

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

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

November 9	Meeting-ELT	Hueber / Myers / Breitenstein
November 15	ELT Training	Buffum
November 20	Great Falls Basin	Mitchell
November 21-22	Telescope Peak	Ostermann
November 28-29	Joshua Tree (Thanksgiving)	Walker
Nov 30 -Dec 2	CPR	Ostermann
December 4	Owens Ridge Climbing	A. Mitchell
December 12	Ultra Marathon	T. Mitchell
December 14	Meeting - Insurance	Green / Schafhauser / Benoit
December 17	Christmas Party	Rockwell's
December 18-20	Mt. Williamson	Dow
January 2	Owens Peak	Mitchell
January 9	Cal Region Meeting @ China Lake	MRA Rep
January 11	Meeting - New Member Orientation	Buffum / Dow / Renta

WHEN YOU ARISE IN THE MORNING, GIVE THANKS FOR THE MORNING LIGHT, FOR YOUR LIFE AND STRENGTH. GIVE THANKS FOR YOUR FOOD AND THE JOY OF LIVING. IF YOU SEE NO REASON FOR GIVING THANKS, THE FAULT LIES IN YOURSELF. - TECUMSEH

Happy Thanksgiving!

Operation Reports

**92-10 6/28-7/2 Search
Lake Tahoe Area Hine**

The China Lake Mountain Rescue Group was involved in the multi-agency search for Kenny Miller from 28 June through 1 July. Kenny became separated from his parents while backpacking in the Meiss Lake area south of Lake Tahoe. He was described as a 12-year-old male with the mental capacity of 4-year-old He was also subject to petite mal seizures.

The search had been going on for five days when CLMRG received the call. By this time the search area had been shifted from the place where Kenny was last seen, south to Woods Lake. No clues had been located around the place last seen in spite of heavy searching. Additionally, two sightings of Kenny had been reported at Woods Lake.

On the first day, the three CLMRG members were grouped with several different county teams to perform line searches. It was believed that Kenny would be hiding from searchers, so instructions were given to look under/around every bush, rock and tree. Other search assignments were being handled by helicopter, dog, and mounted teams. During the first day the weather changed from clear to snow and rain.

The second day of our involvement saw the arrival of four additional CLMRG members. We were given the assignment to sweep the drainage from Caplis Lake to Woods Lake. This is a distance of 1.5 miles and approximately one-half mile wide. The terrain in this area varied from large boulder piles, dense thickets, steep rock slopes, open meadows, to large beaver ponds. No evidence of Kenny's location was found.

The third day, CLMRG was grouped with other MRA teams. We were airlifted by Chinook helicopter to the top of a ridge overlooking Woods Lake. This ridge dropped to the lake in a series of benches 20 to 50 feet wide, separated by sheer granite walls 20 to 80 feet high. Again, no sign of Kenny. The search effort was reduced at the end of the day. Many teams, including CLMRG were released.

It was later reported that Kenny's body had been located within a few miles of the place he was last seen. It now appears that Kenny was never in the Woods Lake area.

CLMRG members participating were Bart Hine, Linda Finco, Fletcher Nelson, Tom Stogsdill, Andrew Mitchell, Mike Myers, and Arun Jain.

We would like to thank the base camp organizers for the warm, dry sleeping areas. Also the Salvation Army did a great job in supplying the searchers with food and beverages. CLMRG coordinators were Carol Burge and Betty Meng.

**92-11 7-7/8 Search
Ridgecrest Finco**

Deputy Liszka from the Kern County Sheriff's Office, Ridgecrest substation, contacted CLMRG via the pager at 2045 on Tuesday, 7 July, to request assistance from CLMRG in a search for a missing adult male. It was believed the man had taken an overdose of pills and then left his house headed out into the desert. He left his residence at 1730, but the incident was not reported by his girlfriend until 1930. Deputies were driving around the area looking for the man. Deputy Liszka requested we meet at the man's residence on Orchard Street (in the southeast section of town, off Gateway).

I wanted to get an advance team of trackers to the residence to contain the area and establish a direction of travel. I called over the pager for two of our team's better trackers, and got a response within five minutes. Tom Stogsdill and Andrew Mitchell became the advance tracking team.

Carol Burge coordinated the callout. Thirteen additional CLMRG members met at the hut between 2115 and 2130. As members got to the hut, teams were assigned and disbursed to the residence. Base operations were run from the hut. By 2205 Stogsdill and Mitchell had contained the area and established a direction of travel. Mitchell teamed with a KCSO deputy and a Ridgecrest reserve police officer and began tracking the subject. Stogsdill stayed at the residence and became the in-field search coordinator.

Once at the residence, CLMRG received more information on the subject. He was 41-yearold Dennis Ferguson. Mr. Ferguson was on pain medication for an injury to his back. He supposedly took a large amount of his medication and then headed in an eastward direction from his residence, walking with the

assistance of a cane. The concern was that if Mr. Ferguson had taken a large amount of his medication, he might be dead within an hour of taking the pills.

We had five teams in the field tracking Mr. Ferguson. Mr. Ferguson was walking a southeasterly direction from his residence. Because of this, one team was assigned to cut Springer Avenue (an east-west road), to establish a southern boundary. Another team was used to cut County Line Road (a north-south road) to establish an eastern boundary. Nothing was initially cut on either of these boundaries. Teams continued tracking through the early morning hours. One team stayed on tracks while the other teams leapfrogged ahead and cut for tracks. Mr. Ferguson continued to head in a southeasterly direction, so it was decided to send another team to cut Springer Avenue for tracks to verify our southern boundary. At 0415 it was established that Mr. Ferguson did cross Springer Avenue near the intersection with County Line Road. A fence however forced Mr. Ferguson to start traveling in a westerly direction.

Field teams were tired, so it was decided that they would take about an hour break (nap, eat, drink), while base made a plan for continuing the search. Since Mr. Ferguson had crossed our southern boundary, that opened up a much larger search area. Base contacted Indian Wells Valley Search and Rescue to assist in the search, requesting that they be at the CLMRG hut at 0600. At 0438 a CLMRG field team located Mr. Ferguson. Mr. Ferguson was nonresponsive; however, he had slow, strong respirations, and a strong pulse. An ambulance was requested. The ambulance arrived at 0500 and Mr. Ferguson was taken to Ridgecrest Community Hospital. Base contacted IWVSAR and called them off.

Mr. Ferguson was located in a fenced compound near County Line Road and Springer Avenue. The location the field teams chose to take a break was near this fenced compound. One of the field team members heard a moan from the compound, so two members climbed over the fence and started looking around. Mr. Ferguson was found shortly thereafter.

All teams were back at the hut by 0545. Members participating: Finco, A. Mitchell, Stogsdill, Roseman, S. Walker, D. Lucas, F. Buffum, D. Burge, Wilson, Dow, Schafhauser, Seibold, S. Pappas, M. Buffum, C. Jain, and Benoit. Coordinator: C. Burge. Telephoners: C. Pappas, T. Mitchell, and Green.

Comments:

1. This operation once again showed us that we need better maps of our local area. The topographic maps are almost worthless for locating streets. We need AAA maps or Chamber of Commerce city maps in the hut for local searches.

2. Another lesson learned again is that we could use large, handheld spotlights for night searches. The reserve police officer with Mitchell had one which made tracks visible up to 20 feet away.

3. Diligence and patience paid off in this search. The tracks were lost many times due to the hard pack dirt. But, the teams stayed with the tracks until another good track was found and the direction of travel once again established.

4. The advance tracking team did an excellent job in containing the area and establishing a direction of travel. A track of the subject's was well preserved so that the incoming teams could get a good description before going into the field. It should also be noted that the cane did not play a role in the tracking of Mr. Ferguson. Because of the terrain, the cane did not leave an obvious track.

5. Steve Walker had a night vision scope. The scope did not pay off in this search, but it is something to consider for operations after dark. The terrain in the search area was fairly flat, so the amount of terrain the scope could cover was limited.

6. It appears the Ridgecrest substation has a very old roster and did not know about our paging system. Sgt. Davis later explained that the Ridgecrest substation gets a lot of new people, so sometimes the procedures are not known to the deputies on duty. I have delivered an updated roster to the substation with our callout procedures.

7. I dialed 911 from our hut to request an ambulance. The China Lake Police Dispatch picked up the call. It took me a moment to get my thoughts together because I had not expected to get the China Lake police. However, after explaining the situation and that it was an off-center emergency, they quickly responded by contacting an ambulance in town, then contacting the Kern County Sheriff to notify the sheriff that the subject had been found.

**92 - 12 7/12/92 Mobilization
Mt Williamson Green**

At 1018 Sunday morning, Sgt. Dan Lucas from Inyo County paged us for assistance to look for a James Farrel (from Georgia) who had not returned from an attempt on Mt. Williamson. James had left Anvil Camp at 0830 on Saturday, not planning and definitely not prepared for an overnight. When he had not returned at 0800 Sunday, his friend at Anvil Camp went out for help.

Sheila Rockwell and Betty Meng coordinated and telephoned. A large number of our members were leading CLMRG's summer class overnight trips to University, Morrison and Split. As a result we could only get three people (Sakai, Hueber and Kong). Tom Roseman, who is still restricted to base camp as a result of frostbite (see 92-5) agreed to go along and help with base camp so we could field two teams of two.

We arrived at the Independence airport at 1315. Inyo had their OES van in place and one team was already at Shepherd Pass and headed for the summit. Pat Elliot was the base camp operation leader. The plan was to insert Inyo's first team at Shepherd Pass and for them to descend to Anvil Camp. Our teams would be placed at Anvil Camp to go up and as high as possible toward the summit. However, on this flight they checked Anvil Camp and found Mr. Farrell. He had returned after his friend had left. We packed our gear and headed for home.

**92-13 7-23/24 Rescue
Whitney Portal Hine**

Jamie Jepson (19) had never seen mountains like those around Whitney Portal in his home state of Florida. Around 1800, he took a flashlight and told his mother he was going toward the ridgeline north of the campground. Two hours later he encountered a ledge system leading up a smooth granite face. Continuing to climb, he soon realized he could neither go up or down safely.

Sitting on a small ledge, he began hollering and waving the flashlight to attract attention. His family at the campground realized something was wrong when the light had not moved in over an hour. They contacted the Inyo County Sheriff's Office for help at about 2200.

The Inyo team located Jamie's position in the dark and proceeded up the slope to the base of the face. Going up the ledges led them into fifth class climbing. This got progressively worse until a 5.10 section was reached 10 feet below Jamie's ledge. This section could not be crossed in the darkness. However, a sweater was passed to help keep Jamie warm.

Inyo called OES for additional support at 0325. We got the call at 0355 from Sgt. Davis of the Kern County Sheriff's Office. At 0501 six members departed the rescue hut. A seventh left a few minutes later. We arrived shortly after sunrise at 0645. After a quick brief at base camp and getting a visual fix on the subject, we started up the slope to the face. Once there, we conferred with the rest of the Inyo team, who had stayed near Jamie through the night. They had sent two members out to see if Jamie could be reached from the top of the face. The safest and shortest route was still believed to be traversing the 5.10 section.

A CLMRG rope team was assigned to try this route again. This time the attempt was successful. Jamie was secured to an anchor, given water and additional clothing. After additional anchors were established, Jamie was lowered two pitches on a yo-yo belay.

China Lake members involved were Bart Hine, Bob Huey, Steve Walker, Paul DeRuitter, Nancy Gray, Robby Dow and Larry Seibold. Sheila Rockwell was the coordinator and was assisted by telephoners Carol VanVerst, Carol Pappas and Terry Mitchell.

**92-14 8/9 Alert
Mt. Sill Green**

At 1330 on 9 August, Sgt Dan Lucas from Inyo Co. called to put us on alert for a probable fatal climbing accident on Mt. Sill. He expected to know in about an hour if we would be needed. I called

Mary Schmierer to initiate a callout for six members. Betty Meng helped with the callout and we got commitments from: A. Mitchell, S. Walker, Antonsen, Castro, M. Buffum and Benoit.

At 1530 a call kept us on alert, and at 1620, we were taken off alert. We have asked Inyo Co. to give us a heads up if they think they might need us. This alert was appreciated and we would have been able to respond immediately if the situation required our help.

**92-15 9-1/2 Search
Death Valley Renta**

Death Valley National Park personnel first noted the empty white Toyota parked along Mud Hills Road on Sunday (8/30) morning at 0600. When the car was still unoccupied at 1340 that day, the Park Service initiated a search for the owner. The car was unlocked with a large amount of money in cash and traveler's checks inside. A quick search of the area by helo that afternoon turned up no sign of the vehicle's owner. The Inyo County Sheriffs Office was then called in to manage the search. Inyo Sheriff's Posse arrived at about 1500 Monday (8/31) and conducted a search for tracks and other signs around the car; however, since the ground in the area consisted of heavy desert pavement, the search proved ineffective.

A call for assistance was received at 2015 Monday night through the Kern County Sheriff's Office. The pager call from Sgt. Garry Davis was answered by Andrew Mitchell. When I responded that I would go on the operation, Mitch asked if I would lead it and passed on the information that we were to arrive at Furnace Creek Ranch at 0700 the next morning. Mitch then called Carol Burge to start the call out while I contacted the Inyo County Sheriff's Office for additional information.

Eleven CLMRG members (Renta, Finco, Stogsdill, Hinman, Rockwell, F. Buffum, DeRuiter, Wisecarver, C. Jain, and Breitenstein) met at the hut at 0400 Tuesday. We rolled at 0421 and arrived at Furnace Creek Ranch at 0640. We were met by Sgt. Dan Lucas of the Inyo County Sheriff's Office and Leonard Daughenbaugh, Bob Wilson and Lisa Barbee of the Inyo County Sheriff's Posse. We were informed that the subject was Robert Severin. He was 38 years old, weighed between 235 and 260 pounds and was 5'11" tall. He had recently quit a postal service job in Connecticut and moved to Spokane, Washington. Having found getting a job there difficult, he was moving again. He had been described as intelligent (two masters degrees in chemistry), very paranoid and having had bouts of depression (not clinically diagnosed). He was introverted, socially inept and loved to go hiking. In his car were found a new right New Balance walking shoe, size 12 and an old left New Balance walking shoe, size 11.5, identical models.

With this information we drove to the subject's car to set up base camp and started the search. The car was at 1570 ft above mean sea level on the south west sloping front of the Grapevine/Funeral Mountains. Less than a mile to the north of the car, Death Valley Buttes rose 2000 ft above. The Mud Hills began southwest of the car, 700 ft below and 3 miles away. Mud Hills Road ends at the road to Scotty's Castle. 4.5 miles below, on the other side of the Mud Hills, the Beatty Cutoff Road runs east from the Scotty's Castle Road to join Mud Hills Road 1.5 miles above our location at Hell's Gate.

Looking around, the only obvious thing that would cause someone to stop at this location was Death Valley Buttes, so we made that the primary search area. Three teams were assigned to it - one going along the south side (Rockwell, Breitenstein, and Wisecarver), one along the north (Stogsdill, DeRuiter, and Barbee), and a third team was asked to walk the ridge (Hinman and Castro). A fourth team of Buffum and Jain was sent to look for sign along an old wagon road that joins the Mud Hills Road near the subject's car and heads west ending at Scotty's Castle Road. All the teams were in the field by 0930. At about this time Tim Etcheverry of Inyo Sheriff's Posse arrived with their OES van which functioned as search base for the operation. Finco and Etcheverry were asked to cut for tracks east of Mud Hills Road starting several hundred yards above base camp and going several hundred yards below.

Tracks heading down hill were found by Buffum on the wagon road then another set was found going uphill. Buffum felt they were Robert's and began tracking the uphill tracks at 1030. Finco and Etcheverry completed their assignment and were sent to assist Buffum's team at 1100. Tracks proved to be difficult to follow and were lost. Buffum started cutting for new tracks to the west and Finco and

Etcheverry came back to base camp.

At about 1330 a CHP helo from Barstow entered the area to help with the search. They landed, were briefed and sent, with Finco on board, to search the area starting from the last good tracks. At 1430, after searching the area of tracks north of the wagon road and the area around the Buttes with no positive results, Finco was dropped off at basecamp and the helo went to refuel.

While the helo was up, Buffum's team had found tracks - scuff marks really- leading northeast towards the low saddle between east and west parts of Death Valley Buttes where we had three teams searching. By 1445, Buffum lost the tracks short of the Buttes.

After a rest, Buffum and Jain were sent to cut for tracks at the base of Mud Hills from Mud Hills Road to the Wagon Road. They also searched the berm of Mud Hills Road for tracks as they drove to their assignment. Not 100% convinced that the tracks belonged to Robert; we also sent a sign cutting team, led by Finco, from Mud Hills Road to Beatty Cutoff Road.

By 1830 all teams were in base camp with no sign, other than the tracks on the wagon road, of the subject. The second day of the search started at 0700. We were joined by four searchers from Sierra Madre Search and Rescue and the CHP helo. It was decided to make a big effort to determine that Robert had not left the area to the southwest, toward Stovepipe Wells, and to put our best trackers on the previous day's tracks. Two teams were therefore sent to cut along the front and back of the Mud Hills. A third team was sent to cut Scotty's Castle Road at the back of the Hills. Because of the commanding view of the area, a fourth team with binoculars was placed on top of Death Valley Buttes by the helo. The helicopter then started to search the area between Mud Hills Road and Beatty Cutoff Road.

After looking at a couple of possible mine locations, the tracking team, lead by Stogsdill, reached the tracks at 1230. They determined that the tracks could not belong to Robert Severin.

As teams finished their assignments with negative results, they were brought back into base camp. The area northwest on Mud Hills Road had been well searched. The only area left to be searched was the triangle formed by Mud Hills, Scotty's Castle and Beatty Cutoff Roads. We decided on a large line search starting above base camp and extending well below. The line consisted of 17 people. The line was started at 1515. At 1615 tracks were found and a positive ID was made. The line was broken up into three teams to attempt jump tracking and the rest of the line was brought back to base camp to get their vehicles. They were sent to cut for tracks along Scotty's Castle Road and Beatty Cutoff Road. By 1800 the teams were having trouble following the tracks. The decision was made to end the search for the day, regroup and start again the next day. The tracking teams were brought back to base camp by Park Service personnel.

While picking up one of the tracking teams, Park Ranger Chris Ward noticed a little white spot to the east of the road. After delivering the tracking team to base camp, he went back to investigate with two other NPS employees, and found the body of Robert Severin seated about 100 yards east of the Beatty Cutoff Road, at the foot of the Funeral Mountains. He had apparently died of dehydration and exposure.

Comments:

1. The weather was mild by Death Valley standards, but most teams reported that two quarts of water was not enough. Under these conditions, four quarts should be taken by the field teams.

2. There were not enough maps to go around for all the field teams. Because of the nature of the search area, maps were not a necessity, but they would have made communications between base and the field teams a little easier and aided field team navigation. Base camp should have made more of an effort to get more maps or at least photo copies of them.

3. Photo copies of the subject's shoe sole could have helped identify the tracks as not the subject's if they had been available. A tracing of the subject's shoe sole was of great help in identifying the subject's track found on the second day.

DONORS

The CLMRG extends our warm thanks for recent donations from these friends:

Roland Robbins

Nick and Lisa Bottka

The Sierra Peaks Section
of the Sierra Club

Customers of the
Whitney Portal Store

The Desert Classic Mountain
Bike Race Organization

SCREE

CLMRG participated in the 3rd Annual Desert Classic Mountain Bike Race by helping to staff four aid stations along the race route. This year's race had over 370 participants. The course had a lot of rigorous uphill, and a few hazardous downhill.

During the race, CLMRG team members gave first aid to a dozen or so cyclists. Most of the first aid was just washing and bandaging abrasions on elbows and knees. There was one case of heat exhaustion and one serious crash. The cyclist with heat exhaustion was given fluids and a rest break before he continued on and completed the race. The cyclist who crashed injured his shoulder in the fall. CLMRG team members bandaged the shoulder and helped the racer back to an aid station.

CLMRG was thanked by many of the race participants and the race organization presented CLMRG with a thank-you plaque and a generous donation.

Members participating: Hine, Finco, A. Mitchell, Stogsdill, Renta, Leiser, Ostermann, Wisecarver, Wilson, S. Pappas, Breitenstein, T. Mitchell, C. Pappas, R. Meng, B. Meng, and Stenger.

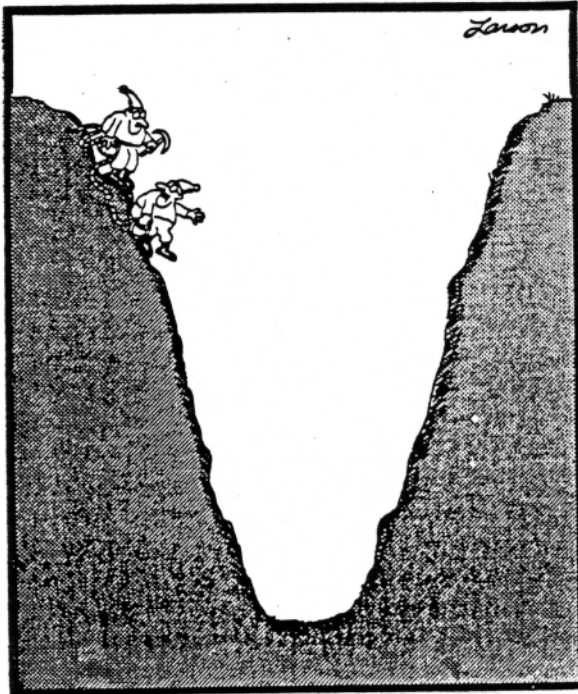
The Mike Mason Memorial Climbing Wall is nearly complete. CLMRG members are already using it to polish their climbing skills, although several more features are planned. Materials for the wall were purchased primarily with donations in memory of Mike Mason- a long-time member of CLMRG who died of cancer in 1990. Labor was provided by several CLMRG members inspired by the youthful energy of Mark Buffum.

The CLMRG Training Manual was completed this past summer after being in the works for at least 20 years. Mike Mason pressed to get it finished before his death and didn't quite make it. Steve Walker took over the editing and publishing duties and in June it was finally printed, put in binders and made available to members. Nice going Steve!

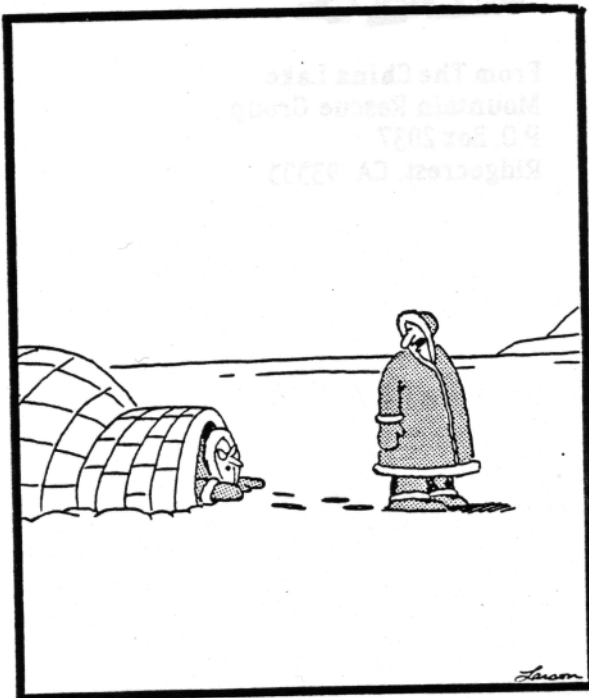
The CLMRG membership recently voted unanimously to amend the CLMRG's by-laws to prohibit any CLMRG member from using that membership to obtain a permit to carry a concealed weapon.

Linda Finco was recently elected to serve as vice-president of the California Region of the Mountain

The Talus Pile is edited by Carol Burge



"Because it's not there."



"Well, it's cold again."