

Missing Autistic Teen

February 26, 2006
Santa Ana River bottom near Jarupa
2006-02-26

by Kevin Walker

Sunday mornings coffee before church was interrupted by a call from Glenn Henderson with news of a missing young woman in the Jarupa area. 16 RMRU responded to an elementary school near Mission Blvd. There Sheriffs personnel were directing the operation. Members were sent into the surrounding foothills and the nearby Santa Ana River. Along with RMRU members from Riverside County Search Dogs utilized.

Lauren Williams was last seen the day before leaving the gated community where her dad lived. A security camera confirmed her exit from the community. Lauren was mentally challenged with the capacity of a 7 year old and suffered from seizures. She had been missing for nearly 24 hours now and was on medication and would be at risk if not found soon.



Operations Leader Steve Bryant assigned John, Brenda, Glenn and I to search an area along the Santa Ana River that the search dogs had given us a direction to. If you are not familiar with this area, you are lucky. It is an area popular with the homeless, thick brush and bamboo laced with Stinging Nettles and as Glenn and I learned a week later on the MRA

recert Poison Oak!

Our team of 4 worked our way down stream on the North side while Ray and Patrick had went upstream a half mile, crossed the treated water of the river to the south and then work back downstream. John and Brenda had continued down for some distance and Glenn and I took advantage of the Van Buren bridge to rappel down to an area we thought to be an island between the river and the treated water input pipe from the sewage plant. As we rappelled off of the bridge we were surprised to find Ray and Patrick suddenly upon us watching (giving their own special support).

Joining up we worked our way downstream, linking up with Brenda and John. Upon reaching the confluence of the treated water and the main river, we turned back up stream and search back upstream until we could get off the peninsula of land we were on

by exiting at the treatment facility. We had been out for about 4 hours and were brought back to base for sandwiches and a break. To this point searchers had found nothing conclusive. The only support to continue searching the river was the search dogs showing interest in pointing towards the river and several reports from witnesses saying they had seen Lauren the day before near and In-n-Out Burger along Van Buren near the river.

After lunch it was decided to best utilize RMRU in this area again by searching downstream for a couple of miles at least from Van Buren. Rob May led a group on the south side and Glenn and Ray took the balance of us on the north side. I do not know what we were thinking but when it came time to split our large group up, Glenn and I took the rivers edge (as best as possible), and Ray and Brenda took the outer edges. In 25+ years (being off the team for 5 years and now back), Glenn and I ended up in the worst vegetation that I have ever seen. We dealt with ALL of the items I listed earlier, saw large holes made in the mud near the river which we later learned was Farrell pigs (nasty mean ones), quick sand and at one point while attempting 2 ½ hours of attempting were in a combination of bamboo and some sort of vine that had us actually several feet up in the air. Glenn found out just how far when the bamboo we were on gave way and he came tumbling down.

As the day came to a close, RMRU members, and the R.C. Search Dog teams had found nothing conclusive. Because of no evidence of Laurens presence in the search area, the operation was shut down at dark. With a deep sense of concern for Laurens very life we headed for home.

To end on a very good note Lauren was found the following day at a Carl Jrs (I believe) near the Galleria at Tyler. Lauren was fine!

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.