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## Search and Rescue

### SEARCH

Mission No. 8414M

1-2 July, Sun.-Mon.  
Dark Canyon,  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Bill Blaschko



A frantic mother told us that her frail, shy, 8 year old daughter was missing below the Fuller Mill Creek picnic area. The Mojeske family was visiting the area for the day and their two children were having fun

playing in the creek. Toni, the daughter, gradually worked her way downstream apparently without realizing what was happening. Although her parents were unaware that their child was drifting away, a number of other visitors to the area remembered seeing the cute child further and further downstream. Once Toni's parents became aware that their daughter was lost they instituted a hasty search. The sheriff was called when Mr. Mojeske and his son were unable to find Toni.

In short order our team was called out, and assembled at the road head by 8:30 PM. We were told by Mrs. Mojeske that Toni was so shy that she would probably not answer our calls. Also Toni had many severe allergies and the mother felt it quite possible that she may have succumbed to a reaction to mosquito bites. We were unable to get an accurate description of Toni's footprints, but did learn she was wearing only a light shorts outfit. With this information we sent our teams into the field. Jim Fairchild and I were assigned to follow the stream bed of the North Fork down from the point the child

was last seen while other teams followed the highway and the ridges to the sides. It was just getting dark as we set out and I switched on my head lamp after only 10 minutes of hiking. The night air was warm, still and thick with mosquitos. At first the banks of the stream were covered with footprints of every description, but as huge boulders increasingly blocked the way the prints thinned out. Jim and I scrambled around and over the boulders mostly in silence, occasionally calling out to Toni. Soon the going got so rough that we doubted that our subject could have gone that way. About this time we heard Joe Erickson reporting over the radio of a possible voice contact from his position on the highway. Jim and I turned 90 degrees to the right to help check out this possibility. To our disappointment we soon realized that Toni was not in this area and bushwacked our way back to the creek bed. I felt my hopes waning as Jim and I worked our way through the patches of poison oak and nettles looking for any evidence of Toni.

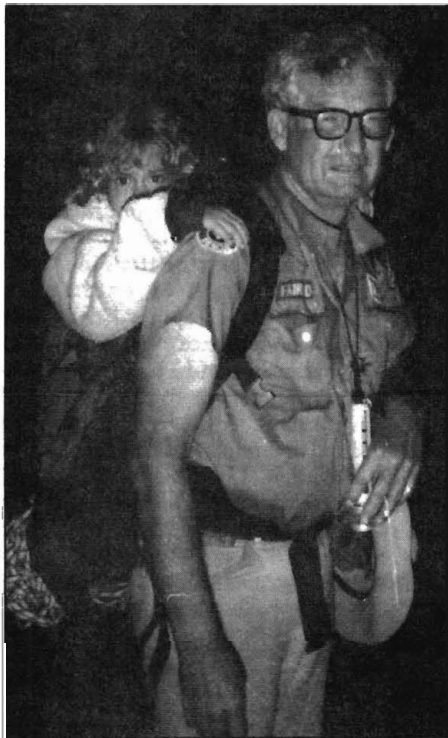
The creek began to level out, making the going easier, when we found our first good clue. In a sand bar in the middle of the stream there was a single set of fresh, small footprints. After excitedly radioing in this information we proceeded downstream. What we found was a recurrent pattern of footprints whenever a sand bar blocked the main part of the creek. Toni was walking in the water almost all the time and therefore leaving no prints. The San Jacinto Truck Trail crossed the North Fork River a couple miles downstream of our location. A search team including Mark Rhodes and Mel Krug was driven to this point by members of the Pine Cove Fire Department. Jim and I continued on while Mel and Mark reported that they could find no evidence that Toni had gotten that far. Jim and I had lapsed into small talk when a little voice interrupted our conversation. Toni was a little ahead of us bedded down in a glade of ferns right beside the creek. The time was 2:10 AM and the first order of business was getting the shivering child warm and fed. While



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

EYES OF A CHILD — Sometimes an expression is worth a thousand words. This being the case with little Toni Mojeske just after being found by RMRU members Bill Blaschko (pictured) and Jim Fairchild.

Toni sipped on some apple juice I relayed the good news back to base. Toni did not turn out to be quite the personality that her mother described. A frail child could not have traveled the two miles through rugged terrain that Jim Fairchild felt was the equivalent of 8 miles of regular hiking. Also Toni was anything but shy. While Jim and I waited for Mel and Mark to hike up from the truck trail, Toni told us all about her adventure. She said she had been splashing water up on rocks to leave a trail for followers and that she had stopped walking at dark. Toni also quizzed us in depth on how we had been sent to look for her.



RMRU PHOTO BY BILL BLASCHKO

**LOADED PACK** — With Toni Mojeske loaded in RMRU member Jim Fairchild's pack, Jim and Bill prepare to hike back to the road.

When Mel and Mark reached us Jim emptied his pack and Toni jumped in. The rest of us divided up Jim's gear and we hiked down to where Bob and Marge Muir of the Pine Cove Fire Department were waiting to drive us out. During this hike Toni continued to be a "walkie talkie" as she told us all about her family life, friends and recycling cans with her brother. On return to base camp all appeared to be back to normal as Toni snuggled in her mothers arms. My thoughts turned toward a warm breakfast until I learned that the team of Cameron Robbins and Rob Gardner had not yet returned. The radio that this team was carrying had not been functioning and Cam and Rob didn't know the search was over. Rob realized that the

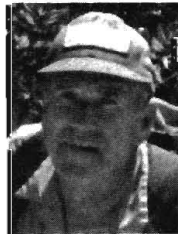
radio wasn't operating and was able to effect some ingenious field repair work to reestablish communication. At 7 AM after a marathon hike Rob and Cameron reached the highway and the team headed off for breakfast. Rob wished that his walkie talkie had worked as well as the "walkie talkie" we rescued. • RMRU

## SEARCH

**Mission No. 8415M**

**18-19 July, Wed.-Thurs.  
East of Lake Elsinore**

*By John Dew*



At 10:30 p.m. the phone rang. It was Walt Walker asking if I could take one of the rescue vans to Elsinore. A nine year old boy had been last seen by his parents just at dark.

The family was out from Garden Grove, had planned to go home that afternoon, but had decided to stay over with friends in Elsinore until the next day. What better way to celebrate this decision than for everyone to get on his motorcycle and have one more ride on the dirt trails in the nearby hills? That's how it happened that the youth got lost. He was riding his yellow Kawasaki '80' when he became separated from his family.

We were in Elsinore by 11:00 p.m. being led to the place where the little boy had last been seen. The area had been and was still being covered by friends with four wheel drives and motorcycles. We added our strength to the search plus the manpower and four wheel power we could get from the Hemet team. At 2:30 a.m. we asked for the Sheriff's fixed wing aircraft to fly search at first light. This was granted provided we could supply an observer. Bob Elliot of the Hemet team was to be the observer and the plane was to arrive at Perris airport at 4:30 a.m. With this new information Bob left for Perris and we all bedded down for two hours rest until the aircraft arrived. The plane didn't get there at 4:30 but did arrive later. They had been flying search for about 30 minutes when one of the motorcycle riders came riding into Base with the little boy sitting on the seat in front of him. He had found him about 3 or 4 miles from Base. He seemed to be no worse for his night out.

All our team members and the ones helping us from Hemet were given the good news and called back to Base.

We got home about 10 or 10:30 that morning ready for a couple more hours of shut eye and happy that the little boy was all right. • RMRU

## ABORT

**Mission No. 8416A**

**19 July, Thurs.  
Hawly Quarry,  
Rubidoux**

We received a call from the Riverside office of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that two youths were stranded on a rock cliff at Hawly's Quarry near Rubidoux. Team members were contacted and while enroute to Rubidoux the pair were assisted to safety by CDF personnel. Members were notified of the abort via the pager system. • RMRU

## CALL

**Mission No. 8417C**

**24 July, Tues.  
Yosemite National Park**

We received a call through the Mountain Rescue Association for a search in Yosemite National Park. No members were able to respond that distance because the call came in the early part of the week. • RMRU

## SEARCH

**Mission No. 8418M**

**28-29 July Sat.-Sun.  
Deep Canyon,  
Santa Rosa Mountains**

*By Kevin Walker*



At 1:00 P.M. we were contacted by the Indio office of the Riverside County Sheriff that a woman had been swept away by a flash flood in Deep Canyon. Members responded to the Pinyon Fire station. There we were met by Sgt. John Sabastian of the Sheriff's Department. He told us that on Friday afternoon a couple had been swept away by flash flood waters. The man made it out of the water and by the next day (Saturday) hiked out to the highway. He told authorities of what had happened, and was then transported to a desert hospital for numerous minor injuries. We did not have much to go on as information was sketchy.

Don Landells was contacted and responded with one of his Bell Jet Rangers. Fellow RMRU member Brian Hixson and I were assigned to fly with Don, as a foot search was out of the question since flash flood conditions still existed with rain still falling in the area, quite strong at times. We took light packs, loaded up and lifted off for the canyon below. It is always

impressive to see what the force of nature is like. We could see that the water level had already gone down, but the level still made it impossible to cross in all but a couple of places. As Don slowly flew down the canyon sometimes getting within a couple of feet of the water, which could now be called a small river, we saw occasional signs of man, clothing, tires, metal objects, etc. but none matching the description of the woman for whom we were looking. We flew for nearly one and one half hours, and during that time made it all the way out to the settling basin near Rancho Mirage. With light fading we returned to base where Walt Walker and Jim Fairchild replaced Brian and I for a short recon of the search area.

The following morning saw clear skies above. The informant had been released the previous evening from the hospital, and had been brought up to show us where they had been washed away from. Don Landells was back bright and early. The informant was placed in the front with Don, and Walt in the back seat. They were gone only a short time and Don radioed that they had found the PLS (place last seen), and that Walt had been let out in a small side canyon approximately one mile above Deep Canyon. Don returned with the subject, and then flew the rest of the team members in to a ridge several hundred feet above the canyon floor. When all members were in Walt told us what the informant had told Don and him while they were flying. In the afternoon on Friday when it started to rain, the woman and he got out of the rain by getting underneath a large overhang by the creek that had been carved out by the water running at flood level. The overhang was just below a 25 to 30 foot

waterfall. There they stayed until the water level came up to near where they stood. He told us that they decided to get out of where they were, and that the only out was to try and cross the creek. Holding on to one another they stepped in the fast moving water and were immediately swept away. He managed to get to the side, and with numerous cuts, scrapes and bruises made his way out.

With all members in and briefed, Walt flew out and directed the search from base. Working in two groups we searched down canyon. From the PLS to the confluence with Deep Canyon all that was found was pieces of clothing from the pairs' camp. But with that clothing was the top and shorts that the woman was wearing. With nothing found in the side canyon, it was decided to continue down Deep Canyon. The water in Deep had returned to almost normal level for early spring, but this was July. So with members searching on either side, Rob Gardner, Brian and I waded in warm water checking under large rocks where a body might lodge. We continued down canyon for several hours. As we neared an area in the canyon where it becomes quite narrow, base informed us that they could see it beginning to storm up on Santa Rosa and Toro Peaks. As this is what had happened in days previous, Don powered up and quickly flew the team out. With all members back at base the sheriff decided to call off the search. • RMRU



## Who Knows What's Happening

**14 July, Sat.  
Sky Yacht,  
San Jacinto Mountains**

Sometimes things just don't go all that well (in plans that is). July is traditionally technical training on Suicide Rock, but not when there is a lightning and rain show going on. So members sat around inside Norm and Maggie Mellors cabin trying to think of things to do, some trying harder than others. At about 10:00 training chairman Jim (snap the whip) Fairchild said let's go hiking. With a lot of unmentionable remarks we headed up the wet Devil Slide to the saddle, there we split into two groups, some going to Tahquitz Peak and others to Tahquitz Valley for lunch. And then ultimately back to Humber Park and the party that was starting. The rest of the afternoon was spent, well let's say enjoying ones self. It truly was an enjoyable evening in the company of friends. To Norm and Maggie from all the husbands and wives, guys and girl friends, thanks for the gracious hospitality and great friendship. Even though plans may not have worked out it was still a great training. • RMRU



Our Hosts  
Norm & Maggie  
Mellor

*Good Times — Good Friends  
at the Wives and Girlfriends Appreciation Dinner  
The Sky Yacht — 1984*

