

## Woman with hypothermia

**October 18, 1980**  
**Little Round Valley**  
**1980-048**

By Pete Carlson

Saturday evening at 7:30 I was sitting down to play cards with some friends. Joe Erickson was finishing a dinner with friends. Craig Beasley was walking up to his date's front door. Tom Aldrich was relaxing at home. Within 2 and one half hours we would be the first team hiking into Little Round Valley to help a young woman in hypothermia. (Beep ... ) All RMRU members call Al Andrews for a rescue. And that is how an RMRU members evening gets ruined.

It seems two young women, Debbie and Melody, drove to Idyllwild Friday night. They spent a cold and uncomfortable night in their car. In the morning they hiked up the Deer Springs Trail to meet their church group in Little Round Valley. They ate nothing and had only a little to drink all day. When the leaders were checking on all the tents they found Melody shivering. They gave her hot drinks and extra clothes. They thought Debbie was asleep, but when they tried to wake her they found her unconscious from hypothermia.

State Park Aid Sue was checking the area and came across the problem. She used her radio to call for help. Once Al Andrews was contacted he relayed information to the group telling them how to treat the unconscious subject. \*\*\*1. Put two sleeping bags together and place the subject inside. 2. Take off all wet or damp clothes. 3. Place two warm bodies inside the sleeping bag on either side of the subject. 4. Once the subject becomes conscious and can take liquids, give hot drinks or soup. \*\*\*

As we drove from Riverside (high temp. 82°F) we were amazed to hear of 5" of snow and a temperature of 20° in Little Round Valley. We planned to go light, taking just enough to get through the night. We were to hike the Marion Mountain Trail and stabilize the subject until morning when Don Landells would fly the subject out. We arrived at the roadhead and a group of eight started hiking up the trail and arrived in 3 hours and 15 minutes at Little Round Valley. By this time Debbie had responded to the treatment described above and was asleep. We checked things over and went to bed ourselves at 2:30 AM.

Morning came too soon and no one wanted to get up as the temperature was now 10°, with a wind of 10-20 MPH. But we were up and about by 7:00. We made some hot cereal for Debbie to try, but after eating a little she felt sick and laid down. We hurried with our packing up, and getting ready for Don to fly in. At 8:00 we heard the sounds of the Jet Ranger helicopter. We picked up Debbie in her sleeping bag and carried her to the helicopter. Dr. Pete



**EMERGENCY EVACUATION - Don Landella's Jet Ranger prepares to lift off with hypothermic patient Debbie Miller on board. High winds made leaving Little Round Valley difficult for powerful helicopter.**

Boss got in back with Debbie, and her sister Melody was put in front. We backed off and Kevin gave Don the thumbs up OK to take off.

Don gave the bird power and raised up. Then instead of the usual fly off, the helicopter was blown back towards the trees. Don maneuvered back onto the ground. As he moved around the small valley for a better position his main rotors hit some small branches. Finally he landed again and told us he was too heavy. We off-loaded the sister, Melody. Don tried again. As we all watched nervously we saw Don make it out of the valley this time.

In about twenty minutes Don was back to get more people and equipment. Since he had used up some fuel he was lighter and had no problems getting out. In four more trips we were all out and on our way to a relaxing breakfast in Idyllwild. In looking back at this mission, we were really caught by surprise in having a winter mission so early in the fall. We are all now getting our winter gear out and ready for the next one.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.