

China Lake Mountain Rescue Group

Talus Pile #113

June 2000

TRAINING SCHEDULE

Jun 9-11 Fri-Sun Balloon Dome Roseman
Jun 12 Mon Meeting/Knots (Botham) Botham/Hueber/Castro
Jun 13, 14 Tue, Wed Summer class begins Huey
Jun 17-18 Sat-Sun University Runkle
Jun 20, 21 Tue, Wed Summer class Huey
Jun 23-25 Fri-Sun Versteeg, Trojan McCormick
Jun 27, 28 Mon Summer class Class Committee
Jul 1-2 Sat-Sun Polemonium Huey
Jul 3-9 Mon-Sun Kaweahs Roseman
Jul 7-9 Fri-Mon Bear Creek Spire, Ruby Finco
Jul 10 Mon Meeting/No training Renta/McCormick/Doerr
Jul 11, 12 Tue, Wed Summer class Class Committee
Jul 15, 16 Sat, Sun Summer class day climbs Class Committee
Jul 18, 19 Tue, Wed Summer class Class Committee
Jul 21-23 Fri-Sun Whitney East Face, Buttress Gates
Jul 25, 26 Tue, Wed Summer class Class Committee
Jul 29-30 Sat-Sun Summer class overnight climbs Class Committee
Aug 1, 2 Tue, Wed Summer class graduation party Party Committee
Aug 4-13 Fri-Mon All Sierra Fourteeners Hinman
Aug 12-13 Sat-Sun Kern Peak Doerr
Aug 14 Mon Summer party Finco, T. Mitchell
Aug 16 Wed Night tracking practice Training Committee
Aug 17-22 Thu-Tue Rainier Gates

SUNDAY ROCK CLIMBING coordinated by W. Runkle

CLMRG is funded by United Way of Indian Wells Valley.

OPERATION REPORTS

Tom Sakai

00-01 9-10 Apr 00 Search Mammoth Mountain Mike Myers

Leader: Mike Myers

Coordinator: Sheila Rockwell

OES # 2000-OES-0148

I received a pager notification from Sgt. Diederich at approximately 1030 on Sunday, 9 April, that the Mono County Sheriff was requesting our assistance in a search. I called the Mono County Sheriff's Office and spoke to Sgt. Bo Turner, who had requested our Group to assist them in the search for a 50-year-old male who had disappeared while skiing at Mammoth Mountain. Sheila Rockwell coordinated a callout and notified me that three members responded to the callout: Al Green, Eric Toler, and Bud Gates.

We met at the Hut at 1215, gathered our gear, and--following a slight delay--departed for Mammoth at 1300. After a brief stop for fuel in Bishop, we arrived at the Main Lodge at 1630. The base camp was set up in the Ski Patrol Room. We reported in at base to Jim Gilbreath and Dave Harvey and then cached our gear in the Mountain School Building adjacent to the lodge.

The missing person was Richard Lewak, and he was reported to be an advanced-intermediate downhill skier, 50 years old, 6 feet tall, 180 pounds. He had mentioned to a friend that he wanted to ski the Hemlock and Paranoid areas and that they would meet at the mid-chalet at 1130 for lunch. He was last seen at 0930 wearing blue-black ski bibs and a gray sweater, and his lift ticket was last scanned at 1000 Saturday morning. His car was found, and all his personal effects were still in his room.

Our first assignment was to drop down to the river on the west side and do a line search between the road and the river from the gravel pits south to Devil's Postpile. Pete DeGeorge of Mono County SAR was assigned to our team since he was very familiar with our area. We were inserted by snowcat and snowmobiles at 1900. The warm daytime temperatures had quickly melted all signs of anybody passing through the area, but we thought we would find something if he had been there. We were well into our search when base decided to pull all field teams back to base, give everyone a night of rest, and renew the search in the morning. We were picked up by the snowcat and snowmobiles and driven back to the lodge by 2230. Following a debrief, we were provided excellent quarters to take a shower and rest.

We were back in base by 0600 on Monday, 10 April, and were treated to a good hot breakfast in the lodge. Following the 0600 Ski Patrol scan of the mountain, we were inserted by snowcat to the Rainbow Falls Trailhead, a one-hour ride, where we met Bob Salima and his dogs. Bob lives at the pack station all winter and collects skiers who come off the wrong side of the mountain. Our assignment was to do a line search

from the trailhead to the river, using the river as our western boundary, search south to Rainbow Falls, and then proceed to Lower Falls. We searched for signs of anybody passing through the area and inspected the cliff areas around the falls.

After arriving at the Lower Falls, base notified us that a ski patrolman had found a short section of ski track about 3/4 mile northeast of our position and asked that we proceed to that area. We fanned out and cut for sign to the base of a cliff band where we decided to split into two teams and look for sign from two different directions. One team of three would travel north to Boundary Creek and follow it up and east to the plateau. The other team of two would climb a more southwest-facing gully to reach Crater Creek and then cut for sign moving back to the plateau to the north. Just as we made that decision, a helicopter crew spotted Lewak just over the ridge from our position.

The helicopter crew had to return to the airport and off-load some passengers before they could come back and pick up Lewak. In the meantime, base made a very good decision to have us continue toward Lewak's location just in case something prevented the helicopter from returning. I estimate our position to be about 1/4 mile from Lewak when the helicopter returned and picked him up. Base then told us to return to the Rainbow Falls Trailhead to be picked up by the snowcat.

The return trek to the trailhead took us about two hours. Once there, we waited for an additional hour to be picked up by the snowcat for the one-hour ride to the main lodge. We were invited to dinner with the Mono team, where we conducted the debrief. We departed the Main Lodge area at 2045 and returned to the Hut by midnight.

The Mono County Sheriff Search and Rescue Team is what we use to refer to as June Lake. They have a strong team with about 30 field members. It was a pleasure working with them.

Results of Lewak's Debrief:

On his third or fourth run from the Gondola Saturday, Lewak decided to do "Dave's Run," which is way to the left after leaving the Gondola. Lewak went left correctly but somehow during the long traverse got confused and exited erroneously to the right. This aimed him down the back side toward Rainbow Falls. He soon realized his mistake but could not easily correct it. He stated that he felt if he continued on down toward the bottom he would hit a road and "worst case" would have to hitchhike out. The "worst case" was much worse than he expected, and he found himself deeper and deeper into the "wilderness."

He spent two nights in subfreezing temperatures wearing only his ski sweater, ski bibs, and ski boots. He had no food, no water, and no hat. He built a makeshift shelter from rocks and tree limbs for wind protection and exercised to keep warm every 15 minutes.

The searching helicopter was overhead several times but did not see him. One pass was less than 100 feet over his head, and as he stated, he could see the pilots eyes, but

nobody could see him. He finally got their attention by stamping a big X in the snow and waving.

He also stated that he had walked all over the plateau that day. This is the same plateau where we were headed.

00-02 14 Apr 00 Incident Mt. Whitney Trail Tom Sakai

At 1710 on Friday, 14 April, Sheila Rockwell called me to ask whether I could take some crutches up the Whitney Trail to a fellow CLMRG member, namely her husband, Bob, who had severely injured his ankle. Bob felt that the crutches could ease his walk out significantly.

I called numerous people on the roster to accompany me, but all I got were answering machines or no answers, except for Tom Roseman. He was busy at the time but would be willing to go with me if I couldn't find anyone else. Because Bob was reported to be below Mirror Lake on the trail and I felt that only one person was really needed to carry up the crutches such a short distance, I went alone so as to not interrupt Roseman's activity.

Bob, fellow CLMRG member Eric Toler, and guest Mike Dukes were on a day climb of Whitney via the Trail. They had gotten to only about 400 feet below Trail Crest because of the 2 feet of snow that had fallen the night before when they decided to turn around. About 1530, they were glissading down the chute just southwest of Mirror Lake when Bob caught his crampons in some hard snow. This caused him to roll over his ankle in an awkward manner and injure it severely.

After the situation was assessed, Eric and Mike split Bob's pack weight, and the three of them walked slowly down to Bighorn Park with Bob relying heavily on his hiking poles. Bob thought his progress might be significantly slowed by increased pain or swelling, so he sent Eric down the trail with his cell phone to call Sheila and request his crutches just in case. Eric was able to get through to Sheila from the east end of Bighorn Park and relayed the request for the crutches. Eric then continued down to Whitney Portal. He was to wait there until someone arrived with the crutches and accompany them up the trail. Meanwhile, Bob and Mike continued their descent.

After a quick dinner, I took the crutches that Sheila had brought to my house and went to the hut to get a CLMRG cell phone. I was on the road by 1755. About 1910, as I was near the northern end of Owens Lake, I got a call from Bob. The reception was terrible, and we were cut off before I could establish where he was and how he was. I suspected he might be at the portal, but I continued up the road and tried numerous times to call him back to no avail.

I had decided that until I could reach him, I would continue driving up to Whitney Portal to check for his car to make sure he had gotten out.

As I was driving up the Portal road, I got a call from Sheila telling me that Bob had gotten out and was driving down the road back to Lone Pine. Bob had been able to get

a call out to Sheila for long enough to say he was out. A little white car like Bob's had passed me earlier going down the road, but they did not stop for me even though I tried to get them to stop. Since I didn't see any more cars coming down the road, I figured it had to be them, so I turned around. On the way through Lone Pine, I checked for Bob's car at PJ's diner, and when I didn't see it, I thought they may have driven directly back to Ridgecrest to get medical treatment as soon as possible. I tried the cell phone one more time to try to establish their location and got through. It turned out they were still coming down from the Portal and were intending to stop at PJ's for dinner, so I waited there. While they had dinner and told me the story, I had dessert (Bob's treat).

We arrived back in Ridgecrest about 2130. While I went back to the hut to return the cell phone, Eric took Mike back to his car at Crest Donuts and then took Bob to the emergency room. Meanwhile, Carol Sakai brought Sheila to the ER so she could see Bob and drive him home after his X-rays.

The ER doctor thought the injury might be an avulsion fracture of the right fibula but recommended that Bob see an orthopedist ASAP. Bob saw the orthopedist on Tuesday,

18 April and was told the injury was a spiral fracture of the fibula with probable torn ligaments around the ankle and he would be in a cast 6-8 weeks and probably have full recovery in 3-6 months.

View from the victim (Bob Rockwell):

Eric Toler, Mike Dukes, and I were on a day climb of Mt. Whitney by the Whitney Trail. With the previous day's fresh snow, the going got increasingly tedious, and we decided to turn around just below Trail Crest. We were looking forward to some good glissades, but because of the softness and quantity of new snow, it was more like snowplowing than glissading.

Everything went fine until at 1530, when we reached the chute that drops from the trail directly to Mirror Lake. We still wore crampons. Doing a seated glissade, it was slow for the first couple of hundred feet, and I often had to use my ice axe as an "oar" to keep moving. Then I hit a patch of hard snow--probably the new snow had blown away from the hard layer underneath--and suddenly accelerated.

The outside heel of my right crampon caught, bending my foot outward at the ankle and then sending me head over heels. I arrested and spent a couple of minutes waiting for the pain to diminish. Then, still in the arrest position, I let gravity take me slowly to the bottom.

At the bottom, I found I could stand, but I noticed that my right leg had way too much rotational motion. I knew that either the fibula was broken or I had some ankle ligaments that were a lot longer now!

I felt I could walk, slowly, with heavy reliance on my ski poles, at least for a while. There were still four hours of daylight to cover the 4+ miles and 2300-foot elevation

loss back to Whitney Portal and the car. So it seemed doable. Eric and Mike shared my pack and contents, and we descended to Bighorn Park. Then, since I knew that increased pain or swelling could force me to stop at any time, I gave my cell phone to Eric and sent him ahead to call my wife, Sheila. He should try the phone every few minutes and, on making contact, tell her to dust off my crutches and send them up with someone (who would turn out to be Tom Sakai). My hope was that I could make it to below the snow line on my own; then no matter what my leg felt like, I could "crutch" myself the rest of the way down.

Eric was able to make contact with Sheila relatively soon and then continued down to the Portal to wait. If I wasn't there when Tom arrived with my crutches, they were to start up to meet me.

But Mike and I arrived at the Portal a little before 1900. In spite of poor cell phone signals, I was able to get the word out that I was down OK. We had dinner at PJ's in Lone Pine and met up with Tom there.

They took me to the emergency room in Ridgecrest, and x-rays revealed a fractured fibula. I am in a cast now, and the doctor will reevaluate in two weeks to see if he needs to insert a plate and screws and recast. If not, I should be back to normal in three months; if so, it will be longer.

Lessons learned:

(1) Glissading can sometimes be dangerous--much more so with crampons. We do both on occasion, and this time I paid the price. If I had known about the hard patch of snow,

I would have tensed my muscles for it. Maybe that would have been enough, maybe not.

(2) Over the years, I have done a lot of ice axe arrests, and it paid off this time. Surely, it was only instinct when I was able to arrest quickly from an unexpected tumbling fall with my leg "on fire." Good thing, too! The bottom was 200 feet farther down with rocks waiting. New winter climbers, take note.

00-03 16 Apr 00 Alert Mt. Shasta Mike Myers

Leader: Mike Myers

Coordinator: Sheila Rockwell

OES # N/A

At about 2100, I received a call from Ms. Jane Koski of the Bay Area Mountain Rescue Unit (BAMRU) concerning a climber who was presumed lost on Mt. Shasta in a severe snow storm. My immediate response was that we needed to have Office of Emergency Services (OES) approval before we could respond. Her request was more to give us an alert and to find out how many could come and when.

The situation was that two separate teams had gone up to climb Shasta in the area of the Shasta-Shastina Col. They climbed to the Col and camped at Sisson Lake. With

the weather forecast looking like it was going to get bad, two other climbers who were also camped at the lake decided to descend Wednesday morning, 12 April. They reported that John Miskits from Sacramento and Craig Heimstra from Essex, England, had talked about getting up at 0100 to attempt the summit before descending. When the first two woke up Wednesday morning, they discovered that John and Craig were gone and had apparently taken their tent, one sleeping bag, and a stove and left the rest of their gear at the camp site.

After summiting Wednesday morning, John and Craig started down just as a weather front moved in. They made radio contact with the other climbing party using an FRS radio and stated that they had become disorientated and asked about upcoming weather. They reported being at 11,900 (by altimeter) and thought they were on the Whitney Glacier, but they were in total whiteout conditions. They were not heard from again.

A search was begun, but the weather deteriorated to extreme conditions. There was a break in the weather on Friday, and they found Craig's body by helicopter at around 10,000 feet in Cascade Gulch. He had no pack, ice ax, poles, or crampons. He was wearing a climbing harness and was dressed minimally for the conditions. The only initial visual signs of trauma were to his knuckles, and the initial report was that he has probably expired due to hypothermia. A more thorough examination later indicated he had severe internal injuries that probably resulted from a fall.

By the time we received this alert, the weather conditions had gone from dangerous to severely dangerous, with four to seven feet of new snow falling in a short time creating huge cornices above the search area.

According to Ms. Koski, they did not need any overhead people but were looking for people with a solid background in winter skills who could possibly be inserted and left in the field for an undetermined amount of time. Because of the extreme weather conditions, I contacted Bob Rockwell (Chairman of the QC), who went through the roster with me to determine who should be called for the alert. Once we established a list of potential people, Sheila began the call-out. Tom Sakai and I were the only two who could commit to going.

The next day, I called the Siskiyou County Sheriff's SAR Coordinator to pass along our willingness to provide support. He stated that the weather conditions were so bad, and the avalanche hazard so severe, that they did not want to put anybody else at risk until the weather calmed and the mountain conditions stabilized. Following that phone call, I canceled the alert pending an OES request.

On 21 April, Stephan Mueller, a Swiss Mountain Guide, examined the avalanche hazard and reported, "The terrain does not offer much help in finding safe paths. The higher slopes on Mt. Shasta are vast and tend to steepen further up. Plus, some of them have rocky sections above them. Stay away! Most of the routes are in gullies. Stay away also! Ridges have to be judged each separately. Do not leave the top and travel onto the slopes! Stay clear of cornices!"

The sheriff had to make a hard decision, but the weather remained extreme for over a week, so it appears the decision not to bring in additional resources was the wise one to make.

00-04 15 May 00 Rescue Mt. Whitney East Face Tom Roseman

Mike Myers received a phone call from Sgt. Randy Nixon of Inyo County alerting us of an injured climber on Mt. Whitney and that he would be requesting our services through the Office of Emergency Services (OES). Myers recruited Terry Mitchell as coordinator and, along with Carol Burge and Karen Botham, quickly called out the roster. After I answered my telephone message and agreed to go on the operation, Myers asked if I would serve as Operations Leader (so that I would get to write this report!). Nine of us left the Hut around 2200 heading for the Lone Pine Airport. Graeme Taylor (39) and Keith Reid (37), two very experienced mountaineers from Canada, were climbing the East Face on Monday, 15 May. Around 1430, near the exit from the Grand Staircase, Graeme took a roped leader fall of about 40 feet. Although his helmet likely saved his life, he was severely injured and no longer able to climb. Keith placed him in a bivvy sack and tied him in so he could not walk off the face, as he had suffered a head injury. Keith soloed to the summit and went for help. Keith arrived at Whitney Portal around 1930.

Inyo had three teams leave the Portal around 2300, and we followed with two teams of three around midnight. Myers, Eric Toler, and Walter Runkel got the job of "light and fast," while Bob Huey, Steve Florian, and Bill Rudy got the task of "heavy gear, yet still fast." The weather was cold, windy, and snowing. All five teams decided to bivvy at Outpost Camp. Sgt. Nixon had arranged for a CH-47 to arrive in the morning from Stockton, but the weather for coming over the Sierra would be marginal. I remained in base camp to assist Sgt. Nixon and held back Tom Sakai and Bud Gates for a possible helicopter insertion in the morning.

After a short and cold night, with the odds of a helicopter flight marginal at best, four of the five teams headed for the summit while one Inyo team returned to base. The teams got back together at Trail Camp around 1000 and made a field decision to wait there for one hour to see what would happen with the CH-47. The helicopter had to go all the way to Bakersfield to find a way around the weather and arrived at Lone Pine around 1030. Whitney had been in and out of the clouds all morning, and the forecast was marginal. Around 1130, the helicopter left with Sakai and Gates to try to spot Graeme, check the wind on the summit, and, if conditions permitted, pick up the teams at Trail Camp and take everyone to the summit. Sakai spotted Graeme, and much to everyone's delight, he was waving! Two Inyo members and eight China Lake members along with a lot of equipment, water, and food were dropped on the summit around 1200. Earlier that day, five additional members from China Lake had set out for Lone Pine: Werner Hueber, Curtis Davis, Andrew Mitchell, Al Green, and Debbie Breitenstein.

At the summit, a dual thrust of reaching Graeme and setting up for a stretcher raising were in full swing. Bob Harrington, an Inyo EMT, gave first aid and oxygen and evaluated Graeme's condition. He would require a stretcher. After one failed attempt due to a pesky cloud that hung on the summit, more supplies and five more members from China Lake, including me, flew in to join the others on the summit. Hueber had taken over as OL, and

I went to the summit. We now had a total of 14 rescue members on the summit along with Keith, the reporting party. Using a 600-foot rope that Inyo provided as the raising line and three anchors set up in series for the belay line, we starting raising Graeme about 1830. With so much rope and many terrain changes, hauling the stretcher was difficult work. Everyone worked to exhaustion with the aid of a nearly full moon, and we finally had Graeme in the stone hut on the summit around 0200 the next morning. The last of the rescue team arrived from ascending the face around 0400. We had a lot of ropes, packs, and hardware left on the face, but they would be collected later in the morning. Graeme and most of the search team were lifted off around 0845. Graeme was treated at Inyo Hospital and then airlifted to Reno.

Meanwhile, back on the mountain, all the gear and people were back on top by around noon, and the CH-47 threaded its way once more through the clouds to bring us back to Lone Pine. **This was the "Big One" that we train for. GREAT job, folks!**

1999 COMMITTEE REPORTS

Editor: The Public Education Committee report in The Talus Pile Number 111 was incomplete. This is the complete report.

Public Education Committee

Terry Mitchell

Presentations

(Excludes Hug-A-Tree presentations)

Date Event/Activity Participants Presenter

4 Feb 99 CLMRG Public Education (Kiwanis) 30 Janet Westbrook

18 Feb 99 Traveling, Trekking, and Climbing in the Karakoram (CLMRG members)

25 Bob Rockwell

23 Feb 99 Traveling, Trekking, and Climbing in the Karakoram (Delta Kappa Gamma) 25 Bob Rockwell

24 Feb 99 Traveling, Trekking, and Climbing in the Karakoram (Maturango Museum) 75 Bob Rockwell

27 Feb 99 Gear demonstration About CLMRG SAR volunteer's 10 essentials (Boy Scouts and parents) 17 Kevin McCormick

17 Mar 99 Mountain Rescue (Tiger Cubs & Parents) 15 Debbie Breitenstein

14 Apr 99 Mojave Primitive Encampment 40 Tom Sakai Terry Mitchell Bud Gates
Debbie Breitenstein Al Green
Dennis Burge Werner Hueber

Donations

Month Donor

January Laura L. Sakamoto
January Barry and Chris Ulrich
January John and Marilyn Wick
January T.M. and Virginia Stirling
January John J. Olley
January Southern California Mountaineers Association
March Warren and Maureen Goda
March Mrs. C.W. (Janet) Hammond
April Lyal & Marilyn Viers
April Jeffery Barrett via Edison International United Way Campaign
July Electa Russell
July Sierra Peaks (Section of Sierra Club)
September Mario and Yolanda Gonzalez
October Dr. and Mrs. Robert Dow
November Sherri Davis via United Way Campaign
November Stacy Dukes via United Way Campaign
November Linda Estrada via United Way Campaign

Combined Federal Campaign 1999 Donors

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Linda Homer Peter J. Lesniak Alan D. Turner Earl Mullis III
Audrey P. Gresham Gregory Born Larry M. Muncy

Hug-A-Tree Presentations

Date Who Students Presenter

10 Mar Norma Square Children's Center (Pre-K & K) 30 Terry Mitchell
26 Mar Gateway Elementary (Kindergarten) 80 Linda Finco
1 Apr Viewig Elementary (K-5) 250 Carol Burge Al Green

16 Apr Las Flores Elementary (K-5) 520 Terry Mitchell Al Green
 26 Apr Faller Elementary (Kindergarten) 60 Tom Roseman Tom Sakai
 14 May Richmond Elementary (Special Education) 50 Terry Mitchell Andrew Mitchell
 14 May Richmond Elementary Afternoon (K-5) 360 Terry Mitchell Andrew Mitchell
 28 May St. Ann's (Kindergarten) 26 Terry Mitchell Bud Gates
 28 May Heritage Montessori School (Pre- K & Kindergarten) 25 Terry Mitchell Bud Gates Karen Botham
 May 28 Richmond Elementary Morning (Kindergarten) 40 Terry Mitchell
 Total Number 1,441

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Mike Myers

Public Education

T. Mitchell (Chair)
 Botham
 C. Burge
 B. Rockwell
 Schmierer
 Westbrook

TRAINING

Runkle (Chair)
 Finco
 Hinman
 Roseman

EQUIPMENT

Hueber (Chair)

Sheriff's Office

Green (Chair)
 Myers
 Sakai

ASTM

D. Burge

FIRST AID

Schafhauser (Chair)

Breitenstein

Ferguson
 A. Mitchell
 G. Niesen
 B. Rudy
 Westbrook

Emergency Services Council

Finco

SUMMER CLASS

Huey (Chair)
 Botham
 Doerr
 Green
 B. Niesen

WEB SITE HOME PAGE

Westbrook

STORES

C. Burge

DeRuiter

Doerr (Quartermaster)

Green

Huey

Renta

Riendeau

QUALIFICATIONS

Rockwell (Chair)

Roseman (Statistics)

Sakai (Operations)

THE TALUS PILE

Castro (Editor)

Botham

S. Rockwell

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ABOUT THE MEMBERSHIP

Editor: *Our roving reporter Karen Botham submitted this report dated Tuesday, 2 May 2000.*

Gina and Barry [Niesen] had their baby on Sunday 30 April.. The baby's not even home from the hospital, a