

Airplane Crash

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Black Hill, Palm Desert
1976-021

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At 3:30 P.M. about fifteen minutes after returning home from a strenuous 4-day climb to Picacco del Diablo in Baja, the phone rang. "We have an airplane crash near the Pines to Palms highway about five miles southwest of Palm Desert; six people aboard. Can you go?" After a moment of silence I said "yes" thinking I might be able to help in base camp if my body refused to go hiking. So I called Jim Garvey, also just back from Picacco, and made arrangements to drive out together.

I have to admit I took longer than the 20 minutes allowed to get ready, nevertheless, we made it in good time for an early supper in Palm Desert. Naturally all our haste was useless since operations had been postponed until daylight and clearer weather. We were hospitably taken care of for the night by the Palm Desert Fire Department.

The plane and occupants were much less fortunate than we as there were no survivors of the crash. Apparently the six place charter from San Diego to Palm Springs encountered severe turbulence due to strong storm activity, overcast skies and rain over the San Jacinto Mountain area which caused the plane to come apart in the air. The tail section was located on the south side of Black Hill (3,689') while the fuselage was on the north side pointing downhill where it burned about 1/2 mile from the highway.

The next day we located even more aircraft parts scattered over four square miles of hillside. We were able to recover the charred remains and with the help of Landell's Aviation helicopter were able to airlift them off the slope. The rest of the day was spent picking up the pieces of strewn aircraft and assisting the Federal Transportation and Safety investigation team. Probably the only thing that remains now is a black spot on the side of Black Hill and the vague memories of those who were involved.

Like mountain climbing, Search and Rescue also has ups and downs.

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.