

OTP & OTHERS

Hiking and Debating Society

Guide Book

Mike Gessner

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Lead, Follow or get out of the way

We don't stop hiking because we grow old, we grow old because we stop hiking.

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Organization

The founders of our group were Bob Bernard, Ginger Brown, Jerry Drinkard, Mike Gessner, Merle Olsen, Dick Rauhut, Bill Sharpe, Dick Utter and Vic Weber.

In November 1989 Hughes Aircraft Company released a number of long term employees with an early retirement plan called the Organizational Transition Program (OTP). The payoff was considered to be quite generous by the recipients. At the farewell party, a group of friends who had worked together for years shared a table. It was decided that we should find some activity that we could share and thus maintain old friendships. After some discussion Bob Bernard suggested that hiking would be the answer. Dick Rauhut insisted that we should hike every week and that we should start immediately.

Bob Bernard led the first hike in Sycamore Canyon. At the end of the hike Dick Rauhut had a case of Lucky Light beer in his car, which he shared with us. This is the origin of the after hike refreshment tradition. Over the years the refreshments have become more varied and elaborate.

Mike Gessner volunteered to lead the second hike in Placerita Canyon. At that hike he started the Leader Roster and Hike Schedule. In the early days no one had e-mail so the next hike notices were sent via snail mail. This necessitated an address list which he compiled. On our first hike we had nine hikers. Mike is the only one of that group still hiking. We expected the group to last about six months. It has done somewhat better than that.

On one of our early hikes Dave Lillback's wife, Dorothy, sent a batch of cookies, which he distributed to the hikers at a break after about an hour's hiking. This started the cookie break tradition. Although, later it became the custom to distribute the cookies at the start of the hike. Since then, most people no longer wait for the cookie break to consume their cookies.

On the first anniversary of the group, Merle and Alice Olsen invited us all to their house for a party to celebrate completing a year of hiking. We have since celebrated our anniversary each December. At first, the party was rotated among the hiker's homes but as our group grew it became necessary to find a larger venue for our gatherings. I believe that Jim and Jan Gardner hosted our last in home party.

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Over the years there have been a number of amusing, outstanding or more serious incidents. Mike started issuing awards for these happenings. It became too time consuming for him so Ron Forbess took over that effort. He has done an excellent job of it.

As our group title, OTP and Others, indicates, our membership is not exclusively former Hughesites. Indeed, now our group consists mainly of “Others”. We welcome new members to our group.

Early in our history Mike originated the web site and also obtained the web domain. This has been very useful and effective in disseminating group information

In August of 2014, Mike decided that after more than 24 years of keeping the records of the OTP, he had enough of that fun. He has been succeeded by Ron Forbess, who manages the Leader Roster and Awards; by Phil Rutherford, who manages the web site; by Pat Forbess, who manages the address list and provides occasional cake to celebrate birthdays; and by Bob Dewolf, who manages the group e-mail notifications.

The OTP continues to trek along. It has changed a lot over the years and we expect it to continue to change more as time goes by.

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THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OUR HIKES

1. Dates and times of hikes are announced by email at least two weeks in advance.
2. Information is handed out at the beginning of each hike giving all the details. If you have any questions, contact the Hike Leader. He/she will be happy to help.
3. It is not necessary to notify anyone if you plan to hike. Just be at the trail head and be ready to hike.
4. Hikes are selected by the Hike Leader and information is posted on the web site at least two weeks in advance

On the Way

Meet at the designated trail head early enough to prepare to hit the trail.

We hike every week, weather permitting.

Monitor Channel 5-10 on your radio.

Ride pooling is encouraged.

On The Trail

1. **If you choose to hike alone you must have an FRS radio tuned to Channel 5-10.**
2. **You are expected to be completely self-contained and prepared.** However, if you run short (and we all do), don't be afraid to ask around for whatever you need.
3. **Each hiker is expected to provide his own water, lunch and trail snacks.**
4. Absolutely NO LITTERING! Pack it in. Pack it out.
5. No disturbing of livestock or wild animals.
6. Do not litter with cans, plastic, food, or other pollutants.
7. Bury your bathroom waste no less than six inches below ground.
8. Dogs are discouraged.
9. The hiker behind you is your responsibility. Do not lose sight of him; if you do, slow down or stop. Radio ahead to the Leader, if possible.
10. If you wish to depart from the group notify the Leader when you leave and be sure you get an acknowledgement from the Leader.
11. The Leader leads the entire hike. He's the one to check with if you have any questions. If he doesn't have the answer, he'll direct you to someone who does.
12. If you feel an area is too difficult for your experience or ability, let the Leader know that you are having difficulties. Abide by his decision. We'll wait.

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REQUIREMENTS: WATER (at least 2 to 3 liters). Bring a lunch and a snack (fruits, nuts, granola bars, etc.) to have during a break.

SMOKING ON THE TRAIL: Smoking is legal and it seems that most of the population are smokers. Due to the recent drought our wilderness is tinder dry. Smoking requires a flame to ignite the cigarette and results in a glowing ember on the tip. Too many thoughtless smokers cause serious fires by being careless with these sources of fire. Smoking on the trail is about as senseless as smoking in a gunpowder factory. The thought that polluting the air for nearby non-smokers rarely occurs to the smoker. If a smoker must smoke, he should find a cleared area where he will not possibly cause a conflagration. He certainly should be careful not to impose his smoke on his non-smoking companions.

DOG-FRIENDLY?: No: Dogs are an unnecessary distraction on a hike.

HOW DO I PARTICIPATE WITH THE GROUP ON THIS HIKE?

1. Read the hike's information which we distribute by email.
2. Make sure that the Hike Level accommodates your hiking experience.
3. If, and only if, it suits you, then show up the day of the hike with all necessary gear and water ready to hit the trail.

MY FRIEND SAID I CAN DO THIS HIKE, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO IT, RIGHT?

We take your safety quite seriously, and would not like for you to attend a hike you're not ready for. You know your body and hiking experience better than your friends. Whether you are a first-timer or an experienced hiker, please read our hike details page as the hike may not suit your experience level. We have a better experience if every hike has hikers of the intended level.

DISCLAIMER: OTP and Others do not take responsibility for any harm, bodily injury, accidents, or damage to personal property. By attending the hike, you are confirming that you understand that all outdoor activity such as hiking, backpacking, and trekking have an associated danger, and will not hold any hike lead/organizer, participant, OTP and Others or any group associated responsible for any hazard to your well being. Additionally, you will not be allowed to participate with the group if you are not adequately prepared with enough water and the right gear/equipment/nutrition essential to complete the hike. **You are fully responsible for yourself.**

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Be Careful Out There!

The recent debacles in Trabuco and Eaton Canyons demonstrates the risks involved in hiking. None of our hikers were involved in these incidents. I call them debacles because they were the result of the stupidity of unprepared kids, ignorant of how to behave in the wilderness. We rarely think of hiking as being a risky sport yet we frequently hear of serious problems on the trail.

Our group hikes through various types of terrain, some of the hikes are on easy trails and some of them on more rugged trails in wilderness areas. The wilderness in our area is generally quite benign. Our group is composed of hikers with varying degrees of expertise. For the more knowledgeable in our group our wilderness is very tame and unthreatening. For the less experienced hiker it can represent a very high risk, possibly even death. We frequently see in the newspapers and on TV reports of hikers getting lost, injured and occasionally dying. No matter how tame the wilderness may seem, we must always respect it as a potentially dangerous place. The wilderness neither harms nor helps one; it is just there. For the unthinking or foolish hiker it is an excellent place to injure himself or to die.

Within our group over the years there have been several regrettable incidents that could have had very serious consequences. Nearly all of the incidents could have been prevented. The best way to treat these problems is to prevent them. The old Boy Scout motto “Be Prepared” is not just an archaic cliché. It is basic wisdom for every person who steps on a trail.

Preparation is the key to a successful hike. Know where you are going. Look at a map of the area prior to the hike. Estimate the amount of food, water and clothing you will need. Respect the wilderness and don't overestimate your own abilities.

The Sierra Club and several outdoor other groups recommend The Ten Essentials for any hike. You may decide that you really don't need all of them but if you find yourself in a bind needing one of them, you might be desperate.

It is **your** responsibility to be prepared and self-sufficient on the trail. Your friends will probably help you, but **you** are responsible for yourself.

The military has a term, “Situation Awareness”. In civilian terms it means “Pay attention dammit”. Google the term and be informed. I have noted that in our group our hikers frequently get more interested in what they are talking about than about the area they are hiking in. Not surprisingly, this leads to confusion and getting lost or injured.

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Situation Awareness

Situation Awareness is a relatively new term, originating in the military. The expression came into general usage in the 1990's.

The term seems so obvious in meaning and so self-explanatory that it should hardly need to be defined. However I have found that in the military, on the job and in most social assemblages there are always individuals who apparently have no comprehension of the concept, or believe that it applies not to themselves but to others.

In the Army, the response to this attitude was frequently expressed by the non-coms as "Getcher godam head outa yer godam ass!" Of course, our group is much too refined and sensitive for such a crude expression. Therefore, "Pay attention, Dammit!" will have to suffice.

Situation awareness simply means that at all times the individual should be aware of his total environment. That includes where he is, what is in his surroundings, how he is equipped, what the weather conditions are and any other pertinent circumstances.

Our group frequently hikes in areas that might be loosely considered to be wilderness. Although our wilderness is quite benign it is possible, if not probable that the unthinking hiker can encounter serious problems or even death. It is essential that while one is on the trail this awareness must be maintained constantly. The greatest danger while hiking is not the wilderness or the wild creatures, but the foolishness of the hiker.

We have had too many incidents where someone was lost or injured because they were engrossed in thinking of things other than their environment or their own circumstances. The previous night's TV show, the big game or your social plans are things that you will have plenty of time to think about and discuss when you are off the trail. It is essential that the hiker not only see his surroundings but he must perceive what he sees.

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Trailsmanship Ethic

Every group hiking, backpacking, or climbing together should have a leader, named or not:

The leader may be the one who gets the group together for the adventure, or be the most experienced, member of the group

Caution:

Beware of the person who tends to assume leadership by inexperienced but confident opinion. The person whose ego and ambition exceeds his experience or his ability is a menace to himself and the others in his group.

The leader should establish the mission:

The members should stay together and share the experience, or if a member is not comfortable with the hike or cannot proceed he should be escorted back or situated in a safe, warm (cool) place and picked up on the way back.

In the case of injury the leader must decide the severity of the injury. It may be necessary to send for help and arrange evacuation of the injured party, or if first aid can relieve the problem. In extreme cases it may be necessary to abort the hike and make sure that everyone returns safely.

The leader should evaluate the individuals in the group:

We often hear of the dangers to be encountered on the trail such as wild animals or difficult areas on the trail itself. These of course should be considered. But the biggest danger for the average hiker is the hiker, himself. Too many people take to the trails when they are ill prepared, ill inexperienced or ill equipped. It is the responsibility of each hiker to familiarize himself to the requirements of any trip that he may venture on.

An inadequately conditioned, experienced or equipped member of the group can spoil the adventure for the others and it is the leaders responsibility to avoid this situation.

Experienced means that you know the route, the techniques, your abilities and those of your group.

Every member should have the Essential Systems, Ten or otherwise:

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Leadership

Effective leadership requires two obvious elements. The first is a group willing to be led. The second is a leader capable of leading. It is futile to attempt to lead people where they don't want to go. In the military the authorities have ways of convincing their followers that they want to go where they are directed. The few who continue to resist are punished appropriately. On the job there is always the threat of termination or missing the next raise in salary.

In a group such as ours, leadership consists mainly of education and persuasion. Education means informing the people what is the proper way to accomplish the group goals. Persuasion is mainly providing a good example and encouraging good performance. The old carrot and stick method does not apply here. Effectively, we have virtually no stick other than withholding the carrot. In a group that refuses to be led it is a waste of time and effort to attempt to lead them. Think of herding cats.

What is leadership?

Leadership is a job. It is not a position or a rank. Although some leaders can be rather rank He must be closely involved with all of his people..

It is a leader's job to understand and be able to fulfill his current mission. He should have the knowledge and understanding required for the successful completion of his mission.

He must be capable of telling his people what is expected of them and what they should expect of themselves. He must be aware that his people are his most important asset and that each individual is essential to the success of the mission.

He must be aware of the abilities and limitations of his people. His primary concern must be that his followers be able to perform their functions and complete their task safely. He must be aware of the welfare of each person in his group. He must be ready to assist any of his people who are having a problem.

He should be able to deal with any unexpected problem that might arise. He should get help when needed.

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The Peter Principle: Why Incompetent People Get Promoted

We have often wondered about someone in charge, "Who promoted you?" or "How have you not been fired by now?" If you have, take comfort in knowing you're not alone -- many of us have to deal with bosses that seem in over their heads.

The fact is, while your inept boss may drive you nuts, it may not even be his or her fault -- or even the fault of your company for promoting your boss in the first place. Your unsuspecting employer had no idea that your boss would become a full-blown case of the Peter Principle in action.

So who is Peter and what did he do to make your boss so frustrating, you ask?

Well, Dr. Laurence J. Peter is a former professor who published a satirical book based around his theory that "In a hierarchy, every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence," and that "In time, every post tends to be occupied by an employee who is incompetent to carry out its duties." Or, basically: We do a job well, we're promoted. We do that job well, we're promoted again. This happens in succession until we eventually rise to a position that we can no longer do well -- or our level of incompetence. There, we either stagnate, revert back to a lower position, or are fired.

While "The Peter Principle: Why Things Always Go Wrong", was originally meant to provide a sort of absurd-yet-true comic relief to the overworked, the practicality and pertinence of the Peter Principle was not lost on the working world, and the theory has since become a hotly debated resources phenomenon.

Leader Types

General Norman Schwarzkopf said: "The truth of the matter is that you always know the right thing to do. The hard part is doing it."

Frederick the Great's typology of officers provides a hint of how one might best think about the issue of military competence. The Prussian king suggested that there were four types of officers.

First were the brilliant but lazy. He suggested such officers had the attributes to function at the highest levels of command.

Second were the brilliant, but diligent. They made the best staff officers.

Third were the less intelligent but lazy. They made good battalion officers.

Finally, there were the less intelligent and diligent. They were the most dangerous

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to the proper functioning of any military organization, in both peace and war, because of their penchant for confusing process and work for product.

Prussian Field Marshal Helmuth Karl Bernhard Graf von Moltke (1800-1891) developed this interesting Value Matrix to categorize his officer corps.

- **Smart & Lazy:** I make them my Commanders because they make the right thing happen but find the easiest way to accomplish the mission.
- **Smart & Energetic:** I make them my General Staff Officers because they make intelligent plans that make the right things happen.
- **Dumb & Lazy:** There are menial tasks that require an officer to perform that they can accomplish and they follow orders without causing much harm.
- **Dumb & Energetic:** These are dangerous and must be eliminated. They cause things to happen but the wrong things cause trouble.

The German World War II general Erich von Manstein is said to have categorized his officers into four types.

The first type, he said, is lazy and stupid. His advice was to leave them alone because they don't do any harm.

The second type is hard-working and clever. He said that they make great officers because they ensure everything runs smoothly.

The third group is composed of hardworking idiots. Von Manstein claims that you must immediately get rid of these, as they force everyone around them to perform pointless tasks.

The fourth category are officers who are lazy and clever. These, he says, should be your generals.

In Short.

It is evident that the most dangerous person in any organization is the one whose ego and ambition exceeds his ability.

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Hiking Safety

Before you lace up your boots, jump into the car and head up to your favorite hiking destination, take the time to prepare. Just a little bit of information and a couple of extra supplies can go a long way in making your trip successful. It could even save your life! The secret is to **KNOW BEFORE YOU GO**.

Unexpected things happen in the outdoors! There are several things to consider before you ever leave home:

- 1) Know the area and the route you plan to visit. Plan ahead and learn about the area by using guidebooks, maps, and the internet and by calling the nearest Forest Service office responsible for the area. Make sure you know your route!
- 2) Know your physical capabilities. Use common sense and don't go on a trip that you are not prepared for or plan a trip that is beyond your physical skill and capabilities.
- 3) Know the weather conditions and forecast where you will be hiking. After you check the weather conditions and forecast, dress, pack your clothing and plan your trip accordingly. As we all know, forecasts aren't always 100% accurate but they can give you a good idea of what to expect. If the weather turns bad, turn back.
- 4) Know what equipment to bring and the proper shoes and clothes for your activity. Layering your clothing is a great idea! Bring extra clothes so you can adapt to weather changes. If it's cold outside, covering your head will keep you warmer. Sixty percent of your body's heat loss is through your head. High heels or go-aheads do not work well in rocky areas!
- 5) Know all necessary skills for your adventure and be prepared to use them. If you do not have all the technical skills, you should go with someone else who has the experience. If you are going to an area where you need to read a detailed map, make sure you know how!
- 6) Know the regulations and rules for the area you are visiting. Some areas require you to have reservations or certain permits. If an area is closed do not go there. There may be rules about campfires or guidelines about wildlife, obey them.
- 7) Let someone else know where you are going. Leave a copy of your itinerary with a responsible person. Let them know where and what time you are going and when you plan to return. Don't change your itinerary without letting someone know. I always leave a copy of the hike info on the refrigerator door so that if I don't get home on time my wife will know where to direct the Search and Rescue team to start their search.

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8) Don't hike alone. It's safest to hike or camp with at least one companion. A ranger once told me "A solo hiker has a fool for a companion".

9) Know what to do in case of an emergency. Know ahead of time where the nearest telephone, ranger station or emergency help is. Remember, cell phones often do not work in remote areas. Know the signs of dehydration, heat stroke, heat exhaustion and hypothermia and how to treat them. Bring a first aid kit with you.

10) Always bring enough water with you, at least two quarts per person. Operate with the assumption that you may get lost or stay out longer than planned. Mountain water sources are not always dependable year round, or clean enough to drink. Always be prepared.

11) Remember other safety items: food, sunglasses, a pocket knife, insect repellent, first aid kit, flashlight, extra clothing.

12) Bring salt tablets or Bouillon cubes for leg cramps or dehydration.

13) Always carry a loud whistle and a two way radio.

14) A spot locator can save your life or a companion's.

We have several hikers who are quite competent. Unfortunately, we have some others who are not as experienced as they may think. Too many of our hikers think that lacing on hiking boots makes them colleagues of Kit Carson, Daniel Boone or Natty Bumppo, (Look him up) and that bunch. Often I think they resemble Elmer Fudd. Many people think "Practice makes perfect". Not so. Perfect practice makes perfect. Imperfect practice establishes bad habits.

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Fire Safety

This year the probability of fire in the woods is even greater than in recent years due to our six year drought. On our hikes we have all seen how dry the wilderness is around here.

This is a serious consideration for our group because we regularly hike in fire-prone areas. As yet, we've experienced no immediate effect from a wild fire. Inevitably, we will, to some degree, be affected by a fire. I hope that because of foresight on our part we will simply avoid it and observe it on TV or in the news. It is much better to scrub a hike and wait for better and safer times.

A few weeks ago two hikers, not from our group, lost their lives in a brush fire. Caution and planning should always be the way to avoid that possibility.

I believe that most of us have had very little immediate experience with wildfire. In 1948 when I was in the Army, stationed at Fort Ord, I and a number of my associates were taken to Hunter-Liggett military reservation to deal with a wild fire. My part was extremely minor, for which I was grateful. In a situation like that, a minor role is quite impressive.

A wild fire is not just an oversized camp fire. It can unexpectedly become an all devouring monster. It can move very quickly and unpredictably. The only way for those not involved with suppressing the fire to be safe is to stay away.

The most benign possibility is that a fire will occur far from where we plan to hike. In that event we should decide whether or not to scrub the hike and perhaps consider an alternate hike.

In the event that a fire has started in the area where we plan to hike, our only alternative will be to scrub the hike. I assume that the hike leader will monitor conditions in the area where the hike is planned. If he decides to scrub the hike he should notify the group by e-mail of his decision and possibly have a plan "B" to a safe area.

A worse circumstance would be if a fire started near us while we were on the trail. The safest thing to do would be to abandon the hike and leave the area. The hike leader would make sure that all the hikers safely leave the hike and the area.

The very worst circumstance would be if the fire is close enough to affect our trail. If this should happen we must find the safest way out of the area. It may be impossible to return to the trail head. Our only consideration would be to get clear of the fire area. Personal safety is our only goal.

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Planning ahead to avoid any of these situations is essential. The group leader has primary responsibility to protect the hikers. It is a fact, leadership can be a pain in the neck! Or whatever.

Some of our people are well aware of the risks involved. Some of the others in our group need to give a bit more thought in advance about their hike plans

If several of our hikers would discuss this matter in a group forum, it would be very beneficial to get our people thinking about the problem.

In addition to the danger of the fire itself there will be a lot of traffic of emergency vehicles. Do not get in their way. Do not impede their efforts by interfering.

In the past I have hiked in areas that might be vulnerable to fire. When I am hiking I always look for safe places to retreat in an emergency.

If you're not part of the solution; do not become part of the problem.

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The Ten Essentials

Extra food and water

Map

Compass

Loud Whistle

Extra clothing

Sunglasses and sunscreen

Pocket knife

Flashlight (with spare batteries & bulb)

Fire starter and Matches (in waterproof container): (Maybe)

First aid kit

The first essential, not mentioned above, is a functioning brain. In the wilderness, more than almost any other place you may go, you will need to be able to think clearly and thoroughly about your situation.

Extra food and water means to carry more than you expect to use on the hike. In our semi-arid climate water is probably the most important. New hikers usually underestimate the amount of water they will require. On the trail you will need more water than when you are sitting quietly at home or strolling in your neighborhood. You probably will be sweating and breathing harder than usual. You might be surprised how much water vapor you expel when you exhale. It's best to always start with a minimum of two quarts; more in hot weather or on a long hike. If you run out of water and you have a long way to go, drink any available stream water. There are water treatment tablets available, use them. Giardia and other problems can be treated by a doctor when you get home.

The map and compass are usually used together. They are nearly useless if the hiker doesn't know how to use them. It's the hiker's responsibility to get some training. The compass doesn't point to home. It merely points north, and even then it's usually off by a few degrees. It's up to you to figure that out.

A loud whistle is very useful for signaling. It's sound will carry further than shouting and can be continued for a longer time than shouting. The little peewee toys that some hikers carry are nearly useless. A sufficiently loud whistle can be obtained for less than five bucks at most sporting goods stores. Be serious.

Extra clothing means to be prepared for weather changes and possibly an unexpected bivouac. When planning a hike, remember, the weather around home is not important; plan for the weather where you will hike.

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We're in Southern California. Expect to be exposed to the sun. Sunglasses will make your hike more enjoyable. Sunscreen will prevent a number of long term skin problems.

A pocket knife and a flashlight can be essential at times. If you find yourself stranded at night the flashlight is a signaling device.

I'm sure that the rangers will take a dim view of you carrying matches and fire starter, especially in the summer time. Always be extremely cautious with fire in the wilderness. Build a fire ONLY when absolutely necessary. In the current drought conditions nearly all of the natural growth is so dry and flammable it is best not to consider making a fire.

A first aid kit is important for minor injuries on the trail. It should include any medications that you are required to take. There are several kits suitable for hikers that are available commercially. I would defer to our OTP Medical Corps to describe the contents and use of these kits. Minor injuries are easily dealt with. I think more serious injuries would simply require making the injured hiker as comfortable as possible, then notifying authorities to arrange evacuation.

Sierra Club has had a Basic Mountaineering Training Class which has been superseded by the Wilderness Training Class, WTC. a similar outdoor training class. I, and at least one of our group, have completed the BMTC. It would be an excellent idea for the rest of the group to attend the current outdoor training class. We have a Sierra Club WTC instructor in our group. Get some information from him.

Additionally there are several devices that we can carry with us. We should all have an FRS radio. A cell phone can be very useful. GPS is of some value. A GPS locator beacon is very desirable. In the final analysis all these doo dads are nice but each one of us is responsible for his own survival. Do not depend on these toys; always keep your brain in the loop. Each of us should prepare ourselves to be self-sufficient and deal with any emergency.

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Hydration

Some of our recent experiences in hot weather give us all much to think about. The basic problem is that in the summer our weather can be much more desert like than it usually is. In short, it might be hotter than, well, I guess blazes will have to do as a simile. In Southern California, we rarely see temperatures near the coast that can be really dangerous.

When I was a little kid in the late 1930's I lived on a large alfalfa ranch on the Mojave Desert, northwest of Barstow near Harper dry lake. From my own experience and observing the ranch hands I learned that the sun is not always our friend. You will rarely find experienced desert people in short sleeved shirts or short trousers. They know what the sun can do. They never get far from their water. They've learned about that too. At that time whenever they moved around doing their work, they always kept a water bag handy. Indeed, whenever you might have seen a car travelling, in those pre air conditioning days, you would nearly always see a water bag attached, usually, to the door handle.

A few years ago Kathy and I were hiking on the Northern Ute reservation in Colorado. Our Ute guide gave me an Indian name. I could never pronounce it so, inevitably, I have forgotten the name in Ute. The English translation is "Mike Two Bottles". Our guide noted that I never got far from my water.

Most of us live in an urban environment where we are rarely in a really uncomfortable situation. As a result we frequently don't understand how to act in extreme situations.

When you are exerting in the heat and the humidity is very low, as it might be, you will sweat and not notice it much because it evaporates quickly. You will probably be breathing hard. You would probably be amazed at how much water vapor you expel with every breath. The breathing and sweating will cause you to lose a lot of water. The sweating will also carry away some essential minerals.

I always carry Gatorade. I sometimes call it synthetic sweat. It was developed by the coach of a Florida team called "the Gators". The coach took samples of the sweat of his players and had it analyzed. He then developed a drink that would replace those minerals and hydrate the player. Thus, our famous Gatorade.

When I'm hiking I have a tendency to not drink enough. By the time I start to feel thirsty, I've already begun to dehydrate. I have to consciously remind myself to drink even though I don't feel like I need it. On occasion I have allowed myself to get lightheaded by not drinking. Yes, I know, there are some who think this is my natural state. There are others in the group who have the same habit. Drink your damned water!

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In the past our group has scrubbed hikes because of excessive heat as we do for rain. The obvious reason for these hikes is to have fun. It's really no fun to get sick on the trail so that you are brought in on a stretcher rather than on your own hind legs. At our ages caution is really the better part of valor. We are old enough to know our limits and to have pretty a good idea what might happen if we exceed them.

A scrubbed hike harms no one. The mountains and the trails will be out there for a long time. Let's enjoy them later when it feels good.

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Lost Sheep

So you think you're lost. Maybe you are, but there's a pretty good chance that you just don't know exactly where you are. Lost is usually a state of mind when you have run out of ideas of how to get to where you want to be. You should be able to think your way out of the problem.

I've never been lost. Many times I have been confused for a while but I've always found my way out. If you think, you can probably figure your way out too. If you're not injured, panic is your biggest problem.

Where are your companions? You should not be on the trail alone. You should have an FRS radio to attempt to contact other group members.

The first thing you must do is not very much. Find a spot to sit down; take a sip of water; relax; nibble on a cookie or something. Get as comfortable and as relaxed as possible. Then try to think as calmly as you can.

If you decide that you are really lost, all your goals have changed. Your only goal now is to survive. If you miss dinner, that's really not a big deal. Getting excited and moving around without thinking will only get you more lost.

If you are injured or unable to travel, your only option is to wait for rescue. You must depend on your friends to note that you are missing and they will notify the proper authorities to start a search and rescue operation. A Locator Beacon can be a life saver in situations like this.

Do not get excited or go into a panic. When your friends miss you they will get a search operation under way. Stay where you are; a moving target is harder to hit. Make it easier for your rescuers to find you. If you have an FRS radio, attempt to contact the other hikers. At a time like this, a Locator Beacon is worth gold, it can save your life. Always carry the loudest whistle you can find for signaling.

Now start thinking. Where were you when you didn't feel lost? If you're on a trail or a road, you're really not lost; just temporarily inconvenienced. How far is it back to where you started? Stay on the road or trail. That's where your rescuers will find you when they start looking. Don't go bushwhacking off the trail, you'll only make your situation worse.

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Try to stay in an open area where aerial searchers can easily spot you. If you have anything brightly colored such as a jacket, back pack, towel or anything brightly colored, display it prominently. This is no time for stealth.

The most important thing you can do is to prevent getting lost. Plan your trip thoroughly. Have some idea of the geography of the area where you are hiking. Why don't you have a map? Carry enough extra provisions to take care of unexpected problems. Don't depend on your companions for your needs. If you find yourself alone and lost they won't help you very much while you're alone. You must be self-sufficient. Leave a copy of your itinerary with someone at home or in your car.

You should come out of this with a great story to tell; just remember, you're really not a hero.

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Rescuing Lost Sheep

If it is determined that a hiker is lost, all efforts must be directed toward resolving that problem. Generally, it is a bad idea for everyone to start searching in an uncoordinated manner. Any rescue effort must be well coordinated and controlled. If everyone starts independently searching, the result will be to simply have more lost sheep. It is human nature to want to help. The eager beavers must use self-control, and if necessary be discouraged from precipitous action. Unfortunately too many hikers think that they can individually effect a rescue. The rescue effort must be a coordinated group effort.

It is a good idea to select the most experienced member of your group as Search Coordinator. When a member of your party becomes lost, all your group goals and plans are changed. Your only goal is to rescue your lost sheep and to keep the rest of your group together to avoid further losses. If, in the unlikely event, you decide to send out searchers do not send them individually. They must be experienced hikers who know the terrain to be searched. There should be at least two in the search group and they must have FRS radios so that they can communicate with the base communicator.

The search coordinator and the search leader should confer to decide what action should be taken.

There must be a responsible person at the base group to communicate with the search party and he should be the only one attempting to communicate. While the search party is out there should be a minimum of radio chatter. Too much chatter interferes with the search operations. It is essential that the search party be able to communicate with the base party. If possible, an attempt should be made by the base group and by the search party to contact the lost sheep. All extraneous chatter must be avoided, only the search party and the base communicator should use the group channel, 5-10, for any transmission. Too many people are unaware that their transmissions may impede the searchers.

Upon determining that a member of your party is hopelessly lost call 911 or use any other means to notify authorities. Do not waste time. It is essential that rescue operations begin immediately. When a search and rescue team or other authority arrives turn the whole rescue operation over to them. They are probably well trained for situations such as this. Cooperate fully with them; do as they say and

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do nothing on your own without discussing it with them. They have become the trail bosses.

We've had several incidents requiring a Search and Rescue party. In some cases helicopters have been needed to locate and evacuate the individual in trouble. Helicopters do not fly cheaply; it may be noted that the rescues have not had to pay for their ride. The taxpayers have paid the fare.

It is costly and to some degree risky to effect a rescue. The recent Trabuco Canyon event has been estimated as costing \$150,000 and one of the rescuers was injured and went to the hospital.

In every rescue incident experienced by this group there was no excuse; each could have been avoided. There are no accidents, every incident has a cause. Poor judgment on the part of one or more hikers has been the most common cause.

We cannot allow ourselves to view these events as amusing larks in the woods.

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First Aid

If you find yourself in a situation that requires anything more complicated than Band-Aids there is very little that you can do. In a really serious situation about all you can do is send for help and have the subject evacuated. Time is always of the essence; you must act immediately.

I'm really not qualified to give first aid advice; I have had first aid classes with my SCUBA training, my hard hat diving training and Sierra Club BMTC. I regret to say that I have forgotten most of the details. Obviously, most of our group are not capable of dealing with any major procedures. **Get help.**

Without the tools of his trade there is little more that a medical professional can do than the informed hiker. Hopefully, he will be able to recognize the nature and severity of the problem. Again, if the problem is serious call for aid and do what you can to stabilize the problem, then **get help.**

I would appreciate it very much if our contingent of doctors would comment, critique or even rewrite this page. The following is what I would do.

I recall that the first concerns for an injured subject are breathing, bleeding and broken bones.

If the subject is breathing, go on to the next concern. If he is not breathing, you have a very large problem. I have had CPR instructions but I doubt my current competence. Get some training. One of my first aid instructors, an ER doctor, advised us that if the subject hasn't been breathing for five minutes, do him a favor, don't attempt to revive him.

If the bleeding is just oozing, put a pad on it to protect it. If the blood is running, put a pressure bandage on it to control the bleeding. If it is arterial spurting, the doc previously mentioned said "Put your thumb on it, I don't care if it's been in horse shit; stop the bleeding. Any resulting infection can be treated later by a doctor".

There isn't much you can do about broken bones. Place the subject in as protected and comfortable a position as possible. Treat any of the foregoing problems then **get help**; send for Search and Rescue to evacuate the subject.

A sprain has some of the indications of a broken bone, only to a somewhat lesser degree. If the subject is able to walk, he should be escorted to safety. If he cannot walk, **get help.**

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We have had a recent experience with a possible heart problem. As a group we need to be advised what symptoms to look for and how to deal with the problem. **Immediately send for help** to arrange for evacuation. If, indeed, it is a heart problem you will not have much time to deal with it. If you have a locator beacon available it could be a life saving device. Time is of the essence. If you misjudge and report an incident which later proves to not be a heart attack, please remember this is less of a problem than if you had allowed someone to die.

A difficult problem to assess is when a person may be having heart problems, a stroke or other condition with sometimes vague symptoms. They may show serious and immediate symptoms or they may simply be feeling bad with more or less vague symptoms. In the first case your decision is obvious; make the subject as comfortable as possible and **get help immediately**. In the second case the subject may just be tired, slightly dehydrated or have other minor problems. This will require you to decide what is required. An immediate period of rest, drink some water, perhaps a salt tablet should be tried. If you consider it a serious problem **get help**. Remember, a life may be at risk. It is better to err on the side of safety than to take an unnecessary risk.

When sending for help, it is best to have at least one person stay with the subject. If possible, there should be at least two, together, going for help. FRS radios are extremely important. Of course, if there aren't enough people available you must do the best that you can.

When you have a hiker incapacitated in any way, the goals of all or part of the group change. The original plans are of no consequence if a serious injury or illness is involved. At this point your only concern is to get the subject and the rest of the group to safety. It may be necessary to totally abort the hike. Solving the problem is of paramount importance.

Never abandon an injured or sick hiker; or for that matter, any injured or sick person that you may meet. To abandon any sick or injured person on the trail is reprehensible and totally unacceptable. The subject should not be left alone or expected to hike out alone.

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Snakes; Whataya do about 'em?

The OTP regularly hikes in areas where rattlesnakes thrive. We have seen them on or near the trail many times. Happily, so far, we've had no snakebites. The very best treatment for snakebite is to not get bit. Prevention is fairly simple; avoidance, and a bit of common sense. Never put your hands or feet where you cannot see. Don't depend on snakes rattling before they strike; sometimes they don't.

Rattlesnakes will not seek you out to attack you. They're not happy to be near you, they really want to get away from you. They bite defensively

Logic and common sense are the two main things that you should be equipped with in order to really understand how to deal with snake bites.

1. First, you must know how to diagnose snake bite. It is important that you know if it is indeed a snake bite or not. If you saw what happened then you can be sure about it and then go to the next step. In case you were not around when a person was bitten you should look for signs of the two fangs bite mark. Other signs include swelling and moderate to severe pain in the bite area. You should also look for skin discoloration, which will indicate venom and the twitching skin on the area. The victim could also suffer from different symptoms like vomiting, nausea, dizziness, slurred speech, sweating and abnormality of mental condition. If the signs and symptoms are present, then it is indeed a snake bite and you should proceed.

2. The next step is to get immediate help.

3. Then, the victim should be kept calm and very still. If you can immobilize the victim it would be better. Do not allow the victim to walk and it would be better to use a splint in the bite area. Also, make sure that the bitten part of the body is positioned lower than the victim's chest. Place a constricting band or a bandage about two to four inches over the bite area, and also under it, if possible. Make sure that the bandage is not too tightly placed though. The main idea for the bandage is to prevent the venom from traveling through the lymphatic system and the bloodstream.

4. It would also be better if the snake can be identified. Take note of the snake's size, color, pattern and other details.

5. Clean the wound or snake bite area with soap and water is the next step.

6. Take the victim to the nearest clinic or hospital. The victim should also be monitored continuously to watch out for any other signs and symptoms. If needed, you may have to perform CPR.

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7. Do not panic! This is actually a golden rule. As much as possible make sure the victim and other people in the team do not panic. Lastly, keep monitoring the victim for changes in the wound area.

WHAT NOT TO DO

Never try to cut open the wound. Do not, for whatever reason try to suck the venom out. You must understand that the venom could seep through any lacerated or damaged tissues inside your mouth and you will be in real danger.

Applying any ointment is also a big mistake. The same thing for goes giving the patient any alcohol. Just use soap and water to clean the wound.

MEDICAL MANAGEMENT

Often venom is not actually passed in a bite, additionally there is also a big chance that the snake is not a poisonous kind. It is also important to understand that even if the snake is not poisonous, hospital management is still necessary because the wound would still need to be treated and tetanus vaccine would need to be administered (depending on how long ago you have had the vaccine). Many are surprised to learn that you can get tetanus from a snake bite.

Antivenin is required if the snake has been proven to be poisonous and the venom had been injected. It is important to keep in mind though that not all hospitals may have readily available antivenin. Thus, knowing about first aid can really save the victim, especially if there is a need to buy time between the time of the bite and the time the victim reaches the hospital.

CONCLUSION

Although being bitten by a snake is somewhat rare, if you do go hiking it would still be great if you know how to take some precautionary measures in order to decrease the chances of a bite. And if the dreaded snake bite does occur, remember that immediate first aid is important.

TRIVIA

A dead snake can still cause damage and it is essential to handle a dead snake with care. It can still carry venom that can still cause serious damages because of the snake's possible reflex action after dying.

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Devices and Doo Dads

There are number of items that can be useful to varying degrees. Some of them are almost essential while others are sufficiently useful that they are worth carrying with you.

The simplest is a whistle. If you are lost or need help you can be heard with a whistle for a greater distance than you can by shouting. You can also whistle for a lot longer than you can shout. The pee wee toys that many of our hikers carry are virtually useless in a real emergency. Get rid of these things or give them to a child. Get a really loud whistle. They are available in most stores selling hiking equipment.

An FRS radio is one of the more important items that you can carry. It is not for your amusement, it is for the exchange of important information on the trail. This can save your life, prevent you from taking a wrong turn or maintain contact with the others in your group. I have heard comments that one of our hikers didn't want to bother to carry one. I can think of a couple of occasions when that individual was rescued because someone with him had a radio.

Map and compass are very useful; if you know how to use them. Unfortunately, not very many people in our group know much about these items. This works best as a combination of a compass and a topographic map. Everyone should take a course in wilderness navigation with map and compass. They will learn that a compass doesn't point to home. It only points north and even then it may be off a few degrees. There is much to learn about this simple device.

A GPS is very useful if you know how to use it. It will give you your location and information about the trails and roads near you. It will not, however, call for help if you need it.

A GPS Locator Beacon will call for help in an emergency. It is basically a GPS device. If you are lost or injured you can press the help button. It will then send a signal to a satellite, which will in turn send a signal to an appropriate emergency responder near you. The rescue people will then come to you and save you.

A cell phone may be of value. Don't expect to be able to make contact in many of the places we hike.

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Personal Locator Beacons

We have had discussions about calling for help in an emergency situation. (1) Assume you are five miles back in the wilderness and you or a companion is seriously hurt. (2) Assume you are hopelessly lost somewhere in the wilderness. You need assistance **now**. How do you get the message out? In case (1), send someone out to notify the appropriate authority. In case (2) you hope that someone will notice that you are missing and will make proper notification. Both these methods take a lot of time. Perhaps you need a response immediately, especially in case (1). How about your FRS radio; try to call someone. frequently in mountainous areas you won't reach anyone. These devices require line of sight to complete the transmission. A cell phone is even less reliable in these circumstances.

There is a solution; that is a Personal Locator Beacon. It is a GPS device, which, when activated, will send your coordinates to a satellite. The satellite will then transmit those coordinates to a ground station, which will in turn, send a 911 signal to the nearest rescue group.

The advantage of this is that moments after you initiate the process, the wheels start turning and help should soon be on the way. There is no time lag while someone goes for help and the communication is much more reliable than cell phones or FRS radios.

I have used a Spot Locator for years and have found it to be quite serviceable. The Spot Locator is, perhaps, the most common type. Another is the ACR Resq Link 406. Its initial cost is higher but there is no subscription fee for five years, thus the total cost over five years is less

These devices are available at Amazon for a reasonable cost.

The locator beacon can be taken with you on other trips that you may take. If you find yourself stranded anywhere, help can be called immediately.

A number of people have complained about the price of these things. My answer has always been, "What's your life worth?".

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Hiking Incidents

Hiking seems to be a fairly simple endeavor; one merely walks up the trail. In fact, there is much to know and learn about the outdoors. Some less experienced hikers have no awareness of what they might experience on the trail. Many who have been hiking for years have not learned much about the outdoors.

Over the years we have had a number of unfortunate incidents involving lost or injured hikers. Several of these incidents were quite serious and involved serious injury. Search and Rescue and helicopter evacuation were required in some cases. These incidents should all have been anticipated and avoided.

It is a fact that there are no accidents, every incident has a cause. With a bit of examination it has become apparent that all of our incidents were caused by poor judgment or foolishness on the part of someone. It seems that we should have some sort of training for some of our hikers. A few of our hikers have taken the Sierra Club Basic Mountaineering Training Class. This has been superseded by the Wilderness Training Class. Many of our hikers should take an appropriate class because they know less than they think they do about hiking.

Mike Dillenback is an instructor with the Sierra Club WTC. He can be a valuable asset to advise our group. It would be wise for some of our less proficient members to consult with him and perhaps arrange to take the class.

We have several hikers who are quite competent. Unfortunately, several others are not as experienced as they may think. Some of our hikers think that lacing on hiking boots makes them colleagues of Kit Carson or Daniel Boone. These are the ones who get into trouble and more closely resemble Elmer Fudd. Frequently, it appears that it is a matter of having more ambition than ability.

Many people think "Practice makes perfect". Not so. Perfect practice makes perfect. Imperfect practice establishes bad habits. A serious hiker should get some training in wilderness requirements and wilderness navigation.

The number of rescues and injuries on the trail experienced by our group over the years indicates that many of our hikers have had a serious lack of respect for the wilderness and a lack of judgment in outdoor situations. Unfortunately, it seems apparent that we can expect more incidents. The inexperienced hikers should recognize their lack of wilderness knowledge and make an effort to learn more. They who know naught, know not that they know naught.

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Some of our hikers use various doodads and gimmicks such as GPS, FRS radios, Spot Locators, compasses and other devices. These are all very useful; however, with or without these items a hiker must always consider his brain to be his most important safety device. The hiker himself is responsible to improve his knowledge and ability. **There is no substitute for awareness and thinking.**

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Feedback

You may find some inaccuracies or omissions in this booklet. If so, please bring them to my attention so that I can incorporate any corrections.

I would like to include any input from our hiking group because I would like this to be a group effort rather than one persons opinion. Please send any suggestions for improvement of this booklet to me.

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Happy Trails,

Mike Gessner