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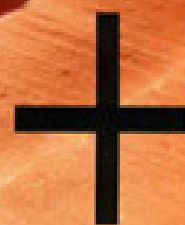
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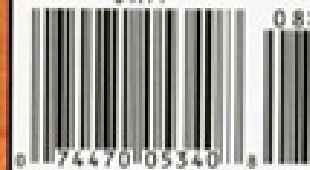


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## SURVIVAL

## Summit Fever

Name William Parven Age 16 Predicament Lost, no food, knocked unconscious Location Mt. San Geronio, CA Days lost 4

[1] Parven made three smart moves—faced inward, carefully placed his feet, and dropped pebbles to gauge water depth—and one stupid one. He descended an unknown cliff whose bottom he couldn't see.

[2] Temps can vary 30°F from top to bottom on the highest peak in Southern California.

[3] The Vivian Creek Trail is the shortest—and steepest—route to the summit, with 5,500 feet of elevation gain in 8 miles. It's a walk-up, but exhausting. Prepare by doing practice hikes.

[4] Parven kept a small daypack containing water bottles, a flashlight, beef jerky, a pocket knife, and a sweater. He neglected to pack most of the 10 Essentials.

[5] He had a case of summit fever. Plan your turnaround time and stick to it. If experienced hikers voice warnings, listen to them.

[6] Smart—try to retrace your steps. Dumb—move too fast to spot junctions, blazes, signs, and other clues. When you know you've gotten farther off track, stay put.

[7] Running, along with fast breathing, a rapid pulse, and negative thoughts, are signs of panic. Regain control. Sit down and breathe deeply. Then get logical and focus on one small task after another. Stay positive.

[8] His clothes: hiking shorts, cotton T-shirt, cotton socks, hiking boots. Sensible footwear, but cotton attire (instead of wicking fabrics) exposed Parven to sweat-induced chills at night.

[9] His father and sister shouted his name as they searched the trail. Parven was already too far away. Emergency gear tip: Carry a whistle to alert rescuers to your location.

[10] Parven awoke to discover a black bear 10 feet away. He tossed his backpack (which contained beef jerky) into the woods—good move—and the bear vanished. He retrieved his pack in the morning.

[11] Parven moved away from the summit and marked trails, where rescuers were searching for him. But the stream did provide access to water.

The last thing William Parven remembers was standing above a waterfall. It was 10 feet high—less intimidating than the **25-foot cascade he scrambled down minutes earlier**<sup>1</sup>. But somehow, he slipped.

When he woke up, he was lying in a pool of water. His ribs ached, and he felt blood on his head. Dazed, Parven stood up and continued walking—hoping no more waterfalls lay ahead.

It was Wednesday afternoon, August 7, 2001, and Parven had been lost on California's 11,499-foot **Mt. San Geronio**<sup>2</sup> for three days. It all began at 8 a.m. Sunday morning, when he started up the **eight-mile Vivian Creek Trail**<sup>3</sup> with his father and younger sister.

Parven, 16, considered himself to be in good shape. Two years earlier, he had climbed Mt. Charleston near Las Vegas, Nevada. But by 3 p.m. the trio was still three miles from the top. Parven removed his pack, gave the heaviest gear to his sister, and told her he'd be back down by 6 p.m. **Without telling his father, he took off alone for the summit**<sup>4</sup>.

Parven met several hikers on the way who advised him to turn around. **But he ignored them, and by 5 p.m. he stood on the summit**<sup>5</sup>.

Realizing he was behind schedule, Parven descended fast. His first indication of trouble was when **the trail vanished into an animal track**<sup>6</sup>. "I kept moving back and forth trying to find the main trail," he says. **As daylight faded, he started to run**<sup>7</sup>, expecting to find the Vivian Creek Trail around each bend.

At nightfall, Parven sat down in a small clearing and **put on a sweater**<sup>8</sup>. Knowing that **his father and sister were looking for him**<sup>9</sup>, he tried to sleep, but the cold air—and the **approach of a predator**<sup>10</sup>—kept him awake. The next morning, Monday, he realized he could either climb back to the summit or descend to a nearby creek. Too tired to hike uphill, **he descended, hoping to intersect the trail**<sup>11</sup>.

Within a few hours, he lost his flashlight and broke his watch on the steep, muddy terrain. He saw numerous trails, **but none resembled the main one**<sup>12</sup>. When several helicopters (part of the search effort) **passed overhead without stopping**<sup>13</sup>, Parven began to panic. He hadn't had anything to drink since the previous night, so he **finally drank from the stream**<sup>14</sup>. Then he slept on a rock outcrop.

On Tuesday morning, Parven **convinced himself that the rescue helicopters had seen him**<sup>15</sup>. They couldn't land on the slope, he rationalized; they wanted him to continue following the stream.

Into Wednesday, he slid down rocks and waded through foot-deep water. "If I were going to die here," he kept telling himself, "I would have died a few miles back."

Then he encountered the waterfalls. Bloodied, he pressed on—**encouraged by warmer air**<sup>16</sup> and thinning forest. By mid-afternoon, pine and oak gave way to desert chaparral. **He rested during the day and moved again after sunset**<sup>17</sup>, sleeping next to the stream.

Early on Thursday morning, he saw tire tracks—**the first human signs since Sunday night**<sup>18</sup>. As he neared **the outskirts of a fish hatchery, he saw a man driving a truck**<sup>19</sup>. "I yelled, 'Help me!'" Parven recalls. "I've come from San Geronio. Get me to civilization!" Since the search effort **had been front-page news all week, the hatchery manager knew who he was**<sup>20</sup>. A helicopter took Parven to a hospital, where he was treated for dehydration, a concussion, and bruised ribs.

Five years later, Parven climbed Mt. Whitney with experienced hikers. "The beauty of summits," they told him, "is that they'll still be there tomorrow. You can always come back and try again."

[12] Lacking a map, he didn't know that dozens of streams and trails crisscrossed the mountain.

[13] Parven didn't try to signal the helicopters—which he could have attempted by waving his sweater or making a giant 'X' out of rocks or branches that contrasted with the ground.



[14] When facing dehydration, it's better to drink potentially contaminated water.

[15] He admits his idea was ridiculous, but it boosted his morale.

[16] Warmer air indicated he was lower on the mountain.

[17] Smart move. Another way to stay cool in the desert: Scrape away topsoil to expose cooler ground and create shade by hanging a jacket from a bush.



[18] Rescue officials determined Parven descended the South Fork of the Whitewater River, a perilous ravine rarely explored.

[19] Parven walked out at the Whitewater Trout Farm, five miles north of I-10, after bushwhacking about 30 miles from the summit.

[20] Reporters covering the search for Parven mentioned how a 12-year-old Boy Scout vanished on the same peak a decade before. Rescuers found his backpack, food wrappers, and camera, but they never found his body.