

## **Two Missing Children**

**April 5, 1976**  
**Fisherman's Camp**  
**1976-020**

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At 6 pm a carload of us were headed for Art Bridge's first aid class over in Claremont. At the intersection of Etiwanda and the Pomona Freeway the pager beeped and said to call A1 Andrews. We found that two young boys were missing from the remote Fisherman's Camp, reached by steep dirt road and surrounded by also steep, brush-covered hills. Even worse, the canyons are frequently choked with dense patches of poison oak. A rainstorm had swept the area that morning, and the night was downright cold.

We found ourselves in the above environment late in the evening. We had good manpower and the RCARES radio group was there to support our communications. Two representatives from supposedly competent agencies had assured me that San Mateo Canyon had been searched both up and down by their groups during the day, going from Fisherman's Camp upstream to the Girl Scout Camp about six miles away. Therefore, I opted to send two strong search teams out, one down San Mateo Canyon, one up Tenaja Canyon which joins the first canyon at the camp. A third party would scour the immediate vicinity. The teams deployed out into the blackness. Various onlookers disappeared. The foster mother of the boys and the sheriff deputy were conferring over by the campfire. I stayed at the van as Ops Leader because of a horrible allergy to poison oak.

Our search was for Pat Baumgartner, 8 years old, and Ron Wickware, 7 years old. They had two friendly dogs with them. They had all been missing since 0800 that morning. Various people searched for a while, then the foster mother drove out the road to notify the Sheriff. We felt that had the boys desired to do so, which is not the usual case, they could have covered several miles from the camp. Chances were they had not gone too far and were curled up with the dogs, shivering. Well, no traces were found by the parties, except the group close to camp found undefined tracks around the corner of the canyon upstream. One team returned to camp in a few hours having been blocked by a patch of poison oak no one had gone through. Pete and Bernie went home to wash down with strong soap. Steve and Tom turned in to be ready for a choice assignment I had in mind for dawn. Quack, Ed, Gary, and Hal were far downstream, out of contact, but we knew they were bivouacked and would ascend

a hill for radio check at dawn.

So, I drove the van up to a fine lookout point about a mile upstream from the camp and three hundred feet above the stream. At dawn I was using binoculars on the slopes when a dog barked, once. The sound seemed to come from my level, almost directly west. Well, we will search that area with the helicopter which is due shortly. Sure enough, Don Landells with Pete and Bernie aboard in his Bell Jet Ranger II pops over a northern ridge. They check the side of the hill and a canyon a bit west. Then they drove slowly up San Mateo Canyon. I radio that they've gone past where the dog barked. They radio back that they spotted boys and dogs in the stream bottom. Don lands and before long humans and canines are gathered up, but not without a chase for one of the friendly but scared dogs. Quack's team is asked to find a helispot and are picked up after the thankful reunion back at the van.

Wouldn't you know, they were found where Steve and Tom were assigned, but had not yet been deployed. RMRU has a quaint saying, "If you ain't searched it yourself, it ain't been searched." Once again, children were found relatively close to the point last seen, were in great spirits, and survived the cold night far better than adults would have.

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.