

The Times-News

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Knotted Rope Canyon

By Myrna Trauntvein
Times-News Correspondent

A couple from Mona, missing since Saturday night, were found at noon on Monday, however, the outcome was not happy.

The couple was spending the weekend in the San Rafael Swell, but a falling accident while hiking claimed the life of Marie Coray, 58, who broke her arm while rappelling and got caught in a pool of water.

Kimo and Marie Coray, both middle-aged, were experienced outdoor fans and had been on many camping, hiking and climbing excursions.

Kimo Coray, who is the owner of Kimo's Kamera in Nephi, has been a long-time scout leader and he and his troops have had many experiences with

hiking. In addition, the Coray family have enjoyed many years of good times and togetherness in outdoor activities.

“The couple had been on a trip out in the San Rafael Swell in Emery County,” said LaMar Guymon, Emery County Sheriff.

The area where the Corays were found is in the Knotted Rope section of the San Rafael Swell. It’s a remote area in southeast, Utah and is a very popular area this time of the year.

The couple was reported missing Sunday when they didn’t return home as expected and a search began, said Guymon.

“Dispatch (at the Emery County Sheriff’s Office in Castle Dale) received a call from a daughter of the couple who was very concerned that her parents had not yet returned home,” said Guymon.

Knotted Rope Canyon, sometimes referred to as Miner’s Hollow, is a technical canyon located on the southern slopes of the San Rafael Swell. This canyon varies from difficult to easy depending on water conditions. The route ends with a stroll up the impressive Muddy Creek Gorge.

There are several old uranium mines in the area. There are also pools of water and steep canyon walls. The area is frequented by experienced climbers.

“We began our search of the area by 3 a.m.,” said Guymon.

The area is located about 2 hours away from Castle Dale, the county seat.

The Coray’s car was located and Kimo was discovered at about noon. Then the long and difficult rescue by authorities began. After the body was retrieved Monday, it was sent to the state Medical Examiner’s Office in Salt Lake City.

“The man said his wife hit into the side of the canyon and broke her arm and was unable to pull herself back up and he was unable to pull her up also,” said Guymon. “The man said his wife ran into trouble while rappelling down a drop above a pool of water.”

Kimo tried stopping her fall and failed, said Guymon. Kimo worked more than four hours to free his wife.

“The broken arm prevented her from pulling herself back up and her husband was unable to pull her to safety,” he said.

Guymon said Kimo Coray is doing well for the circumstances. He was hydrated at the scene and was flown to a hospital.

“He will be fine,” said Guymon.

The search was focused in a remote area of Emery County in the San Rafael Swell. It is the same general area as Goblin Valley, which is south of Interstate-70.

“There was nothing he could do to save her. She eventually slipped into the pool and he believes she died of exposure and hypothermia.”

The search began early Sunday after the call was received from the Coray’s daughter.

“They were supposed to be home a day and a half ago,” said Guymon.

He said this is a very remote area, although it’s one that’s very popular for outdoor recreation.

After Marie Coray died, Kimo spent Sunday trying to find the couple’s vehicle. He walked about 20 miles but was found Monday headed in the wrong direction, said Guymon.

There is limited communication in the area. There is almost no cell phone service. In fact, the dispatchers at the sheriff’s office said they had a hard time keeping in radio contact with the searchers.

“They were well-prepared,” said Guymon. “It was one of those things where they got into a situation that was beyond their capabilities to get out of.”

“They just got caught in a bad situation.”

East of the Fishlake Mountains, I-70 cuts across one of the emptiest and least developed regions of Utah—a wide plateau crossed by two entrenched river systems and surrounded by a ring of upturned strata.

This is the San Rafael Swell—arid, little vegetated and scenic, with mesas, cliffs, buttes, springs and especially canyons; these are sometimes wide with stepped sides but are often narrow and slot-like. Knotted Rope Canyon is one of those slotted canyons.

Most of the land is owned by the BLM, is open and has unrestricted access.

The Swell, located in Emery county, is an oval shaped uplifted area of layered rocks—geologically termed an anticline—about 75 x 40 miles in extent, most of which has been eroded away forming the mostly flat central plateau, while the strata at the edges are left exposed and angled near vertically (the San Rafael Reef); here are found most of the spectacular canyons, especially in the southeast section.

UT 24 and its side roads give access to the southern swell, and along here is found Goblin Valley State Park, the most visited site in this area.

Kimo is in the LDS Bishopric in the Mona 3rd Ward. The bishop, Craig Weight, has high praise for Marie.

“I think everybody who knew her loved her,” he said. “I don’t think she was the kind of person that would ever say anything bad about anybody.”

Neighbors say Kimo and Marie were always together.

Krista Steiner described them as a “very, very happy couple, [with the] kind of marriage that we’ve all kind of envied and want to achieve ourselves.”

“He (Kimo) just referred to his wife this past month as ‘the love of his life,’ and mentioned how she was the perfect spouse for him,” said Mike Smith.

“He was right. She was a great, compassionate human being. A mother and a friend to many, she will be missed by all who knew her.”

The Corays have six children.