

CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP
P. O. BOX 2037
RIDGECREST CA 93556

AUGUST 2001

NUMBER 120

TRAINING SCHEDULE

Aug 11- 12 Sat-Sun Whitney Rockwell
Aug 17 -19 Fri-Sun Ritter & Banner Huey
Aug 18 Sat Inyo joint stretcher practice Roseman
Aug 24-26 Fri-Sun Vennacher Needle & Ruskin Roseman
Aug 27 Mon Summer party Mitchells
Aug 30-Sep 3 Thu-Mon Goddard Myers
Sep 8-9 Sat-Sun Tahquitz Hueber
Sep 10 Mon Meeting Huey/C. Burge/Castro
Sep 12 Wed CPR First Aid Committee
Sep 14-16 Fri-Sun Conness Gates
Sep 15 Sat CRMRA meeting (San Diego)
Sep 22-23 Sat-Sun Ruby Rockwell
Sep 28-30 Fri-Sun Humphreys Davis
Oct 3 Wed First Aid-Topic A First Aid Committee
Oct 5-8 Fri-Mon Yosemite Valley Finco
Oct 10 Wed First Aid-Topic A First Aid Committee
Oct 12-14 Fri-Sun Baxter Toler
Oct 15 Mon Meeting Rockwell/Myers/Mitchell
Oct 16 Tue Stretcher Hut night Training Committee
Oct 17 Wed First Aid-Topic A First Aid Committee
Oct 20 Sat Stretcher practice Training Committee
Oct 24 Wed First Aid-Topic A First Aid Committee
Oct 26-28 Fri-Sun Desert peaks Schafhauser
SUNDAY ROCK CLIMBING coordinated by Bud Gates

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

OPERATIONS

01-02 (OES 01-0899) 9 Jul 01 Search Kennedy Meadows (Sonora Pass Road)

Tom Sakai

I received a call from Arnold Gaffery (Sierra Madre) at 1745 on Saturday, 7 July 2001, asking if we could field a team for a search in the Emigrant Wilderness north of Yosemite (Tuolumne County). This was not yet an official callout. He was trying to find out who would be available from the CRMRA before an official request was issued by Matt Sharper of OES.

The search was for Eric Tucker, age 28, who was overdue from a backpacking trip in the area. Based on his permit, he intended to hike a 40- to 45-mile loop with entry at Kennedy Meadows Resort. Eric started his trip on Wednesday, 27 June and was due out on Sunday,

1 July. He was reported overdue two days later, and a search was started. After several days of searching with no result, those in charge decided they needed fresh troops and issued a statewide callout.

I called Sheila Rockwell to be coordinator and explained that this was not yet an official callout but that the request from OES would probably come soon if we had any volunteers. She and Mary Schmierer (telephoner) were able to get Bud Gates and Eric Toler. We met at the hut at 2100 to pack gear. After several phone calls by Sheila to KCSO to verify that we actually had an OES request, we left town at 2130. We were asked to be at the search base, located at the Dodge Ridge Ski Area, at 0700 Sunday, 8 July. The ski area is on the west side of the Sierra near Highway 108 (Sonora Pass road). We arrived about 0330 and managed to get a few hours sleep before checking in.

We were given our assignment to search for clues or sign in the Kennedy Lake and Creek area, especially the campsites around the lake and to investigate a report from an earlier search team of possible shouting from the rocks above the north side of the lake. Our team of three was to join a search dog and its handler. We were expected to search all day and walk out to Kennedy Meadow resort the next day.

We were given our assignment about 0830 and told we were second in line for helicopter transport. Apparently the plans changed, and we were still waiting for a ride at 1100. Then, shortly before we were fielded, our dog team was put on another assignment. Our team of three was finally inserted to Kennedy Lake at noon. We were told that radio communications in the area would be spotty at best. In fact, we could hear some transmissions but could not be heard by anyone.

We searched the area for several hours and then started for higher ground to report in for the day. We had to climb nearly a thousand feet to get reliable communications with search base. We reported our lack of significant findings at 1600, requested

transport from the resort the next day at 1000, and turned back to the lake to continue our search. We felt that we had completed our assignment by 1900, still not having found any clues or sign, and found a campsite to spend the night.

The next morning, Monday, 9 July, we had a cold breakfast and started our 3-hour-plus hike out to Kennedy Meadows Resort. We tried several times along the way to establish radio contact to no avail until we were able to get a clear line of sight to the relay on Granite Dome. We reaffirmed our requested pickup at 1000 and continued out. We were met precisely at 1000 by our ride, and we settled in for the 30-mile drive back to base.

After some lunch and a debrief, I asked for another assignment for the rest of the day. They didn't have any tasks that weren't already being covered, and they planned to end the search that night anyway, so we were released at 1220.

We left the ski area under a beautiful blue sky with warm temperatures, and within an hour around Sonora Pass, we were in a downpour that turned to hail. We drove through an area with a 3-inch accumulation of hail. After we got through this bit of weather, the rest of the trip was smooth sailing. We were at the hut at 1830. We put away the gear we had taken and headed home.

Note 1: On Sunday, 8 July, the Huey from Fallon NAS that was helping with the search crashed shortly after transporting equipment to the radio relay site on Granite Dome. All six persons on board escaped with light to moderate injuries. They were in the helicopter as it plunged nearly a hundred feet from its perch on Granite Dome after suffering mechanical problems. The photo (from Ron Atkins via Al Green) shows how close it came to disaster.

Note 2: On Tuesday, 10 July at about 1600, Eric Tucker hobbled out of the forest into a campground that is a short distance from the edge of the search area. He had fallen 40 feet after having gotten lost his first day out and injured both ankles severely. He stayed put for a week until he gained enough strength to make his way out of the forest.

Editor: This is the Associated Press story of the search for Eric Tucker (refer to Operation 01-02 above) as reported in the Sacramento Bee and Fresno Bee. If you notice any differences between this version and the version in the Bees, it's because I corrected all the errors of syntax and punctuation that the AP style, which I consider to be the biggest impediment to clear communications ever devised, requires. (Well, they edit my stuff, right?)

Missing Mountain View hiker walks out of forest

SONORA, Calif. (AP) -- A Mountain View man who had been missing for a week in the Stanislaus National Forest walked out of the forest Tuesday slightly hobbled by two injured ankles. The Tuolumne County Sheriff's Department said 28-year-old Eric

Tucker limped into the Baker Campground near the Kennedy Meadows trailhead about 4:00 p.m. Tuesday.

Tucker was taken to Tuolumne General Hospital. He said he fell about 40 feet his first day out after losing his trail, hospital spokeswoman Judy Villalobos said. Tucker said he stayed put for about a week before gaining the strength to find his way out of the forest. He had packed food and a water purifier when he set off for his hike June 27. Villalobos said Tucker may have broken both his ankles, was dehydrated, and had an elevated blood pressure. "He's in good spirits otherwise," she said. "He knew how to handle himself and kept his wits about him."

Local authorities had searched for Tucker since he was reported missing July 3 after not reporting from his solo camping trip. He was supposed to return July 1 after setting off June 27. Tucker had intended to return to Kennedy Meadows after a planned hike of up to 50 miles in the Sierra Nevada.

A military helicopter aiding in Tucker's search went down Sunday near Granite Dome in the Emigrant Wilderness. Five crew members on board the helicopter from Nevada's Fallon Naval Air Station were not seriously injured. The cause of the crash is under investigation.

Tucker's mother, Elinor, has described her son as a moderately experienced hiker who turned back during a 1999 attempt to climb Mount Shasta because of bad weather.

The three best things in life are a good landing, a good orgasm, and a good bowel movement.

A helicopter flight is one of the few opportunities to experience all three at the same time.

01-03 29 Jul 01 Transit Death Valley Walter Runkle

Editor: The report for this operation will appear in the next issue of The Talus Pile.

A GOOD landing is one from which you can walk away.

A GREAT landing is one after which you can use the helicopter again.

OPERATIONS REDUX

Editor: Alert member Linda Finco forwards this account of finding the remains of a lost ranger in the July 19, 2001 edition of The Bakersfield Californian. Refer to Operation 96-08 in The Talus Pile #99.

Remains believed to be that of missing ranger

Filed: 07/19/2001

By BRYAN SWAIM, Californian staff writer e-mail: bswaim@bakersfield.com

The remains of a park ranger who disappeared five years ago while on patrol in the Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks apparently were found Sunday, parks officials said. Randy Morgenson, 54, was last heard from on July 20, 1996, before setting off on a back-country patrol. A note was found July 21 at his duty station saying he was expecting to be gone three to four days. A search was initiated for him July 25 and at its peak involved 90 people, five helicopters, and eight dog teams. No clues were found, and the search was scaled back Aug. 2, 1996.

Almost five years to the day he was last seen, four off-duty trail crew members found remains and a leather hiking boot in a stream drainage northeast of Window Peak, a remote and trailless area of Kings Canyon National Park. A pack and some equipment were also found in the same area.

Park rangers and two teams of search dogs were flown to the site Monday and focused the search on the stretch of stream drainage approximately a quarter-mile north of a large lake east of Window Peak. Searchers located additional remains, a hand-held radio, and a park ranger uniform with a badge and Morgenson's name tag on it.

Remains were sent to the Fresno County coroner for identification against dental records, and results should be back within seven to 10 days. It is believed that Morgenson died from an accidental fall while attempting to cross the stream.

The location where the remains were recovered was searched by rangers multiple times in 1996. It is likely Morgenson's body was not seen because of the high amount of runoff in the stream that summer.

Kris Fister, spokeswoman for Sequoia and Kings national parks, said the 1996 search was difficult emotionally for the parks staff, and although the dental records haven't yet confirmed the remains are Morgenson's, the findings have brought some closure to those who knew him. "We're 99.9 percent certain the remains belong to Randy," she said.

Back country refers to the wild terrain in the sequoias accessible only by foot.

Morgenson served as a back-country ranger in Sequoia and Kings Canyon for 28 years. He lived in Arizona and worked at the park during the summer.

A helicopter is thousands of individual parts flying in close formation.

Editor: This item appeared in the May 31, 2001 edition of The Bakersfield Californian. Refer to Operation 01-01 in The Talus Pile #118.

Hikers discover body of man who vanished during ski trip

By TIM BRAGG, Californian staff writer e-mail: tbragg@bakersfield.com

The body of a Bakersfield man who disappeared while on a snowboarding trip to the Mammoth Ski Area in February was recovered from a deep crevice over the weekend. Mono County Sheriff's Sgt. Boe Turner said hikers spotted the body of 32-year-old George Hoyt, Jr. in a rocky area near Chair Lift 9 at the Mammoth Mountain ski area Saturday.

Turner said the death appears to be accidental. He said a large amount of snow covered the area until recently. Although authorities searched the area, Turner said the snow would have obstructed views of the body. "If it was snowing during the time of the accident, or shortly after, there's no way you would have been able to see him," Turner said.

Hoyt was reported missing Feb. 17 after he failed to return to a hotel room. Friends of Hoyt, a furniture salesman who worked at the former Bassett Furniture Gallery store in Bakersfield, said he arrived in Mammoth Lakes Feb. 13, just after the first large snow of the ski season.

The last known contact with him was the following day, when his lift ticket was scanned at a ski lift near where his body was recovered. Officials believe he went snowboarding that day and got into trouble on the mountain. Hoyt left his car keys and other personal items in his hotel room when he disappeared, and no signs of foul play were found.

At the time of his disappearance, Hoyt had been making plans to reconnect with his parents and brother, with whom he had little contact over the past five years. His family was unavailable for comment Wednesday, but his father, George Hoyt, Sr., said his son's disappearance was a big blow to the family. The father said his son left the rest of his family in Florida to head west and make a new life for himself. But George Hoyt Jr. never did contact his family after moving.

Two years ago, the family moved to San Diego and began searching for their lost son. "We've been searching for him for the last two years, and then this happens," Hoyt, Sr. said. "He was so close to us, being in Bakersfield, and we didn't even know it." In lieu of flowers, Hoyt's family is asking that contributions be sent to the Mono County Search and Rescue (SAR) Team, P.O. Box 616, Bridgeport, CA 93517-0616.

Helicopters are the triumph of engineering over theory.

ACTIVITIES

Cirque Peak

By Walter Runkle

On Saturday, July 14, 2001, 12 of us went on a trip to Horseshoe Meadows to climb Cirque (12,900'). The following summer class students participated:

Tom Brown

Matt Davis

Jim Vijay

George Van Auken

Don Wooley

Jamie Willhite

The following members of the CLMRG participated:

Loren Castro

Dennis Burge

Elaine Riendeau

Gina Najera-Niesen

Kevin McCormick

Walter Runkle

We started at 0850 for the summit. George made it only as far as the saddle east of Trail Master (11100') before he had to turn around because of altitude problems. Gina went back to the cars with him. Thank you, Gina, for taking one for the team! The time was about 1030 or so when they turned around.

Eight of us made it to the summit between 1240 and 1255. Jamie was very slow (again because of altitude), and he and Kevin made it to the top at 1340. Kevin did an excellent job of sticking with Jamie and encouraging him to keep going for the summit. I sure wish Kevin could make more of our trips! Jamie dropped his pack at the saddle just below the summit for the last 500-foot stretch.

Students Tom and Don are in excellent shape. The altitude didn't seem to bother them at all. Usually, five of us were out front: Tom, Don, Loren, Elaine, and I. Dennis, Matt, and Jim were usually only 5 minutes or so behind us. (Dennis was recovering from a bout with pneumonia and was less than 100 percent.)

On the return trip, we dropped off the saddle south of Cirque into the drainage that runs east and then took another shortcut over a saddle at 10700' that dumped us back on the trail running back to the lower parking lot. No GPS. Just map, compass, altimeter, and familiarity with the area. Jamie had no trouble keeping up with the group on the downhill and flat parts of the return. I think the group enjoyed the cross-country part. We made it back to the parking lot at 1640 and stopped at PJ's in Lone Pine for dinner.

I have been applying the new gas policy on all of my trips for the last few months, and it seems to work well. This time was a real test. We had a truck, a car, and a van carrying two, four, and six people and getting 18, 30, and 13 miles per gallon. The round trip distance was 200 miles. It was a little involved, but it worked. I like it.

Independence and University Peaks

By Loren Castro

On the weekend of 28-29 July 2001, Tom Sakai led the summer class's overnight trip to climb Independence and University Peaks.

Class members:

Tom Brown

George Van Auken

Charley Raff

Jim Vijay

Jaime Willhite (Independence only)

CLMRG members:

Tom Sakai (Leader)

Al Green (University only)

Elaine Riendeau

Mike Renta

Loren Castro

From the parking lot at Onion Valley (9186'), we backpacked the two miles to our campground at Robinson Lake (10,499'). We were early, so we had a nice long rest and a leisurely lunch before starting the climb up Independence (11,744').

Our route was a demanding climb up scree, through and over talus, and between dense patches of dwarf pine trees to the ridge. (At some point on the climb, we looked down at our lake and saw Al setting up his campsite. Al had come up separately and planned to climb University the next day.) On attaining the ridge, we discovered that we were a bit farther south than we had expected, so we traversed the airy ridge past a few false summits to the true summit and our true goal: the summit register.

We enjoyed the view and our snacks on the summit, talked about mountains, and joked about the Occasional Peaks Gang (OPG) and the Geriatric Section (GS). Before the climb, only CLMRG members were members of the OPG. (The class members, of course, were "infected" and became part of the OPG on reaching the summit.) I was the only qualified member of the GS on this climb.

On descending, we looked for and found the scree chute that is the usual route up and down the mountain. The lower end of this chute is well below our lakeside camp, so we bore left toward the lake to avoid losing elevation unnecessarily.

Back in camp, we organized our sleeping areas and fired up the stoves for hot water for dinner. (I hadn't wanted to bother with cooking for a simple overnighter, so I brought along a Blimpie sandwich for dinner. OK, I also had half of a Blimpie sandwich for breakfast the next morning.)

We fell into our sleeping bags at about 2030 because Leader Tom wanted to get an early start up University in the morning. Tom, sleeping about 10 feet from me, had warned me about his snoring. I didn't hear any snoring from him at all, but I did hear rather frequent occurrences of what he called HAFE.

Jamie opted to head out for home after breakfast. The rest of us climbed University (13,632') in about four hours. The day started cool, and we passed through several layers of wind as we climbed.

The chute to the ridge was the longest and loosest I've ever encountered. (I say that even though I know I climbed it many years ago. These mountains get higher and steeper every year.) Just below the summit, we had to climb about 20 feet of hard snow. Leader Tom chopped and kicked steps for us, and we all made it without roping up.

We stayed on the summit a long time eating, talking, and reading and signing the summit register. This time, Al joined me as a member of the GS.

The chute below the ridge was the longest and loosest I've ever encountered. (Does that sound familiar?) We got back to Robinson Lake in less than two hours, but it seemed forever before we finished the two-mile backpack to our vehicles at Onion Valley. Al had left the lake before the rest of us because he was traveling separately. At some point during the weekend, the usual topic of beer and how good it would taste back at the vehicles came up. It turned out that Al and I were the only ones who had brought some beer in coolers with us. Al had brought four cans of Tecate, and I had brought four cans of Coors Light. Well, you should have heard the grief I got about my taste in beer! Anyway, when I got my cooler out of the bear box back at the parking lot, I thought it seemed heavy. Imagine my surprise when I opened it and found the three Tecates that Al had left us. They made three hot and thirsty hikers very happy. I was the ONLY one to drink a Coors Light. I'm surrounded by beer snobs.

I should mention that Elaine, our only female climber that weekend, was 11 weeks pregnant.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Editor: The following item appeared in the University of California's Wellness Letter of June 2001.

Block that bite

Why do bugs bite people? To get a square meal. Researchers are learning more about why mosquitoes are more attracted to some people than to others and why some pests prefer certain body parts. It all has to do with chemicals we secrete-chemicals that mosquitoes, ticks, and similar creatures love-as well as the temperature and smell of human skin. One day we may be able to swallow a pill that will repel insects and ticks.

Meanwhile, it pays to fight off biting insects with the means currently at hand. Deer ticks can carry the corkscrew-shaped bacteria that cause Lyme disease. Dog ticks carry the microorganisms for Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Most North American mosquitoes (except for a few species in California and the south-west) cannot carry malaria or yellow fever, but the latest mosquito-borne illness is a form of encephalitis caused by the West Nile virus. It has led to seven deaths in and around New York City; 62 cases of the disease were reported in 1999.

On a less threatening level, mosquitoes, biting flies, and no-see-ums can spoil picnics, tennis matches, and other outdoor fun, leaving everybody with itchy welts. But there is plenty you can do.

In choosing a repellent or insecticide, you should weigh various factors. For instance,

going on a camping or fishing trip in the wilderness may require stronger, longer-lasting measures than does sitting on the back porch in the evening. Are you in an area where Lyme disease is prevalent? Then you need to take extra precautions against ticks. How will you be dressed-in shorts and a T-shirt or fully covered?

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DONATIONS

Gina Najera-Niesen

CLMRG gratefully acknowledges recent gifts from the following friends:

Bryson Van Gundy, Jr. Sterling, Colorado

SCREE

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

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

Sorry - this web version is missing a cute cartoon which says something like "sorry, I can't go any farther - my cell phone will be out of reach!"

And a neat photo of a helicopter sitting on a ledge, somewhat the worse for wear. - hence all the comments about choppers! :-) JW.

(it won't be used again).