

CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP

TALUS PILE NEWSLETTER

#119, JUNE 2001

TRAINING SCHEDULE

Jun 2-3 Sat-Sun Split Doerr
Jun 8-10 Fri-Sun Matterhorn Runkle
Jun 11 Mon Meeting (knots & class procedures) Schafhauser/Davis/Renta
Jun 12 Tue Summer class Gates
Jun 13 Wed Summer class
Jun 16 Sat Carillon Doerr
Jun 17 Sun Jackass, Smith, & Granite Renta
Jun 19 Tue Summer class Gates
Jun 20 Wed Summer class
Jun 20-25 Wed-Mon Rainier Gates
Jun 22-24 Fri-Sun Milestone Basin Schafhauser
Jun 26 Tue Summer class Gates
Jun 27 Wed Summer class
Jun 30-Jul 1 Sat-Sun Guyot Rockwell
Jul 4-8 Wed-Sun Palisades Runkle
Jul 9 Mon Meeting (GPS) Roseman/Runkle/Toler
Jul 10 Tue Summer class Gates
Jul 11 Wed Summer class
Jul 14 & 15 Sat & Sun Summer class day trips
Jul 17 Tue Summer class Gates
Jul 18 Wed Summer class
Jul 19-21 Thu-Sat Whitney & Russell (Fishhook Arete) Runkle
Jul 24 Tue Summer class Gates
Jul 25 Wed Summer class
Jul 31 Tue Summer class Gates
Aug 1 Wed Summer class party
Aug 3-5 Fri-Sun Tuolumne Meadows B Niesen
Aug 11- 12 Sat-Sun Whitney Mitchell
Aug 17-19 Fri-Sun Ritter/Banner Huey
Aug 24-26 Fri-Sun Vennacher Needle/Ruskin Roseman
SUNDAY ROCK CLIMBING coordinated by Bud Gates

CLMRG is funded in part by United Way of Indian Wells Valley.

ABOUT THE MEMBERS

Friends of CLMRG will want to know about long time members **Bob Rockwell** and **Werner Hueber**. Both had developed coronary artery blockages (Bob had apparently suffered a silent heart attack). Both had noticed that something was wrong only because of diminished performance in the mountains and a little chest discomfort. Both had successful bypass procedures in March. Both are in rehabilitation programs and are progressing nicely.

Also, long time Special Skills member **Phelps TerHeun** had a successful triple bypass in May and is recovering nicely.

Barry Niesen tripped and broke a small bone in his foot at Fossil Falls. Thinking it was just a sprained ankle, he continued climbing for a while. Continued discomfort caused him to get an X-ray, which revealed the break.

David Miles and **Mike Franklin** are now Trainees with CLMRG. Welcome.

Bill and Jeanette Rudy have been reassigned and are leaving us. Farewell.

OUTINGS

The East Ridge of Mount Carl Heller

By Daryl Hinman

The striking east ridge of Mount Carl Heller is unusually symmetrical in form. From the base, the crest of this long knife-edge ridge rises at an almost constant angle until it joins the main mass of the mountain. The steep sides of the ridge fall off at continuous and almost identical angles. The excellent picture of Mount Carl Heller in Moynier and Fiddler's *Sierra Classics 100 Best Climbs in the Sierra* illustrates these features well.

The East Ridge route follows the crest of the ridge to its end and then ascends a steep chute to the north ridge, which leads to the summit. The route is rated Class 3, and given the challenging climbing on the exposed ridge, it is one of the best routes in the Sierra at that level and certainly well deserving of its inclusion in *Sierra Classics*.

However, because of its remoteness, it sees very few ascents. The route finding on the ridge is fairly straightforward but critical to maintain the climbing at the class 3 level. Generally, the route does not deviate far from the actual crest. The easiest descent is the West Face route, which is shown in Secor's second edition of *High Sierra - Peaks*,

Passes, and Trails.

On the weekend of May 2, 1987, six members of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG)--Bob Rockwell, Bart Hine, Dianne Lucas, Bob Huey, Chris Ostermann, and I--climbed the East Ridge route. After spending the night at Whitney Portal, we went up the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek to Cleaver Col. Following a side trip to climb Mount Carillon, we descended the Col and traversed around the east side of Tulainyo Lake. At these higher elevations, large areas were still covered with snow. We climbed Tunnabora Peak and descended its complex north slopes to our camp near the base of Mount Carl Heller's east ridge.

We began our ascent early in the morning, and the climbing on the lower part of the ridge went well. It was always exciting, and at times, we were moving up on the very crest of the ridge. Because we were wearing mountaineering boots and carrying our ice axes and overnight packs (including sleeping bags, pads, bivouac sacks, and stoves), careful route finding was a definite requirement. As an added measure, we carried two 80-foot 9-mm ropes, about 10 pieces of protection, and some slings and carabiners because of our fairly large and varied party.

We climbed the entire ridge unroped except for a 120-foot section about two-thirds up the ridge. Here we were forced to climb a narrow ramp on the shaded north side of the crest. The ramp was covered with about 18 inches of snow. I spent most of two hours leading this section, which required chopping away the snow and ice to obtain holds and pro placements in the rock. With Rockwell belaying me, I did this in two leads and used every piece of pro on our scanty rack for each pitch. The others in the party climbed using prusiks to self-belay on the fixed ropes we left, except for the last person who was belayed as a follower. The conditions in this single section cost our party more than three hours.

The climbing on the remainder of the east ridge went well, and after ascending the snow chute and north ridge, we reached the summit eight hours after starting the climb. We descended the West Face route and then headed south towards Tulainyo Lake. Our intention had been to reach the roadhead that day, but given the slow, knee-deep post-holing across the extensive snowfields, it became clear that this was out of the question.

Thoroughly exhausted when we reached Tulainyo Lake, we shared our modest food supply and bedded down for the night. Leaving at first light, Rockwell and Huey made a dash for Whitney Portal to contact our rescue-mates at home before our pre-arranged deadline to be out. Although late, they were able to stop the rescue alert that was in progress before a mobilization had begun (see CLMRG operation 87-8 in *Talus Pile #71* dated June 1987).

My recommendation for doing this route is to use the same approach but camp at Tulainyo Lake rather than at the base of the east ridge. This avoids hauling a heavy pack up the route and allows the option of camping a second night at Tulainyo Lake

on the way out. To avoid any snow on the route and approach and eliminate the need for an axe, do the climb later in the season. From Highway 395, Mount Carl Heller can be viewed only from Manzanar north of Lone Pine. From there, snow on the ramp can easily be seen as a prominent finger of white on the ridge. I have looked at it many times since our climb, and it is the last significantly visible snow on the ridge's crest to melt. The required technical gear is of course a function of the party, but most should at least have a short, light rope and some slings and carabiners.

Recently, Mount Carl Heller's East Ridge has gained a reputation for being significantly underrated. It is very exposed and challenging Class 3, but if there are any 5th Class sections at all, they are only a few short moves no harder than 5.2. I don't think our party would have accomplished the climb in the manner we did if this were not the case. In addition, the rating is consistent with Secor's accurate discussion concerning the realities of climbing ratings for mountaineering on page 31 of his book.

All in all, ours was a classic mountaineering experience. I consider it one of my best climbs, and I am sure the other participants have similar feelings. Mount Carl Heller is named for the founder of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group. He had many hundreds of ascents in every area of the Sierra Nevada and many climbing regions of the world. He was also on the second ascent of the East Ridge. It is fitting that such a superb climb is on a mountain that honors such a superb mountaineer.

Editor: Bob Rockwell provided the picture of Mount Carl Heller

A walk in the snow

By Walter Runkle

I was on Mt. Whitney this weekend [April 27-28]. I went up the Mountaineer's Route on Friday, spent the night on the summit, and came down the trail on Saturday. Snow conditions were good to excellent. I did not take snowshoes and never needed them. I was glad I took an ice axe and crampons, though, especially for the trail from just south of Third Needle all the way to Mt. Muir.

I was able to park at Whitney Portal and take the old trail short cut up to the main Whitney trail. The road was open to the Portal, but snow still blocked the drive around the fishing pond. I wore plastic boots and usually was on snow the whole time from the Portal to the summit and back.

The gully up the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek was still filled with snow but not so much as some years. I took the trail on the south side of the creek and then stayed on the snow instead of using the Ebersbacher Ledges. Clyde's Meadow was covered by snow, and the outlet from Upper Boy Scout Lake was still covered and frozen. I was able to get water at the waterfall below Iceberg Lake, which was good because Iceberg Lake was also frozen over and looked pretty solid.

I went up the chute between 2:00 and 4:00 in the afternoon. I was able to follow a couple of skiers who kicked good steps for me. There were a couple of hard spots (frozen) higher up, but usually the snow was pretty soft all the way up to the notch. As I was climbing the chute, I noticed two climbers on the East Buttress route. The Washboard and the Grand Staircase on the East Face still had plenty of snow on them. The third class route from the notch to the summit was pretty much filled with hard snow. I couldn't take the usual climbing route on the rock because of all the snow, so I followed the skiers' boot prints directly to the top. Here, as I got near the top and the angle of the snow increased, it got very hard to kick good steps. I met the skiers coming down. They were facing in and backing down since they didn't have any crampons on. They did have ice axes, as did I. They had left their skies at the notch and planned to ski down to their camp at Upper Boy Scout Lake and hike out that night.

On the summit, I met the couple who had been climbing the East Buttress. He was from Colorado, and she was from Arizona(?). They had met in Washington and were training for a climb in Peru. The night on the summit was comfortable enough with my Blue Kazoo and bivvy bag. The next morning, the water in my cooking pot was only partially frozen, so it got only slightly below freezing during the night. But it was really windy, so I moved my cooking set-up inside the hut to make breakfast a little more pleasant. The hut was about 1/3 filled with drifting snow. It brought back memories of last year's operation.

The traverse over to Trail Crest was a big surprise. From just south of Third Needle all the way to Mt. Muir, the trail was covered by drifting snow. I was really glad to have crampons and an ice axe for this part. I saw no other footprints in the frozen, virgin snow. At one point, I used my ice axe wedged in a crack in the rock as a belay to climb over a steep vertical drift. I had tried to kick steps to get over it, but the snow kept giving away. It reminded me of trying to cross a bergschrund. I finally saw some other footprints just north of Muir. Whoever they were, they didn't have crampons and had been staying high off the trail, climbing on the ridge for the most part. It looked like they turned around just north of Muir. The traverse took me a good two hours. The glissade from Trail Crest is in good shape. The snow still had a little bit of a crust on it, but otherwise was pretty soft. The glissade down to Mirror Lake was perfect! No previous glissade runs. I got to be the first!

I took the usual three shortcuts from Big Horn Park, the "bush in the rock" shortcut, and the last good one down to the Portal. I got down about 12:30 in the afternoon after leaving the summit about 7:30. The weather was gorgeous both days.

The Sierra Nevada is your play ground. Why aren't you out playing?

MEMBERS ON THE RUN

Editor: The Over the Hill Track Club (OTHTC)-a popular local social club-offers and participates in some unusual foot races each year. These activities seem to appeal to several members of CLMRG. This is a summary of the racing accomplishments of our members so far this year as reported in OTHTC's newsletter THE ROADRUNNER.

Disney World Marathon

January 7, 2001

By **Elaine Riendeau**

In 1995, I participated in the one and only Disneyland marathon. This year, I decided to relive that experience by running in the Eighth Annual Walt Disney World Marathon in Florida. Florida had a cold spell in early January, and marathon day proved to be another cold morning. With temperatures below freezing at the start of the marathon, runners huddled to stay warm. We were herded like cattle to the start line. Following brief announcements and a short fireworks display, Mickey Mouse started the race.

The first four miles of the marathon had two routes to allow the runners to thin before we merged back together. Crowds were huge as we began by running into Epcot. The parks weren't open at the start, so cast members were there cheering us on.

The race went through all four parks--from Epcot to the Magic Kingdom to the Animal Kingdom to MGM and back to Epcot. Running through Magic Kingdom was a rush, especially going through Cinderella's castle. So many people were cheering us on that we couldn't help get caught up in the excitement and run faster.

Additional highlights of the marathon included slapping the hands of Mickey, Minnie, Tip, Dale, and Buzz Lightyear.

Across the finish line were golden Mickey Mouse Ears. People who ran the half-marathon were treated to Donald Duck medals. The day after the race, marathon certificates were handed out. My official place was 2701 out of 8012. My gender place was 815 out of 3973. My age division place was 172 out of 740. My net time was 4:26:42.

Los Angeles Marathon

4 March 2001

Member 10K Half 30K Chip Time Clock Time

Curtis Davis 0:57:14 2:01:58 2:56:08 4:08:49 4:10:24

American River 50-Miler

7 April 2001

Curtis Davis completed his first 50-miler.

Andrew Mitchell completed yet another 50-miler.

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OUT OF THE PAST

Editor: Long-time member Al Green forwards a note from Mike Walters, who was a member from September 1974 to April 1981.

For those of you who remember Mike Walters. And, those of you who fantasize about doing "Walters Crack." Al

Hi, Al. Mike Walters here. I was just paging through climbing news on the net and found the CLMRG. Boy, was I surprised to see you, Rockwell, and Hinman in the Talus Pile. I'm living and working at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. Been doing a lot of backpacking here and have climbed a few more of the Temples in the canyon since Bill and I climbed Zoraster years ago. I [intend] to do Buddha Temple, but it may have to wait till next spring. I would like to thank you for the backcountry/climbing knowledge you taught me. By the way, I guess Marty Landau

moved from DC to CO. Do you know his address? Al, say hi to all. Feel free to come enjoy my mountains! I know some outrageous spots both here in the canyon and in southern Utah. Happy Climbing. Mike

DONATIONS

Gina Najera-Niesen

CLMRG gratefully acknowledges recent gifts from the following friends:

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Lyal and Marilyn Viers Ridgecrest, California

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Robin Anders; Arthur Bayer; Marjorie Vargas;

Tamara L. Tucker; Elaine Riendeau; Goro (Ike) Fujiwara;

SCREE

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

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