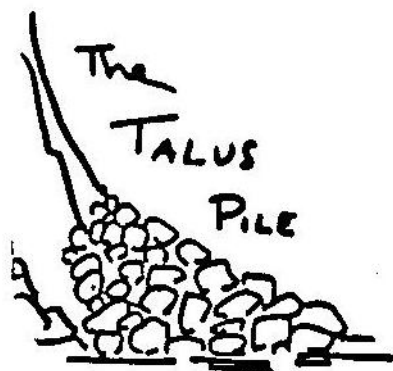


NUMBER 145

January 2010



CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP

P. O. BOX 2037
RIDGECREST CA 93556

TRAINING SCHEDULE

	Jan	1-4	Mt. Russell	Rockwell
	Jan	8-10	Open	
T	Jan	9	Winter National MRA meeting-SLC	Bishop
T	Jan	11	Meeting – FA Victim Winter Packaging	Rockwell, Rockwell, Rockwell
	Jan	16-17	Open	
T	Jan	16	Region MRA meeting-SB West Valley	Bishop
	Jan	22-24	Open	
	Jan	27	Rock Skills – Free Climbing	Hinman
	Jan	30-31	Open	
	Feb	5-7	White Mtn	Bishop
T	Feb	8	Meeting	Myers, Bishop, Najera-Niesen
	Feb	13-14	Open	
T	Feb		Search Training at Warm Springs	Inyo, Sierra Madre
	Feb	20	Recert Practice	Bishop
	Feb	27-28	Recert Practice	Bishop
T	Mar	5-7	MRA Recert	Bishop
	Mar	13-14	Open	
T	Mar	8	Meeting	Huey, Derkey, Loughran
	Mar	19-21	Mt. Whitney	Myers
	Mar	27-28	Open	

T designates official training activities.

*"I've climbed with some of the best
climbers in the world, more
importantly, to me, they are some
of the best people in the world.
That's another reason why I climb."
--Jim Wickwire*



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

OPERATION REPORTS

Operation 2009-07 (Alert)

21 May 2009

California City area (Kern County)

By Tom Sakai (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Tom Sakai.
Subject: Down aircraft.
Problem: Subject was a pilot of a crashed military jet.
Outcome: Subject was found deceased.
CLMRG members: Tom Sakai (Operation Leader), Dave Miles, Bud Gates, Al Green, Bob Rockwell, Paul DeRuiter, and Jeff Green.

Narrative:

Mary Schmierer called at 1635 on 21 May 2009 looking for an operation leader (OL) to respond to Lt. David Barker's of the Kern County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) request for assistance in searching for a pilot of a crashed military jet near California City. When I hung up from Mary's call, I immediately called Lt. Barker to get details. Directed to his voicemail, I left a message. He returned my call about 5 minutes later and told me that we were no longer needed because the missing pilot had been found dead. I then called Schmierer to stop the call-out I had told her to begin. She and Terry Mitchell had already gotten commitments from six other members: Dave Miles, Bud Gates, Al Green, Bob Rockwell, Paul DeRuiter, and Jeff Green.

From subsequent newspaper reports, I learned that the military jet was an Air Force T-38 jet trainer from Edwards AFB with two crewmembers. It apparently crashed about 1315 that afternoon 9 miles north of the base with two pilots aboard. One pilot survived and was airlifted to a hospital with undisclosed injuries. The other was not immediately located; hence, the call for our assistance.

Lessons Learned:

N/A

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation 2009-08 (Search)

5-6 June 2009

California City (Kern County)

By Dan Bishop (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Dan Bishop.
Subject: A 9-year-old autistic boy.
Problem: Subject likes to run away from home and evade searchers.
Outcome: Subject was found safe and taken to hospital as a precaution.
CLMRG members: Dan Bishop (Operation Leader), Mike Myers, Dave Miles, Al Green, Bob Rockwell, Debbie Breitenstein, Tom Sakai, Dennis Burge, Mike Renta, Jeff Green, and Martha Bodine.

Narrative:

I received the call from Sgt. Gary Rhoades (KCSO) at 1630 on 5 June. He was mobilizing a search for a missing 9-year-old boy in California City. Shelia Rockwell agreed to be the Coordinator, and Tom Roseman (acting as the Telephoner) assisted with the callout, which netted the following members: Mike Myers, Dave Miles, Al Green, Bob Rockwell, Debbie Breitenstein, Tom Sakai, Dennis Burge, Mike Renta, Jeff Green, and Martha Bodine.

The missing boy is autistic, has disappeared from his home several times before, and would actively evade searchers. Previous runaway attempts had him ranging as far as 4 or 5 miles from his home on the northern edge

of California City. The boy's home is in a sparse residential area adjacent to miles of open desert, unmaintained dirt roads, and a tortoise preserve that is closed to vehicular traffic. The boy was barefoot and not wearing clothing at the time of his disappearance, which concerned us because of the cold nighttime temperatures and wind.

A hasty team of Myers, Miles, Rockwell, and A.Green left the hut at 1720 to get to the scene and preserve tracks. The rest of us (for a total of 11 from our Group) left at 1750 in two vehicles.

The hasty team arrived at the Command Post (CP), which was also the boy's home, and were on 7-inch-long barefoot tracks north and east of the place last seen (PLS) by 1900. The tracks did not stay consistently on established dirt roads but headed cross-country onto hard scrub terrain that was very difficult to track through. The rest of us tried to jump-track in our vehicles in the direction of travel of the tracks. When we came up against the tortoise boundary, Renta, Burge, Bodine, and I headed off on foot to intersect tracks. Sakai, Breitenstein, and J. Green tried to drive around the preserve to the east, but road closures forced them to the western border. Two teams (1) Miles and Rockwell and (2) Myers and A. Green were on and off track heading north on the preserve's western edge throughout the evening.

At 0100, we were all on the same side of the preserve and still on track when we discovered his tracks heading south, a reversal of direction. With our vehicles and on foot, we continued the process of jump-tracking through the early morning.

By first light, we were all tired but still had the direction of travel south. I suggested that everyone take a short nap while Miles and I walked a road that we expected to find tracks on. Miles and I found tracks on the road at 0630. At the same time, we received a report that one of the Desert team had spotted a boy at the school. He turned out to be the subject of our search. He had no shirt and no shoes, but he did have jeans on—although they were not his.

We all returned to the CP. The boy was hungry and cold but appeared to be uninjured. He was taken to the hospital as a precaution. The sheriff treated us to breakfast at the California City airport café.

Lessons Learned:

- Radio communications were poor; fortunately, cell phone coverage helped.
- We had no radio communications with the Desert team.
- A formal CP might have helped coordinating the search provided that communications could have been established. We were running our own search plan on an on-the-fly basis, independently of the Desert team.

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation 2009-09 (Incident)

17 June 2009

Wagon Wheel area (San Bernardino County)

By Dave Miles (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Dave Miles.
Subject: A summer mountaineering class student.
Problem: Fall from boulder resulting in a broken ankle.
Outcome: Ankle bandaged and splinted. Subject taken to hospital.
CLMRG members: Dave Miles (Operation Leader), Debbie Breitenstein, Bud Gates, Joe Dunn, Gina Najera-Niesen, and Mike Myers.

Narrative:

As part of the CLMRG Basic Mountaineering and Mountaineering Safety Course, the 17 June class was scheduled as bouldering at Wagon Wheel. Debbie Breitenstein and Bud Gates were assigned a group of students, including Chris and Phyllis Stewart.

This group did the chimneys in the parking area, letting the other groups sweep ahead on the more popular problems. Eventually, this group worked their way over towards the three problems at the bicycle rock bouldering area (so named due to a bike carved into the boulder). There were already two other groups there on

the friction climbs, so this group decided to try the bicycle boulder problem. This problem starts on a sloping face with a crack and proceeds up to a “bomber” ledge that one needs to step up onto prior to getting to the top of the boulder.

The group had a crash pad and it was placed over the rock at the base of the problem with the edge against the boulder. Bud demonstrated the climb and then each student proceeded to attempt the climb. After spotting two students, Debbie climbed to the top to help direct from above and to ensure that the climbers accessed the descent route safely. Bud took over spotting from below.

Phyllis did the lower part of the climb and was almost to the top. Phyllis placed her foot on the last “bomber” ledge, but when she tried to push up and weight her leg, the leg would shake (sewing machine leg) and she would back off to a more unstable position. Debbie encouraged Phyllis to complete the move and told her that it was easier to go up than down at that point (the final move is about 8 feet from the ground). After a few tries, she stated that she couldn't do it and that she was going down. She immediately shifted hands and feet and descended to within 1-1/2 to 2 feet from the ground, where she then either slipped or let go. She landed on the crash pad and fell back. Her left foot buckled under the impact and was obviously broken. Debbie summoned Mike Myers who was on the other side of the boulder problem where the accident occurred. Mike came around the rock and quickly assessed the situation. Mike decided to call me since I was the lead rock instructor. Joe Dunn and I were with a group of students in a different area, but we responded very quickly to the radio call. I started to coordinate the evacuation and Joe was dispatched to get the Explorer that contained the stretcher and first aid equipment.

Gina Niesen also responded and assisted Bud in the first aid. A small amount of blood indicated that it was likely a compound fracture. Bud decided to just untie her shoe enough to check for a pulse but leave the shoe and sock in place to minimize any further injury. Phyllis stated that she had osteoporosis and was taking Boniva, and that she had experienced several fractures in the past. Gina assessed her condition and found no additional injuries other than a minor abrasion of the left knee. Bud and Gina used gauze padding and a SAM splint to splint the leg, ankle, and foot in place. The bleeding was minimal so the gauze padding used for the splint was determined to be enough to control it.

After consulting with Mike, we decided to request an ambulance rather than try to transport the subject in the back of a truck. A 911 call was placed at 1812 and after some effort to get transferred to the right dispatch a direct call was made to the San Bernardino County Fire Department in Trona at 1837. The fire department and ambulance arrived a little after 1900 and Phyllis was treated and transported by 1930 to Ridgecrest Regional Hospital.

Lessons Learned:

N/A

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation 2009-10 (Search)

25 June 2009

California City, California (Kern County)

By Linda Finco (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Linda Finco.
Subject: A 9-year-old autistic boy.
Problem: Subject likes to run away from home and evade searchers.
Outcome: Subject found safe.
Coordinator: Janet Westbrook.
Telephoner: Carol Burge.
CLMRG members: Linda Finco (Operation Leader), Tom Roseman, Dave Miles, Bud Gates, Debbie Breitenstein, Mike Franklin, Bill Stratton, and Nathan Simons.

Narrative:

At 0625 on 25 June 2009, Sgt. Baldwin of the Kern County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) called CLMRG requesting assistance in the search for an autistic nine-year-old boy with a bad habit of running away from home. He reported that the boy figured out how to open a secured garage door and left his home in California City around 0200. The California City Police Department searched the area for a few hours and then contacted the KCSO for help. We were to meet at base camp near the boy's home.

Janet Westbrook coordinated the callout and Carol Burge helped telephone. Seven other members responded: Tom Roseman, Dave Miles, Bud Gates, Debbie Breitenstein, Mike Franklin, Bill Stratton, and Nathan Simons. We met at the hut at 0730 and arrived at base around 0845.

Teams from Desert and Tehachapi were also participating in the search. Roseman stayed in base to help Sgt. Baldwin coordinate it. The local police were already out looking for the boy. The KCSO helicopter arrived in base around 0900. Reportedly, the boy was barefoot and wearing only dark boxers, and he liked to run. Teams from Kern County have searched for him in the past, and on those occasions, he ran from the searchers.

Two CLMRG teams were put on the boy's track outside of his home, and other teams were assigned roads to search and cut for tracks for containment. The lead tracking team of Breitenstein and Gates confirmed the boy's tracks and his direction of travel, and shortly after, the second team of Miles and Franklin confirmed that he had crossed the road near his residence and headed out into the desert in a westerly direction. At 1100, base received word from a CalTrans crew at the intersection of Highways 14 and 58 that they had found the boy. They had to trail him for a while in their vehicle because he did continue to run from them, but he eventually stopped, and they were able to pick him up. The California City police went out to get the boy.

All teams were back in base by 1200, and the sheriff treated us to lunch. All CLMRG members were back at the hut and had the gear secured by 1430.

Lessons Learned:

N/A

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation Report 2009-11 (Incident)

18 July 2009

Perrin Lake (Inyo County)

By Dan Bishop (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Dan Bishop.

Subjects: Daryl Hinman and Bill Stratton.

Problem: Hinman's wife received HELP messages from his SPL.

Outcome: Subjects found uninjured and surprised.

Coordinator: Terry Mitchell.

CLMRG members: Dan Bishop, Al Green, Mike Franklin.

Narrative:

As we gathered at the donut shop's parking lot to depart for the summer class overnight trip to University, Ron Atkins arrived and told us that Ellen Hinman had received multiple HELP messages via a Spot personal locator (SPL) from her husband and long-time Group member Daryl Hinman. I considered this to be a higher priority than the class overnight trip and informed the students of the situation. I encouraged Group members Mike Renta, Nathan Simons, and Mike Derkey to proceed with this trip and told them to call me before losing cell phone coverage in Onion Valley in case I needed more support. I also phoned Dave Miles, leader of the other overnight trip to Mt. Morrison, to inform him of the situation and tell him to stand by before proceeding with that trip.

Al Green and I drove to Hinman's house to get more information. An OK message came from Perrin Lake (south of Mt. Chamberlin) the previous evening. Starting at 0600 this morning, a series of six HELP messages went out in a 30-minute period. The SPL has three pre-programmed messages: an OK, a HELP, and a 911. All go to a pre-programmed e-mail list. The 911 message activates the local SAR. In this case, the pre-programmed

HELP message stated, "HELP: Coming out early." The concern was that six messages in a row all came from the same location. After reviewing the Spot e-mail and Google maps and talking with Mrs. Hinman, we decided that we would investigate by hiking toward their last known location.

Terry Mitchell agreed to be the Coordinator. Mike Franklin committed along with Green. The three of us met at the hut at 0930. I asked Mitchell to contact Spot directly to find out whether the six HELP e-messages were automated or sent by six separate activations of the HELP button.

I called Sgt. Rhoades and Sgt. Baldwin to let them know our plan. I also called Dave German of Inyo SAR to give them a "heads-up" of what was happening in their jurisdiction in case we would need further support. Knowing that Hinman or Stratton would have activated the 911 option if they needed immediate assistance, I contacted Simons and told him to take the University overnight trip and Miles to stand-down and take the Morrison overnight trip.

Using Mitchell as a central point of contact, we devised a system of communications using the SPL activation buttons if we could not communicate using the satellite phone. By this time, Mitchell had researched and talked to a representative from Spot who informed her that, in fact, the SPL had six separate activations (see Lessons Learned below).

Arriving at Horseshoe Meadows, we eventually found Hinman's vehicle. I left a note on his windshield advising them to contact Mitchell in case we missed them coming out. We proceeded toward Cottonwood Pass in hot weather. As we approached the pass about two hours later, along came Hinman and Stratton, uninjured and rather surprised to see us. I called Mitchell immediately with the satellite telephone and told her that everything was OK. Hinman told us that because of afternoon thunderstorms, they had decided to cancel their planned climb on the exposed, committing ridge and to come out a day early. He had pressed the HELP button on his SPL only once with the intended message of "HELP, we are coming out early", but what was sent were six HELP messages all from the same location with no further messages.

As the five of us approached our vehicles, a thunderstorm moved in and dropped a significant amount of rain. Driving out, the rain and hail continued at such a rate that the windshield wipers could hardly keep up.

Hinman treated all of us to a fine dinner at Seasons in Lone Pine while Mitchell contacted Mrs. Hinman, the Kern County Sheriff, Inyo SAR, and our spouses to inform them of the situation.

Bob Huey, who was to join the University overnight trip, met us in Lone Pine, and he and I drove to Onion Valley and hiked in to join the trip. We arrived around 2230.

Lessons Learned:

1) From Terry Mitchell: This is not an easy website to find a telephone number and talk to a person: <http://findmespot.com>. The number is 1-866-651-7768. I pressed the number key for the Law Enforcement-Rescue option and explained that I was a member of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group, which is part of the Mountain Rescue Association, and that we worked for the Kern County Sheriff in California. I explained that two of our members were on a trip in the backcountry and that one's wife had received a HELP message from his SPL. I told him that because the message was HELP, we had gotten a rescue team together, and that because we felt that if something was life threatening he would have sent the 911 message, we assumed that something less serious had happened and that they just needed assistance. What we wanted to know was whether the multiple messages received by the wife were multiple transmissions of a single message or were actually multiple messages, each one being transmitted separately. Luckily, Bishop had given me the ESN number, so the man said he would research it and call me back.

Because I had used the Law Enforcement-Rescue option, I called Sgt. Rhoades to let him know what I had done and why. He told me to let him know what I found out. Findmespot called me back and said that there were multiple messages, each one being sent just once. However, I found this when I looked again:

<http://www.findmespot.com/en/index.php?cid=1114#>, which says basically that the HELP message will be sent out every five minutes for one hour or until turned off.

2) Hinman had left a very good list of information, including vehicle description, license plate, trip itinerary, and entry and exit plans.

3) The satellite phone worked well and was very useful.

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation 2009-012 (Rescue)

24 July 2009

Mt. Whitney Trail (Inyo County)

By Linda Finco (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Linda Finco.
Subjects: An 11-year-old girl and a 50-year-old woman.
Problem: Altitude sickness.
Outcome: Subjects provided oxygen and escorted down trail.
Coordinator: Carol Burge.
Telephoner: Elaine Riendeau.
CLMRG members: Linda Finco (Operation Leader), Bud Gates, Jeff Green, Dave Doerr, and Eileen Loughran.

Narrative:

Sgt. Gary Rhoades called at 0100, Friday, 24 July, Inyo County was requesting our assistance with two rescues in the Mt. Whitney area. The reports were a 60-year-old man at Trail Camp and an 11-year-old girl at Outpost Camp (no relation in family or group outing), were experiencing severe altitude problems. Inyo only had one person responding and needed additional help. I started the operation, with the thought of turning it over to another operations leader since it would be difficult to find a dog sitter at that hour. Carol Burge coordinated the callout. Elaine Riendeau helped with the telephoning. Carol called back and said the only others to commit were Bud Gates and Jeff Green. So I agreed to the operation and set the time for 0200 to meet at the hut. I called a neighbor and apologized profusely for calling at that hour, but I got a dog sitter. Just before leaving for the hut Carol called to say Dave Doerr would go and later I got the call that Eileen Loughran would meet us at the hut also. So what started as a small team grew into a good sized team for the effort.

Jeff Green was first to the hut and did a good job in getting all the gear set out. We packed it up and when everyone arrived we headed out at around 0220. We arrived at the Portals a little before 0400 and met Sgt. Yang from Inyo. Dean (Inyo member) was still looking for the 11-year-old girl and her companions who were reported between Mirror Lake and Outpost Camp. I volunteered our team to head out to Trail Camp, checking in with Dean on the way up the trail. Sgt. Yang apologized for not updating us and stated friends of 60-year-old Glen Bailey hiked in and helped him down. At Trail Camp Mr. Bailey began experiencing severe nausea and diarrhea, but said he would seek his own medical care now that he was off the mountain. So now all we needed to focus on was the 11-year-old. As we got our gear together, Dean called in to say he located the girl, Emily, and her two companions (her mom, Susan, and their friend, Michele Yanez, age 50) just as the trail leaves Mirror Lake heading towards Outpost Camp. Dean started Emily on oxygen and requested we bring additional oxygen up the trail. Dean would start slowly down the trail with the group and meet us around Lone Pine Lake. We started up the trail at 0430 and met up with Dean and the others just below Lone Pine Lake. By this time, Michele began complaining of severe nausea and a headache. Emily was feeling quite a bit better, so Dean put Michele on the oxygen and after transferring gear to lighten Michele's load we all continued back to the Portals. We arrived at the Portals a little after 0700 and the sheriff had an ambulance there to check out Emily and Michele. Both were taken to the hospital for further evaluation. The sheriff treated us to breakfast in Lone Pine and we arrived back in Ridgecrest and had everything secured by 1200.

Lessons Learned:

N/A

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation 2009-013 (Search)

03 September 2009

Split Mountain (Inyo County)
By Dan Bishop (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Dan Bishop.
Subject: Adult male.
Problem: Overdue from hike.
Outcome: Subject hiked out.
Coordinator: Terry Mitchell.
CLMRG members: Dan Bishop (Operation Leader), Bud Gates, Dave Miles, Daryl Hinman, and Nathan Simons.

Narrative:

Wednesday night, September 2nd, Myers took the call for a request from Inyo county, Cpl. Waterbury, for assistance with a technical search on Split Mountain. I accepted the operation and contacted Terry Mitchell to start the call-out.

The subject, Ed Saenz, a retired CHP officer, failed to return to his camp at Red Lake on September 1st. His climbing partner, staying at Red Lake, hiked out and reported him missing on September 2nd. Another hiker reported that the subject's name was on the summit register of Split Mountain. A search via helicopter was conducted for 2 hours on the 2nd with no success. Inyo SAR requested that we be prepared for searching technical and icy terrain and to report at the Big Pine ball field at 0630 on September 3rd.

Dave Miles, Daryl Hinman, Bud Gates and Nathan Simons committed to the operation. We met at the hut at 0400 and were soon in route. During the briefing at 0700 we learned that a single CHP helicopter would be inserting a limited number of searchers at the 12000 foot saddle between Split and Mt. Prater. Hinman and I were assigned to search the normal ascent/descent route of the north ridge, check the summit register of Prater and to descend the St. Jean couloirs to Red Lake. The rest of our team composed of Miles, Gates, and Simons were to hike in to Red Lake and search the bottom of the east facing chutes coming off the summit of Split. Considering the length of time to hike in we suggested that the China Lake SAR helicopter be requested to help with the insertion of teams.

While Hinman and I flew in, our second team was driving to the trailhead to scout out possible landing zones for the China Lake helicopter. As Hinman and I climbed above the 12000 foot landing zone, and just 100 feet from the actual north ridge descent, is another steep ice filled chute that leads to the Tinemaha drainage. Here Hinman spotted a fresh boot track. We reported this to base and continued with our assignment. As we cleared the loose sections around the descent route it was easy to dislodge large rocks.

Meanwhile the China Lake SAR helicopter arrived in Big Pine, but due to mechanical difficulties was unable to insert teams. By 1200 the team of Miles, Gates and Simons started hiking in to Red Lake. At 1330 as Hinman and I were near the summit of Prater we received word of the subject's appearance on the road exiting from Tinemaha drainage. Hinman and I were able to be extracted from the 12000 foot LZ after we retrieved our gear. Miles, Gates, and Simons hiked back to the trail head and we all met at Lone Pine.

The subject reported that he did indeed descend the steep, loose, ice filled chute where we spotted the tracks. He realized part way down his error but was unable to ascend and therefore committed to the long descent down Tinemaha. He heard the helicopters, but was unable to signal them (his signal mirror was with his climbing partner). He was lucky to have no injuries after his descent of the chute and after two nights out with minimal equipment. We returned to the hut by 1830.

Lessons Learned:

- Rhino had completely dead batteries.
- Rhino data transfer cable is located in the Explorer center console.
- More pre-coordination with the China Lake SAR helicopter. They reported that they had an 11,000 foot operational ceiling.
- Do not underestimate subject's ability to climb improbable terrain.

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation 2009-014 (Alert)

13 September 2009

Mt. Whitney Trail (Inyo County)

By Mike Myers (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Mike Myers.
Subject: Adult male.
Problem: Overdue from hike.
Outcome: Subject hiked out.
Coordinator: Carol Burge.
Telephoner: Elaine Riendeau.
CLMRG members: Mike Myers (Operation Leader), Dan Bishop, Bud Gates, Daryl Hinman, Dennis Burge, Jeff Green and Paul DeRuitter.

Narrative:

I received a call from Sheila Rockwell at 8:30AM informing me that Janis Nichols had been talking to her regarding Jim being overdue from a day hike of the Whitney Trail the day before. Sheila handed the incident over to me because she was leaving for the day. I telephoned Janis and got the following information concerning Jim's plans. Jim left Thursday night to drive to Whitney Portal. His plan was to sleep at the Portal, then leave early on Friday morning to day climb Whitney via the trail. He was scheduled to be down by 10:00 PM and home by 12:00 AM.

My recommendation to Ms. Nichols at 8:30 AM was to give him more time before alerting authorities, because many times people underestimate the physical exertion required to get up and down the Whitney Trail and become benighted due to one or more factors, fatigue being one of the most common. I convinced her that it was still too early to react, that he had most likely stopped to rest, and was just going very slow due to fatigue.

As the morning drew on, Ms. Nichols' concern grew, and her worry meter was climbing. I explained that the Whitney Trail gets so much traffic that we would have probably known by then if there had been an accident. I waited until 11:30 AM before initiating action, at which point Jim was over 13 hours overdue. I telephoned the Inyo County Sheriff and spoke with Deputy Waterbury, Inyo Search and Rescue, and requested a deputy be sent to the Portal to search for Jim's vehicle. I provided a vehicle description and a partial plate. Waterbury agreed, but said it would take an hour or so to get a report back.

During that hour, I called Carol Burge and requested that she put the team on ALERT so we could have a team ready to go if the sheriff's report came back that there was a potential problem. Seven members responded to the alert. At approximately 12:40 PM, I received the sheriff's report that their deputy had indeed located Jim's car at the Portal. The deputy was going to leave Jim a note to contact the Sheriff's office, when Jim walked up to the car. Jim was tired, but uninjured.

Lessons Learned:

N/A

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation 2009-015 (Alert)

26 September 2009

Thousand Island Lake (Mono County)

By Dave Miles (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Dave Miles.
Subject: A 44-year-old woman.
Problem: Overdue from hike.

Outcome: Subject found safe.
Coordinator: Mary Schmierer.
Telephoner: Sheila Rockwell.
CLMRG members: Dave Miles (Operation Leader), Bud Gates, Bill Stratton, Mike Franklin.

Narrative:

On September 26 I got a call from Mike Myers at 3:55 PM looking for a leader for an operation in June Lake. Mabel Grall, 44, of Aiea, Hawaii, started hiking from the June Lake loop at 12:30 PM on the 25th with the intention of being at Thousand Island Lake at sunset. The Mono and Inyo SAR teams had searched during the night and day.

We were just coming into Inyokern from our tracking class. I agreed to lead the operation and contacted Mary Schmierer to be the Coordinator with Sheila Rockwell's assisting as a telephoner. Bill Stratton, Mike Franklin, and Bud Gates also committed. By the time I got home I received the call from Sgt. Rhoades with the news that our subject had been found safe. She had taken a cross country route back to the June Lake Loop road after spending all night hiking. Members were put on stand down at 4:15 PM.

Lessons Learned:

N/A

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation 2009-016 (Search)

15 October 2009

Bubbs Creek (Sequoia National Park)

By Dan Bishop (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Dan Bishop.
Subjects: Three adult missing backpackers.
Problem: Overdue from hike.
Outcome: Subjects found safe.
Coordinator: Carol Burge.
Telephoner: Linda Finco.
CLMRG members: Dan Bishop (Operation Leader), Tom Sakai, Dave Miles, Bill Stratton and Martha Bodine

Narrative:

A request came from Sequoia National Park via Sgt. Baldwin to assist in a search for three backpackers that were overdue from a multi-day trip out of the Roads End trail head. Finco took the call but was unable to commit. She contacted me and I agreed to lead the operation, however, since I was out of town she and Sakai agreed to help with the logistics until I returned to Ridgecrest. Carol Burge was the Coordinator and Tom Sakai, Dave Miles, Bill Stratton, and Martha Bodine all committed.

The three hikers, Lanier Rogers (San Bernardino Police Officer) and brothers Jordan Zeman and Jake Zeman had departed the Road End trail head in Cedar Grove on October 7th with possible plans of hiking the so called "circle-of-solitude" which is a notional 65 mile loop extending south near Triple Divide Peak, north to Forester Pass and returning via Bubbs Creek on the 12th.

We met at the hut at 0300 and due to the recent storm in the Sierra, we prepared for winter conditions. It was a tight fit in the Explorer with 5 and gear. Arriving at the Ash Mountain Command Post at 0630, we checked in and received our briefing at 0900. Our assignment was to be inserted via a Park Service helicopter to Junction Meadow at 8000 feet, proceed to Lake Reflection (10000 feet elevation) and then on to Harrison Pass. It was estimated that due to the heavy snow it would take two days to complete.

Two helicopters were being used. By 1130 four of us, (Miles would come on the second load), were airborne when the radio call from the Command Post order us to return to base because of a possible sighting of the subjects by the other helo. We were in the air for about 10 minutes. Confirmation of the sighting came an hour

and a half later, at which time we were released. We stopped for lunch in Three Rivers and we returned to the hut by 1830.

Follow on information that I received from the Park Service and local media reported that the three men were stranded on a ledge above a waterfall in the Roaring River drainage about a quarter mile from Cedar Grove. This route was not in their plan, but they used it when they saw it was the most direct path to Cedar Grove. At the start of their hike they did pass through the Roaring River area and pass by the Ranger Station. They turned around before Colby Lake. Later in the media they were quoted as saying, "We couldn't cross the river that night because like I said, we couldn't do it. And when it rained, it raised the river by like 4 or 5, 6, 7 feet". The three hikers survived by sleeping side by side under one tent and rationing what little food they had left. Jordan Zeman said, "We had about 2 Fiber One bars and a freeze dried meal to last us however long. So, the past three days, we split those bars three times." Eventually, they lit a fire to signal rescuers. A helicopter spotted them Thursday morning, and they were rescued a couple of hours later. All three hikers were hungry and weak, but fortunately there were no injuries to report.

Lessons Learned:

-Park Service helicopters have a PPE waiver for snow/winter operations (no flight suits required).

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation 2009-017 (Search)

27-28 October 2009

Mt. Whitney (Inyo County)

By Dan Bishop (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Dan Bishop.

Subject: A 73-year-old man.

Problem: Overdue from hike.

Outcome: Subject not found (follow up with Operation 2009-18).

Coordinator: Janet Westbrook.

CLMRG members: Dan Bishop (Operation Leader), Dave Miles, Tom Sakai, Bill Stratton, Tom Roseman, Mike Franklin, Mike Renta, Jeff Green and Mike Derkey

Narrative:

I received a call on Tuesday morning from Tim Winkler of the Inyo Sheriff department requesting help in the search for a 73-year-old male Kenneth Wade Brunette from Washington state who was attempting a day hike of Mount Whitney. I called Janet Westbrook and she agreed to be the Coordinator. While we were waiting for Sgt. Baldwin to receive the official request from Inyo County, Dave Miles, Tom Sakai, Bill Stratton, Tom Roseman, Mike Franklin, and Mike Renta committed. We all met at the hut at 10:00 AM.

The subject had left the trailhead on Sunday, 25 October, at 3:00 AM with the intention of climbing to the summit as a day hike. Mr. Brunette was described as an experienced hiker with many trips accomplished in the Pacific Northwest, however this was his first excursion in the Whitney area. Reports from other hikers that day, had the subject moving very slowly from near Trail Crest. A photo of Mr. Brunette showed him heading up within 1.5 miles from the top.

After a briefing at the Lone Pine Sheriff substation, our assignments were to conduct a one day search from the intersection of the main trail with the north fork up to Outpost Camp, with special attention paid to the "shortcuts". Since Roseman, Franklin, Renta, and a Mono county member had to return home that evening this task was assigned to them. The other team of Bishop, Sakai, Miles, and Stratton were to hike into Trail Camp carrying additional overnight gear for a hasty team of 4 Inyo members.

The "one day" team, led by Roseman, interviewed hikers that were exiting the North Fork and discovered that they had valuable information from the summit, including photos of the register. They continued their assignment up to Outpost Camp via the shortcut and returned to the trailhead. The three then drove back to Ridgecrest.

Meanwhile the remaining four of Bishop, Sakai, Miles, and Stratton continued up the trail. Conditions deteriorated above Mirror Lake with the trail becoming covered in ice, winds increasing, and the temperature dropped below freezing. We made a sweep of the chute southeast of Mirror Lake before returning to the trail. Two Inyo members were heading down below Trailside Meadow. We returned some of their gear to them since they had opted not to spend the night. We filled our canteens, with what we later learned, was the last liquid water source at Trailside Meadow. Just below Trail Camp we met the remaining two Inyo members. They had made it to the cables and looped back to Trail Camp before weather conditions made it evident that they should go back. We returned their overnight gear to them and they showed us the Ranger cache where the shelter had been taken down the week prior. We bivied near the location of the old latrines at Trail Camp and settled in for a lovely evening. During the night conditions varied from socked in clouds and snow flurries, accumulating about ½ an inch of new snow, to cold winds with gusts up to 40mph. The morning brought continued increasing winds and single digit temperatures. We opted to descend rather than continue into obviously severe winds at and above Trail Crest.

During the descent we were surprised to see J.Green and Derkey above Mirror Lake ascending with a Mono county member. It had been decided to send them up that morning. Their assignment was a single day search up to and around Consultation Lake. We briefed them on details of the conditions above.

Below Outpost Camp we met two members of the Bakersfield team who were ascending and planned to spend the night at Trail Camp. We advised them of the conditions and recommended that they stay at Trailside Meadow. We also loaned them water bottle parkas.

We arrived back at the trailhead and after the debrief we returned to Ridgecrest by early evening. The team of J.Green and Derkey completed their assignment and returned to Ridgecrest around 11:00 PM. Inyo did initiate a Region callout with teams from Sierra Madre and Altadena arriving on Thursday. Winds persisted on Thursday, and by Friday conditions finally improved for helicopters, including a National Guard CH-47, to insert teams at and near the Whitney summit. CLMRG sent another team on Saturday when we had an available Operation Leader. See Operation Report 2009-18.

Lessons Learned:

-Great work by Miles who reprogrammed the group radios on the drive up, filling the banks with all the pertinent frequencies. However, transmission from Trail Crest was spotty because of a repeater that we were not aware of and had not yet programmed.

-Our group rescue parkas are not as effective in severe winter conditions (my opinion).

-Our group canister stove is good for heating small quantities of water (white gas is preferred in winter).

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

-AA batteries are needed.

-One group compressed gas canister was used and needs to be replaced.

Operation 2009-018 (Search)

31 October 2009

Mt. Whitney (Inyo County)

By Dan Bishop (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Dan Bishop.

Subject: A 73-year-old man.

Problem: Overdue from hike (Continuation of Operation 2009-17).

Outcome: Subject found deceased.

Coordinator: Janet Westbrook.

CLMRG members: Dan Bishop (Operation Leader), Mike Myers, Bob Huey and Nathan Simons

Narrative:

This search was a continuation of the search for 73-year-old Kenneth Wade Brunette from Washington state who was attempting a day hike of Mount Whitney on October 25th but never returned to the trailhead. Our team was initially out on the 27th and 28th in cold and windy winter conditions. By Friday, the 30th, the weather improved and teams led by Inyo County were able to be inserted via helicopter at and near the Whitney summit. On Friday the subject's pack was found by Inyo team members between Muir Peak and Trail Crest off the trail to the west. The contents of the pack proved that it was indeed Mr. Burnette's and contained three quarts of water along with his clothing and ice ax. Further searching west of the trail would be coordinated by the Park Service and east of the trail would continue to be managed by Inyo county.

The Incident Commander, Tim Winkler, from the Inyo Sheriff, requested us to be available on Saturday morning. I asked Westbrook to conduct a callout Friday morning for a muster at the hut at 5:00 AM Saturday. I continued as Operation Leader, and Myers, Huey and Simons all committed to the search. We met at the hut at 5:00 AM and arrived at the Lone Pine Inyo Sheriff substation in time for our briefing. Our assignment this day was to be inserted via the Air National Guard CH-47 near Pinnacle Ridge in order to search the eastern bases of the ridge from Pinnacle Ridge to the Muir Buttress. After dropping the 13 other searchers at Trail Camp the four of us stayed on the helo as I recommended to the aircrew to drop us off at the no-name lake northwest of Wotans Throne. The helo pilot was able to accomplish a two wheel hover just next to the lake and we exited the aircraft at about 11:00 AM.

We broke into two teams of two. Huey and I, and Myers and Simons checked the east facing exit chutes as high as possible as we progressed south toward the base of Muir. Another team, comprised of Mono and Inyo members, was directed by the field coordinator at Trail Camp to proceed north from Muir until they met up with us. Around 1:00 PM we coordinated with the other team and we were just about to start a sweep of the area between the ridge and Wotans Throne when we received the word that the subject's body had been found.

The subject was located at the base of the cliff between Muir and the Muir Window, near the start of the winter ascent route to Trail Crest, by searchers that included a cadaver dog. Ropes and gear was requested by the team on site. Our teams had sufficient ropes and gear to assist in the recovery and proceeded to the location. Simons was showing symptoms of AMS, so Myers escorted him down directly to Trail Camp to await helo extraction while Huey and I joined the Inyo/Mono team to assist with the body recovery. The helicopter beat us to the site with ropes and gear, however Huey and I were able to assist in moving the subject to a suitable extraction location. Huey and I, along with Fischer and Spitek from Inyo, stayed to help in the long line hoisting of the subject. The helo returned and lowered a stretcher in which we packaged the remains. Once the helo raised the stretcher, the four of us rushed down to Trail Camp. We made it in time to get on the returning helo along with the other 13 searchers and returned to the Lone Pine airport.

Considering my 2-year-old back in Ridgecrest, the other members of our team suggested we return after our debrief in order to be back in time for trick-or-treating. We were back at the hut at 5:00 PM.

Lessons Learned:

Field team members need to discuss with the leader any physical limitations they may have, or be experiencing prior to committing to an operation. The leader will want to know about any physical restrictions/limitations, medical conditions that may hamper performance, or if anticipating a high altitude mission via helicopter, how long has it been since you have been to altitude. There are usually other jobs that can be assigned where these restrictions won't impact our ability to complete a mission.

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation 2009-019 (Transit)

13 November 2009

Death Valley NP (Inyo County)

By Tom Roseman (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Tom Roseman.

Subject: Unknown.

Problem: A jeep rolled over a cliff injuring the subject.
Outcome: Self rescue with assistance from CHP.
Coordinator: Sheila Rockwell.
Telephoner: Gina Najera-Niesen.
CLMRG members: Tom Roseman (Operation Leader), Linda Finco, Dan Bishop, Mike Franklin, Debbie Breitenstein, Al Green, and Bill Stratton.

Narrative:

The CLMRG pager was activated on Friday the 13th about 6:00 PM. Lt. Hardcastle of Inyo County was requesting help for a rescue of a person pinned in a jeep over the side of South Park Canyon road. S.Rockwell was the Coordinator and G.Najera-Niesen helped in phoning. L.Finco, D.Bishop, M.Franklin, D.Breitenstein, A.Green and B.Stratton committed. We left the hut just after 8:00 PM. When we made radio contact with the Inyo team as we were descending into Panamint Valley, we learned that the subject had been extracted and transported to a medical facility. At that time we returned to the hut.

Lessons Learned:

-Once you crest the hill on Hwy 178 near the BLM Facility you are out of cell phone coverage.

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

Operation 2009-020 (Alert)

20 November 2009

Death Valley NP (Inyo County)

By Tom Roseman (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Tom Roseman.
Subjects: Possible missing Germans from 1996 search.
Problem: Possible evidence found on the location of the missing Germans.
Coordinator: Mary Schmierer.
CLMRG members: Tom Roseman (Operation Leader), Linda Finco, Bob Huey, Bob Rockwell, Debbie Breitenstein, Al Green, Bill Stratton, Mike Derkey, and Mike Myers.

Narrative:

This callout was postponed to the weekend of 4-6 December. Please see Operation 2009-21 for details.

Operation 2009-021 (Search)

4-6 December 2009

Death Valley NP (Inyo County)

By Tom Roseman (Operation Leader)

Summary:

Operation Leader: Tom Roseman.
Subjects: Possible missing Germans from 1996 search.
Problem: Possible evidence found on the location of the missing Germans.
Outcome: Additional evidence found.
Coordinator: Carol Burge.
CLMRG members: Tom Roseman (Operation Leader), Bob Rockwell, Debbie Breitenstein, Al Green, Mike Renta, Bill Stratton, and Mike Myers.

Narrative:

Over thirteen years ago on October 22, 1996 CLMRG was involved in a search (#1996-16) for the remains of four missing German Nationals in the Anvil Springs Canyon area of Death Valley. The subjects were never found and the only evidence found, beyond their car, was a beer bottle five miles down Anvil Springs Canyon. Tom Mahood and Les Walker of Riverside MRA discovered remains and a collaborating identification card on November 12, 2009. Debbie Breitenstein had been working with Tom Mahood on a theory he had as to the direction the Germans might have traveled after they abandoned their vehicle, and that theory led to the discovery. The purpose of this search was to look for further evidence in a wider search area North and South of the discovery location. Search teams met at Ballarat on the afternoon of 4 December to finalize the search plan and wait for helicopter transport to the search area on the morning of 5 December. Just after dawn on the 5th two U.S. Customs helicopters arrived and started flying searchers into the search area. Twenty-four people and three dogs, as well as a radio repeater were flown in. After the search teams were inserted the Command Post (CP) and the vehicles were moved to Butte Valley, where the searchers were to hike out to on Sunday. All search teams spent the night in the field. A lot more evidence was found in the area near the discovery site. We are waiting confirmation, but at this time it appears all four missing people are accounted for.

Lessons Learned:

-Bring the computer to reprogram the radios if needed. We had been given a frequency for the Inyo MRA repeater, but that frequency was not correct.

Equipment Needed/Replaced/Repaired:

N/A

GROUP BUSINESS

2010 Officers were elected at the December 2009 meeting. Our 2010 Officers are:

President:	Mike Franklin
Vice President:	Dave Miles
Secretary:	Eileen Loughran
Treasurer:	Werner Hueber
MRA Rep:	Dan Bishop

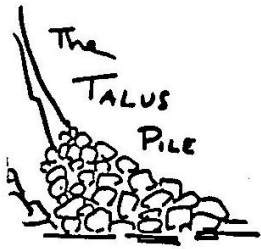
CONGRATULATIONS!

SCREE

Check our web page at clmrg.org.

Check the California Region's web page at crmra.org.

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



China Lake Mountain Rescue Group
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Ridgecrest CA 93556

Address Correction Requested

