

Volume XXI, Issue VI, June 1985

Jim Fairchild, Editor — Kevin Walker, Publisher — Dona Halcrow, Artist

## Search and Rescue

### SEARCH

Mission No. 8525M

2 June, Sun.  
South of Beaumont

By John Dew



It was just midnight and I had been asleep about an hour when the phone rang. Virginia answered it as there is an extension on her side of the bed. Those two familiar words was her only response, "It's Walt," and with that she handed me the phone.

I was informed that there was a missing eleven year old boy, out from Breeze Lakes in Beaumont. The Sheriff had attempted to get the Hemet team to respond because of their four wheel drive capability and the flat land in the search area. They were unable to respond because they had another search going on at that time for two little boys in Hemet. Needless to say, we rolled on the mission immediately.

Arriving at our destination near Breeze Lakes (the boy was not from the Breeze Lakes campground) at about 1:00 a.m., we were told of a boy, 11 years old, who had become angry with the other children because he felt that his turn at riding the motor-bike was shorter than he thought it should have been. He had last been seen near two old concrete pipes out in the 39 acre field in which they had been riding at about 6:00 p.m. last evening. These pipes were possibly 50 or 60 yards from the house. There were also three lakes (or rather muddy ponds) on the property.

These ponds made a special cause for concern. We did learn that the Sheriff with his "K-9" in the field, had checked

around the pipes and the ponds without finding any trace.

We received our assignments, went out in teams of two and attempted to cover again the area where the boy was said to have been last seen. We tried tracking but all the children and the motor-bike had succeeded beautifully in causing that to be an impossible task. We tried calling his name and making noise but that didn't work either. We found no more than the Sheriff and his dog had found.

When we who were in the field returned to Base for new assignments we were greeted by some members from the Hemet team. The boys for whom they were searching had turned up at someone's house and authorities were notified, thus releasing them to join us in our search.

One team of RMRU was across the road trying to following tracks through a wheat field. Could these possibly be those of our subject? All efforts were then concentrated east in and around that field.

Our search continued until about 5:00 a.m. when a report came over the radios for all teams to return to Base as the boy was there and safe.

We learned upon arriving at Base that this child said he was asleep through the searches and our calling and the dog search, "very near the two pipes" of our original effort.

All involved were happy for the search to be over and that the child was safe. I suppose we will never know just exactly what the situation was that night. Apparently he walked back home where base was set up.

We all drove into Banning for breakfast together and then each left for a sleepy ride home. • RMRU

### ABORT

Mission No. 8526A

2 June, Sun.  
Palm Desert

Just before midnight we received a call from the Indio station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that a man was overdue in returning from a day hike up in the mountains behind Palm Desert. Members were contacted, and as the team headed towards the desert, the man returned home, the mission was aborted and members turned for home. • RMRU



### SEARCH

Mission No. 8527M

8-9 June, Sat.-Sun.  
Fuller Ridge  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Jim Fairchild



A day hike in the mountains with friends and wonderful activity. Occasionally something goes awry, such as one person getting separated from the group, or left behind. Both these problems arose on Saturday

when Meriche Petrich, 43, of Cypress, found herself alone on the Fuller Ridge Trail. This caused her to hurriedly look for friends in a bit of a panic, then she lost the trail where it seems to be indistinct. She headed steeply downhill on the north side of the ridge, into the East Branch of Snowcreek. To have persisted down this ever steepening face would have brought her to cliffs and waterfalls. Before long she slipped and fell, losing her grip on the hiking staff. She was able to recover the staff, then changed her direction and climbed for a while — until late in the afternoon. She came to a hump that had a flat space and stopped for the night. Warmed by a small fire, she made it to dawn, then continued upward.

Meanwhile, her friends had re-grouped at the roadhead and discovered Meriche's absence. They re-deployed Saturday afternoon to look for her, then reported her as missing. RMRU was called, and several of us gathered at Camp Lawler to organize a search. Because most of our faithful members were still descending Tahquitz Canyon, we called in Sierra Madre. Soon Dave Ezell and Ed Hill were proceeding up the Fuller Ridge Trail. Before long two teams of Sierra Madre searchers were on their way up the Marion Mountain and Seven Pines Trails. After dawn, Walt Walker and John Dew flew some search with Mike Donovan piloting the Landells Aviation helicopter. Then Brian Hixson and Gordon Lee were flown in with two Sierra Madre members to strategic spots for more ground search.

Before too long a van driven by an Outward Bound instructor arrived at Camp Lawler, the passenger was Meriche. She had ascended to the trail, turned the right direction (west), and continued down to the roadhead. She was fine, hungry and thirsty. She had seen the helicopter, but was in thick forest. She had been too far downhill to hear the searchers shouts. We were thankful for her good health and return. • RMRU

## ABORT

**Mission No. 8528A**

**22 June, Sat.  
Azalea Trails Camp,  
San Jacinto Mountains**

At approximately 4:30 in the afternoon we received a call from the Hemet Station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that our technical rock assistance was needed to assist the Pine Cove Fire Department in the rescue of a man who was injured by a 30 foot fall above Azalea Trails. As members started to arrive at the roadhead above the Dark Canyon Campground the fire department along with volunteer help had been able to complete the mission. Members were turned around, and the injured man was taken by ambulance to Camp Maranatha where the Life Flight helicopter was waiting.

• RMRU

## CALL

**Mission No. 8529M**

**26 June, Wed.  
Trinity Alps  
Northern California**

Through a Mountain Rescue Association call-out we were contacted for a search for a mission adult in the Trinity Alps. After a team call out two members responded with a yes. They were to report

first thing Thursday morning to the National Guard station at Van Nuys Airport for air transport up to Northern California. Late in the day the two members had to cancel out because of work related problems. RMRU learned on Friday that as the plane landed in Northern California, teams in the field located the subject. He was found deceased from a fall he took. The plane was turned around and returned to Van Nuys. • RMRU

## ASSIST

**Mission No. 8530M**

**29 June, Sat.  
Cabazon Fire  
San Jacinto Mountains**

*By Kevin Walker*



Late Friday night as the Cabazon Fire burned out of control in the San Jacinto Mountains, Walt Walker was contacted through the California Division of Forestry and the United States Forest Service. To Walt's surprise the fire was getting dangerously close to the upper station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. Walt learned that the plan for Saturday called for putting technical firefighters out into the vicinity of the tram. If the wind blew like it did on Friday, the tram would be in serious danger. Our role would be to stand by in the event a fire fighter became injured in the technical terrain.

Saturday morning we met at the fire camp in Cabazon. This was my first time to a fire camp. It was impressive in an eerie sense. It looked like a base camp out of a war movie. I expressed my feeling to fellow member Rob Gardner who is an armed forces veteran, and he told me I was pretty darn close to being right. Walt checked us in. Our assignment was to standby at the lower and upper station of the tram which had been closed the day before because of the fire. Fire retardant clothing, goggles, helmets, gloves, fire shelters, and first aid kits were issued to us. Some members like Bill Blaschko looked as if Uncle Sam had caught up to them. At any rate we went down to the tram. After arriving and making ourselves comfortable either inside the building or out in the shade, I called Landells Aviation and checked to see if a pilot and helicopter would be available on short notice that day. The reply was to the affirmative.

The day was spent visiting with Tram manager Bob Ficker and number one assistant Linda Vivian, watching firefighters set back-fires to protect the tram, and going through gear. Fortunately the wind did not move the fire that fast in our direction, so our services were never needed. But we made new friends, were fed like "Kings" and learned that those guys in the field worked pretty darn hard to save our mountain. I do not know what the totals for burned acreage were, but burning from Cabazon through Jensen Canyon, Snow Creek, Falls Creek, and close to Chino Canyon a large amount of country was destroyed. Remember only you . . .

• RMRU



# TRAINING

## Familiarization

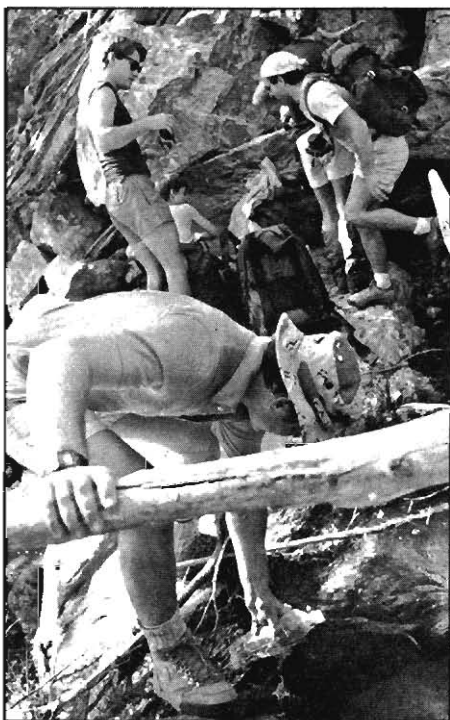
7-9 June, Fri.-Sun.  
Tahquitz Canyon  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Jim Fairchild



Hiking is a great and wonderful recreation, and it's made more so when the environment is beautiful and company pleasant. Such was the case as Bill Blaschko and I proceeded from Humber Park into the

Mt. San Jacinto High Country. Actually, it was Thursday night just before dark that we "hit" the trail. The writer was there a day early to luxuriate in some random loafing around Caramba before the epic descent of Tahquitz Canyon, Bill was there for the exercise and familiarization until next morning because he had to



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

**WATER STOP** — This was a common sight during an epic descent of Tahquitz Canyon. Water stops were often as unusually high temperatures and thick brush made going difficult.



work in the Hemet Valley Hospital Emergency Room. He wanted to maintain his all-night up and around status because a 12-hour stint as an emergency room physician often features twelve continuous hours of action.

Conversation never waned and before long we arrived at the Saddle Junction for a breather. Dark, cool, calm air — a great night. On down towards the ultra-familiar Tahquitz Meadow, thence through the silent columns of conifers to Law's Camp. No sounds other than a couple of Flam-mulated Owls and the rushing stream. My heel was totally non-painful, its down-sticking bone spur quieted by a pain-deadening drug. So, we hoofed it on down to Caramba, having been illuminated by the late-rising moon. A comfortable bed on pine needles by a log, and we slept.

Six hours later the sun appeared over the Caramba Palisades. Here, at an elevation of 6600' above sea level, we were 6200' above Palm Springs. Between is an exceedingly steep, rugged canyon with narrow wall-like confines of cliffs and bluffs, a series of continuous waterfalls and cascades that demand unrelenting care of step and proper route-finding. This we knew from many previous full-length and partial descents. We've been called for dozens of searches and rescues up and down the chasm, finding and evacuating exhausted, dehydrated wanderers, badly fractured victims of falls, and bodies of those who would wander no more. Anyway, our seven-mile walk of the evening before bore no resemblance to the seven miles of tortuous canyon between Caramba and Palm Springs.

Bill and I had a snack and looked around the vicinity for a while, then Bill headed back to Idyllwild for this 10:00 am appointment. My day was spent snooping around the familiar helispots, ridges, and canyons. Six friendly Steller's Jays nibbled my crackers. Azaleas, snow plants, and views were recorded on my film. Up 400' at Caramba Helispot South I relived hikes along the Desert Divide and the Hidden Lake — Caramba Ridge. So very soon voices wafted down from the trail across the valley, and I descended to meet Ray,



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

**CLIMB OUT** — Because of the many large and unsafe waterfalls, RMRU members had to climb out of the canyon floor and bypass the treacherous spots during the descent of Tahquitz canyon.

Mel, Glenn, and Kevin. We set up camp on a point overlooking the desert and had supper. Later in the evening Randy, Curtis, and Kathy arrived, having hiked over from Long Valley. During the night a nice breeze cooled the air, and we were grateful for sleeping bags, except for Kevin who wore all the clothing he could accumulate from friends. All of us went to sleep thinking of the rigors ahead.

The sun is such a stickler for its schedule! The earth seemed to have turned faster and shortened the sleep time. During our breakfast Bernie and Colin showed up from Law's Camp and Skunk Cabbage Meadow, and our group was complete.

The start down canyon was made and went well. We drank frequently, made quite good time, but there seemed to be an ominous atmosphere about the process. A thousand feet down and the sun was in the canyon and definitely causing an effect of promoting fatigue. Bernie and I frequently commented that the gully-washers of past years had exposed more low waterfalls that had carried away sand and small rocks so that the stream bed was more difficult to negotiate. The past four years have given the hillsides more rain with a resultant growth of brush that obscures our neat little by-passes and detours to avoid waterfalls we'd otherwise have to rope down.

Another thousand feet down and we stopped for lunch. It appeared to me that the group was somewhat more tired, even lethargic than during previous descents. We were hydrating well, snacking well, resting well, but the "oomph" that should have prevailed just wasn't there.

Personally, it was becoming frustrating. My spur was totally deadened by the drug, but my coordination suffered — I was an accident looking for a location. Little did I know that my body was allergically reacting and becoming toxic. Disgusting but true, Jim simply did not belong there now. Kevin radioed to Landells Aviation in Desert Hot Springs. We prepared a one-runner helispot. I prayed for their safe and successful continuation of the epic I had anticipated eagerly for so many weeks.

Pilot Mike Donovan arrived quickly and without hesitation eased the bird into position, several members holding skids steady. I was outta there . . . Mel will pick up the story from here.

*Continued by Mel Krug*



I have been in Tahquitz Canyon a number of times but this was my first time going from top to bottom. In talking to the others on this trip, I have discovered that the brush and overgrowth was quite a bit heavier than on previous trips. When Jim lifted off with Mike of Landells Aviation, it was already about 3 pm and we should have by past schedules, already gotten to our traditional Saturday night camp site. Well, because of further brush busting travel it was difficult so we didn't make camp until about 6 o'clock. We had no further physical problems, just a lot of heat and hard work.

Upon arriving at our camp we found it in a state of disaster. Boulders and sandbars had been relocated, trees removed and a lot of brush had grown up, making what used to be a good camp-site, at best,



RMRU PHOTO BY GLENN HENDERSON

**FINAL APPROACH** — RMRU members Bernie McIlvoy and Mel Krug standby to steady the skids of the helicopter piloted by Mike Donovan of Landells Aviation. Mike had to come in over some trees and then position one skid on the large boulder in Tahquitz Canyon.



RMRU PHOTO BY GLENN HENDERSON

**READY TO LOAD** — An unsteady Jim Fairchild is helped into the helicopter by fellow RMRU members, before being flown out to Palm Springs.

mediocre. By this time Kevin was feeling sick and we were all exhausted. Small sleeping sites were cleared and some cooled off in the stream, but very shortly everyone was fed and asleep.

Sunday morning Kevin was feeling much better and all were the better for a good night's sleep. We got a good early start this morning but shortly had the quiet of the Canyon interrupted by the sound of a chopper overhead. The team had been called out for a lost hiker, had found her and were just flying over to say hi.

As the morning progressed, so did the heat, especially as we got lower in the Canyon. We had to go out of the Canyon along the ridge to bypass some difficult terrain, and while on the ridge after some

discussion decided to try and bomb down the ridge and get out sooner. Well, the heat was intense and after a couple of hours of moving over extremely steep terrain in temperatures of 115 degrees, we stopped. No one was in bad shape yet, though Kevin said he was not feeling 100% so as a precautionary measure to prevent anyone from getting heat stroke, Don Landells was contacted by radio as the day before. This time Don flew in, first to a set of boulders near the ridge where he picked up Randy, Curtis and Kathy. In two more loads from a point lower, Bernie, Ray, then Glenn, Kevin and myself were flown down to Ann Dolley's. Fortunately not soon enough as Kevin became quite sick again. As quick as

our rides arrived, we went over to Shakeys, where we gave Kevin iced tea and kept cold we towels on his head and neck. Everyone else cooled off with different types of drink. All present recovered fine, and soon the troops were on their way home. To Don, we really appreciate having you and your helicopters around. We really needed you, and you were there. And to the section of the San Jacinto Mountains known as Tahquitz Canyon, well I can't say that in print. • RMRU



## The President's Box

By Walt Walker

Another six months have flown by and once again RMRU has fallen behind with the newsletter. When it comes to search and rescue this group moves like a firehorse at the sound of the bell. But when it comes to writing articles for the newsletter we have to resort to threats like, "You're assigned to Caramba on the next mission no matter where we are unless you get that article in by Friday." All kidding aside, between work, families, mountaineering for fun, other hobbies and sports, RMRU members give a lot of time to the most important thing of the unit, search and rescue.

While up here on the old soap box I thought I might tell you about a rather interesting item. One of our members was in one of the local mountaineering stores when he overheard the conversation between a clerk and man we had rescued earlier this year. The man was relating to the clerk that he really didn't need to be rescued because he was just about to take care of his problem. Our member was not upset, he actually was amused, because we run into this type of thing a couple of times a year. When we are up on the mountain the person we are rescuing readily accepts our help, but once he or she is back on flat ground they then say they really didn't need our help. We call this "rescue bravado." We sometimes feel like we would like to take them back up to the mountain and watch them get out of their problem. But that lasts for only a little while because we know we have done a good job and the rescued person deep down knows it too.

# SUSTAINING MEMBERS

BY KEVIN WALKER

After reading through this set of issues I am sure that you would agree that RMRU has had a busy first half of the year nineteen hundred and eighty-five. There are a few more people around today because of the group known as the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit. Along with a year of increased activity comes increased expenses. Unfortunately donations have dramatically dropped off, requiring that we use funds stored away for just such an occasion. Here comes the pitch. We were planning to start a fund drive for the new field radioes, but due to the fact of the drop in donations we are going to have to make the old system work a little longer, i.e. repairs and tender loving care. Our radioes are approaching the 20 year mark of faithful service to the team. Two things come into play, one being the original purchase of quality electronics, and the second, being excellent care of the equipment (as with all our gear) purchased through your donations. I do not want to sound ungrateful, but asking our faithful contributors to donate in every issue does not cover the whole picture. The key answer is to increase the sustaining membership base. So if you know of someone who might be interested, ask them, or send their name and address to us and we will send them a brochure on RMRU. RMRU NEEDS YOUR HELP!

On a more cheery note, our new Motorola Paging System finally arrived (almost a year late) and became operational in February. We tried to get the \$6,000 through a grant or large donation, but as in the past the monies needed came from you. Almost every active

member on the team now has a trustworthy means of being contacted, and we thank you for that. Before closing, I want to say again how we really do appreciate all that you do for us in the way of financial support and letters of encouragement. That is why we are, "A volunteer organization dedicated to saving lives through rescue and mountain safety education."

## JANUARY — JUNE

### New —

- Ramona Flinchpaugh
- \*Dr. M. MacPherson
- James Larson
- Francis & Patricia Johnston
- Dr. Robert D. Kayser
- Harold E. Carlson
- \*Col. & Mrs. Antonio Rivera
- Bill & Juanita Stamer
- Genie Bryant
- \*M/M John Pohlers
- Helen Warner
- M/M H. Markle
- Merike Petrich

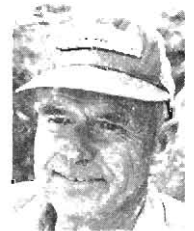
### Renewing

- Hundred Peaks Section, L.A.
- Chapter of the Sierra Club
- El Camino Real Student Body
- \*Dr. & Mrs. Thomas Gillen
- M/M Clifford Rose
- Dr. James Mead
- M/M Timothy Carvalho
- \*Circle City Hospital
- M/M Frank Williams
- Keldon Paper Company
- \*Esther Briggs
- Marjorie LaBlonde
- \*Rotary Club of Idyllwild
- United Way Contributions
- Womans Club of San Jacinto
- M/M Harry Hein
- Nuviev School Science Camp Fund
- Mission Bell ASB-PTA

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

## The printer's apologies to:

Jim and John for the mix up of their photos on the first page of this issue.



John Dew



Jim Fairchild

