

Man killed as car left highway

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Lambs Canyon
1986-015

By Jim Fairchild

Late Saturday afternoon, William S. Tru, Jr., age 53, of Hemet, was driving along Lamb Canyon Road south of Beaumont on his way home. Upon approaching the "Thirty Mile-an-Hour Curve," his car veered off the road, took out the sign indicating the speed, and plummeted over the edge. Three-hundred feet down the 45 degree angle slope, the car and Mr. Tru's body came to a stop. We heard during the mission that a lady witness proceeded to Hemet to call for help, and that fifteen Marines climbed down to the wreck. We do marvel there weren't serious injuries in the latter action. Before long the CHP arrived, we heard one officer went down and returned. The California Department of Forestry arrived, along with a number of San Jacinto Police. One each of the last two agencies went down, and were there when RMRU arrived.

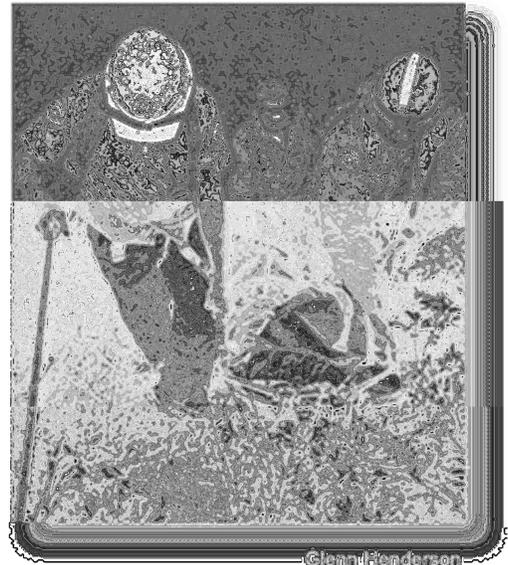
We were called about the time darkness fell. When the writer arrived there were two huge fire trucks, a large generator trailer providing power for brilliant lights that flooded the canyon below. CHP officers were keeping flares going and directing traffic. I found John Dew and Bruce Gahagan. We formulated a plan to get someone down for the recovery. Before long Dr. Ray Hussey, Jay Pion, Joe Erickson, and Henry Negrete were on hand.

We lowered Bruce and Joe with the litter, while Ray, Jay, and Henry prepared the mechanical advantage system for the haul back up. We were pleased to have used one of our six-hundred foot long static lines, because with the lower and the raise riggings we used the last foot. Down at the wreck Bruce took many photos and then they placed the body in the bag and readied for the ascent. Instead of trees or rocks or pickets for anchors, we used the very convenient large hooks on the front bumpers of the huge fire trucks. With a ninety-degree angle from the truck at the canyon's edge, we ran the raise, rigging sixty feet laterally to the second truck. After about six increments of pulling we had retrieved the body, Bruce, Joe, Ray, and Gil Carr. The latter had arrived a bit later, and had gone down with Joe and Ray when it was determined their help was needed. That left the fireman and policeman, and Gil was lowered to get them tied in for their raise. Glenn Henderson arrive during the later stages and suggested we use the upper truck to raise the last men. This worked quickly and well.

All through the mission representatives of the other agencies were helpful and cooperative. It was highly rewarding to see five agencies working together in their areas of expertise toward a common goal, tragic as it was.

Had there been a live subject down there with serious injuries, we would have called for a helicopter pick-up and evacuation, because the ride up the loose rock slope might have been too bumpy.

Sometime after midnight we all drove off into the brisk night air, breathing deeply to rid our lungs of the flare and diesel smoke - this was one of the few operations we've conducted at the edge of a busy highway.



UP THE HILL - RMRU members Joe Erickson, Gil Carr, and Bruce Gahagan pull up the litter holding the body of William S. Tru, killed when his car went off Highway 74 in Lamb Canyon and tumbled nearly 600 feet to the canyon bottom.

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.