



Man slid 200 feet down ice

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Angel's Glide Trail
1983-039

By Walt Walker

It was nearing the end of another workday (about 4 p.m.) when RMRU received a call from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that a young man had slipped and slid down an icy mountainside. It was reported to us that a hiking partner had come out for help and that he was at the Mt. San Jacinto State Park headquarters in Idyllwild. When I called Ranger Ernie Brown answered the telephone and he told me that the informant Scott Sand was there. He put Scott on the line and I asked him to tell me what had happened.

Scott related that he and two other men had started hiking on Monday. They camped Monday night near Saddle Junction. Tuesday morning they started hiking up the Angel's Glide Trail. Slightly before the boundary between the State Park and the Forest Service areas they stopped for lunch. After lunch David Sprague walked down the trail a short distance to try and get a better view of the snow covered trail. He slipped on an icy patch and began to slide down the slope. He struck a number of small trees and finally was stopped, approximately 200 feet down, by a large downed tree. The group had been hiking and had not planned on any climbing, so they had not carried any rope. It appeared that there was no way they could descend to the injured man. At that time Scott went for help and the third man, William Thomas remained with the packs.

It was approximately 5:30 p.m. when my son Kevin and I arrived at the State Park Headquarters. We went inside and I began to interview Scott for more details. Just minutes later Mary Bowman, Glenn Henderson and Bruce Gahagan showed up.

The five RMRU members plus Scott drove up to, Humber Park in the rain. It was decided that Kevin, Glenn, Bruce and I would start up the Devil's Slide Trail immediately as a bash team. (A small group who hikes in as quickly as possible to give first aid.) Scott wanted to go back in with us and he looked young and healthy, so we said o.k. This proved to be a poor decision on my part, as Scott had already hiked many miles that day, which slowed us down.

As we hiked along we discussed what equipment would be needed. Shortly we radioed back to base and told Mary what gear we wanted brought in by the next group. Shortly after 6:00 p.m. more RMRU members began to arrive at base. The second team comprised of Mel Krug, Jim Fairchild, Craig Beasley and Don Ricker started up the trail

with the wheeled litter and technical hardware. Later, Dave Ezell, Rob Gardner and Brian Hixson became the third group and they carried with them extra clothing and water.

The bash team ran into some ice on the trail below Powder Box spring and when we arrived at Saddle Junction, the entire area where the trails meet, was covered with ice. just before we reached the top of Angel's Glide we stopped and strapped our crampons onto our boots. We topped the "Glide" and started downward to ward Wellman's Cienega. Scott said we were nearing the area where he had left William and the packs.

Using the teams large portable spotlight, I looked further down the trail. just 100 feet away were the packs, but no William. We started looking and calling. About 150 feet down from the trail I heard a reply from our calling. Shining the big light in the direction of the call I spotted two heads sticking out of a sleeping bag. I hurried over to the sleeping bag and found William and David.

During the afternoon William had slid from tree to tree with a sleeping bag in hand with him. My worst fears had been that David would be deep into hypothermia. William had done a very brave thing indeed. While Kevin set up a stove to heat water, Bruce and Glenn broke out two rescue ropes and secured one end to a tree. They then started down the slope towards Kevin and I. Talking to David about his injuries I learned that he had lacerated his hand, sustained some type of injury to his thigh and to the area near the tailbone.

Upon examining David I found a puncture wound in the back of his thigh. I dressed and bandaged the laceration to his hand and determined that he had probably sustained a fracture to his tailbone. Considering how far he had traveled he was lucky to have received rather minor injuries. Kevin brought over soup for David and William, which they eagerly accepted.



Jim Fairchild

FINAL PREPARATION - RMRU members finish securing injured subject David Sprague in to the wheeled litter. Once completed, David was raised up the steep ice covered slope to the trail 200 feet above.

The second team radioed that they were at the packs left on the trail. We radioed back for them to follow the rope down to us. They descended with the wheeled litter. We quickly discussed how we would lift David and move the wheeled litter. Six of us knelt around David, grasped the sleeping bag and lifted him up, the litter was rolled under him and we lowered him into it. He was then secured into the litter.



Glenn Henderson

BACK ON TOP - Once up to the trail, the wheel is adjusted by RMRU members for the long wheel out to Humber Park. Because of ice conditions the trip out took nearly six hours.

While this was being a one a hauling system had been set up at the trail. We radioed that four of us would come up with the litter. Two team members tied William into a sit harness, secured it to the rope and they helped him up the slope.

The third team arrived just in time to help with the hauling. The hauling team radioed that they were ready and we radioed back that we were ready to be pulled up the slope. In a fairly short time, as hauls 90, we reached the trail. While we took turns holding the litter, each member loaded extra team gear into his pack. With this completed we started down towards Saddle Junction. We stopped at the junction for a breather. Before starting again we checked David and how he was doing.

Gathering around the litter again, we started down the Devil's Slide Trail. It was 7:00 a.m. when we arrived at Humber Park.

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.