

July 1992
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CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP
P.O. BOX 2037
RIDGECREST, CA 93555

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

July 24 - August 2	Cascade Trip	Frank Buffum
July 28	Dynamic Belay	Larry Seibold
August 1-2	NE Ridge Lone Pine Pk	Ron Leiser
August 8 - 16	John Muir Trail	Jeff Moffat
August 8	Mt. Whitney Day Hike	Andrew Mitchell
August 10	Meeting Survival (Rockwell)	Smith/Roseman/ Ostermann
August 15-16	Mt. Ruskin	Linda Finco
August 18-19	Advanced Rock Climbing	Larry Seibold
August 22-23	East Buttress Mt Whitney	Ron Leiser
August 29-30	Bear Creek Spire	Dianne Lucas
September 4-6	Tuolumne	Ostermann
September 8/15/22/29	Mini Stretcher Practices	Dianne Lucas
September 11-13	Minarets	Daryl Hinman
September 14	Meeting - ICS (TerHeun)	Rockwell/S. Walker/ Seibold
September 16-17	CPR	First Aid Committee
September 19-20	Idyllwild	Werner Hueber
September 25-27	Picture Peak	Tom Roseman
October 3-4	Russell/Carillon	Ron Leiser

OPERATION REPORTS

92-1 2-12/13 Search Johannesburg Finco

The China Lake Mountain Rescue Group was contacted by the Kern County Sheriff via the pager at 1715 on Tuesday, 12 February. CLMRG was requested to assist in a search for 69- year-old Phillip Craig Costello. Mr. Costello was returning home to Manhattan Beach from a trip to Santa Cruz. Mr. Costello has in the past, enjoyed exploring the area around Johannesburg by 4-wheel drive. Mr. Costello called his wife on Tuesday, 11 February at 1030 from the Mobil gas station in Johannesburg. Mr. Costello told his wife he would be home at 1800. At 1530 on Wednesday, 12 February, Mr. Costello's wife contacted the Kern County Sheriff to report her husband overdue.

Thirteen CLMRG members arrived at the hut at 1800. We met Deputy Steve Bishop at the Mobil station in Johannesburg at 1900. Six vehicles were sent out at 2000 to search the area around Johannesburg, Randsburg, and Cuddeback Lake. Sgt. McNutt arrived at 2100 and stated he would like to concentrate the search between the Johannesburg area and Highway 14. Mr. Costello's wife had told Sgt. McNutt that she felt her husband would travel home via Highway 14. Sgt. McNutt felt it was very likely Mr. Costello had attempted to go cross-country to Highway 14 via the Mojave-Randsburg Road, the Twenty Mule Team Road or the Garlock Road. As search teams finished their initial assignments, the teams were reassigned to search those roads.

Due to the numerous roads taking off from the main roads, searchers did not start returning to base until around 0400, having found nothing. However, with the dark and the fog, it was almost impossible to know if there was a vehicle stuck just fifty feet from the road being searched. It was decided to return to Ridgecrest and see if air support would be available in a couple hours. If no air support became available, the sheriff requested that we regroup and search in the same area from higher points so that we could scan more terrain.

CLMRG members got two or three hours rest before the sheriff requested our assistance because no air support was available. CLMRG met at the hut at 0800. Three more team members arrived to help. We left the hut and in transit to Johannesburg, we were informed that Mr. Costello had been found. He had just called his wife from Kernville. CLMRG members returned to the hut and after a short debrief returned home for some sleep.

CLMRG members participating: Green, Hinman, Hine, Finco, Mitchell, Roseman, Stogsdill, D. Lucas, Antonsen, F. Buffum, Hueber, Wilson, Kong, Nelson, S. Pappas, Martin. Coordinator: S. Rockwell. Telephoners: T. Mitchell, C. Pappas.

Comments:

Communications were a problem. A large area was covered, and the base in Johannesburg was unable to communicate with the field teams for most of the search. If our more powerful car units, which need crystals, had been available, and if we had had base or at least a relay, on Laurel Mountain, most of our communication problems would probably have been solved.

We left the hut with the Midland base, but no microphone. The microphone had been detached from the base unit. If there is a reason for detaching the microphone or battery cables from the base, they should be put in a separate bag and attached to the base. Luckily, we were not a great distance on this operation and another member was able to bring the microphone from the hut.

92-2 3/26 Transit Mojave "B" Range Stogsdill

At approximately 0730, Lt. Auston of the China Lake Police Department (CLPD), used the pager system to request the assistance of CLMRG in a search for a missing person in the area of Randsburg Wash

Mojave "B" Range. I responded and took the operation, called Lt. Auston for details, and then called the Kern County Sheriff's Department to let them know that CLMRG was responding to a request from the NAWS Command, on government property, within San Bernardino County - and without an Office of Emergency Services number. Cdr. Steve Del Tour called back with approval and said they would coordinate with the San Bernardino County Sheriffs Office if the operation spilled over the border into county property. Del Tour said he would send Sgt. Dave McNutt over to assist. During this time I had also called Carol Burge to start the callout and have people at the hut by 0815.

I was at the hut by 0900 with Bart Hine and Andrew Mitchell arriving shortly thereafter. Mitchell had picked up a fairly new Randsburg Wash map at work that showed the roads into the area. Bart was sent to the CLPD to better pinpoint the location of the place last seen, while other members arrived and started laying out gear needed for the search. We left the hut in three 4X4 vehicles with eight members at approximately 0845 heading to Guard Post 9 Mojave "B" to be escorted into the area of the search. We arrived at Guard Post 9 around 0920 where we were told by the guard that the subject had been found and flown out by helicopter just a few minutes before. We turned around and headed back, arriving at the hut around 1000 to secure gear and debrief.

The subject of the search was James A. Whelan, a member of a three-man team of government contracted geological data gatherers who had decided that the hills to be climbed that day were too much for him and that he would return to the vehicles. Later, when the others returned to the vehicles, James was not there. This was about 1430 on 25 March. After searching for James for approximately 2 1/2 hours, the party got into the vehicles to go for help. They arrived at a locked gate on the way out with the only key in the possession of Mr. Whelan. Rather than knocking the gate down, they left their vehicles and walked out to where they could report the problem.

Members of CLMRG participating in the transit were: Tom Stogsdill (OL), Bart Hine, Andrew Mitchell, Dianne Lucas, Chris Antonsen, Phil Wilson, Steve Pappas and Paul DeRuiter. Carol Burge was the in-town coordinator and Terry Mitchell assisted in telephoning the troops.

**92-3 5/10 Transit
Mt. Whitney Mitchell**

At 0720 on May 10, the Inyo County Sheriff's Office requested CLMRG to go on standby for an overdue camper at Upper Boy Scout Lake. The camper was supposed to return to the trailhead at 1800 on 9 May. He told his father if he had not returned by then to call for help. At 1000 ICSO requested CLMRG to come up and assist in the search. Inyo County had a team headed toward Upper Boy Scout Lake. Due to a mix up in communications, the Kern County Sheriff had not yet relayed OES's request for our services. This caused an approximate 30 minute delay in the team's departure. We arrived at the Lone Pine Airport at 1300 and were told that the overdue camper had been found by the Inyo Team just above Upper Boy Scout Lake. He said he was not overdue. There had been a miscommunication between him and his father. We all returned to the hut at 1500.

Those who participated were: Bart Hine, Linda Finco, Tom Stogsdill, Ron Leiser, Ron Atkins, Loren Castro, Jeff Moffat, Arun Jain and Andrew Mitchell. Carol Burge coordinated.

Notes:

Inyo had the base camp at their hut in Bishop. This makes it difficult to run an operation 70 miles away.

When we know OES has requested our services, we should not wait any more than 20 minutes for a call from the Kern County Sheriff before calling them.

**92-4 5/10 Alert
Mt. Hood Finco**

On our way back from the previous operation, the pager went off with a call from Arnold Gaffrey of Sierra Madre requesting searchers for an on-going search on Mt. Hood in Oregon. When CLMRG

arrived at the hut, it was determined that a leader had not yet responded to the pager call. I contacted Arnold and was told that the search was for two climbers missing since the day before.

Oregon was requesting assistance from other MRA teams. Arnold felt that the teams in southern California would not be called until mid-week, but was taking a poll to find out how many each team could send. Seven of the returning CLMRG members committed to the Mt. Hood operation.

I contacted Sgt. Diederich to let him know CLMRG might be participating in an operation without an OES number, since Oregon had made their request only to the MRA and not the state of California. Sgt. Diederich said to remind participating members that they would not be covered by the state of California if an accident or injury occurred.

At 2100 CLMRG was taken off alert. A C-130 aircraft would leave Denver at 1100 on Monday, carrying enough members from Colorado and Utah to continue the search through the first part of the week. It was decided that CLMRG could begin another callout if assistance was required later in the week.

Participating CLMRG members: Finco, Hine, Mitchell, Stogsdill, Leiser, Moffat, A. Jain, Coordinator: B. Meng, Telephoner: C. Burge.

92-5 5/10/92 Rescue Mt. Denali Rockwell

Three CLMRG members—Daryl Hinman, Tom Roseman and Bob Rockwell— had started out on April 24 from the mining camp of Kantishna (elevation 1,600'). Our plan was to do a traverse of Denali, going up McGonagall Pass to the Muldrow Glacier; over Denali Pass; and down the West Buttress; to be flown out from the customary landing strip on the Kahiltna Glacier. We would climb the summit (20,320') from Denali Pass. The distance involved was 45 miles from Kantishna to the summit, then another 16 miles to the Kahiltna landing strip. We expected a three week excursion.

The weather was colder than usual, and we crossed frozen Wonder Lake and the McKinley River with ease. We reached McGonagall Pass (5,720') on the 28th and dropped to the Muldrow; and by May 3 were at 11,000' starting up Karsten's Ridge, the crux of the climb. Karsten's Ridge is a knife edge in places, and ascends quite steeply in others: a lot of exposure. But the snow conditions were good for climbing. Also, we were able to clip into old fixed ropes for some protection in several spots. Temperatures usually ranged from about -20° in the early morning to perhaps +5° at midday, and the weather had been good.

On May 7 we started up gentler terrain on the Harper Glacier from our camp at 14,600'. Tom began to experience a serious lack of energy, but with no other symptoms. We attributed it to a touch of acute mountain sickness, and the fact that we had had no rest days in our two weeks on the mountain. We were to learn later that he was developing high altitude pulmonary edema: HAPE.

By the end of the next day we had managed only 3,000' higher and 3 miles. Tom was considerably weaker, and now exhibited a high resting pulse. Still, we did not suspect HAPE because he felt fine otherwise: good appetite, no lung sounds or coughing, and his breathing rate was normal.

On May 9, even though the conditions were poor—cloudy, and winds of 30 knots with higher gusts—we had to move over Denali Pass. In an unfortunate accident on May 5 we had lost a gallon of fuel, and now had only enough for three or four more days. We needed



to be on the west side of the mountain in a descent mode, just in case this was the beginning of one of the infamous Denali storms.

We started out at noon in subzero temperatures. Tom's lack of energy was worse than before. Resting for 20 hours had not helped him at all. We stopped often and yet the stops did not help. He stated later that keeping going was the hardest thing he has ever done in his life.

We reached Denali Pass around 1400 and headed down the steep west side for a place to camp. Even in descending Tom was lethargic. Soon it got icy and only the points of our crampons pierced the snow. After a couple of falls which fortunately we were able to arrest—the longest was 180'—we anchored and belayed each step of the way. But the anchors were not always secure, and a fall was still a serious event. Miraculously—in spite of Tom's helplessness, the high winds and bitter cold, and our anxiety—we were not injured.

Finally, at 2200, we found a filled-in section on a crevasse big enough for the tent. The elevation was 17,400'; it had taken us 8 hours to descend 800'! The temperature was -25° (note: -25° with a 30 mph wind is a wind chill of -87°). We were all cold and exhausted. Tom had a coughing spell and although it was a dry cough, we thought for the first time of the possibility of HAPE. Also, half of his left foot was now frost bitten, as well as Bob's toes and fingers.

The next day we discussed going for help or continuing down on our own. But even if Tom had been able to move at a normal rate (patently impossible), it would have taken two more days to reach the Kahiltna landing strip. And two more days in subzero weather would have a dire effect on Tom's and Bob's frostbite.

No mountain rescue person ever wants to be the subject of a rescue, and we were especially sensitive to the fact that many climbers on Denali who request help are in fact quite capable of getting out of their predicament themselves. Certainly we felt that as mountain rescue personnel we would be even more expected to do so. Nevertheless, this was a time where discretion was called for . . . and Daryl went for help.

During the climbing season the National Park Service maintains a ranger camp at 14,200' on the West Buttress route; with shelter, communications and a helispot. Daryl took his sleeping bag and bivvy sack; crampons, snow shoes and ice axe; lunch, and two canteens of hot water. He left at 1030 and hoped he would encounter climbers with a radio. Failing that, he counted on getting to the rangers' camp in the afternoon.

Daryl passed other climbers but none had a radio. He reached the ranger camp around 1400 and reported the situation. Then, things moved quickly. Barely an hour later a Lama helicopter arrived at Tom's and Bob's location, and hovered with the front points of each skid on our platform; the main rotor was missing the slope above by a few feet. Two rangers— Ron Johnson of the NPS, and volunteer Julie Culberson— got out and we climbed aboard.

Within minutes we were reunited with Daryl at the 14,200' camp! We complimented the rangers on the ultra- fast response, and Daryl pointed out that one of the reasons was a major storm from the Bering Sea expected that night. As it turned out, the four-day storm brought four feet of snow at the Kahiltna strip and 110 mph winds on the summit. One ranger described it as the worst in ten years for that season and more typical of December, not May. Six climbers perished as a direct or indirect result of this storm. Unfortunately, this was only the beginning of by far the worst year in history for fatalities on Denali.

Then came a second helicopter ride to the Kahiltna landing strip, a fixed wing trip to Talkeetna, and another to Anchorage. By 1900 Tom and Bob were at the Humana Hospital emergency room. There, ER physician Peter Hackett, probably the best high altitude physiologist in the world, examined Tom. After only a few seconds with the stethoscope, he announced "You've got High Altitude Pulmonary Edema!". Everything now seemed to fall into place and we breathed a sigh of relief that Tom's HAPE had evidently not progressed to life- threatening levels as we climbed from 15,000' (about where he first began to have problems) to over Denali Pass at 18,200'.

Bob stayed in the hospital for two days and will recover completely. Tom left the hospital after a

Schmierer/B.Meng. Telephoners: C. Pappas, B. Meng.

92-7 6/18-19 Search
Palisades Lakes Roseman

Friday morning at 0300 I left Ridgecrest for the first time as a CLMRG Operation Leader with three other members: S. Walker, Huey, and Wilson. Having learned the previous evening that Philip Wallace (29-year-old male from Victorville) was overdue from the Palisades Lakes area, we were to meet Inyo and the Forest Service helo by 0630 at Glacier Lodge. Thursday evening, Inyo had had a team flown in to just this side of South Fork Pass, ready to start searching in the morning. We arrived at 0645 to find the Inyo OES van but no helo. I discussed plans with Doug Wilson, the Inyo operation leader who was with the advance party. We knew that Philip's intention had been to meet his brother in the Palisades Lake area. We knew that the brother had been turned back on the 14th by a ranger because of bad weather, but we didn't know where the brother was coming from. While waiting for the helo to arrive, I attempted to get information on the brother's route since I felt strongly that Philip had gone in search of him when he failed to show up. When the helo arrived at 0900, they were to pull the Inyo team out from South Fork Pass and then take a two person China Lake team to Bishop Pass, as I had learned that this was the brother's intended route. A NPS helo was operating on the park side, conducting an air search. Alden Nash of the NPS arrived on scene at 0930 with a reporting party (RP) who was sure he had seen the subject about a mile the other side of Bishop Pass the previous morning. I decided to fly in our first team before extracting the Inyo team, to cover an area of high probability based on discussion with the RP, and move the Inyo team directly to the Fifth Lake area, at their suggestion. I also asked the Inyo sheriff to call Ridgecrest for a backup team. Five more team members were available to leave China Lake at 1400. The helo was enroute with the first team when word was received that the NPS helo had found the subject in good shape near Fifth Lake and he was going to hike out on his own. When everybody returned to base camp, Doug Wilson demonstrated Inyo's new portable repeater which had worked well during the operation. Base camp shut down at 1153 and we drove up to Bishop to have lunch and debrief with the Inyo team.

92-8 6/20/92 Alert
Mt Whitney Roseman

Looking forward to a nice Father's Day with my children the next day, I was eating with friends at John's around 2000 when I looked up and saw Bob Huey. He pointed to his pager, and I curiously walked over to talk to him. Much to my chagrin, my pager had gone off and in the din of noise I had not heard it. Mitch had answered the page and then Inyo County had called to report that Paul Sandifur, a 50-year-old from Spokane, WA had lost his party while descending the Whitney Trail around 1300 in the vicinity of Lone Pine Lake, and was overdue. While waiting for the OES notification, I called the Inyo Sheriff at 2027 and learned that Paul had just walked out. The Inyo dispatcher was surprised that OES had not notified us of the status. In actuality no word from OES or Kern County ever came. S. Walker, Finco and Mitchell committed based on the page. No callout was made due to the quick end of the operation.

92-9 6/27/92 Transit
Bridgeport Hine

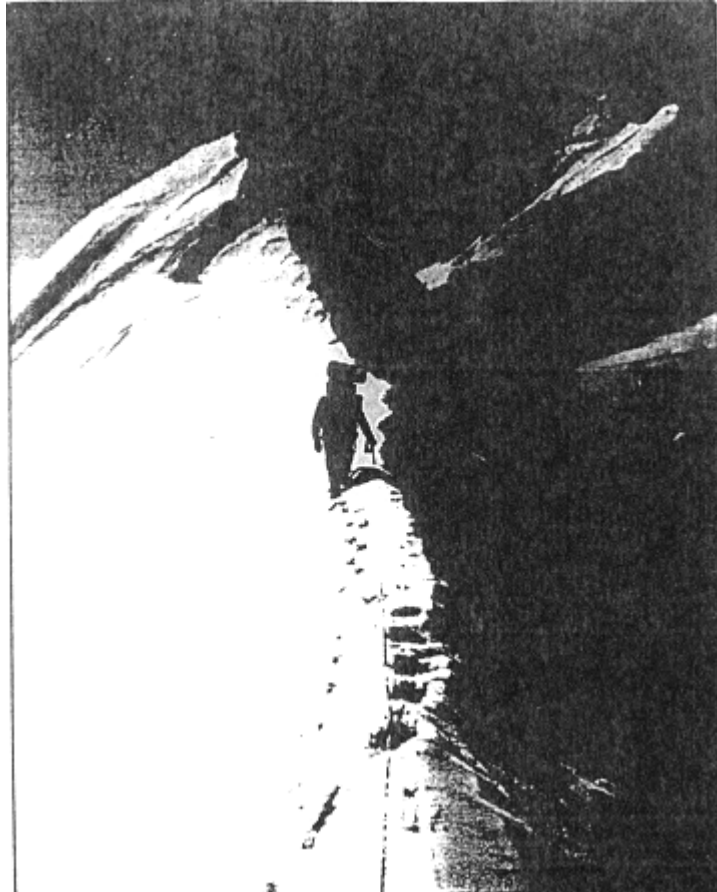
The hardest part of this operation was finding out who had made the pager call. The recording was garbled. After calling three counties (Kern, Inyo and Mono), I found out that Mono had requested aid in locating an overdue eighteen-year-old day hiker.

The in-town coordinator, Betty Meng, had a little difficulty locating team members. The majority of

them were out of town on our summer mountaineering class's day hike. Eventually, three other members, Leiser, Buffum, Meyer and I left for Bridgeport.

We stopped at Bishop to check on the status of the search. Mono dispatch informed me that the subject had been located. But she wanted me to standby while she checked to see if we were needed on another problem. Another hiker had received a laceration and was being escorted out. It turned out that our assistance was not needed and we could return to Ridgecrest.

Comment: I had a lot of frustration trying to use the calling card. Everything from operators telling me that the card was not valid to absolutely no response to the dialing.



Ridge Crest—Bob Rockwell led team up knife-edged Karsten's Ridge



DONORS

The CLMRG deeply appreciates the support of these friends of the group:

Janet E. Hammond
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Dorothy E. Gould
William and Frances Harris
Southern California Mountaineers

Kern SAR Personnel Changes by Al Green

The announcement in early June that all three of the officers in charge of Kern County Search and Rescue had been replaced, surprised and disturbed CLMRG. Cdr. Stephen Del Tour, Sgt. John Diederich and Sgt. Dave McNutt have proven to be able and dedicated SAR people. They understood that "Search is an Emergency" and responded accordingly. Cdr. Del Tours office memorandum, dated 4/4/91, was a very enlightened summary of what is needed for effective SAR. Sgt. Diederich has worked closely with CLMRG - providing operation support and attending our meetings and practices. Sgt. McNutt has worked very effectively with us on operations. The seminar that he gave on "Managing the Search Function" at the 1991 Seminar was outstanding. Working with Cdr. Del Tour, Sgt. Diederich and Sgt. McNutt has been a real pleasure. From our vantage point, this team of professionals served Kern County and the SAR community extremely well.

CLMRG has worked with many Kern County SAR Officers over the past 34 years. We are a resource for Kern County and we look forward to working with Cdr. Fivecoats, Sgt. Davis and Sgt Wilbert with the same commitment as before. Our goal is to save lives.

The Talus Pile is edited by Carol Burge

Stanley C. Dalbec

1917 - 1972

Members of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group were saddened to learn of the death of Stan Dalbec on April 7 of this year. Stan and his wife Lolette (who died in 1988) were long-time staunch friends and supporters of CLMRG. Their connection with the group began many years ago, when Elizabeth Anderson called them in the middle of the night and asked if she could leave her dog at their Casa K-9 Kennel so that she could go on a rescue. They not only didn't mind being awakened for business in the middle of the night, they refused to take any payment. Shortly afterwards, they placed a "kitty" on their counter for donations to CLMRG. Through the years we have enjoyed not only their monetary donations but their lively interest in our work. We will miss Stan as we have missed Lolette.