



Search For Missing Aircraft

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Baja California, Mexico
1970-009

by Bill Briggs

We omnivorously watched the desert of Baja California roll by while bouncing down the dusty Highway 1 on an overnight drive to base camp in El Rosario We are to look for a young pilot who emergency landed his plane when out of fuel and then left the aircraft. Arriving there in the total confusion our new search and rescue forces from Sierra Madre and Riverside (Fairchild, Bryant, Michleson, Briggs) join the San Diego team which is already out in the field, out of radio contact for the last few hours, days. Mexicans have been searching which compounds the confusion with a language barrier. Oh how rich we are to have topographical maps of our local mountains, in Rosario we get the locals (Espinosas) to sketch a map of the roads and villages in the search area.

A quick aerial reconnaissance by Sierra Madre shocks us into the vastness of the terrain. Another dusty four hours into the night gets to what we thought was our search area, but morning proves us wrong, we search anyway, for tracks, for gasoline, for the field base camp. Noon finds us there and another few hours driving and tire changing gets us finally to within sight and six or seven miles of the primary search area, the San Carlos Mesa. Another flat tire puts us out of service for another day by which time the tenacious Mexican trackers locate the body of the lost pilot. Help finally arrives after another bivouac to get us back to base but now we find our transportation back home (Sierra Madre rescue truck) has a broken axle in the field so we draw lots as to who has the worst family and job situation to be another day out and wrangle him a ride home on an airplane.

Lessons learned: Under these conditions, the aid of experienced Jeepers is invaluable, communications again becomes a problem with mobile ham equipment the only answer, local people who know the country are invaluable and should be utilized, a bell helicopter is essential. Why weren't we called earlier? As the pilot Sam Spry learned, the tenet is to always stay with the ship. Thanks must be given to Jim Brocamonte of JIMSAIR AVIATION SERVICES, San Diego, for his continuous spearheading of the operation.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is

purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.