

Volume XX, Issue V, May 1984

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

## Search and Rescue

### SEARCH

Mission No. 8407M

13 May, Sun.  
North Face,  
Mt. San Jacinto

By Walt Walker



It was Sunday at one in the afternoon when RMRU received a call from the Banning station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that two young men, ages 23 and 25, were overdue from a planned one day climb of the North Face. So much for a planned family event.

Members began arriving at our usual helispot near the Snow Creek community at the base of Mt. San Jacinto. We quickly made assignments, packed gear and were ready when Don Landells arrived at 2:30 p.m. in one of his Bell Jet Ranger helicopters. In only about 30 minutes we had three field teams airlifted onto the North Face.

The missing pair had planned on a one day ascent of the face. It has been done by groups that knew the route and traveled light. This group was traveling light but did not know the route. We were fairly sure that they were either off route, stranded or injured. Considering the vastness of the North Face the problem facing us was immense.

One of the field teams found tracks in the Falls Creek drainage and this drainage is some distance from the route that was described to us by friends of the missing men. Shortly after 5:00 p.m. we received word from the State Park Rangers at Long Valley that one of the missing men had walked out. He said that he had left

his partner on a ridge and that he was exhausted and dehydrated. From the description that was relayed to us we searched the area from Cornell Peak to the Palm Springs Tram by air with no success.

It was then decided that we fly to Long Valley and pick up the hiker who had walked out. The Rangers had the man waiting for us when we landed. We quickly put him into the front seat of the bird and took off for the North Face. He had a considerable amount of trouble figuring out the route that the two had gone up. (This is normal and we expect it.)

Finally we spotted a man waving from the ridge top. There was no spot near the man where the bird could set down. About 200 feet above the man, Don located a series of boulders and hovered over them while a RMRU member helitaced out. We descended to the man and led him up to the boulders and signaled the bird to return. Once again the bird came into the tight spot and picked up the missing man and the RMRU member. They were flown to base. The helicopter picked up the field teams in repeated trips and at 6:30 p.m. the mission was completed. • RMRU

### SEARCH

Mission No. 8408M

20 May, Sun.  
Tahquitz Canyon,  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Jim Fairchild

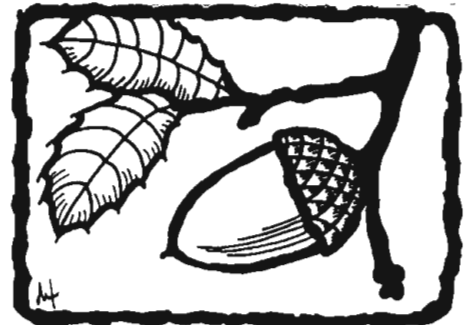


It is not unusual to meet friends in a mountaineering shop. Ralph Glenn, whom I've known since he was a Cub in my Webelos Den 22 years ago, and John Noyes, an applicant to RMRU, were there. We were conversing when a certain "beeeep" sounded. The voice following said to call Al Andrews, RMRU's Coordinator. Al told of a lost woman in the vicinity of Caramba, a campsite at 6600' el. about seven airline miles west of Idyllwild. It overlooks the 6000' high escarpment on the east side of the Mount San Jacinto Massif, facing Palm Springs. Within ten minutes I was in the No. 2 rescue van heading for Ann

Dolley's home, the roadhead for so many Tahquitz Canyon missions.

During the fifty-mile drive I overheard No. 1 van talking to the Banning Sheriff's Office, and was amazed that they were somewhat behind. Just past Windy Corner Don Landells and I conversed about his arrival at the roadhead with his helicopter. We spoke of flying immediately because sundown was not too far off. We did arrive almost together, did some briefing, threw together a pack with radio and other items deemed necessary, and took off.

We quickly rose above the 100 deg. plus heat heading up the spectacularly steep and varied canyon. John Burden, a sergeant with the Sheriff's Office who was in Walt



and my First Aid classes many years ago, went along to help observe. The object of our search was Melissa Grimshaw, 34, recently of a campsite near Caramba. Her boyfriend had looked for her when she failed to return from a water-fetching errand at 9 a.m. this morning. At afternoon he hiked back to the Tramway up which they had come the night before, and reported her missing. The rangers called the S.O., and they quickly called RMRU. Melissa was wearing blue denim trousers and jacket, and tennis shoes, and was described as being 5'10" tall and weighing 165 lbs. I figured she could help me carry my pack if I were the one to find her, and was not prepared at all for . . . I'm getting ahead.

From about the 3600' elevation on up to Caramba we looked diligently into the canyon bottom and along the sides of the canyon. The dense leaves of both the evergreen and deciduous trees prevented us from seeing even half the canyon

bottom, but we hoped she could get into the open and wave. After a few circles of the Caramba area we spotted the sleeping bag with note on top the boyfriend said he left. Then ensued a division of opinion wherein Don espoused the theory that Melissa came up from water fetching and missed the camp, and was now wandering around the thickly forested plateau country west of Caramba. This grizzled upstart dared to think she had become confused and wound up going down. Needless to say, we searched a couple of miles west of Caramba, then headed easterly to descend the canyon, searching, to airlift search parties onto the campsite area to find tracks. We wanted to look closely at the canyon again on the way down. Don circled out away from the campsite and down three-hundred feet, then turned in toward the canyon bottom. There she was, standing on a flat boulder at the stream. Even from our distance of about 400' we could see she was sobbing and no doubt wondering if we saw her. Don hovered lower and lower and I waved, reassuringly, I hoped. Don said he could not get into the well protected location. Tall, vertical cliffs to the left, tall, vertical sugar pine to the right, tall, vertical incense cedar blocking the downstream approach. No way! The plan now was simple: put me off as near as possible so I could try and reach the woman, take John back to base and bring a couple of RMRU men up to assist. An eminence of boulders on a minor ridge about 300' above Melissa on the sugar pine side was a great helispot, and soon I was picking my way down, fully expecting a couple of drop-offs that would require the use of my rope. Providentially, a gully led straight down to her. Through ant-covered oak trees, of course! About a hundred feet away I called to her and she heard over the sound of the waterfalls and torrents. She answered but did not move. Much closer I called, "Melissa, turn around." She did, and rushed toward me, muttering something like, "I'm lost and am going to stay on this boulder until I die." A few minutes of banter and half a can of peaches brought her around. What I mentioned earlier that I was not prepared for is that Melissa is a beautiful woman not of the dimensions of height and weight described. Why, I even put her only possession at the time, a dented Army canteen, in my pack for the flight out.

By now Don was back and put Kevin Walker and Joel Erickson out above where I started down. Just on a hunch, I asked Don to take another look at our location. It appeared that he might be able to guide his powerful Bell Jet Ranger III into the hole without shortening his main rotor blades on the cliff or catching his tail rotor on the cedar. He came and looked, and settled down, ever so slowly, into the hole. We talked on the radio about clearance, I waved my hands to indicate posi-

tion. Almost imperceptibly the bird approached, like a minute hand on a big clock you know is moving but movement is so gradual. Don nodded for me to get into position with Melissa. We climbed over the top of a boulder where the main rotor spun only a foot or two above our heads, then down onto a jutting ledge. The bird neared our hands, again so gradually, so smoothly, I took hold of the skid, and Melissa adroitly stepped up, a very long step, into the back seat. Don then began his escape from the hole. First, move a few feet left toward the cliff to get out from under a menacing limb of the sugar pine. Second, power upward about seventy feet, no deviations right-left-forward-or back, then, because the nose of the bird was facing up stream and a turn around was necessary, perfect orientation regarding the tail rotor in relation to the aforementioned obstacles must be maintained. Fascination, admiration, and prayer melded into my steadfast gaze, and the bird was gone. I was left with the wilderness.

Don flew up and retrieved Kevin and Joe so they could comfort and monitor Melissa on the trip back to base. I ascended to my drop-off point, thrashing upward through the ant-covered oaks. Awaiting Don's return, I listened to the stream below, and the voices emanating from up and down the walled gorge — the Siren Song of Tahquitz Canyon. • RMRU

## Evacuation

### Mission No. 8409M

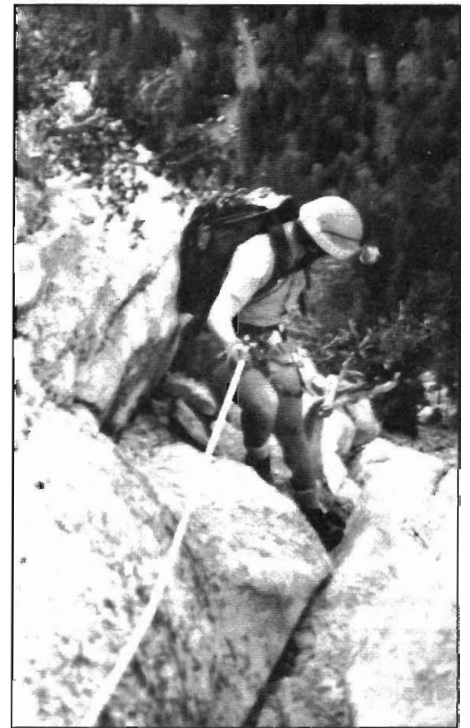
27 May, Sun.  
Tahquitz Rock  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Kevin Walker



Rock fall, we all know about most of us have seen, and some of us have been struck by it. It touched home on this particular day. We received a call for a rescue on Tahquitz Rock. The initial report to the Sheriff from bystanders at Humber Park was that a large amount of rock fall was seen and heard, followed by calls for help on the rock.

Enroute to Humber Park I wondered what we would be required to do. Would there be many injured, would there be fatalities. Traffic was in my favor and soon I was at Humber Park. There emotions ran high. Stories of what happened varied, location of the rock fall also varied greatly. A climber who had been at the base of the rock, hiked back out to Humber. He stated that after the rocks stopped and dust settled he made voice contact with climbers in the fall line. They yelled down



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

**CAUTIOUS DESCENT** — RMRU member Kevin Walker rappels down the Sahara Terror route to fellow member Mike Daugherty and the body of Kimberly Eittröm some 250 feet below. It was in this area that the large boulder was dislodged and then fell striking and fatally injuring Kimberly.

that a young woman was struck by a rock weighing in excess of 600 pounds, and was fatally injured by it. No other injuries were reported.

It was now about 6:30 p.m. Because of fading daylight it was decided we needed the help of a helicopter and one particular pilot, Don Landells. Don was involved in a rescue in the Palm Springs area but would be able to break away to help us.

We moved down to Camp Maranatha and quickly prepared ourselves. Don would only be able to stay a short time, so we needed to make the few flights in count. First load, Mike Daugherty and Walt Walker. Two; Glenn Henderson and myself. Three; Jim Fairchild and Rick Pohlers. With low fuel Don finished the third load and left for Palm Springs to refuel and complete the operation he was involved with. Being the most familiar with the Sahara Terror, Mike was lowered down the route. For the most part, the route is a series of large crack systems. Along the way he passed where the original boulder was dislodged by the lead climber. With approximately 275 feet of rope out Mike arrived at the ledge. After radioing up to hold tension on the line, there was a brief silence and then the message to secure the rope and send me down with the necessary equipment for a body evacuation. Not



RMRU PHOTO BY LARRY CARTER

**LAST LOAD SAFELY BACK** — Helicopter 816 piloted by Don Landells lands in the darkness of the Camp Maranatha ball field with the last of the RMRU members from Tahquitz Rock.

much was said as people went about their tasks. With gear loaded, I clipped in and began the long rappel as the light of day began to fade to darkness. I arrived at the ledge and found Mike waiting for me. On the small ledge, about a foot to two feet in width, off to one side lay the body of 23 year old Kimberly Eittreim. Evacuations are never enjoyable and are quite often sad. In this case it was worse, and was therefore quite emotional for me. The small ledge offered little protection from rock fall, and I am sure Kimberly had no time to react when the large rock was dislodged, fell and struck her right shoulder, pulling the arm from its socket and also amputating the right hand. The rock struck her cleanly leaving no other obvious injuries to her body. But by the amount of blood down the face of the rock, it was quite obvious that Kimberly bled to death in seconds.

For some reason there had been a large amount of rock fall in this area all day according to climbers who were on the rock or in Humber, and because we felt that the danger still existed, we opted for a plan that we had only talked about in the past for Tahquitz Rock. I will explain. It was now after 9:00 p.m. and quite dark. Distance and depth changed. The rock seemed so much larger now, with Humber Park being that of small lights of cars driving far below us. Mike and I had placed Kimberly's body into a body bag and then into the aircraft cargo net. Once secured, we took our places and waited for what was only a short time but seemed longer as emotion ran high. Soon we heard the sound of the Bell Jet Ranger III. With the helicopter head set on I radioed

to Don, he approached us slowly as I talked to him and Mike used red tipped flashlights to help with artificial horizon. This was only a practice run, but yet very important. As Don flew down to base to have RMRU's 80 foot cargo rope attached, I thought of what it is like to fly in the mountains during darkness. I have only been on board several times but could vividly remember how strange it was to have no lights below or in front of you. Soon Don returned, and it was time to do my job. Again Don ever so slowly approached the rock. With a small light taped to the end of the cargo rope for my reference I called out instructions to the pilot above. Because of poor rotor clearance Don had to back away. Because of the shape of the rock Don told me that he thought we could do it from a slightly different angle. This time Don was able to come in tighter to the face, but again we had a problem. Because of the rotor wash against the rock, the weighted rope was being pushed by air away from the face. I relayed this to Don, and with a smooth movement he started a small oscillation in the rope, and in doing so Mike was able to take hold of the rope, secure it to the cargo net, and then with the transmission of "hooked up, clear to back away," Don applied more power and slowly moved back out from the rock.

With sighs of relief, we gathered our gear and started jumaring back up the rope to the top of the climbing route. Once up systems were broken down, gear loaded back into packs, and then the short climb back to the summit of the rock. There, Don came back three more times to the tight helispot, but of course this

time it was dark. But soon we were all back at base.

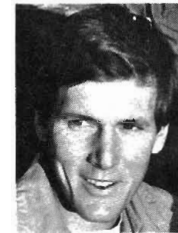
I would like to just say to the following: Don, thank you for helping us with a very difficult operation. I speak for all of us in saying it would not have been as safely done without you (thumbs up) there. To my closest friends who make up RMRU, thanks for being there at the top, and also to those who anxiously waited and listened at base. I have been there too and it is not a nice position to be in. To the sustaining members, for helping us have the best equipment possible, thank you. And finally to the family and friends of Kimberly Eittreim, our deepest sympathy for the loss of a loved one. As you can see this is a mission that I will not forget for many obvious reasons. • RMRU



## Familiarization

**5 May, Sat.  
Tahquitz Rock,  
San Jacinto Mountains**

*By John Muratet*



Saturday morning found an eager group of both new and old members meeting at Humber Park. This month's training would actually be quite simple, but yet important. The plan, to familiarize ourselves with Tahquitz Rock and its different routes.

From Humber we headed up the northeast base of the rock. It is along this area that the majority of the long climbs start. We moved on around the rock stopping and discussing routes, their directions, missions performed in the past and general trivia. The group hiked around to the south side and then up to the top. There a hearty lunch was had by all. While on top we looked over to Suicide and talked about some of its more popular routes, and visited with climbers as they finished various climbs. In the afternoon we went down what we call the friction route, which is a quick way on and off the rock. Once back at Humber we critiqued the day's activity, all good I might add, and headed for home. • RMRU

# The Board of Directors for the Fiscal Year of May 1, 1984 – April 31, 1985

**President Walt**  
The man who we respect  
and admire.



**Director Joe**  
An ad for deodorant.



**Director Jim**  
Still protesting the lack of winter.



**Secretary Mel**  
Just showing off.



**Director Rick**  
Listening to his favorite tunes on the siren.

**Director Bernie**  
The rescue prep look.



**Vice Pres and Treasurer Kevin**  
The all around nice guy who put this page together.