

Female hiker separated from group

June 8, 1985
Fuller Ridge, San Jacinto Mtns
1985-027

By Jim Fairchild

A day hike in the mountains with friends and wonderful activity., Occasionally something goes awry, such as one person getting separated from the group, or left behind. Both these problems arose on Saturday when Meriche Petrich, 43, of Cypress, found herself alone on the Fuller Ridge Trail. This caused her to hurriedly look for friends in a bit of a panic, then she lost the trail where it seems to be indistinct. She headed steeply downhill on the north side of the ridge, into the East Branch of Snowcreek. To have persisted down this ever steepening face would have brought her to cliffs and waterfalls. Before long she slipped and fell, losing her grip on the hiking staff. She was able to recover the staff, then changed her direction and climbed for a while - until late in the afternoon. She came to a hump that had a flat space and stopped for the night. Warmed by a small fire, she made it to dawn, then continued upward.

Meanwhile, her friends had re-grouped at the roadhead and discovered Meriche's absence. They re-deployed Saturday afternoon to look for her, then reported her as missing. RMRU was called, and several of us gathered at Camp Lawler to organize a search. Because most of our faithful members were still descending Tahquitz Canyon, we called in Sierra Madre. Soon Dave Ezell and Ed Hill were proceeding up the Fuller Ridge Trail. Before long two teams of Sierra Madre searchers were on their way up the Marion Mountain and Seven Pines Trails. After dawn, Walt Walker and John Dew flew some search with Mike Donovan piloting the Landells Aviation helicopter. Then Brian Hixson and Gordon Lee were flown in with two Sierra Madre members to strategic spots for more ground search.

Before too long a van driven by an Outward Bound instructor arrived at Camp Lawler, the passenger was Meriche. She had ascended to the trail, turned the right direction (west), and continued down to the roadhead. She was fine, hungry and thirsty. She had seen the helicopter, but was in thick forest. She had been too far downhill to hear the searchers shouts. We were thankful for her good health and return.

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.