

11-Year-Old Boy Lost Near Lake

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Lake Riverside
1970-007

by Tom Dadson

After working all day Saturday and having to report for work at 7:30 the next morning, I had retired early. About 9:45 P.M. the phone rang and being a little groggy, I naturally turned off the alarm clock. Jack Schnurr, a little upset at being turned off, explained there was a missing boy in the Anza area. Shortly after Jack's call, Jim Fairchild was on the "horn" looking for transportation for himself and equipment. Jim's truck had been involved in an accident earlier in the month and had not, as yet, been reassembled. After picking up Jim and while en route to the search area we tried to piece together what we already knew about the missing boy.

The boy's name was Georgie, he was 11 years old and had been fishing with his family at Lake Riverside - a land development near Anza on Highway 71. The lake covers an area of approximately 80 acres with 12 miles of shoreline. The lake is located in a desert climate and, during this time of year, is teeming with rattlesnakes. When Jim and I arrived, Walt Walker was already interrogating the mother and other people that had helped search the area that afternoon. According to his mother and aunt, the boy was missed about 2:00 P.M. that afternoon. Georgie was reported to be small for his age, husky, and had difficulty seeing without his glasses.

He was wearing blue jeans, T-shirt, and tennis shoes. Since Georgie was purported to have been fishing near the dam at the end of the lake, interested parties on horseback and in Jeeps combed the lake shore thoroughly during the late afternoon and evening. Then Sgt. John Myers arrived and called RMRU.

Walt assembled the RMRU members and briefed us on all the details surrounding the missing boy and divided the group into two search teams. Since the lake shore was reported to have been thoroughly searched without a clue, it was concluded that the boy wandered off into the area surrounding the lake. One team would comb the area looking for tracks while Walt, Don Ricker and myself prepared to "fire" Sugar, our tracking bloodhound, on a scent article given us by the mother. The daylight hours had been hot and with a slight wind blowing, any scent would be faint and much harder for Sugar to follow. Walt "fired" Sugar above the lake where a boy answering Georgie's description was last seen.

Sugar worked her way back to the lake shore and headed toward an old buffalo corral

obviously on the trail of something much larger than an 11 year old boy. Walt steered Sugar out of the corral and aimed her toward the lake.

During our run by the lake shore a track was found which appeared to fit the general description of the tennis shoes the boy was wearing. The parents were asked to look at the print in order to make a positive identification. The mother indicated the track was about the right size, but wasn't sure about the sole print. Sugar was again "fired" and we headed shore towards the dam. With her nose to the ground and tending business of tracking it wasn't long before Sugar met up with the business left by a horse earlier in the evening. Scents like that are hard on the delicate nose of the bloodhound and Sugar was no exception. With tracking at a standstill Walt, Don and I retreated with Sugar in tow and reconnoitered with the rest of the RMRU search team. None of us had "turned" any signs of the missing boy.

It was decided to assemble as many details before calling in more searchers at first light. Jim and his group split up to comb the area along the lake shore, since many times an experienced searcher can find things the amateur overlooks. Half way across the earth dam we checked the pump house which supplied the lake with water. No sign of anything. As Walt and Don remarked about the pipe leading from the pump house into the lake, I flashed my light across the pipe. The beam caught what looked to be a long pole floating about 20 feet from shore and 10 feet to the right of the inlet pipe.

I removed my pack, boots and outer clothing and attempted to wade through the shallow water to substantiate our find. The lake bottom was slick and difficult to negotiate. Yes, it was a fishing pole and it answered the description of Georgie's in every detail. The three of us seemed to sense the outcome without saying a word. Base was notified of the situation. It was 2:00 A.M. and 12 hours since Georgie was found missing. Dragging the lake in the spot where we found the fishing pole our search reached its tragic conclusion. Georgie was found with his glasses clutched in his right hand in about 6 feet of water. Our job as a search and rescue team was done, but I couldn't help thinking that for me this was not to be a very happy Sunday.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.