

CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP  
P.O. BOX 2037  
RIDGECREST, CA 93555

SCHEDULE OF EUEHTS

APRIL 3 - 5	Saline Valley Search Practice	Mitchell
APRIL 5	Hut Night (Radios)	Renta
APRIL 11	Piute Monument	Mason
APRIL 13	Meeting	Wyatt
APRIL 22	Hut Night (Equipment & Tent)	Harris
APRIL 25	Search Practice	Amster
MAY 2 - 3	Mt. Heller	Hinman
MAY 9 - 10	Snow Practice	Renta
MAY 11	Meeting	VanVerst
MAY 20	Leader Training	Lucas
MAY 23 - 25	Mt. Williamson	Hinman
MAY 30 - 31	Joshua Tree	Stogsdill
JUNE 1 - 10	Sierra Crest: Langley to Williamson	Ostermann

**MR: BOFFO**



Memories of that first CLMRG trip.

## OPERATION REPORTS

87-2  
Sequoia NP

2/19-20/87

Search  
Renta

Robert Simmons left the Wolverton Ski area in Sequoia National Park on 11 February for a solo ski trip to Triple Divide Peak. Simmons was well equipped for his planned 3 day tour, and he was experienced. He stayed at the Pear Lake hut that night. Three feet of snow fell on the next two days. When Simmons failed to return to Wolverton by the 15th, the Park Service began an air search, flying over the intended route on February 16th and 17th. On the 18th a ground search was started in the area between Triple Divide Peak and the Pear Lake hut.

CLMRG was put on alert at 1230 by Dick Sale of Sierra Madre Search and Rescue. Four people committed to go on the search: Hine, Lucas, Amster and me. The request from Sequoia NP asked for strong skiers but Sale felt that snowshoes would be of some use. Since I didn't consider any of us to be strong skiers, I decided to go with snowshoes. We got the "go-ahead" at 1615. We left Ridgecrest at 1900, arriving at the base camp area, Ash Mountain, at 0030 on the 19th. The next morning we drove to the Ash Mountain helopad, arriving by 0700.

The four of us, a dog team, and a GSI (park concessionaire) employee were flown to the east end of the Tablelands. There we joined four more GSI employees. Our assignment was to search the Tablelands area, terminating at the Pear Lake hut. We divided into five groups of two a GSI skier with one of us. Amster would search along the southern end just north of Moose Lake, and Lucas in between. The dog team was to go down wind of the ski trail that traversed the area. I went into the Buck Creek drainage. By 1815 all the parties were at the Pear Lake hut except for me and GSI employee Jack Hunterman. By 1630 we were at the top of Buck Creek and decided to bivouac there.

The day's effort didn't turn up any sign of Simmons. The snow depth in the area was from zero (top of rocks showing) to six feet in drifts. Due to the wind, ski tracks were significantly covered within an hour.

The next day we were all flown back to base camp. After debriefing we spoke to the incident commander, Tim Simonds. We all felt that snowshoes were inferior to skis in the primary search area, with skiers usually making better time. The area was ideal for

cross country skis. We were therefore released by the Park Service at 1130, arriving in Ridgecrest by 1615.

Back home, earlier in the day, Bob Huey had placed ten snowshoers and four cross country skiers on alert. The skiers were requested by midafternoon by the Park Service. However, upon discussions with the returning team and a final call to the Park Service prior to departure, Bob was told that the search strategy had changed and that they had more than enough skiers in the search. Sequoia was now concentrating on getting more search dogs.

The search continued: on the 22nd search dogs alerted at a couple of locations but the searchers were not able to probe the area. A storm that evening and the following day caused operations to cease. Five days later the search was resumed and the areas the dogs had alerted in were thoroughly examined with probes and shovels, but no sign of Simmons was found. The search was suspended until spring.

Coordinator on the operation was Wyatt, with C. Burge assisting.

Comments:

1. In the future we should consider taking both skis and snowshoes to west side Sierra winter operations since much of the area is within the capability of many CLMRG skiers.
2. One of the search areas was almost devoid of snow, and regular mountaineering boots would have been more appropriate than Koflach boots.

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87-3  
Horse Canyon

2/22/87

Search  
Huey

Three motorcyclists were reported overdue on 21 February. IWV Search and Rescue responded and searched the Jawbone Canyon and Horse Canyon areas. CLMRG was called at 1115 the next day by the Sheriff's Substation in Mojave to search the Pacific Crest Trail between Horse Canyon and Walker Pass.

The cyclists had departed at noon on the 21st and had planned a 100 mile trip up Horse Canyon and over the crest through the Piute Mountains and then into

Jawbone Canyon, returning to their departure point. They wore light motorcycling clothing, had one quart of water, but no food. No provisions were made for an overnight stay. Temperatures dropped to the 20s that night.

Teams from Kernville joined the search when it was determined that the motorcyclists had intended to descend the steep west slope and into the Piutes.

By 1600 one cyclist was returned to camp after walking out of the Piutes during the night, and the remaining cyclists were soon discovered by the Kern unit.

CLMRG coordinator was J. Westbrook, assisted by S. Rockwell. Brubaker operated the Ham communications between base camp and Ridgecrest. Other CLMRG members fielded were Finco, Jones, Derrickson, Gleason, Castro, Barbee, Mitchell, McDowell and Sakai. Amster participated by bringing a radio to base camp.

## PAST OPERATIONS

**Editor's note:** It isn't often that we get an in-depth look at an operation from the victim's point of view, and the following fascinating narrative is one of those rare occurrences. Debra Melvin was the subject of an intensive search in October 1986, which was reported as operation 86-28 in the Talus Pile issue of November, 1986. We recently received this communication from her and are printing it in its entirety.

Friday, 10/10: Mark and I left Oakland for Glacier Lodge to climb the V-Notch in the northern Palisades. Both of us had rock climbed for years but this was to be my first time climbing ice, and Mark's first ice lead.

Saturday, 10/11: We parked at the North Fork trailhead, hiked to the base of the Palisade glacier and made camp.

Sunday, 10/12: We took our ice gear and a small daypack and climbed the V-Notch. The only descent route we knew of was a rappel down the walls of the notch which, as it would be dark before we got down, did not appeal much. We hiked east hoping to walk off but traversed too low and dropped behind a subsidiary ridge running southeast; we were southeast of Temple Crags as well. After the moon set we rested in a lake basin but were too cold to sleep.

Monday, 10/13: We climbed out of the basin and up a small peak from which we could see the backside of the north Palisades. The rest of the day we rappelled on a single rope to a snowfield we believed would skate us over to the glacier and our packs. We realized soon after we were down that we were wrong

but still thought we were in the North Fork drainage, so we dropped to a lake and followed a stream bed down and east. By this time it was dark again: we were both beginning to see things that weren't there, generally people, though Mark saw an old mattress and kicked it twice before it became a rock. Very late, after the moon set, Mark set down a sling of ice gear to come see a bear cub I'd spotted up a tree. We looked for at least an hour without finding that sling.

We never found a trail either so we stumbled on through the night; by sunrise we were past Willow Lake, but still didn't know we were in the South Fork drainage. After dropping over a cliffy area we found a trail and Mark went ahead; he said he'd drive up to get me at the lodge. My feet were blistered and hurting from my climbing boots; I trudged on down not looking around me, somehow still thinking we'd been in the North Fork and just missed the trail.

Tuesday, 10/14: We drove to Big Pine for a meal and to make phone calls to work. There was never any question of not retrieving our packs up on the glacier, and we wanted to get it over with and get home. We drove to Bishop for a pair of cheap tennies so I wouldn't have to hike back in my boots. On the way back up the North Fork trail we argued about where we had been the night before. Mark knew we came out the South Fork, but I convinced him to at least look for the ice gear above Third Lake. I hiked on up toward the glacier. At dusk, Mark came up behind me on the talus near our gear. He told me to head on down, he would throw everything in the packs and be right down with them. I went down a way; every time I took a step, or my ice axe clanked on a rock. I thought I heard Mark call me. I stopped for a while, took a few

steps, screamed Mark's name: a few steps further down I did this again. Pretty soon I stopped moving and stood there screaming to him. No answer; I went slowly back up to get in shouting distance. Finally heard a very faint "Debra", then nothing. I panicked, picturing Mark somehow in trouble. I went up the remaining talus faster than I have ever done talus in my life, until I was above our camp site. There was nothing there.

I calmed down, reasoning that there was nothing likely to happen to Mark and that I should just get myself down the trail as fast as I could. The rest of the night I wandered over snow fields looking for the trail. I saw people everywhere; they were getting very acrobatic and just a wee bit menacing, but I could make them go away.

Wednesday, 10/15: I still don't know where I wandered that night but in the morning I was on a ridge above Third Lake. I called to some climbers I saw on the skyline but got no answer so I started slowly down. I saw no one but heard people talking softly here and there. I wanted desperately to see Mark when I got to the trail; I was near the head of Third Lake when I did see him. I climbed down some rocks to reach him, then heard him above me. I sat down to wait for him and fell asleep in the sun.

When I woke up I heard Mark arguing heatedly with a park ranger about the poor condition of the trails. I agreed with him but after a while got annoyed that he would spend so much time talking about it. I called up that I was walking to the showers, where were they? Mark then used me to illustrate his argument, directing me back and forth through a huge thicket. It hurt me to crawl through bushes and my ice axe kept catching; I laid it down and screamed to Mark to come get it if he wanted it back.

At sunset I was standing on a mud flat watching cars circling at the other end of the flat, one of them our Audi. I did not understand why Mark didn't drive down to me, but knew it had to do with that park ranger. I cried and pleaded with him to take me home. I remember a helicopter flying overhead; it was almost dark and I was glad no one could see me standing in the mud crying. I walked toward our car until I was standing in ankle-deep water. The cars vanished but I knew I was to meet Mark later that night at a road off to my left, and we would drive home. All the people around me in the woods wanted me to stay, so I was

going to have to sneak off. I stood around nonchalantly, then announced I was going for firewood and ran towards the road.

I believed that continuing to act made what I wished to be true become reality: by moving quickly I could make the road and Mark appear. To that end I leaped off a rather tall rock into a bush and fell to the ground. I got up, kept moving quickly toward that elusive road. An old man down by the edge of Third Lake directed me back up the hill. In a small clearing I sat down, took off my wet tennies (my socks were long gone), curled up and slept. My cold feet woke me. I went barefooted in search of the campground where I knew sleeping bags could be rented, at least in the summer; I hoped someone would still be there. Luckily there was. and luckily the camp was only 10 feet or so uphill from my shoes. I gave the boy there my Audi key in exchange for two cotton batting bags. He apologized for not having down bags, said he would toss the bags downhill toward me when he got them. I went back to my shoes. He called out that the bags were in the thicket in front of me. I found one and pushed it toward my sister-in-law Jenny who I'd discovered was sleeping near me, also without a bag. I never located the second bag but felt happy to see that Jenny at least was sleeping. A man who I believed to be both my brother and Mark's brother came down the hill to tell me my father-in-law Ed and his wife were parked up on the road and were going on a picnic next morning. He and Jenny would meet me there. I could walk on up and take a nap in the back seat.

I found the road but couldn't imagine how anyone drove on it. There were cars parked among the rocks and bushes, however. I walked up the road until dawn; Second Lake was below me. Members of Mark's family kept appearing 30 feet from me, pointing to the parked car and telling me they would be back, to help myself to Calistoga or Seltzers in the cooler. I remembered I no longer had the key and hoped they didn't lock the car. I searched the area above Second Lake, saw lots of cars, but no Audi. When the sun hit me I lay down on a rock and slept. A helicopter flying very low over me woke me up: I thought I heard a radio transmission about a missing person. I woke up for the second time when Ed called my name. I moved toward him. A man's voice from down near the lake called out my name, and I vaguely saw two figures in orange below me. This annoyed me, as I believed them to be bored hunters trying to confuse me. I moved away from them, calling to Ed and Jenny to direct me. I got no

response from them and finally in frustration and exhaustion I quit moving. I wasn't sure what to do next.

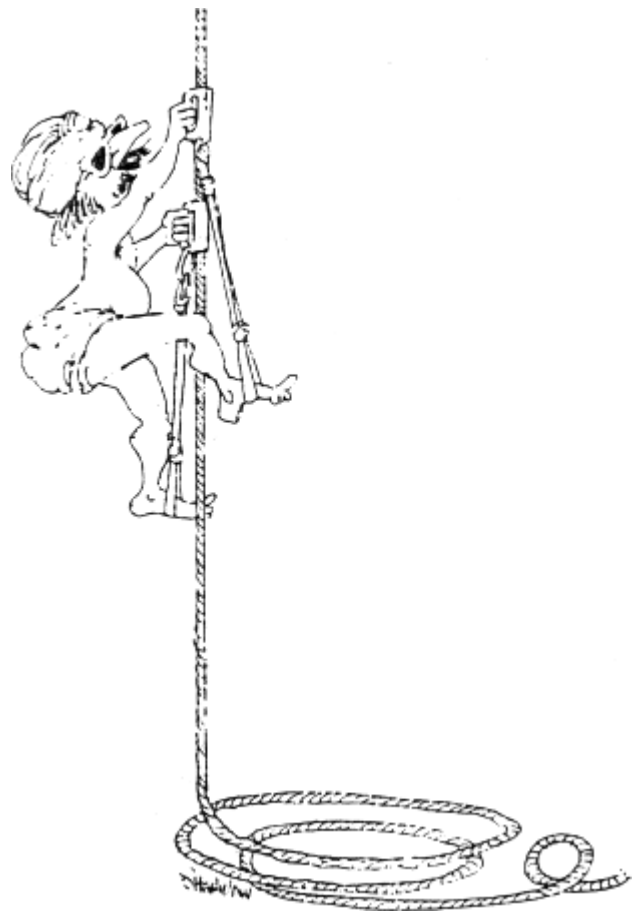
The two men in orange shirts came up to me, saying how happy they were to see me. It was nice to see a person at such close range for a change, but I didn't, for a minute, know why seeing me should make them happy. More people joined us, and when someone said Mark was right below us, I began to wake up to my real situation.

The rest of that afternoon is a blur. I remember the faces of the people who found me, but very few names. They told me what they'd done to find me. I was amazed anyone could track a trail like the one I'd been making the last 24 hours. Everyone was very kind, feeding me and giving me tea and warm clothes. Mark and I were helicoptered down to Big Pine, where I was surprised and chagrined to see up close the number of people and amount of gear and equipment involved in my rescue. I heard more about their search from different people involved; Mark has since filled in the gaps in the story.

## AFINANCIALOVERVIEW

Our donors, and others, may be interested in a peek at CLMRG's finances: How much we receive and where it comes from: how much we spend and where it goes. The following summary was extracted from the treasurer's report for the year ending 31 December 1986.

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
United Way	\$5,511
Other Donations	2,442
Interest	449
Summer Class; Seminars	270
Sales of Supplies	151
Grants	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,872</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Equipment	\$3,386
Gas: SAR Operations	2,894
Equipment Repair	1,227
Telephone	846
Supplies	639
Gas: Public Education, Administration	316
Talus Pile	296
Postage	188
Forwarded to Other Teams	110
PO Box Rent, Contract Services	79
MRA Dues	55
Fees	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,064</b>
<b>YEAR-END BALANCE</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Savings Account	\$2,902
Checking Account	2,486
Petty Cash	89
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,477</b>



From *The Gaines Climbers Play*

For many years the CLMRG has required each field member to participate to a certain minimum level in the activities of the Group. These requirements have been adopted by the Qualifications Committee (QC) after considerable thought and discussion, with the intent that by participating to these levels, each member is demonstrating continued proficiency in the specific skill.

One role of the QC is to make certain that each member is in the appropriate category of Rescue, Support, etc. Of the several tools that are used to perform this function, the annual activity is one of the most useful. Members who do not meet the requirements for their category are put on probation for the following year. If they fail to meet the requirements for a second year, they are usually demoted to the next lower category.

It is important to stress that the annual requirements in themselves are not sufficient to maintain the associated skill. For example, members who profess expertise in technical rock climbing skills will obviously need to do many roped climbs each year; members who maintain tracking expertise must put in many hours in tracking practices: and to maintain altitude acclimatization and conditioning requires mountain ascents quite frequently.

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REQUIREMENTS FOR FIELD MEMBERS

SKILL	RESCUE	SUPPORT	TRAINEE
1. SAR operations	3 commitments	3 commitments	3 commitments
2. Mountaineering trips	3 (1 overnight)	3 (1 overnight)	3 (1 overnight)
3. Technical roped climbs	1	optional	optional
4. Tracking practices	3 hours	optional	optional
5. Stretcher practices	1	1	optional
6. Advanced first aid review	10 hours	optional	optional
7. Maintain first aid card	Advanced	Standard	optional
8. Maintain CPR card	yes	yes	optional
9. Regular contact	yes	yes	yes
10. ELT practices	optional	optional	optional
11. Winter mountaineering trips	optional	optional	optional

Most of the requirements are self-explanatory; however the last three entries require elaboration. Regular contact means sufficient participation in Group activities which are specifically not mentioned above, yet are important for our overall effectiveness. Examples are attendance at meetings and hut nights, public education presentations, assistance with the newsletter, service on the board of directors or on standing or special committees and helping with the summer mountaineering class.

ELT practices involve the locating of simulated downed aircraft, by using direction finders to find an ELT beacon. CLMRG is not often called on this type of operation, so the skill is optional for all members.

Winter mountaineering expertise is also optional. Winter operations are very serious events, requiring our most capable and experienced mountaineers. It takes several years to develop the necessary strengths and skills, and a definite commitment by the member is involved. Once achieving Winter Mountaineering status for the call roster, a yearly winter mountaineering trip is required to maintain that status.

A corollary to the foregoing discussions is that CLMRG is composed of a large number of people with diverse interests, areas of expertise, and levels of commitment to the Group. Most members specialize in one or more of the needed skills and become known for their strengths in those areas. Note: annual operations and mountain climbs are not optional for any category of field membership.

The annual requirements encourage participation. Participation breeds expertise. Expertise translates into effectiveness on operations. It is this thought sequence which drives the QC to stress the importance of meeting these annual requirements. The bottom line is to have a rescue team that is totally prepared for any mountaineering search and rescue eventuality.

## DONOR'S CORNER

Our sincere thanks go to the following donors:

Manuela Mitchell  
Charlotte Schmetzer  
Janet Hammond

All the anonymous donors from the recent United Way  
campaign

## THE MAILBOX

We heard from Liz Anderson (First Lady of MRA!). She recently moved from the foothills of the Sierra in Lone Pine, to the "nohills" of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Liz gets her exercise (but not altitude) in the many small parks near Lincoln. There are many paved trails located along creeks and drainages. Liz said, "There is life after mountains!"

"Wilderness has the power to soothe,  
to calm, to restore and recreate"  
Summit

## MOUNT RAINIER WINTER ATTEMPT

On Valentine's Day Bob Rockwell, Daryl Hinman, Ron Atkins, Greg Rogers and Chris Ostermann departed for a flight to Seattle and a winter attempt on Mt. Rainier, at 14,410' only 35' lower than Mt. Whitney. We were never confident of our objective, given the notoriousness of the storms of the Pacific Northwest. We felt that if the weather was permissive, we'd make the summit. But this was not likely: the last successful ascent was on October 17, 1986 and several hundred climbers had tried since then and failed.

Our premonitions proved true. We managed 2000 vertical feet before storms drove us into our tents, to emerge two days later for the descent. The fun of reading the same magazines over and over was exceeded only by that of shoveling snow drifts off the tents every few hours.

As a winter experience, though, it was rewarding. The preparations, logistics, and pre-trip conditioning events were, as always, educational. Certainly the high point of the trip was the many hours we spent with Lee Tegner, vice president of the Tacoma Mountain Rescue Unit. Lee graciously volunteered to drive us from the SEATAC airport to the road head on the mountain, and return for us at the end of our climb. It is always worthwhile to "talk rescue" at length with people from other SAR organizations. Jeff Sharp, Tacoma's president, provided much useful data on the details of the route - although we never got high enough to take full advantage of this information.

*On Saturday, June 27th, Paul DeRuiter and Denise Baublitz will be married in Spokane, Washington. Paul's parents will be hosting a reception in Ridgecrest to welcome the newlyweds back from their honeymoon. Members of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group are invited to attend the reception on Sunday, July 12th from 2 o'clock until 4 o'clock in the afternoon at the home of Jim and Mary Netzer, 727 Trisha Court, Ridgecrest.*

*Please RSVP before June 24th to:*

<i>Paul</i>	<i>375-2700 (home)</i>
	<i>939-1515 (work)</i>
<i>Denise</i>	<i>375-3590 (home)</i>
<i>Mary Netzer</i>	<i>375-7643g (home)</i>

**CROCK** By Rechin and Wilder



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