



Overdue Backpacker

June 3-6, 1976
San Jacinto Mountains
1976-029

Rich Quackenbush

On the afternoon of Thursday, June 3, RMRU was activated at the request of Capt. Ray Canova, commander of the Riverside County Sheriff's Substation at Banning.

On May 28, 23 year old Raymond Blahausz had been left at Humber Park in Idyllwild by his sister and boy friend. On the morning of June 3, Blahausz' family contacted the Palm Springs Police Department and advised them that their son had been due out of the wilderness Monday, May 31, and had not been seen nor heard from since he left Humber Park. At that time Blahausz advised his sister that he planned to hike up the Devil's Slide trail and go to Tahquitz Peak. From there he planned to hike down one of the Indian Canyons to Palm Springs and home.

By late afternoon RMRU had dispatched four teams up the Devil's Slide trail from Humber Park. The assignments were to check the peak register and to look for tracks in the vicinity of the canyons. Results were negative and the teams spent the night in the field.

Because of the cold trail and the size of the area involved it was decided that much more manpower would be needed. The China Lake, San Diego, Sierra Madre, Saddleback, Montrose and March AFB Para-Rescue teams and the Palm Springs Mounted Posse were called.

Base was moved from Humber Park to the entrances of Murray and Andreas canyons just off Palm Canyon Drive in the city of Palm Springs. The next morning forty additional men were available. Don Landells and his helicopter had been hired by the PSMP and a UH-1 Huey from George AFB arrived. The helicopters were used to carry teams up to the high country and to search for the missing man. Teams were sent down Andreas, Murray, Tahquitz and Palm canyons along the Desert Divide and many other side canyons and ridges. Not a clue or a sign was found.

On the next day, June 5, the search continued with similar results. This time we

were aided by a Marine Huey from El Toro.

The search continued through Sunday, June 6, with another Huey, this time from Edwards AFB. Again not a clue to Raymond Blahausz' whereabouts was found

I think we were all impressed again by the immensity of this wilderness area. Although it can be crossed in a helicopter in five minutes, the search area embraces an expanse of over one hundred square miles. The terrain ranges from forested mountain side at ten thousand feet through brushy canyons down to arid desert at five hundred feet. None of it is flat and some of it is vertical.

The canyons Raymond planned to descend are not often visited in the higher elevations. If he had entered either Murray or Andreas by any normal route his tracks would surely have been found. We can only speculate as to what happened to him.

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.