

### Husband of ex-city rep still missing in New Mexico range

By Adriana Gómez Licón / El Paso Times

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The search for Robert Sumrall, the husband of former El Paso city Rep. Jan Sumrall, continued Tuesday, three days after he vanished in freezing temperatures in mountains of west-central New Mexico.

Family members said the search was made more difficult by blizzard-like conditions on Sunday.

Helicopters and rescuers in all-terrain vehicles have searched trails in the Black Range since Sunday afternoon, said Robert Sumrall's daughter Paige Strait.

Temperatures in nearby Silver City reached the upper 20s from Sunday to Tuesday, the National Weather Service said. The wind-chill factor was greater in the mountains where Robert Sumrall went hiking in light clothing.

Ten inches of snow fell Sunday on the Black Range, but there were no reports of heavy snowfall in the mountains Monday night and only light snow on Tuesday. The mountain range's elevations are from 4,200 to 10,900 feet.

Initially, New Mexico State Police were looking at the Emory Pass trail, but Tuesday evening they found fresh tracks on other trails, where cabins are scattered, Jan Sumrall said.

"I could see him camping somewhere," she said. "That gave me a lot of hope."

Jan Sumrall said her 67-year-old husband was supposed to return home Saturday evening from a hiking trip he has taken before.

Robert Sumrall left Saturday morning wearing shorts and a sweatshirt. But family members said he always carried a raincoat, water and protein bars on his hikes.

"He is pretty prepared most of the time," Strait said. "But the biggest concern is the sudden change of weather and how brutal it is."

Strait traveled Monday from New York to Silver City, near the search area.

Jan Sumrall said she thought it strange that her husband did not return Saturday night. She waited until morning to notify authorities.

Strait said it took valuable time to file the missing person report, which was why Grant County Search and Rescue team did not start its search until late Sunday afternoon.

Police found Robert Sumrall's red Hummer H-3 parked at the entrance to the hiking trail, Jan Sumrall said.

New Mexico State Police did not return calls about the search.

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"I'm hoping he had warmer clothes with him," Strait said. "That's all we can hope for now."

Today, temperatures are expected near the upper 40s with winds between 6 and 15 mph in Silver City.

As for what happened in the Gila Wilderness mountain range, Strait said there are two possibilities: He could have gotten lost or been injured.

"He is a fairly experienced outdoorsman, but he is still 67 years old," she said.

Jan Sumrall said her husband took his black Labrador retriever, Zulu, with him. She said that he liked to ski, hike and jog and that he is in good physical condition.

Robert Sumrall has another daughter, Christine Guerra, in addition to Strait and also has a son, Brad Sumrall. He married Jan Sumrall about 20 years ago and has a stepson, Dereck Philpot, and a stepdaughter, Wendy Hoggard. Jan Sumrall was the West Side city representative from 1995 to 2003. Term limits prevented her from running again.

Robert Sumrall is the director of business development for Glacier Technologies, LLC. The 4-year-old company is headquartered on the East Side, and performs technology, engineering and call center services mostly for federal government agencies. He has owned Media Systems Rentals since 2001.

Jan Sumrall said that her husband is a member of the Software & Information Technology Organization in El Paso and that he is a committee member of the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce.

Robert Sumrall has lived in El Paso since 1991, when he arrived from Baton Rouge, La.

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