



The Meridian

January 2007

I had planned to write this issue of my newsletter during my quiet Sunday at home. But, as luck would have it, we were called out to assist in the rescue of an injured climber. So, now on Tuesday, I'm getting around to summarizing my thoughts on the Business Meeting. As this was my first meeting to run, I'll admit that I had some trepidation. Ok, I was downright nervous! The confidence that you always want to show during a mission is more difficult to exhibit while sitting in front of the Board. However, I should have realized that there would be no worries. Although lively discussion is an integral part of the meeting, a tremendous amount of respect is always present. And, of course, these folks are my peers, friends and ski buddies. Thank you to those in attendance for sharing your experience and wisdom to the group and myself.



Saturday began with a review of our Strategic Goals and the accomplishments made in the last few years. The overwhelming theme of Saturday's session as well as the Business Meeting was that of COMMUNICATION. The MRA website, ably guided by Neil Van Dyke, has grown leaps and bounds in the last year. We discussed how it has become the face of mountain rescue to the public and media. It was decided that the site will have more of a 2-pronged approach. One to the public – more of a public relations/marketing venue and a Member's Only section for us. Included in this new member's section will be the meeting packets so those who were not able to attend can review them. Also, the minutes from the meetings will be posted here. In addition, our MRA Grant recipient's work, the latest information from IKAR and other educational programs will continue to be posted.

From Saturday's discussion came the formation of a Media Committee. The recent search on Mt. Hood pointed to a clear need for the MRA to be pro-active in our message, particularly in regards to SAR Cost Recovery. Developing press releases and talking points that our teams can use when speaking with the media is one of the goals of this group. These will also be available on the website. It seemed there was no end to the number of ideas for MRA.org. As we consider this one of our most important communication tools to our members, we increased the yearly funding significantly to support the projects. You are welcome to send suggestions for the site to Neil, but please be patient as he sorts through priorities and tasks at hand.

Another of our venues for communication is the Lister. Dick Sale has done a tremendous job of moderating this for us. But, as we have all grown used to talking through typing, our needs have outgrown the current Lister. In the very near future, we'll be switching to a yahoo group. This will enable us to archive, search, add attachments and use many other conveniences. We'll also be looking to add many more members to the group and use it as our primary communication tool to our members.

Many thanks to Loui McCurley of Alpine Rescue Team who gave a presentation on working with Authorizing Agencies (AHJ's) and Fire Departments on an Emergency Response Pre Plan for your area. I learned that this is a formal, written document that these agencies are required to have in accordance with NFPA 1670. This could be a way to work in a constructive and positive way with the folks who use our services. The plan should include identifying hazards in your area and creating an Incident Response Plan to address them. I certainly can't summarize here what Loui explained but ask one of the members who attended. Better yet, we plan to put together a PPT that you can use in promoting your team to the AHJ's and it will include some of this information. It was a refreshing approach to this ongoing dilemma. As Loui stated, developing a relationship with your AHJ and FD is the most important way to stay relevant in SAR.

Thanks to Dave Clarke, Steve Reese and Rocky Henderson who gave us a rescuer's perspective of the latest Mt. Hood incident. They may have raised more questions than were answered.

On Sunday, we tackled a few policies that were mostly clean up of conflicting policies. These included wording on the International Evaluator section – now removed and we will just use the Out Of Region Evaluator criteria - and sections regarding the Legal Chair position. The Board decided not to fill the Legal Counsel position at this time. Most issues can be dealt with by the Officer's and the Membership Chair and do not require legal expertise. If a true liability issue arose, appropriate legal counsel would then be engaged.

When the Publications (or lack of) issue arose, it was an interesting discussion. Rather than spend money on a new magazine or try to produce one in house, it was decided to continue to invest in our other tools – website, lists, public relations, media assistance, educational programs and more – and to use this newsletter as a way to inform the membership of items of interest in our organization. We hope to improve and facilitate the free exchange of information on search and rescue for our members in the coming year.

John Sohl gave us an update on the June Conference being held in Weber County, UT. These folks will have 2 pre-conferences – one on Wilderness First Aid and the other on Rigging on the Via Ferrata. Both classroom and field sessions are planned for the Conference and terrific speakers like Jeff Lowe. The team has worked hard to make this an affordable and interesting conference as well as providing things to do for the family. Check out the details at <http://planet.weber.edu/sar/MRA2007.html>.

Last but certainly not least, I'd like to mention the recognition that was given to Walt Walker, founding member of RMRU and a Past President of the MRA. His accomplishments in SAR were many and it seems only surpassed by the positive impact he had on his colleagues and friends. A deep and grateful thank you to his friends who brought his memory so movingly to this group of his peers.

Take care and stay on course,
Fran Sharp
MRA President



MRA Powder Mountain Ski Day, 1/19/07