

## Three Boy Scouts at the Tram

**April 9th, 2005  
Long Valley, Sam Jacinto State Park  
2005-013**

by Will Carlson

Oh how quickly a quiet evening at home can change to a quiet evening in the San Jacinto Mountains. We received a call to search for three fifteen-year old boys who attempted San Jacinto Peak and did not return to camp. After talking my dad into joining me for the search we took off.

Two hours later we found ourselves leaving the upper station of the Palm Springs tramway. Our assignment was to head over to Hidden Lake, hike through the divide, and down into Willow Creek to look for tracks. We were met with wonderful conditions. Hiking atop hard packed snow we made decent time. Around 2:00 A.M. we decided to hunker down for the night. We found a lovely site just above Willow Creek, and were anxious to begin the search the next morning.

Morning brought an unexpected surprise. My dad woke to an extremely swollen knee with severe pain. We discussed our options and decided that I would quickly search the Willow Creek drainage area and then we would head back. I searched for about an hour and returned back to our site. After taking another look at my dad's knee and talking about the hike out, we decided that he would not be able to hike. An airship from San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department assisting in the search came in and hoisted my dad, and took him back to the tram.



Photo: Patrick McCurdy

Will Carlson and Rob May with the rescued boys

After discussing many different options with our team, it was decided that I would wait for another team to meet up with me and we would continue our assignment up the Willow Creek drainage. This left me with a large amount of down time. At first I was ok, but that quickly began to change. Anyone who knows me understands that sitting still is not something I do well, if I do it at all. I was yelling

the three boys names every few minutes in case they were still moving and ended up near me. After a while I was bored beyond belief and the other team was still a ways out. I found some rocks to climb and goofed around until they were getting pretty close. All the time I was calling out to what seemed like nothingness.

"Team 2, team 1." "Go ahead." "Was that you?" "Negative." "Copy, break...Base, team 1, possible voice contact." Well, at this point the adrenaline was pumping and I was thinking all of this yelling paid off. However, above all other thoughts were the thought that I needed to get to these boys before anyone else.

Thinking that Team 2 was in the drainage just below where the voice came from. I decided that running was the best option. I ran and ran and ran some more, with only one thought in mind.... must get there first. After running a fairly long distance (with a full winter search pack weighing roughly 35 lbs) and talking with Team 2, I realized I was a long way ahead of them. This was a good thing because it meant I could walk and take a break. Well, that was not the case. Not more than a millisecond after the thought of taking a break, the trustworthy helicopter could be heard on both the horizon and the radio. "Team one, Air Rescue 6." "Go ahead." "Can you guide us into the area?" "Head to the east."

The race was on again, and this time the odds were not in my favor. I ran and ran and ran, gaining speed with every step. I was gaining speed until I ran into the steep part of the hill. But, the race was over. To my surprise I had a visual on three young boys. All I could think was, "I'd never raced a helicopter before ...and won!"

After a quick medical exam the helicopter was released to head home. The boys were very hungry and ate quite a bit of food. Team 2 (Rob and Kirk) arrived and we began our trek back to the tram. Along the way we ran into the many other teams that just happened to be racing into the same area. Talking to the boys, we learned that they had hiked down the Willow Creek drainage and ended up at the mouth of Tahquitz Canyon. A long hike for the boys! Back at the tram we had a reunion and packed up. Another great mission for RMRU!

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.