



Missing day hiker

July 4, 1987
San Jacinto Mtns
1987-025

By Donna Halcrow

The phone rang at 2:00 a.m., 4th of July morning. At first I thought it was one of those computer generated messages, and then I realized it was Walt Walker, who has evidently mastered the ability to make calls without waking up. He advised me that we would be meeting at Idyllwild fire station to search for a missing hiker.

The subject had been reported missing by his friend, Don, when he failed to show up at Humber Park. The subject had been dropped off at the desert station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, planning to go up the Tramway, hike to Humber Park, be picked up by Don, and then they would have dinner at the Chart House in Idyllwild. Don drove from Palm Springs, arrived at Humber Park in the afternoon and waited until midnight. With no sign of the subject, either at Humber Park or the Chart House, he notified Riverside County Sheriff's Office at Idyllwild, and RMRU was then called out.

At 6:00 in the morning we gathered at the Idyllwild Fire Station and Operations Leader Walt Walker started making field assignments. Bud White and Larry Carter were to search as far as Caramba and the start of Tahquitz Canyon. Ronnie Pierson and Eric Townsend covered the area from Saddle Junction to the Peak of Mt. San Jacinto, while Joe Erickson and Mark Rhodes went up the Tramway to cover Round Valley and the trails back to Humber Park. Steve Bryant acted as radio relay on the palisade area above Devil's Slide Trail. Bob Sairs, Donna Halcrow, Henry Negrete, and Walt Walker remained in base. After checking in, Mary Bowman reported to work at the Forestry, which needed extra help on the holiday.

The weather was clear and warm - perfect for hiking. The field teams made progress, checking their assigned areas, calling out and talking to hikers and campers they met along the way. As the day led on, no sign of the subject was found and no one answering his description had been seen by anyone. Walt and Henry started a thorough search of town - searching the area of the Chart House, Humber Park, and finally a check was started of the local motels.

At about noon, the Deputy advised us that they had received a call from Don at Bluebird Motel in Idyllwild, reporting his friend and his car missing. A stop at the motel gave us the information that the subject had left the motel, hitch-hiked to

Hemet and was now at a rental car agency. At this time we turned it over to the Deputy, and his friend, and called off the search.

It seems the subject finished his hike a lot quicker than anticipated, and unable to find his friend, checked into the motel. As we waited for all the field teams to return to base, we reflected that in the future we might check the motels first!

Another two hours of hot work hiking out (our field teams had covered nearly all their assignments), and we adjourned for lunch at the Chef in the Forest, then home to spend what was left of the holiday with our families.

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.