

## China Lake Mountain Rescue Group

### The Talus Pile

January 2005, Number 134

#### TRAINING SCHEDULE

Jan 10 Mon Meeting Burge, Breitenstein, Myers  
Jan 10-Feb 4 Mon-Fri Aconcagua, Argentina Rockwell  
Jan 14-17 Fri-Mon University Huey  
Jan 22-23 Sat-Sun OPEN  
Jan-Feb TBD TBD Pear Lake Hut Roseman  
Jan 28-30 Fri-Sun Joshua Tree Roseman  
Feb 4-6 Fri-Sun Kern County Winter SAR Sheriff's Committee  
Feb 11-13 Fri-Sun Winter Peak Myers  
Feb 14 Mon Meeting Sakai, D. Burge, M. Franklin  
Feb 19-21 Sat-Mon Whitney Huey  
Feb 25-27 Fri-Sun Rock Certification practice Training Com  
Mar 5-6 Sat-Sun MRA rock test MRA Rep  
Mar 11-13 Fri-Sun Telescope from Panamint Valley Rockwell  
Mar 14 Mon Meeting S. Rockwell, B. Rockwell, Bishop  
Mar 19-20 Sat-Sun Desert peak Finco  
Mar 25-27 Fri-Sun OPEN  
Apr 2-3 Sat-Sun OPEN  
Apr 8-10 Fri-Sun Sill Huey  
Apr 11 Mon Meeting Myers, Roseman, DeRuiiter  
Apr 16-17 Sat-Sun OPEN  
Apr 22-24 Fri-Sun Red Rock Canyon, Nevada Roseman  
Apr 27 Wed Stretcher Hut Night TC  
Apr 30 Sat Stretcher Practice TC

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#### GROUP BUSINESS

The members present at the 13 December 2004 meeting elected the following officers for 2005:

**President Linda Finco**

**Vice President Bud Gates**

**Secretary Elaine Riendeau**  
**Treasurer Werner Hueber**  
**MRA Representative Dave Miles**

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## **OPERATION REPORTS**

2004-07 26 April 2004 Search Tulare County Mike Myers

This operation was identified incorrectly as **2004-06** in *The Talus Pile* Number 132.

### **2004-14 (2004-OES-0531) 18-19 October 2004 Transit Red's Meadow Tom Roseman**

The usual group was enjoying the social time after our monthly meeting on 18 October when Linda Finco, who had already gone home, called looking for an operations leader for a missing hiker out of Red's Meadow. She had received a direct call from Sgt. Plank (Kern County Sheriff's Office). Mono County wanted us to be at the Mammoth Fire Station the next morning at 0700 and indicated that they were expecting snow, cold, and high winds. Janet Westbrook was in town and agreed to serve as the coordinator. Carol Burge agreed to help as the telephoner.

Mike Myers, Tom Sakai, Eric Toler, Dan Bishop, and I (Tom Roseman) met at the hut at 0200 the next morning and left about 0215. After driving about 25 miles up Highway 395, I received a call over my cell phone that the subject had been located, so we turned around and headed back to Ridgecrest. We secured at the hut by 0400 and went home. Al Green, Dave Doerr, and Curtis Davis had committed to come up on Wednesday if needed.

### **2004-15 19-21 October 2004 Search Courtright Reservoir Tom Roseman**

- *Katie and the Big Snow* When my children were much younger, they loved for me (Tom Roseman) to read them a story about a big snowstorm and the snowplow (Katie) that made everything OK. We could have used Katie on this operation!

Tom Sakai, Dan Bishop, Eric Toler, and I responded to a callout on Tuesday, 19 Oct to search for four overdue hikers who were caught in the backcountry by an early winter storm. Paul Bargetto, 46; his son Michael, 20; Frank Horath, 45; and his son Dominique, 16, were overdue from a backpacking trip to Rae Lake in the John Muir Wilderness. (We four had responded to a callout earlier that day, meeting at the hut at 0200 and returning at 0400 after the subject was found. Refer to operation report 2004-14) Janet Westbrook was again the coordinator and Carol Burge again helped as the telephoner. (Janet really performed well on this operation--we were in the field out of contact for more than a day.)

We left the hut at 1800 and drove six hours to Shaver Lake, where we checked into a motel at 0130 Wednesday morning. We woke at 0600 and, after a hearty breakfast,

drove to Courtright Reservoir. We arrived just after 0800 to a command post being buried by heavy snow. At about 1000, we were transported by 4-wheel drive about one mile up the trail to snowshoe to our search assignment. The temperature was in the mid-20s, and heavy snow continued to fall. Nearly four feet of new snow was on the ground.

At 1400, we arrived at a trail junction that was the start of our assignment. Sakai, worn out from building too many houses for Habitat for Humanity, remained at the junction to set up the team tent and wait for the other three members of our team to complete the assignment. We spent the next 10 hours doing a 5-mile loop in deep snow. We returned to the junction and Sakai's cozy tent a little past midnight. We woke to a 10-degree temperature and clear skies. We broke camp and started the hike out at about 0800.

We arrived at the original drop-off point about 1000 and were able to contact the command post for the first time since the previous afternoon. That was just in time to avert a search for us. We left for home about 1130 and while *en route* learned that the four overdue hikers had been located by helicopter and rescued. We secured at the hut about 1830 that evening. During our time away, Janet had organized a follow-on team of Mike Myers (Leader), Bob Huey, Bob Rockwell, and Linda Finco.

#### **2004-16 (2004-OES-566) 6-7 November 2004 Search Mt. Baldy Tom Sakai**

On Saturday, 6 November at 1600, Paul Walters of OES called our pager requesting help in searching for Evgeniy "Eugene" Lushevskiy, age 19. Eugene was visiting some family friends in Claremont and had left on his own sometime the previous Sunday without telling anyone where he was going. His family reported him missing earlier in the week, but it was not established until late Thursday that he was probably hiking up Mt. Baldy. Carol Burge coordinated the callout with Karen Botham helping and got Tom Roseman, Mike Myers, Bud Gates, Bob Huey, Dan Bishop, Dave Miles, and me (Tom Sakai) to commit. I agreed to be the leader. Sgt. Mike Kirkland, Kern County Sheriff's Office (KCSO), unaware of the previous call, also called our pager about 1620 to relay the request for assistance.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Office (SBCSO) wanted us at the command post (CP) in the Mt. Baldy Village Fire Station by 0630 the next day. We left the hut at 0400 and arrived at 0600. After a hot breakfast provided by SBCSO, we got ready for insertion by helicopter to the summit of Mt. Baldy. Searchers had found Eugene's backpack late Saturday morning just below the summit on the north-northeast side, and our assignment was to search down the chutes on the northeast side.

The summit was covered by a cloud when the helicopter approached, so the pilot landed near Mt. Harwood just to the east. When our second team arrived, we hiked to the summit. Since radio communications to the CP would be difficult at best from the north slopes, we left one of our group on top to act as a radio relay. The rest of us hiked down to the point where the pack was found the previous day. There, we

organized into three teams of two and started down the northeast slopes.

About 5 minutes after we started, Gates, who was with me, lost his footing when some crusted snow he was standing on broke away. Before he could arrest with his axe, his crampon caught a nearby stump and wrenched his leg. After realizing he could not bear much weight on that leg, we aborted our assignment and started on a plan to get him out. Because we were in a cloud with little or no chance of it clearing, an air evacuation from that location was not a possibility. Gates did, however, have a good leg and could hobble along with help.

We decided to go back up about 100 vertical feet to the ridge and down the south side about 1200 feet to the Sierra Club hut, where Gates could be sheltered if the weather didn't clear enough for an air evacuation. It was only 1030 then, so we figured we could get him down to the hut before dark. He was able to hobble along with one person on each side and one person holding him on belay. Others went ahead to find a route with good footing. We were able to get him down the south slopes about 800 feet and put him in a stretcher brought up from the hut by two other SAR members. We then lowered him an additional 300 feet to the last possible air evacuation location above the hut.

Helicopter Air 5 from Los Angeles County made several attempts to get to our location during brief clearings, but each time the clouds reformed before an extrication could be made. Finally, about 1615, there was a significant clearing, and Air 5 came in and extricated Gates via a long line and hoist. Everyone was relieved to see him get in the helicopter.

We all retreated to the hut. After a short break and cups of hot cocoa offered by the hut attendant, we proceeded down the trail for transport back to the CP. We left about 1900 and stopped by the hospital to pick up Gates from the emergency room and were back in Ridgecrest by 2230. The diagnosis was no broken bones and a probable muscle tear of the calf.

The search for Eugene was unfruitful that day but would be continued the next weekend.

Note: Gates is back at work. He is able to walk moderate distances and ride a bicycle. His recovery is progressing well.

### **2004-17 (2004-OES-566) 14 November 2004 Search Mt. Baldy Mike Myers**

We received a pager call from Sgt. Kirkland on Thursday, 11 November requesting assistance for the continued search on Mt. Baldy for 19-year-old Evgeniy "Eugene" Lushevskiy. Participating members were Mike Myers (Leader), Linda Finco, Al Green, Bob Rockwell, Bob Huey, Dan Bishop, Dave Miles, and Carol Burge (Coordinator).

We met at the Hut at 1800 on Saturday, 13 November, packed our gear, and departed at 1830. We arrived at Mt. Baldy at 2130. West Valley MRU had made arrangements for us to stay at a local church, where we threw our bags on the floor and spent a cozy

night in the loft. We checked in with the command post (CP) at 0600 on Sunday, 14 November, attended a briefing at 0700, and deployed to the helicopter landing zone (LZ) at about 0800.

We were assigned to search the steep gullies on the north side of Mt. Baldy. The support helicopter made several attempts to drop off a division leader and a first aid team, but the winds were too strong to land, so we were returned to the CP for a new assignment. With high winds, ice, and the mountain shrouded in clouds, the sheriff deemed the north side of the mountain too dangerous to commit any resources, especially since air evacuation was impossible.

For transportation back to the CP, Rockwell, Green, and I climbed into a sheriff's patrol car for what was to be the ride of our lifetimes. Just as we left the LZ, the deputy received a call about a motorcycle accident down the road a few miles. We were locked inside the patrol car for a frightening ride down a very narrow mountain road. Calling it a white-knuckle ride would be an understatement.

For our second assignment, we rode to the top of Chairlift 4 by vehicle and hiked up the Devil's Backbone Trail to the 9000-foot level. We cleared two ridges southward from the Backbone back to the access road with no sign of anything but animals (bighorn sheep, deer, and mountain lions).

At the access road, we were picked up and transported back to the CP, where we were debriefed and released to return home.

#### **2004-18 (2004-OES-566) 15 November 2004 Search Mt. Baldy Tom Sakai**

On Monday, 15 November at 0720, Sgt Mike Kirkland called our pager to relay a request from West Valley for searchers for a missing couple on Mt. Baldy. After the search for Evgeniy Lushevskiy had wound down the previous evening, the San Bernardino sheriff had received a cell phone call from a couple on Mt. Baldy who had become lost on their day hike. They were requesting help in getting off the mountain. Before San Bernardino officials could establish their location, cell phone reception was lost and could not be re-established.

Carol Burge coordinated the call-out. Despite calling the roster and leaving messages for everyone she could not talk to, she could get no volunteers by 0900. Because I (Tom Sakai) was a leader with no team, I opted to stay home also. This was the first time in my memory that CLMRG could not field a team when requested. I called Sgt Kirkland and told him we could not get a team together and he agreed to relay the information to San Bernardino.

Fortunately, a search helicopter could fly that morning and located the missing couple within a short time. They were picked up by the helicopter about 1150 and transported to base.

### **2004-19 (2004-OES-566) 19 November 2004 Search Mt. Baldy Mike Myers**

We received a pager call from Sgt. Kirkland on 17 November requesting assistance for the continued search on Mt. Baldy for 19-year-old Eugene Lushevskiy. Tom Sakai, Bob Huey, Walter Runkle, Mike Franklin, Dave Miles, and I (Mike Myers) committed for the operation. Carol Burge was the coordinator.

We were to meet at the Hut at 1800 on 19 Nov. When I contacted the San Bernardino Sheriff on the 19th to finalize our response numbers and to ensure that we had a place to spend the night, I was told that they had decided to suspend the search for the entire weekend because of the forecast extreme winds and bad weather. The sheriff deemed the weather too bad to put search teams at risk. I notified Sgt. Kirkland and Carol of the cancelled operation.

### **2004-21 4-5 December 2004 Search Mt. Pinos Linda Finco**

Sgt. Kirkland requested CLMRG's assistance in continuing the search for Mr. Robert Komenda, age 64, on the weekend of 4-5 December. Sheila Rockwell coordinated the callout and got me (Linda Finco), Tom Sakai, Al Green, and Bob Rockwell to commit for the search on Saturday and Debbie Breitensten, Tom Roseman, and Mike Renta to commit for the search on Sunday.

On Friday, 3 December, CLMRG received a pager call from Sgt. Kirkland, who stated that the search for the weekend was cancelled. Calling Sgt. Kirkland back, we learned that Mr. Komenda was found dead at 1030 that day. Later news releases stated that Mr. Komenda had died from natural causes. Mr. Komenda was found about one-half mile southwest of the previous week's search area.

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## **SUMMARY OF PAST TRIPS**

Date Location Participants Notes

Oct 24 Telescope Myers, Rockwell, Green, Bishop Drove to Mahogany Flat, hiked up road to Rogers Peak, then dropped to Arcane Meadow, followed the trail to the base of Telescope. Moderate snow to there. Went up north ridge, deeper snow. All snow was good consistency, and we didn't need crampons or ice axe, but we had to be careful on the part of the trail from the north peak to the main peak because of hard sloping snow. Reversed trail and came home.

Oct 31 Zinc Hill Finco, Rockwell, Green, Breitenstein, Sakai, C. Burge, Waters Drove through Darwin to west of Zinc Hil. Climbed it via a trail almost to the summit. Drove home through Panamint Springs.

Nov 19-21 Black, Diamond, Mary Austin Rockwell, Bishop, guest Jan Lorenzen Two nights out; stormy; snowshoed to 11,200' but did not summit anything.

Dec 3 Whitney Trail Rockwell, Runkle Snowshoed to Mirror Lake. Nice day.

Dec 4 Lamont C. Burge

Dec 5 Searles Peak Rockwell, guests Tom Brown and Rachel Woodard Also traversed over Slate Benchmark. Cold and overcast, snow spitting.

Owens Ridge Green, guest Bill Stronge Climbed Banana Jam

Dec 11-12 Desert peak Sacatar Trail Finco, Rockwell, Green, C. Burge, D. Burge We crashed a Sierra Club trip

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**DONATIONS** Terry Mitchell

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

United Way Funds Received:

Second Quarter Kern Mono Inyo Disbursement

Second Quarter Mojave Disbursement

Edison Anonymous Donor

Third Quarter 2004 (3 of 4)

W. Ross & Lois H. Adamsen "So happy you continue your good work. This is in memory of my brother, Carl Heller."

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*Outside, the hawk wheels;  
Inside, the caged bird watches  
Sadly, longingly.*

--Lura Osgood

Pleasant Hill, California

**SCREE**

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

Check the California Region's web page at <http://www.crmra.org>.

Newsletters from other MRA groups, catalogues, etc. are available in the hut.

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

*I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains, from whence cometh my help.*

-Psalm 121.1