

## Search for boy who had fallen down a cliff

**March 23, 1974**  
**Jensen Canyon, Cabazon**  
**1974-007**

Shortly after noon a family group left the south end of Elm Street, a few miles SE of Cabazon, for a hike. Included in the group were Allan Coghetti, his mother, his younger brother Ross, and two other boys. About three-quarters of a mile up the dirt road is a spring where the family split, Allan and Ross going cross-country uphill, the others returning home.

About five o'clock Ross returned home reporting that Allan had fallen off a cliff somewhere up the mountain (probably in a side canyon near Jensen Canyon). Following some checking by Sheriff's Deputies, RMRU was called. By ten or so sixteen of our twenty active members were searching. The nature of the call (;...a boy hurt in a fall up a canyon south of Cabazon...;) gave us all the impression that we'd just zoom in with technical gear and light call-out packs to evacuate the boy. Little did we know! Before long Walker and Morris were going up "Poison Oak Canyon" a western tributary to Jensen Canyon. Bridge, Schnurr, and Brown went up some steep gullies and bluffs just to the north. Claybrook shuttled latecomers up to the spring. Soon we had Carlson, Schmel, McIlvoy, MacIntosh, Quackenbush, Gillespie, Castilonia, Hill, Stephens, Pohlers, Frickland, and yours truly, assigned to various areas. The hours went by. No luck. Exceptionally difficult to cover steep loose-rock terrain surrounded by thick scrub oak, buckthorn, chamise,



The missing boy's brothers watch as the Riverside Police Department helicopter searches the canyon walls.

mountain mahogany, and many other shrubs. Three of us bivouacked below poison Oak Canyon due to our sensitivity to the poison.

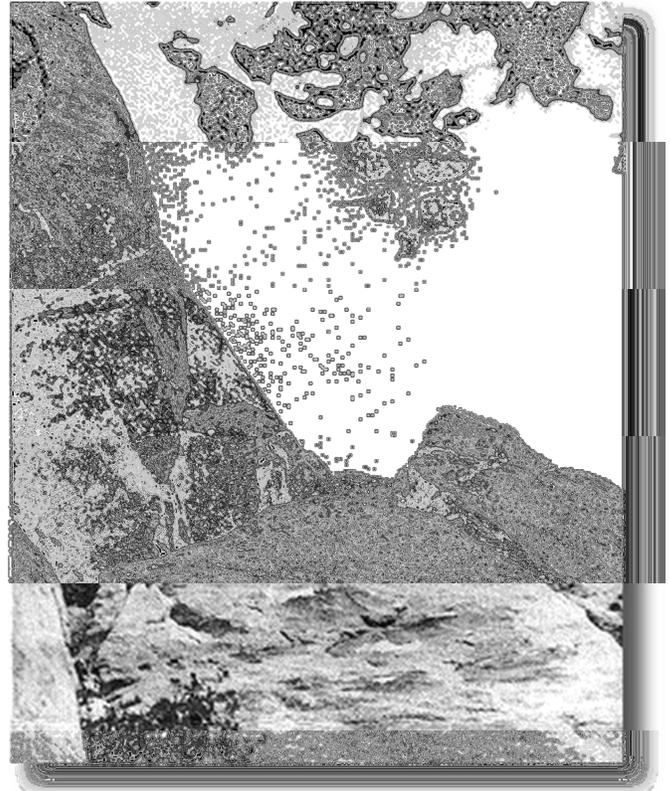
Friday morning several teams ascended Poison Oak Canyon, then turned their attention to the area above. Our party tried to ascend the 300' high south wall of P.O. Canyon, finally making it in a direct line to where Don Landells had landed his bird in the ;tilt; position. Ray, Hank and I tried to lift the skids and place small boulders under for more leveling, but the engine, which Don had shut down, refused to re-start. So, with Gary, he hiked out to base and got a ride to his base, returning with Reed Jarroch in another bird and a fresh battery. The engine started, and Don ;popped; the machine up from his predicament in spectacular fashion.

Meanwhile, the search turned up a few of Ross' tracks about two hundred yards north of the helispot, but hard gravel and deep grass deterred our attempts to follow them. The search area was crisscrossed and enlarged. With heavy hearts we came out at dark, sure the boy had fallen to his death, ;somewhere.;

Saturday, with many more men from Altadena, Montrose, China Lake, and Sierra Madre, we expanded and intensified the search with the same results. We found rattlesnakes, Mountain Lion, bobcats, coyotes, many cliffs and brush patches, but no trace of Allen.

Sunday, I took a three hour hike with Ross to see if he could re-trace his hiking route and give more information. He stuck well to the original statements:

;On our way back from our hike we came to a place where Allen said he would slide



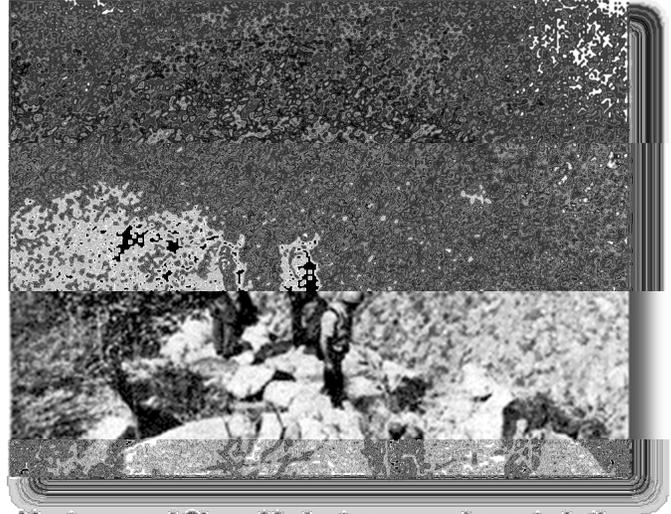
**Steve Stephens, RMRU member, searches one of the ledges in the prime search area.**



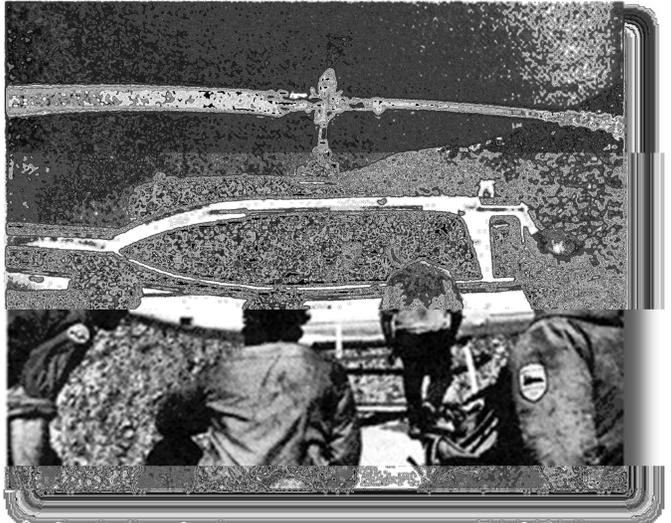
**Rescue team members from Altadena, Montrose, Sierra Madre and Riverside climb into Los Angeles County Fire Department helicopter just as the sun rises.**

down to the rock to a tree and then climb the rest of the way down. I was chicken to do that. Allen slid past the tree and missed it. I heard him hit trees below and saw an orange tennis shoe fly up.; Our search had been directed to cover every possibility, especially cliffs that even remotely fitted Ross' description.

Sunday afternoon featured more skillful and spectacular helicopter flying, by the Los Angeles Fire Department, to search the canyons and cliffs. Hope to find Allen alive faded, because we were aware of the nighttime temperatures and that we had covered the area so that if he could have answered even in a whisper, we could have heard him. If he had been injured and knocked unconscious, shock and exposure would have probably killed by the first night, the second night for sure. It was a consensus of MRA teams and the Sheriff's Office to discontinue the search until the following Saturday.



**Montrose and Sierra Madre team members study the ledges below, looking for a descent route.**



**As the helicopter hovers on one runner, Walt Walker heads towards the big bird to assist in off loading equipment.**

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.