

JULY 1999

NUMBER 109

CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP  
P. O. BOX 2037  
RIDGECREST CA 93556

## TRAINING SCHEDULE

Jul 31	Sat	Irvine	Finco
Jul 31-Aug 1	Sat-Sun	Lone Pine NE Ridge	Lambert
Aug 6-8	Fri-Sun	Ritter, Banner	Runkle
Aug 9	Mon	Party	
Aug 14	Sat	Russell	Lambert
Aug 20-22	Fri-Sun	Whitney	B. Niesen
Aug 28-29	Sat-Sun	Humphreys	Davis
Sep 3-6	Fri-Mon	Tuolumne Meadows	B. Niesen
Sep 11-12	Sat-Sun	Norman Clyde	Myers
Sep 13	Mon	Meeting (role of QC)	Westbrook-Creusere-Green
Sep 15	Wed	Map and compass training	Hinman
Sep 17-19	Fri-Sun	Zion	Florian
Sep 25-26	Sat-Sun	Peak 13520, Thumb, Birch	Rockwell
Sep 29	Wed	First Aid Topic A	Schafhauser
Oct 1-3	Fri-Sun	Conness	Myers
Oct 6	Wed	First Aid Topic A	Schafhauser
Oct 9-11	Sat-Mon	Bear Creek Spire	Finco
Oct 13	Wed	First Aid Topic A	Schafhauser
Oct 15-17	Fri-Sun	Irvine	Davis
Oct 18	Mon	Meeting (tents)	Hueber-Renta-C. Burge
Oct 20	Wed	First Aid Topic A	Schafhauser
Oct 23/24	Sat/Sun	Panamint Butte	Finco
Oct 29-31	Fri-Mon	Open	
Nov 11-14	Thu-Sun	Cerro de la Encantata	Davis



CLMRG is funded by United Way of Indian Wells Valley.



## **OPERATIONS REDUX**

*(Editor: We received the following letter from Jim and Kathy Wilson of Inyokern, California.)*

Jan 15, 1999

Attn - Terry Mitchell

Received your thank you for our donation, and the thought occurred to me that you might like to see one of the reasons we think so much of your group—a picture of our grandson some 16 years later.

We had just moved to Ridgecrest from the midwest in Dec. of '82 to be near our son, Ken, & family. On Sunday of Jan 23, 1983, we knew something had happened when Ken & Kyle had not returned at a definite hour.

After many calls, we came into contact with your group, who gave immediate attention to our problems. What an extraordinary group of people you are.

We wanted you to see what that young man looks like today. Kyle is 17, will graduate from Burroughs [High School] this spring, has been in the band for 4 years, does computer work out of his home for several firms, & is off to college this fall.

Yes, we are very proud of him, but how fortunate we are to live in a city that has such a dedicated group as the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group.

Our sincere thanks to all of you again.

Jim & Kathy Wilson  
Grandparents

*(Ref: The Talus Pile #53 and The Daily Independent of January 24, 1983)*

## **FROM OTHER SOURCES**

*(Editor: From the Ridgecrest Daily Independent of 25 May 1999. Dad Tom is a long-time member and a respected leader in the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group.)*

### **JILL SAKAI**

ROCHESTER, N.Y. -- Jill Sakai graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of Rochester in Rochester, N.Y. on May 16. She received a bachelor of science degree with research distinction in neuroscience. She was also elected to Phi Beta Kappa. After a tour of Italy with the UR Chamber Orchestra, she will be working at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute on Cape Cod. Sakai is a 1995 graduate of Burroughs High School. She is the daughter of Tom and Carol Sakai of Ridgecrest.

*(Editor: The following story first appeared in Hot CoCo, <http://www.hotcoco.com/>, the online edition of the Contra Costa Times on May 24, 1999.)*

### **81-year-old reaches top of El Capitan**

By Matthew Yi

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK -- Tanned and visibly exhausted, a retired chemical engineer Sunday became the oldest climber--again--to scale Yosemite National Park's famed El Capitan.

Greetings, all, Gerry Bloch said with a tired smile to his grandson and the half dozen reporters waiting for him at the summit of the granite monolith.

Bathed in bright sunshine that reflected off surrounding snowcapped mountains, Bloch, 81, reached the summit about 5 p.m., breaking his own record as the oldest person to make the climb.

It's much . . . very much tougher than I imagined, said the wiry Bloch, his green eyes tired behind gold-rimmed glasses. There were days when we thought we wouldn't make it, but we just kept striving. This is an obstacle course.

Bloch, of Cherry Hill, N.J., set out on his quest May 12 with two other men. The climb was only supposed to take a week, but the group was slowed by chilly weather and the weight of the food and water they carried.

He last scaled El Capitan, one of the most popular challenges for serious rock climbers, in 1986, when he was 68. Back then, Bloch took a relatively easy route--up The Nose. This time, protected by a bright orange helmet and knee pads, he scaled the more difficult Aquarian Wall, rising 2,500 feet to the summit.

Bloch, who has been climbing since 1934, was accompanied to the rocky summit by guide Mike Corbett and NBC cameraman Craig White. The summit is dotted with windswept pine trees with a view of Yosemite Valley waterfalls below.

Jerry climbed up every inch of it, White said. We didn't pull him up at all or anything.

Bloch and his team planned to camp out Sunday night and rappel down the 7,569-foot mountain today, which they expected to take four to five hours.

Bloch quit skydiving at 78 after doctors refused to treat him unless he promised he would stop, said grandson Sam Bloch, 20, who shook his hand at the summit to the applause of onlookers. But this was the last climb.

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*(Editor: The following story first appeared in Hot CoCo, <http://www.hotcoco.com/>, the online edition of the Contra Costa Times on June 14, 1999.)*

### **Colorado man dies, three others hurt in rockslide**

By Matthew Yi

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK -- A Colorado climber who died in a massive rockslide at Yosemite National Park sacrificed himself to protect two friends climbing above him, park officials said Monday.

Peter J. Terbush, 22, a student at Western State College in Gunnison, Colo., was at the base of a granite face at Glacier Point, holding a rope his friends were using to climb from about 100 feet on the so-called apron jam route, an intermediate climb which takes about half an hour.

When the rocks began crashing down, he could have run and perhaps saved himself. Instead, his friends told officials, he held on to the rope. The friends, as well as a third person who tried to help, suffered only minor injuries and were treated at a park clinic and released.

He was on the bottom and the two guys were on top, said park spokesman Scott Gediman. He held the rope until they came down safely.

Terbush's body was recovered Monday afternoon. Park officials said he died of head injuries. None of the three climbers were wearing helmets, which are not required.

It was like a huge rumbling sound, like a jet coming close, said Abbie Kealey, 43, a tourist from Baltimore who was atop Glacier Point when the face of the mountain collapsed beneath her. We looked over and we saw a tiny plume of impact that rose up like a nuclear blast.

Frightened campers grabbed their children and ran when the huge boulders broke loose from the about 2,500 feet up west shoulder of the Glacier Point apron at the eastern end of the park.

Steve Hartman, a CBS reporter having dinner in Curry Village with his family, rushed over for a look and ran into one of the climbers. Out from the woods a man wearing a mountaineering harness came out screaming, 'My buddy's dead, my buddy's dead!' Hartman said.

It sounded like an enormous clap of thunder, except it wasn't thunder, said Mike Sherman, 45, vacationing with his wife Marinda and their son Silas, 11, from Baton Rouge, La. I saw rocks falling down . . . then it was quiet. Then there was this dust cloud and you couldn't see anything.

Mrs. Sherman said she had walked away from the cabin, which was about 30 feet from a roped-off area near where the slide halted. All I knew was, I was back there and he was up here, she said. I started screaming and running back in my flip-flops.

It was like a waterfall of flesh-colored rocks, a cascade of these rocks and dust, she added. Slides are relatively rare, and Gediman said the park is safe. Anyone coming to the park has nothing to worry about, he said as the sun rose Monday. Everything is open and OK.

A geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey was expected to examine the slide area on Tuesday.

About 1,300 guests and employees in 300 cabins were evacuated from Curry Village, then allowed to return several hours after the slide. Nobody in the village was hurt, and no structures were damaged. Many tourists chose to leave the park rather than spend the night.

Those who did stay were shaken awake again at about 5 a.m. when a second, much smaller rockslide, lasting about 10 seconds, sent more boulders down.

The climbers were beneath Glacier Point in a mostly undeveloped site outside the village at the time of the slide, according to park spokeswoman Christine Cowles.

Geologists say the spring cycle of freezes and thaws contributes to such slides. Moisture gets into cracks in the rocks and freezes, widening the cracks. During the day it melts, then refreezes in the now wider fissure, accelerating the cracking.

Most of the time we don't know what triggers these things, said National Park Service spokesman Bob Roney. The last grain of sand just gave way.

On July 10, 1996, a massive slide about half a mile from Sunday night's avalanche killed one tourist and injured seven others. Last November, about 500 park employees and visitors were evacuated when

rocks fell more than 3,000 feet from Glacier Point to the Yosemite Valley floor. There were no injuries or major damage.

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*(Editor: From the Contra Costa Times of June 20, 1999.)*

### **Disabled climber scaling Yosemite's El Capitan again -- the hard way**

By Christine Hanley

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK -- Sitting with his back against the base of El Capitan, Mark Wellman took one last tug on his shoulder straps and looked skyward.

All right. See everybody at the top, hopefully, Wellman said as he began his arm-pumping, heart-thumping 3200-foot climb up Yosemite's most daunting peak.

Aw, yeah, this feels good, he said, kissing his fiancée and business partner, Carole Praxmarer, goodbye after taking the first few hoists.

Wellman, who has had only partial movement in his legs since a 1982 climbing accident, was the first paraplegic to scale El Cap 10 years ago. He's marking the anniversary by tackling the soaring monolith again, on the tougher Nose route.

Wellman and his climbing partner, Mike Corbett, started their ascent at about 1:45 p.m. Monday. Using a special T-bar system, Wellman will hoist himself up six inches at a time by doing pull-ups as Corbett climbs ahead and sets the ropes.

Wellman expects it will take a week and about 7,000 to 8,000 pull-ups to summit, resting between each pitch, which can range anywhere from 100 to 140 feet.

They hoped to reach the summit in one week, but we're always wrong, said Corbett, who also accompanied Wellman up the mountain a decade ago.

The pair planned to climb about 500 feet before calling it quits their first day. After that, they'll climb between 10-12 hours a day.

Wellman, who plans to ride a mule down the peak's gently sloping backside, found the 300 yards from the trailhead to the base of the mountain to be the hardest part on Monday. His wheelchair got stuck in sand, loose rocks, and pine cones. Corbett and another friend eventually took turns giving him piggy-back rides.

My message isn't for the disabled to come and climb El Capitan, Wellman said earlier. It's to climb whatever mountain that is the barrier in their life. And that can be anything.

In 1989, Wellman scaled the route called The Shield with the help of special equipment and Corbett, a big wall veteran. This time around, a stronger, bulkier Wellman will be taking the same partner but better gear and a different path, up one of the most challenging of the 75 or 80 routes to the summit.

Named for its appearance and made famous by photographer Ansel Adams, The Nose is the highest unbroken granite cliff in North America, with the toughest-to-tackle angles on its lower third.

Wellman, 39, was a Yosemite ranger when he made his first ascent of El Cap. He now lives in the mountain community of Truckee, Calif., where his company, No Limits, has carved a solid niche in growing industry of outdoor equipment for the disabled.

Wellman travels around the country giving motivational speeches and remains a passionate sportsman, embarking on adventures in alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, and white-water kayaking.

The only way I'm falling is if you had a rock fall and it cut the rope, said Wellman, who broke his back when he slipped while descending a steep chute of the 13,700-foot Gables Peak south of Yosemite.

He and Corbett, 45, will be lugging 200 pounds of gear, water, and a diet of cold food. They'll sleep on natural ledges when they can and on a doublewide, portable ledge when they can't.

They'll also be carrying a cell phone and a digital camera that will help them update reports on Wellman's Web site: [www.nolimitstahoe.com](http://www.nolimitstahoe.com).

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## **ABOUT THE MEMBERSHIP**

### **Our Loss**

Roger Meng, a ham radio operator and long-time member of CLMRG, died 1 June 1999 at the age of 79.

Roger and Betty Meng were honored at the 40th Anniversary Celebration last October for their many years of service to the Group. Betty was an active Coordinator. She retired from the Group earlier this year.

Our sympathies go out to Betty and her family.

### **Ten Years Later**

by Tom Roseman

I was looking through some old rosters and found one from 1989, so I thought it might be interesting to compare the two. I draw no conclusions from the comparison, leaving that to the wide array of individual characters who have always made up the Group.

In 1989, we had 53 members. Four were applicants (three who never became members). Three were inactive and soon dropped out of the Group. We now have 43 members. We are about the same size. Of the 53 members in 1989, 21 are still with the Group. The rest have gone. Some lost interest, some moved away, and sadly, one passed away.

We had 12 leaders in 1989. Of those, six are no longer in the Group, four are in the Group but no longer leaders, and two stalwarts are still leaders. We now have eight leaders. They include the two carryovers from 1989, three from the 1989 Technical category, one from 1989 Support category, and two who were not in the Group in 1989.

We had four in the Technical category 10 years ago. All are still in the Group, but only two are still Technical on the roster. We now have two members in the Technical category. Both were leaders in 1989.

There were four coordinators in 1989; we have five now. All four from 1989 are still coordinators today! My hat is off to them.

Of the 13 Support members from 10 years ago, nine are no longer with the Group, one is a leader, two are still Support, and one is Special Skills. Of the 15 current Support members, 11 are new, one was Technical, one was an Applicant, and two are the steadfast Support members from 1989.

In 1989, we had seven Inactive members and Applicants. Six are no longer around, and one is Support. We have one Inactive member today.

Of the eight Special Skills members in 1989, six are gone, and two are still Special Skills. Today we have six Special Skills members. One was Rescue, one was Support, two are new members, and two were always Special Skills.

## 1999 OFFICERS

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## 1999 COMMITTEES

Mike Myers

### **PUBLIC EDUCATION**

T. Mitchell (Chair)  
C. Burge  
Schmierer

### **TRAINING**

Runkle (Chair)  
Breitenstein  
Davis  
McCormick  
Roseman

### **EQUIPMENT**

B. Niesen (Chair)  
Creusere  
DeRuiter  
Huey  
Hueber  
O'Conner  
Renta  
Riendeau

### **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Green (Chair)  
Myers  
Sakai

### **ASTM**

D. Burge

### **FIRST AID**

Schafhauser (Chair)  
Breitenstein  
Ferguson  
Goettig  
Kong  
A. Mitchell  
G. Niesen  
Westbrook

### **QUALIFICATIONS**

Roseman (Chair)  
Rockwell  
Sakai

### **EMERGENCY SERVICES COUNCIL**

Finco

### **SUMMER CLASS**

A. Mitchell (Lead Instructor)  
Breitenstein  
C. Burge  
Botham  
Doerr  
Gates  
Green  
G. Niesen  
Runkle

### **WEB SITE HOME PAGE**

Westbrook

### **THE TALUS PILE**

Castro (Editor)  
Botham

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## **DONATIONS**

Steve Florian

**CLMRG gratefully acknowledges recent gifts from the following friends:**

Electa G. Russell      Ridgecrest, CA

## **SCREE**

Check our web page at <http://www.clmrg.org>.

All telephone numbers in *The Talus Pile* are area code 760 unless noted otherwise.



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Address Correction Requested