

11-year-old separated from hiking partner

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San Jacinto Mtns
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By Hal Fulkman

After receiving a somewhat confusing pager call, I contacted Walt Walker for clarification and location of the team's rendezvous point. The information Walt had was sketchy and puzzling. All he had was that an 18 year old boy had called the sheriff from the Long Valley ranger station and said that his 11 year old companion was lost somewhere near Round Valley.

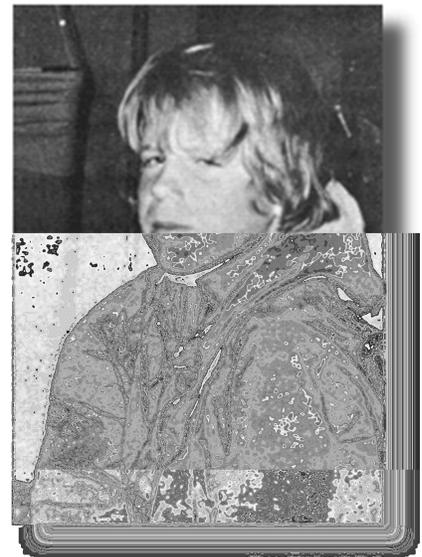
Walt and I decided to ride together to the rendezvous, which was the lower station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tram. Upon arriving at the tram's lower parking lot, we were met by Capt. Ray Canova. Jim Fairchild had also arrived and was at that time in the helicopter, with Don Landells, taking advantage of what little daylight was left. As darkness closed in the bird returned with no sign of the 11 year old boy.

Several more RMRU members arrived, as well as Hemet Search & Rescue Team members and members of the March Air Force Base 303rd Rescue Unit. With teams and assignments designated, we moved the operation to the top of the tram.

Steve Zappe and I were assigned to search Willow Creek Crossing by way of Hidden Lake divide. We decided to check Long Valley ranger station as we passed it, in case the boy had found his way back. On the door of the station (no rangers were on duty) was a note that said, "We have a lost 11 year old boy and are camped in the vicinity." After radioing the message back, the teams in the area, spread out into Long Valley and within a short time we had located the camp and the 11 year old boy.

The boy was accompanied by a man and woman who had found the boy as he had wandered into their camp at Willow Creek Crossing. They had then moved their camp to Long Valley and put the note up.

After reuniting the separated hikers, we returned to the lower tram station and



Jim Fairchild

The wayward 11 year old, bundled in a RMRU parka, waited to be reunited with his hiking companion.

concluded another successful mission.

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.