



## Airplane Crash

**March 26, 1976**  
**Elsinore Area**  
**1976-018**

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At approximately 1620, while driving down Vacation Drive in the resort town of Canyon Lake, I witnessed debris falling from the sky. The debris appeared to be from an aircraft. The main section of the craft came down what looked to be about a mile off the paved road, but was determined later to be a distance closer to one half mile.

Driving immediately to the closest point I could reach with my vehicle I proceeded on foot to the area where I saw the main section impacted. The debris from the craft was scattered over a 2,000 yard area and many pieces were observed, including the main wing sections, while en route to where the fuselage impacted.

When I arrived at the fuselage there were two spectators at the scene. I asked the spectators not to touch or remove anything. Upon inspection of the cockpit I observed that the pilot had been killed upon impact. Not being able to render any aid to the pilot, I turned my attention to preserving the crash scene from souvenir hunting spectators.

Shortly thereafter Deputy Mullin from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, Elsinore office, arrived on the scene along with an invasion of additional spectators. After I identified myself as an RMRU member to Deputy Mullin, he asked me to standby the fuselage while he cleared the area of spectators.

RMRU's van had been dispatched, manned by Hank Schmel, but was returned to base because of accessibility of the crash scene to the sheriff's department. Upon the return of an additional deputy, we began locating objects that might be beneficial to the investigation.

Within approximately one and one half hours the coroner arrived and a representative from the FAA arrived approximately an hour after the coroner. After several photographs were taken, the body was removed.

At this time the FAA man requested that I locate as many parts of the aircraft as I could find in the dark. After examining the sections of the craft, it was determined that it was a high performance Czechoslovakian made sailplane and that the pilot

had attempted a maneuver beyond the capability of the craft.

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.