

*Four years ago Jimmy Beveridge lost his young life on Palomar Mountain (CA). Today searchers are finding young kids hugging trees—and surviving.*

## Search for Eli

### Hug-A-Tree Bears Fruit

*From SAR DOG ALERT*

One minute four-year-old Eli was there; the next, he was gone. A little after noon on August 31 of this year, on an end-of-summer outing at Marin Sierra Scout Camp, the shy little boy suddenly disappeared just a few yards from a group campground. His mother had been right behind him, his father was a short distance ahead. Eli was wearing only swimming trunks, a T-shirt and tennis shoes, and there had been frost the night before.

Other campers and scout camp-staff searched for him for an hour, then called Nevada County (CA) Sheriff's Department. Two Sheriff's patrol dogs responded right away, and SAR Coordinator Sgt. Tim Hargrove, a graduate of NASAR's Managing the Search Function Course, called for additional dogs from the California Rescue Dog Association (CARDA).

No one knew the sole pattern of Eli's shoes, and there were lots of other children around the camp. Scented on articles of Eli's clothing, the search dogs worked in circles through the immediate camp area, then led their handlers along a maze of camp trails, through brush and down rocky gullies, still moving in circles. Late that night a CARDA shepherd retraced a route the missing boy had taken 10 hours earlier with his father; the father, who accompanied the dog team, confirmed the trail. But still the trails led searchers in circles.

At first light on Sept. 1 there were 15 members of the Nevada County Sheriff's Mounted Posse, over 40 inmates from the California Youth

Authority (CYA), two Sheriff's patrol dogs and 10 CARDA dog teams on scene, along with campers and camp staff who accompanied other searchers in the field.

A CARDA handler drew up sectors for methodical coverage by dog teams and CYA crews; these included the camp itself with a lake and two ponds, the woods to the north, dropping abruptly down rock faces into Gonelson Canyon, the Yuba River and Lake Spaulding. Meanwhile, mounted searchers began riding trails, and a CARDA bloodhound started from the PLS. A CHP helicopter began an aerial search, and a Sheriff's boat patrolled Lake Spaulding. At base, a handler without a dog helped coordinate communications on two frequencies, kept radio logs and maps, and developed second-shift assignments.

By checking places where Eli was known to have been, and eliminating the prints of other children in camp, a

CARDA handler was able to sketch the missing boy's probable track. He found more tracks in an area of the camp where dogs had trailed the night before.

As searchers completed their initial assignments, the search moved west. A CYA crew had found prints resembling Eli's near water tanks above camp to the northwest, and at 1043 mounted rescuers discovered more tracks at the head of a drainage leading down to Lake Spaulding. An excited horseman reported, "they look just like the sketch at base."

Meanwhile, the bloodhound had worked around to the water tanks where Eli's footprints had been found; "It sure was nice to see those tracks as my dog went by," the handler said. The hound stood on top of the ridge and "pointed" across to the west, then the dog team worked down into the drainage and joined the horsemen, who had carefully preserved the tracks they found.

In changeable wind conditions, and with Eli's tracks going in different directions, the bloodhound kept working the drainage. Convinced that the missing boy was close by, the handler called for more dog teams to work the drainage.

One CARDA team was already searching east along the shore of Lake Spaulding, toward the mouth of that drainage, and three more teams headed out to work the drainage from the top. As the bloodhound continued to puzzle out the missing boy's scent, an accompanying mounted searcher found more signs; pursuing it, he found Eli sitting on a rock, talking quietly to a hollow tree trunk—just as Ab Taylor's "Hug-A-Tree" program had taught him to do. (See *Response!* Spring 1982, p. 15.)

"Where've you been?" he asked his rescuers.

Eli was weak from lack of sleep and dehydration, with insect bites and scratches on bare arms and legs and caked blood on his cracked lips, but otherwise in good condition after his 23-hour ordeal.

As word came over the radio that Eli was found, searchers hugged each other and tired dogs presented sticks to their handlers for a tug-o-war reward. People who had searched or driven through the night all stuck around to see Eli, sitting tall on a posse member's horse, ride back into camp. □



*Editor's Note: This article is reprinted with permission from our good friends at SAR DOG ALERT newsletter, Hatch and Judy Graham. They were at this search and supplied the photo shown. Subscriptions to SAR DOG ALERT are only \$6.50 per year. Contact Judy Graham at P.O. Box 39, Somerset, CA 95684; 916/621-1833.*

*For more information on how to be a Hug-A-Tree instructor, contact Hug-A-Tree, 6465 Lance Way, San Diego, CA 92120 or call 619/286-7536.*