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Couple missing from camp

The young kayakers said they were going to San Francisco.

By Christina Jewett -- Bee Staff Writer

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The last trace family and friends have of Lindsay Cutshall is a report that she bought miniature Tabasco sauce bottles on Pier 47 in San Francisco at 1 p.m. Saturday.

Cutshall, 22, and her 26-year-old fiance, Jason Allen, came from the Midwest to live near the American River as rafting, kayaking and climbing guides at a Christian summer camp.

After apparently going to San Francisco on Friday to visit friends, they haven't been heard from since. Cutshall was planning to fly home to Ohio on Sunday night to prepare for the couple's garden wedding.

"Something is definitely wrong here. We just don't know what it is," Cutshall's father, Chris, a pastor in Fresno, Ohio, said from the camp near Coloma.

Cutshall and Allen were expected to check back into the Rock-n-Water camp at 5 p.m. Sunday. Camp leaders reported the couple missing at 3:50 p.m. Monday to El Dorado County sheriff's officials, Lt. Kevin House said.

"It looks like more than an average missing-person report," House said. "Everyone describes the two as reliable, dependable - that separates it from the thousands of missing-person reports we get."

Camp director Craig Lomax said the couple left their checkbooks at the camp, which piqued detectives' interest. He said both are adept at leading groups through raging rapids and left their river and climbing gear at the camp. Sheriff's officials said the couple did take light camping gear.

"They are kind of a unique breed," Lomax said. "They think really clearly, they're used to being really physical, and they're really comfortable outdoors."

Lomax said they left Friday saying they were going to visit friends. But family and friends in El Dorado County are at a loss for whom they might know in San Francisco, where a credit company said Lindsay Cutshall made a purchase.

Chris Cutshall said they drove a distinct car - a red 1992 Ford Tempo with a duct-taped right-front headlight, kayak rack and Ohio license plates. His first indication that something was awry came Sunday evening, when Lindsay didn't call him and her mother, Kathy, for their usual two-hour chat.

"We went to bed thinking, 'Well, she must have gotten busy doing things,' " he said. "We have a really good relationship with her. She's the kind of person you could fall in love with and learn to respect. She's very genuine and caring if you're hurt."

He said the couple met at Appalachian Bible College in West Virginia, where they spent time rafting in the New River Gorge, where both were level-five guides.

They plan to be married Sept. 11 at a farm belonging to one of Chris Cutshall's parishioners, before going

to live in a tent and rafting in West Virginia. In November, they plan to honeymoon on a beach in Costa Rica.

Cutshall said both of them are comfortable in cities, Jason not a fearful type and Lindsay having visited Chicago and New York.

House said the Sheriff's Department has assigned a detective to the case and is taking it seriously. Lomax said he and other camp leaders planned to go to San Francisco to post fliers and talk to shopkeepers on Pier 47.

Chris Cutshall and Allen's parents, Bob and Dolores Allen of Holland, Mich., plan to meet with investigators in El Dorado County today. He said the chances are slim that the couple would be away without further contact with family or friends.

"She'd know what it would do to the people who care about her," he said. "It wouldn't cross her mind to do this to people who love her; Jason, too."

Anyone with information about the couple can call El Dorado sheriff's officials at (530) 642-4709 during business hours or (530) 621-6600 after 5 p.m.

About the Writer

The Bee's Christina Jewett can be reached at (916) 321-1201 or cjewett@sacbee.com.

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The Sacramento Bee, 2100 Q St., P.O. Box 15779, Sacramento, CA 95852
Phone: (916) 321-1000

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