

Climber fell 25 feet

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Tahquitz Rock
1980-045

By Kevin Walker

Two days previously, my wife and I had just returned from our honeymoon. On this fine afternoon, Patrice was preparing her first meal for company. All was going smoothly inside, while I was working out in the yard, that is until the pager went off with news of an injured climber on Tahquitz Rock. Let's just say that my new bride was not overjoyed at my leaving this particular day.

My dad, Walt Walker, picked me up in the #1 van and within 45 minutes we were at Humber Park. Deputy MacWilliams from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department was on the scene. He informed us that Saddleback SAR (Orange County) had been practicing on Suicide Rock when the climber fell on Tahquitz. Some of their personnel along with a paramedic from the Idyllwild Fire Department had already hiked in to locate and give aid. Walt sat up base along with Jack Bowman, while I put a unit radio into my pack. I was sent up the climbers trail to Lunch Rock, and as I was about two thirds of the distance to the rock, Saddleback radioed out that they had reached Dave Slandy, a Huntington Beach resident. Dave had taken a leader fall of about 25 feet, and landed on a ledge near the base of the rock, on the South side. He had sustained serious chest injuries, and it was thought that he might have fractured ribs on both sides. Dave's climbing partner had lowered him down the 15 feet to the base. Shortly after that Saddleback and the IFD paramedic arrived.

I hiked past Lunch Rock and met the group when they were about 15 minutes from Lunch Rock. When I arrived I saw that Dave was having difficulty breathing, but otherwise he was in fairly good spirits. Upon reaching Lunch Rock we were met by the rest of RMRU who had brought up our wheel to put under the litter for the rest of the journey. Once the wheel was in position, fellow team member Pete Carlson took the job of field leader, and gave litter assignments, and saw that the wheel-out went smoothly and safely for Dave. Within an hour and 15 minutes (now after dark) we arrived back at Humber Park. There Dave was transferred onto a gurney and placed into the IFD ambulance. He was taken to the Hemet Valley Hospital.

And luckily for me, my new wife had postponed the dinner till Monday night. Patrice, welcome to the RMRU family.

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