

# China Lake Mountain Rescue Group

Issue #125 October 2002

## TRAINING SCHEDULE

Oct 21 Mon Meeting Westbrook, Huey, Renta  
Oct 23 Wed CPR First Aid Committee  
Oct 30 Wed Hut night (stretchers & tents) Training Committee  
Nov 2 Sat Stretcher practice Training Committee  
Nov 6, Wed First Aid (Topic B) First Aid Committee  
Nov 8-11 Fri-Mon Red Rock Canyon & Charleston Niesen/Huey  
Nov 13 Wed First Aid (Topic B) First Aid Committee  
Nov 16-17 Sat-Sun Olancha Mitch  
Nov 18 Mon Meeting Sakai, Niesen,  
Nov 20 Wed First Aid (Topic B) First Aid Committee  
Nov 23-24 Sat-Sun Tin Schafhauser  
Nov 28-Dec 1 Thu-Sun Thanksgiving (Open)  
Nov 30 Sat Sheriff's retirement dinner  
Dec 4 Wed First Aid (Topic B) First Aid Committee  
Dec 6-7 Fri-Sat Telescope Sakai  
Dec 8 Sun Rock climbing (Owens Ridge) Toler  
Dec 9 Mon Meeting Huey, Breitenstein, Roseman  
Dec 11 Wed CPR First Aid Committee  
Dec 19 Thurs Christmas party -Westbrook  
Dec 14-15 Sat-Sun Palmer Schafhauser  
Dec 20-22 Fri-Sun Open  
Dec 28-29 Sat-Sun Open  
Jan 1-5 Wed-Sun Sill Huey  
Jan 11-12\* Sat-Sun Rabbit Peak Rockwell  
Jan 13 Mon Meeting (GPS-TC) Rockwell, Schafhauser, Bishop  
  
Jan 15 (W) GPS Field Problem, Training Committee  
Jan 17-20 Fri-Mon Whitney Roseman  
Jan 22 Wed CPR First Aid Committee  
\*One- or two-day trip  
SUNDAY ROCK CLIMBING coordinated by Mike Franklin

---

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

---

## **OPERATIONS**

### **02-03 21 Jun 02 Incident University Peak Bob Rockwell**

On 21 June, Kevin McCormick and I started to climb University Peak via Robinson Lake. At 10,800 feet, a few hundred feet above Robinson Lake and shortly before noon, Kevin was crossing a snow bridge over a stream. The bridge collapsed, and he landed in the water. It was a foot or so deep, and he got his left foot wet.

On the bank, Kevin took off his boot and wrung out his sock. Then we noticed the little finger on his left hand was bleeding. The end joint was flexed. I asked him if it always looked like that, and he said, "No." He tried to "will" it straight. It would not straighten, but he could straighten it easily with his other hand.

He asked if it could be broken, and I replied probably not because it was angulated at a joint, not the middle of a bone. I suggested that he might have torn a tendon. We made a splint out of a piece of cardboard and a stick, and I applied it after first bandaging the finger. I let Kevin use one of the wrist straps from my pack-this acted nicely as a sling-and he used one of my hiking poles for support as we descended. We got back into town around 1500, and I took Kevin to Urgent Care. He said he would call Traci to pick him up when he was finished. (We had alerted Traci by cell phone earlier.)

A few hours later, Kevin sent me an e-mail report that indeed a tendon had torn along with a small piece of bone (Mallet Finger). He'll have a splint for a few weeks. After that, surgery is a possibility.

### **02-04 (OES #2002-OES-0356) 14-16 Jul 02 Search Tulare County Linda Finco & Tom Sakai**

*Linda Finco starts the report:*

Commander Rocky Lacertoso, of the Kern County Sheriff's Office, paged CLMRG around 1515 on Saturday, 13 July. Tulare County Sheriff's Office was requesting assistance for a search for a missing 43-year-old man, Alejandro Martinez, who did not speak English. Alejandro went out with two friends on Tuesday, 9 July. Around 1500 that day, the three became separated. Alejandro was not reported missing until Thursday afternoon. Mary Schmierer was our coordinator, and Tom Roseman, Dennis Burge, Bud Gates, and David Miles committed to the search. We met at the hut at 0500 and departed at 0530. We arrived at base around 0800 at the Parker Pass ranger station.

Base gave us more details: Alejandro was last seen wearing a light brown shirt with

white dots, light brown pants, and tennis shoes or light boots. We got a possible shoe print and a photo. Base originally thought that the three men might be "gardeners." The area is often used to grow marijuana. The reporting party (RP), Martin Martinez (Alejandro's cousin), said that they were scouting for deer hunting areas. The three men, Alejandro, Martin, and Victor Sanchez, parked Victor's truck in the Buck Slide area and started to hike down a drainage. The hike got too rough for Victor, so he returned to his truck to wait for the others. A little farther, Martin got tired and talked Alejandro into stopping for a while. Martin took a nap, and about 30 minutes later when he awoke, Alejandro was gone. The two had agreed that if they separated, they would meet back at the truck. Martin returned to the truck and found Victor but not Alejandro. The two men searched for Alejandro the rest of Tuesday and all day Wednesday. Thursday morning at 0430, they went to Alejandro's house to tell his wife he was missing and to get supplies to continue the search. Thursday afternoon, after hearing nothing all day, Alejandro's wife called the Forest Service for help. The Sheriff's Office was notified that evening but couldn't start the search until Friday morning. Alejandro's wife said that her husband had been acting strangely the last six months saying that the government was out to get him. Alejandro had started to wear hats and sunglasses to cover his face. The wife also said that maybe her husband knew someone on the Tule Indian Reservation who would take him back to Mexico so that he could hide there. If we saw Alejandro, we were to yell, "Ven aqui" (Come here). We were not to approach him.

Tulare County teams searched the area around the place last seen (PLS) on Friday and Saturday. Saturday afternoon, they called for additional help and got teams from Fresno County and CLMRG. We formed two teams of two (Finco-Gates and Roseman-Miles), and Burge was teamed with Deputy Corey Klingenfelter from Tulare County and Chris Schmidt of Fresno County Sheriff's SAR. The two CLMRG teams were assigned to hike down the North Fork and South Fork drainages leading away from the PLS. Burge's team was to check out some footprints reported by Alejandro's family on the Indian reservation, which is north of the PLS.

The helicopter dropped Gates and me off about 0.4 mile from our starting point. There was no human sign in our drainage. We finished our assignment around 1520. Roseman and Miles were lowered to their assignment in a Penetrator, a three-legged seat. They finished their assignment around 1620. We met up and got a ride in vehicles back to base.

Burge's team, followed by Alejandro's family and friends to locate the footprints, drove to the Indian reservation. Starting above the south fork of the Tule River at about 2000 feet, the group descended about 400 feet to the prints, which were in dry moss on granite and led to dried grass. Measurements seemed to match the information we had for Alejandro. The tracks were old, however, and could be followed for only five or six steps. Burge got back from his assignment around 2300. We got more details during the Monday morning brief. Alejandro knew how to hunt

and fish and survive in the backcountry. He also knew how to avoid leaving tracks. Base asked us to split our team members to go with the dog teams. Roseman was teamed with a member of BAMRU and WOOF, Miles with another WOOF member, and Burge with a CARDA member to go back to the Indian reservation where the possible footprints were found. Roseman was going back to an area where another dog team alerted but where the terrain was too rugged for the handler. Gates and I teamed again and were assigned the lower portion of the Bond Creek drainage to the north of the PLS.

Gates and I finished our assignment around noon. We did not have communications with base (both days, communications were bad), so we waited to see if the helicopter would get back in the air. About 40 minutes later, we made contact with the helicopter. They relayed our position to base. Base asked us to continue down the drainage. This put us off the map, but we agreed. For the next three hours, Gates and I hiked the drainage. From the top of the falls below Slick Rock, we saw a paved road, which we reached around 1530. I contacted Burge's team, who relayed our position to base. The helicopter picked us up near the Tule River. Roseman was the last member back to base around 1700.

The teams found no clues. We debriefed and learned that Tulare County was going to continue for one or two more days. I told them to call our sheriff if they wanted additional help from CLMRG for Tuesday. On the way home, we reached Mike Myers on the radio. Myers paged the team and got Tom Sakai to be the leader for Tuesday. Tulare County wanted the team in base at 0700 on Tuesday. Back at the hut, I confirmed with Sgt. Diederich that sending another team would be OK. Three members, Sakai, Al Green, and Mike Franklin, committed for the next day.

***Tom Sakai continues the report:***

CLMRG coordinator Mary Schmierer called me at home on Monday evening, 15 July, asking whether I could lead a second team on the search for Alejandro. The first team, led by Linda Finco, was returning to Ridgecrest after two days of searching. I agreed to lead a team and would depart the following morning at 0400 for a 0700 brief at search base. The team consisted of Al Green, Mike Franklin, and me. Terry Mitchell took over as coordinator starting at 1500 on Tuesday.

We arrived at base at 0620, checked in, and waited for the morning brief. The Blackhawk helicopter arrived shortly after. The RP, Martin, was at the command post, and he was to go in first with a Tulare County deputy and a translator (Team 1) to verify the location of the place he last saw Alejandro. The three of us from CLMRG were assigned with two Tulare County deputies (Team 2) to do a grid search starting at a point about 0.2 mile northwest of the reported PLS and heading downhill in a SE direction to another point about 1.1 miles away. We got GPS coordinates for all three points.

The Tulare County Sheriff's lieutenant in charge of the search wanted Team 1 to be flown to the PLS by the helicopter, but the pilot told the lieutenant that, by directive,

absolutely no civilians not covered by OES were allowed on the helicopter. The civilian searchers could be taken but not the RP or the translator. Because the lieutenant wanted the RP in the area first, a plan B had to be developed.

Plan B was to take both teams in two 4WD vehicles on dirt roads to a location near the PLS. Even though the place we were going to was less than three air miles from the command post, the trip took two hours on the dirt roads. When we got to our assigned location at 1100, Team 1 went to verify the PLS, and Team 2 started the grid search down the steep slope looking for human tracks or sign.

After about 2 1/2 hours of searching, Team 1 reported that they had come across an active marijuana garden. The search was terminated, and the situation became a law enforcement matter. We (CLMRG members on Team 2) were asked to return to the road where we had started for a ride back to the command post. The two deputies on our team would go down to investigate the garden.

We were picked up within 10 minutes of reaching the road, but we had to wait for Team 1 to return. When they did, both vehicles started the long journey back to base. We were back at the command post by 1620. We were released to go home at 1630 and were back at the hut by 1845.

***Comments:***

1. The crew from the California Air National Guard, pilots Clint Cain and Rob Walters, crew chief Wendy Steinhoff, and medic Michael Sable, all deserve praise. The Blackhawk is a nice helicopter and worked well in the terrain. The Penetrator is a great way to be lowered or raised (instead of a horse collar or harness). We should remember this outfit and resource.
2. Tulare County did an excellent job providing for the searchers. There was plenty of water, and the cooks did a great job with all the meals. We never EXPECT to be fed, so when food is provided, we always appreciate it. Transportation was provided to and from all assignments.
3. The only real problem was communications. Both days, we were sometimes out of radio contact with anyone for three hours or more. Originally, CLEMARS (pre-programmed into our radios) was the operating frequency. On the second day, they added 155.15, which is our MRA 1. We could communicate on CLEMARS only when the helicopter was in the air in our vicinity because of all the drainages. I don't know what the solution would have been except to keep the helicopter in the air, which of course is not feasible.

**02-05 (OES #2002-OES-0400) 2-4 Aug 02 Search Fresno County Linda Finco**

CLMRG was paged around 0910 on Friday, 2 August. Terry Mitchell returned the call to Sgt. Kirkland of the Kern County Sheriff's Office. Terry called down the roster for a leader, and Mike Myers took the operation around 0925. Terry became the coordinator and started calling the roster for people to go on the search. The initial information stated that Fresno County needed assistance in a search for a 45-year-old

male who was last seen on Friday, 26 July. The Fresno County Sheriff was not notified until the evening of Wednesday, 31 July. The missing man's vehicle was located at the Potter Pass trailhead, which is a few miles northeast of Huntington Lake. Base camp would be located at the trailhead. Lt. Johnson was our point of contact for the Fresno County Sheriff.

I received the call from Terry around 0945 and committed to the search. Myers paged me around 1000 and asked if I could take the operation. I got all the information from him and took the operation. I called Terry to tell her that I would be the leader and that we would meet at the hut at 1200. Al Green, Werner Hueber, Andrew Mitchell, and Dennis Burge committed to the search.

At the hut, we collected maps, radios, GPS, and technical gear. We left the hut around 1230 and arrived at base camp around 1800. After we had dinner and signed in, base asked us to go out that evening to secure Kaiser Creek, which had been searched from the California Riding and Hiking Trail to Sample Meadows but not from Kaiser Peak Meadow to the trail. Bill McDivitt from the Fresno County team was assigned as our team leader. We left base around 1930 and arrived at the meadow around 2000. The assignment was only two miles in length, but the creek was dense with boulders, willows, and downfall. The going was rough and got worse when the sun went down. For a night search, the probability of detection (POD) was still high for a responsive person but very low for an unresponsive person. We got to the trailhead around 2330. We got back to base around midnight.

We got a general briefing Saturday morning. We were searching for 45-year-old Albert Jachens. Jachens was 6 feet tall and weighed 220 pounds based on his driver's license, but it was reported that he was closer to 180 pounds. Jachens might have been in the area to fish because his girlfriend said that his green backpack, red sleeping bag, and two green fishing poles were missing. He had left Friday, stopped in Shaver Lake to borrow \$20 from his uncle, and driven to the trailhead at Potter Pass. He did not return Sunday evening, so his girlfriend reported him missing to the Fresno Police Department on Monday. The police did not notify the sheriff until Wednesday evening. By the time the sheriff arrived at the trailhead, all sign around Jachens's vehicle had been destroyed. They thought they might have a print (tennis shoe with circles in the pattern) but no direction of travel. They found three vodka bottles in the vicinity. Jachens was known to be a heavy drinker, and he would at times drink until he passed out either physically or mentally (blacking out). The drainage near the trailhead was searched thoroughly by search dogs to ensure that Jachens had not been injured after drinking large quantities of alcohol near his vehicle. Jachens's keys and wallet were found in the vehicle.

Saturday, our team of six with Bill as our leader again were assigned to search from the Badger Flat Campground to Weldons Camp. We searched about 100 yards to the east and then to the west of a 4WD road. We completed our assignment by 1315. We called base and waited until around 1500 for a ride. No afternoon assignments were

given.

We got two assignments Sunday. Al Green was to go with a CARDA dog team and a Fresno County team member to search a trail area and meadow. The rest of us from CLMRG were to search Big Creek from Weldons Camp to Ershim Lake. Dan McDivitt (Bill's younger brother) was our team leader. We started the assignment at 0800 and drove the 4WD road to Weldons Camp. From there, we hiked cross-country to Big Creek. We followed the creek to the Ershim Lake trail crossing. We then followed the trail back to Weldons Camp. The search teams had found no clues. More than 100 people had been interviewed on the trails with no one seeing Jachens or having any information.

We got back to base around 1430. We changed clothes, packed up our gear, signed out, and left around 1500. We stopped in Bakersfield for dinner and arrived at the hut at 2200.

### **02-07 16 Sep 02 Recovery Temple Crag Tom Roseman**

The pager rang Wednesday evening around 1900. Sgt. Randy Nixon of the Inyo County Sheriff's Office wanted two technical climbers with good knowledge of our rescue hoist for a body recovery on Moon Goddess Arete on the north face of Temple Crag. We had to be at the Inyo hut at 0700 the next morning. Daryl Hinman and I would be the technical team. Al Green would be our driver and technical advisor. Carol Burge would be the coordinator. We met at our hut at 0430 Thursday and arrived at the Inyo hut right on time. During the brief, we learned that Steve Levesque (47) had died in a leader fall about 500 feet from the top of the arete. His partner, Ric Tietz (46), was uninjured.

A member of the Alpine Skills Institute, who was guiding a party up the route, led Ric to the top.

A California Highway Patrol A-Star helicopter flew eight Inyo team members, Daryl, and me to the south side of Temple Crag about 500 vertical feet from the top of the route. Daryl and I reached the top around 1100 about a half-hour behind the lead Inyo team. We spent the next hour or so trying unsuccessfully to see Steve from the top. A Forest Service A-Star helicopter, which had short-lined all the ropes and technical gear to an area near us, saw Steve from the air and hovered over him. Steve was on the west side of the arete about 200 feet below a prominent notch and out of our sight from the top. The pilot thought that he could short-haul Steve if we could move him about 50 feet up and 50 feet over to a long, narrow outcropping. To do this, we had to set up a raising system at the notch.

Greg Corliss, Inyo's field team leader, sent Daryl, Bob Harrington, and me to descend to the notch and start setting up. To reach the notch, we fixed 500 feet of rope with four rappels down the chute to the east of the arete and one climbing pitch out and up onto the arete. Three other Inyo members, Paul, Darla, and Mike, followed with the hoist, a Ked stretcher, a body bag, and more gear. I rappelled to Steve on a 200-foot

rescue rope and just barely reached him. We would later use my rope as the stretcher belay line. Daryl followed on a second 200-foot rescue rope, which would serve as the main raising line, with the stretcher and body bag. After we had packaged Steve, we had to lengthen the system in order to wind the ropes through the hoist and the belay device. We used two 20-foot webbing sections for the main line and a doubled 20-foot webbing for the belay line. Bob and Mike raised with the hoist while Paul and Darla worked the belay system. We raised 30 feet, removed the webbing extensions, raised another 20 feet, and pulled the stretcher with the webbing laterally 50 feet to the flat outcropping. The Forest Service helicopter arrived 10 minutes later. The pilot worked the short line to the stretcher. Daryl hooked the line quickly, and the helicopter pulled the stretcher up and off the outcropping. By this time it was 1800, and darkness was approaching fast. Daryl and I climbed up to the notch belayed by the hoist and belay lines respectively. All six of us then started to get everything back to the top of the arete. We finished by headlamp around 2100, working hard to stay out of the very real danger of our own rockfall. Tired but glad to have completed a difficult job safely, we "enjoyed" MREs and debriefed the operation. The helicopter returned late the next morning, and we were all back in Big Pine by 1300. Five of us climbed the 500 vertical feet to the top of Temple Crag that last morning because it seemed the right thing to do.

***Notes:***

1. This was a textbook problem for using the hoist. The notch was about 50 feet long and 10 feet wide, and its uneven surface consisted of large blocks and various-sized loose boulders and small rocks strewn about. A traditional mechanical advantage raising would have been difficult to set up and operate safely in this limited area and would have required additional personnel to power. The vertically mounted hoist eliminated any edge problems and was located ideally to minimize dislodging loose rocks on the steep face from the notch down to the stretcher. Two persons, alternating turns at the crank, powered the hoist. The lateral movement of the stretcher to the outcropping required numerous small raisings and lowerings by a few feet. This was accomplished quickly and easily by the hoist's clutch mechanism. Additionally, its small size and weight allowed it to be packed easily across the technical terrain from the top to the notch.
2. Ironically, the Inyo team actually operated the hoist. Our teams had met twice previously specifically to practice using the hoist. This demonstrates the value of learning each other's technical systems. In addition, these events and other joint operations and practices have allowed our personnel to work together closely. This contributed greatly to the smooth way in which this technically difficult operation proceeded.
3. The Forest Service helicopter pilot's pick-off of the stretcher with a 50-foot long-line in this very steep and constricted area was impressive. The personnel at the notch were looking down on the helicopter and could see how very close the rotor was to the



rock. Had the pilot been unwilling or unable to perform this task, we would have had to raise the stretcher to the notch, which would have been much more difficult and dangerous.

---

## **SHERIFF CARL SPARKS RETIRES**

The new Honorary Member

Kern County Sheriff Carl Sparks has been elected an Honorary Member of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group. The last time a person was given this award was in 1997. The last time a person who was not a prior member of CLMRG was given this award was in 1983. The inscription on the sheriff's plaque reads as follows:

**China Lake Mountain Rescue Group  
Honorary Member  
Sheriff Carl Sparks**

The statement on the back of the plaque reads as follows:

Kern County Sheriff Carl Sparks has been elected an Honorary Member of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group. According to our bylaws this membership is non-voting, for life, and not subject to dues or assessments.

Carl has been a vocal and passionate supporter of volunteer search and rescue ever since becoming the Lieutenant in charge of Kern County SAR in 1980. After being elected Kern County Sheriff 10 years later, with broadly expanded duties and responsibilities, he remained ardently committed to SAR.

Carl realized from the beginning how important SAR is to Kern County and its citizens, and made every effort to enhance and utilize the specialized capabilities of its member teams and to improve the ways that the teams worked together. He demonstrated his commitment through funding, equipment and visible support to the SAR community. He greatly appreciated the mountaineering skills that CLMRG brought to the County, and he has been one of our most special friends and supporters for over 20 years.

It is with great pleasure that the members of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group honor Sheriff Carl Sparks with this award.

Refer to *The Talus Pile* Number 123 (April 2002) for the history of our Honorary Member category.

### **The old timers campout**

Sheriff Sparks welcomed Search and Rescue members who were active during the time (1980 to 1989) he was the commanding lieutenant of SAR to an old timers campout the night of Friday, 23 August 2002 at Fort Tejon Campground

### **The retirement party**

The sheriff's retirement party is scheduled for Saturday, 30 November (the Saturday after Thanksgiving). Reserve your place with CynDee Street (661-391-7771) before 5:00 p.m. on 22 November.

---

## **TRIP REPORT**

### **Climbing Mt. Carl Heller's East Ridge**

By Bob Rockwell

What is a third of a mile long, gains 1300 vertical feet, is hard class 3 almost every inch of the way, has a thousand feet of exposure off both sides, and is truly one of the finest climbs in the Sierra? A lot of people know the answer: Mt. Carl Heller's East Ridge.

The story behind the mountain is also well known to this community. After more than one failed attempt, on 14 August 1966, CLMRG founder Carl Heller, along with Al Green, Russ Huse, Chuck Ringrose, and Bob Stein, finally climbed this ridge.

Unfortunately, this was not the first ascent of the route. Two others managed to get up it in 1964—on what was then known merely as Peak 13,211.

After Carl's death in 1984, CLMRG began an attempt to get Peak 13,211 renamed Mt. Carl Heller, but the U.S. Congress's Board on Geographic Names rejected the idea.

Nevertheless, common usage is winning out, with the prominent Sierra Nevada climbing guidebooks now referring to it by that name. The East Ridge is known as a "classic climb" in at least a couple of publications and is described as being of difficulty class 3 (ropes not necessary for the experienced) to class 4 (ropes required, though barely so). Many mountaineers in California are familiar with the mountain although few have climbed it at all by any route.

Since 1966, Mt. Carl Heller has been a scheduled training climb for CLMRG at least five times, the latest being the week of 15 August 2002. It is not an accident that the date selected by the Training Committee for this exercise fell on the 70th birthday of long-time member Al Green, who had accompanied Carl on his first successful ascent 36 years and one day earlier.

Al succumbed to the suggestion that climbing the East Ridge would be a great way to celebrate his birthday. So four of us—Al, Daryl Hinman, John Ellsworth (from June Lake), and I—started out from Whitney Portal on the morning of 14 August.

We hiked up the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek and then followed the stream that feeds Upper Boy Scout Lake on the route variation that leads to Russell-Carillon Pass. From the pass, Daryl and John could not resist the temptation to climb Mt. Russell's east ridge. Descending the pass, we made camp by Tulainyo Lake. At 12,802 feet, this lake is the highest in the western hemisphere.

The next morning, the 15th and Al's birthday, we were on our way by 7:20. We climbed over the summit of Tunnabora Peak (13,565 ft.) and walked a half-mile out on the northeast ridge. From there, a nice gully dropped to the 11,500-foot basin next to the start of the Mt. Carl Heller East Ridge route. We each tanked up with two liters of water from a small stream, and at 10:20 we were on the route.

The first part was over gently ascending slabs, but soon we encountered a steep pitch of at least 100 vertical feet that looked hard! I remembered from an earlier climb that this section could be bypassed by going up an easier track around to the left, but today, we wanted to do the direct line. We had a short length of 8-mm rope along for emergency use, but we hoped it would spend the day in the pack (it did).

Up we went. As would continue throughout the day, youngsters Daryl (55) and John (56) led the way, and Al (70) and I (67) followed. Above the pitch, we discussed how most climbers would rate it: class 3 or 4 or possibly low class 5.

I have a personal rule of thumb: If I can downclimb it comfortably, it's class 3.

Because of this pitch's steepness and smoothness, I'm not sure I would want to try it. On the other hand, good holds don't have to be very close together for downclimbing: About seven to eight feet apart will sometimes do for hanging by a hand while your foot stretches for a toehold. After talking it over, we felt that this was a class 4 pitch. The rest of the route was class 3. Much of it was the hard variety, interspersed with a dozen more difficult moves of, usually, easy class 5-but nothing beyond 5.5. The rock was beautiful, solid granite, and the weather was perfect.

Some difficult mountain routes are known as friction climbs, crack climbs, etc., but not this one. Everything in your bag of tricks is needed: stemming, jamming, manteling, underclings, overclings, counterforce, friction, cracks-this route demands it all. There was almost no routefinding difficulty, since our goal and the conditions both mandated that we stay on or near the top of the ridge the whole way. With the tremendous and constant exposure, the climbing was thrilling and the views were stunning.

We found small level spots in a couple of places and stopped for eats and drinks. Finally, about 2\_ hours after starting up the ridge and at an elevation of about 12,900 feet, we moved onto a steep ramp to the right toward a steep and narrow chute that ascends to a notch on the skyline. (Why does the word "steep" keep appearing?) The chute was still moderately difficult class 3 and, unlike the ridge, a little loose. But it went well, and after climbing another 200 vertical feet, we were at the notch. We took some pictures and then ascended the remaining short but steep 100 feet to the summit. It was a little after 1:00-about six hours since leaving camp.

Reading the summit register, we saw we were the first people there since September 2001. An average of about two parties a year manage to make the summit with the East Ridge being the slightly favored route. The East Ridge involves a far more remote approach and is much more difficult than the other ways, so this relative frequency attests to the reputation this fine route has been garnering within the mountaineering community.

We were in no hurry, so we took our time descending the western side (*easy* class 3 for a change!). Then back up to Tulainyo Lake. We got to camp at various times between 4:00 and 4:30, for a less-than-strenuous, roughly nine-hour day. Soon, the late afternoon thundershowers made dinner preparation a little damp, but they could not quench our memories or enthusiasm.

The next morning, we ascended Russell-Carillon Pass once again and climbed Mt. Carillon on the way out. At the Whitney Portal Store, Al treated us to a delicious cheeseburger and beer lunch.

It was a great climb, with fine friends, and an excellent way to help a good old (pun intended!) friend celebrate a significant calendar event in a unique way. Al has set a high standard for mountaineers turning 70.

Daryl wrote, "This route is without a doubt the best class 3 climb I have ever done. The continuity of the climbing and the exposure are unmatched. Its remoteness adds to the allure. Without this remoteness, there would be a steady stream of climbers on the route." I certainly agree with Daryl, and I know the others do, too.

Recommendations for others? Because the route is committing and retreat is not reasonably feasible, I wouldn't take anyone there who is not an acclimatized and conditioned mountaineer. Being comfortable climbing unroped, with serious exposure, is a trait not easily gained. The route is long, and while belays in a couple of places could be tolerated from a time perspective, if a person needs more than that, the party could become benighted.

Pictures of the climb can be viewed at <http://photos.yahoo.com/arold999> and selecting

"Mt. Heller," and at <http://photos.yahoo.com/rockwellb> and selecting "2002-08-14 Mt. Carl Heller."

---

*Let me advise thee not to talk of thyself as being old. There is something in Mind Cure, after all, and if thee continually talks of thyself as being old, thee may perhaps bring on some of the infirmities of age. At least, I would not risk it if I were thee.*

--Hannah Whitall Smith, a Philadelphia Quaker

---

## **DONATIONS**

Gina Najera-Niesen

### **CLMRG gratefully acknowledges recent gifts from the following friends:**

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bergman Huntsville, Ala. In memory of Jeff Wingo, who died on Whitney 4 August 1998

Mario and Yolanda G. Gonzalez Valley Village, Calif. "In memory of Dave Dykeman"

Anonymous donation in memory of Arwen Lienau. "Thank you for the work you did on her behalf. A Friend"

---

## **SCREE**

Check our web page at <http://www.clmrg.org>.

All telephone numbers in *The Talus Pile* are area code 760 unless noted otherwise.

---

Posted on Sat, Sep. 07, 2002

### **Colorado man becomes first blind person to summit peaks on all seven continents**

#### **ASSOCIATED PRESS**

DENVER - Erik Weihenmayer reached the top of Australia's highest mountain, becoming the first blind person to climb the tallest peaks on all seven continents. Weihenmayer, 33, scaled the 7,316-foot summit of Mount Kosciuszko Thursday with a group of about 100 climbers.

"Reaching the summit of Kosciuszko is an accomplishment unlike any other I've experienced," he said in a statement. "In climbing the Seven Summits, I hope to show people that what may seem unattainable is really within reach."

Weihenmayer began his quest in 1995 by scaling 20,320-foot Mount McKinley in Alaska, North America's tallest mountain. In 1997, he reached the 19,339-foot summit of Africa's Kilimanjaro.

Two years later, he summited South America's 22,840-foot Aconcagua. In 2001, he reached the top of Antarctica's 16,067-foot Vinson Massif and then climbed Mount Everest.

Three months ago, Weihenmayer and other members of the 2002 Seventh Summit Expedition climbed 18,510-foot Mount Elbrus, the tallest peak in Europe.

Weihenmayer, a former middle school teacher and wrestling coach, started climbing after losing his sight to a rare eye disease at age 13.

*The secret of living to a ripe old age is to stop  
doing some of the things that make you want to.*  
--Sam Ewing