



December 1991
#87

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

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

December 6-8	American Alpine Club	Rockwell
December 7-8	Pyramid/Thimble/Tucki	Finco
December 9	Meeting "Search Ops"	Green/Hine/ Wisecarver
December 12	Stretcher Hut Night	Stogsdill
December 14	Five Fingers Traverse	Mitchell
December 15	Stretcher Practice	Atkins
December 19	Christmas Party	Westbrook
December 21-22	Owens Ridge	S. Walker
December 27-29	Mt. Williamson	Ostermann
January 4	Owens Peak	Mitchell
January 3-5	Deer Horn	Roseman
January 11-12	Great Falls Basin	Mitchell
January 13	Meeting "peips"	Rockwell/ Breitenstein/Ditsch
January 17-20	Junction Peak	Rockwell

Operation Reports

91-7 5-13-91 Rescue
Darwin Falls Mitchell

The Inyo County Sheriffs Office, ICSO called on the pager at 1315, requesting our assistance in rescuing an injured climber, Eric Merrill, at Darwin Falls. Mr. Merrill had fallen 15 feet, breaking the tibia and fibia bones of his right leg.

I asked Carol Burge to call the roster and have CLMRG members meet at the Hut at 1400. Ten members committed to go.

I contacted Commander Conn about the availability of the Naval Weapons Center SAR helo. He said it would be available and that they could fly three CLMRG members to Darwin Falls. The advance team of Al Green, Bart Hine and Steve Walker left the Hut for the Air Terminal at 1400. The rest of the field team left at 1420.

At 1530, Mr. Merrill was spotted and the advance team was landed near the end of the road. There were four BLM personnel with Mr. Merrill and they had completed the initial first aid. A Sam Splint had been used and the injured leg was elevated for a most "comfortable" position.

The EMT from the helo crew took over first aid. Mr. Merrill was placed on a Miller Board and then into a Stokes litter. We then proceeded directly down the bottom of the canyon to the first falls. At this point a technical lowering was needed. The falls itself was difficult because of the water, brush and the contour. We decided to lower from the south side. This was dry and much easier to negotiate, but the rock fall potential was extreme. However, this problem was minimized by extending the anchors so that no moving rope would disturb the loose rock. We ran the lowering from the bottom to eliminate the need for anyone to move around on the loose rock above. After extending the anchors, the drop was only 40 feet. We traversed the stretcher out under the anchors and lowered it. At the bottom, the wheel was attached and the evacuation continued directly down the canyon.

The helo crew was extremely helpful. They assisted in hauling the stretcher down the canyon and helped carry out the equipment.

Those members who participated were: Green, Hine, Finco, Stogsdill, Huey, S. Walker, Buffum, Antonsen, Atkins, Mitchell and C. Burge (Coordinator).

Notes:

1. The Inyo County Sheriff's Office was notified at 1305, called CLMRG at 1315 and we received the OES number at 1330.
2. Vehicle drivers should not change an operation meeting place without informing everyone involved - especially the Operation Leader.
3. Ensure that enough vehicles go to bring back those who fly to the rescue in the helo.
4. I left a radio hanging from a tree. Be sure to double check the area for any equipment which may have been left. I was lucky the radio was returned to me by Jo Heindel from Big Pine.
5. The Miller board worked very well to immobilize the subject. It cannot be broken down, so could not be carried on a backpack.

91-8 6-22-91 Alert
Tulare County Finco

The China Lake Police contacted CLMRG, via our pager, requesting assistance in the evacuation of a snake bite victim. They were primarily interested in getting the China Lake SAR helicopter to help in the evacuation, but with no daylight the helicopter could not assist. The Deputy asked the CLMRG team to be on alert in case the Bureau of Land Management personnel who were hiking in to evacuate the subject, needed assistance. None was required.

91-9 6/23-24 Search & Recovery

Clyde Minaret Finco

Commander Del Tour from the Kern County Sheriff's Office contacted me at 1245 on Sunday, 23 June, on behalf of the Office of Emergency Services who were requesting a team with technical abilities to assist in a search and rescue on Clyde Minaret.

On Saturday, 45-year-old Bruce Graham Parker and 30-year-old Cathy Moore were climbing the Starr Route on Clyde Minaret. Part way up the rock Cathy decided not to go any further, so Bruce continued on by himself. At approximately 1500 hours and when he was 50 feet from the summit, Cathy heard Bruce yell and saw him fall. Cathy looked for Bruce and when she could not find him she continued down to their camp below the mountain. Two other climbers were in the area. One went out for help and the other went up to try to find Bruce - without success.

The June Lake Mountain Rescue Team was requested to try to find Bruce from the air. This was not successful and because of the difficulty of the terrain (very steep and loose rock), and the fact that their technical members were not available, they asked that CLMRG be called to perform the search and probable evacuation. Through Scott Air Force Base, OES requested the assistance of the China Lake SAR helicopter. Two team members, Hinman and Mitchell, flew to base camp in the helo while the other four drove.

Since the June Lake team was at base and manning the radio, it was decided to send all CLMRG members into the field. The China Lake SAR helicopter, piloted by Lt. John Brooks, was able to get teams dropped off high on the mountain at approximately 10,500 feet. Sunday evening CLMRG searched the area till dark looking for clues to Bruce's location.

We camped high on the mountain and got up at first light Monday morning. When we called down to base, we found that four more CLMRG members had arrived. The six team members in the field hiked up the snow to the base of the rock on Clyde Minaret. The CHP helicopter arrived at 0600 and resumed the air search. With the help of the CHP helicopter, we located the subject's pack, boots and ice axe. We split up into two teams. Hinman and Mitchell climbed the right chute, searching for Bruce, while D. Lucas and I searched the middle chute.

At 0800 it was learned that the NWC helicopter would not be available to insert the additional ground team members, so the Lemoore helicopter was asked to assist. At 1300 Hinman radioed base to inform them he saw something green below and to the right of the area he was searching. The SAR helicopter from Lemoore, piloted by Lt. Jim Ellinger, arrived at about the time of the sighting. It flew over the area and confirmed that the green Hinman saw was the subject. It appeared that Bruce had fallen approximately 500 feet. The Lemoore helicopter lowered Steve Walker from CLMRG onto the face. The location was so steep and unstable that Walker waved the helicopter off while he secured himself and the subject to the rock face. Walker confirmed that it appeared Bruce was killed during his fall. He prepared the body to be lifted out of the chute by the Lemoore helicopter's hoist. After evacuating the body, the helicopter came back and hoisted Walker out of the chute. The helicopter then hoisted Hinman and Mitchell from their location high on the mountain and then picked up the other CLMRG members in the field. All CLMRG members were back in base by 1600. We debriefed with the SAR helicopter from Lemoore then headed back to Ridgecrest.

Members participating were: Finco, Hinman, Stogsdill, Mitchell, D.Lucas, Dow, Green, S. Walker, R. Walker and Hueber. S. Rockwell coordinated the callout assisted by C. Burge and B. Meng.

Comment: The hoist capability of the Lemoore helicopter was instrumental in minimizing the hazards of this operation. A technical lowering would have been extremely dangerous.

91-10 6/27/91 Transit

Mt. Whitney Sakai

Thursday evening at 1915 a request from Sgt Diederich of the Kern County Sheriff's Office, came over the pager. After I called the pager number to take the operation, but before I could call Sgt Diederich,

my phone rang. It was Bob Rockwell telling me he had just received a call from Doug Wilson of the Inyo Posse with details of the impending operation.

The situation was that a 30-year-old male, Gary Gunnow, was suffering from pulmonary edema between Trail Camp and Outpost Camp on the Mt. Whitney Trail. The Forest Service contract helicopter had searched for him, but could not locate him. It was suspected that he might be wandering about and a ground search should be initiated.

While I called Sgt. Diederich, I had Bob arrange for a coordinator to start a callout. At 1935, while on my way to the rescue hut, the pager went off again. This call was to notify us that the subject had been found and airlifted to the Lone Pine Hospital, so our services were no longer needed. A few more phone calls to notify our people, and by 1950, I was on my way home.

Committing were Sakai, B. Rockwell, D. Burge, D. Hinman (coordinator), and B. Meng (telephoner).

91-11 6/29/91 Rescue

Mt. Whitney Sakai

Saturday "morning" at 0017 the pager woke me from a sound sleep. As I listened to the message on the pager, my phone rang. It was Doug Wilson of the Inyo Posse requesting our assistance and relaying details of the situation. Shortly after I hung up, another phone call came in. This was from the Kern County Sheriff's Office Mojave Substation, the originator of the pager call, following up on the phone. After assuring him we would respond and after getting the OES number, I was able to start the callout. The situation was that a 56-year-old male, Don Taylor of Bakersfield, was at Outpost Camp on the Mt. Whitney Trail and was suffering from a case of pulmonary edema, the second such incident in a day and a half. He and the reporting party, Dr. Eric Fortenberry, had hiked up to Trail Camp the previous day. They descended until dark, making it to Outpost Camp. Eric continued down to Whitney Portal to report the incident. The Forest Service helicopter would not be able to respond until 0600 because of darkness. So we responded as soon as possible to provide first aid and be prepared to carry Don out should the need arise.

Twelve CLMRG members departed the rescue hut at 0116 headed for Lone Pine Airport where we were to rendezvous with a team from the Inyo Posse. We arrived at the airport at 0235 shortly before the OES/Inyo communications van from Bishop. Three Inyo team members and the reporting party were already at Whitney Portal. We quickly got nine of our people, with a stretcher and oxygen, up to the Portal. The first team was on the trail by 0320 and reached the subject at 0456.

The subject's vital signs were taken and oxygen was administered. Don's condition improved markedly with the oxygen, and he was able to walk to the helicopter when it arrived at 0607. He was on the ground at Lone Pine Hospital by 0620.

All field teams were back at the Portal by 0800, except those that remained behind to climb Thor with our Basic Mountaineering Class trip which was taking place that morning.

Participating were: Sakai, Green, B. Rockwell, Stogsdill, D. Burge, D. Lucas, Ostermann, Wilson, R. Walker, Hueber, Atkins and Dow. S. Rockwell coordinated assisted by Schmierer and B. Meng.

91-12 7/11/91 Rescue

Red Rock Canyon Hine

Charles Randell Crofton-Atkins was attempting to climb the west wall of Red Rock Canyon state Park. He is not a climber nor is this a good climbing area. The "rock" is very loosely bonded sandstone. Deep erosion grooves add to the dramatic appearance to the 250 foot canyon walls.

Charles was following one of these grooves in an attempt to reach the top. One-hundred-fifty feet from his goal, Charles found himself standing on a sloping ledge with no obvious way to continue. Looking down, he discovered that he had climbed 30 feet beyond anything he wanted to down climb. At about 1800 he started calling for help.

CLMRG received the pager call at 1915 and responded with a six man team. We met Sgt. Diederich (Kern County Sheriff's Deputy) at the Park at 2030. After a quick assessment of the situation and talking

with the local Park Rangers, Sgt Diederich took up a position below Charles where he could provide moral support.

Ranger Faull led the CLMRG members into the gathering darkness to a point above Charles. The hardware racks we carried proved to be useless. The top was smooth sandstone with no cracks for placing protection and was too soft to hold pitons. (There is the possibility that snow stakes and/or ice screws may be practical.) An anchor was established by roping a rock formation that was approximately 100 feet in diameter and 18 inches high. Not the most comforting anchor, but serviceable.

Since we were not sure of Charles' exact location, we did not throw the rappel ropes over the edge. Instead, the rope was flaked into the rope bag. The bag was then attached to the rappeller's harness and the rope fed out on the way down. This prevented hitting the subject or startling him with a near miss in the dark. A CLMRG member then rappelled down and secured Charles. The time was 2135. Charles was then lowered on a second rope to Sgt. Diederich's location. From there he was escorted down the erosion groove to the canyon floor. The only complaint he had was of being thirsty.

Our thanks to Park Rangers Craig Mattson and Mark Faull for their assistance in this operation.

CLMRG members involved were Hine, Mitchell, Leiser, Ostermann, Seibold, and Hueber. Sheila Rockwell was the Coordinator assisted by Betty Meng.

**91-13 7/26/91 Mitchell
Death Valley Search**

At 1530 on 24 July, Cdr. Steve Del Tour called us on the pager for a search in Death Valley. The National Park Service (NPS) requested 20 searchers. Cdr. Del Tour suggested that the Indian Wells Valley and Desert teams be asked to join China Lake since all teams are trained in desert search. I agreed with this suggestion.

I called Ranger Mark Machina for more information. Mark said Patrick David Hodge was overdue in Oregon. Mr. Hodge was supposed to cross from Badwater to Telescope Peak down to Mahogany Flats and then take the same route back to Badwater. The NPS would provide an air conditioned trailer and showers for the search teams. We were to be there for breakfast at 0430. We left at 2300 and arrived at Cow Creek at 0100 and were able to get a few hours of sleep.

We were briefed at the command post at 0530 by Ranger Mike Rondas, the Operations Chief. On 20 July, Mr. Hodge's truck was found parked at Badwater. On the morning of 23 July, Ranger Rondas checked the area by air and did not see anyone hiking.

The assignments were given out. China Lake would take the cliffs to the east of Badwater. IWV and the Desert Team were to search from Trail Canyon on the east side of West Side Road - Hanaupah Canyon down to Eagle Borax Spring. Mr. Hodge would have to cross the West Side Road and Hanaupah Canyon was on the route he was to take.

We finished our assignment and went to help search the area around West Side Road. The California Highway Patrol (CHP) helicopter from Barstow had been following tracks west from Badwater, lost them and wanted a tracker. The helo picked up Tom Roseman and flew him to the last good track. The helo dropped Tom off and left on a medevac. Tom followed the tracks and Kit Antonsen and Dianne Lucas went to help him. During this time, Tom saw the same set of tracks heading east, back towards Badwater.

At 1300 I called the search off for the morning and had all field teams return to the vehicles at Cow Creek for lunch. The temperature was about 120 degrees F.

Searching was stopped, to be resumed at 1600. At that time, the CHP helo returned and followed the tracks east until stopped by darkness. Meanwhile the rest of the teams searched Trail Canyon, Death Valley Canyon and Bennett's Well. All teams returned to Cow Creek at 2200 after dinner at Furnace Creek.

Breakfast was served at 0430 and assignments given out at 0530. China Lake was to go to Badwater and head west towards the last good tracks which were last seen by the helo the evening before. The tracks had been marked by two helo skid marks. The other teams were to search up Death Valley and Trail

Canyon and the west side of West Side Road.

The helo once again flew out to the prints east of Badwater. At approximately 0630, the helo left an NPS ranger at the last good track, while it flew back to Furnace Creek for another medevac. Tom Roseman and Dianne Lucas went to meet the ranger, while Kit Antonsen and I headed south to cut the track. We cut it shortly after in soft mud. Kit and I took a compass bearing of approximately 110 degrees. We followed the bearing through very difficult tracking ground - I jumped on the dirt several times to see what kind of impression I left. NONE!

At 0845 the five of us joined up and a few moments later found the body of Mr. Hodge. The location was one mile south of Badwater and 250 yards - about a 5 minute walk-from the road. We waited until 1130 for the sheriff's deputy and the helo to arrive. We gave two slings to the NPS rangers so they could lift the body into the body bag, which was on the Stokes litter. It was then transported to the helo for a short haul. .

I want to thank IWV and the Desert Team for their help with this operation. CLMRG members who participated: Hine, Finco, Stogsdill, Huey, Roseman, Renta, Leiser, S. Walker, D. Lucas, D. Burge, Antonsen, Silverman, Gray, Schafhauser, Wilson, L. Lucas, Jain, Westbrook, C. Burge (coordinator) and Mitchell.

Notes:

1. High-Tech makes many different kinds of soles for their shoes.
2. Tracking by helo was different and could only have been done in flat terrain. However, it was still ground teams who found the victim.
3. Temperature by 1000 was 120 degrees F.
4. The National Park Service was great.
5. The track Roseman was on, had been found on Tuesday morning and was thought to be a track of a search team member. Each team member should have been dragging their tracking stick. The lack of a drag mark would have clued the tracker that this track did not belong to a searcher.
6. Mr. Hodge carried an 8 mm video camera with him. From the tape, we found that his intention was to cross from Badwater to the West Side Road and return about a 12 mile journey. From the mountain shadows on the tape, we also concluded that he left Badwater at about 0730 and traveled during the hottest part of the day. In his pack, I saw only enough containers to carry three quarts of water.

91-14 7/28/91 Search San Gorgonio Huey

CLMRG was placed on alert on Thursday 25 July, by Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team for the possibility of assisting in the search for Jared Negrete, who had been lost since July 19. Jared was last seen on July 19, at approximately 1800 near the head of Vivian Creek Trail and the Old San Bernardino Peak Trail on San Gorgonio Mountain. He was hiking with his scout troop and had lagged behind. Over 200 personnel were participating in the search. CLMRG was not called to participate for Saturday and Sunday.

CLMRG personnel who were on standby included: Huey, Schafhauser, Silverman, Stogsdill, Wilson. S. Walker, Leiser, Jain, L. Lucas. J. Westbrook coordinated.

CLMRG was called at 1700 on Sunday night to send a technical team to the area on Monday, 7/28. A camera and food wrappers belonging to Jared had been found Saturday, but no other clues were discovered. The location of these items led searchers into a rough stream bed with a difficult rock section.

CLMRG and Sierra Madre units were assigned this area on Monday morning and thoroughly covered the area between the trail and opposite side of the stream. The technical area was covered as best could be, keeping in mind the safety of the searchers. CLMRG members had to return to work Tuesday. Participants included: Huey, Finco, S. Walker, Roseman, Wilson and J. Westbrook (Coordinator).

**91-15 8/12-13/91 Rescue
Robinson Lake Mitchell**

While he was attending our August meeting, Sgt. John Diederich's pager went off. It was a request for China Lake to assist the Inyo County Sheriffs Posse (ICSP) in the rescue of Marilyn Merker, who had fallen while descending a chute 1/2 mile above Robinson Lake.

Marilyn was unconscious and bleeding from the mouth. The weather at Onion Valley was rainy with a temperature of 45 degrees F. Conditions were deteriorating. We met at the Hut at 2030 and departed at 2045.

When we arrived at basecamp at 2245, the ICSP had their OES van set and their advance team was just below Robinson Lake. At 2315 China Lake's advance team departed with the stretcher and wheel. Ten minutes later, the rest left, carrying the oxygen.

At 0020, the ICSP advance team radioed that we might be too late and a few moments later confirmed that Marilyn had died from her injuries. The ICSP requested a helo to do a short haul in the morning since a lowering through the loose rock would be a serious hazard for the rescue members.

China Lake was requested to walk the rest of Marilyn's party back to Onion Valley. Marilyn's brother, John, had been struck on the ribs by a large rock. He complained that it hurt to breathe. I decided to walk the party back to base camp since I was the most experienced in first aid. I left Steve Walker responsible for working with ICSP on the body evacuation.

On the way down, we stopped and bandaged John's ribs. I requested that an ambulance meet us at base camp to transport John to the hospital in Lone Pine to have his ribs x-rayed.

We returned to base camp at 0244. At 0815, the Forest Service helo transported Marilyn's body to base camp. All field teams returned to base camp at 1000.

**91 - 16 8/18/91 Mobilization
Pine Creek Roseman**

At approximately 1930, Sunday (8/18), I received a call from the Kern Sheriff via Mitchell, about a female horseback rider, Elizabeth Dille, in shock with a broken leg. A call to Inyo dispatch confirmed the need for a night carry-out from a trail above Pine Creek Pack station north of Bishop. As I collected equipment and got organized for my first field operation as the leader, Kern called Mitchell with the message that Inyo could handle the carry-out. I called Carol Burge, the coordinator, in an attempt to catch people before they left home, but Finco, Leiser, S. Walker, F. Buffum and Wilson all arrived at the hut in a few minutes. In a later conversation with Pat Elliot of Inyo, I learned that the carry-out was done by a crew of 15 eager Honor Camp Trustees working to repay their debt to society.

**91 - 17 9/4 - 5/91 Search
Mt. San Jacinto Hine**

CLMRG was called to assist in the search for Martin Copeland on 3 September. Copeland had failed to return from a day hike to the summit of Mt. San Jacinto on Monday, September 2. The day had been rainy with thunder storms and hail. Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit had swept the trails on Tuesday and found no sign of Copeland's presence.

On Wednesday, four CLMRG team members arrived at the Keenwild Heliport at 0615 in time for team briefing and assignments. Most of the day's assignments were to sweep along both sides of the trails and down the major drainages that intercepted the trails. Our assignment was to fly to the summit of San Jacinto, check the summit register, and sweep down both sides of the Marion Mountain Trail to the Pacific Coast Trail intersection.

A Landell helicopter (16-U) deposited the team on the summit via one skid landings. During the sweep down the trail we called out Martin's name while looking under the many boulders, Manzanita bushes, and any other natural shelter spot. Throughout the day, other teams could be heard calling out Martin's name. Again, no positive sign was located.

By Thursday morning base camp had obtained additional information on the subject. He was a cross-country hiker, liked to scramble on rocks (even though he was a bit clumsy), and liked to go to the edge of cliffs to enjoy the Grand Vistas. Also several reports had come in from hikers who had seen Martin along the trail. One witness, who recognized Martin's picture from a newscast, reported seeing him very near the summit.

This new information changed the search strategy. Now spending more time in technical areas and additional searches of trails was the order of the day. Also dog teams were being added to the growing number of ground searchers (CLMRG added 7 more members). Additional helo support was coming in from the Marine Air Station at El Toro.

The CLMRG assignment was to fly to the summit and search the cliffs to the north; search the ridge to Folly Peak, and then sweep toward Marion Mountain. The Marine Huey (Angel 8) inserted nine CLMRG members and a dog team on the summit of San Jacinto. The dog balked a bit at the one skid landing. But, with a little help from behind, he was successfully put on the ground.

A three person team was heading for Folly Peak while three rope teams were searching the cliffs near the summit. Shortly after starting our assignments we received a response to our voice calls. Inadvertent reflections from Martin's glasses helped pinpoint his location. He was 2000 feet below us and about a quarter mile away horizontally. Helicopter 16-U was directed in and picked Martin up.

Martin had mistakenly started down the drainage to the north of San Jacinto Peak while trying to follow an abandoned trail. After suffering minor cuts and bruises during his descent, he decided to stop near running water and wait for assistance. He spent three nights in this location before hearing his name being called. He had waved at a helicopter the previous day, but had not been seen. Other than the cuts and being hungry, Martin was in good condition.

Base camp needs to be congratulated in how they handled this operation. Their planning and logistic staff did a fantastic job. Both in adapting to changing subject information and keeping the ground teams informed. Also 16-U and Angel 8 deserve a "Job Well Done" for the excellent flying they did in marginal weather conditions.

China Lake members involved with the search were: Hine, Finco, Stogsdill, Mitchell, Roseman, Lucas, Antonsen, R. Walker, Castro, Kong, and Dow. Sheila Rockwell was our coordinator.

**91 - 18 9/6/91 Alert
Baja California Finco**

At 1500 on Friday, 6 September, Jon Innskeep, from Sierra Madre, called the CLMRG to notify us of a possible operation in Baja California. The De Anza team in Baja, had been searching for a 17-yearold Mexicali youth. The young man, who was dropped off on the side of the road in the vicinity of Canon de Guadalupe, planned to hike cross-country to the canyon and then do some climbing. The DeAnza team had tracked the youth to the vicinity of the canyon when storms washed away the tracks and the roads. The San Diego Mountain Rescue team planned to contact the DeAnza team to determine whether or not the California Region MRA could assist with the search in the canyons. At 2100 Jon called CLMRG to notify us that the MRA would not be required to assist in the search.

Those interested in going to Baja were Finco, Stogsdill, Sakai, Leiser, Gray, R. Walker, Wilson, and Castro. Betty Meng helped with the telephoning.

Comment: There was a concern about getting an OES number for this operation. Since the operation never materialized, we did not find out how the process would work for an operation in Baja. The issue of how teams needing an OES number should respond to operations in Baja should be discussed at the next Cal Region MRA meeting.

**91 - 19 9/6 - 7/91 Rescue
Mt. Whitney Green**

The call came at 2045 directly from the Inyo Co. dispatcher. The situation reported was that two climbers were in trouble on the face of Whitney, between the Mountaineer's Route and the East Face

Route. Mary Schmierer took over as coordinator and called all the technical members on the roster. While on the way to the rescue hut, Sgt. Diederich called on the pager and gave us the OES #. We (Green, Finco, Roseman, Huey, Sakai, Steve Walker, Buffum and Hueber) left at 2215 and arrived at the Lone Pine Airport at 2330.

The Bishop team (Pat Elliot, Bob Wilson, Bob West and Ellen Siegel) had set up base camp with their OES van in place. The reporting party (RP) who had heard the call for help while at East Face Lake, was there. He said that his two friends, (5.8-5.9) climbers were getting ready to try to climb to the victims when he left at about 1700. He also said that it was raining during his descent and that the ledges were treacherous.

The Sheriff's office had made arrangements for the Forest Service contract helicopter (a new Aero Spatiale) to arrive at first light the next morning. With the information that climbers were on the way to the victims and that the weather was supposed to improve, I decided to hold our team and have them flown in. This was a gamble and goes against our standard policy of not waiting for a helicopter. I was convinced that the RP was reliable (as he proved to be) and given the current dangerous conditions for the climb to East Face Lake concluded that it was justified to wait.

The helo arrived at 0645 and departed at 0710 with Roseman and a helitac person. The helo would stay at East Face Lake to facilitate subsequent insertions. The weather was clear at East Face Lake, with a dusting of snow. There were four people and some tents at the Lake. Our initial elation was destroyed when Roseman learned that the climbers not only had been unable to reach the victims the night before, but also learned that one of the climbers on the Buttress was dead. The one encouraging report was that verbal contact had been made earlier that morning with the other person on the Buttress.

We requested a backup team from China Lake.

Roseman started up to the Mountaineer's Route with two volunteers from the group camped at the lake, to attempt more definite contact. At 0730 one of the two people with Roseman saw something fall from the Buttress into the Mountaineer's Route. Finco and Walker were flown in at 0742 and Huey, Sakai and Hueber at 0808. At 0855 Roseman confirmed our worst fears - the person who had survived the night had now fallen to his death.

Sakai, Huey and Hueber would handle the victim in the Mountaineer's Route and Roseman would go to assist Walker and Finco on the Buttress.

Gray was flown in at 0903 with the breakdown stretcher. Walker said that it would be about 1.5 hours to get to the Buttress victim. At 0923 the helo was able to hover over the Buttress site and reported an obvious fatality.

At 1033 the back-up team (Hine, Hinman, Stogsdill, Mitchell, D. Lucas, Antonsen and Seibold) arrived from China Lake just as Walker reached the Buttress victim. The helicopter was able to use a long line to evacuate both victims. This expedited the operation and was considerably safer for the work on the Buttress.

The Mountaineer's Route victim was out at 1145 and the Buttress victim at 1220. By 1430 all of our people were back in base camp. The speed of this effort was possible because of the excellent helicopter support.

Comments:

This would have been a difficult operation if the weather had been perfect. Steve Walker deserves credit for leading the pitches on the Buttress under very dangerous conditions. It was cold (snow and hail off and on) and he was not sure at the outset that the victim was not alive. It takes a cool head to climb safely under these conditions. Tom Roseman not only raced up to determine the fate of the victim in the Mountaineer's Route, but then went over to the Buttress Route to climb with Steve. Sakai, Huey and Hueber had the difficult task of loading a broken climber into a body bag and rigging it for evacuation. The helicopter and crew were extremely competent. The helitac person landed at East Face Lake with no certainty of a ride out. The weather can change quickly, and it was putting on a real show that day. The pilot was an expert; the rescuers on the mountain had nothing but praise for his performance.

For future use - Steve and Tom found it possible to rappel with two 165' ropes from the third pitch of the Buttress into the Mountaineer's Route. This was not known a priori.

**91-20 9/7/91 Incident
Owens Lake Green**

At 1445, we were at the Lone Pine Airport loading the cars with gear from Operation 91-19, and preparing to go home when a car pulling a glider trailer pulled into the airport. The woman who got out of the car said that her husband had crashed on the north end of Owen's Dry Lake. She had had radio contact with him and said that at first he seemed alert and responsive. However, his last words were weak and said, "get help, get help".

I asked Pat Elliot to contact the Sheriff's Office for authority to respond. Because of the immediate need, we prepared to roll. All but seven of us started towards the dry lake. Buffum and I were the last to leave and followed the woman pulling the glider trailer - who it turned out- was getting instructions from a glider pilot in the air. We managed to get within a 1/4 mile of the wreck. Hine and Mitchell were minutes ahead of us and Mitch was already on a secondary survey of the victim when we arrived.

The pilot was in the glider, had raised the canopy, taken his belts off and was moving his head and arms. He did complain of neck and lower back pain. I was sure that he was not in a life threatening situation and requested that ambulance personnel be brought to the site. We are not professional paramedics and as it was relatively easy to get professionals involved, it seemed the prudent thing to do.

We assisted the ambulance personnel as directed in extracting the pilot from the glider, placing him on a backboard and carrying him to the ambulance. We also assisted other glider pilots in disassembling the glider and carrying it out to its home in the trailer.

This operation was a total success and our efforts were appreciated by live victims - both wife and husband.

We had a very late lunch - compliments of Inyo County - and were home by 2015, almost exactly 24 hours after the first call (for 91-19).

**91-21 9/7/91 Alert
Mt. Whitney Mitchell**

I had been home almost an hour, (see two previous operations) when at 2140 the pager went off. It was the Inyo County Sheriff's Office, ICSO, wanting us to help search for a 49-year-old missing hiker in the Mt Whitney area, who was "disoriented, exhausted and out of focus". He was last seen somewhere between Trail Crest and the summit of Mt. Whitney.

Since we had just returned from two operations, I asked the ICSO if I could call the Sierra Madre Team for their assistance and was given permission. Sierra Madre was willing to meet us at Lone Pine Airport at first light.

At 2010 the ICSO called and said the subject had just walked out and was ok.

Those who committed were: Hine, D. Lucas, Ostermann, F. Buffum, Dow and Mitchell. Coordinator was B. Meng. Twelve members of the Sierra Madre Team committed to go.

SCREE

Congratulations to Linda Finco, who was elected vice-president of the California Region of the Mountain Rescue Association in September.

arranged by Dianne Lucas, was very productive. The helo crewmen were: Lt. Steven Huber (current SAR officer), Lt. Fred Butler, U Paul Matheson, Crew Chief Stefan Fehr and Corpsman David Adkins.

On October 2, approximately 15 members of CLMRG met with four China Lake helicopter crewmen to discuss procedures for working together and just to get acquainted. Everyone involved felt the meeting, which was



“This new guy is really fouling up our Classification system”



The Talus Pile is edited by Carol Burge

**From
The China Lake Mountain Rescue Group
P.O. Box 2037
Ridgecrest. CA 93333**