



OLYMPIC MOUNTAIN RESCUE NEWSLETTER

A volunteer organization dedicated to saving lives through rescue and mountain safety education
December 2006

Missions

Mission No: 2006-11 (DEM 06-3450)

Date: November 7-9
Location: Upper Lena Lake; Olympic National Park
Type: Missing Hikers

Personnel: (Field) Steve Leslie (OL), Jason Bausher, Susie DiBenedetto, Dick Waldo, Joel Pomerinki, Sarah Armstrong (In-Town) Roger Beckett, Jim Groh (Standby for 11/10) Margaret Brownell, Mac McDowell, Jim Groh, Greg Barron

Late on the 7th, Beckett took a call from a friend of Jeff Mersmann of Bremerton, who reported him missing and inquiring what needed to be done. Mersmann and another hiker, Neil Twilla of Silverdale, had set out to go to Upper Lena Lake on the 4th and were supposed to be back for work on the 6th. With the trail head in Mason Co, most of the trail in Jefferson Co and the lake in ONP, after some consideration of best options the friend was told to call 911 and report a missing person in the park. On the 8th Beckett called the EOC at park headquarters to see if they had been notified of missing people. Indeed they had and they were making arrangements for a helo to fly into Upper Lena Lake. Later that day, the Park EOC called and reported to Leslie that they had spotted a tent but no hikers and that a mountain rescue team would be needed; there was light snow at the lake. Weather wasn't good but looked more favorable for the 9th. Beckett and Groh made an early evening callout with good results with peo-

Meeting

Next meeting : Tuesday, December 12th. There is no scheduled training for this meeting. Instead there will be recap of there year's events and a slide show and social time. Please bring a snack, dessert or your favorite (non-alcoholic) beverage to share with the

Training

Upcoming training : There is no scheduled training for the month of December.

In the month of February, OMR was lucky enough to get Nikko Weis up for another snow and avalanche training. The date is going to be February 16, 17, and 18. There is a lot of good snow up there right now and it is looking to be a great training. The past few years have been very light in the snow department, so put the dates on your calendar. The Board is asking for ideas that the membership would like to see implemented in this year's avalanche training, as the itinerary is not yet set. If you have something then give the someone on the board a call.

Elections Time

This month is the time that we vote for the new board members. Please come to the general meeting and nominate someone to serve and to vote on the nominees. If there is anyone you would like to see on the board, but cannot make it to the meeting, please call one of the board members, to get their name on the ballot. There is an extra position open this year, due to the fact that Sarah Armstrong will be stepping down from the board for personal reasons. The people currently on the ballot are Greg Barron, John Stieber, and Andy Graham.

Winter Standby

People have started signing up for the winter stand by up at Hurricane Ridge. Take a look at the sign up sheet included in this newsletter and decide which weekend you would like to patrol on.

Included with the sign up sheet are two other items. The first is a general list of expectations, of the OMR people who sign up for Ridge duty. The second item is the detailed description of our duties, both while on patrol and while on rescue missions. Please take the time to read both of these. There are always questions on what we are supposed to do while up there on patrol. These two items will answer pretty much all of the questions the should arise. If any other questions are out there please feel free to call John Stieber at 360-830-0914 or e-mail him at janddstieber@earthlink.net.



now (?) training 2005 on Mt Angelas

Dues Are Due

The year has come around and it is once again to pay your annual dues. The cost is \$15 if you DO NOT have a pager. If you have a unit pager, then your cost will be \$45. Let's see how soon we can get our dues in this year. It will make the Treasurer's job a lot easier if we can get the dues in as soon as possible.

Truck Fund

Over the past few years the unit has been looking into sources of funding to replace our aging rescue truck. To date we have raised about \$3310 with donations received from 23 individuals and 6 organizations. Recent donations include \$50 in matching funds from Microsoft and \$50 from Loring Bemis's company, the IBI Cattle Co. This amount plus the \$12,000 of unit funds that have been committed to the purchase of a new truck and the potential resale value of the current truck of about \$4000 brings us to \$18,310 which is 40% of the total needed. As the fund drive winds down to completion this coming January, please keep in mind that we will be submitting a grant application to the Boeing Community Fund this spring. The Boeing Community Fund has a history of assisting organizations like ours acquire vehicles, including Kitsap ESAR. However, in order for this application to be successful we need to fully demonstrate strong support we have from the communities of the Pacific Northwest. To do this, the grant application will be including a list of the individuals who have made donations. In case of this grant, the number of donors will prove to be at least or more critical than the amount of the donation and the greater the number of supporters we have, the better our chances will be for success. Given this, it would be great if we wrap this fund drive up with a few more donations. These donations can be of any amount so please don't be taken back by some of the larger donors such as Seahome Services of \$500 (Greg Baron's business), Olympic MountainSchool.Com donation of \$230 (Jason Bausher's business). Thanks for the help and if you have any questions feel free to call John Ellsworth at 360-779-5382 Over the past few years the unit has been looking into sources of funding to replace our aging rescue truck.

ple being available for several days if needed. The field team left about 0630 (9th) for a meet at the SAR base set up at the Jorstad Creek fire station off hwy 101 by 0800. From this location Susie D and Dick W were to proceed up the Duckabush trail and Steve L and the others were to proceed up Boulder Creek drainage from the Hamma Hamma River road.

The following report was submitted by Susie:
Nov 9, 2006

Having been alerted the evening before that there were 2 overdue hikers in the Upper Lena Lake area, 6 of us from OMR met at the Jorstad Fire Hall at 7:30 AM, along with the ONP folks. During the briefing we learned that their car was at the trailhead, and their tent had been spotted at Upper Lena Lake. It appeared that they had spent a night in the tent. It contained their sleeping bags, map and compass, guide book, stove and matches, some food and clothes (including a rain jacket!). There was 3 in. of fresh snow, but no foot tracks. In other words, they hadn't been back in a while and most of their life saving gear was in the tent.....

We were given our assignments--Dick Waldo and Susie DiBenedetto left for the Duckabush trail head (place of "least probability"), and Steve Leslie, Jason Bausher, and Joel Pomerinki had the wonderful chore of checking out the Boulder Creek drainage (at least it was a place of "high probability"). Sarah Armstrong was with several Rainier NP people on the E side of the creek.

Our goal (Susie and Dick) was to hike that day to 10 mile shelter (where there is no shelter) with full packs and set up camp. Next day we would go further in the possibility that they came down the One Too Many Cr or Crazy Cr drainages. Of course even if they did this, they'd end up on the opposite side of the river from the trail we were on. The river was raging full force, since they couldn't have picked a wetter time to get lost. It appeared impossible to cross. Every time we got near the river we blew whistles, presuming that if they were anywhere in the area, it would certainly be on the other side of the river. We were listening to the chatter on the radio....the



Susie DiBenedetto with Jeff Mersmann and Neil Twilla, after locating them on the Duckabush trail.

helo spotted foot tracks at Scout Lake.....I have to admit that I was complaining that this seemed like a waste of time, since certainly it seemed so unlikely they'd end up here.

Therefore, I was shocked when, 6 miles up the trail, low and behold, walking up to us on the trail was obviously one of the 2 missing guys (a description of 6ft 5in, lean, was very accurate!). He looked in a daze and simply asked "is this the way out?" I said "yes, but what is your name?" He said "Jeffery Mersmann". I couldn't contain my huge smile, and said we were from SAR and were looking for him. He was delighted, not to mention starving, cold, tired. We pulled out food and Gatorade, which he gobbled up. He said his friend was maybe half hour or so back on the trail, moving slower with a sore knee. I ran down the trail and came upon him. He appeared less dazed, but more sore, and was elated to see us and know that the ordeal was nearly over. He ate a bit, and then we headed up the trail. It was about 1:30 PM, and we knew we still had a long way to go.

When we reached Jeff again, we made hot drinks, got them hand warmers, warm, dry clothes, and set off. SAR base had been alerted and were sending in a few extra people with supplies in case we needed them for the hike out. We ended up coming out in the dark, near 2000 hrs. It hadn't rained all day, but 5 min. after we started our drive down the road, it started to

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pour!

Their tale was amazing. Saturday they hiked to Upper Lean Lake as planned. Sun. AM there was a break in the weather, so they decide to make a quick trip up to Mt Lean before buzzing back down. They took with them a box of wheat thins, can of cheese spread, and a couple Cliff bars. They buzzed up to the peak easily, but then the weather totally socked in.

They were in a white out, w/o compass or adequate clothing. They spent the remainder of the day searching for their tent, which they never found. However, that first night they found adequate shelter in a huge tree! There was a 5 ft diameter opening, tall enough for Jeff to stand up in. They stayed dry and relatively warm. In the AM they resumed their search for their tent. It rained again all day, and visibility was nil.

They never found the tent. They had a very miserable night and woke up covered in 3 in of snow. They said it was gut wrenching to figure out what to do--stay high, where they knew their tent and supplies were close by, and hope that rescuers would come.....or head below snow line, which they knew meant they were totally on their own.....due to the ever deteriorating weather, they made the painful decision to pick a valley and head down.....not really having a

clue where they were headed. The sun had not been visible enough to help with orientation, and there were no stars to be seen. As it turns out, they probably went down the One Too Many Creek (which is I'm sure how they were feeling!). They had another extremely long, wet, cold night huddled together in the rain. They were exhausted by the endless cliff outs and gullies. At one point, with a quick break in the weather, they thought it looked like the terrain was better on the other side of the river, so they decided to look for a crossing. They lucked out and found a log, which they shimmed across.

They were ecstatic when they happened upon the trail. The rest is history! It was nothing short of a miracle that they survived 4 nights in those miserable conditions.

It felt GREAT to be part of the search!

Friday was a near record rain day and all were glad to be back home.

Total Personnel: 11

Total Hours: 100

Total Mileage: 855
