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## Search and Rescue

### ABORT

Mission No. 8537A

2 Sept., Mon.  
Fuller Mill Creek  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Cameron Robbins



I had been expecting a rescue or search call this weekend. After all, it was Labor Day weekend. I had spent the day rock climbing in Idyllwild and had just finished an early dinner. Now, just drive

back to my home in Banning for a relaxing evening.

My pager had other ideas. It sounded and gave me the message to report to the picnic area near Lawler Lodge, that a woman was missing. I drove to Lawler Lodge and talked to the Sheriff's deputy at the site. I found out that there indeed was a missing woman, that she had had an argument with her daughter and then proceeded to become lost.

Shortly after my arrival Dr. Bill Blaschko arrived and his pager went off with the message that all RMRU members were to report to Camp Maranatha, that a rock climber had been injured on Tahquitz Rock. Bill and I were trying to decide how to be in two places at once when I heard that U.S. Forest Service personnel had located the missing woman on a nearby fire-service road. So, Bill and I mounted our trusty vehicles and disappeared into the south, to our next exciting mission. (See No. 8538M). • RMRU

### RESCUE

Mission No. 8538M

2 Sept., Mon.  
Tahquitz Rock  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Bill Blaschko, M.D.



Cameron Robbins and I were waiting for the rest of the team at Fuller Mill Creek Picnic Area when our pagers went off announcing a rescue of an injured climber on Tahquitz Rock. We stayed at the scene of the first search until there was more information available (see 8537A). Fortunately the missing subject was found and Cameron and I were off to Camp Maranatha, the rendezvous for the mission on Tahquitz Rock. Mary Bowman and Walt Walker soon joined us. We learned that a climber had fallen near the top of the Long Climb and had possibly broken both ankles. The Long Climb is a popular route, which as the name implies, goes up the tallest portion of the rock. The climb has a difficulty rating of 5.7 on a scale from 5.1 to 5.12, the high the number the harder the climb.

A rescue strategy was formulated. It was felt that the best plan was to land a team at the top of Tahquitz Rock by helicopter to complete an assessment of what men and equipment were necessary to evacuate the subject. In the meantime all the items that were most likely to be needed were carefully laid out. I was selected to go with Walt on the first trip because of my medical expertise. I packed a cervical collar, leg splints, blood pressure cuff and other first aid gear into my pack. Other team members prepared ropes, slings, and hardware needed to raise the injured climber to the top of the rock from where he could be flown to safety.

The sun was just getting low in the sky when Don Landells flew his helicopter into Camp Maranatha. Walt and I wasted no time getting into the bird. As always the view from the helicopter was spectacular as we rose above Fern Valley. Don circled the rock a number of times, testing the wind currents, before resting one runner of the helicopter on a rock out-

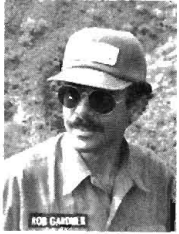


cropping near the top. Walt and I evaluated the situation while Don hovered a safe distance away. Our subject turned out to be one tough customer. He had managed to get to the top of the rock with the aid of some other climbers in the vicinity. His left leg was significantly injured and he had pushed himself up on his good leg while the other climbers had painstakingly, and painfully, dragged him to the top. I did a rapid survey of the subject and found a number of abrasions and bruises in addition to a very swollen and painful left ankle. After splinting the broken ankle the subject was maneuvered into position to be loaded into the bird. Don made another one runner landing in the fading light and I quickly moved up the boulder and into the bird. While I pulled on a sling I had attached to the subject's climbing harness, Walt and the other climbers boosted him into the helicopter. Don flew to Camp Maranatha and gently landed. Other RMRU team members were there to help the subject out of the bird. The climber headed on to Hemet Valley Hospital for x-rays and treatment. • RMRU

## SEARCH Mission No. 8539M

2 Sept., Mon.  
Lawler Lodge  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Rob Gardner



The weather was mild as a small group of **RMRU** volunteers began to gather at Lawler's Lodge. A Riverside Sheriff's Office (RSO) deputy explained that three adults had picnicked at Lawler's Camp earlier in the day.

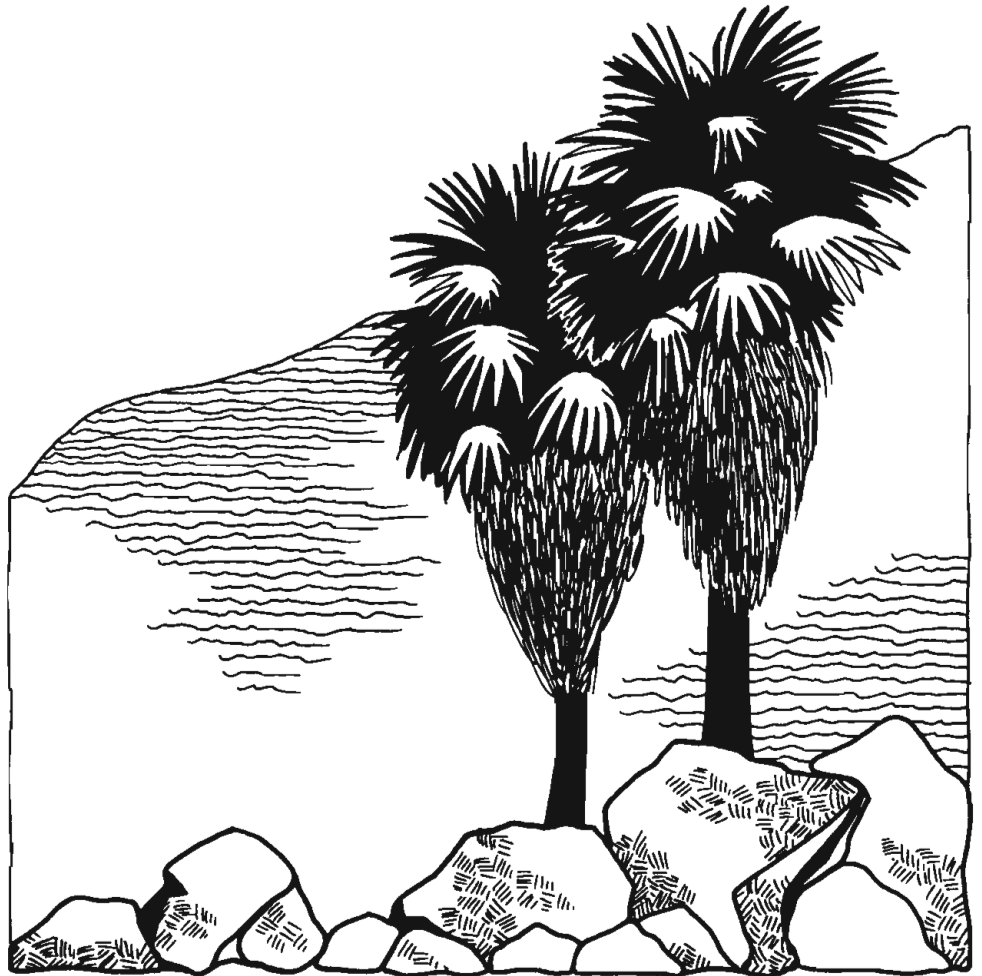
He said that after the three people ate, two had gone for a short day hike, and failed to return. The third person reported the incident to the RSO, who then called out **RMRU**.

With Walt Walker at base camp as Ops Leader and Mary Bowman at the radio van, searchers hiked to the Point Last Seen (PLS). Tracking the subjects was complicated by the numerous amount of people that had left tracks in the area earlier in the day. Also, the darkness of the night and the ground covering made tracking difficult.

The searchers split into two groups. Mel Krug and Kathy Davis proceeded to search the area surrounding the PLS gradually enlarging the area of search. Steve Bryant and Rob Gardner proceeded down the main drainage which is a general area of interest to many day hikers. Footprints and litter were obvious as Steve and Rob continued down the drainage, calling out to the subjects in the dark, shining flashlights into the shrubs, and looking for any evidence of the over-due couple.

The shouting out paid off when the couple suddenly called back from the darkness. They were quickly reached and found to be in good condition. They had curled up under some trees and covered themselves with leaves and pine needles, to keep warmer.

The two said they had lost track of the time and their location as they hiked earlier in the day. They did not have any idea of the direction of their picnic site. They stopped as it got dark and remained where they were. They had fallen asleep, and were awakened by Steve and Rob shouting out. The lady was particularly tired but both people made the hike back up the drainage, with the assistance of the **RMRU**. Mel and Kathy hiked over to assist and a bit later Glenn Henderson and Kevin Walker arrived to assist. • **RMRU**



## RESCUE

Mission No. 8540M

3 Sept., Tues.  
Chino Canyon  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Walt Walker



While the team was searching during Mission No. 8539 we were advised via the Sheriff's frequency that two young men were stranded in the vicinity of the tram. We were further advised that the State

Park Rangers were going to try and locate the pair.

As the old saying goes "ignorance is bliss," as we completed 8539 we had not heard anything and assumed no news was good news. We also assumed that we would not be needed. It was mid-morning the next day when we found out our assumptions were incorrect.

The **RMRU** pagers broadcast the news that we were needed to search for the missing pair. When we arrived at the bottom terminal of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway we were met by Capt. Ray Canova of the Banning office of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. He

introduced us to the informant who had been a member of the hiking group.

The informant described how the three young men had hiked cross country from the vicinity of Caramba towards the tram. The missing pair had become stranded on a cliff that looked into Chino Canyon and the informant had hiked out for help. We decided that the quickest way to handle the situation was to use a helicopter. Don Landells was contacted and in a very short time arrived with one of his Bell Jet Ranger helicopters.

We put the informant in the front with Don, and I climbed into the back and buckled up the seat belt. The powerful bird lifted off and we were on our way up Chino Canyon. The informant pointed out the area where he had left the pair and Don flew back and forth. While doing this I spotted some movement about 1000 feet down canyon and advised Don. We descended and found the pair waving a space blanket. There was a car sized boulder just above the two youths and Don put one runner down on it and I climbed out onto the rock. Don lifted off in the bird and returned to base to let off the informant.

Looking the situation over I was able to spot a route that the two young men could climb up to where I was standing. I shouted down to them and told them to get their packs and climb up. When they got up to

me I told them how to slowly climb into the helicopter and buckle up. When Don returned he once again put one runner down on the rock and I assisted the pair into the bird. When they were buckled up I gave Don the signal to lift off. He flew them to base and after they were out RMRU member Glenn Henderson climbed into the back of the bird and Don flew back to the boulder. While Don held the bird in position on the rock I passed the packs to Glenn and climbed aboard. In little more than a couple of minutes we were back at base.

We were happy to see that the two young men were safe and that we would not have to perform a rescue on a rocky cliff. After a quick lunch we all headed home. • RMRU

## CALL

**Mission No. 8541C**

**5 Sept., Thurs.  
Mt. Whitney  
The High Sierra**

We received a call from the China Lake Search and Rescue Team to assist them in rescue operations from the first major storm of the season to hit the high Sierra. Several hiking parties were stranded on Mt. Whitney. The China Lake team had been out working in the extreme weather for some time. As a manpower report was being gathered on our part, weather cleared enough for China Lake to get air support from the Navel Base, and our assistance was no longer needed. • RMRU

## CALL

**Mission No. 8542C**

**16 Sept., Mon.  
Angeles National Forest**

We received a call from L.A. County Teams to assist in a search in the Angeles National Forest. No members were able to respond. • RMRU

## CALL

**Mission No. 8543C**

**28 Sept., Sat.  
Rancho California,  
Riverside County**

We received a call from the Elsinore station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department for a search in the Rancho California area. As the call procedure was being initiated, the mission was cancelled.

• RMRU



## Search and Rescue Mock Missions

**6-7 Sept., Fri.-Sat.  
Devil's Slide/Tahquitz Valley  
San Jacinto Mountains**

*By Steve Bryant*



September's training was a double mock mission. RMRU was instructed to meet at Humber Park in Idyllwild after dark on Friday. A sealed envelope was opened, which gave a brief history of a callout for a missing woman and child. The woman's husband had supposedly been hiking to Saddle Junction, and got ahead of his wife and baby; he returned to Humber Park without finding them and called the Sheriff for assistance.

RMRU assembled for a search, and sent teams up the Devil's Slide trail to search for the missing woman and child. After about 35 minutes of searching, their calls were faintly answered by a voice below a steep section of trail just before Jolly

Spring. Down the steep hillside went a couple of RMRUers to give first aid and assess the situation, while the rest of the team organized to raise the victims back to the trail. SURPRISE — it was now time for a second sealed envelope to be opened — this envelope gave details of a search for a man missing on a hike to Red Tahquitz peak.

As the first RMRU teams gave first aid and helped the woman and child back to the trail with a rope belay, the rest of the team went to search for the missing man. Fortunately, the woman and child were not badly injured, and were able to walk back down the trail with a little help from RMRU.

When the searchers for the missing man got into Tahquitz Valley, their calls were eventually answered by a male voice. However, as the searchers made their way toward the voice, it kept moving away from them, wandering around the forest just past the point where the trail crosses Tahquitz Creek in Tahquitz Valley. The searchers were eventually able to more or less corner the missing man, who was cold and lost, but otherwise unharmed. He was given a hot drink and some food, and hiked out with the rest of RMRU to Humber Park.

Thanks to my wife and six months of age baby daughter for playing the victims near Jolly Spring, and to the searchers in Tahquitz Valley — good work, but I'll make it even more confusing next time!!!

This training gave tracking and night searching experience for all who participated, and also operations leader experience to a couple of newer members. • RMRU

