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Student Missing In Mountains Is Found Safe

By Eve Zibart

Washington Post Staff Writer

An injured 18-year-old West Virginia music student, missing since Sunday afternoon in the rugged, mist-shrouded mountains of Shenandoah National Park, was found yesterday by park rangers as darkness and rain closed in.

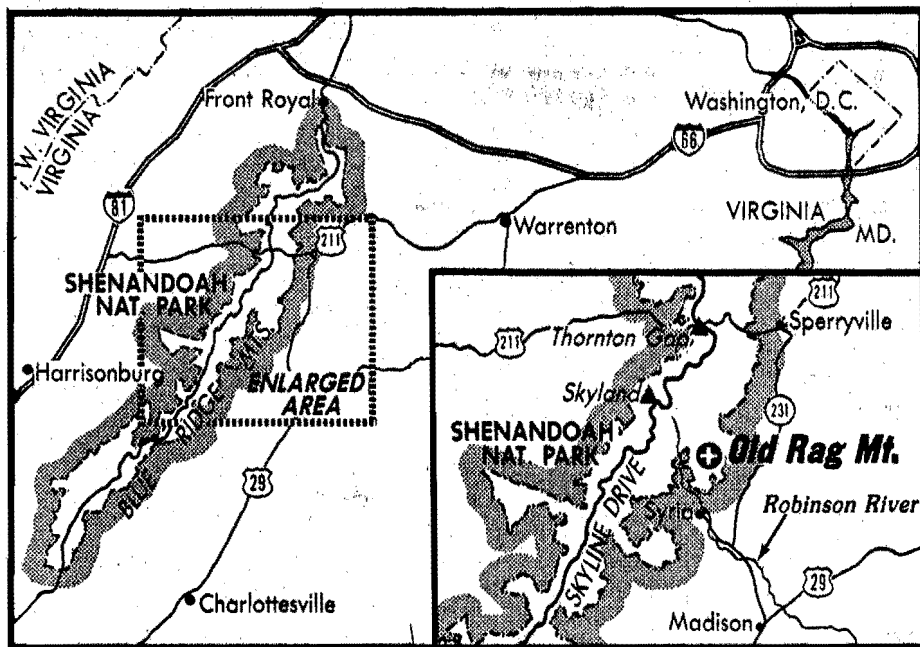
"I got a broken radio transmission just 30 seconds ago, and he's alive," assistant park supervisor Bill Loftis exulted in a telephone interview shortly before 5 p.m. yesterday. "We're just delighted."

Shawn Howland Crawford was last seen Sunday as he strode away from his friends down the rugged north face of Old Rag Mountain, about 75 miles southwest of Washington. Rescue workers found him in an area called "The Pinnacles" 1,000 to 2,000 feet north of the summit, Loftis said.

According to radio reports from the rescue team, Crawford was semiconscious and appeared to be suffering from hypothermia and a fractured knee. Loftis said rescue workers used ropes to rappel into the area where Crawford was lying, and other crews late yesterday were "searching out a way to take him out."

Loftis said Crawford's mother, Belle Cummings, of Bakerton, W. Va., had arrived at the park and was "doing pretty well, considering—much better now, anyway."

Crawford, wearing only shorts and a sweater and carrying no camping equipment, had hiked with friends to the 3,291-foot peak of Old Rag Mountain when he decided to bushwhack back to



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the car on his own, according to park officials.

A first-semester music major at Shepherd College in Shepherdstown, W. Va., Crawford was making his first trip to the 197,000-acre park. When he failed to make the rendezvous at the parking lot by 4 p.m. Sunday, he was reported missing.

"A medical team is on its way to him, but it could take several hours to carry him out," said Loftis, who called the weather "terrible . . . overcast and rainy." "We can't get a helicopter in there, and in the dark, it'll be slow going."

A search party of about 30 began combing the area Sunday evening, and park officials said then that their efforts would focus on the north side of the mountain about 1,000 feet down. The party was hampered, however, by rain, temperatures that dipped into the 30s and fog that prevented an aerial search.

As the search intensified, ranger teams were joined by volunteers and dog teams

from the Virginia Search and Rescue Dog Association. Workers posted lights along major trails and stayed on duty Sunday and Monday nights in case Crawford signaled or shouted. Loftis estimated yesterday that the search party had grown to more than 100 persons, half of them volunteers, aided by eight canine patrols.

According to a spokesman at Shepherd College, Crawford graduated in the spring from Perry Hill Senior High School in Baltimore but now commutes from Bakerton, where he lives with his mother.

Dave Newlin, the college's public relations director, said the hiking expedition did not appear to be a school activity. Newlin said there had been no activity at the college in connection with the incident "because I don't think anybody heard much about it" over the Columbus Day holiday. "We got [the story] over the wires."

Acting Dean Linda Dunn said she had been away for a week and knew nothing about Crawford or his disappearance, "but of course I'm glad he's safe."