

## SOS spotted

January 1, 1984

Southeast of Tahquitz Canyon, San Jacinto Mtns  
1984-001

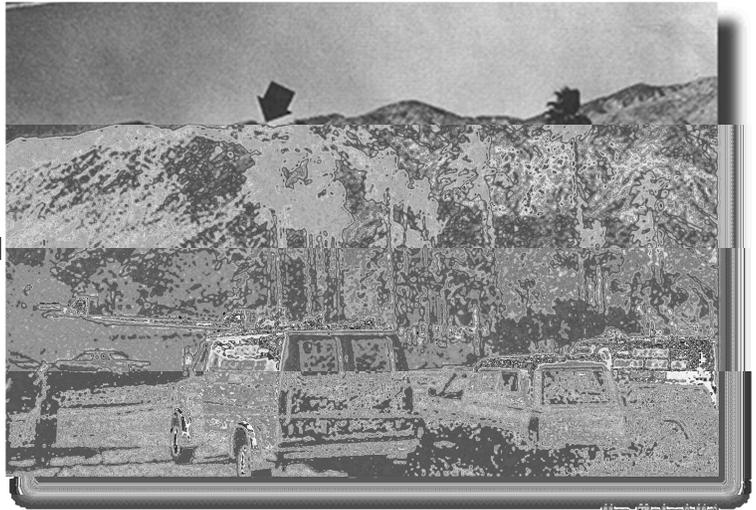
By Walt Walker

Since I had not attended any New Year's Eve parties, it was with no pain, that I answered the telephone at 6:30 a.m. I wasn't behind in paying my bills, or anything like that - you guessed it, the team was being called out for a mission. It had been several years since we had had an almost traditional New Year's holiday mission.

It had been reported to the Palm Springs Police Department that a flashing light could be seen high up into the mountains above the city.

They dispatched a patrol car to the south end of the city. The officers soon saw the light and it was flashing a Morse code "S.O.S." The police department contacted the Indio station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department since the light was well out of the city limits.

Shortly before 8:00 a.m. RMRU members arrived at the corner where the officers had observed the light from. They had carefully lined up their car and the ridge top, creating a line of sight. After listening to all the information and looking at the ridges along the line of sight, we decided that the best thing to do was to deploy members on the different ridges by helicopter.



Jim Palencia

**REPORTED SOS - It was at this location that a signal of distress was reported to the Palm Springs Police Department, who in turn called for RMRU's assistance. The arrow points to the approximate location.**

Don Landells had been previously called by the S.O. and was already in the air. We set up a base at the corner in front of Ann Dolley's house. In a very short time the teams of two members were being airlifted to the ridge tops. One of the teams reported finding some tracks left by running shoes. They began tracking and the helicopter searched the area from the air.

Everyone of the canyons leading downward were carefully searched from the air by the helicopter. We even searched the famous Tahquitz Canyon from the air. Field teams were picked up by the bird and moved to other areas to search again. Since there are very few trees in the area, searching from the air is very effective. However, everything was fruitless, we could not find anyone, and nobody was reported missing. At 3:30 p.m. we called off the search.



Jim Fairchild

**ON THE SPOT - RMRU member Joel Rothschild takes a break where the previous photo points to. Prints were found in the vicinity, but no clues as to what was used to signal the desert were located.**

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.