

Two brothers overdue

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San Jacinto Mtns
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By Craig Beasley

It was just minutes before 2:00 when the pager went off. The voice emitting from the little gray box told of a search in Idyllwild, and that all RMRU members were to call Kevin Walker for information. Upon calling Kevin I was told that two brothers were missing somewhere in the San Jacinto Mountains.

As I arrived at Humber Park, I was quickly turned around as base camp was being moved down to Camp Maranatha, I did not need to be told why, as that means a helicopter had been asked for and okayed. Once at Maranatha, we (the members) were told that James DeWitt (age 29) and his brother Michael (14) had come up to the Idyllwild area on the previous Thursday. They had told their family that they were going to stay in one of the public campgrounds and would return on Sunday. When they did not return home on Sunday the family notified the Sheriff's Department. Our only clue was the pair's car which was now parked up at Humber Park. They had not brought any backpacking gear with them, so we could only guess that they had went on day hike. How long they had been up on the mountain, we did not know.

Rick Pohlars and Kevin Walker would be on the first flight to Caramba to try and cut tracks. The two Jims, Fairchild and Garvey would be on the second load. Their assignment was to search the upper Tahquitz drainage. I was waiting for Bernie McIlvoy to arrive. We would also search the drainage. John Dew and son Roy were hiking up the Devil's Slide trail in the chance that the two brothers might have found their way back to the saddle.

The chopper, piloted by Mike Donovan (of Landells Aviation) was about 10 minutes out when we were notified that the pair had wandered into the tramway, and had rode it down to Palm Springs. Both were okay, and with that, the mission was cancelled. Information was passed back that James and Michael had went day hiking on Sunday and became lost. They were forced to spend the night on the mountain. Monday, they wandered onto a trail that led them to the tram. With that, we headed home.

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

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