

Two hiked in, one hiked out

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North Face San Jacinto
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By Jim Fairchild

Lawrence Maira, and a friend were backpacking in the vicinity of Fuller Ridge and Deer Springs. About their second evening, some confusion as to location occurred. They camped on the west side of the Middle Fork on Snowcreek, where there is a spectacular view over, down, and up that can be seen. Folly Peak loomed high above to the southeast with San Gorgonio Pass 5000 feet below.

The next morning they packed, then headed down northwesterly. Soon they saw Camp Lackey, owned by Riverside's YMCA. For some reason they left their pack high on the mountain, and split-up to find the camp, having lost sight of it because of the gullies and thick trees. The friend made it to a point where he could see camp, then returned to the packs. Mr. Maira was not there. So, he went to report Lawrence's disappearance.

Following organization and deployment, Henry Negrete, Ron Pierson, and the writer, accompanied by the informant, hiked together up the mountain from Camp Lackey to find the packs. If Mr. Maira was not there, we'd track him from either the packs or the last campsite. After some wondering and watching searchers in Western's helicopter driving about in the sky, we found the packs, but no lost subject.

We found good tracks scuffing downhill, but the informant said the tracks were his. We then searched uphill after checking the area carefully.

Our search pattern led up a ridge featuring huge tall pine trees, enormous boulders, and views of Mt. San Jacinto's North Face. Tracks led to our backpackers' last campsite, but no tracks led elsewhere except those leading down to camp.

Other RMRU teams were searching above and below our area. We took a different route back to the packs. Ron went far below and found the lost hikers' prints. The informant was getting quite concerned and agitated about his friend's absence, so we called for pilot Pete Gillies to pick him up at the helispot 300 yards from the Pack's location.

Ron and Steve and I prepared to charge down the mountain following tracks into the rugged, precipitous West Fork of Snowcreek and catch up to the elusive lost subject.

But wait! That last garbled radio transmission hinted that our subject was located. Sure enough, he had hiked down to Cabazon and was OK.

Pete rounded up the search parties and flew us to Vista Grande Ranger Station. Hence another great exploration of beautiful terrain was over.

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.