

# CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP TALUS PILE NEWSLETTER

## July 1998

### TRAINING SCHEDULE

Jun 27-28 Sat-Sun Summer class day trips Operation leaders

Jun 30-Jul 1 Tue-Wed Summer class Class Committee

Jul 1-6 Wed-Mon Shasta Myers

Jul 3-5 Fri-Sun Arrow Peak Sakai

Jul 7-8 Tue-Wed Summer class Class Committee

Jul 11-12 Sat-Sun Summer class overnight trips Operation leaders

Jul 13 Mon Meeting (Self rescue-cravases) Ferguson/Schafhauser/O'Conner

Jul 14-15 Tue-Wed Summer class Class Committee

Jul 16-20 Thu-Mon Ericson/Geneva/Jordan/Stanford Rockwell

Jul 21 Tue Summer class final exam Class Committee

Jul 22 Wed Summer class party Class Committee

Jul 24-26 Fri-Sun South Guard/Brewer/North Guard Hinman

Jul 27, 29 Mon, Wed Standard first aid Ostermann

Aug 1 Sat Whitney (Mountaineer's Route) Florian

Aug 7-9 Fri-Sun Whitney (East Face)/Russell Davis

Aug 10 Mon Wagon Wheel party Sakai

Aug 15-16 Sat-Sun Peak 13803 (Split) Roseman

Aug 21-23 Fri-Sun Russell/Cleaver/Carillon/Heller/etc. Rockwell

Aug 26, Sep 2, 9, 16 Tue Mini-stretcher practice Huey

Aug 29-30 Sat-Sun Darwin/Mendal Sakai

Sep 4-7 Fri-Mon Tuolumne Meadows B. Niesen

Sep 12-13 Sat-Sun White Mountain Runkle

Sep 14 Mon Meeting (wound irrigation) Finco/Niesens/T. Mitchell

Sep 15-16 Tue-Wed CPR Green

Sep 18-20 Fri-Sun North Pal Hinman

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**CLMRG is funded by United Way of Indian Wells Valley.**

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### **OPERATION REPORTS**

Tom Roseman

**98-1 19 Feb 98 Search Kern River (Tulare County) Tom Sakai**

**OES #98-OES-0077**

At 0800 on Thursday, 19 February 1998, my phone rang just as I was about to have breakfast. It was Sgt. John Diederich of KCSO relaying a request for assistance from the US Navy at China Lake and the Tulare County Sheriff in searching for a missing crewman from the crash of the China Lake SAR Huey helicopter of the previous day. Five crewmen were on the flight, but a preliminary inspection of the crash site on Wednesday afternoon and night accounted for only four of them. The whereabouts of the fifth crewman was still unknown as of early Thursday morning. The Navy investigative team was going to extract the remains of the four dead crewman Thursday morning and probe the wreckage for signs of the fifth. They wanted us to organize a search team and be on scene at the crash site in case they didn't find the fifth crewman under the wreckage.

My point of contact was to be Sgt. Diederich, who was to be on scene along with the Kern Valley River Rescue team.

Terry Mitchell (Coordinator) and Mary Schmierer (Telephoner) managed to get nine people to meet at the hut at 1000. We gathered necessary gear for a search and headed for the river. We arrived on scene about noon in a light sprinkle. There were more than 20 military and civilian people from China Lake, 2 or 3 Naval Investigative Service personnel, some Tulare County deputies, Forest Service people, 11 members of the Kern Valley SAR team, and representatives from 3 Bakersfield TV news organizations as well as Sgt. Diederich.

The military was in charge of the operation, so we stood by while offering our assistance in any way via Sgt. Diederich. We watched while the investigative team extracted the remains of the 4 crewmen and probed further into the wreckage. When they found the fifth crewman, our hopes for a survivor were dashed. The gray drizzly weather seemed appropriate for the mood of all those on scene.

Our group stayed until 1440, when we were released by Sgt. Diederich. We arrived at the hut at 1620, stowed our gear, and went home.

CLMRG field members were Tom Sakai (Leader), Andy Mitchell, Mike Myers, Linda Finco, Dennis Burge, Walter Runkle, Dianne Rindt, Paul DeRuiter, and Gina Najera-Niesen.

### **98-2 14 Apr 98 Search San Jacinto Werner Hueber**

Cdr. Moe, Kern County Sheriff's Office, called on Easter Sunday, 12 April 1998 at 1039 and asked CLMRG to support a search for a 45-year-old male cross-country skier who was reported missing on San Jacinto, Riverside County, on Saturday, 11 April at 1600.

Betty Meng, the only coordinator in town, found only Gina Najera-Niesen ready to leave on Sunday. Daryl Hinman and Al Green could leave early Monday in time to go into the field by day break. Leaving on Monday morning made more sense because we would have not been able to get to the base camp at the San Jacinto Tramway before late afternoon or early evening-too late to get fielded on Sunday.

I called Cdr. Moe back, and he concurred with our plan to leave early Monday morning. I also called base camp and informed Sgt. Dowdell, Riverside Sheriff's Office and Operations Leader, that four of us could be at the lower tramway before

daybreak on Monday. I would call him back around 1800 to find out if we were still needed on Monday morning.

When I called at that time, I was informed that the skier had been found, and he was OK. So all of us enjoyed Easter Sunday dinner.

### **98-3 13 May 98 Search Milestone Creek Tom Sakai**

#### **OES #98-OES-0201**

At 1215 on Tuesday, 12 May 1998, Steve Klump, Assistant District Ranger from Sequoia/Kings National Park, called me to give us a heads up on a possible operation. Somebody had called Randy Nixon of Inyo County SAR presumably from or near the crest to report a hiker with an altitude illness problem near Milestone Mountain. Nixon called Klump to alert him, and Klump, remembering us from the Tyndall operation, called me for possible ground help if helicopter support was not available. Lemoore was ready and willing and needing only a break in the weather in the area, so that would be his first option.

After hearing the results of the interview with the reporting party (RP), Klump called back about 1400 to request our help. He then called the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to request our help.

I got in touch with Sgt. John Diederich, who gave me the OES number he had just received. Klump said the RP reported that the victim had a sleeping bag, tent, stove, food, and water. A group of people back there said they would check up on the subject, but it was unclear whether they were going to stay with him throughout the day because they talked of going to climb Milestone.

Because of the weather, helicopter support might not be possible for several days. Klump decided that a ground response was necessary, but he needed to get his people to the east side because the approach to the area is significantly shorter. Therefore, he wanted us to meet his people, one of whom is a medic, at the Shepard Pass trailhead first thing Wednesday morning. We agreed that would be 0600.

I called down the coordinator list, and the first one I could reach was Betty Meng. The first team of Tom Sakai, Tom Roseman, Mike Myers, Walter Runkle, and Steve Florian were to meet at the hut at 0300 Wednesday, 13 May to get some gear and go. We were to go in quickly to evaluate the victim, tend to him, and get him down to a lower altitude (via the Kern) if necessary. We were there in case the latter was called for. Klump felt it would not be wise to do a carry out to the east because of the elevation of the plateau. Consequently, I broke our team into two teams. The second

team headed by Werner Hueber and consisting of Cindy Goettig, Debbie Breitenstein, Eric Toler, and Scott Money Penny were on standby until Klump called Hueber with an assignment.

We were a little early, so we stopped in Lone Pine to meet the National Park Service (NPS) people (Bud Walsh, Eric Morey, and Dave Stransky) at their motel. The weather in the Owens Valley was clear at the time with some clouds hanging on the crest, but the winds seemed not to be bad. After some discussion with Walsh, the NPS Operation Leader, he decided to wait awhile to try to expedite a helicopter evacuation. If weather did not permit that, he would also try to get us helicopter transport from the valley to near the crest. This would save ground transit time to the victim by nearly a full day.

While these arrangements were going on, the CLMRG crew went into Lone Pine to get breakfast. By 0700, definitive helicopter plans had not been made because of changing weather on the west side. A helicopter might still be possible for evacuation or transport, but Walsh felt we shouldn't gamble on getting one. So the plan was to have the medic, Morey, and Roseman (because he had skis) wait at Lone Pine airport for a flight while the rest of us started hiking in. At 0700, the other six of us left Lone Pine and arrived at the Shepard Pass trailhead about 0800. We started hiking at 0820.

At approximately 0930, we heard a helicopter flying eastbound near the Shepard Creek drainage and hoped it was participating in the operation. We couldn't see it because of the clouds and couldn't contact it by radio because of the terrain. At 0955, Walsh received a call on his radio from Morey that the helicopter we heard, a Blackhawk from Lemoore Naval Air Station, had picked up the victim and had taken him to Bishop. Tom and Eric had to drive nearly to Independence to be able to contact us in the Symmes Creek Canyon. We turned around and were back at Lone Pine airport at noon.

The subject, Mark Mason, a 45-year-old male, was apparently OK. He was ambulatory at the time of the evacuation and in good condition. Mark was taken to Northern Inyo Hospital in Bishop for observation and treatment. He and his partner, Tyler Rhead, the RP, had started in the Shepard Pass trail Saturday, 9 May about 1600. Sometime Monday night or early Tuesday morning, Mark had developed audible "gurgling" sounds, coughing, and rapid breathing. At 0530, Tyler left to get help.

After the NPS treated us to lunch in Lone Pine, we said goodbye to the NPS folks and headed home. Several miles north of the Red Hill cinder cone on Highway 395, we ran into a heavy, cold storm cell that had dumped 1-2 inches of hail on the highway resulting in two cars sliding off the highway and overturning about 20 minutes before

we came along. There were no serious injuries to occupants of either car, and help had been summoned. So we proceeded home and arrived in Ridgecrest about 1430.

#### **98-4 28-31 May 98 Search Yosemite Linda Finco**

CLMRG received a page from Sgt. John Diederich around 1415 on Wednesday, 27 May 1998. Kern County was requested to send up to 20 searchers to Yosemite to assist in a search. The search was for a 28-year-old man missing since Monday in the Half Dome area. We were to meet at the SAR cache in Yosemite at 0600 the next morning. I called to verify snow conditions and was told there was a little snow, but no snow gear would be required. Also, Sgt. Diederich said no technical gear would be required, but I had the coordinator make sure that all CLMRG members had a harness, a helmet, carabiners, and a few slings.

Seven people committed to the search. We met at the hut at 2400 and gathered our group gear. We arrived at the SAR cache around 0610 and were directed to the east auditorium across the road for the briefing. During the briefing, we were told the search was for David Paul Morrison, 28 years old. David was staying at Curry Village with his girlfriend. On Monday at 0530, he left Curry Village and said he was going to hike to Half Dome. He was reported last seen in the Little Yosemite area around 0630 on Monday. David was wearing a sweatshirt, sweatpants, and tennis shoes, and he had a fanny pack with limited gear. That evening when he had not returned, his girlfriend reported him missing. A storm dropped rain and snow on Monday, and reports from the area said visibility was low. Searchers searched the trail on Tuesday, and helicopters flew the area. On Wednesday, the search had expanded to include trails other than the Half Dome trail and the drainages leading away from the Half Dome area. On Thursday, the search would expand even more to areas outside the primary Half Dome trails area. Teams from the previous day's search were assigned to the field first. We were directed to the west auditorium to await our assignments.

Around 0730, a search planner asked if we could supply four searchers to act as observers in the helicopters. Tom Sakai, Steve Florian, Debbie Breitenstein, and Cindy Goettig volunteered. Bob Huey, Barry Niesen, and I were given a field assignment to search the Sunrise trail. A Yosemite volunteer, Jacob Schmitz, was assigned as a fourth team member. We were to be flown to the shoulder of Half Dome and hike to the Sunrise trail. We were to look for signs that anyone had been through the area. We drove to El Capitan meadow to await our helicopter ride.

By 1100, it was decided that the winds were too high and that teams would have to hike to their assignments. We were told to carry overnight gear and hike to Little

Yosemite Valley. From there, we would complete our search assignments. We had to be shuttled to the trailhead, so we started our hike in around 1300. We arrived around 1600 at Little Yosemite Valley. Clouds had been building all day, and it looked like it was about ready to storm, so the ranger asked us to set up a lean-to shelter using a large tarp. This way as other searchers arrived, they would have some shelter. Just as we finished setting up the tarp, it began to rain-first lightly, then more heavily. Most of the field assignments were called at that time with people concentrating on getting their shelters set up for the night. Huey and Schmitz hiked up to the first trail intersection on our search assignment but found nothing of significance. Around 1800, it began to snow. The snow lasted until around 2130.

The next morning, new assignments were issued. The three members from China Lake were combined with four members from Tehachapi, three members from BAMRU, one member from Marin County, and a team leader from YOSAR. Our assignment was to fly to the shoulder of Half Dome and search the slopes coming off the shoulder. The helicopters came in to transport people, but at 1130 the clouds had rolled in and made landing on the shoulder of Half Dome unfeasible. We started hiking up the Half Dome Trail at 1200. At around 1230, we got word that a dog handler had fallen around the shoulder of Half Dome and strained his back. A couple of searchers hiked to his location to assess the situation. We all regrouped just below the shoulder of Half Dome around 1300 and waited to see if a carry out would be required or if a helicopter or horse would be made available for the evacuation. At 1400, it was decided that we would continue with our search assignment and that two rangers and the four members from Tehachapi would assist the dog handler to the landing zone for a helicopter evacuation. Two other dog handlers and their dogs searched down the slopes ahead of us, and after they gave the OK, we began our search down the slope.

We finished our search around 1630 and were told to pack up our gear at camp and be at the landing zone in Little Yosemite Valley at 1700. We were flown back to the El Capitan meadow and got a ride back to the SAR cache.

That night, we were housed in Curry Village and met up with the other CLMRG members. The four observers from CLMRG flew most of Thursday, but only two were used on Friday. The air search covered as far as Clouds Rest on the east, Mt. Starr King on the south, Tenaya Canyon on the north, and Illiouette Valley on the west. The searching was done as low and as slow as the winds would allow. Each of the four flew two one-hour flights on Thursday. The search on Friday was to examine specific areas where clues had been reported. Consequently, only two flights were undertaken, so two of the observers from CLMRG stood by the whole day. For Saturday, Yosemite wanted technical people to search a few drainages in the Half Dome area. Yosemite asked if our team could stay on Saturday to assist on these

assignments, so we said yes. We ate dinner, showered, and got our tent assignment for the night.

The briefing on Saturday was at 0800. Sakai, Florian, Breitenstein, and Goettig were teamed with a YOSAR member to search the Grizzly Peak drainage. Huey, Niesen, and I along with Jane Koski from BAMRU were assigned the Liberty Cap drainage. We were flown to Little Yosemite Valley and then hiked to our assignments. We were told to complete our assignments by 1700 and be back to the trailhead by 1800. We searched under every rock, bush, and log. Base wanted at least 90% to 100% coverage of the drainages. We felt we came awfully close to complete coverage in the drainages.

After three days of searching, no positive clues were found to help locate David. Yosemite requested that we spend the night. They would provide dinner and breakfast and release us on Sunday. We left Yosemite around 0830 on Sunday and arrived home around 1430.

Members: Linda Finco (Leader), Tom Sakai, Bob Huey, Steve Florian, Debbie Breitenstein, Cindy Goettig, Barry Niesen, Mary Schmierer (Coordinator), and Betty Meng (Telephoner).

A good rule of thumb is to always bring a minimal amount of technical gear on all operations. Both technical search assignments on Saturday could have been completed without technical gear, but we did do one rappel in the Liberty Cap drainage that would have been awkward (if not painful) as a dulfersitz.

We had problems with our GPS units on this operation. One GPS when turned on stated that all stored data was lost, and both took a significant amount of time to autolocate (10 minutes or more). Only lesson learned here is to remember your map and compass (which we still emphasize) because the GPS is a technical gizmo that can fail in more ways than one.

The Park Service in Yosemite did an excellent job in providing for all the searchers.

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## ACTIVITIES

**Searles Peak Friday, 20 Feb 98 Bob Rockwell**

Friday at 0730, Loren Castro and I left Ridgecrest heading east with no definite plan because of the unsettled weather. North of Trona, the Slate Range looked unthreatened so we decided to try a peak I had done 20 years earlier. Just north of Valley Wells, we took a dirt road and drove to 2500 feet. A nice east-west ridge led to the crest, and then we made a right turn south. Passing several minor summits got us to what is now referred to-at least by the locals-as Searles Peak (5093 feet): the high point of the Slate Range.

From the register:

1. Jan 2, 1960: George Barnes, Russ Huse, Doug Huse, Doug Lind, Carl Heller, Ernst Bauer.

The register was placed by Carl, writing that the name of their party was the "NOTS Marginal Ascension Group." In the front, he wrote "When this register is full please send to P.O. Dead Letters, NY."

2. Jan. 3, 1960: Andy Smatko, Shirley Smith.

3. Mar. 12, 1978: Lee Lucas, Bob Rockwell.

4. Oct 15, 1981: Bill Gossett.

5. Nov. 21, 1981: Gordon MacLeod, Barbara Lilley.

6. Dec. 11, 1983: Jim Porteus, Bob Dinger.

7. Feb. 22, 1986: Carol Burge, Jim Porteus.

8. Feb. 28, 1996: Dan Polman, Jim Vitz, Don Kirby.

9. Apr. 13, 1996: Richard and Tom Gossett.

10. Feb. 20, 1998: Loren Castro, Bob Rockwell

For a few minutes, the clouds parted to let us see a perfectly white Telescope Peak poking between two cloud layers before closing in again. We headed back, this time crossing over one of the minor summits we had ignored on the way in: Slate Peak Benchmark (5049 feet).

The entries:

1. Mar. 29, 1959: Polly Conable, Walt Wheelock.

2. Jan. 2, 1960: Carl Heller & company, same names as above.
3. Feb. 28, 1996: Dan Polman. He was struck by the fact that he was the first one there in 36 years. He wrote, "Thanks Walt and Carl."
4. Apr. 13, 1996: Tom and Richard Gossett.
5. Jan. 23, 1997: Pat Phillips, Brian Gorlitz.
6. Feb. 20, 1998: Loren Castro, Bob Rockwell.

Loren and I were back at the truck at 1430 and home in time for a nap before supertime. Class 2, 3400-foot elevation gain, about 5 miles. It was an interesting trip, and old timers will recognize some of the names.

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## STANDARDS

The new technical rescue draft standards, 1670 (Standard on Operations and Training for Technical Rescue Incidents) and 1006 (Standard for Rescue Technicians Professional Qualifications), are now available on the internet through the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) site at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org). Navigate through the **Codes & Standards** pages until you reach a page where you can enter the number of a standard and click on **Get Document**. The drafts are in Acrobat pdf format. Acrobat is a browser plug-in that you can download free if it is not already installed. (Follow the instructions that you find.) Submit online proposals and comments about the standards at [www.nfpa.org/submitterapp.html](http://www.nfpa.org/submitterapp.html)

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*Climb the Mountains and get their glad tidings.*

*Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees.*

*The winds will blow their own freshness into you,*

*And the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.*

-John Muir

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## FROM OTHER SOURCES

*[Editor: The following article appeared in SAR DOG Alert, March and April 1998, Vol. 18, No. 2.]*

### PEPPER PIQUES BEAR APPETITES

by Craig Medred

Daily News Outdoor Editor

*Bruce Bowler, SEADOGS, [Alaska] sent this story to us. It is timely since Spring is in the air and those furry critters are out and about in some areas already-Ed.*

The same pepper spray that repels threatening Alaska brown bears may also attract them, a government scientist has concluded after studying bear sprays this summer.

Bears react to pepper a lot like people do. In your face, it's a powerful, eye-burning irritant. But on your food, it's an attractive taste sensation.

Products such as *Counter Assault* remain useful for scaring off threatening or aggressive bears, said Tom Smith, a researcher at the U.S. Geological Survey's Alaska Science Center. But he wouldn't advise sticking around any place sprays have been used.

He found that when he sprayed red-pepper bear repellent on gravel bars on the Kulik River in Katmai National Park, he attracted bears rather than scared them away. Some bears rolled in the red pepper, he reported. Others sniffed, licked and pawed it. Still

others rubbed their heads in the spray. Smith compared the behavior of bears and pepper spray to cats and catnip.

"For bears," he said, "it's clearly a turn-on." Alaska Department of Fish and Game biologist Mike McDonald said he was not particularly surprised. "I like hot sauce on my food, too." McDonald said he was involved with dousing a moose carcass with pepper spray to see if that would keep bears away. It didn't. But those were black bears, known to develop a quick immunity to the red-pepper spray.

Brown bears, in every documented case, have retreated from the spray when shot into their nose and face. They apparently develop no such immunity, said biologist Stephen Herrero of Canada.

But they do seem to find the pepper attractive when it is sprayed on tents, boats, gravel or other objects, Smith said. "It does have a down side. The implications are a bit important."

For instance, if he has test-fired a can of bear repellent, he won't put it in his tent. Enough red-pepper residue remains on the canister that he worries a bear might get a whiff of what he calls "this eat-at-Joe's scent" and come to investigate. "It's not a bad scent. It's a scent they like." He isn't as worried about being eaten as other possible consequences from the bear behavior he's seen.

Who, he asks, would want an 800-pound brown bear rolling on their tent trying to coat itself with pepper spray?

Smith said he began investigating the bear-attracting properties of red pepper after co-workers reported strange field experiences. In one case, he said, they pepper sprayed one rubber raft, to protect it after their other raft had been chewed up by bears.

They didn't realize how wrong they were until they saw a brown bear licking the pepper off the boat, shortly before the animal tried to eat the craft. Much the same thing happened with a bear-plagued outhouse, Smith said. After it was sprayed with pepper, a bear reduced the outhouse "to toothpicks."

Smith said he worries about what might happen if someone sprays their tent or, worse, themselves, thinking of bear repellent like insect repellent.

At least one such incident happened with a group of oil-spill cleanup workers in Prince William Sound after the Exxon Valdez disaster. "I don't think we've actually seen it, but we've heard the stories," said Jane Tranel, spokeswoman for Denali National Park.

She confessed she tends to believe the stories of confused tourists, particularly foreigners unable to speak English, putting on Counter Assault with the thought it is "a deodorant for bears."

"I've been around long enough to believe anything," Tranel said. Smith thinks state and federal wildlife agencies should warn people of the bear-attracting dangers of pepper sprays.

It's a bad idea to test-fire the sprays near camps or areas heavily used by humans, he said, and a fired canister should not be left in tents or near sleeping bags. If you are forced to use pepper-spray to shoo away a bear, it's probably a good idea to camp far away, too.

*In Alaska, tourists are warned to wear tiny bells on their clothing when hiking in bear country. The bells warn away MOST bears (brown, black), but be careful because they don't scare grizzly bears. Tourists are cautioned to watch the ground on the trail, paying particular attention to bear droppings to be alert for the presence of grizzlies. One can easily spot a grizzly dropping because it has tiny bells in it.*

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## **1997 PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

Mary Schmierer

### **Date Activity Participants CLMRG Member**

Jan Path Finders 5 Andrew Mitchell

Apr 12 Rappelling with Mesquite Students 17 students Bob Huey (Leader)

Apr 16 Girl Scout Encampment 40 girls Linda Finco (Leader)

Oct 17 Murray Middle School Gifted Students Presentation on Mountaineering 45 students Bob Rockwell

Oct 18 High Desert Classic Downhill Race (First Aid) 7 participants Linda Finco (Leader)

Oct 19 High Desert Classic Mountain Bike Race (First Aid) 200 participants Linda Finco (Leader)

Oct 22 Red Ribbon Day Las Flores Elementary 500 students Werner Hueber

Nov 14 Rappelling with Mesquite Students 17 students Bob Huey (Leader)

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*Climb if you will, but remember that courage and strength are naught without prudence and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste, look well to each step, and from the beginning, think what may be the end.*

-Edward Whymper.

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## **DONATIONS**

Gina Najera-Niesen

**CLMRG gratefully acknowledges recent gifts from the following friends:**

William C. and Frances M. Harris Nashua, New Hampshire

Don and Denise Terry Chevy Chase, Maryland "In memory of Robby Dow"

Lyal D. Viers Ridgecrest, California

Dorothy Gould Inyokern, California "In memory of George Oftedal"

**SCREE**

Check our web page at <http://www.clmrg.org>.

All telephone numbers in *The Talus Pile* are area code 760 unless noted otherwise.