

Volume XIX, Issue X, October 1983

John Dew, Editor — Kevin Walker, Publisher — Dona Towell, Artist

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 8331M

10 October, Mon.
Live Oak Canyon

By Jim Fairchild



Charlotte and five friends, members of a hiking club in Orange County, had planned to go backpacking in the San Geronio Wilderness, but the snow up there at the time changed their plan. Instead, they decided to hike from a roadhead out of Garner Valley, up the Morris Ranch Road. They would hike up to the Desert Divide where the Pacific Crest Trail traverses the entire divide between Garner Valley and Palm Canyon. Starting Saturday morning, they reached Live Oak Spring, in a canyon of the same name, about noon, a bit spread out.

RMRU, at noon on Saturday, was having lunch after a truly brain-stressing session on map and compass. We were on training up at Skunk Cabbage Meadow 7900' el., in the San Jacinto Mts. (See report thereon).

Charlotte's hiking companions regrouped for a snack at the spring. Then, the three best hikers, taking the maps, continued down the canyon on the trail. Charlotte followed shortly, with the two girls whose feet and legs were problematic, some distance behind. Before long the trail swung north after staying in the easterly flowing stream bottom, and gained elevation as it headed for Oak Canyon. Charlotte tried to make voice contact with the three ahead, and thought she heard them, but could never catch up. Then she decided to wait for the two

slower companions behind. They never came along the trail. Charlotte continued on for a while but failed to find any of them. Still on the trail, she decided to backtrack to the spring, but approaching darkness compelled her to set up camp before reaching there.

RMRU spent a wonderfully instructive afternoon practicing cliffside rescue techniques of individual nature on a forty foot high bluff at the edge of the meadow. This was followed by our usual gourmet supper. After a social hour bedtime came in the coolness and cloudiness of the evening.

Charlotte ate supper and went to bed, not especially secure in her predicament, but all was well until dawn. Then she packed and completed the return hike to Live Oak Spring. The campsite there is superb with plenty of water, wood, a lot of oaks and large shrubs, and a fascinating variety of plants. The moderately steep canyon sides are covered with thick chaparral. Not much view, but a fine place to await rescue.

RMRU went right back to practicing on

the cliff, this time to do as difficult a raise of a litter as possible. It took a lot of time, and we went into lunch time. Following the meal it was time to hike out to Hummer Park.

Charlotte planned what she would do if a helicopter showed up looking for her — wave her red shirt. But, here it was Sunday, all of it, and no helicopter appeared. It was a long wait, but she determined to stay until found. Her equipment included sufficient food, a roomy one-person tent, a good sleeping bag and insulating pad. She thought about how on Tuesday her youngest of three sons had told her, as he was boarding a bus for Montreal, "Don't get lost, Mom." She had backpacked and travelled a lot with her son. She is an intensive care nurse at a hospital in Orange County.

Charlotte's hiking companions finished the hike by reaching Palm Canyon and ascending out of it at highway 74. They reported Charlotte's status of being overdue to the Indio Sheriff's Station. The situation did not sound very threatening but RMRU was notified to be on stand-by at



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

EVERYTHING DONE RIGHT — RMRU members Dave Ezell and Craig Britton visit with Charlotte Guathier after locating her near Live Oak Spring. Charlotte did everything right by returning to the last point she had seen her companions, and then waited for rescuers.

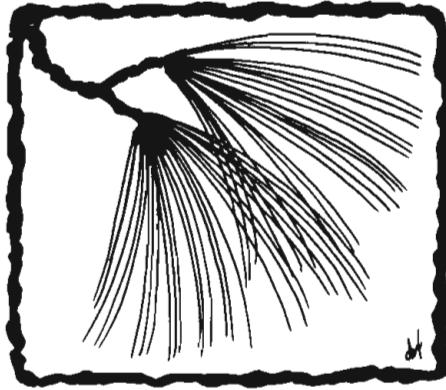
about 5:00 p.m. Sunday. It was thought that RMRU should commence the search at 4:00 a.m. Monday, but Walt persuaded the Sergeant in charge to let us get moving about midnight. The callout was made and we assembled at Paradise Corners, at the far east end of Garner Valley where highways 74 and 351 meet.

RMRU left the mountain just before 5:00 p.m. Sunday. As the writer drove off, Kevin said, "Don't say it!" He meant, "Don't say — See you tonight!" Stevie thought it was interesting that we would anticipate a mission.

Charlotte prepared to spend another night alone. She put her pack against the sign by the spring so it might be seen. Her boots were under a discarded, blue air mattress she'd found. She wondered if someone would show up who was not concerned about her welfare, rather, inclined to hurt her.

RMRU was now in a search mode, in its usual time frame — middle of the night. Actually, somewhat late in the night. Walt assigned the writer and Dave Ezell and Craig Britton to go first up a six-mile-long dirt road to a point about two miles from Live Oak Spring, from which we would begin a serious tracking exercise to locate the missing woman. We had a good description on everything about Charlotte and her equipment, except her boot print. The sole print is the most important piece of information we need in a search, and the least often known. So what? We'd find a single print about 5-6 in size, going someplace alone. Doug Henniger drove us up the jumping off place in a Forest Service pickup, and we

started hiking. A beautiful night, nice trail, a great motivation provided by a lost person. We yelled "helloooooo" at frequent intervals, three times about thirty seconds apart. Kevin Walker and Joe Erickson were to follow us after being driven to the end of the dirt road. We had started ahead because of the long time required for a round trip. At the intersection of the Pacific Crest Trail and Live Oak Canyon Trail, we carefully checked tracks, but a wide-tired tote-goat type vehicle had been through, covering most. A few miscellaneous tracks, large and small, were seen. We headed for the spring, a mile away. We found small tracks, some were of running shoes, but one was a lug sole that seemed to say, "Charlotte." It was headed down toward the spring. We yelled a few more times. We soon passed a fire ring and some sitting stumps. We called again. "Here I am, who are you?" In a tent a hundred feet away was the subject of our search and



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

SAFELY RETURNED — RMRU member John Dew (left) guides Thomas Garcia away from the helicopter after he had been located and then flown back to his companions near Toro Peak

concern. Craig said, "We're the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit." She then was ultra-glad to see us and we made it clear we were ecstatic over locating her. She got out of her sleeping bag and was going to dress for the hike out. Almost in unison we said, "Wait a minute, Charlotte, you've been in bed since 7:00 p.m., and we've not been to bed at all. We'll just bivouac until dawn, fix some breakfast, then hike out." She readily agreed and we turned in after some picture taking.

The writer regained consciousness hearing Dave talking to Charlotte. Wow! That short hour just didn't seem sufficient. Sunlight highlighted the trees and sky, and we bleary-eyed shuffled about to start the stove and pack. Somehow or other, when we contacted Base, it was thought we were hiking then, but no way. Kevin and Joe awaited our arrival at the end of the road. We consumed some nibbles and red zinger tea. Craig set a quick pace up the trail. Charlotte followed very well, but after we left the shady canyon for the warm, sunny hillside, she slowed and we made a few stops. Dave and I delighted in the many botanical wonders to be observed. I reminisced about the two traverses of the Desert Divide it has been my joy and privilege to make during the past year. How tremendously satisfying it is to hike with fellow searchers happy with success, and with a woman who is vibrant and enthused about backpacking — safe and alive!

Kevin and Joe hiked in a ways to meet us, and soon we were in the number two orange pumpkin (van) returning to Base.

At the Garner Valley Fire Station Charlotte was reunited with her companions. RMRU members headed out to resume their between-mission lives.

• RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 8332M

15-16 October, Sat.-Sun.
Toro Peak,
Santa Rosa Mountains

By Bruce Gahagan



Something told me early in the evening that the stroke of good luck I had just received would end up being a mere hallucination. The luck I am talking about was seats to the Rams game; third row seats on the forty-five yard line. Then as luck usually has it the phone rang and my greatest fears were vocalized by Kevin Walker informing me we had a call out for a lost hunter.

All members responded to the Pinyon



Flats Fire Station and were told that the search would be for a deer hunter that had become separated from his friends during the days hunt in the Toro Peak area. Members waited at the fire station while one of the hunters' partners returned to show RMRU members the exact area of their last know contact. When the primary facts were obtained, members loaded up in four-wheel drive vehicles to get to the search area. Upon arriving at the scene teams were sent out in coordinated directions to find any signs.

The field teams consisted of Joe Erickson, Cameron Robbins, Bruce Gahagan, Glenn Henderson, Jim Fairchild...? and John Dew acting as radio relay. Since dawn was growing near and the only sign found was possible tracks heading down a canyon by Joe and Cam, all teams bedded down for a brief rest before dawn.

At the hint of first light members were up and searching. About an hour into the search Bruce and Glenn heard a sound after another team yelled trying to obtain voice contact with the subject. After climbing to a high point on a ridge, Bruce and Glenn spotted the subject at the base of the canyon against some rocks. We reported the position and started down. The subject was at the base of the canyon which Joe and Cam were tracking down. Both teams heading down the canyons ran into the same problems bushwacking through heavy manzanita. First to the subject was Cam; who yelled across to us that the subject was exhausted, but all right. This was radioed to the base and the field teams converged with Cam and the subject.

It was determined that because of the subjects condition and the difficulty of the bushwack back up the mountain that a helicopter be requested. Due to the diplomacy of Walt Walker and the base team and the sheriffs department understanding of the subjects status and field condition, a helicopter was authorized from Landells Aviation and all were flown out safely. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 8333M

**16-17 October, Sun.-Mon.
Coal Canyon,
West of Corona**

By Mel Krug



We had come off of another all night into the next day type mission (see 8332M) on Sunday, so needless to say I was not pleased when my call captain phoned me in the evening.

It was a typically weird mission for the area, and to keep it quite short because not much happened, I move quickly. We met in Corona and then drove into the hills on a dirt road that went forever. Once on scene, we broke into two teams and started searching. Working with a great group of people from Orange County (we were near the county line) we searched towards Coal Canyon and the 91 freeway. We had not searched long and voice contact was made. Our goal, a lost hunter, sitting, waiting for help in plain view of the highway. Oh well, that's the way it goes. Back out the long dirt road and back home for a few hours sleep before morning. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 8334M

**25-26 October, Tues.-Wed.
Box Springs Mountain,
Riverside**

By Kevin Walker



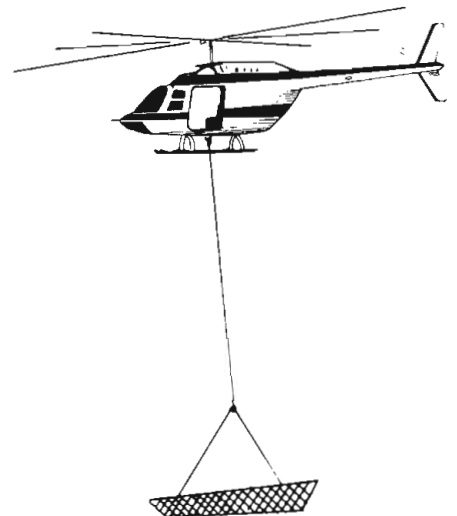
The phone rang at 8:00 P.M. It was Al with news of a mission. The call was for a stranded man on the side of the Box Springs above Riverside. From the information given, it would be a simple operation, and we would be home in no time. Fellow member Bruce Gahagan picked me up and we headed to Sunnymead to rendezvous.

We did and caravanned in and up to the summit of the mountain. There waiting was the sheriff, paramedics, and a CDF fire truck. Somewhat to our surprise, the subject was not up, and why the paramedics? After inquiring we soon learned that the simple operation would turn into one of RMRU's riskiest missions in some time. It seems that a 23 year old went out with two other friends to hike and have fun in general on the Box Springs. Greg Freborg and his two companions went up the

mountain on Monday. I am not certain when the accident happened and how long it took Greg's friends to locate him, but while Greg was up on a view point he lost his footing and fell nearly 70 feet. After Greg's friends did locate him, they moved him a short distance and then just waited.

First order of business was to get down to him. Bernie McIlvoy and Cameron Robbins started first, followed by Craig Britton who laid out a rope for the operation. Bernie's group had gone down about 500 feet when they radioed up that they were with the subject. Not long after Bernie radioed back up some very bad news. After doing a survey of the subject, it was learned that Greg probably had neck injuries. With that, Rick Pohlers guided one of the paramedics down to Greg. A very important decision had to then be made. How to get a person with serious head and neck injuries out. Try and do a raise up 500 feet of large boulders and ravines. Wait till morning, and use a helicopter. Or try an air evacuation at night. Well, team doctor Bill Blaschko arrived and helped with the decision. No waiting till morning, something needed to be done soon. Operations Leader Jim Fairchild asked me to take care of helicopter support meant only one person could do the job. Quickly via radio telephone I was in contact with Don Landells. I explained the problem to Don, and that we felt the only way to get Greg out was to airlift underneath the bird as we have done several times before. And to add to the obvious difficulties of night and steep terrain, was a Santa Ana wind condition. Don still agreed, and said he would be on the way shortly.

Bruce, Glenn and Bill took the litter and rigging down, everyone at the subject worked together to place Greg, who was already on a back board and immobilized, into the litter. As this went on Mel Krug



and I prepared the helispot. Nothing was easy. The landing site was a short distance from one of the many 50 foot radio towers on the top of the mountain. We finished preparations at both ends, and waited only a short time when Don made contact with us. Soon he was on the ground. We helped him remove his door, hook up the 30 foot rescue sling and then all agreed on the plan of attack.

Once ready, Don lifted the machine up, and with the sling below the bird, he disappeared from our site up on top. It was only a short wait, but it seemed an eternity. At the site, Don positioned himself above, maneuvered the machine down, the litter was attached, and very slowly Don raised up, and soon was back on top. With radio and hand signals I guided him overhead and then down so we could unhook the litter. Don then set down, his door was reattached, and one back door was removed. The litter was then placed in the back, secured and one paramedic and I climbed in also to keep Greg still. Once secure, Don lifted off and in a short matter of minutes we sat down on the helipad at Loma Linda Hospital. Greg, still in the litter was placed on a gurney and taken in by nurses to the waiting emergency room. Don flew us back, picked up his door and headed for home. A successful, but sad mission drew to a close at 1:30 A.M.

To date of publishing Greg Freoborg is still in the hospital, and is paralyzed from the neck down. We send our heart felt sympathy to Greg and his family. We also want to thank the Riverside Sheriff's station personnel, C.D.F., two very professional paramedics, and to Don Landells for helping us in a major way, to save a life. • RMRU

ABORT

Mission No. 8335A

**31 October, Mon.
Horse Canyon,
Anza Borrego area**

We were called by the Hemet station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department for a missing hunter in Horse Canyon near Coyote Canyon who had been missing for a day. As members were arriving at the roadhead to the canyon in Anza, the hunter arrived back in Anza after finding his way back to the camp where his companions were waiting.

• RMRU



Personal & Team Skills

**7-9 October, Fri.-Sun.
Skunk Cabbage,
San Jacinto Mountains**

By John Muratet



Friday evening found a small group of RMRU members gathered at Humber Park in Idyllwild. With heavily laden packs we began our journey to Skunk Cabbage Meadow via the devil slide trail. The cool night air seemed to give extra incentive to hike on and soon we were at our destination. Tents up, and then in for the night.

Saturday morning the group was up early to training chairman Jim Fairchild's surprise. After breakfast we adjourned to a nearby hillside for map and compass work. The morning was well spent on that practice. After lunch we moved over to a rock bluff that overlooks Skunk Cabbage. There we spent the remainder of the day working on anchors, rappelling, jumaring and rescue evacuations using personal equipment, in the event that a small search team had to at least get to an injured person, or if something was to happen to one of us. In all, a good day of training. But that was not enough. After dinner (some of which, were gourmet delights), Kevin led us on an evening hike down the drainage out Skunk Cabbage to Reeds Meadow and then back up the trail to Tahquitz Valley, where we said hi to the rangers at their tent cabins. Then back to camp.

Sunday we were back on the bluffs again. This time with an injured climber problem. Using a fine sport of a victim, a young lady who brought Jim for the weekends training. We set up rigging, lowered Glenn Henderson down to the subject. The rest of us walked around and team physician Bill Blaschko went over injury assessment. Then instruction on placing a person in the litter, and then back on top for a Mechanical Advantage raise to the top. With that completed successfully, we packed gear and went back to camp for lunch, and then home.

• RMRU