

Dave Carter



APPALACHIAN SEARCH & RESCUE CONFERENCE, INC.

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NEWCOMB STATION  
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22904

28 NOV 92

John Punches, SWVaMRG GTO  
628 Lee St  
Blacksburg VA 24060

Dear John,

Attached you will find a Washington Post article which appeared soon after the Old Rag mission earlier this month. I think that you will agree with me that the highlighted section of the second page is an example of why searchers should not talk to the press unless the IC has so authorized them.

I am sure this person's remarks seemed very reasonable at the time, but taken out of context and read quickly, they potentially characterize the ASRC as "quitters" or wimps. However, regardless of the amount of harm that may have been done in this particular instance, she is clearly in violation of ASRC policy, and should know better.

I hope that you will have a stern conversation with this individual, and explain the potential ramifications of such a breach of policy. At the same time, I do understand that it is sometimes difficult to avoid talking to the press, and I do not personally feel that any further action is necessary in this instance.

Please ensure that other members of your group are receiving proper training on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Bruce Hemmer  
ASRC Secretary

cc: Robert Koester, ASRC Agency Rep., Old Rag mission, Nov 92  
John Casey, SWVaMRG Chair  
David Carter, ASRC Chair

# MIETRO

## Lost Va. Boy Walks Out of Woods Without a Worry

By Patricia Davis  
Washington Post Staff Writer

SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK, Nov. 9—A 12-year-old Virginia boy who became separated from his Sunday school group during an outing here Saturday said he survived two days in rugged terrain and below-freezing temperatures by sleeping under a blanket of leaves and eating Butterfingers and a sandwich offered by a group of 25 elderly hikers, who didn't realize he was the target of a massive search.

Park Ranger Robert Fleming wasn't even sure the youth he spotted about 11:30 a.m. today—walking nonchalantly next to a hiker he had met along a trail on Old Rag Mountain—was the one that 125 rangers and volunteers had been searching for.

"I yelled, 'Donny!' I was more shaken up than he was," Fleming recalled today.

Donald "Donny" Wentz, of Partlow, Va., south of Fredericksburg, was wearing only a light jacket over his hooded Dallas Cowboys sweatshirt. He calmly told Fleming he was kind of tired and cold after 45 hours lost in the woods—and that he was afraid he would miss wrestling practice at school this afternoon.

Fleming stuck the 115-pound youth with the soggy tennis shoes in his National Park Service Bronco and cranked up the heater.

A nearby paramedic gave Donny a quick

checkup, which had the same results as a more thorough examination later at University of Virginia Hospital in Charlottesville: Donny survived with barely a scratch.

In addition to a cut on his right knee and scrapes on his legs and thighs, Teresa Schlager, a physician, said Donny had "very minor hypothermia," a low temperature resulting from exposure.

He also complained of a stiff neck and back.

"He was in very good shape," said Richard Christoph, director of the pediatric emergency service.

Donny was kept overnight for observation at the hospital, where he had a cheeseburger and french fries for lunch.

"They expect him to do fine," Park Ranger Terry Lindsay said at the command post set up in the Big Meadows area of the park. "This is a tough little 12-year-old."

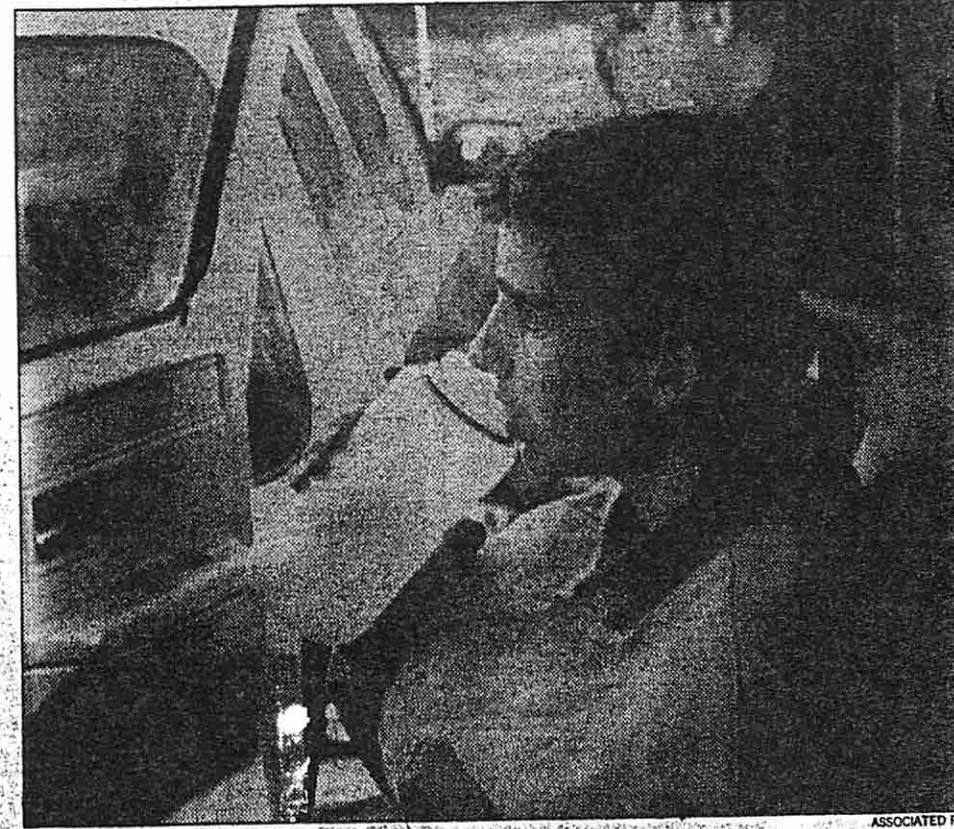
Donny's father, Robert Wentz, would not speak with reporters today.

In a statement, he said, "My son is in fine shape and we are very grateful to all those who helped."

Donny had been on a Sunday school outing from Spotswood Baptist Church in Fredericksburg, a trip classes had made before.

"There's no way to express how happy we are," said a church member who an-

See BOY, E6, Col. 1



Donald Wentz, 12, has a drink after wandering for nearly two days in Shenandoah National Park. The youth, whose disappearance led to a massive search, found his own way to safety.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

He was kind of belligerent and his gestures showed he was angry," she said. "Out of the corner of my eye I saw him make a certain motion as though he was going into his

because he pulled his hand back out of his pocket. But he didn't walk away.

A third officer arrived, and DelValle told him to handcuff Gomez. DelValle testified last week that the

allowing Gomez to escape. Jewell said she ran into the street to help Officer Tymia Prince who was confronting Gomez. Moments later, Gomez was shot, and an angry crowd starting throwing bottles.

Later, under cross-examination she said she talked with Police Chief Issac Fulwo, an unidentified union lawyer, and parents before making a statement to a homicide detective.

# Lost Boy Met Hikers In Woods

BOY, From E1

answered the phone there this afternoon. "We had everybody in the church in massive prayer all day Sunday. We prayed for God to watch over him. This has been a real answer to our prayers. We are really pleased."

While Donny earlier ate barbecue and french fries and drank Gatorade provided by the rangers, he told Fleming that he had gotten off the mountain trail on Saturday because he was trying to beat his friends to the parking lot.

Donny was hiking a 7.2-mile trail when the others in his group—his 14-year-old brother, Robert, three other children and four adults—lost sight of him about 3 p.m. Saturday.

A search that began with two bloodhounds grew quickly to more than 100 rangers and volunteers.

Light snow fell Saturday night and temperatures dropped into the teens. Foot-long icicles were hanging from boulders in the park.

Park rangers were especially worried because Donny was an inexperienced hiker, was wearing light clothing and had only two Butterfinger candy bars and two Cokes with him.

As Donny told rangers and doctors today, he kept walking during the day and slept under rock overhangs at night, covering himself with a layer of leaves and sticks, held down against the wind with a few small rocks.

At one point, he said, he waved at a helicopter overhead but it didn't see him through the thick brush.



BY BRAD WYE—THE WASHINGTON POST

*"Man, I couldn't believe it. It was the happiest day in my Park Service life."*

— Robert Fleming

"I couldn't see the ground because of all the boulders," said Jennifer Heath, 27, a member of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference who called it quits about 9 p.m. Saturday. "We quit because it wasn't safe."

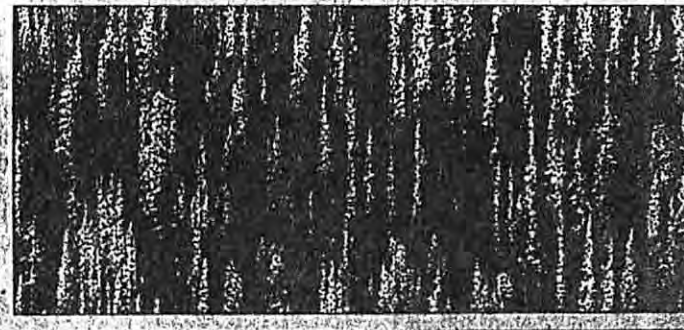
But Heath, a communications officer with the police department in Blacksburg, Va., did not give up a search that also included several dog-tracking organizations, horses and four-wheel-drive vehicles.

## WHEN A CHILD GETS LOST IN THE WOODS

Here are survival tips from Virginia's Hug-A-Tree and Survival program for children lost in the woods:

- **Stop.** Stay in one place. You'll be found faster.
- **Don't Panic.** When lost, fear is often more dangerous than the cold or the hunger. Don't get separated from your clothes, hat or gloves.
- **Hug a tree,** once you know you are lost. Hugging a tree, and even leaning against it can calm you. By staying in one place, you will be found more quickly.
- **Don't climb a tree.** You might fall.
- **Always carry a trash bag and whistle.** By making a hole in the bag and putting your face and head through the hole, the bag will keep you warm and dry. The whistle will carry farther than your voice.
- **Your parents won't be angry.** Children have avoided searchers because they were ashamed of getting lost and afraid of being punished.
- **Make yourself big.** From helicopters, people are hard to see when they are standing up. Wait in a clearing, if possible. Wear brightly colored clothing. Lie down when the helicopter flies over.
- **Don't be afraid of noises at night.** Yell. If it is an animal, it will run away. If it is a searcher, you are found.
- **Do not build a fire.** It can be dangerous, especially in dry areas.
- **Do not eat plants and berries.** They might make you very sick. You can go three days without water and three weeks without food, if necessary.

SOURCES: Virginia Department of Emergency Services and Boy Scout Handbook (1990).



Somehow, the group of elderly hikers, who Donny said he met up with this morning didn't realize the boy they offered a sandwich was the one being anxiously sought. Nor, apparently, did the mystery hiker who was seen walking with Donny today. Rangers confirmed that a group of about 25 senior citizens was hiking in the park. They said the hiker seen today with Donny disappeared in the hubbub and remains unidentified.

Rangers estimated their search cost \$14,000.

Donny wasn't sure what the fuss was about, Fleming said. "I don't think he realized what was going on—all the people," Fleming said. "Man, I could have loved it. It was the happiest day in my Park Service life."

Staff writer Maria E. Odum, special correspondent Jim M. and Charlottesville contributor report.

# Educators Disagree on Worthiness of Combining

COMBINATION, From E1

tween the two classes of kids. The one teacher would teach the first classes, although officials could men