

Missing Woman

**June 1, 1976
Palm Springs
1976-028**

John Muratet

The search started at 2245 hours (10:45 p.m.) at Mrs. Morgans on Camino Rojos in Palm Springs. She'd seen a flare with a red arching trajectory behind the ridge, just below the tram light and above the "First Hump" of the mountain. Jerome, her son saw it also. He said, "It appeared north of the line from the house to the tram light."

There was also another sighting that was reported by Mr. Doty on Chino St. He said he had seen a similar flare on the mountain, with a possibility of it being on the ridge northwest of Chino Canyon.

At 2345 (11:45 p.m.) Ed Hill and Jim Garvey went up the road to the lower tram station. Their plan was to yell and shine their lights up side canyons, and to check for tracks.

Just about midnight the tram operators appeared and the teams drove up to take the tram to the top. One team was dispatched to go down the skyline trail; Bernie McIlvoy, Larry Brown, Hall and Ron Barry. A radio with John Dew operating it, was on the top level of the tram station, acting as a relay. The tram started up at 0055 (12:55 a.m.) and stopped at numerous places along the way. Those aboard gave many shouts and waited hoping for a response. The only sound to be heard was that of a small breeze.

At 0112 (1:12 a.m.) everyone at base camp was discussing what was to be done in the morning when Sergeant Conroy saw a flash in the area where the other sightings had been. Meanwhile Bernie's team had gotten on the trail and found a Yashica camera case and some tracks going uphill. About five minutes later they found the tracks going downhill and also picked up some tennis shoes.

At a little after 0200 (2:00 a.m.), John Dew found the victims name in the Long Valley ranger station signin book. Apparently the victim had signed in on May 29. The plans were set for the next day.

At 0530 (5:30 a.m.) Jim Fairchild was at Morgan's trying to determine the exact location of the flare. It was determined that the flare had appeared most likely on the ridge separating the Chino and Snow Creek drainages, possibly on the ridge

running north of the tram, with a telephone line running down it.

Meanwhile Bernie's team was on their way back up to the tram to meet a new team in the field.

At 0730 (7:30 a.m.) Captain Canova made the decision to call in a helicopter. He called Western and arranged to have the bird land at base camp at 0800 (8:00 a.m.)

At base camp Bob Claybrook was getting ready to go up in the bird. First they would go up to Long Valley then starting at 7000 feet make sweeps across the eastern side of the mountain, dropping 200 feet each sweep.

At 1010 (10:10 a.m.) base asked for the field teams location. One was south of Desert View, and southeast of Hidden Lake and returning to Willow Creek. Another was on Sunday School peak. Still another was in the bird on their way back to Long Valley.

About 30 minutes later while the team with Radio 64 was at the intersection of ridges just above Fall Creek, taking a break scouting the ridge which they were going to go down to the desert, it came over the radio that the victim was located at school, thankfully safe and sound. Apparently, he had come off the mountain and spent the night at a friends and had not notified his parents.

So another search ended, everyone returned back to base, glad that everything turned out all right.

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.