

CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP
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RIDGECREST, CA 93555

SCHEDULE OF EUEHTS

NOVEMBER 15-16	CRMRA Rock Workshop	Mason
NOVEMBER 22-23	Joshua Tree	DeRuiter
NOVEMBER 29	Desert Peak	Lucas
DECEMBER 7	Kern River Search	Kern Co. Sheriff
DECEMBER 8	Meeting	Mitchell
DECEMBER 10	Map and Compass Seminar	Martin
DECEMBER 13	Orienteering Course	Lucas
DECEMBER 17	Christmas Party	J. Westbrook
DECEMBER 20-21	Telescope	Renta
JANUARY 1-4	Mt. Sill	Rockwell
JANUARY 9-11	Donner Pass Ski Trip	Rogers
JANUARY 12	Meeting	Atkins
JANUARY 13 and 20	Avalanche Class	Adams
JANUARY 17-19	Mt. Abbot	Green
JANUARY 24	Avalanche Field Trip	Adams
JANUARY 31 FEBRUARY 1	Mt. Gould	Geyer

"Go into the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine through the trees. The winds will blow their freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves." John Muir

OPERATION REPORTS

86-24 8/28-29/86 Search Mt. Whitney Green

The initial information for this "search" had all the indicators of a serious problem. Robert Lenea of North Hollywood found a note from his roommate Richard Jerrard on Saturday, 23 August, saying that he would see him in a couple of days. The implication to Robert was that Richard had gone off to climb Mt. Whitney and would be back no later than Monday or Tuesday (the 25th or 26th). We were called Thursday evening (the 28th) after Robert had become concerned and notified the Inyo County Sheriff's Office. Sgt. Dan Lucas then checked the Whitney Portals roadhead for Richard's vehicle and, finding it there, concluded that Richard was indeed overdue.

We started our search early Friday morning with teams going up both the Whitney Trail and the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek. A CHP helicopter would insert other searchers as high as possible to accelerate the search. A dog team from CARDA was enroute. We also made a CRMRA call out to alert the other MRA teams that they might *be* needed the next morning.

In the process of searching Richard's vehicle for an appropriate scent article, Sgt. Lucas found a local motel receipt, dated 26 August. He called the motel and determined that Richard had checked out on the 27th at 11:00 a.m. This, of course, changed the situation and Richard was not overdue - just irresponsible.

The following CLMRG people participated: Wyatt made the initial call to get an operation leader and coordinator. S. Rockwell accepted the coordinator job. Derrickson, Barbee and Dan Harris started the search up the regular trail. Finco and Roberts started up the North Fork. B. Rockwell managed to get the one helicopter ride to Trail Camp, but was called back before landing. Mitchell, Wisecarver and Walker waited in vain for their ride. Liz Anderson was in base camp with me. Roger Meng and his wife Betty provided HAM communication back to Ridgecrest.

Doug Wilson of the Inyo team assisted in base camp.

Comments:

1. Richard's inconsiderate action caused considerable inconvenience, effort and expense. A simple phone call to adjust his itinerary was obviously in order.
2. We had trouble receiving messages in base camp from the teams in the vicinity of Whitney Portals. The teams had no trouble hearing base. The antenna *was* set up near the telephone at the airport. I don't recall experiencing this problem before, with the antenna nearer the airport office. If this problem persists we will need to try different antenna locations.

86-25 9/2/86 Alert Yosemite NP Renta

At 0800 hours on 2 September Sheila Rockwell received a call from Arnold Gaffrey of Sierra Madre Search and Rescue. Yosemite NP had requested CRMRA assistance for two adults lost in the Big Oak Flats area of the park. Several local teams were already in the field. If the victims were not found by 1600, our help would be needed.

I agreed to take the operation. Since Sheila would not be available to continue the call out I asked Janet Westbrook to help. She telephoned the roster with the help of Carol Burge and Shannon Harris. I called Gaffrey to tell him that I would be the contact for CLMRG. **Ten other people**

committed to go on the operation: Sakai, Dan Harris, Amster, Wisecarver, Bonbright, McDowell, Sinclair, Nelson, Walker and Leiser.

At 1730 I called Gaffrey and was informed by his telephone answering machine that the victims had been found and the call out cancelled two hours earlier.

86-26 9/11/86 Transit Whitney Trail Finco

My pager went off around 1700 hours on Thursday, 11 September. The message was to contact the China Lake Police Department. I called and was told to telephone Sgt. Lucas with the Inyo County Sheriffs Office.

Sgt. Lucas informed me that 42 year old Glen Houston was hiking on the Whitney Trail with Larry Baile and that Glen had become very sick. Larry left Glen on the trail with other hikers around 1500 and hiked out. Sgt. Lucas said that Glen was approximately midway between Lone Pine Lake and the trailhead.

Shannon Harris and I made a quick call out. We mobilized at the rescue but at 1800, and the advance team was on its way by 1810. Upon arrival in Lone Pine, the advance team contacted the sheriff and found out that Glen had hiked out.

All members were back at the hut around 2130. Other CLMRG participants: Green, B. Rockwell, Hine, Sakai, Gleason, Mitchell, Dan Harris, McDowell, Nelson, B. Westbrook, Roseman, Walker and Leiser.

86-27 9/14-15/86 Recovery Disappointment Peak Finco

I walked into my house after getting back from the dump Sunday, 14 September, and my pager was squelching away. (I forgot to take it with me!) I called Sheila Rockwell to find out if anything was going on and she said, "Yes, do you want to take the operation?" Sheila had received a call from the Inyo County Sheriffs Office around 1300 hours requesting our assistance.

I called Sgt. Lucas and he said that around 0800 that morning a climber fell into the bergschrund above Middle Palisade Glacier while attempting to climb Disappointment Peak. His climbing partner gave him CPR for about 15 minutes with no response, so he came out to report the accident. Sgt. Lucas said he would get a helicopter to shuttle people in that afternoon.

I called Sheila back and told her to have people meet at the hut at 1430 hours. Shannon Harris assisted her. Stogsdill, Sakai, Derrickson, Geyer, Bonbright, Hill and Leiser were able to go.

We arrived in Big Pine around 1640. We met with Deputy Ray and the reporting party, Scott Denton. Scott said that he and his climbing partner, Don Kershaw, were climbing up on rock toward Disappointment Peak above the glacier when they got into some hard climbing. They decided to traverse across into an area that appeared easier. While they were traversing, Don fell. Scott estimated that Don fell about 50 feet and landed about 10 feet down in the bergschrund.

A helicopter from Edwards Air Force Base arrived around 1740. They said they would make as many trips as needed, so Stogsdill, Sakai and Denton went up first. Because of the high winds the helicopter could not get the ground team close to where Don fell, so the team was dropped off on a plateau northeast of Brainard Lake. The second team of Derrickson, Geyer and Bonbright was taken to the same location. The two teams hiked up partway and then made camp.

The next morning the ground teams got an early start to continue the hike to the glacier. At 0910 a CHP helicopter arrived to try to shuttle the teams closer. However, due to the terrain and winds the helicopter could not land.

Sakai reached the victim at 1228 hours, with everyone else arriving shortly thereafter. They had Don's body out of the bergschrund at 1358, and started what would be a 10 pitch lowering over snow and ice.

The sheriff requested that the CHP helicopter come in to drop off some food for the ground teams since it now appeared they would be spending another cold night out. As the pilot was flying into Big Pine he spoke with the ground teams. The pilot agreed to try to pick up the victim.

The helicopter flew in, picked up the victim, and flew to Big Pine. The helicopter then was able to shuttle the ground teams out, one person at a time, to an LZ at Glacier Lodge.

Everyone was in Big Pine by 1800 and back in Ridgecrest by 2000.

86-28 10/15-16/86 Search Big Pine Creek Lucas/Hinman

On Sunday, 12 October, 32 year old Debra Melvin and her husband Mark ascended 14,000+ foot Polemonium Peak near North Palisade. Their route was the 1000 foot, 50 degree ice chute called the "V" Notch. They topped out late in the day and apparently had no planned descent route. The Oakland couple spent most of the night searching for an easy way off the mountain. Having no map, they were disoriented enough by Monday morning to descend into the drainage to the South Fork of Big Pine Creek, thinking it was the North Fork of Big Pine Creek. This means that they had to have traversed around Mount Sill sometime during the night. They spent much of the day looking for their *base* camp before realizing their error. On Tuesday morning the couple finally reached their car at Glacier Lodge, which is the trailhead for both the North and South Fork drainages.

They drove to Big Pine for breakfast and then to Bishop to buy tennis shoes for Debra. That afternoon they started up the North Fork trail to retrieve the gear at their base camp on the glacial moraine below Palisade Glacier and above Sam Mack Meadow. At about 2200 hours they separated, approximately a quarter mile before reaching their base camp, because Debra was too exhausted to continue. Mark went on to retrieve as much equipment as he could carry and Debra started down to Sam Mack Meadow.

In the darkness, Debra lost her way. Mark descended the trail thinking Debra was in front of him. Arriving at Glacier Lodge on Wednesday morning and not finding Debra, Mark started back up the trail thinking he had somehow passed *her* during the night. He hiked *the* six miles to Sam Mack Meadow before he decided that he needed help. Mark returned to Glacier Lodge and notified the Inyo County Sheriff at 1400 hours on Wednesday.

CLMRG was called at 1546 hours on the pager system and eight members, headed by Lee Lucas, drove to Glacier Lodge. One Inyo County SAR team was on the trail at that time. Two CLMRG teams were fielded Wednesday evening. These teams were to search the area bounded by the point last seen (PLS) on the moraine, Third Lake (which is below the moraine) and Sam Mack Meadow. They spent the night walking into the area. That evening a CRMRA call out was initiated. WOOF teams were also called.

On Thursday morning, 16 October, seven more CLMRG members arrived. A radio relay was established near Logging Flat and base camp was moved from Glacier Lodge to Big Pine. Another CLMRG team was fielded to proceed to Third Lake. At 0830 hours a set of tracks was found leading

down through the intermittent snow and rocks on the bench above Third Lake. At about the same time a set of tracks was found by another team at Third Lake. A single engine Huey from Edwards Air Force Base arrived. A WOOF team and Mark Melvin were flown to Second Lake, which was as high as the helo was able to safely land. The WOOF team was sent in to work with trackers at Third Lake. By 1040 hours the PLS had been reached and a similar set of tracks had been found leading down the moraine. Tracks had also been found leading around the north side of Third Lake toward Second Lake.

At 1230 hours an automobile key was found next to a track on the shore of Third Lake. Mark identified it as the key to their vehicle. This concentrated the search in the drainage between Third Lake and the roadhead. By 1330 hours, several Bay Area Mountain Rescue Unit (BAMRU) teams were fielded (which included a BAMRU bloodhound) along with three more WOOF teams. Some of these teams were to slowly sweep up the drainage toward Second Lake while others were to move directly to the area of Second Lake.

At 1350 hours Lucas left to return to China Lake and Hinman took over as operation leader. At 1420 hours Debra was located by trackers on the southwest side of Second Lake. She was physically in good condition except for dehydration, slight hypothermia and blistered and swollen feet. Mentally, she was totally disoriented and completely unaware that she was lost. She was given food and water and helo'd out on a CHP Ranger by 1540 hours. By 1730 hours all teams were out of the field and by 2200 hours CLMRG secured at the hut in China Lake. Other CLMRG members participating were: Huey, Renta, Mason, Mitchell, Jones, DeRuiter, Barbee, Silverman, McDowell, Roberts, Rogers, Roseman and Walker. Coordinators were S. Rockwell and C. Burge.

Comments:

- 1.** Searchers first saw Debra at 20 yards and called to *her*. She ignored the calls and started to walk away. In her mental condition she didn't feel she was in any danger or in need of rescue. The moral is that victims don't act as you might think they would and may not respond to searchers' calls.
- 2.** Debra later recounted that she had been hallucinating most of the time and passed the 20 degree nights by continually walking. Her tracks indicated that she wandered around aimlessly and that at times she was within a few feet of the main North Fork trail. She had moved less than two miles during her ordeal.
- 3.** This was a classic search problem. Four different search teams independently found tracks. Trackers were eventually able to connect all four sets. Debra was tracked from the PLS to the spot where she was found.
- 4.** CLMRG response time was slow. The advance team left the hut 1.5 hours after mobilization was started. More members should have ready packs at the hut or learn to pack faster.
- 5.** We took time Wednesday night to formulate a search plan (which eventually succeeded) before committing teams to the field. This proved to be wise since base camp at Glacier Lodge could not talk to field teams until the relay was established.
- 6.** During the period when the tracks were being found around Second and Third Lakes, there was confusion in base camp as to what was happening in the field. Field team members and radios were being interchanged and this was difficult to follow, especially through a relay. Base finally asked a CLMRG team leader in the field, Mike Renta, to coordinate the teams in that area. This action was being initiated when Debra was found.

7. A map table and 7.5' quads in base camp really helped to plan the search. We should obtain 7.5' quads of the Eastern Sierra roadheads where available.

8. Two leaders in base were kept very busy on this complex search. One of us alone could not have handled it effectively.

86-29 10/19-21/86 Search Yosemite NP Sakai

Around midnight on Saturday, 18 October, Yosemite National Park SAR requested help with a search for an overdue hiker in the Mt. Clark area. The search was for Michael Kalantarian, a 30 year old Camp Curry employee and experienced backpacker, who was several days overdue from an overnight hike. A call out was initiated for a 0200 hour departure on Sunday. Three CLMRG members responded and drove to Yosemite, arriving at 0810 on 19 October.

WOOF dog teams and search/track personnel from several SAR teams were deployed by helo and van to probable ingress and egress routes near Mt. Clark, as well as the summit and drainages. High probability tracks were found at the PLS early Sunday, and the victim's overnight camp was found later that day. By late Monday, when the CLMRG contingent had to return home, no other major breakthroughs had occurred.

We learned later that Michael was found at about 1430 on Tuesday, 21 October, in fair-to-poor condition. He had apparently fallen about 50 feet while climbing to the summit of Mt. Clark on 15 October and had broken both ankles and a wrist. He could not reach his pack, which he had removed to climb the summit, but was able to drag himself to water. He spent the next six days in sub-freezing (5-10 °F) night-time temperatures without the benefit of overnight gear. He faces the probable loss of part of one leg due to frostbite.

Responding were: Dan Harris, Amster and me. Coordinator was C. Burge, assisted by Braun.

SAD NOTES

Don Landells, long a familiar name to teams operating with the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit on missions in their area, as well as to people reading their newsletter, was killed in a helicopter accident recently. Don was a very skillful helicopter pilot who never hesitated when he was needed to participate in a search and rescue mission. He will indeed be missed.

In Memory of **J.D. (Don) Landells**

A dedicated pilot who never hesitated to help others when called upon —
Who will be remembered for his smile and ability to make others feel at ease.

Last July, CLMRG participated in an unsuccessful search for Marcel Sommeria (see operation 86-17). Earlier this month, his scattered remains were discovered near the search area. Cause of death is unknown at this time, although representatives of the Inyo County coroner's office noted that he had a known heart condition. He was also wearing light clothing and the cold evening temperatures might have been a factor in his demise.

DONOR'S CORNER

We are deeply appreciative of all the financial support that American Legion Post 684 has given us lately. Many of our pagers have been purchased using donations from the local American Legion post. On November 2 they held a "CLMRG Evening", complete with a delicious chicken dinner and good company. Afterwards, they presented the Group with an extremely generous donation which will enable us to obtain an elaborate wheel system for our stretchers. THANK YOU!

Ex-member Paul Woodworth recently sent in a donation. Paul is working in the Los Angeles area now, but still manages to climb with group members now and then. Thanks, Paul!

TERMINOLOGY FOR OPERATIONS

Qualifications Committee

Our operations (called missions by some other teams) fall into several categories, as readers of the Talus Pile are well aware. While some of the terms are relatively self-descriptive, it may be useful to remind everyone what the definitions are. Most of the time there is no doubt into which category an operation will fall. On rare occasions it is not clear, and in these events the Qualifications Committee makes the determination.

ALERT This type of operation, usually involving a missing or overdue person, is one where the operation is cancelled before we leave home. A common situation is an agency request in which we are to leave the following morning for the search site if the person has not shown up before then, but the person walks out or is found before we can leave. Having a number of alerts during the year pleases us because, although it means wasted effort in some sense, it tells us that we are getting called early. And early calls when the operation does go means enhanced chances for finding the victim in good condition.

MOBILIZATION: Somewhat like an Alert, the Mobilization is a cancellation, but after members get to a central mobilization point (our rescue hut) and before we transit to the operation site. Typically we will receive the cancellation telephone call just as we are readying our advance team for departure.

TRANSIT: This is a Mobilization in which members begin the transit. The operation is cancelled while we are enroute to the base camp, or at base camp before anyone is

fielded. Because of this possibility, for searches occurring a considerable distance away we usually stop every couple of hours to telephone the cognizant agency as to the progress of the operation.

SEARCH: As the name implies this is an operation for one or more missing persons, in which we actually get into the field and are searching for someone. Most of our operations are searches.

RESCUE: A Rescue involves someone who is stranded or injured, and needs technical mountaineering assistance to return to safety.

RECOVERY : Sometimes we are requested to retrieve a body which has already been located by others, and this is called a Recovery. If a Search succeeds in finding a deceased victim, for statistical purposes it is usually still called a Search because the main efforts involved an abundance of search techniques.

INCIDENT: This is a situation in which one or more members has rendered assistance to someone, where circumstances do not warrant identifying the situation with one of the above categories. Typically, the total effort involved is quite minor and there was no team call out. The agency having jurisdiction may not be involved. Whether to count it among our operations at all requires answering the question: "Did the assistance require skills unique to mountain rescue?"

The operation narrative which appears in *the Talus Pile* constitutes the main part of our official record of the operation. Therefore, it needs to be factual and concise, but complete in the important details. Simple operations call for short reports, but long complex operations need considerable description. Because the Talus Pile is read by many people with different vantage points we need to be careful about how some things are described. This is particularly true in the area of "lessons learned", where some statements could be unintentionally construed as fault finding.

Usually, the narrative is written by the operation leader. It is given a careful review by at least one member of the Qualification Committee and then sent to the Talus Pile editor for another editing job before coming to print. The final product may be very different from the original version because of the filters it must pass through before printing. Fortunately, our leaders are very understanding when they finally read "their report" in print.

OUT OF BOUNDS By Rechin & Wilder'



"The world is a better place to live in because it contains human beings who will give up ease and security and stake their own lives in order to do what they themselves think are worth doing, who are brave without cruelty to others and impassioned with an idea that dignifies all who contemplate it In such persons mankind overcomes the inertia which would keep it earthbound forever in its habitual ways. They have in them the free and useless energy with which alone men can surpass themselves.

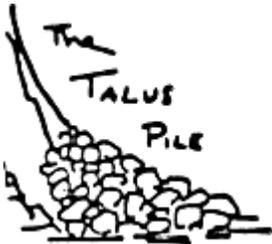
"They do the useless, brave, noble, the divinely foolish and the very wisest things that are done by man. And what they prove to themselves and to others is that man is no mere automaton in his routine, no mere cog in the collective machine, but that in the dust of which he is made there is also fire, lighted now and then by great winds from the sky."

- Walter Lippman

THE FAR SIDE By Gary Larson



Never put your lip on a glacier.



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