

Climbers stranded on ledge

October 3, 1982
North Face, Mt. San Jacinto
1982-033

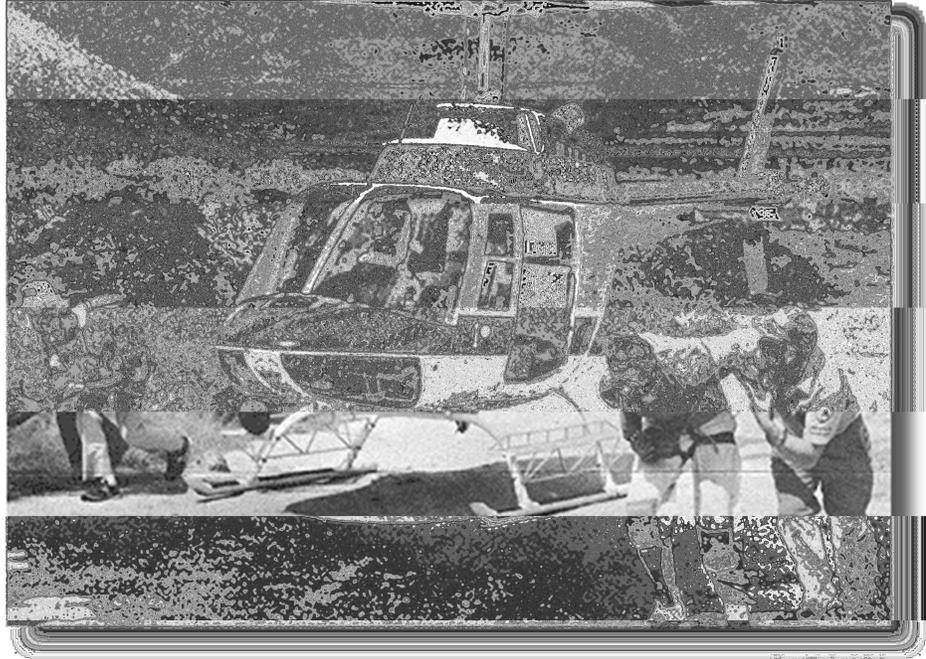
By Randy Iwasiuk

The previous month or so had been devoid of rescue activity so the last thing I expected was my pager to go off Sunday morning. I had uncharacteristically gone to school to do some work in the lab, and true to form just as I got my project and all my instruments spread out the call came; two climbers on San Jacinto's North Face, overdue almost three days.

The North Face being the awesome entity that it is precludes guessing what type of situation we can expect to encounter on any given mission. The vagaries of weather, season, and the subjects' location and or situation compound the problem presented by the precipitous terrain.

By 10:00 a.m. about a dozen RMRUers had assembled at the Snow Creek village. Little time was wasted before Vance Colvig arrived in a helicopter from Landells Aviation. Fortunately the two climbers, Ralph Glenn and Ken Rose, both experienced mountaineers with a good knowledge of San Jacinto had left a Xeroxed map depicting their route. Armed with this map Walt Walker and Joe Erickson lifted off with Vance in an aerial search for the overdue pair. A systematic scouring of the labyrinthine maze of canyons on the East Fork of Snow Creek turned up Ken and Ralph in about 45 minutes. They were uninjured but indicated that they required assistance. RMRU's newly acquired bullhorn proved to be the most vital piece of equipment on this mission. The subjects were sighted on a broken ledge about 400 feet from the top of a 2000 foot buttress. Vance the pilot was unable to find a place where he felt he could safely land and wisely elected not to endanger anyone by attempting one. After a short wait this problem was short circuited by the arrival of Don Landells. While Don was on his way we prepared for a major technical mission. At this point a difficult and tricky landing on top of the buttress and a 400 foot rappel for a technical evac team loomed probable.

Walt and I were the first team Don ferried up the mountain and as we climbed I was amazed at the size and steepness of the rock walls in this area, and was somewhat taken aback when Don maneuvered the helicopter into a one runner position on a large boulder at the edge of the ledge system where the two climbers were. Once again Don demonstrated that



Jim Fairchild

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY - RMRU member Mel Krug leads Ralph Glenn away from the helicopter, as John Dew does the same with Kenneth Rose. The photo may look strange, but the reason that everyone is bent over is to stay away from the moving rotor blades. Both Ralph and Ken had just been flown out from a ledge on the North Face of Mt. San Jacinto.

the Bell jet Ranger III is an extension of his body. Walt and I easily, but not without some trepidation at the formidable exposure stepped onto the boulder. It turned out to be a simple matter to assist the subjects in boarding the helicopter, slinging out the packs, and being whisked out ourselves on the third run. What could easily have been a long and dangerous mission, fortunately ended quickly and safely.

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.