

Woman with injured ankle

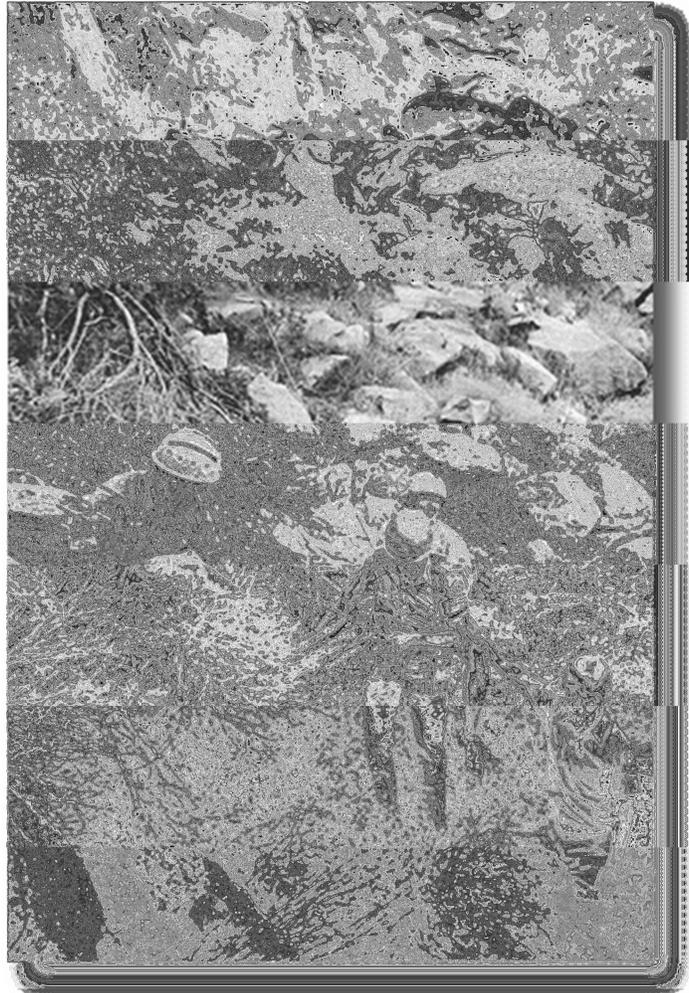
April 23, 1987
North Chino Canyon
1987-012

By Kevin Walker

At a little after 1:00 p.m. the phone rang at work with the news of a rescue down in Palm Springs, destination the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. I was the first to arrive followed closely by Rob Gardner. At the lower station Rob and I interviewed James Newby, the informant. James told us that he, Steven Rule, Tina Kuo, and Jill Woelfle, all from Pasadena, were down to Palm Springs for spring break. Their fellow classmates were planning to ride the tram up in the late afternoon and have dinner at the mountain station. But this group of four had a more challenging way to reach the top.

They started out from the parking lot H at the lower station early in the morning. The group was well equipped for the day hike, each having plenty of water, extra clothing, food and other items of necessity for the trip from the palms to the pines. The only error was they picked the route north of Chino Canyon instead of going up the Skyline ridge to the south. By mid morning they could see that their route was taking them away from where they wanted to go, and that they had quite a bit more altitude to gain to get to the top, so the decision was made to descend back to the valley station. The group went via the direct route, taking a very steep chute toward North Chino Canyon. About halfway down, Jill Woelfle dislodged a rock weighing in the neighborhood of 600 pounds which rolled over and pinned her right foot. Her companions quickly tipped the boulder back enough for Jill to pull her foot out. They could not tell for sure whether or not her foot or ankle was broken. There was no doubt though that she would not be able to get out on her own.

Sgt. Dave Nordstrom from the Banning station arrived, and after discussing with James her approximate location and possible injuries the decision was made to contact Landells Aviation. As more members arrived, Rob and I readied our packs and waited only a short time for the arrival of mountain pilot Steve DeJesus in helicopter 16 uniform. We loaded our packs, strapped ourselves in and lifted off for North Chino. As we gained altitude, I described to Steve where we thought the remaining three were. After making sweeps across the slopes of the north side and reaching the top of the ridge with no results, we then started a slow descent back. Everyone on the team will have hot spell for finding people, a lot of which is being in the right place at the right time. Well this was the beginning of a hot spell for me. About a thousand feet below the helicopter in the shadow of the ridge was something moving! I called out for Steve to roll left. As we came about sure enough we had located them. Steve spiraled down; end ended up level with the group several hundred horizontal feet away. The chute was a large one with a very confined bottom, so we would have to be careful not to roll rocks down on the trio if we were to get out above. Steve did find a spot where we could get out of one side slightly. Steve put the tip of one skid onto a small boulder in the mountainside and Rob and I climbed out. Steve pulled away and returned to base to wait for further instructions for loads and equipment.



Jim Fairchild

TROGSITZ EVAC - This photo shows RMRU's Trogsitz which was used to carry injured subject Jill Wobelfe on the back of RMRU member Kevin Walker, as fellow members Bill Blaschko and Henry Negrete help balance. In the background RMRU member Glenn Henderson can be seen as he belays Kevin and Jill down the slope.

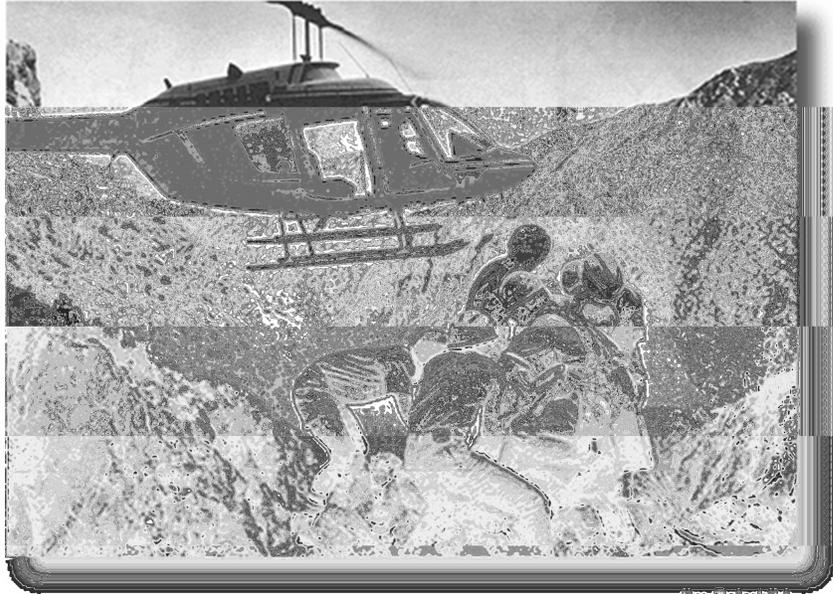
Upon arrival, we found Jill resting comfortably on a large flat boulder with two other companions close by. It was Tina's red sweatshirt being waved that I had spotted something to remember when out in the wild. Back to Jill though, there was some swelling at the ankle with moderate point tenderness, enough to warrant fracture precautions. This information was relayed to base along with other items that would be needed for the rescue operation. Second load in consisted of Jim Fairchild and Walt

Walker with brush cutting tools. The brush hooks were handed out to Rob who made some minor improvements to the site, enough for Steve to let Walt and Jim out. With all three working, the helispot was quickly ready for the balance of members and equipment. Next were Bill Blaschko and Henry Negrete, followed by Glenn Henderson and Joe Erickson. Back at base was base camp operator Bob Sairs and fellow member Jay Pion and Ray Hussey who arrived late.

Steve returned to base and shut the machine down and waited there as we went about the business of getting Jill ready to go. Dr. Bill examined Jill and then he and I placed an air splint on the injured foot while the rest of the guys set up anchors for rope belays, cleared a small path to walk to the helispot, and also cleared a little more room at the helispot itself.

Instead of using a stokes litter to move Jill in, we used the teams Troggsitz. It is a means of carrying someone on the back of another person piggyback style. With anchors and

belay stations ready, Jill was strapped to the Troggsitz, I got into the pack strap portion of it, clipped in and then with the help of Bill and Henry as outriggers for me to balance with, we started out, first we traversed over about twenty feet and then down about thirty belayed by Glenn. Then we transferred to another belay by Joe, and soon were at the spot. As gear was being gathered I asked to radio down and have Steve start up the helicopter, but Walt said to wait so that we could make sure all was ready. As Jill was still strapped to my back, I was a little anxious to get the show on the road, (sorry Jill). I must say that Jill was one of the lighter subjects we have helped, so the wait was not all that bad. As the photos that accompany this article show best, once Steve arrived, using almost all present, Jill was removed from my back and transferred into the helicopter, and then flown back to base. Steven and Tina were flown out next followed by loads of RMRU members and gear until all that remained was Rob and myself. Steve returned, and what would become known as the THREE AMIGO's returned to base. For Jill, X-rays showed no fracture, which was good to hear. Some college students may have had some excitement in the springs. This foursome had some excitement of a different sort up in the mountains known as the San Jacintos.



Jim Palahila

READY FOR PICK-UP - As RMRU member Henry Negrete, Rob Gardner, Glenn Henderson, Kevin Walker, Walt Walker, and Bill Blaschko cling to a small helispot holding Jill Woolfe, pilot Steve DeJesus maneuvers the helicopter into position for the pick-up.

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.