

CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP

P.O. BOX 2037

CHINA LAKE, CA 93555

<b>SCHEDULE OF EVENTS</b>
---------------------------

JUNE 3	Search Practice	Lucas
JUNE 4	Owens Ridge Rock Climbing	Green
JUNE 10	Telescope Peak Fun Run	Mitchell
JUNE 10-JULY 15	East Ridge of Mt. Logan, Yukon Territory	Rockwell
JUNE 12	Meeting	Stogsdill
JUNE 13-JULY 26	Summer Class	Finco
JULY 1-4	Ionian Basin and Environs	S. Walker
JULY 15-16	Mt. Goddard Day Hike	Rockwell
JULY 26	Summer Class Party, Robbers' Roost	SC Committee
JULY 29-31	Charlotte Dome	Ostermann
AUGUST 5-6	Mt. Russell - North Arête	Hinman
AUGUST 12-13	The Thumb	Rockwell
AUGUST 14	Meeting	Hueber
AUGUST 19	Mt. Whitney	Mitchell
AUGUST 26-27	Mt. Muir - East Buttress	Hinman
AUGUST 28	CLMRG Summer Party	Atkins

\* \* \* \* \*

*"This is the romance of high mountaineering—the crunching of frozen snow underfoot, the coolness of the air entering your lungs at each deep breath, the long shadows slowly giving way to the pink early morning blanket of light. . . we each in our own way; tuning in to this alpine environment; each imprinting, in our own way, the future memories of this glorious morning... "*

- Dan Heidenreich

## SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS

89-2 Death Valley NM	3/11-13/89	Search Hinman/Finco
-------------------------	------------	------------------------

Hinman begins . . .

At 2030 on Saturday, 11 March, the China Lake Police called our paging system. I waited an inordinate amount of time before responding to the page, since I was busy and would have preferred that another leader take the call. The police dispatcher said that they had been requested by OES to contact us for a search in Death Valley National Monument. OES put me in contact with Death Valley Ranger Rod Lawson.

Lawson informed me that an abandoned car, owned by thirty-one year-old Roy Hegel of Bismark, South Dakota, had been found by park rangers the previous afternoon. It was located a quarter mile east of the main highway about seven miles north of Furnace Creek and had been there for some time. The sedan had been driven cross-country into the desert until it got stuck in the soft sand. There was no evidence to indicate that an attempt had been made to free the vehicle. Good tracks, made by the driver wearing cowboy boots, led east into a large alluvial fan which runs up to the Funeral Mountains. On Saturday park rangers had followed the tracks for three miles until they vanished in the hard-packed terrain known as "desert pavement". They found a leather rifle case along the tracks about a hundred feet from the car.

Ranger Lawson requested 15 to 20 CLMRG personnel. I told him we would be lucky to get 10 since many of our members were on a search practice in the Saline Valley with Inyo County SAR, and others were out of town for the weekend.

I was unable to get a coordinator, so Betty Meng and I made the roster call out. We got six other members to commit. I phoned the Inyo County Sheriffs Dispatcher in Independence to see if he could contact our people in Saline Valley. He couldn't, but informed me that Inyo County Sheriffs Deputy Dan Lucas and 12 others from the Saline Valley exercise were already proceeding to the Death Valley search. I informed Lawson that there would be at least 17 people there from CLMRG and Inyo.

The seven CLMRG members traveling from Ridgecrest arrived at the Furnace Creek base camp by 0800 the following morning. Five other CLMRG people arrived later with the group from Saline Valley.

Bart Hine and the two rangers who had tracked the subject on Saturday were held to the point where tracks were last seen, to continue tracking. CLMRG was given a 6 square mile search area to cut for sign, which roughly covered the area between the point where tracks were last found and the base of the Funeral Mountains. Inyo was given the region between the main road and our area. In addition, two rangers were flown to the top of Indian Pass Canyon in the Funeral Mountains, which they were to descend since it was the most probable route in the direction of the subject's travel.

While walking the three miles from the main road to our search area we were able to follow the subject's tracks. This provided everyone with a good description of the prints. Upon approaching our search area we divided into four teams, all heading east towards the mountains. By midday probable, intermittent, tracks were found in the drainage which leads through the alluvial fan into Indian Pass Canyon. Unfortunately, this drainage is a popular hiker's route so there were many other tracks.

As the day progressed, all our teams concentrated on this steep-sided drainage with two teams cutting sign above each side and the others inside. By the end of the day we had joined up with the ranger team descending the canyon near its mouth. They had found no sign. Just before we were to be held out, we found tracks leading down an intermittent jeep road which leads south from the mouth of the canyon and eventually back to the main road. As we were being flown out, two CARDA dog teams and a Sierra Madre SAR team were flown in to continue working those tracks.

Participating in the search this first day were Hine, Finco, Huey, Mitchell, Sakai, Silverman, Schafhauser, Wilson, Leiser, S. Walker and Antonsen. Finco, Sakai and Silverman stayed to search the following day and the others returned to Ridgecrest.

Finco continues.. .

Teams were debriefed Sunday evening and dinner was provided at Furnace Creek Ranch. We were given a place to sleep and met at base at 0600 the next morning.

On Monday morning the search would again concentrate in the canyons around Indian Pass. However, the search area would be expanded to cover canyons further north and south of the main area. The three from CLMRG were

assigned a canyon approximately 1.5 miles south of Indian Pass.

We were helo'd into the area, so were able to scout the terrain before being dropped off. We followed the canyon out to its mouth, but the only consistent tracks we found were those of bighorn sheep. By noon we met up with an Inyo team whose search assignment was the canyon just south of the one we searched. Base reassigned us to the area where the tracks had been found the previous day on the intermittent jeep road, to cut for tracks in all the canyons leading east from the road.

We found many tracks in the area, but they belonged to searchers from the previous day and that morning. We searched far enough up the canyons to make sure no single set of tracks continued into the canyons. At about 1400 we radioed to base camp that we had completed the assignment. We were then told to start just north of the main canyon leading to Indian Pass and continue heading northwest for 2 miles, cutting for tracks. A few tracks were found, but nothing that fit Roy's description. It was getting late in the afternoon and base wanted to reassign us one more time. The helo picked us up and flew us approximately 3 miles northeast.

We were now to follow an "old Indian trail" southeast, looking for tracks. We did so, again finding no tracks that matched the shoes Roy was wearing. The helo then flew us to Furnace Creek airport, and we arrived back at base at 1800.

There, we were told that the search would continue into Tuesday. Since we were not able to participate, we left Death Valley and arrived back in Ridgecrest at 2100.

I called Death Valley NM on Wednesday, 15 March, and was informed that no new evidence had been found.

Comment:

Each field team carried two radios. One was used to communicate with base camp on the Park Service frequency and the other was used to coordinate our efforts on the MRA frequency. This worked well since the base camp frequency was extremely busy with non search-related communication.

89-3 Palm Canyon	3/16/89	Search Huey
---------------------	---------	----------------

This was a CRMRA call out for an overdue experienced hiker on the Pacific Coast Trail in the Palm Canyon area near Idyllwild. Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit had searched for one and a half days. If one other person

from CLMRG would have responded we could have sent a team of two. The victim, found later in the day with injuries, was extricated by the teams that responded.

This is probably the first time that CLMRG could not field a team when requested.

89-4 Picacho Del Diablo	3/25/69	Alert Finco
----------------------------	---------	----------------

John Innskeep from Sierra Madre called on the pager at 2045 on Saturday, 25 March. John Wehbring's (San Diego MRT) brother had traveled to Picacho Del Diablo on the week of the 20th of March, and was due back on the 24th. When he did not return, John became concerned. The San Diego team planned to drive to the Picacho Del Diablo area to see if they could locate the vehicle that John's brother was driving. CLMRG was put on alert for a possible search the next day.

Mary Schmierer coordinated the call out, with Roger Meng's help. Bob Huey, Dave Silverman and Chris Ostermann committed. Then, at about 2135 that same evening, John Innskeep called me to say that John's brother had arrived back in San Diego.

89-5 Mt. San Jacinto	3/28-29/89	Search/Rescue Finco
-------------------------	------------	------------------------

Arnold Gaffrey from Sierra Madre SRT called me at 0020 on Tuesday, 28 March. I had spoken with Arnold earlier in the evening, so he knew I was home and called directly instead of using the pager. Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit was putting teams on alert for a search for a missing woman in the Mt. San Jacinto area. It had snowed in the area on Saturday, and the woman was not prepared for bad weather. RMRU started the search on Monday and did not find any clues. They were requesting a helicopter to overfly the search area Tuesday morning. If the helicopter did not spot anything, more MRA teams would be called to help. Arnold said we would be notified at 0900 on whether we would be needed.

I decided to start a callout, so that people could be ready to go. Sheila Rockwell coordinated, and Betty Meng helped telephone people on the roster. Five people committed to the operation.

At 1000 we were informed that we were needed. Tom Stogsdill, Andrew Mitchell, Dave Silverman, Randy Walker and I met at the but at 1045 and left at 1115. We arrived at basecamp at the Keenewyld Heliport at 1500. There we were informed that the missing woman was 27 year-old Jennifer Isbell from Long Beach.

Jennifer wanted to get away for a weekend, so she bought a backpack, tent, sleeping bag and other gear, and headed off for Idyllwild. She picked up a permit Friday afternoon for the Devil's Slide Trail and Tahquitz Peak area. With it being so late in the afternoon and the weather not looking good, the rangers tried to talk her out of going by herself, but she insisted that she would be all right. That evening it rained, and the rain became snow on Saturday. On Sunday when Jennifer had not returned home the Riverside County Sheriff was notified.

The search was concentrated in the vicinity of Saddle Junction. CLMRG was assigned a technical but low probability area at Carumba Camp and Tahquitz Canyon. As we were readying our gear, a search team notified base that they found Jennifer's camp in Reed's Meadow. It appeared she had left everything behind. She also left a note explaining that she was frightened and needed help and that she was going to try to head back to Idyllwild. With that information our low probability assignment now had higher potential. However, the helicopter from El Toro Marine Corp Base was grounded due to mechanical problems, so CLMRG was not fielded that afternoon. Some teams were brought out that evening, while others regrouped in the vicinity of Jennifer's camp.

The plan for Wednesday morning was to put a scent dog in the vicinity of Carumba Camp to try to determine whether or not Jennifer had headed down Tahquitz canyon. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's helicopter came in to assist, and first flew the search area with a RMRU team member, so the pilot could be shown the LZs and have a better feel for the terrain.

At 0820, while flying over Tahquitz canyon, the crew chief spotted someone in the canyon. They flew in closer and with the help of the loudspeaker, determined that the person in the canyon was indeed Jennifer. She was in an inaccessible spot for the helicopter, so teams would have to bring her up to an area where she could be flown out.

CLMRG was tasked with bringing Jennifer to a helispot. Cameron Robbins from RMRU was flown in first to make contact and to determine her condition. Stogsdill and Mitchell were then flown in with ropes and technical gear for a possible raising out of the canyon. They determined that Jennifer could be assisted to a pinnacle where the helicopter could pick her up. Jennifer arrived at base at 1030. All field teams were back by 1200.

Jennifer said that she had picked up her permit Friday evening at 1700. She followed the Devil's Slide Trail and arrived at Saddle Junction at dark. She finally found an area free of snow to pitch her tent and settled in for the night. It rained all Friday evening and continued to rain Saturday morning. The rain on Saturday quickly turned

to sleet, so she packed her gear to head back to Idyllwild. However, she headed downhill on the trail which was the wrong direction. When she arrived at Reed's Meadow she was cold and wet, so she decided to make camp. But with the snow and wind she could not get her tent set up properly.

By this time almost all of her gear was soaked, so she wrote the note, changed into some dry clothes and took off down the creek in hopes of getting to Idyllwild. (The creek she followed led to Palm Springs, not Idyllwild.) Part way down she intersected a trail and followed it to Laws Camp. Since she did not have a map she was not sure which way to go, so she continued heading downhill on the trail. At one point she felt so tired and cold, that she just laid down ready to give up, but the lack of movement made her even colder, so she continued on.

Saturday afternoon she arrived at Carumba Camp, and the signs that warned of the impassible waterfalls in Tahquitz Canyon. However, Jennifer felt she had already hiked down some pretty hard terrain and she was too tired to hike back uphill, so she was determined to make it down the canyon. Later, she found a dry spot to rest.

The next morning Jennifer heard a helicopter flying over the canyon, and at one point she thought she heard people calling her name, but then she thought it was just her imagination. Since it appeared that the helicopter could not see her, Jennifer spent the afternoon hiking to a more open area. On Wednesday morning when the San Bernardino County Sheriff's helicopter flew over, she was on a slab away from all the brush in the canyon, and so she was spotted by the helicopter.

The Riverside County Sheriff treated us all to a meal and let us gas up our vehicles for the trip home. CLMRG arrived back in Ridgecrest at 1500.

Comments:

1. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's helicopter did a great job of flying. The pilot picked out the pinnacle in the canyon, which probably saved 6 hours in getting Jennifer out of the canyon. He hovered over the pinnacle to drop CLMRG off. Then, with winds in the canyon increasing, he was able to come back to do a one skid hover to pick up Jennifer. The pilot also mentioned how impressed he was with the professionalism displayed by all of the MRA teams.
2. By Tuesday evening, the tone of the search had turned from searching for a responsive subject, to searching for a nonresponsive subject. Jennifer was out for 5 nights with temperatures dropping to freezing. So, when her full camp was found with all of her soaked gear,

people became discouraged. However, once again someone's will to survive overcame what people thought the obvious outcome would be.

In a search it is important for base to try to keep the searchers' morale positive, and more importantly to keep the objective of the search positive. Some agencies were hesitant to commit a helicopter to a search for someone who apparently no longer needed immediate help.

89-6 Olancha Peak	5/14/89	Search Mason
----------------------	---------	-----------------

At 1000 Sunday morning (Mother's Day), my pager sounded with a message to call Dan Lucas at the Inyo County Sheriffs Office. Dan asked if CLMRG could respond to a search for five members of a nine-person Sierra Club outing who had failed to return from climbing Olancha Peak. A call out was started by Sheila Rockwell and Betty Meng that eventually netted four members besides myself.

We drove to base camp at Sage Flat and were given the following information: on Saturday, 13 May, the nine-member party set out from their base camp at Summit Meadows to climb Olancha Peak (12,123'). Everyone summited, but several members of the group were very tired, poor weather was setting in, temperatures were dropping and the decision was made to separate the group. Four would return via their ascent route, with the remaining five dropping off the west side in hopes of intercepting the trail that would eventually lead then south and back to camp. Early Sunday morning, when the five had not returned to their base camp, the decision was made to go for help. Two went out to contact the sheriff, leaving two to search for the missing five.

CLMRG's plan was pretty straight forward. We had resources for two teams of two. One would be sent up the trail to the group's base at Summit Meadow, while the other would be held back for the helicopter that was inbound from China Lake. The helo arrived at 1500, and with it came the rain; and the word from the pilot that he would not fly any higher than our base camp because of the weather. The situation seemed rather bleak. At best we could put only two teams in the field, and they had an enormous area to cover. Even Mother Nature wasn't cooperating on her day; the rain had turned to hail and snow at the higher elevations. It was now 1530 and things had to get better. They did, in a big way.

Team one had met up with the whole group on the trail at 7,500 feet. Everyone was in good shape and heading down. The whole group was back in base at 1637. The

missing party told us that they had dropped too low and ended up in Monache Meadows, far below the crest on the west side. After a comfortable night in an old cabin, they aroused early and booked it for home. We wrapped things up and headed for the Ranch House for our Mother's Day dinner—minus our mothers.

Other members participating: Sakai, Roseman. **Wise-carver**, Leiser and Seibold.

89-7 Mt. Whitney	5/16-17/89	Search Mason
---------------------	------------	-----------------

At 1630 on Tuesday afternoon, 16 May, the pager announced a call from the Inyo County Sheriffs Office, requesting a team from CLMRG to search for a climber who had failed to return from Mt. Whitney. Randy McClure, 40, of Los Alamitos, had left his companions on the afternoon of 13 May at the 13,600' level of the trail to make a solo attempt for the Whitney summit. The weather was turning sour and a report from another climbing party informed Randy that the trail was treacherously icy. When Randy did not return to base camp by the 14th his companions went for help, leaving Randy's gear behind at his base camp.

CLMRG left the hut around 1830 on the evening of the 15th with an advanced team of Finco, Hine, Leiser and Mitchell. They would start in that night while I set up base camp. A second CLMRG team would be leaving Ridgecrest at 0500 to join us at base the following morning. Sierra Madre SRT, who had also gotten word of the operation, would have a team there at dawn. Dan Lucas of the Inyo County Sheriff's Office had arranged for a CHP helo from the west side to meet us at base camp the following morning. All was quiet for the night.

The following morning began with all the teams rolling into base. Our advanced ground team was still struggling up the trail through the snow making its way towards Trail Camp. The helo was having difficulty negotiating the weather on its way over the crest and the pilot decided it would be best to check the summit of Mt. Whitney now while he could still see it rather than waiting until he transported out teams. One of our concerns was the report we had received of slab avalanches occurring in great number above Trail Camp and at Trail Crest. This would be a major problem for our advance team on its way to the summit, and for Randy if he was trying to retreat from the top.

Our plan was to fly a team in and drop them high on Discovery Pinnacle so they could get above some of the avalanches. This would also position them for a rapid ascent of Whitney. We would also put a team at the

Crabtree Meadows Ranger Station just in case Randy wandered off the west side. Sierra Madre would be sent up the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek while the final China Lake team would be helo'd to East Face Lake just in case Randy found his way down the Mountaineers' Route.

Our advance team had just arrived at Trail Camp when we got a radio call from the helo that they had spotted a man outside the rock but on the Whitney summit. Although we had no contact with the man, we figured this had to be our man. The helo info, mad us that they were going to attempt to set down and pick the man up

Thirty minutes had passed and everyone was beginning to worry when the word came in that it was Randy and that the helo was transporting him to the Lone Pine Hospital for a general exam.

Without the helo, our job would have been extremely difficult and dangerous. Our teams headed back down the trail. Randy was examined at the hospital and was determined to be in fine shape with no injuries. Before he got away, one of our people interviewed him. It went like this:

Randy left his wife and friend at the 13,600 foot level at 1430 Sunday afternoon for the summit. When he was about 500 feet below the top he stopped to remove his crampons and pack. When he decided to continue up, he didn't want to carry his pack and left it behind. When he

reached the top, the weather turned bad and Randy retreated, only to discover that he could not find his pack in the falling snow. Without his gear, food or water. Randy returned to the summit where he spent the night. He told us that he found some little strips of wood which he ignited with the lighter he had in his pocket. With some rusty cans, he was able to melt some snow for drink.

Randy found some old Top Ramen-type food and ate it. He slept in the rafters of the hut because the floor, as we well know is always covered with snow and ice. Luckily, he was wearing lots of warm clothes. He spent Sunday afternoon through Tuesday morning there, when the halo picked him up on the summit. He said he didn't think he could have survived another night. This was Randy's practice climb for Mt. McKinley, two weeks hence.

At final report. Randy did not find his pack on his return trip the following weekend, nor did he even find his tent and gear that his partners left for him when they went for help. A report of missing gear has been filed with the local sheriff.

Other members on the operation Hinman. Renta. Ostermann, Huey, R. Walker, S. Walker and Castro. Mary Schmierer was the coordinator.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Daily Independent

**DONORS' CORNER**

**We received another donation from our friend, Janet Hammond. Janet has been a supporter of CLMRG for many years. Thank you so much for your interest and support!**

**Tom Boyd, brother of CLMRG coordinator Mary Schmierer, designed the flyer for this year's summer class. We like it! Thanks so much for sharing your talent with us, Tom!**

## **NWC engineers recognized**

BAKERSFIELD — The names of two China Lake Naval Weapons Center engineers are included on a monument honoring Kern County peace officers killed in the line of duty.

The Kern County Law Enforcement Memorial outside the Courts and Administration Building on Truxton Avenue was dedicated Friday.

Frederick C. Scheberies and Richard O. Slates are among the men honored by the monument.

Scheberies, 27, died Jan. 11, 1964, in a fall while crossing an ice-covered waterfall above Whitney Portals during a practice session. He was an aeronautical engineer.

Slates, 34, died Dec. 21, 1966, while participating in a search for the body of Fallbrook hiker near the summit of Telescope Peak. He was a physicist.

The names of 91 peace officers are included on the monument. They range from Bakersfield Police Officer Thomas Jefferson Packard and Deputy Marshal William E. Tibbet, who were killed in an April 19, 1903, shootout in downtown Bakersfield, to sheriff's Deputy Richard Robert McHale, who died March 3, 1989. McHale died after being beaten while responding to a call in Oildale.

**Rich and Fred perished in service with CLMRG.**

## SAR group excels in mission; nominated for national award

By Peggy Shoaf

Dedication to saving lives and their unselfish commitment to the aims of their organization caused Capt. John Burt, NWC Commander, to nominate the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) for the President's Volunteer Action Award. This nomination was endorsed by D.L. Kline, former NWC Public Affairs Officer; Sgt. Dan Lucas, Inyo County Sheriff's Office; and Lt. Carl Sparks, Kern County Sheriff's Office.

"The mere knowledge that they are available to assist this department (Inyo County Sheriff's Office) when needed for search and rescue (SAR) missions is very reassuring," stated Sgt. Lucas in his endorsement letter."

Lt. Sparks noted in his endorsement letter, "I would never hesitate to recommend the China Lake Mountain Rescue team to any county or state agency for any type of search and rescue mission involving lost persons or missing aircraft."

The President's Volunteer Action Awards were created in 1982 to honor those individuals and groups who make unique contributions to their communities through volunteer service and to focus public attention on these outstanding and innovative volunteer efforts.

The China Lake Mountain Rescue group has been in existence since 1958, and has responded to well over 500 SAR requests from California and other states, plus several from other countries. Most of CLMRG's activity is in the nearby Sierra Neva-

da range, especially in the vicinity of ML Whitney, the highest point in the contiguous United States.

CLMRG has an extremely active training schedule, including many mountain ascents yearly to maintain members' physical conditioning, route familiarization, altitude acclimatization, and technical climbing. In addition, each member is expected to participate in up to 20 days of training every year in climbing, first aid, search methodology, rescue techniques, helicopter operations and tracking.

To date, CLMRG has successfully retrieved over 400 people who had been stranded, injured or missing. The group averages about 30 SAR operations annually, expending approximately 5000 man-hours in the process.

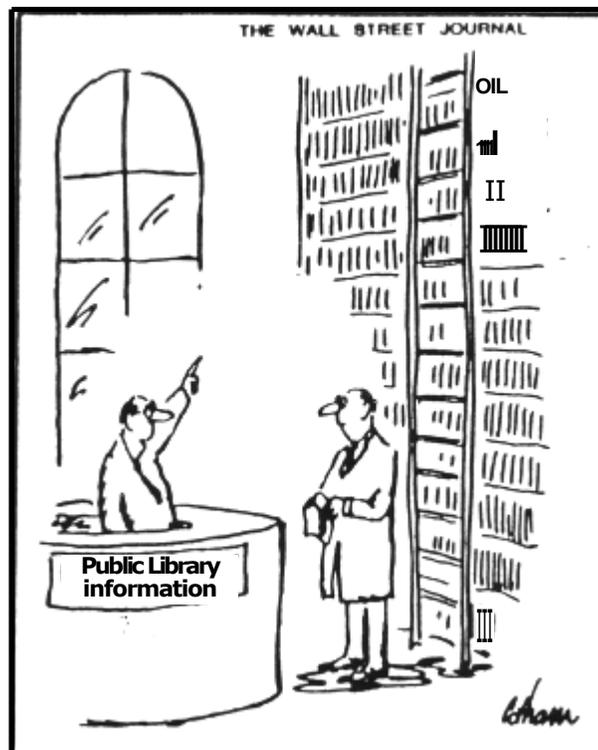
While the group did not win the award, they did receive a letter from President Bush congratulating them on being nominated. The letter reads, in part, "Congratulations on being nominated for the 1989 President's Volunteer Action award. Your nomination reflects the profound influence you have had upon your community, as well as the inspiration and joy you have given to others...You have won the respect and gratitude of your friends, neighbors and the Nation. Barbara joins me in saluting **you** and sending **you** our warm best wishes."

Leaders of the group are Arold Green, Daryl Hinman, Robert Rockwell, Thomas Stogsdill, Bart Hine,

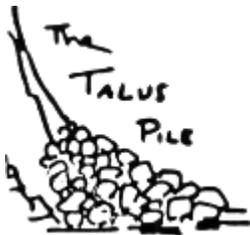
Robert Huey, Linda Finco, Lee Lucas, Michael Renta, Robert Adams, Michael Mason and Ronald Atkins.

Thomas Sakai, Carol Burge, Sheila Rockwell, Mary Schmierer, Andrew Mitchell, Larry Gleason, Thomas Roseman, Dennis Burge, Scott McDowell, Daniel Harris, William Martin, Paul DeRuiter, Michael Wisecarver, Chris Ostermann, Doug Speck, Ellen Schafhauser and Loren Castro are also members of the group.

Additional members are Randy Walker, Ronald Leiser, David Silverman, Lawrence Seibold, Gary Cunningham, Frank Buffum, Steven Walker, Philip Wilson, Christopher Antonsen, Allen Jones, Phelps TerHeun, Betty Meng, Carol VanVerst, Roger Meng, Bob Fletcher, Lloyd Brubaker, Robert Westbrook and Kenneth Amster.



"The section on acrophobia is at the very top."



From The China Lake  
Mountain Rescue Group  
P.O. Box 2037  
Ridgecrest, CA 93555