

Missing dirt biker rider

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Rancho California Area
1986-006

By Kevin Walker

There are searches and there are searches. In all the time that I have been with the team I think that I can count on one hand the amount of missions in the Elsinore area that have been straight forward. I don't know why, the staff out of Elsinore from the Sheriff's Department is top notch, and we have many friends there. If not I could not say these things.

We were called and asked to meet at first light near Lake Skinner in the Rancho California area to look for a missing dirt bike rider. Eleven members responded, and we were led in through a maze of dirt roads back to near where Rick Rhines, age 25, was last seen out in front of the group he was riding with, heading away from Vail Lake. They were riding to a cabin that the group had back in the hills. Rick pulled away from the rest of the group and was not seen again. The Sheriff authorized a helicopter and Landells Aviation was contacted.

In the meantime we had Glenn's big heavy Ford Bronco and my all terrain four-wheel drive Jeep CJ5. Glenn took Rob Gardner and Cameron Robbins, and I took Henry Negrete and Ron Pierson. We followed the informants back into the more severe dirt roads that the group rode through the previous day. The hills were covered with hundreds of dirt roads, trails and other paths. Along the way something really entertaining happened. I went past a narrow spot in



Glenn Henderson

IF YOU'VE SEEN ONE ROAD... - RMRU ground teams look over one of the many 4-wheel drive dirt roads in the Rancho California area trying to locate Rick Rhines, missing for better than a day.

the road that had been partially washed out by recent rains, and of course my nimble Jeep had no problem with the obstacle but when Glenn came along with that thing of his, the ground naturally gave way. Well, there we were, I was in front on a road that stopped a short distance up on the end of the ridge. At any rate we worked for awhile digging at the vehicle, not really getting anywhere. Cameron came up with a good idea, we dug out in front of the Bronco so that I could come in and push with the Jeep. After years of verbal abuse from Glenn about my Jeep, I finally had him where I wanted him. He had to say please. With a hard push from RMRU 4 (my Jeep), he was out. Fortunately that was the only major trouble of the day.

By mid morning Brian Novak from Landells Aviation arrived with a jet ranger. While we continued to search on the ground with our vehicles, Brian flew Walt Walker and a deputy in the search area. As the day progressed we traded people off in the helicopter and continued on the ground.

Late in the day we talked to some locals building a home, and asked if they had seen Rick. They said they had seen the group riding around and carrying on, and that they felt the group had been drinking well, come to find out they had been. As the sun was getting low on the horizon we were called back to base. The subject had been located. Once back, we learned what had happened.

While riding the previous day Rick fell and had hurt his leg. He said he had wandered around for a while and ended up going down a canyon. He did not know where, but had spent the night out, fortunately for him we were experiencing spring like conditions so the nights were not that cold. He ended up walking out to a road and hitchhiking in to Temecula. So the troops loaded up and made their way back to civilization and then home. Thanks to the Sheriff for their usual great support, Brian and Jim from Landells Aviation and a special thanks to Glenn for making my day.

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.