



*February 2008*

## *The Meridian*

Just before the January Business Meeting, I was able to locate a box of historical documents from the MRA that had been lost for years in my team's cache. When I returned home and before handing them off to Rick Lorenz for scanning and safe storage, I read through many of the papers. Within the notes are Dick Pooley's minutes from the first eleven years of the MRA. It gave me a nearly firsthand account of how our great organization came to be.

Over the few hours that I read the notes, I had to smile many times as they could practically be reprinted as the minutes of a current meeting. Many of the same issues still stand as the leaders then and now struggle with the changing needs of the membership. Our Founders grappled in '67 with who to allow as members of the MRA. They discussed intently extending membership to Associate Members as they wisely realized the value of inclusion of "all groups who help out on mountain rescues".

There's also a letter from a Scotsman who while in the United States in 1968 worked with the MRA. His letter gives us a window to many of the issues that the MRA was dealing with at that time. His writing includes his advice for teams who even then were having controversies and turf battles with their authorizing agencies. He points out that our goal is to save lives and that we can only do this if asked to by the agency in charge. His quote of "make no mistake, if you do not prove amenable, there are others who will" remains sound advice as many teams are still involved in these controversies. He addresses standardizing equipment and even those who do not pay their dues! Bylaws, Policies and even the radio license were issues in those early years. Yes, many things never change.

For years, I have heard some in our organization use the terms "what our founding fathers intended" as a way to argue their point in discussion. After reading those early minutes, I can tell you that some of those who seem to channel the founding fathers are not quite correct in their interpretation. I personally believe that the MRA's founders were wise indeed by creating an organization that allowed for the growth necessary to adapt and face new challenges. After leading the group for 19 months, I'm quite sure that the experience, wisdom and reasonable minds of the delegates are well prepared to take the MRA successfully into the future.

As you read further in this newsletter I hope you will see that the issues we are currently dealing with can be complex and sometimes frustrating. But to directly quote Dick Pooley from his Report to the Long Range Planning Committee submitted on November 25, 1967:

*...never lose sight of your primary goal “to save lives.” ...Organizing for organization sake soon gets worn thin—but organizing for improving our primary goal—so that we as rescuers can do a better job – quicker and safer – is worth going after.*

## Business

The January meeting began with an all day Strategic Planning session ably led by Tim Cochrane, Vail MR. The delegates reviewed not only past goals but those that had been completed. New ideas as well as changes to original goals were also discussed. The attached spreadsheet summarizes the short term and long term goals that we created that day. Action Items and those who volunteered even more of their valuable time to carry the goals forward are also included on the spreadsheet. At the June meeting we hope to have a vote on some of these proposals. Please plan to have a delegate there or send in a proxy for these important items. My thanks to Tim and all who participated in this necessary process.

Although the Minutes will be out soon, I would like to note a few new items that came up during Sunday's Business Meeting. A Committee was formed to develop a Scholarship Fund that would utilize the moneys in the Memorial Fund. The committee will decide the parameters for awards and amounts and we hope to have this in place for this June's conference in Stowe, VT. Another exciting announcement was that we now have our own MRA delegate on the Federal SAR Working Group. These are the folks who have been crafting the work on Typing and Credentialing. I asked Mike Voracheck to accept this position (and he did!) not only because of his extensive insight of how the government works but also because of his absolute dedication and full understanding of what our members need in this arena. Also, Kayley will be looking into allowing the dues to be paid online. (I'm sure our Founders would have appreciated that item). And, Monty Bell, Chair of the Nominating Committee will present a slate of nominees for the positions of President, Vice President and Member at Large by March 1<sup>st</sup> for our June elections.

Speaking of June, I hope you are planning your summer vacation in Vermont. Neil Van Dyke and his team in Stowe are planning a great conference with field sessions including bouldering and rock climbing as well as technical rescue sessions and the all important – MRA Adventure Race! Information can be found on the website under Future Events or click on this link: <http://www.stowemountainrescue.org/mra2008.htm>.

Thanks to all of you who continue to give your time and effort to the MRA.  
Safe travels,  
Fran Sharp  
MRA President