

3 Hikers stopped by obstacles

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Tahquitz Canyon
1982-031**

By Kevin Walker

Just as we were about to break for lunch at work, the phone rang with news of a search in Tahquitz Canyon. So, skip lunch to get the #1 van, pick up Walt and drive to Palm Springs.

Base was set up in front of Ann Dolly's home. There Sgt. Dave Weakley from the S.O. told us that three men had set out Saturday morning to hike down Tahquitz Canyon, and that they had planned to be out by Sunday evening. One of three things had happened, someone was injured, they were stranded, or they were taking much longer than planned.

Don Landells arrived with one of his Jet Rangers, as we were finishing loading our packs. Walt and I were the first load in. We would make a search run up the canyon, and then be let off to start searching on foot. As we searched up the canyon, various groups of people could be seen in the lower pools swimming and sunbathing, but as we lipped over the second fall the crowds thinned out. And as suspected Walt spotted the three men just up canyon from the third (largest) falls. Don quickly found a large boulder to let us off on. We made our way down to the subjects, confirmed it was indeed them, and led them back to the helispot. As we waited for Don to return, the leader of the group Bill Whittenberger explained that they had found some of the obstacles to be very hard to get around in the canyon. We then explained to them that the falls they were approaching would have proved to be too much for them and their equipment, and that the only way to go was up and out of the canyon if it was to be done on foot.

Don quickly returned, and two men were loaded and flown out. Next trip was the last of the three, and the cargo net loaded with their packs and our two. The last load was Walt and myself. Because of the location that the subjects were found, the mission went quickly and smoothly. So ... after a quick lunch, it was back home and to work.

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

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