



CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE
GROUP

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Editor, E. Anderson

April, 1970 # 6

CALENDAR

April 13. . Meeting at Barbara Slates', 709-A Nimitz, 7:30 p.m.

April 18 (or 19) Ice-ax practice and snowshoe trip, and the area will have been decided at the April 13th Meting. Dennis Burge will coordinate the transportation, if you call him at 446-5359.

April 19 The IWF S&R team has asked us to join them in an all day, uncontrolled, tracking exercise they are setting up. Details to be supplied later. They supply the tracks.

May 2 3 California Region MRA Equipment Seminar will be held at Idyllwild, at Buckhorn Camp. CLMRG is responsible for winter ice-and snow equipment and a display on mountain safety education.

May 9 (or 10) reconnaissance of the proposed Trail Peak ski area, from the Carroll Creek roadhead, with possibilities of Muah and/or Trail Peak for peak baggers. Call Roman Motyka (446-6824) for transportation.

May 11...Meeting at Frank Buffum's, 703-A Nimitz, 7:30 p.m.

May 16...Armed Forces Day. Display and demonstrations at NAF

May 29,30,37...the summer schedule committee will know more about snow conditions when they meet to plan summer trips. If you have worthy ideas for a 3-day trip, volunteer for the committee!

OPERATIONS

Five Fingers, 28 February

Carl Heller

This brief operation was very satisfying as two rain-drenched young men were removed from exposed ledges and the chilling effects of a snowstorm.

Sgt. Don Glennon received. The phone call about the two sailors at 1730 as he prepared to leave for an evening's party. He alerted our group and

then drove into Indian Wells Canyon for a reconnaissance. When he radioed out to the Security Police (John Pearia relayed the call) our advance team was ready to leave and was supported by our own and Indian Wells Valley SAR people. Don had organized help from two aqueduct construction men and the sailor (Sam Smaniotto, 21) who had come out to report his friends rapped.

The three-man advance team (Heller, Stronge & Green) was jeeped almost to the rock. Actually they chickened out while the driver was still willing to continue traversing the steep slope. Sam and the other driver were under Finger One and Sam thought his friends were on Finger Five. At least one was still there and had recently fired his pistol. Sam was willing to help our team follow his tracks back to the foot of the correct Finger.

The rain had stopped and it was not difficult to traverse and climb on the sand under the Fingers. Around 2000, Sam recognized the ridge they had climbed and stopped to await the Support teams. Shortly afterwards our team could talk to the men and learn that they were both in the original position of entrapment, and uninjured. The support team was notified that stretchers and other gear was unnecessary. The advance team continued up the ridge finding tracks of 3 men.

From the summit, voice contact was simple and one climber started down with belay ropes. The victims had tried to climb down the north face and had reached separate ledges. Vic Cook (19) was reached 100' down and was belayed and helped to climb back to the summit. On top he was glad to get a dry jacket and warm blanket while another trip was made for his friend. Gary Simpson (20) who had gotten further - about 120' down the face, and required more assistance to climb back. Both had become cold enough to have trouble holding the rock or rope. Warmed by the climb, dry clothes and food they easily climbed down the class 3 ridge with upper belays for safety and confidence.

Radio contact had been good all this time from the new 4.5 watt GE to base camp and the support teams. The support teams had a fire going, and Don had 3 vehicles to take everyone to base camp. About this time large, wet, cold snowflakes began to fall emphasizing our good luck and underlining the necessity for being able to move rapidly on operations.

Base camp had two vehicles, our White Elephant and the S&R team's, and was ready for a long operation if necessary. The IWF had been ready to supply a large support team if it was needed.

This operation had involved the cooperation of several groups and had worked well. The construction men had notified the Sheriff's office and then prepared themselves and Smaniotto to aid in the search. The China Lake Police aided with communications. The Naval Air Facility to which the sailors belonged, left the ground operation to the Sheriff and the rescue teams while standing by to give air assistance when the weather allowed. Altogether we were prepared for a much larger operation if circumstances had required.

Five Fingers...continued...

It was pleasant to see our own knowledge, technique and organization working. A recently-scheduled climb on the Five Fingers gave us the knowledge. Tracking and class 4 techniques at night were simple compared to our training trips. Our telephoners got the technical and support teams together rapidly. The advance team idea saved time and the radios again proved their value.

A few new lessons were learned from mistakes - fortunately without serious consequences. These might be, listed:

1. In setting time schedules on the phone or radio check accuracy of watches, giving time and hour e.g. "at 1930 in 30 minutes".
2. First Aid kits and victim's pack require some changes.
3. The communications truck needs more material for base camp - particularly shelter from rain or snow, and simple hot food.

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Mount Whitney, 23 March. .

. . . Al Green

At approximately 0930 a call was received from the Inyo County Sheriff's office via NWC Security Police. The situation as described by Sgt. Randolph: a solo climber had planned to do class 6 on the face of Whitney (no details, concerning the intended route) and was overdue. ESMR had been called and were going to rendezvous at Lone Pine.

(See news item on the last page....)

We began an immediate mobilization of all technical and support people with the objective of meeting at the hut in 30 minutes. A call was made to NAF requesting a helicopter to lift teams in to enable a search of the most probable routes before nightfall. NAF responded immediately: Major Jon Robson and crew had to wait 30 minutes for our first team. Your operation leader is to blame for this because when I was talking to LCDR Al Brown I was looking at an electric clock that had been stopped for 30 minutes over the weekend (sorry about that!) We managed to get a team at NAF about an hour after the first call. This doesn't set any records and certainly leaves room for improvement. As a matter of incentive: qualified members who get to the hut first have the highest probability of a helicopter ride, provided of course that the operation can justify a helicopter and that one is available.

As it turned out we were airborne only about 15 minutes before a cancellation call came. The teams that were leaving for Lone Pine by car were called off before they left. Pictures of a potentially dangerous operation faded pleasantly.

A couple of thoughts in regard to this mobilization:

1. It was really helpful to have a member (one who was not able to go on the operation) at the hut getting equipment ready, able to relay messages, etc. Possibly it should be routine to ask the first technical or support member who says he can't go, to help out in this way.
2. As usual, the question of what food and equipment to bring presents a quandary: each member must think about this and have a list that will preclude forgetting anything e.g. piton hammer on this particular operation. Many lists have been distributed but they can only be suggestions. It's up to YOU, and the lives of the victim and yourself, and your teammates may depend on it.

SOCIAL CORNER

On March 13, 15 members of the CLMRG and Mary and Don Glennon and Sam Van Gundy spent the evening reminiscing over Sam's tour of duty as NAF Operation Officer. To remember the desert and the mountain rescue group Sam has a Graham Westmoreland photograph of Upper Centennial Valley with the MRA insignia set into the frame. Certainly we all wish Sam all the joys of retirement, and thank him for all the help he has given us on rescue operations.

FINANCES

. . . . Roman Motyka

Special thanks is sent to Rotary Club of China Lake for their recent contribution to the CLMRG equipment fund.

Further contributions came in by way of Sierra Madre S&R for our participation in the Mt. Whitney evacuation on Memorial Day weekend, 1969.

And our thanks to one of the members of CLMRG, Nick Bottka who is going to school in Germany. Nick has contributed to the Equipment fund, from overseas!

With no new major expenditures and with most of the December assessments in, both the equipment and operations funds appear to be in a reasonably solvent state.

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BACKPACKING, ANYONE ? ?

Some American soldiers have suffered "rucksack paralysis" as a result of injury to their brachial plexus, the complex set of nerves that serves the chest, shoulders and arms. As a warning to them and to stateside vacation backpackers, doctors note that although light 15 or 20-pound knapsacks don't usually cause trouble, the wearer of a really heavy rucksack should be sure to wear a hip belt snugly at all times. This will cause the hips to bear a great deal of the burden and will protect the upper body more than any amount of padding.

Family Safety

ROCK-CLIMBING

March 28. . . . Members of the CLMRG and members of the RCS of the Sierra Club spent the day climbing on Owens' Ridge. The RCS climbed routes familiar to the "locals" and checked the difficulty as listed in "Carl's Guide". At least 3 weekends had seen CLMRG members doing roadwork, of the pick and shovel type, making the road up Indian Wells Canyon passable.

From the MONO HERALD, Thursday, April 2, 1970 .

Dave Kruger, Lone Pine school teacher whose hobby is mountain climbing, successfully made a solo ascent of the east face of Mt. Whitney after having been turned back on an earlier attempt.

Kruger left Whitney Portal the morning of March 21, a Saturday, and followed the north fork of Lone Pine creek to the foot of the east face route where he bivouacked in bitter cold.

"I was surprised at how cold it became once the sun went behind the mountain," he said afterward.

Arising at 6 a.m. Sunday, with full equipment Kruger started up the face. He "belayed" as he went. That is, he'd leave his equipment, ascend a short distance, drive a piton and secure a rope, then go back for his gear. With each leg of the climb he's retrieve the piton and go on to the next leg. Following the "Fresh Air Traverse" route, known to all who have scaled Whitney's east face, he reached the summit about 3:30 p.m.

After a short breather he started down the trail but was overtaken by darkness at Trail Crest. The trail was covered with snow and almost impossible to make out in many spots.

Although he had told Ben Randolph he expected to be back at the Portal Sunday night — and had advised him to organize a search if he did not arrive on schedule — Kruger was forced to make camp at Trail Crest. Monday morning the first mile of his descent was made at high speed — he went into a "seated glissade" and slid from Trail Crest to Consultation lake on the seat of his pants. He steered and maintained speed control with his ice ax.

Arriving at the Portal about 10:30 a.m. Monday, he found two vehicles from the Eastern Sierra Mountain Rescue team—of which he is a member — had arrived and members were getting ready to go up the trail to search for him.

Two helicopters at the China Lake Naval Weapons Center were preparing to join the search when word was received that Kruger had completed his trek safely.

Kruger said he suffered no injuries in the climb except for being struck in the stomach by a falling rock during his trip up the east face.

"I heard it coming and was able to protect my head by ducking under a ledge," he said. "The rock was only a few inches in diameter and didn't hurt much, but it scared the hell out of me."

Four weeks earlier Dave attempted the same trip but turned back after climbing about half way up the face.