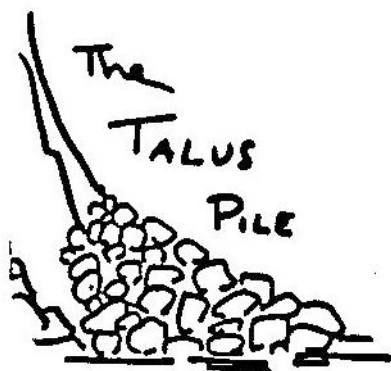


NUMBER 137

MARCH 2006



CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP

P. O. BOX 2037
RIDGECREST CA 93556

TRAINING SCHEDULE

| | | | | |
|---|--------------|---------|--|-------------------------|
| | 1-2 Apr | Sat-Sun | Open | |
| | 7-9 Apr | Fri-Sun | Charleston (Nevada—winter snowshoe) | Huey |
| T | 10 Apr | Mon | Meeting | Sakai, Hueber, Reindeau |
| | 12 Apr | Wed | Mojave Primitive Encampment | Sakai |
| T | 15-16 Apr | Sat-Sun | Stretcher Practice | Training Committee |
| | 21-23 Apr | Fri-Sun | Open | |
| | 29-30 Apr | Sat-Sun | Open | |
| | 5-7 May | Fri-Sun | White Mountain | |
| T | 8 May | Mon | Meeting | _____ |
| | 13-14 May | Sat-Sun | Spanish Needle | ____, _____ |
| | 19-21 May | Fri-Sun | Open | Huey |
| | 27-28 May | Sat-Sun | Rock skills | Training Committee |
| | 2-4 Jun | Fri-Sun | Open | |
| T | 10-11 Jun | Sat-Sun | Search practice | Training Committee |
| T | 12 Jun | Mon | Meeting | ____, _____ |
| T | 13-14 Jun | Tue-Wed | Summer class | Summer Class Committee |
| | 16-18 Jun | Fri-Sun | Lone Pine Creek North Fork (second choice) | |
| T | 20-21 Jun | Tue-Wed | Summer class | Summer Class Committee |
| | 24-25 Jun | Sat-Sun | Norman Clyde | Huey |
| T | 27-28 Jun | Tue-Wed | Summer class | Summer Class Committee |
| | 30 Jun-2 Jul | Fri-Sun | Lone Pine Creek North Fork (first choice) | _____ |
| | 3-4 Jul | Tue-Wed | No summer class | |
| | 8-9 Jul | Sat-Sun | Morgan, Stanford (from Hilton Creek) | Rockwell |
| T | 10 Jul | Mon | Meeting | ____, _____ |
| T | 11-12 Jul | Tue-Wed | Summer class | Summer Class Committee |
| T | 14-16 Jul | Fri-Sun | Summer class day trips | Leaders |

T designates official training activities.

*wow—just look around
buds, flowers, sunshine, and you
glorious living*

—Nona Mock Wyman, Walnut Creek, California



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

GROUP BUSINESS

QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE

The members present at the 9 January 2006 meeting elected the following members of the Qualifications Committee for 2006:

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| Tom Sakai | Chair, operation reports |
| Tom Roseman | New members, roster |
| Linda Finco | Trips, training |

OPERATION LEADERS

Based on the votes of the membership, the Qualifications Committee named the following operation leaders for 2005: Tom Roseman, Linda Finco (20 years as a leader), Mike Myers, Tom Sakai, Dan Bishop, Debbie Breitenstein, and David Miles.

OFFICERS

The members present at the 13 February 2006 meeting elected the following officers for 2006.

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| President | Linda Finco |
| Vice-President | Bud Gates |
| Secretary | Elaine Riendeau |
| Treasurer | Werner Hueber |
| MRA Representative | Dave Miles |

NEW MEMBERS

We welcomed Eileen Loughran as a new member in 2005.

TRANSITIONS

Honorary Member Bryson van Gundy, Jr. died in August of last year. A former Operations Officer at the airfield, Bryson did much to establish good relations between the Naval Ordnance Test Station (NOTS)—the predecessor to the Naval Weapons Center (NWC)—and local SAR groups. He helped develop the Navy's willingness to call us on their mountain SAR missions.

Sgt. Mike Kirkland is leaving his SAR duties to be in charge of the Special Operations Group of the sheriff's new Special Operations Division.

SAR Cdr. Rocky Lacertoso's retirement party was on 24 February. Cdr. Dave Nelson replaced him.

Christina Lee Jain was born 5:48 p.m. on Tuesday, January 10, 2006 at Hoag Hospital, Newport Beach, California to Chris and Michelle Jain. Baby, Mom, and Dad are in good health and doing well.

APPRECIATION DINNER

Sheriff Mack Wimbish hosted his SAR teams at his annual appreciation dinner at Hodel's Restaurant in Bakersfield on 24 March. Group members Al Green, Linda Finco, Tom Roseman, Debbie Breitenstein, Dave Miles, Paul DeRuiter, Dan Bishop, and Mary Schmierer; Honorary Member Tom Stogsdill; and family and friends attended.

President Finco introduced Dan Bishop as our top contributor for 2005 for his work as lead instructor for the Basic Mountaineering and Mountaineering Safety Course and for his active participation in the Group's mountaineering and SAR activities.

The following members received longevity of service awards:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Mike Renta, 30 years | Paul DeRuiter, 20 years | Mike Franklin, 5 years |
| Mary Schmierer, 25 years | Tom Roseman, 20 years | Dave Miles, 5 years |
| Bob Huey, 25 years | Walter Runkle, 10 years | |

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

OPERATIONS IN 2005

| Operation | Talus Pile | Date | Type | Location | Leader |
|-----------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| 2005-01 | 135 | 6-7 Jan 05 | Search | Kernville | Sakai |
| 2005-02 | 136 | 22 Apr 05 | Mobilization | Mariposa County | Breitenstein |
| 2005-03 | 136 | 29-30 Apr 05 | Search | Mariposa County | Bishop |
| 2005-04 | 137 | 3 Jun 05 | Search | Frazier Park | Gates |
| 2005-05 | 136 | 26 Jun 05 | Mobilization | Yosemite National Park | Sakai |
| 2005-06 | 136 | 18-19 Jul 05 | Search | China Lake | Finco |
| 2005-07 | 136 | 11 Aug 05 | Mobilization | Yosemite National Park | Roseman |
| 2005-08 | 136 | 12-13 Aug 05 | Search | Tulare County | Finco |
| 2005-09 | 136 | 8 Sep 05 | Search | Inyokern | Sakai |
| 2005-10 | 136 | 12-13 Oct 05 | Search | El Paso Mountains | Roseman |
| 2005-11 | 137 | 10 Dec 05 | Search | Kern River Canyon | Breitenstein |

OPERATIONS BY TYPE

| Incidents | Alerts | Mobilizations | Transits | Searches | Rescues | Recoveries | Total |
|-----------|--------|---------------|----------|----------|---------|------------|-------|
| 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 11 |

OPERATIONS BY MONTH

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |

REQUESTING AGENCIES

| Kern County | Mariposa County | Tulare County | Yosemite NP |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
| 6 | 2 | 1 | 2 |

SUBJECT OUTCOMES

| Found uninjured | Found dead | Not found | Total |
|-----------------|------------|-----------|-------|
| 2 | 4 | 6 | 12 |

GROUP DATA

| Callouts | Total hours expended | NAWC excused hours | Total vehicle miles | Average number of members per callout |
|----------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 11 | 795 | 0 | 2350 | 7 |

I was too shy to socialize, and I didn't know how to drink, so I went camping.

--David Drake

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Members: Terry Mitchell (Chair), Carol Burge, Mary Schmierer.

Presentations and Activities

| Event | Participants | Members | |
|---|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Mojave Primitive Encampment | 29 girls, 13 adult advisers | Tom Sakai Bud Gates Tom Roseman Dennis Burge | Dan Bishop Debbie Breitenstein Werner Hueber |
| Rappelling at Fossil Falls | Youth Group | David Miles Bud Gates | Al Green |
| Footprinters | 15 | Karen Botham | Karen Botham |
| Climbing safety Rappelling at Fossil Falls | Church group | Dave Miles Werner Hueber | Al Green Debbie Breitenstein |
| Cold weather tips Winter survival | VX-31: 200 sailors | Bob Rockwell | |
| Climbing and rappelling | 30 Boy Scouts | Tom Roseman | Debbie Breitenstein |

Individual donors

| | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Jeffrey Bennett | Dr. & Mrs. Robert Dow | Kennedy Meadow Committee | Jon/Melissa Bergh |
| Bryson Van Gundy | Clifton Chandler | Lois Adamson | Footprinters |
| Lyal & Marilyn Viers | Janet Hammond | John Olley | |

Combined Federal Campaign donors

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Tamara Tucker | Susan Haynes | William Deemer |
| Linda Homer | Johnnie Maschhoff | Eugenia Schneider |
| Peter Lesniak | Renee Lesniak | Kimberly Johns |

SUMMER CLASS COMMITTEE

Chairman – Dan Bishop
 Head Lecturer – Dan Bishop
 Head Rock Instructor – Mike Franklin
 Equipment Coordinator – Dave Miles
 Publicity Coordinator – Karen Botham
 Administrative Coordinator – Karen Botham

Class Party Coordinator – Debbie Breitenstein
 Presentation Technical Coordinator – Al Green
 Bud Gates
 Carol Burge
 Pete Waters

The Tuesday night presentations were great, and member participation for Wednesday nights and for the day and overnight climbs was good. The average student attendance throughout the duration of the class was 70 percent.

| | | |
|------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| June 14 | Lecture | 5 members, 28 students |
| June 15 | Conditioning hike | 10 members, 28 students |
| June 21 | Lecture | 5 members, 29 students |
| June 22 | Bouldering | 10 members, 28 students |
| June 28 | Lecture | 4 members, 27 students |
| June 29 | Belay & Navigation | 10 members, 22 students |
| July 5 | Lecture | 5 members, 27 students |
| July 6 | Climbing | 9 members, 27 students |
| July 9, 10 | Day trips: | |
| | Thor | 3 members, 11 students |
| | Dragon | 4 members, 8 students |
| | Trail | 5 members, 4 students |

| | | |
|------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| July 12 | Lecture | 5 members, 23 students |
| July 13 | Rappelling | 9 members, 18 students |
| July 19 | Lecture | 3 members, 19 students |
| July 20 | Climbing | 10 members, 16 students |
| July 23-24 | Overnight trips: | |
| | Morgan | 5 members, 4 students |
| | University | 5 members, 2 students |
| July 26 | Lecture | 3 members, 14 students |
| July 27 | Graduation party | 10 members, 17 students |

EQUIPMENT COMMITTEE

David Doerr (Chair)

Committee members had the following equipment responsibilities for 2005:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Bob Rockwell | Tents and snow flukes |
| Linda Finco | Radios and GPS units |
| David Miles | Stretcher bag equipment |
| Al Green | Rock drill, winch, tripod, generator, computer, digital projector, and copier |
| Tom Roseman | Avalanche beacons, digital camera, night goggles, batteries |
| Dave Doerr | Hut coordinator; Rinos |
| Paul DeRuiter | Explorer |
| Mike Renta | Ropes |
| Bob Huey | Inventory |

We performed the following actions during 2005:

- Purchased two HS95 voice activated radios.
- Received an HP 9670 wide format auto duplexing printer (purchased for the Group by the sheriff). This printer can print maps on 13x19 waterproof paper.
- Purchased a new Dell 700m laptop computer and a new Canon PC940 copier to replace the aging laptop and copier we had.
- Purchased a satellite telephone. It is a tri-mode phone that has capability for use as a regular cell phone, but the sheriff has not set up cell service for it yet.
- Purchased a new box for the omni antenna.
- Purchased the following new ropes:
 - One 300 feet paralock static rope. This type of rope is designed to be more cut and abrasion resistant than kern-mantle ropes. The assessment of this new rope so far is that it works fine for raising and lowering but does not work well in the 540-belay device.
 - Three 11-mm, 50-m length dynamic ropes to replace the oldest three of our current six tactical ropes. The three we are keeping are 9.9 mm.
 - One 11-mm, 60-m length dynamic rope that we will cut into 20-foot sections for anchors.
 - Two 9-mm half ropes to replace the current ones.

FIRST AID COMMITTEE

Gina Niesen

Committee members were Gina Niesen (Chair), Dr. Bill Ferguson, Karen Botham, Ellen Schafhauser, Linda Finco. Each member must be current in CPR and First Aid.

We had several classes in CPR, Standard First Aid, and Wilderness First Aid.

Hours: approximately 220.

EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Debbie Breitenstein (Chair)

CLMRG attended all the monthly meetings to support this community organization. The meetings this year focused on briefings from organizations within the community that could be called on to assist in an emergency. RACES, the American Red Cross, the Civil Air Patrol, Mercy Air, and others discussed their organizations and assets and how they could be used in an emergency or natural disaster in our area.

TRAINING COMMITTEE

Committee members were Eric Toler (Chair), Debbie Breitenstein, Daryl Hinman, and Dan Bishop. Training activities in 2005:

| Date | Event | Leader |
|-----------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| 16 Feb | Tracking practice | Schafhauser |
| 25-27 Feb | MRA rock certification practice | Roseman |
| 5-6 Mar | MRA rock certification test | Roseman |
| 15 Mar | Tracking practice | Finco |

| | | |
|--------|--|-------------|
| 12 Apr | Tracking practice | Schafhauser |
| 17 Apr | Rock skills—ascending & descending (Roseman, Bishop, Franklin, Waters) | Hinman |
| 18 Apr | Hut night for OLs (Gates, Bishop, Myers, Sakai) | Finco |
| May | Big wall training—Red Rock Canyon (Nevada) with Las Vegas SAR | (1) |
| 10 May | Tracking practice | Finco |
| 14 May | Stretcher practice | Bishop (2) |
| 13 Jun | GPS pre-meeting | Toler |
| 14 Jun | Tracking practice | Runkle |
| 3 Dec | Stretcher practice—Fossil Falls | Roseman |

Notes:

- (1) Canceled because the training site was declared a wilderness area, which prohibited helicopters from flying in the area. Las Vegas SAR is seeking a waiver, but it could take up to 18 months to obtain. CLMRG members who registered were Dan Bishop, Dave Miles, and Mike Franklin.
- (2) Started as a mock operation, but two real operations happened. Ultimately canceled.

ASTM COMMITTEE

Dennis Burge

The purpose of our American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) Committee is to be aware of, and participate in, the development of standards by ASTM's Search & Rescue Committee. I am a voting member, so I receive notices of ballots on proposed new standards. If needed, I then get inputs from other CLMRG members.

Occasionally, a standard is proposed that we feel would be detrimental to CLMRG or MRA. Nothing of concern came up in 2005.

JUMBLE® THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
by Henri Arnold and Mike Argiron

Unscramble these six Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form six ordinary words.

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YEASUN
UNEASY
BOICED
BODICE
WHAREK
HAWKER
KLEACT
TACKLE
CLOTUC
OCULT
GRAYUS
SUGARY

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

PRINT YOUR ANSWER IN THE CIRCLES BELOW

"STICKER" SHOCK

OPERATION REPORTS

Operation 2005-04 (Search)

Frazier Park

5 June 2005

By Bud Gates, Operation Leader

At 1515 on 4 June 2005, I received a page from Sgt. Kirkland requesting help in a search for a missing man, 61-year-old Michael Miller, in the Mt. Pinos area. The terrain was reported to be steep

with many pine trees. I accepted the leader position and asked Karen Botham to coordinate. She agreed and recruited Mary Schmierer to assist her. Tom Sakai, Dennis Burge, Eric Toler, and Mike Renta committed to the search.

Sgt. Kirkland asked us to be at base camp by 0730 the following day, June 5. We met at the hut at 0500 and were en route by 0515. We arrived at base camp at 0750. We were 20 minutes late, but that wasn't a problem because the briefing didn't start until 0800.

The following statements are from the official report:

"On 5-25-2005, Michael reported to his wife that he was in Bakersfield, CA and was en route home to Marina Del Rey. On 5-25-05, Michael was reported to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department as a missing person. On 5-31-05, Lockwood deputies checked the Mt. Pinos parking lot on a routine patrol and did not see any vehicles in the lot. On 6-03-05, Michael's vehicle was located in the Mt. Pinos parking lot by family members. It is not known when Michael's vehicle arrived at Mt. Pinos."

"Michael . . . [was] characterized by friends and family as being an avid hiker, but typically only enjoys day hikes and is not very good with navigation."

We were assigned to grid search a semi-triangular area bordered by a stream on the north and east edges. The western boundary was merely a compass bearing from the point where an extrapolation of the stream would have reached the road and a small peak designated as 8292. The southern boundary of our search area was a true 90-degree compass bearing from the peak to the stream.

All members received a radio and tested it before leaving base. We began our search at 0905 by hiking up the road to the northern-most point of our search area. We spread out in a search grid and followed our compass until we reached peak 8292. From that point, we spread out again and searched in a true east bearing until we reached the stream thus outlining and familiarizing everyone on the team with our search area. By then, we had essentially completed our search assignment, so I had everyone regroup at the stream for a lunch break before requesting a new assignment. Mike Renta's radio was no longer working, so he did not hear the call to regroup. Mike had not joined us after 20 minutes, so Dan Bishop and I set out to find him while the others waited at our lunch spot. Mike had stopped and sat down when he reached the stream, which made him easy to find.

Mike, Dan, and I rejoined the team at the lunch spot at 1220. As we got our packs on to return to base, we heard the announcement on the radio that Miller's body had been located by another team at UTM 11 305468E 3856216N (WGS84/NAD83). The cause of death was not known at the time of this report. After a short debrief, we headed home and were back in Ridgecrest by 1630.

Operation 2005-11 (Search)

Kern River Canyon

10 December 2005

By Debbie Breitenstein, Operation Leader

On November 21, Linda Finco received a call from Sgt. Mike Kirkland that a search of the Kern River had been scheduled for Saturday, 10 December 2005. The search was for five persons who, over the course of 2005, were believed to have drowned in the lower Kern River and whose bodies had not been found.

I agreed to be operations leader. Nine CLMRG field members—Al Green, Bob Rockwell, Tom Roseman, Tom Sakai, Mike Franklin, Dave Miles, Ellen Schafhauser, Eileen Loughran (her first operation!), and I—participated. Karen Botham was our coordinator—her first long distance coordinating effort since her recent relocation.

At Kirkland's suggestion, I went to Home Depot and bought four extendable rake-hoes, which we used to break up drifts of flotsam. I also bought tough washable gloves to reduce contact with the poison oak that infested the area.

On 8 December, Sgt. Kirkland informed us that the flow rate below the power plant would be running at only 70 CFS through the day of the search versus 600-800 CFS of the previous week. This would make the search safer and expose deeper levels of the river and banks.

Our team left Ridgecrest at 0600, which gave us time to stop at McDonalds for breakfast and get to the Operations Base along Highway 178 at the Borel Road turnoff by 0730. Ellen Schafhauser, who has

moved to the Kernville area, met us at the base along with about 90 members of other Kern Count SAR teams. Briefing began at 0800.

Participating SAR members were assigned to 10 six- to eight-person search teams, each covering 1- to 3-mile sections of the river. Each search team was divided into "A" (river right) and "B" (river left) sub-teams.

CLMRG members were assigned to three teams to work with other SAR members who were better acquainted with the river and to provide technical rock skills and hardware while searching the slick vertical rocks that border the river. Tom Sakai joined Team One. Dave Miles, Mike Franklin, Bob Rockwell, and Eileen Loughran joined Team Six. The remaining team members—Al Green, Tom Roseman, Ellen Schafhauser, and I—joined Team Seven. The teams were driven to the upriver start of their sections and dropped off at the easiest access points.

The search area for Teams Six and Seven started just below the Borel power plant and continued down canyon to the Delonegha launch area. We worked down the river searching shallow water and several feet up the banks. Team members on opposite river banks were generally able to scan visually the less accessible sections. At one point, while examining the base of a cliff on the opposite bank, my team saw a shoe protruding from a pile of sticks and mud. The shoe was about two-thirds exposed with the sole facing us and the toe pointing straight up, which suggested that it was held there against normal water currents. Roseman rappelled to the debris pile and confirmed that the shoe contained only mud.

We pulled or dug apart many piles of driftwood and found such diverse items as paddles, rafts, shoes, clothing, toys (K-Mart kiddy pool tubes—scary!), lots of trash, and a few cow bones. Despite the well-attended and coordinated effort, we found no human remains.

The teams climbed from the canyon to the nearest roads and to be extracted by vehicles starting at 1530. We reconvened at the search base where the cooks had prepared hot soup, drinks, and other fuel for tired searchers. When our team was all accounted for, we departed the base and headed home to wash the poison oak from our cloths and bodies. We were home at approximately 1730.

Note: The new 9-mm ropes are slick; 8-mm Prusiks don't grip it well, which made Roseman's rappel a little more tense than usual. Perhaps smaller diameter Prusiks should be used.

Operation 2006-01 (Search)

OES #2006 LAW 0005

Pine Creek (Inyo County)

5-6 January 2006

By Mike Myers, Operation Leader

Known information. Mother (Stacy Stotko) and daughter (Brittany Marie Stotko) left either Bishop or Crowley (Stacy's story changed often) on Sunday, 1 January 2006 to drive to Lower Rock Creek. They took a wrong turn onto Pine Creek Road. They drove about six miles past Rovana and about 200 feet up the first switchback past the gated entrance to the Tungsten Mine and the stables before spinning off the road and disabling the car. They spent two nights in the car during the New Year snowstorm. On the third day, Tuesday (3 January), Brittany decided to walk out for help. Stacy last saw her on that day leaving the stranded vehicle in four feet of new snow. Stacy watched her through binoculars go back down the road but lost track of her near the stables. Brittany, a 19-year-old white female, 5'1" tall, and 100 pounds, was not dressed for the cold and snow. She wore only brown leather dress boots, a brown leather jacket, blue Levis, a black beanie, and a green bandana with white polka dots. The bandana was supposedly wrapped around her face for protection from the cold wind. She carried a black umbrella.

Brittany told her mother that she planned to follow the roadside snow stakes. On the day she left the car, the wind was blowing snow like a blizzard down the Pine Creek Canyon. The snow looked like an ocean and revealed no sign that anyone had left the car and walked down the road. Brittany was said to be a stubborn and determined young lady.

The search. The Mono County Sheriff started a search on Monday (2 January) in the Lower Rock Creek area. When they found nothing, they expanded their air search area. The car was spotted by helicopter Wednesday morning (4 January) near the mine at the west end of Pine Creek Road, and

snowmobiles went in to rescue Stacy and transport her to the hospital. After interviewing the mother, the Inyo County Sheriff began a full search near the vehicle. CLMRG was asked to join the search on Thursday morning (5 January).

Sgt. Kirkland paged us about 2100 on Wednesday night. I contacted Janet Westbrook, who agreed to coordinate and initiate a callout. Only two members responded: Dave Miles and Bud Gates. We were asked to be in base at 0600 Thursday morning. We met at the Hut at 0300 and departed at 0315. Following a short stop for breakfast in Bishop, we arrived at base at 0555.

During the morning brief, we learned that Brittany's umbrella was found Wednesday about a half-mile down canyon from the car. The general belief by Inyo personnel was that Brittany could not have made it more than 150-200 yards from the car in the deep snow, so that area remained their priority search area. They thought the wind blew the umbrella down the canyon earlier in the week.

Because Brittany was a local, a large number of local volunteers came out to help with the search. Nobody was allowed past the Command Post (CP) without an avalanche beacon. We were split up into different teams with Bud and Dave assigned to lead volunteer teams—all with beacons. According to Bud and Dave, they were never put in a place where an avalanche could occur.

Dave's and Bud's teams were assigned areas below or near the umbrella, and I was assigned to a team of Inyo and Mono SAR members in their high probability area near the car. The snow at the upper end of the canyon was deep and unconsolidated. Searching was physically demanding on everyone, especially those on snowshoes. Snowshoes sank about three feet with every step, so it was like breaking trail for ten hours straight. Skis with skins had a lot more flotation.

On day two, we were joined by CLMRG members Mike Franklin, Bob Huey, and Curtis Davis. Inyo search leaders had decided to expand the priority search area. They decided that Brittany might have made it all the way down the road, past the trees and brush that would have snared the umbrella, before losing the umbrella to the wind. They decided that she would have seen how far she had to go and turned back up canyon to the car. Our assignment was to probe only tree wells, rocks, bushes, and anything else bulging from or protruding through the snow.

The Ventura team was inserted at the umbrella site and told to work their way up canyon with the same probing instructions we had received. The Ventura team, as well as other searchers from the day before, walked mere steps away from Brittany's body without knowing it. Friends of the family were walking on the plowed road next to the Ventura team. As they walked past a power pole at about 1000 on Friday (6 January), one of them jerked on a piece of cable attached to the pole, which was just a few feet from the road. That action exposed Brittany's jacket. She was covered by about 10 inches of snow. The snow was flat with no bulge and only two feet deep with snowshoe tracks all around where she lay. The discovery brought the search to a halt. We were transported back to the CP and released.

Lesson learned. Never underestimate the abilities of a determined individual. Too much emphasis was placed on Brittany's physical size—she stood only 5'1" and weighed only 100 pounds—to give her credit for what was stated clearly in our original brief: that she was stubborn and determined. If nothing else, bring in some opposing views to ensure that you are close to making informed choices.

Notes.

1. The sheriff had so many of Brittany's family and friends who wanted to participate in the search that he allowed them to search an area with little potential of an avalanche. Gates and Miles assumed the risk of leading some of these local volunteers. The sheriff did this for only one day, and we believe he made this decision to satisfy the need of the locals to help. On the second day, he did not allow any volunteers without an endorsement from a qualified SAR person as to their abilities.

2. Be prepared when traveling in the mountains during the winter months. In addition to emergency items you would normally have in your vehicle, add a sleeping bag or blankets and a supply of wood and water. If you do not have the equipment or training necessary for the conditions, stay with your car if it becomes disabled.

THE CLINIC

Poison Oak.

By Debbie Breitenstein

We encountered a lot of poison oak on our search in Kern River Canyon on December 10 (refer to Operation 2005-11 in this issue). The foliage was gone, but it was fairly easy to recognize, very thick, and impossible to avoid. Most of us had used a pretreatment—Tecnu brand lotion or IvyX towlets—that create barriers against the oil. When we got out of the field, we washed with Tecnu soap or IvyX wipes. I believe this helped, but several members did end up with rashes. Here is some information from research I did (while trying NOT to scratch).

The oil—urushiol—is unbelievably potent. One ounce is enough to give every person in the world a rash. It retains this potency for up to five years, and archeologically retrieved samples up to 500 years old have caused contact dermatitis. All parts of the plant—leaves, roots, twigs—contain urushiol. The oil soaks into the skin, bonds with cells, and provokes an immune reaction. Some reports said bonding can occur within 3 minutes, but others say that it might take up to 2 hours. There is no real immunity; there are only people who get poison oak and people who will eventually get poison oak. After you have had a reaction to it, you will likely be more reactive with each exposure.

To avoid or reduce the rash, as soon as possible after contact, place all the clothes that were contacted, including shoes, in a separate bag and wash them before touching them again. Use Tecnu or other oil solvent (rubbing alcohol works, and gasoline works—if that's all you have) to remove the oil from your skin. Then take a shower. A good detergent will remove the substance from clothes, and Tecnu or an oil-based solvent will remove it from your shoes. Also treat tools and anything else that might have had secondary contact with the oil (your car seat?), or plan on re-occurring dermatitis until the oil is removed or used up.

After you remove the surface residue from your skin, poison oak CANNOT be spread by scratching or contact with the rash. The urushiol has bonded permanently with your skin cells and will leave your body only when you slough those cells. However, lesions caused by scratching may result in secondary infections. For bad cases, or cases in bad places (Google “using poison oak as TP), see a doctor. If you can gut it out, several commercially available potions may help the itch and a quick Google will bring up reams of home remedies. Good luck. Whether you use Caladril or banana skins, plan on several weeks of gritting your teeth and trying to avoid scratching.

DONATIONS

Terry Mitchell

CLMRG gratefully acknowledges recent gifts from the following friends:

Jeffrey Barrett, Edison International Employee Contribution Campaign, Tehachapi Office

Dr. And Mrs. Robert Dow

Jon and Melissa Bergh

Lois Adamsen

In memory of brother Carl Heller

Mario and Yolanda Gonzalez

Janet E. Hammond

Jeffrey Barrett, Edison International Employee Contribution Campaign, Ridgecrest Office

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Susan Haynes

Tamara Tucker

Majorie Vargas