

Hiker lost in fog

October 7, 1985

Dark Canyon Camp, San Jacinto Mtns

1985-045

By Bud White

Early in the evening a pager call punctuated a thought I had just expressed to my wife Sue, to the effect, "What a lousy night to be out." Temperature 36 degrees, heavy fog, misty rain. I responded to the pager call. Walt told me a thirty-eight year old man had gone for a walk from Dark Canyon campground that afternoon and hadn't returned. The man's father reported this to the Sheriff's Office. I then called Ron Pierson, a new member on the team that lives in Idyllwild. Ron and I met up and drove, or should I say groped, our way to Allandale on the road to Banning in a fog so thick we could barely move. A normal ten-minute drive became a forty-five minute adventure. I still don't see how the deputy sheriff, the RMRU vans and other RMRU team members made it up the hill in the thick fog.

Once at Dark Canyon we determined the direction of travel and split into two groups. Steve Bryant, Ron Pierson, and I went to Camp Azalea Trails and searched all the buildings and surrounding area. The rest of the group searched the road to Pinewood and the Seven-Pines trailhead. No clues, no luck. It was so foggy and wet we would have had to fall over the gentleman to find him. By 3:00 a.m. we returned to base camp, bundled up the best we could, and waited for first light to continue the search.

We split up again sending one group down Dark Canyon to the highway, and another back over the dirt road. On the road we passed a gentleman who advised us he was a caretaker at Pinewood and that he had just given our lost friend a ride back to his father's camper. Needless to say we were relieved he was found because this side of the mountain can be the original needle in a haystack type of search.

Apparently, James Duke had gone for a walk and found the Seven-Pines trailhead, then proceeded on, having decided to see where it led. He lost track of the time, it got dark and he crawled under a boulder for the night.

At daylight he went toward Pinewood instead of Dark Canyon and walked into the caretaker's cabin. Happy ending for all. The Dukes, the deputy sheriff, and the RMRU team returned to the Country Corner Restaurant in Idyllwild and had breakfast. We would like to thank Mr. Duane Duke for his generous donation to RMRU on his son's behalf.

P.S. I now have fog lights on my car.

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.