

Volume XVI, Issue IV, April 1980 — Kevin Walker, Editor — Walt Walker, Publisher — Dona Towell, Artist

## From the Editor's desk—

Let us not forget the old saying, 'better late than never.'

During the San Jacinto Flood in February, Walt Walker's four wheel drive jeep suffered engine difficulties because of the excessive amount of water that it was driven through. Because Walt's jeep was badly needed in the flood oriented rescue operations, Walt called a fellow resident and long time friend John Freitas who is an auto mechanic in our area. It was one thing to say yes to fix the vehicle. But to say yes at 3:00 a.m. is another thing. Because of John's fast service, the jeep was able to be put back into operation that same day. If that is not enough, John tuned-up the rescue van, and only charged for parts. He gave all his time to us for **no charge**.

After all the flood waters had receded, we were told that our vans tires and wheels should be checked for possible damage from flood waters. So while the van was in the San Jacinto area, we had the van checked over at Evans Tire Co. Once again, **no charge** for services rendered. With money being a little tight these days, it is nice to have people and businesses support a group such as the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit.

We at RMRU thank you, the people in the community for helping RMRU to continue in its endeavors.

## Coming Events—

### MAY

- 7 — Regular Meeting
- 10-11 — Training
- 21 — Board Meeting

### JUNE

- 4 — Regular Meeting
- 7-8 — Training
- 18 — Board Meeting

### JULY

- 9 — Regular Meeting
- 12 — Training
- 23 — Board Meeting

## Search and Rescue

### SEARCH

Mission No. 8016M

15 April, Tues.  
Falls Creek,  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Kevin Walker

It was about 10 in the morning when the intercom came on and asked for me to report to the front office. It was there that parent, employer and RMRU member Walt Walker informed me that two teenagers were overdue in returning to their homes in the Coachella Valley, and that RMRU's services would be needed in locating the pair. Because of a heavy work load Walt would be unable to respond. So

I took the rescue van and headed for Banning. Before responding to the Snow Creek roadhead, we met at the Sheriff's office in Banning. I was the first RMRU member there, so I started the paper work for the mission. After getting a manpower report from Walt over the phone, I decided it would be a good idea to also activate the Hemet Team. With 12 RMRU members at the office and two on the way from Hemet, we headed for Snow Creek. Once there veteran RMRU member Jim Fairchild asked me if I would like to be Operations leader for this mission. As calmly as possible I said YES . . . I may sound excited, but that is to be expected when one is entrusted to direct a rescue mission for the first time.

As I began to organize teams, the familiar voice of pilot Don Landells came over the radio and notified us that he was airborne and would be at our location in 5 minutes. After consulting with Jim I decided to send the two Jims (Fairchild and Garvey) in to make a recon run up Falls Creek, and then down Snow Creek in the event that the two had gone that route. After Don had arrived and then left with J.F. and J.G. I made sure that the other teams of two were ready to hike in the



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

BACK AT BASE — Mark Maglione and Richard Gonzales walking with his Uncle, walk away from Don Landells' helicopter, after being airlifted from Falls Creek RMRU member Larry Roland follows to make sure they exit away from the chopper in a safe manner

event that the chopper did not turn anything on the first run. After about 20 minutes the chopper returned. They had not found anything, but Don had seen an area that he thought would be a good area to start searching in. Since Jim Garvey was in the bird, and had seen the particular area Don was speaking about, I thought it best to make him the team leader for the first search team. Joe Erickson would join Jim for the first run in. With men and gear loaded, I replaced Jim Fairchild as observer and we were off. We had no sooner reached the area at about the 3,000 foot level, when Jim Garvey shouted up to the front that he had the two in sight on a boulder below us. Sure enough the description matched, so Don landed on a ridge above the canyon and let Jim and Joe off so that they could hike down and make contact.

While they were making their way down the ridge, Don and I flew back to base to pick up a brush hook so that I could clear the helispot and make more clearance for the tail rotor. After Don had let me off, I started clearing the brush away. After about 30 minutes, Jim and Joe returned with the two teenagers. Both were in great shape, and were apparently having a good time. We did convince them though that it would be wise to come out with us to their waiting relatives. With all clear at the helispot, we called Don back in. After two trips, Don had the two hikers and the three of us back to base. Mission No. 8016M complete.

One problem though; while we had been working on the mission, Don had spotted a pack at the top of a waterfall in Snow Creek. So Jim Fairchild sent Don Chambers in with the chopper to retrieve it. Bringing the pack out was actually harder than the main mission, because Don had to make a one runner at the waterfall while Don Chambers climbed out and got the pack. We thought we might have another mission, but after the Sheriff ran a check on an I.D. found in the pack we learned that a solo hiker had to leave it to get around the waterfall, and that we could have the pack and contents as a donation. Lucky once again that day - a happy ending. • RMRU

## SEARCH

**Mission No. 8017M**

**19-20 April, Sat.-Sun.  
Strawberry Creek, Idyllwild**

*By Jim Fairchild*

"Beware of stepping into swift flowing streams, the force of the water can suddenly spin you into the torrent." So I addressed my class in wilderness safety at UCR, at about 1530 that Saturday. At about that same time Howard Bechefskey, 39, a San Diego Superior Court judge,

along with his fiancée, was enjoying sunbathing and scenery in the vicinity of Grieg's Grotto where Strawberry Creek flows down narrow, cliffy, steep terrain. There was a really considerable volume of swift flowing water present.

My wife, daughter and I were de-briefing the class just ended when the pager told me to call Walt Walker. His information was that we were to meet at the Idyllwild Grammer School to search for a man. Daughter Carol and I were soon on our way, arriving at the base camp on the Isomata Campus, just a few minutes hike from the grotto. Mary Bowman was at the van as Base Camp Operator. Walt, Kevin, Brian, John and Steve Vaughn from Hemet Search & Rescue Team (HSAR) were ten minutes into the field already, Jim Garvey pulled up, so we decided to go together, having loaded requested gear. Just then the eye-witness to the accident showed up. I loaned him a flashlight, and we hiked. Soon we saw lights below and by radio learned Walt's party was checking pools. The eye-witness had described the whole scene to us, and we checked very closely downstream from where he had last seen the judge. Jim Garvey went on belay to check a huge boulder that split the stream, no luck. We went around the projecting ridge and onto an overhanging rock 150' from a likely pool. My headlamp revealed a skin-toned shape undulating below the surface, often obscured by foam. That had to be the judge. To be sure Kevin was lowered halfway to the pool to verify our find, and the search was over. Jim, Kevin, and I stayed

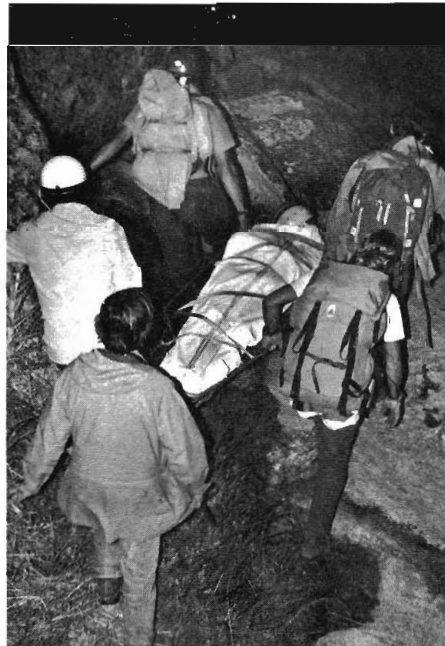
on the scene while the rest went up to obtain appropriate additional gear, along with Craig Beasley and Joe Erickson who had just arrived.

The eye-witness said he was watching as the judge approached the stream, placed a leg in it, was pivoted off the rock and into the torrent. He tried to stop himself by hooking a rock with his foot, but just as the eye-witness came along to help, he was swept down and over a waterfall, striking head first, then he went over a second falls and out of sight. We found him down a third long cascading falls, around a bend and in the pool.

Our teammates returned, along with several more HSAR men, and a couple of Idyllwild residents. We set up anchors and rigging, and Jim, Kevin and I rappelled down to the pool. Kevin and Jim climbed onto a huge boulder that helped block the judge's body from washing on down, then Jim dropped onto a flatish boulder near the body. He tied a rope onto the judge, then I pulled him free and over to the close side of the pool. After placing him into a body bag and securing that into the Stokes litter, I jumared the rope back to the ledges to take further pictures. Kevin and Jim attended the litter as it was lifted, and soon the tedious, back-breaking task of climbing back to the van was in progress.

What started out to be a nice day in the sun by the stream became a tragedy, what was expected to be a quick, easy mission became a search and technical evacuation.

• RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

**SAD TASK** — Members from RMRU and HSAR carry the litter containing the body of Howard Bechefskey up the steep canyon side of Strawberry Creek.

## RESCUE

**Mission No. 8018C**

**20 April, Sun.  
Suicide Rock,  
San Jacinto Mountains**

We received a call from the Hemet office of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that two climbers had been spotted hanging from their climbing rope and had not moved for some time. RMRU was then put on stand by while an Idyllwild deputy drove up to Humber Park to investigate. The two apparently made their way down safely, because we were taken off of stand by at approximately 10:00 p.m. • RMRU

## SEARCH

**Mission No. 8019C**

**24 April, Thurs.  
Pacific Crest Trail,  
San Jacinto Mountains**

At approximately 9:00 A.M. we received a call from the Banning office of the Riverside County Sheriff's Depart-

ment that two young women hiking the Pacific Crest Trail had failed to check in with their parents at one of the rendezvous points. RMRU was then put on stand by while the Sheriff checked in to where they had last been seen. At 1:30 P. M. the team was going to be activated and start searching the high country. But at a little after 1:00 the pair checked in at Cabazon. Both were OK, they had been delayed by bad weather the previous two days. • RMRU

## SEARCH

### Mission No. 8020M

**27 April, Sun.  
Chino foothills,  
West of Prado Dam**

By Kevin Walker

Certain rescue missions just don't seem to fall together properly; this would be one of those missions. My phone rang at 8:30 A.M. daylight savings time. On the other end was my dad, Walt Walker with news of a search operation in the hills west of the Prado Dam for a balloonist. "A what?" I said. Sure enough, there was a balloon race going on Saturday, and due to deteriorating light and weather conditions, a helium filled balloon containing two balloonists, had to make a forced landing in the foothills. Well, the pilot was picked up that evening, but for some reason the co-pilot wasn't. That's where we came in, we thought.

The team met in Corona, from there we caravanned back into the hills on an access road for an oil company. After driving for about a half hour we reached our destination. On a small hilltop we found a large group of balloon people and R.A.C.E.S., a radio group from the Orange County area acting as rescuers. We offered to help, but the group didn't seem to want any extra help. So all we could really do was stand back and watch. Apparently we had ended up crossing into Orange County, because a helicopter from the Anaheim Police Department was flying search in the area the balloon went down.

After another hour went by Walt questioned the balloon pilot who had made it out safely. The pilot remembered his route quite well, but could not make things out good from the ground. Well, to make this a short story, Walt convinced the other searchers to allow the balloon pilot to go up in the chopper and retrace his course. Sure enough, they were not up more than five minutes when the chopper reported that they had spotted the missing man next to the now **rolled up balloon**. After he was flown out and the rescuers were patting each others' backs, the rest of us troopies from RMRU headed for home. • RMRU

# \$USTAINING MEMBERS

BY WALT WALKER

In an effort to try and catch up with our newsletter distribution, and the fact that Mike Daugherty is up to his armpits in alligators, it has fallen to me to put the Sustaining Members column together.

Last fall our SAR missions activity slowed considerably and it continued into the first part of this year. Just when we began to wonder what had occurred, it happened. The almost drought was over in a hurry as you may have been able to read about.

Being the unit treasurer, I end up with the bills that have to be paid, **bad**, but I also end up with the checks from our Sustaining Members, **great!** You, the Sustaining Members, through your donations, have kept us ahead of the bills. **Hurray!**

We, the Regular Members, sincerely hope, you the Sustaining Members will continue to do the outstanding job that you are doing now. With your efforts, we are able to do things like replace radio batteries when needed (last month we had to use a whole case of "D" cell alkaline batteries at one time).

RMRU cannot express too strongly our **heartfelt thanks**, to all the following Sustaining Members, for your donations. I am sorry that we could not take the time to note the New and Renewing Sustaining Members.

### January

- \*M/M Kenneth Andrews
- \*Theodore L. Young
- \*Philip C. Moedt
  - Stanley R. Brown
  - John E. Coles, M.D.
  - Richard Webster
- \*Corona Breakfast Lions Club
  - Herwil & Genie Bryant
  - Daly F. Cole
- \*Soroptimist Club
  - of Hemet — San Jacinto
  - Evelyn Fenton
- \*Circle City Hospital
  - Stephen Jensen
  - Fred C. James
  - Frances Hall
  - Jose M. Paleo, M.D.
  - Albin & Katherine Merzals
  - Ruth D. Echols
  - M/M Albert Leithold, Jr.
  - Weston & Joanne Robinson
  - Robert G. Williamson, M.D.
  - Western Helicopters, Inc.
  - Diann Coate
  - Edward Hill
- \*Circle City Auxiliary
  - Gene & Barbara Garlinger

### February

- Fred Camphausen
- Douglas & Mary Glenn
- Freeman C. Bovard
- Dorothy E. Webley
- Louis & Rosa Delevie
- \*Ruth Kuykendall

### March

- William & Maryann Wickett
- Paul Wright
- San Bernardino Unit,
  - Wally Byam Caravan Club
- \*Circle City Hospital
  - The Desert Sun School
- \*Circle City Auxiliary
  - Timothy & Stephanie Carvalho
  - Jack & Grace Mihaylo
  - John Freitas
  - Dorothy & Harold Carlson
  - Burkhard Tax Service
  - Jane & John Wiefels
  - C. O. Barker, Jr.
  - David E. Randel, M.D.

### April

- \*The Woman's Club
  - of San Jacinto
  - Herbert & Inge Schwartz
- \*Lloyd & Karin Allen
- \*Mrs. James Bailey
  - Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Anger
  - Dave & Edith Weir
  - Joe & Helen Lamb
  - Beaumont First Christian
    - Men's Fellowship
- Carrie Ebaugh
  - Romoland School District
- \*Barbara & Lloyd Allen, Sr.
  - Jane & John Wiefels
  - Gary Anderson
- \*Rubidoux Grange No. 611
  - Fred C. James

Anonymous

\***Century Club**, donation of \$100 or more.

## Notice!

The **RMRU Newsletter** is published 12 times per year by the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit, Inc. It is intended primarily to inform the Regular and Sustaining Members.

If you would like to receive the newsletter on a regular basis, and at the same time become a Sustaining member, send your tax deductible donation of \$25 or more to:

Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit  
Post Office Box 5444  
Riverside, California 92517



# TRAINING



**12-13 April, Sat.-Sun.  
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Ed Hill

April's training session was a combination familiarization and ice axe practice. We were to meet at Humber Park on Friday evening; hike to Chinquapin Flat; practice ice axe arrests and tour the high country.

I was to meet Craig Beasley with the rescue van at Walt Walker's house in San Jacinto and take him up to Humber Park. I had not been out that way since before the flood and so was unprepared for the flood's aftermath. The roads that I was used to traveling were either in pieces or simply gone. I picked Craig up and got directions from Walt on how to avoid the now missing Mountain Avenue. Our first try at the route ended us up in the now dry San Jacinto floodplain. The second try took us all around Park Hill and we ended up in downtown Hemet. Consequently we were an hour late and expected to find the group gone. Since we had all the radios in the car, Craig and I would have had to carry one each up to camp that night.

The group was still waiting for stragglers. It turned out that some other members had been late, and we had several no-shows. We saddled up and hiked up to the saddle. The snow was very hard and slick in some places. I was glad that I had my ice axe out. In one place I cut a small step for my boot. It was cool and windy at the saddle. We took a short break for candy and water and departed for the bivouac spot.

The next morning we discovered that our search for a sheltered bivouac spot had sent us circling back to almost the saddle. After breakfast we started hiking toward the ridge that leads to Chinquapin Flat. Again the snow was hard underfoot. On the ridge, Don Chambers slipped and slid twenty feet down into a small swale which stopped him. After that, everyone started using their ice axes. From the ridge we had a good view of the north face of Tahquitz Peak where the skier had fallen and fractured his ankle. Those gullies are long, steep and icy. Don pointed out where the victims had been; where our team had been; and where the six hundred foot raise to the ridgetop had been.

The slope above Chinquapin Flat turned out to be ideal for ice axe. The slope was ice under a thin layer of corn snow. Jerry Niswonger, Don and I chopped some platforms part way up the slope where we ate lunch after cajoling the rest of the group into coming over with a tale of the beautiful flat lunch spot we had found. After lunch we put on our wind and water resistant pants and parkas and had a practice session sliding down and rolling into an arrest when someone yelled "arrest." We used two trees as an imag-

inary cliff line and tried to stop before we slid below the trees. Most of us were successful. The snow was on the damp side so we soon became soaked. We stopped in time to dry everyone out before the sun went down. While drying out, we worked on raises using ice axes and snow flukes.

Three sailplanes took advantage of the strong updrafts on the west ridge and were soaring in lazy circles above us. We could hear the flaps and ailerons as the sailplanes made adjustments to stay in the strong updrafts. They sounded exactly like a creaky door.

That evening we camped in two places. Those who had tents slept on the ridge top while those without found a small hollow out of the wind. The wind was rushing by about twenty feet over our heads. We built a low windwall to deflect any other breezes. After dinner we went up to the largest tent for cheese cake courtesy of Jim Fairchild.

The next morning Dave Ezell and Tom Aldrich joined us. Tom had climbed directly up from Humber Park and had found himself cutting steps in the hard snow just below the ridge. While the rest of us worked on roped travel, Tom and Dave checked out on ice axe.

Once the arrests were done, we started down the drainage toward Little Tahquitz Valley. At the lower end of the valley, we found a bare spot for lunch. I started to dig a hole in the snow over the creek to get water. Jim Garvey picked a spot twenty feet further down to do the same thing. He picked a weak snow bridge to stand on, and it collapsed dumping him into the creek. Fortunately the creek was shallow at that point so Jim did not get wet. We refused to haul him out until he had filled everyone's water bottle.

From Little Tahquitz Valley, we hiked through Tahquitz Valley to Skunk Cabbage Meadows before returning to the saddle and thence down to Idyllwild. I would like to thank our new training officer, Hal Fulkman, for an excellent training. My only regret was that more of the team was unable to attend. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

LOOK ... OUT ... BELOWWW ... — This is called the pass the ice axe game. RMRU president Ed Hill passes an ice axe to Craig Beasley. Once in Craig's hands, he must get the axe up against his body and roll over in the arrest position, and ultimately stop himself. Jim Garvey watches at a safe distance

returned to the campsite, they found that Joe had not made it back to camp. The group searched the area and found tracks descending towards Law's Camp and Corwin's Camp. They decided they need

thick brush, towards our location. We acknowledged and began our climb downwards through the brush and over the loose dirt and rock. Reaching the canyon floor we quickly decided that Joe had to



Joe was tired, dehydrated and his poor, exposed arms and legs told the tale of his 4500' descent through the thick brush. He got some nourishment from Mary's