



Missing Boy Scout

July 08, 1978
High Country, San Jacinto Mtns
1978-033

By Larry Roland

"Larry, wake up!"

"Huh?"

"Wake up."

"What time is it?"

"You're wanted on the phone."

"It's midnight. Must be Al Andrews." Did you ever wonder why the majority of missions start about midnight?

"Hello, Al."

"Hi Larry, we got a lost Boy Scout in Little Round Valley. We need manpower, can you go?"

"Sure Al. I'm on my way."

Several minutes later I'm packed and enroute to the Idyllwild substation. "What's a Boy Scout doing out this time of night? It's probably past his bedtime," I thought as I wheeled in at 1:30 am. Four others were there ahead of me, Fairchild as operations leader, Pete Carlson, Tom Aldrich and John Muratet. I quickly read the situation dossier and tried to think of a way to get some sleep.

Sheldon Halper, age 14, was last seen at 5:30 pm in Little Round Valley after being separated from his group on the Wellman's Divide trail to San Jacinto Peak, 10,804 feet. He became tired and said he would sit and wait for the rest to climb on up and return. When they returned, all that remained were his 10 essentials. He was gone, taking only his canteen.

"Looks like well have two teams of two, one on the Fuller Ridge Trail, the other on

Marion Mountain," said Fairchild.

'Larry and I go up the Marion Mt. Trail" Pete volunteered. The slim hope of a little more rest suddenly disappeared completely.

The Sheriff drove us to the trailhead and we had nothing to do but put our packs on and start hiking. We quickly warmed to the occasion! Although the Marion Mt. Trail is the shortest trail up the mountain (5 miles) it is also the steepest, 4,240 foot elevation gain. I rationalized that we'd just be working harder for a shorter period of time. Three hours. Later, 5:30 am we were in Little Round stirring the Rangers up to try and find out what was going on.

The Rangers, Art and Dave, were truly a congenial group for being wakened at such an hour on a Sunday morning. They even obliged us with hot water and offered a quick breakfast which Pete and I greatly appreciated after meager rations of jelly beans and dried prunes all night. We made a reconnaissance of the other campers in the area (we woke them all up except for a couple of scouts who couldn't help it anyway) to gather as much information as possible.

One of the groups of scouts said they saw him about 5:30 pm wearing a red plaid shirt and carrying his plastic Sparkletts bottle canteen by a rope around the handle. We said that was our man and thanked them. Sherlock Holmes couldn't have done better. We went back to the Rangers, finished breakfast and headed for the peak. We had learned in our sleuthing that the subject was headed back up the trail to rejoin his party. Sure enough, as we hit the trail above camp his prints were right on top. A blind man could have tracked him.

We radioed base via Sierra Madre on Mt. Wilson and informed them that the subject was headed up the trail and not down as previously thought and that other teams should be deployed on the north side of the mountain in the Tamarack/Round Valley Region or Wellman Divide Area. The Air Force helicopter had just arrived and was preparing to fly the troops in. Forty minutes from Little Round we were on the summit of San Jacinto. Just then the subject walked out to Round Valley and turned himself in to the Ranger. The mission was secured.

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.