



Search produced unexpected find

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San Jacinto High Country
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By Henry Negrete

Summer is never complete without the multiple calls for help to find lost or injured hikers in our wilderness.

This mission was concerning one Jim Cox, a 27 year old from Upland. He was a member of a party of five, who had come up to the high country via the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway to enjoy a few days of backpacking. On the evening of the 27th of June, the group was day hiking from their base camp near Caramba to explore other outlying areas. After a short while Mr. Cox decided that he did not wish to proceed with the others and would return to base camp.

The rest of the group was not happy with Jim's decision to curtail the group's exploring activities and reluctantly followed suit in order to keep the group together. Upon arriving back in camp, Jim was nowhere in sight. At first they thought he had stopped off to do his duties in the bushes, but after a while they became concerned enough to back track and start searching for him. They ended up searching all night and the next morning to no avail.

The group decided to split-up and send two hikers out to alert the authorities while the other two waited around camp just in case he found his way back.

RMRU was notified in the afternoon and met with the reporting party in Idyllwild to be briefed personally on all the incidentals that had transpired.

We were advised that Jim was still experiencing some side effects from a traffic accident in which he suffered head injuries and could possibly have become disoriented in his direction towards camp.

With the better part of the daylight behind us already, we jumped into high gear for action. We secured a helicopter from Landells Aviation, and were soon sending in teams for the search.

This particular area was of grave concern to us, because from the area at which they camped one can see the alluring lights of Palm Springs. At night it appears that one can easily reach the security of the city within an hour or two. In fact the canyon

known as Tahquitz is one of the most treacherous routes out of the mountain for any novice hiker.

One plan was to do a quick over flight of the canyon to see if we could spot him, and drop a "bash" team to bomb down the canyon. Other teams were placed at optimal view points in order to seal off the canyon and possibly expedite Jim's recovery.

I drew a "Lucky" straw. My assignment was to be a member of the bash team. "Lucky" on three accounts, one that it was probably the "hottest" assignment, two, that my search partner was Bernie McIlvoy, who blazes down trails faster than a loose carabiner wrap on rappel (it's kind of hard to enjoy the scenic route with this guy), and the third is yet to be revealed.

After being dropped at one of the many landing zones (LZs) that RMRU has adopted to expedite team deployment, Bernie and I picked our way down and weaved wild grape vine which covered the floor of the subdrainage leading to the infamous "Tahquitz Canyon." We survived our swimming lesson in the grape vine quite well, still very pumped about the possibility of making the "find."

We got into the main drainage and began an intensive search for shoe prints along the creek bed, looking for any unusual sign of someone having come down this far. As our search continued, alas we found something strange. We discovered a green vinyl water hose coming down the course of the creek.

We were relatively sure that this was not any "sign" left by our subject, and proceeded with little more caution and a lot more awareness.

Bernie and I bet among ourselves that we knew exactly what that little green hose was being used for, and lo and behold, not much further down the canyon was the greenest patch of "wildwood weed" you ever did see. Not being gluttons for punishment we were wanting to move away from the area as soon as we could establish that our subject Kim Cox had not also been in the area.

Soon was not soon enough, just as we started to leave we were confronted by a very burly looking character who inquired as to what was going on. As I sized him up I noticed he held by his side an old beat-up 30 cal. carbine rifle. I explained to him about our search for Jim Cox and asked if he had seen any one fitting his description. He responded no, and then expressed disgruntledness about his growing season being disrupted. We advised this character that there would be many other rescue people coming down the canyon and he would have ample opportunities to report anything that he saw. We did this as much for our protection as any help he might provide. As soon as we were out of earshot from him we reported back to base by radio what we had encountered.

We were given the option to be immediately picked-up by helicopter or proceed with our assignment. We explained that we did not really feel threatened and felt it more

important to continue the assignment.

Just as darkness was upon us we received a radio transmission that Jim Cox has somehow found his way off the mountain and returned home. His parents explained that apparently he was quite mixed-up and had actually thought that his group had left without him instead of the other way around. There are appropriate words for people who sit snugly at home while volunteers search desperately for find them, but none good enough for the ears or eyes of our readers.

Never the less RMRU was glad he was safe and Bernie and I made the best of all we had been through.

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.