



Woman lost in dense brush

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San Jacinto Mtns
1978-039

By Hal Fulkman

A call came in to Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit from the Riverside County Sheriff's Banning Office requesting RMRU to assist the United States Forest Service and the Pine Cove Volunteer fire department in searching for a woman who had disappeared from Camp Lawler near the Allandale Ranger Station. The woman was believed lost in the Dark Canyon area and was unfamiliar with the surroundings..

The woman had last been seen shortly before sundown near the kitchen facility area where she was employed as a helper. After interrogating some of the woman's friends, we discovered that the woman liked to take short strolls on the many nature paths that surrounded the camp; particularly those trails that led down to the stream. With this information we focused the search in the immediate area around the stream. The paths were heavily traveled and it was difficult trying to single out the particular footprint we were looking for.

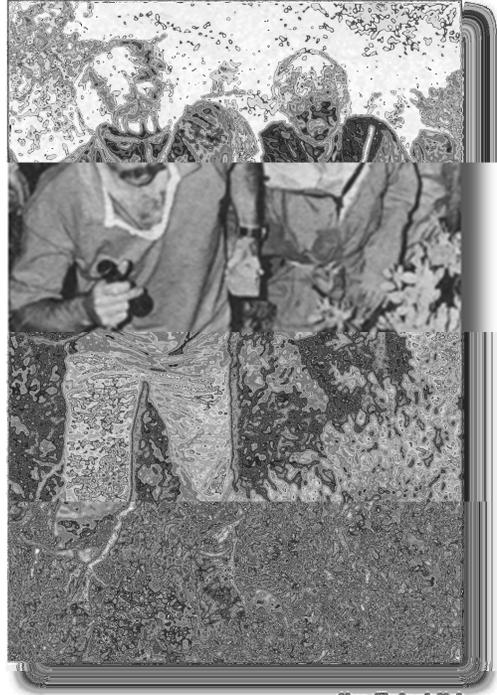
Finally, we discovered a few partial prints that looked promising and, after some careful tracking and a little guesswork, we discovered several good clear prints in a sandbar near the stream that we were able to determine as being hers.

Continuing to follow the tracks, we discovered that the prints followed the stream for a short distance and then turned back toward the direction of the camp. After considering the direction the prints were going, the girl had either walked back to camp and was somewhere in camp without anyone's knowledge or she had, somehow, walked past the camp and was further to the west of where we were searching.

Because the direction was paralleling the highway, some of the Pine Cove firemen were sent in vehicles down the highway; periodically stopping their vehicles and calling the woman's name. After approximately 1/2 mile distance, the firemen got a distant reply to their shouting. All RMRU personnel were sent to the location of the firemen and dispersed down the heavily brushed slope toward the direction of the woman's cries for help.

The progress was slow and arduous through the immense wall of thick brush. The continual searching for a passable route became more and more difficult and finally came to the point of having to crawl under the brush instead of trying to penetrate through it. The feeling of claustrophobia and the thought of coming face to face with one of the "buzz-tails" that frequent this area made it difficult to concentrate on zeroing in on the sound of the voice. Finally, the brush opened to the point that we could once again move forward in an upright position. Moving steadily forward, we covered the last 50 to 75 yards in about 25 minutes.

Reaching the girl who by this time was wondering if we were going to find her at all, and after some minor first aid, some nourishment, and about 2 quarts of water, the woman was able to travel. joining up with another team consisting of USFS personnel and a counselor from the camp, we began the long, slow trip back to the highway.



Jim Fairchild

RMRU MEMBER Darryl Hand, flashlight in one hand, and the missing woman's hand in the other, leads her through the dense brush.

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.