



Missing 13 year old San Jacinto Mountains

July 4, 2012

Humber Park Idyllwild

2012-025

Written by Craig Wills

I was home from work about 30 minutes, sitting down with a sandwich and our newest edition of the weekly newspaper when my cell phone sounded off at 4:07 pm. Since I had just sent my oldest daughter in Sacramento a quick “Happy 4th” message, I figured it was her writing back. My Wife’s kids were with the Grandparents and she was embarking on a great barbecue plan to celebrate the day. I was planning on romance, not rescue.

I read the text and called in to the response line. When I heard it was for a missing 13 year old kid, my emotions really kicked in and I knew I wanted to participate. My Wife was very understanding and presented me with the proverbial question, “When do you think you will be home?” Even though I am one of the newest Idyllwild team members, without hundreds of missions under my belt, she is becoming used to my answer. “Sorry Honey, I really don’t know”. Thankfully, I had just set up my borrowed pack the evening before. I mentally prepared myself that this might develop into an overnight search and the first use of my new sleeping bag.

I phoned Lee quickly and learned that he was going, so I was on my way. I drove up to Humber Park and saw two Deputies in the upper parking area. By the time I stopped my truck and walk over to them, Lee was already leaning over the hood of a car belonging to the missing boy’s family. With notepad and pen in hand, he began asking all of the pertinent questions that might help us in our attempts to find his son. Moments later, Helene, Les, Ralph and Donny arrived. We were all eager to glean as much detail as possible. Without good cell reception, Les agreed to head back toward town and contact the Ranger at the Palm Springs Tram to see if the boy had by chance shown up there.

It seems that the boy and his father had parked their car in Humber Park and hiked up to the Round Valley area the night before. From their camp, they hiked to the Tram and enjoyed a meal. Eventually making it back to their camp area and spending the night. The next day, the father let the boy begin the hike back to Humber Park on his own, with a head-start of approximately 15 minutes. The idea was that the father would catch

up with the boy and they would hike down to the parking lot. After the father completed this hike down and reached his car, he realized that the boy was nowhere to be found. He called 911 and ultimately RMRU was dispatched by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department.

After confirming that the boy had not connected with anyone at the Tram area, Les and Donny agreed to drive there and begin hiking back toward Humber. Our remaining members split into two teams. Lee and Helene were team 1 and Ralph and I became team 2. We reviewed the supplies in our packs and Lee checked the radios. Team 1 handling base camp until others arrived, while Ralph and I headed out at about 5pm from the parking lot heading up the Devils Slide Trail, pacing ourselves and discussing our strategies. (OK, we were putting positive thoughts out into the Universe to locate the boy).

We encountered a couple of sets of hikers coming down the trail and inquired about a boy matching the description of ours who was hiking alone. No one had seen him. We kept on. After about 40 minutes on the trail, up near the Middle Springs area, we spotted the boy. Orange T-shirt, blue shorts and hiking shoes. We called out his name, and sure enough, it was our subject. He admitted to becoming lost and really could not share with us what pathways he had taken. Ralph immediately notified our base camp at the Humber parking lot. We did a quick assessment of the boy and turned back for home. We met up with the Deputies and our Team members and waited for the father to return from Idyllwild where he had driven to notify the boy's mother via phone. What a good feeling to know that a potential tragedy had been avoided and I still made it home in time to take a shower and meet up with some friends for a 4th of July celebration that I will never forget. My "first find" as they call it. Thank you to my Team members for their encouragement and support.



Ralph, subject, and Craig at Humber Park
Photo by Helene Lohr

RMRU team members present: Lee Arnson, Donny Goetz, Ralph Hoetger, Helene Lohr, Les Walker, and Craig Wills.

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.