



Child missing from campground

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Black Mountain Group Campground

1987-015

By Kevin Walker

Every member holds certain missions close at heart. It might be a difficult rescue, a long search, some sort of funny operation, any number of combinations. But ones that always come to mind quite easily, are the searches for young children. The following is an account of just such a mission.

2300 hours Friday, a call from the Hemet station, of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, a young child missing out of the Black Mountain Group Campground. For me, there is nothing more important, this is what search and rescue is all about.

0030 hours Saturday, 12 members responded to the group camp which lies on the Western Slope of the San Jacinto Mountains near the Fuller Ridge. Walt Walker, Operations Leader interviews leaders of the group which is from an LDS church in Hemet. The purpose for being in the mountains: a father and son campout. It is learned that after dinner a group of boys were playing in the camp, the group was called to come to the campfire ring for the evening campfire. All the boys except one made it to the fire. A search of the area was initiated for five year old Dean Peterson. With no results, a parent was sent to drive out the long dirt road to call for help. For Co. James Paterson, father to young Dean it would be a long wait.

Teams are formed in two's. Rob Gardner and Bob Sairs to cut for sign along the dirt road heading towards Camp Lackey to the East. Jay Pion and Ray Hussey to take the road to the West. Ron Pierson and Henry Negrete to cut for prints around the upper perimeter of the camp, and Glenn Henderson and Kevin Walker to take the stream bed and follow it out to camp. Packs are loaded and members head out on assignments. No prints are found on the close in search because of the earlier search efforts. Members continue to expand the search area. As the search goes on plans are made for the morning. Because a child is involved, and the nights are still in the low 40's other MRA teams are contacted, and a helicopter is authorized for first light. Still no substantial clues as to the direction young Dean might have taken.

0400 hours while heading down the stream bed, Glenn spots what could be a small foot print in the moist stream bottom, Kevin looks ahead. A definite print is found by Kevin, it is reported to base. The teams continues downstream calling Dean's name. Kevin calls out from the top of the small waterfall. The greatest joy for a searcher can have is hear in the distance, a faint "I'm here." The contact is reported to base and the team



Rob Gardner

Kevin Walker, Dean Peterson and Glenn Henderson

quickly moves down the now narrow and steep stream several hundred yards away. The voice sounds closer. The pair wondered how a little one can still be up and moving with it being so cold. The reason is soon learned as youth Dean had climbed out of the bottom of the stream and went up the side several hundred feet and got on top of a boulder, there he stayed. It was considerably warmer and the air was not a moist. Dean is cold, hungry and scared, but most importantly, uninjured. Glenn's wool sweater is put on the youth, Kevin's balaclava (like a wool cap) is placed over Dean's head, and then zipped up in with Glenn in his 60/40 parka. As teams arrive, they find Dean smiling and enjoying Glenn's candy. The Troggstiz (A device for carrying a subject on a rescuers back). Dean is secure in it on Kevin's back. The Group then hikes back up to camp and a very anxious father. Breakfast is made by the elders of the group. All is well..

..For Glenn, myself and the entire group of searchers, the reuniting of the father and son are all the thanks necessary. We are proud of what we do, and for Dean and his family, 1987 would hold another birthday, another summer vacation and all the things that make being a five year old something special.

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.