



Two boys camping alone

January 11, 1986
Long Valley
1986-002

By Rob Gardner

The RMRU was in the California State Park for training from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. When the first group of team members entered the wilderness area they were put on alert by the State Park Ranger to watch for two fourteen year old boys that had entered the area, destined for Round Valley. Rangers were concerned because these boys, Ken Rivera and John Conrad of Palm Springs, were inexperienced hikers and poorly equipped for winter camping.

Ken and John had a parent consent letter to obtain a permit and enter the wilderness area. Unable to disallow the young hikers to proceed on, Ranger Robert Mendoza had cautioned the boys and advised them to stay in one spot if they were to get lost or into difficulties.

The first RMRU team hiked to Round Valley, via the high trail, in the dark on Friday night. They did not see any sign of Ken or John. The second team hiked to Round Valley via the lower trail in the early daylight hours of Saturday morning. It was the second team that found Ken and John.

A voice was heard calling out. Initially, the direction the voice came from could not be established. However, as the team of eight quickly switched from the alert mode to the search mode the direction was pinpointed and voice contact was established. Direct contact quickly followed.

Ken had slipped on the icy ground and gashed his head on Friday night. Ken and John had holed up under a large boulder, not too far from the lower cross-country ski trail to Round Valley. They were less than a mile out of Long Valley, however, they did not know their way back to Long Valley.

Cameron Robbins of RMRU checked John's head injury which appeared to be superficial. Ron Pierson and Cameron escorted Ken and John to the Long Valley State Park Ranger Station and released them to Ranger Robert Mendoza.

Proper experience and equipment may have prevented John's slip on the ice and the boys' feeling of being lost. However, having followed Ranger Mendoza's advice to stay in one place after they decided they were lost, and John had become injured,

may have prevented more serious injury to these young men.

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.