



## Missing 11 and 13 year old boys

**July 18, 1988**  
**Toro Peak**  
**1988-020**

When I joined RMRU, I envisioned dozens of searchers on bright, sunny days, supported by helicopters and search dogs. Several weeks ago, my bubble burst as I responded, just before midnight, to the Piñon Flats CDF Fire Station to search for missing 11 and 13 year old boys.

We were greeted by a Sergeant of the Riverside Sheriff's office and by a hospitable engineer from CDF. The boys' father described what was supposed to be a pleasant afternoon of pellet gun shooting near the transmitters on Toro Peak. He was quite surprised, he told me, when his sons took off immediately down the trail instead of waiting to unpack the guns. He was worried when he hadn't heard a thing from them in about forty-five minutes. Six hours later, after scouring the area himself and with the help of his nine year

old daughter, he decided to make the long drive back down the windy dirt road, to call for help.

While Dona Halcrow remained at base camp to await members from San Diego Mountain Rescue, Sierra Madre SAR, China Lake Search and Rescue, and the California Rescue Dog Association (CARDAs), Ray Hussey and I loaded our gear into a patrol car for the ride to the "point last seen".

It was very early in the morning when Ray and I began to look for tracks around the trailhead. We spent several hours covering about a quarter mile of trail and calling out to the boys through the RMRU loudhailer. Unable to get a description of the boys' shoes, we proceeded to explore an area which had been thoroughly trampled.

After much puzzling and scratching of heads we returned to the roadhead. Ray accompanied the deputy back to base, where he planned strategy with Dick Sales of the Sierra Madre team.

First light found the radio abuzz with transmission from CARDAs. They were exploring the numerous unmarked dirt roads near the PLS. There were four CARDAs members and three dogs. They had interviewed the family, and acquired "scent articles" collected by RMRU. Having never worked with CARDAs before, I was impressed by their professionalism as they began searching. Soon, they reported following an "air scent", and a handler explained to me that scent is like water, flowing downhill in the

morning when it is cold.

While CARDA worked, I took my portable radio and the loudhailer out on a prominent rock. Lo and behold, after several shouts, we had faint voice contact, and at 0745 hours CARDA member Susan Williams bounded downhill after the voices.

Scratched, cold and thirsty, our subjects reported that they'd just gotten disoriented and spent the previous afternoon trying to sort things out. (Although they found water, they didn't drink for fear it was contaminated.)

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.