



Two overdue hikers

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San Jacinto Mtns
1980-053

By Kevin Walker

Everyone was just finishing lunch when the phone rang. It was Sgt. Weakly from the Banning Sheriff's office with news of two overdue hikers. After finishing his calls, my dad Walt Walker and myself picked up the No. 1 van and headed for Cabazon where the team was to rendezvous. Walt and I were the first to arrive followed shortly by Rick Pohlers in the No. 2 van and soon after that Jim Fairchild. At the meeting point were the two wives and a friend of the missing hikers. While the rest of us troopies were preparing gear, Walt and Captain Canova gathered information from the informants. They learned that the two had set out from Cabazon on Tuesday and started up a ridge that would put them on the Fuller Ridge; once there they would head for Little Round Valley, the summit and then down to the tram for a Thursday pick up. They were now a full day overdue. Our job was to cut tracks on the ridge first with a helicopter, and then set members out in various locations along their route of travel. We soon heard the familiar sound of a jet Ranger approaching from the desert. That of course was Don Landells with his newest Bell Jet Ranger (number 3). For the initial run to cut tracks, Walt assigned Rick Pohlers and myself to fly with Don. We were soon under way flying towards the ridge that the pair had started up. At about the 4,000 foot level we spotted what looked like one set of tracks. We were almost to the 6,000 foot level when Don spotted what he thought was two sets. After circling back around and then maneuvering in close to the ridge line, and sure enough it was two separate prints in a sandy spot. just as Don was about to radio back to base that we had found two good sets of prints, base beat us to the microphone. It seems that our two missing hikers had just walked into the tram and had phoned out that they were in good shape. It just took them a little longer than expected (about one days worth). With that it was back to base.

With this mission coming to a close, so would the missions for 1980. Out of 53 calls 35 of those were actual missions in the field. All in all a very busy year.

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.