



Man Missing for Seven Days

April 5th, 2004
Ryan Campground, Joshua Tree National Park
2004-007

by Dave Webb

The call came out about 08:00 Easter Sunday. All we knew was that there was a missing person in Joshua Tree National Park and they needed us there at 07:30 Monday morning at the Ryan Campground. After getting the support, (and normal response from my better half) I started gearing up.

When I got there the next morning I was relieved to see so many of my team members had made it. Jim Bakos, (AKA Bill), Angie James, Patrick McCurdy, Jim Fairchild, Darrell Bell, and Travis Henderson. We gathered for the briefing to learn that the subject was a distraught male, who had last been seen seven days earlier. He was known to wear black caps, black shirts, and his weight was about 160 lbs. After the briefing we were told that due to the overwhelming response, they would need another 20 minutes to set up new assignments. Many used this extra time to get our gear together and use the last civilized bathrooms. (In the process Angie walking right by the subject). I went back to my truck and kicked my legs up on the tailgate, leaned back on my backpack, pulled my hat down, and acted like Joe cool enjoying the morning sun, anticipating a nice hike. Even though I thought that the consensus was that when we would find him, it probably wouldn't be pleasant.

As I was relaxing, I looked over and here was this guy walking towards me, he had a black shirt on, a black cap, he had the right build, and he had my attention. I sat up on the tailgate and watched as this guy came towards me. At one point he looked up and I could see this bewildered look in his eye. I asked, are you OK? He stopped as I got up and started towards him. In a mumbling voice and with half gesture he said, my camp's over there, but my Jeep is gone. Knowing from the briefing earlier that the Park Rangers had already impounded his Jeep. I asked, are you Paul? He looks up at me with this, how did you know my name look and says, "yes". All I could do was chuckle, put my arm over his shoulder and I said, Paul! Buddy old pal! Partner if you could come over here with me. I know some people that are going to be real glad to see you. So I simply walked him 60 yds. around a boulder and into the command center. As we approached people started to gather and I saw that same bewildered look in everyone's eyes, the same one I had just seen in Paula's earlier. When we got there I said, everyone this is Paul. After a few questions someone asked, "are you Paul JorgenÅsen?" When he said, "yes." It was

like a light just went on, the EMT was called and as the Park Rangers excused us so that they could do their questioning.

During the debriefing we learned he had indeed tried to commit suicide. It was a night when the temperatures were just above freezing, it was windy, and it was raining. Being hypothermic he took a piece of glass and tried to cut his wrist. Obviously it hurt and he didn't do it again. An ambulance was on the way to take Paul to the hospital for a few days of healing and close attention.

So RMRU got the credit for another successful mission. Afterwards we all headed to Denny's to get our complimentary lunch, (dinner, breakfast, or what ever time of day it is meal) from our Sheriffs Dept. Even though this might have been one of the shortest search and rescues RMRU has ever done, technically they had to give it to us. Out of three different rescue units that made it, it was someone from RMRU that had made gone to the briefing, spotted the subject, stopped him, questioned him, identified him, and brought him into the command center. I wish all mission could be this easy, but alas we all know this isn't to be true. Until the next mission, Climb Safe!

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.