



Missing L.A. man's car found

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San Jacinto Mountains
1979-038

By Jim Garvey

Seems like it never fails, RMRU invariably has a mission during the holidays.

The call came at noon Sunday for a search in Idyllwild for what we initially thought to be a missing hiker. As team members arrived at the Idyllwild office of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, we learned this mission was not going to be a straightforward search.

The subject, Gregory Tanner, 20, of Rancho Palos Verdes left home Thursday, December 20th, ostensibly to run a few errands and then return home to leave with his family to spend the holidays in Mammoth.

On Friday, December 21st, the Sheriff noted a car left parked in the County Park visitor center parking lot. When the car was still there on Sunday, the Sheriff ran a computer check on the vehicle and turned up a missing person report Gregory's parents had filed in Los Angeles.

Friday and Saturday had been stormy, leaving a few inches of snow in the parking lot and up to one foot at higher elevations. This added another complication as Gregory was not equipped with any mountain clothing or equipment.

RMRU's search efforts in Sunday's remaining daylight concentrated on searching the area immediately around the parking lot where the car was found. Jim Fairchild and his scent dog also worked this area. Since the parking lot is the roadhead for the Deer Springs Trail, we wanted to sweep the trails on that side of the mountain. Don Landells and his Jet Ranger arrived in time to fly Pete Carlson and Larry Roland into Deer Springs to hike the five or so miles out to the parking lot. Don Chambers, Kevin Walker, Hal Fulkman, myself (RMRU members) and John Foster and Jan Caldwell (Hemet Search & Rescue Team members) were flown to the top of Suicide Rock. We hiked out the Suicide Trail to the Deer Springs Trail (searching both sides) and finished at the parking lot after dark.

Given the weather conditions and area that needed to be searched, Hemet, San Diego, San Dimas and Sierra Madre teams were called. When all the teams assembled at base camp in the parking lot early Monday morning, we had 40 S.A.R.

people to put into the field.

An intensive line search by all personnel around the parking lot perimeter failed to turn up any evidence of Gregory. The next stage was to deploy field units in the drainages below the parking lot and up and down both sides of the trails above the parking lot. Don Landells was called back. Walt Walker, John Dew and Don spent several hours flying the area at sometimes less than treetop level.

Late Monday afternoon, because we had found no evidence whatsoever that Gregory Tanner was even in the mountains, Captain Bill Park and Operations Leader Walt Walker called off the search.

As the men of RMRU and the other teams prepared for the drive home to a Christmas Eve with their families, their spirits were dampened by the thought that one family would not be together that night.

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.