



Two men lost and wet

October 26, 1982
South Fork, San Jacinto River
1982-036

Just after midnight, RMRU received a call from the Hemet station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department requesting our services in locating two men overdue in completing a hike from Lake Hemet down the South Fork to the Cranston Ranger Station. Members met at the Hemet station for details and assignments, and then went on their way. Bruce Gahagan and Kevin Walker were the first into the field. Their assignment was to drive to the end of a dirt road that goes into the South Fork about one mile, and then start hiking up the canyon and either cut footprints or locate the missing pair. The Hemet team had one foot team available, so they were assigned to hike in the Rouse Trail to the bottom of the South Fork to try and cut prints in the bottom. On the top of Rouse Hill was the Hemet van. It would relay for teams in the bottom. Coming in from Highway 74 on the South Fork Trail was a double team consisting of Jim Fairchild, Craig Britton, Mark Hebert and Mike Deden. They would hike into the canyon and attempt to also cut tracks or locate the men on the trail.

As the dark early morning hours progressed it began to rain, and continued on for the remainder of the mission. Kevin's team had not found anything in the lower end. The Hemet team did indeed find two sets of tracks when they reached the bottom. That put the two somewhere from the middle of the canyon down. Jim's team had found two sets of prints wandering on the South Fork Trail, so his team stayed with questionable prints.

At first light, Bernie McIlvoy and Dave Ezell started in from the big horse-shoe curve on Highway 74 and went cross country to what they thought would be somewhere in the middle of two teams already in the bottom. The ridge went further down stream than first thought, as Bernie and Dave met up with Kevin and Bruce as they came into the canyon. The group of four continued up stream in the light rain, and within 30 minutes came across two very wet hikers slowly making their way down canyon. After radioing out the good news to base, relay and the other two field teams, the group headed on down canyon and eventually back to Kevin's Jeep CJ5. Just after noon, better than twelve hours later the last of the teams were out and the mission was completed.

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.