

2022-17 ALERT Santa Barbara Gaviota Finco

Sgt. Kimmel, Kern County Sheriff (KCSO), called Linda Finco at 2030 on Sunday, 04 September 2022 with an Office of Emergency Services (OES) mutual aid request for a search in Santa Barbara County. With the late request, Sgt. Kimmel asked us to field a team for Tuesday, 06 September.

Linda Finco, took the operation and Terry Mitchell coordinated the callout with the help of Eileen Loughran. Phil Cash, Andrew Cammenga, Nick Pio, Bill Stephenson and Scott Paniccia committed to the operation.

The search was for 29 year old, Tim Sgrignoli. Tim and his girlfriend were hiking in the wilderness area of Gaviota Peak on Trespass Trail on Sunday, 03 September, when the girlfriend began to have heat related issues. Tim left his girlfriend to get help and left the cellphone with her. She was able to move to a spot with cellphone reception and was rescued, but Tim was now missing. Temperatures were 114 degrees on Sunday,

On Monday, 05 September at 1500, Sgt. Kimmel received a call from OES stating they had enough resources for Tuesday but would need searchers available for Wednesday. Linda contacted Terry and we secured the operation for Tuesday and put out another request for Wednesday. At 1600 Sgt. Kimmel contacted me and said Kern County had just received a mutual aid request for a search in San Bernardino County. He told us to discontinue the effort for Santa Barbara and see if we could get a team for San Bernardino County on Tuesday. A callout went out to secure the Santa Barbara operation at 1600.

Epilogue:

Tim was located, deceased, on Thursday, 8 September. His body was found just north of the Gaviota Tunnel and only about 20 feet from the highway (Highway 101). The extreme heat likely contributed to his death.

2022-18 Search San Bernardino Cucamonga Pk Finco

Sgt. Kimmel, Kern County Sheriff Office (KCSO), called Linda Finco at 1600 on Monday, 05 September 2022 with an Office of Emergency Services (OES) mutual aid request for a search in San Bernardino County. This call came while we were trying simultaneously organize a Team for the search in Santa Barbara County for Wednesday, 07 September. Sgt. Kimmel directed us to call off the Santa Barbara effort and see if we could get a team for Tuesday, 06 September for the San Bernardino County search.

Linda Finco, took the operation and Sheila Rockwell coordinated the callout with the help of Terry Mitchell. Mike Derkey, Nick Pio, Bill Stephenson and Scott Paniccia committed to the operation. San Bernardino County wanted teams at their San Antonio Heights substation at 0700 for the briefing, therefore I set the meet time at the Hut for 0500 with Members being told to bring their ready pack, technical gear and plenty of water for the day.

We met at 0500 and departed shortly thereafter. As we approached the Cajon Pass we realized we were not going to make the briefing at 0700. What should have been just a little over a 2 hour drive turned into a 3.5 hour drive due to traffic causing us to arrive at the Substation at 0845. We were directed to the command post just up the road for an assignment where we learned that most of the assignments had been given, however, there were two assignments just below the peak that could possibly entail some rappelling. We were broken up into two teams, Derkey and Pio would take the more difficult drainage while Stephenson and Paniccia would be in the easier drainage. We were flown to the summit of Cucamonga Peak in two separate flights and began to descend our drainages around 1000, while Finco stayed on the ridge as a radio relay. Derkey and Pio were instructed to descend to the bottom of their drainage if they could, Stephenson and Paniccia were directed to just search a few hundred feet down to determine if anyone had recently descended the drainage.

We were searching for Carlos Garcia, 45 years old. He and his wife were hiking Cucamonga Peak on Sunday. Just above Cucamonga Pass, Carlos decided he could not continue, so he stopped to rest. The wife continued to the summit and upon her descent she did not find Carlos. Another couple had stopped and talked to Carlos prior to continuing to the summit where they met up with the wife. So sometime between talking to the couple and the wife descending, Carlos wandered off. The drainage Derkey and Pio would descend is just to the east of Carlos' last known point.

Stephenson and Paniccia cleared their drainage and met back with Finco around 1200 while Derkey and Pio felt they could complete the complete descent of their drainage. At one-point Derkey thought he heard a voice and possibly someone tapping on rocks, however, after investigating did not find anything and returned to their drainage.

The two Teams were to regroup at Ice House Saddle and descend to the trailhead making the total mileage for the day around 8-9 miles. At Cucamonga Pass, Finco decided it was best if she could get a helicopter ride out since the temperatures were in the high 90's and the heat was becoming an issue. The Command Post (CP) requested the San Bernardino County helicopter, and they were able to hoist Finco.

Stephenson and Paniccia continued to Ice House saddle where they met up with Derkey and Pio and hiked out to the trailhead where our vehicle was located, allowing them to drive back to the CP to debrief. We stopped for dinner and the area and secured at the Hut at 2140.

The Subject is still missing.

2022-19 ALERT Inyo Mt. Whitney Finco

CLMRG was alerted to the possible need for searchers to rescue an overdue hiker on the Mt Whitney trail. The only description of the hiker was that he was in his 70s. The request was for a possible team later that day or for the following day. We didn't get enough commitments for that same day, but were able to field a team for the next day. With Mike Derkey as Op Leader and Christian Aranda, Andrew Cammenga, Philip Cash, Gabriel Cortez, Bill Stephenson, and Nick Pio committing to go with Dave Miles as a driver. Carin Miles was the Coordinator and Eileen Loughran assisted in telephoning.

About an hour after we initiated a callout to the group members, word came in that somebody had activated a satellite beacon device for an elderly man on Mt Whitney Trail. A few hours after that, it was confirmed that the Subject rescued from the beacon alert was the same person that the search was being planned for. We then cancelled our membership callout.

2022-20 SEARCH San Bernardino Cucamonga Pk Derkey

CLMRG was called out for another operation search period for Carlos Garcia, who went missing on Sept 4th. This was CLMRG's second time supporting this search with Mike Derkey (Op Leader), Christian Aranda, Nick Pio, Andrew Cammenga, and Dan Bishop committing with Linda Finco acting as Coordinator.

We were to be flown to the top of Cucamonga Peak and split into two teams for our assignments, however, clouds and limited visibility required that we move from the San Antonio landing zone (LZ) up to the LZ near the town of Mt. Baldy,. Mike and Andrew were assigned to stay on the prow of the NE ridge of the peak and scope out the south side of the ridge with binoculars. Nick, Dan and Christian were given an assignment to go down into a drainage on the north side of the peak to search. The terrain on this side of the peak was fairly steep and somewhat loose. Both teams hiked back to the Ice House trail-head where our vehicle was staged. We then debriefed back at the San Antonio Sub-station.

Neither team found any evidence of the Subject. The search for Mr. Garcia is still open.

See photos, page 4

2022-21 SEARCH Kern Black Mountain Finco

Sgt. Kimmel, Kern County Sheriff Office (KCSO), called Linda Finco at 1015 on Tuesday, 20 September 2022 with a request to assist Kern County deputies in a search for a missing man, Donald Beach, 73 years old. Mr. Beach was out in the Black Mountain area with a friend on the night of Monday, 19 September. His friend told Sheriff deputies that around 0130 Tuesday morning, Mr. Beach decided to go look for arrowheads and when he had not returned by 0800, the friend called to report Mr. Beach missing. Kern County Sheriff, Sgt. Wong, Sgt. Malloy, and Deputies Madrano, Juarez and Shotwell responded and proceeded to the area where Mr. Beach was last seen. They did locate a track belonging to Mr. Beach and tracked him for a while but lost the tracks in the rocky terrain when at around 1000, Sgt. Wong contacted Sgt. Kimmel and requested Search and Rescue.

Finco took the operation and Carin Miles coordinated the callout with the help of Terry Mitchell. Dave Miles, Nick Pio, and Bill Stephenson committed to the operation. Sonja Van Soelen was also available to help telephone. I coordinated with Dave Miles, and we agreed that he would head out as a hasty team to secure the track and area and determine a direction of travel from where the Sheriff had lost the track. Miles left Ridgecrest at 1045 while the other members would meet at the Hut at 1130. Due to our small team size, I did agree with Sgt. Kimmel to reach out to the Desert team for additional personnel.

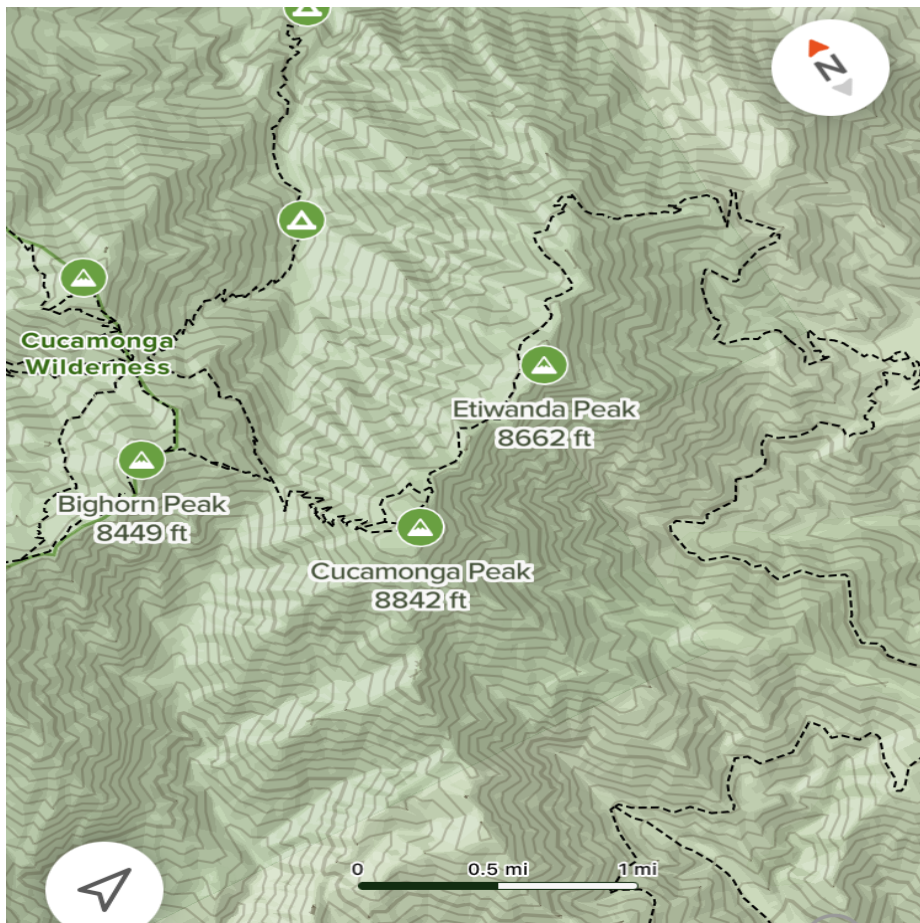
Finco, Pio and Stephenson met at the Hut and packed up the remote base camp equipment and stretcher/wheel for a possible rescue. We left the Hut at 1145 to meet Miles and the Sheriff at the intersection of EP 17 and the Red Rock/Inyokern Road, arriving a little after 1200. Miles was in the area where the Sheriff lost the track where it appeared Mr. Beach was heading out of the rocky area down a wash to the southwest. Pio joined up with Miles and Stephenson/Finco would cut along the road to determine where Mr. Beach might have exited the wash. Almost immediately as we started along the road, we found Mr. Beach's track heading north on the Red Rock/Inyokern Road. Miles confirmed that the track did head back to the road and turned to the north to our location. We were getting ready



Pio and Aranda during helicopter transport.



Prior to helicopter departure from the summit.



to reassign members from the Desert team who were arriving to start a containment to the north, when Sgt. Wong got word that our Subject had just contacted the Sheriff to say he was in Inyokern at a friend's residence. We waited to get confirmation from the Deputy that headed to the location to meet with the Subject. Once it was confirmed that Mr. Beach was located, we secured the search area at 1250.

Sgt. Kimmel arrived just as things wrapped up and offered to take us to lunch in Inyokern. We secured at the Hut at 1430.

Members from the Desert team were Michelle Slade, Don Bennett, Randy Glass and Andre Loayza. The Sheriff also contacted Tehachapi and if needed CLMRG did have another potential team for later that evening (Maricela Park, Philip Cash, Sean McNamara, and Dan Bishop).

2022-22 ALERT Madera Co. Minarets Simons

On Oct 5th, 2022, the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) received a mutual aid request from Madera County for a search on Oct 6th out of the Agnew Meadows Trailhead for an overdue hiker in the Minarets area. No team could be fielded to respond to this operational period.

Hiker was subsequently found, deceased.

2022-23 SEARCH Inyo Co. Goler Wash, DVNP Miles

On Thursday October 6th at 2022 hours, Dave Miles received a text from Inyo Deputy Derr asking if we could get a team to search Goler Wash in Death Valley for a missing 69 year old male. Since it was still quite hot and we would be searching for tracks that were over a week old, Miles told Derr that we would go after work and search late into the night for easier tracking. Our Subject, Dennis Burton, was last heard from on September 24th in Lee Vining and the last cell ping was in Ridgecrest on September 25th. On September 30th BLM and DVNP rangers located his unoccupied truck in Goler Wash and were unable to find him or his tracks. On September 30th the VX-31 search and rescue helicopter searched the wash area around the vehicle and a CHP helicopter searched on October 1st.

Miles put out an alert at 1315 hours and set a meet time at the hut of 1700. Terry Mitchel was the Coordinator and Sonja Van Soelen assisted with calls. Our field team was Dave Miles, Nathan Simons, Mike Franklin, Christian Aranda, Gabriel Cortez, Tom Sakai, Andrew Cammenga, and Phil Cash. We left the Hut at 1710 and got to the Barker Ranch area of Goler Wash at 1920 hours. We split into two teams to search both forks of the road about 1 mile east of the junction. We met back at 2115 and then formed one large team spread across the wash and began to sweep down the wash searching for tracks. We found tracks from the Rangers around the location of the truck but none others that we felt belonged to the Subject. The night tracking gave us the best chance of finding tracks but the canyon was also quite rocky. We completed our search of the canyon at 0120 hours and secured back at the Hut at 0315 hours.

2022-24 SEARCH Kern Mojave Finco

Sgt. Joe Saldana, Kern County Sheriff (KCSO), called Linda Finco at 0023 on Tuesday, 18 October 2022 with a request to assist in a search for a missing woman, Louise Bartley, 78 years old, who was last seen on Monday, 17 October, leaving her residence in the area of Holt Street and Oak Creek Road in Mojave. Ms. Bartley was considered at risk-due to having dementia and needing medication for her symptoms. A callout was started with Sheila Rockwell coordinating and Debbie Breitenstein helping on the telephone. We could not get a team for the original callout; I updated Sgt. Saldana that we would try another callout again later in the morning.

Tuesday morning at 0655 I sent out another request for the search. With Tom Sakai and Roger Pio committing to the operation and agreeing to a meet time of 0830 at the Hut as well as Andrew Cammenga and David Jensen committing to meet at the Hut at 1030, I contacted Sgt. Saldana with the updated plan. Since our Teams had no track description or direction of travel, they attempted to locate any clues in their search area.

Cammenga reported that he and Jensen met with the Sergeant and were given the SAR TOPO QR code for this operation, and he directed them to begin searching at a location where someone had supposedly seen the missing Subject walking. Upon arrival they met up with the second CLMRG team, Tom and Roger, who informed them that they had already walked down that road and did not see any tracks, even after cutting. The combined teams decided to conduct a quick grid search of their section and then continue to walk down the road. After finishing they met with a Tehachapi team and realized the area had been searched. Heading back to the car to contact the Sergeant at around

1330 they were informed that the Subject had been spotted by helicopter. Convening at that location it was learned that the Subject had sustained a head injury, ankle injury, and hip injury and was being transferred to an ambulance. Ms. Bartley was located ¼ mile north of Arroyo Dr., on the west side of the railroad tracks. The Teams were released at 1414 and secured at the Hut at 1527.

2022-25 SEARCH Kern Co. Rosemond Miles/Pio

On Tuesday evening, 11 October 2022, around 1830 we received a request from the Kern County Sheriff Office (KCSO) to support a search for evidence. The Desert Team, Bakersfield, Drone Team, Tehachapi and China Lake were requested for 22 October to search an area in the vicinity of Rosamond.

Dave Miles originally accepted as operation leader but later asked myself (Nick Pio) if I was willing to take it, and I accepted. Shelia Rockwell accepted as coordinated and Debbie Breitenstein as Telephoner along with 13 additional Members: Dan Bishop, Nathan Simons, Bob Huey, Phil Cash, David Jensen, Roger Pio, Bill Stephenson, Tom Sakai, Joe Kromphardt, Jessica Kormelink, Christian Aranda, Tyler Brewer, and Gabriel Cortez.

The Team met at the Hut at 0730 on 22 October and transited to the Command Post for a 0830 briefing. The search areas were fairly large areas, and I decided to split us up into two teams. I led Team 6, and Bishop accepted to be a field leader for Team 4.

Team 6 consisted of Jensen, Simons, Cash, Brewer, and Cortez. We again split into 2 vehicles, sweeping the dirt roads and only searching on foot if we saw items of interest. We marked finds for further investigation as we swept up the wash where they appeared to come from.

Team 4 was to search Area 5 and consisted of D.Bishop, T.Sakai, B.Stephenson, R.Pio, B.Huey, J.Kromphardt, J.Kormelink. Splitting in to two teams, one to start at the south-east corner of the assignment the other at the south-west. Leaving the vehicles and sweeping along the sides of the sometimes undefined rough roads, the teams covered the area on foot, supplemented by the Bakersfield team whom searched directly from the dirt roads. After several hours of searching, no definitive evidence was discovered. Upon returning to the Command Post, the Team was directed to search the adjacent Area 4. Again, traveling on foot, sweeping the north section, several clues were discovered and flagged for further investigation. This area contained many areas of trash and debris that had been dumped, further complicating the search. Upon completion, we returned to the CP where we were released, completing the search effort and secured at 1500.

2022-26 INCIDENT Kern Rademacher Hills, Ridgecrest, High Desert Classic Bike Race Public Service Event

The High Sierra Cyclists club asked the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) to participate in the annual "High Desert Classic " mountain bike race scheduled for 19 November 2022 to be held in the Rademacher Hills, south of Cerro Coso Community College in Ridgecrest, CA. CLMRG operated as first aid and search & rescue support. Arriving at the staging area at 0850, we broke up into three teams: Base Camp, Team 1, and Team 2. Base Camp, manned by Phillip Cash, Nathan Simons, and Jessica Kormelink, was stationed at the College to provide first-aid at event central and to keep good communication with the event staff. This location would also serve as a rendezvous for any ambulances that might be called. Team 1 (Nick Pio, Linda Finco, Bill Stephenson, Christian Aranda Bob Huey) and Team 2 (David Miles, Joe Kromphardt) were stationed in the field at various aid stations throughout the course.

The event was quiet this year with only one first aid performed at Base Camp: a simple bandage for a laceration. The cut was deep enough that we recommended the subject go to urgent care for stitches, but since the bleeding was controlled and he already had ridden over 17 miles with the injury, we determined that emergency medical service was not required. Team 2 was dismissed from the event at 1200 while Team 1 was dismissed at 1500. Base Camp broke and the operation was secured at 1600.

2022-27, 28 Alerts for search – Fresno Co. Miles We were not able to field a team for either of these ops

Donors for 2022:

James and Tammy Tucker

Tina and Monte Frisbee via Gifts that Give Hope

Andrew and Terry Mitchell – in memory of Dennis Burge

Over the Hill Track Club

Rotary Club of China Lake Charitable Foundation - Totally Tables Fundraiser Ev

End of the trail



We've lost another "old timer". **Frank Buffum, Jr, Jan 1935 – Dec, 2022**

Frank joined CLMRG in 1960 under Carl Heller's lead and went on several major expeditions with the group, including the successful 1967 McKinley climb where all 9 climbers made the summit. Quite a feat in 1967. He also climbed Popo and Orizaba in Mexico in 1970, Mt. Logan in 72, Mt. Fuji in 76, Mt. Elbrus in Russia in 94, Pichacho del Diablo, Everest Base Camp in 97, Huscaran in Peru in 81, Kilimanjaro in 2007, Mt. Blanc in 08, and the highest peaks in all 50 states. He served as President of CLMRG for years.

He left the group in 1997 when he retired from the Base. He joined the Army just out of school, and used the GI bill to go to college for a degree in Engineering Physics, and later an MS in Mechanical Engineering. Frank had a very distinguished career at China Lake. Frank received the Navy Superior Achievement Award 6 times, the Director of Navy Commendation, the NWC Michelson Lab Award, and the Meritorious Civil Service Award. He received 2 patents and one for a rocket motor test facility.

Not only was he active with CLMRG, but he was a member of the National Ski Patrol and worked at Shirley Meadows when it had enough snow to open. Frank and Debbie traveled all over the world, from Alaska to China to the Silk Road and other adventures. He then went back to school to become a Physician Assistant and worked at Ridgecrest Hospital and the Rural Health program. He retired from those activities at age 81 but kept hiking with his friends. We will miss the variety of suspenders but mostly that smile and willingness to help anyone he could.



1967 CLMRG McKinley Expedition

Bob Westbrook, Frank Buffum, Jim Nichols and the White Whale in Talketna, Alaska