

## **Van went down 300 feet off roadside**

**August 7, 1981  
Foothills South of Corona  
1981-025**

By Pete Carlson

After just returning from my evening run, the phone rang with news of an evacuation near Corona. No more info was given out, except that we were to meet at the Riverside S.O. at 6:00 a.m. the following morning.

On my way down Friday morning I picked up fellow member Bernie McIlvoy. We were the first there, soon followed by Mark Rhoads, John Dew and Kevin Walker with the No. 1 van, and lastly Rick Pohlers with the No. 2 van. Kevin told us that only six people were requested for the operation, as it was only going to be an assist. We went on in and met with a sergeant. He introduced us to some of the other S.O. personnel that would be rolling (sorry, I'm terrible with names). We were told that a van (possibly stolen), containing two bodies, was approximately 300 feet below a truck trail in the Corona foothills. And because of the steepness and loose rock our technical skills would be needed to extricate the bodies back up to the road.

We followed the Deputies out and through Corona, and up into the hills. Once at the scene, Bernie looked things over and decided to use one of the vans as an anchor. We tied a 300 ft. goldline to the anchor, and Bernie started down to assess the situation. Soon Bernie radioed back up that another 300 ft. rope would be needed. I pulled another one out and started down, closely followed by new member Mark Rhoads. Once the ropes were tied together on the near 30 degree slope, we radioed up that all was ready for the sheriff's personnel. John, Kevin and Rick put helmets on everyone, and sent them down the hand line.

After the coroner and criminologist had gathered all the information that was needed, the bodies were placed in the body bags. Bernie told the sergeant that he felt it would be faster and much safer to use a helicopter and airlift the bodies out, instead of setting up a raise at the top. With that, the call went out to El Toro for one of their choppers. After a bit the word came back that none were available. So, the request was then made to the San Bernardino Sheriff. From them came a "yes." Some time later the sound of a chopper could be heard. Soon after that, they arrived with their large 204 (Huey). We told the pilot what was needed, and got an "affirmative" back. The large bird lifted off and flew over to the site. The crew chief lowered a line down into the narrow canyon, the bags were placed in

the litter and soon after were back on top. The rest of us then made the climb back up to the road.

This task is never enjoyable, but necessary. And when it is in a tough or remote location, RMRU gladly responds, because we are trained for it, and do not want to see anyone else become injured during such an operation.

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.