

There was no Board meeting in March due to the lack of a quorum of board members. The following two articles were first published in the Rucksack in 1995. Sorry to repeat myself but I did not have the time to research two new articles to fill up the space left by the board meeting minutes. And after doing this for eighteen years it gets very hard not to repeat yourself. Gus Bush, Editor

SURVIVAL: A STATE OF MIND

Here you are a member of a Mountain Rescue organization. You have all your survival equipment in your Hernia IV Deluxe backpack. You've been through numerous lectures on survival, and then suddenly without warning, you are dropped into a wilderness disaster. You could be lost, injured, caught in a storm, threatened with hypothermia or whatever your worst nightmare might be. Think quickly, what is the key to your survival? Did you focus on things? What's really in that Hernia IV Deluxe backpack. Perhaps layered clothes, tube tent, waterproof fire-starting materials, extra food, compass, water purification tablets or first aid kit? Or should you think about all those techniques taught in all those lectures. Perhaps learning how to build windbreaks, shelters and fires, staying put to be rescued, going hungry if the finding of food costs more calories than it provides? They do not provide the key to survival, that element comes from within.

Some survival emergencies are recognized immediately, other survival situations develop slowly, often without being recognized until it is too late. It is these problems which possess the hidden dangers to life.

The "challenge to stay alive" in hostile environments is a physical and a mental experience to a human. For humans to sustain life in any environment they must have air, body shelter, water and food, and

the will to live. These are necessary for sustaining energy production and normal body functions. How a person may acquire and utilize these necessities to maintain life is determined by the individual's brain. The best survivors are not overly attached to objects, procedures or beliefs. Those people who continue to need a recipe to follow in life after they mature are not the best survivors, whether in daily affairs or wilderness disasters. Thus the survivor's brain becomes his greatest asset, or his most dangerous enemy in a survival situation where his life is endangered.

Your situation and actions must be carefully analyzed to determine the immediate and most important needs to improve your chances of living and being rescued. The mind and the body with its limited amount of life-sustaining energy make up the major factors that are prevalent in every survival situation. When either is uncontrolled, both are sure to perish.

Often a person must expend energy to travel to a better location to eliminate energy loss due to weather exposure. Energy spent in improving shelter from wind, wet and cold is energy well spent, because it improves your ability to conserve vital body heat. The challenge is to determine what energy to expend to gain the greatest return for the energy used.

Resourcefulness -- In many cases, a lack of confidence in their own fortitude and ability has broken people who could otherwise have fared much better. When survival is threatened and you have acknowledged the fact that you are scared, you must also acknowledge that you are not helpless. You have many items on your person that can be useful. You have to think like the 21st Century, educated person that you are, but place your thoughts in the caveman's level. After all, the caveman lived in conditions far worse than yours and evolved to what you

are today. Think basic needs when searching for the means of keeping warm and dry: fabric for body shelter, insulation for warmth, metal and wood for shelter from rain and wind.

Because the wilderness environment is different you fear the discomforts which might result. Two of the gravest general dangers to survival are concessions to comfort and having a passive outlook. Both dangers represent attitudes which follow lines of least resistance and overrule your effort or desire to cope with stress. A passive outlook will result from the lethargy, the mental numbness, and the indifference which creep in as the will to keep trying and to carry on slips away. It usually comes on slowly, but can suddenly take over and leave you helpless to care of yourself.

One of the most important things for you to learn as a potential survivor is to make decisions which will increase your chances of successful survival. You must remember that the intelligent discipline and organization with which the individual or group approaches the problems will determine the success of any survival procedures. The establishment of an unhurried routine will bring about the calm and confidence without which considered decisions are impossible.

You must recognize that decisions will have to be based upon your previous survival training. You should have the ability to evaluate all of the circumstances with which you are faced and come up with a course of action which will profit you to the greatest degree. In a survival situation, every decision is important. Are you a survivor?

BUDDY SYSTEM OR BUST

Before I became involved in Mountain Rescue about twenty-one years ago, I used to think nothing of grabbing my backpack and taking off to the mountains for a solo hike in the Cascades. I brought along everything I thought I needed, extra food and water, the ten essentials, extra clothing etc. One important item I forgot was a buddy or companion.

Hikers and climbers know that the buddy system can be as important to safety as carrying adequate food, water, and clothing. If you hike alone, a mishap as simple as a sprained ankle could leave you stranded until someone happens by, which might mean a long, cold, unexpected overnight stay or being the subject of a search. Besides providing companionship and sharing equipment, a partner can administer first aid, go for help, and (since two heads are better than one) help you puzzle your way out of a predicament. An effective buddy system requires more than just another warm body. For maximum enjoyment, and for adventures that test the limits of your abilities, it pays to find one or more close friends with whom you can function like a well-oiled machine—one lubricated by mutual confidence and respect.

How many times have you heard the saying that you don't travel any faster than the slowest member of your party? Don't be too proud to tell your partner exactly how you feel. If you and your partner aren't evenly matched then one might become the teacher and the other a student, and the only way you can say you're hiking or climbing together is that you're both on the same trail or mountain.

When building such a partnership, some goals are pretty straightforward and practical. For example, you want a partner with whom you're comparable physically, who has roughly equivalent skills, and is interested in the same activities that you are.

Psychological concerns are equally important. You want a partner whose temperament complements your own. Some people left to their own devices are likely to attempt a summit at all costs, or try and find out what lies over the next ridge without considering whether they can get back before dark. It helps, therefore, to team up with a partner whose sense of caution is more keenly honed. Finally, it's the way partners relate to each other, particularly in the face of potential danger or discomfort, which makes or breaks backcountry friendships. You need companions whose judgment you can trust, and depend upon in the most difficult situations. The difference depends less on physical prowess than on whether you feel that you and your companion can be honest with each other, even if that means backing down in the face of a challenge one partner would prefer to confront. This is a good rule for any type of friendship, but when you're up against the trials of the wilderness or the pressures of climbing a mountain, it is particularly important. An excess of pride (or, conversely, a lack of assertiveness) can destroy a hike or climb and a friendship. Finding a good companion is more difficult than describing one. Your best friends may make disastrous outdoor partners, and someone who's the life of the party may grow tiresome after six nights on the trail. Ultimately, finding a compatible partner is part luck, part persistent trial and error.

For people strong-willed enough to head off into the backcountry in the first place, obeying rules doesn't always come easily. A few rules that apply equally well to all modes of travel do stand out. At heart, all of them deal with communication. Besides that rule about honesty, they are as follows:

1. Make sure that you have the same objective in mind before you start on a hike or climb.
2. Are you hiking 6 miles a day, or 16? On-trail or off?
3. Is time elapsed and distance covered

critical, or is it to be a come-what-may excursion?

4. Agree that you are committed to your plan unless one or both of you both decide to quit or conditions become dangerous.
5. Follow the honesty rule unwaveringly. This avoids the guessing game of, "Are you really saying what you mean?" (The lone exception occurs if we suspect hypothermia, which can cloud the victim's judgement.)

Recognize that danger is subjective. If something looks perilous to one partner, then it is perilous, despite what the other believes. Do not pressure each other to attempt something one of you does not want to do. If this causes disappointment, you should remember that since you are equal partners, sometimes the hiking or climbing boot will be on the other foot.

Following these rules results in a buddy system that does more than merely ensure safe passage. It provides an opportunity to develop trust and to figure out how to work harmoniously with another person. And those lessons, like so many other things learned in the wilderness, apply just as well back home

KIT PARTY

The following members attend the Kit Party on March 5, 2008

Chris and Tracy Berryman

Randy Brake

Greg Lang

Gus Bush

They made 150 Kits