

Weather is hampering search for missing aircraft, two men aboard

Weather continued to hamper efforts to locate a light plane that is believed down in northern Nevada with Jake Metherell of Cedar City and Ronald V. Trussell, National Park Service Ranger at Bryce Canyon National Park.

The plane, enroute from Cedar City to Boise Wednesday evening, Feb. 7, lost contact with Elko, Nev. and Salt Lake City tracking stations late Wednesday evening and failed to reach Boise.

Throughout the entire week efforts of Civil Air Patrol units and Jeep Posses have been hampered by bad weather conditions.

Officials at Elko believe that the plane may be down in the rugged Ruby Mountain area between Elko and Wells in northern Nevada. However,

efforts have also been made to check for possible wreckage north of Elko based on testimony of a truck driver who reported sighting an unidentified aircraft at low altitude at approximately the time that the plane was missing. That sighting was 35 to 40 miles northwest of the Ruby Mountain Range.

However, most of the search efforts are concentrated in the Ruby Mountain Range near Sacred Pass. Last radio contact with the plane indicated that Metherell, pilot of the plane, had changed his flight pattern from an elevation of 14,000 down to 12,000 feet just prior to losing contact.

Several units from Cedar City both ground and air, traveled to Elko this past weekend to participate in the search.

They joined CAP units in that area, an area Jeep Patrol and the National Forest in the search, that through Tuesday was thus far unproductive.

Aerial search has been almost completely ineffective owing to weather conditions throughout the week, it was reported Tuesday by Douglas Knell, who was one of the Cedar City group contacted in connection with the search. Seven planes from Cedar City have been involved, but Tuesday, reported improvements in weather conditions had not developed sufficiently to allow for extensive search. Knell indicated that helicopter units from Hill Air Force Base were also on a standby alert to assist once weather conditions were conducive.

In addition to Knell, Bob

Bradshaw, Jim Breeze and Bob Sigfrid of Color Country Aviation of Cedar City; John Cox, Bill Clark and Symon Bronson were assisting with seven planes. Also participating earlier was Dex Cowley, also of Cedar City.

Over the weekend a group of snowmobile owners were also participating but efforts Sunday and Monday had not produced any results. Following leads the snowmobile group would check out an area and return for further directions and further search missions. Wilfod Day, Kent Hoyt, Kent Blackner, John Pensis, and Norm Staples, were among those from the Cedar City area who have assisted.

But again, extremely cold weather and deep snow has hampered that operation.

Efforts of the Jeep Patrol has been limited to travelable highways in the area and has also been limited.

Metherell and Trussell had filed a flight plan from Cedar City to Boise. They left Cedar City at approximately 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 7. Metherell is an experienced pilot and had maintained radio contact throughout the flight until contact was lost in the northern Nevada area.

Efforts are expected to continue with concentration in the Ruby Mountains, it was reported by the Forest Service who has assumed much of the leadership in the early stages of the search operations.