



Lost 43 year old man out of campground

June 22, 1991
Boulder Basin Campground
1991-017

By Henry Negrete

Boulder Basin is a beautiful camp-ground nestled high atop Black Mountain in the San Jacinto Range. RMRU has held training in the area in the past; all of use love the campground, none of us like the long switch backing road used to get there.

At approximately 6:00 p.m., RMRU was called to make this trip to search for a 43 year old man who had gone for a day hike with his wife and not returned. Daylight was soon to leave us, so we rushed up the steep dusty road.

As we gathered in the campground, we quickly set up base and scoured the ground around his campsite to try and isolate any good shoe prints he may have left behind which might enable us to match them in the field and track him down. With good shoe print information in hand, RMRU deployed several teams covering all nearby trails and drainages.

Tracking became increasingly difficult because of the steepening terrain on the north slopes of the mountain, and travel was made more dangerous because of nightfall.

Juliane Christinson and I were assigned the western perimeter leading north down into the main drainage.

The late hours of night soon turned into the wee hours of the morning as we worked our way down the mountain side. We could soon see the lights of Cabazon off in the distance, and looking back into the darkness deep in the canyon, we could make out faint lights of scattered residences.

Suddenly our eyes fixed on an amber light well below which seemed to be twinkling. At first we thought it might be another search team with a mini strobe light, but after checking via radio with other teams, none of them were in that area. It was apparent that it might be a campfire. So Juliane and I requested a team to drive around the mountain and attempt to reach the fire from the bottom.

When we saw the bottom team (consisting of Ron Ackert and Jason Beeman) approaching, we gave them coordinates to direct their way. Each time the bottom team tried to get close they were stopped by huge, thick walls of brush. After many vain

attempts to reach the campfire, the bottom team prepared a helispot so we could bring in a helicopter at first light. The CHP helicopter stationed in Thermal California was available to assist us.

As the bottom team worked to prepare the heli-spot, I decided that I would hike further down the canyon and attempt to make voice contact with the keepers of the campfire.

Well, to make a long story short and to convey a lesson well learned, the campfire turned out to be that of the subject. He was in okay shape, and gratefully accepted a helicopter ride out of his predicament. As for me, I wound-up finding out just how thick the brush actually was, wishing all the while that I had brush clearing tools with me.

I spent quite a while working my way to a clearing large enough for helicopter pickup. By then all other teams had been picked up by helicopter or able to hike back to base.

All ended well, the subject learned about the importance of having a map on hand, and I now always carry a machete in my pack.

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.