

# OLYMPIC MOUNTAIN RESCUE - THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

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**Prologue:** Olympic Mountain Rescue (OMR) was spawned, of necessity, by the post World War II climbing boom. Prior to the "Great War", climbing was a sport participated in by a select few who were generally well experienced. They were a tight fraternity who saw to it that the few neophytes venturing along were well taken care of; as a result, there were few accidents. Some of the better-known local names of this era included: George Martin, E. "Swede" Johnson, A.E. "Bremerton" Smith and Paul Crews. Undoubtedly, this colorful group participated in early un-official rescue activity. They can also be credited for starting the Bremerton area climbing tradition, which persists to this day.

After the war, the masses discovered the mountains, including the Olympics, and the accident rate rose accordingly. In the late forties and early fifties there were a number of climbing accidents in the Olympics including fatalities on both Mount Anderson and Mount Olympus. The moving force, which eventually led to the formation of OMR, was undoubtedly the loss of Bob Thorson on The Brothers. He was a well thought of young man and the Student Body President at Bremerton High School. Naturally, Bremerton climbers volunteered to go to the aid of the mortally injured Thorson. These climbers immediately discovered that rescue was a totally different experience than nice uneventful mountaineering. They had neither training nor equipment; they did have big problems! In fact, it was later reported that the group was fortunate to eventually make the recovery without having their own accident.

The late George Martin, a veteran climber and later the registrar at Olympic College, was a member of this group. He was disturbed not only by the senselessness of the accident (inexperienced and untrained climbers), but also by the inadequacy of the rescue effort. Thorson had lingered and some felt that a timely rescue might have made the difference. At any rate, Martin decided to do something about the problem. He convinced the Olympic College administration that people were going into the mountains with or without training, and that they had better offer a mountaineering course to provide the training. This was no small feat since the idea was met by considerable local opposition. Several key Bremerton climbers were opposed to a class that would encourage "reckless" youth to take up mountaineering. The course proved successful from several standpoints. Firstly, very few local climbers have, through the years, been involved in accidents. Secondly, within a very short time, the course produced a number of skilled climbers who were soon to become the nucleus of Olympic Mountain Rescue.

**The Beginning:** On January 23, 1957 a small group of local climbers met, not surprisingly, in George Martin's living room to discuss the practicality of forming a rescue group. Dorrell Loof, chairman of "The Mountain Rescue Council" in Seattle, was also invited to outline problems that a new rescue group would have to face and to assure Seattle support of the proposed endeavor. The principal output of this meeting was election of an organizational committee consisting of Roy Etten, Glenn Kelsey, George Martin, Dr. Arpad Masley and Jack Newman. They were charged with the task of developing recommendations regarding type of organization, affiliation, officers and committees and patch requirements.

After several committee meetings, the complete group reconvened on February 27, 1957, in what proved to be the first official meeting of the new organization. Recommendations of the committee were quickly reviewed and accepted and a slate of officers was elected. Grocery man Roy Etten was named first Chairman. "Tiger" Jack Newman became Vice Chairman, and Scout executive George Sainsbury was tapped as Secretary-Treasurer. Other officers and committee heads were: Arnold Bloomer, Arthur Broetje, Roy Harniss, Jack Hayes, George Martin and Chet Ullin. The group agreed to affiliate with the Seattle based "Mountain Rescue Council", thereby assuming the name "Mountain Rescue Council Olympic Unit". While all this organizational stuff was going on, a Navy plane crashed near Kingston. OMR actually participated in its first mission (a search for this aircraft) before it officially existed.

While very modest about his role Martin is generally credited as the moving force behind establishment of the new organization.

**The Early Years:** This era was undoubtedly, the most enjoyable in OMR's history. There were few rules, little red tape, and great comradery. Each crisis was met as a call to arms with the group sallying forth with little more than a primitive stretcher and first aid kit.

However, the period was not all roses. In addition to the lack of equipment and training, the group came from diverse backgrounds. They were a hard-nosed bunch, were strong spoken and had definite opinions. There was more than one battle! Chairman Etten had his hands full and years later confided that his two years as chairman were among the most difficult in his life. He also noted that on several occasions, he half expected the combatants to attack each other. No blows, however, were ever struck.

The early meetings were a little strange by current standards; quite informal and basically fun to attend. Lots of strange things happened. To illustrate, Kent Heathershaw arose one night to request OMR help in providing leadership to the Olympic College Rescue and Survival Class. Kent had been attending the meetings, but had not been particularly speedy about formally joining the group. The group arose in mass to silence the speech claiming that only paid up members could speak of serious matters. While a bewildered Kent Heathershaw looked on, George Martin and Chuck Maiden each coughed up a buck to pay his dues. Heathershaw was then allowed to proceed and the group enthusiastically supported his pitch. This was the beginning of a close working relationship between OMR and the Olympic College Outdoor Education Program; a relationship, which continues to this day.

There were relatively few rescues during the early period. This was just as well as the group had great need of spending its resources on training and equipment. It was the "hey day" for the innovator as little store-bought rescue equipment was available. Gordon Sinrud and Glenn Kelsey developed a number of valuable items. Sinrud was credited with development and manufacture of the first stretcher hood used anywhere. Slowly, but surely, the group solved its equipment problems. This included the purchase of a "highly regarded" Tilley Lantern. This beast would, upon command, provide either light or heat. Unfortunately, it was both delicate and a pain to carry. Immediately, the group polarized into "fores" and "antis". This friendly fight over the poor Tilley continued for years until alas, it was lost on a night exercise on Mount Washington. Rumor has it that the "antis" quietly left this artifact behind as they left for the descent.

It seemed that the early group was always training. They could be found either at Green Mountain or Mount Rainier. Sessions covered a gamut of activities, including carrying construction materials to Steamboat Prow to support construction of the Schurman Memorial Shelter. In those days, the Northwest Mountain Rescue Association held very useful spring and fall joint training sessions. OMR eagerly participated in most of them.

Somewhat surprisingly, much of the early rescue activity took place in Kitsap County. At that time, there were no local lowland rescue groups and OMR was regularly called in. The group searched for lost hunters and fishermen, sought runaways, ministered to downed aircraft and even saved a little old lady sitting on a stump near her back yard. Mountain activity wasn't entirely lacking, as there were calls to Mount Rainier, the Queets River and the Hamma Hamma River. OMR also began a long and often painful relationship with, what was to become its old friend, Mount St. Helens. Three members (Glenn Kelsey, Roy Harniss and Jack Newman) also went to Mount McKinley in Alaska in 1960 to support the "John Day Party rescue effort". This was undoubtedly the most note-worthy mission that OMR ever participated in. The trio got quite a shock being transported directly from sea level and the Seattle rain to the high altitude and sub-zero temperature of Mount McKinley. However, they performed well reaching approximately 15,000 feet on the mountain. This was a wild rescue and it included the highest aircraft aided evacuation to that date. One injured climber was picked up by a very stripped down helicopter at an altitude of over 17,000 feet. Don Sheldon in his "Super Cub" actually landed on the side of the mountain to pick up a very ill second party. Sheldon landed up-hill and kept the brakes and power on while the victim was loaded. He then spun the plane around and gunned it downhill off the edge of a cliff. OMR personnel actually spent 11 days on the mountain, the last four pinned down in a storm. Kelsey went back to McKinley again in 1967 to participate in another major rescue effort.

In May 1959 Roy Harniss was named the second chairman. As Etten left office he could take pride in having led the group to a very strong start. Most problems had been solved and his strong emphasis on training and equipment had placed the group in a good position. The Harniss years were for the most part a building and strengthening of what had already been started. There were, however, several noteworthy special accomplishments.

*1. OMR helped start and became a charter member of the national Mountain Rescue Association.*

*2. The unit recognized the need for financial strength and embarked upon several successful fund raising activities.*

3. *They also began to think in terms of public relations/safety education. Most noteworthy was OMRs participation in the 1961 Kitsap County Fair.*

Officers and active members during the 1957-1961 period not previously mentioned included: Don Anderson, Floyd Armstead, Don Bechlem, Keith Belcher, Ken Branch, Carl Broberg, Bert Brown, Frank "Punk" Cameron, Jack Christiansen, Barbara Erickson (the first lady member), Ken Gard, Kent Heathershaw, Ken Jensen, Joe Leopold, Ted Luebke, Chuck Maiden, Norm Nelson, Jim Richardson, Frank Rossi, Gordon Sinrud, Keith Spencer, Bob Thomas, Dr. Jack Turpin, Bill Van Wert and Bob Wood.

**The Golden Years:** The election of Glenn Kelsey as the third chairman in April 1962 signaled the end of an era; not because of Kelsey, but because times were rapidly changing. The "good old days" were gone and rescue was becoming much more complicated. Rescue groups around the state began coordinating their efforts and later the state became involved through establishment of the State Rescue Coordinator. This was the era of radio nets, helicopters and big rescues.

The 1962-1966 period reflected new ideas, programs and expanded vision as to the role of OMR. For example, training became more socially oriented by a "climb of the month" program. Participants found themselves going to out of the way places like Mount Storm King, Castle Pinnacle, Mount Bretherton, Ingalls Peak, Mount Index and Six Ridge. Quite successful, the program lasted for several years, later turning into an OMR Labor Day Climbers Outing. OMR also began working closely with the Olympic College Mountaineering Class and there were numerous joint training sessions to places like the Constance Trail, Obstruction Point, Green Mountain and Mount Rainier. It's hard to tell who helped whom the most. Normal training continued, but with emphasis on radio operations, helicopters and cable hoist systems. From an equipment standpoint, "where to put it" seemed the recurring problem. Originally located at Olympic College, the equipment cache bounced from place to place for several years. It finally found a home in Harold Pinsch's basement until, years later, the equipment was moved into the new truck. The first radio was purchased in 1962 and by 1964 OMR had 2 portable and 2 mobile units, thus solving the long-standing communication problem. An efficient cable hoist system was developed, eliminating the final major equipment lack.

It was not an easy period from a rescue standpoint. There were lots of them--approximately 25 during the 1962-1966 period. Units were not used to working together, there was limited experience with big rescues and helicopter transport was new. If you think that rescues are disorganized now, you should have been around then. One instance requiring mention involved the Loomis search for a downed Air Force jet. Arnold Bloomer and Glenn Kelsey were transported by chopper to Windy Peak in NE Washington. They were supposed to descend N to a prearranged pick up point. The unlucky duo actually got deposited on a peak 8 miles NE of Windy Peak. Unwittingly, they descended into a whole new drainage, eventually crossing the unmarked border into Canada. Here they were surrounded by unfriendly looking indians and later confronted by equally suspicious Canadian constables. The pair had doubts whether they would ever get home.

Things seem to happen in bunches, and this period was no exception. Air crashes and river searches permeated the era. There were at least 7 missions involving planes and 4 searches for drowning victims. The P-2V Neptune crash near Mount St. Helens was probably the most miserable in OMR's history. Seven OMR members spent 3 days and 2 nights under extremely difficult winter conditions. At the end of the second day, the tired group found itself cut off from radio communications, soaking wet and running out of food and fuel near a ridge crest. In the sleet and gathering darkness, the group realized it could not make the logging road and the waiting Navy support team and set up camp as best they could. It was a bad night! Two members actually huddled around a candle for imaginary

heat until it burned out. No coaxing was needed to depart at dawn. In the mean time, the P-2V had been found and unfortunately the Navy Operations Officer had ordered the Navy support team to the crash scene. Luckily the junior officer on the support team pretended not to hear the order and the Navy was still around when the exhausted OMR team finally emerged near dark the third day. Without them, another five miles of snow shoeing would have been required. The TV stations were actually reporting the OMR team as missing and overdue. OMR was one of the very few teams which actually completed its-task.

Other interesting rescues included: Mt. Index, Mt. Garfield, Crystal Peak, Elk Mountain, the Bailey Range, Kimpta Peak, the Sawtooth Ridge and Mt. Washington.

It should be noted; like in the "good old days" things were still a bit loose organizationally. Perhaps the best example occurred at the February 1967 meeting when Keith Spencer (then secretary/treasurer) arose to note that elections hadn't been held for several years and that only 2 of 6 officers were legal. Needless to say, the meeting came unglued.

New members making a significant contribution during the 1962-1966 period included: Jim Baldwin, Dr. H. A. Barner, Jerry Burdette, Ken Deitchler, Tag Embree, Marion Fisher, Doug Hudson, Jack Hughes, Ruth Jewell, Herb Lee, Frank Madden, Dr. Clyde Parlova, Harold Pinsch, Joyce Pinsch, Roy Schoonover, Dave Sicks, Max Triboulet, Gary Ullin, Ben West, Marilyn West and Harry Wilson.

The 1966-1971 period was a continuation of OMRs expanded horizons and there were many notable events. Harold Pinsch was named chairman in May 1967 and the fun began.

Equipment acquisition and training continued as usual. Particularly newsworthy was the beginning of a close relationship with Olympic National Park through joint OMR-ONP training sessions on Mt. Angeles and elsewhere. This relationship continues to this day. OMR also became involved with the Explorer Scouts, though the unit never officially sponsored an Explorer Post.

The late sixties also brought the first serious Public Relations/Safety Education effort. Pinsch, Gordon Sinrud and Ruth Jewell led this early action which included: distribution of pamphlets, the sale of storm kits, safety displays about the county, film showings, lectures and a series of cable TV appearances.

At about the same time, the group saw the need for a rescue truck. Unfortunately, OMR was broke. For the first time finances and fund raising became a really serious matter. Roger Beckett and Ted Balter spearheaded this attack on poverty. Activities included: solicitation of the area's merchants, a rummage sale, a used mountaineering equipment sale and the sale of aircraft parts legally taken from one of the earlier operations. Beckett was instrumental in negotiating the first United Way grant of \$400 in 1971. Through the years the grant was increased and today it provides a substantial part of the OMR yearly budget.

In early 1970 the OMR board gave the go-ahead for one of the most unlikely projects that OMR ever tackled. Who would have thought that an illiterate bunch of climbers would try to write a mountaineering guidebook? It all started when the American Alpine Club decided to get out of the guidebook business. After negotiations with the AAC and the (Seattle) Mountaineers, OMR took over the copyright for the Olympic portion of the previous guidebook. It was a long and difficult task. Chairman Keith Spencer (ably assisted by George Sainsbury) and his dedicated guidebook committee labored nearly 3 years to achieve publication of the "Climbers Guide to the Olympic Mountains" in June 1972. Birth of the book was not without problems as there were numerous disputes on rating systems and route descriptions. At one point, two very close friends got so angry with each other that they wouldn't speak to each other for a month.

Finally, all was forgiven and the two remain close friends to this day. The Guide turned out both artistically and financially rewarding. It has been judged one of the better guidebooks around and has provided the unit at least \$6000 from royalties and sales. In 1979, an all-new 2nd Edition was published with essentially the same crew doing the work.

One other event occurred during the period to prove that OMR had indeed arrived. In June 1971, the unit hosted the Mountain Rescue Association national meeting. Thanks to a lot of hard work by Chairman Pinsch and his committee, the meeting came off really well and OMR had become a nationally recognized entity.

Last but not least, there were a lot of rescues (around 30). Some were pretty juicy and surprisingly most were mountain missions. The really serious adventures included: Curtiss Ridge on Mt. Rainier, Boston Peak, Mt. Temple and Mt. Baker. Missions of lesser stature found OMR on The Brothers, Kelley Butte (aircraft), Rainier (Emmons Glacier), Hall Peak, Mt. Margaret (aircraft), Gibson Peak, Flapjack Lakes, Bogachiel River, Mt. St. Helens and Lake Constance. There were a few strange ones too:

- 1. Norabelle See disappeared on the Seabeck Conference Grounds. Her bones were found years later.*
- 2. The S fork of the Hoh, where OMR found two injured climbers with crampons made from pieces of 2 X 4 with spikes driven through.*
- 3. The carryout from Wildcat Lake above the Dosewallips River of a woman who lost her baby. Somebody forgot the fetus and the sheriff made OMR go back and get it.*
- 4. Several members fought fires in steep terrain near Winthrop during the summer of 1970.*

One gets all kinds of opportunities in this business!

Finally, from a rescue standpoint, OMR participated in the MAST weekend standby program at Gray Field for a number of years. The unit finally initiated its own in-town standby program which continues to this day.

New members making a significant contribution during the 1967-1971 period included: Donnella Allred, Ted Balter, Roger Beckett, George Broatch, Frank Chapin, Richard Culp, Roger Duggins, Terry Giroux, John Gray, Ken Harrison, Russ Heglund, Dave Kneeland, John Luz, Dan Michael, Fred Natter, Rick Sample, Roy Sederberg, Florence Sicks, Jerry Smith, Dave Stevens, Dick Topness, Mark Wilder, Dr. Robert Yekel and Charley Zeek.

Glenn Kelsey again assumed the chairmanship in May 1971 and while his term was short, he presided over what was probably the second most important event in the unit's history. The OMR board had for some time been considering restructuring the unit into a non-profit corporation. There was concern that the officers and members might be individually sued if there was an accident during the course of a rescue. Incorporation as an individual entity would solve the problem. Many also felt that it was time to separate from the Seattle unit and for OMR to establish its own identity. This turned out to be a most complicated task and it was fortunate that Seattle lawyer Paul Williams (a long time unit friend and almost a member) gave us a hand. Incorporation required: (1) preparation and filing of Articles of Incorporation, (2) a complete redo of the by-laws and (3) achievement of tax exempt status. When this was accomplished, a number of other issues had to be resolved including a new radio license, insurance matters and, of course, a new name. By the February 1972 meeting, the task was essentially complete and the unit had been officially renamed "Olympic Mountain Rescue". While everyone was congratulating themselves on this magnificent event Chairman Kelsey quietly relinquished the chair to Vice Chairman Dave Sicks who read Kelsey's letter of resignation as chairman. The stunned group reluctantly accepted his resignation, probably not recognizing that they were seeing an end of an era. Looking back, the amount of change which had taken place during the 1962-1971 time period actually boggles your mind. Never again would there be such change and turbulence. OMR had indeed grown up.

**The Corporate Years:** OMR had as of 1972 become a business, and a fairly complex business at that. The group was increasingly forced into the "Madison Avenue Gray Flannel Suit" mold, a group run by steely-eyed businessmen. Several new positions were created to deal with this trend. The new Rescue Chairman was to coordinate all rescue activities including callouts, reports, critiques, and any other matters affecting OMR rescue capability. The Finance Chairman was charged with developing yearly budgets, dealing with United Way and in general drumming up "bucks" for the group. The Public Relations-Safety Education Director was chartered to keep OMR in a favorable public eye and to promote outdoor safety by whatever means. The new Communication Chairman was to solve the group's communication problems including the development of a viable communication plan.

Some of the transactions typical of this period included:

- 1. Preparation and adoption of a Personnel Policy.*
- 2. Preparation of a New Member Handbook.*
- 3. Preparation of a Training Manual.*
- 4. Preparation of a Rope Leaders Handbook.*

George Martin must have turned over in his grave.

The ink was hardly dry on the new charter when Dave Sicks took over as the sixth chairman. Dave was well organized, had a business sense and understood the importance of politics, thusly, was well suited to start the new era. This 1972-1977 period was characterized by lots of big rescues, heavy emphasis on the upgrading of equipment, and a concerted public relations effort.

Training continued in pretty much the usual manner. OMR continued its joint spring training with ONP and the relationship was eventually expanded to include an annual winter session at Hurricane Ridge. The relationship with Olympic College also continued with OMR taking over the "Belay Practice". Of particular interest was OMR participation in several training competitions with other units.

The real sign of the times involved the upgrading of OMR equipment and this was undoubtedly brought about by the sudden wealth of the unit. The "boggling" array of newly available ropes was studied and the long used "gold line" replaced with new specialty ropes. By 1972 the unit owned a number of films and an auto-load Bell and Howell projector was purchased. In 1974 OMR filled a longstanding need when it took possession of a surplus 1966 crew cab Dodge truck and installed a camper. Frank Chapin, Gordon Sinrud and, of course, Chairman Sicks were instrumental in bringing this transaction off and in the subsequent effort to make the "beast" operational. Radio capability was also upgraded. In fact, radios received so much attention that Chairman Sicks was good naturedly



accused of going "radio mad". His interest in radios was, however, well founded. The faithful Motorola PT-300s worked well, but were very heavy and time had passed them by. The weight problem was solved with purchase of 4 lightweight "Pace" radios in August 1976. The group also purchased a lightweight "Cascade" stretcher and wheel, thus retiring the faithful Bergtragga to the pasture of Public Relations. By the end of 1977, OMR had completely re-equipped itself.

OMR had for some time, been drifting into the mountaineering equipment sales business. Since there was no retail outlet in Bremerton, the endeavor turned out to be pretty profitable. Thanks largely to the aggressive effort of Harold Pinsch; the program was, by 1975, providing considerable revenue to the treasury.

By 1973 a major Public Relations campaign was in progress. Through the efforts of Keith Spencer and Gordon Sinrud, OMR was participating in a wide variety of endeavors including participation in the following shows and displays: (1) Back Country Living 74 (at the University of Washington), (2) Kitsap Air Fair, (3) Western Washington Fair, (4) Human Resources Day Show, (5) Kitsap Sportsman Show and (6) several Scout Seminars. By 1976 the unit began participating in the Armed Forces Day and other parades. It was also asked to participate in the newly formed Kitsap Sports Council. OMR also got a lot of favorable publicity as a result of rescue headlines. In fact, after the C-141 Starlifter crash Spencer got roundly chewed out at a United Way meeting, because OMR was getting all the headlines while the press wouldn't give the other agencies the time of day.

It should be noted that OMR was still having trouble with elections. In 1976 two new board members were elected. It was then discovered that the wrong guy had been put up for re-election; he had another year to serve. The board after much soul searching invalidated the election and with a red face started over. It wasn't funny at the time, but looking back, it sure is now.

The 1972-1977 period provided the greatest rescue activity in the unit's history. There were over 60 missions, mostly mountain/climbing situations. OMR journeyed down to its old friend Mount St. Helens no less than 9 times. There were 6 actions involving aircraft and the group spent a lot of time on both The Brothers (5) and Mount Rainier (4).

The biggest operation in unit history took place in the winter of 1975 when an Air Force C-141 Starlifter crashed into the summit of Inner Constance. Eleven OMR members spent more than 1000 man-hours during the search and recovery under impossible weather conditions. Another 500 hours were expended the following summer as the group participated in the final cleanup. It was a hairy operation involving more than 100 people. Glenn Kelsey was appointed base operations leader. Dave Sicks served as field operations leader. The only way in or out was by helicopter and, because of the weather; there was at least one near collision. Adding to the "pucker factor" was very deep and unstable snow on steep and difficult terrain. Field personnel were forced to climb and re-climb Inner Constance under winter conditions many times during the 10 days the mission went on. There were no crash survivors.

The other rescues were too numerous to list them all, but a few of the more exciting included: Mt. Garfield (2), Steel Bridge, Mt. Washington (4), Mt. Olympus, Snoqualmie Pass, Mt. Constance, Iron Mountain, Silver Peak, High Divide, Mt. Cruiser, Mt. Anderson, Mt. Baker and the upper Duckabush River. Note that the Iron Mountain mission was a little strange. The goat hunter victims were more concerned over their skinned out goat than of themselves. They asked OMR to evacuate the poor beast and were more than a little disappointed when the team threw it down a cliff for later recovery.

New members making significant contributions during the 1972-1977 period included: Brad Albro, Terry Anderson, Bruce Craswell, Jim DeYoung, Roger Duggans, Bill Ferguson, Roger Gray, Jeff Greer, Doug Jensen, Mick Keenan, Werner Kriple, Harry Mathis, Joe Murphy, Jerry Neve, Chuck O'Hara, Jon Olson, Rich Olson, Jr., Ken Pearce, Rick Piercy, Gerald Phillips, Frank Reh, Jerry Rickaby, Larry Ryan, Bill Sipple, Cris Tiffany, Dave Wedeven and Allen White.

The period covering 1978 to the present turned out to be pretty much "business as usual", with primary emphasis directed toward increasing both team and individual rescue capability. Frank Chapin assumed the chairmanship in January 1978, but after one successful term declined to be reappointed. Frank seemed to feel he had a house to build. At this point, January 1980, Roger Beckett stepped in as the eighth chairman, a position he still holds as of this writing.

There was renewed emphasis on training with Brad Albro spearheading an aggressive program both in the field and at the monthly meetings. Training highlights included: (1) Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) practice at Leavenworth, (2) several avalanche practices at Hurricane Ridge with the Park, (3) a shrund evacuation practice, (4) team leader training sessions with the U.S. Forest Service and finally, (7) a simulated evacuation from Mt. Ellinor. One night we even got a treatise from Roger Beckett on the Rocky Mountain Barking Spider. OMR members get all the information!

The big accomplishment regarding equipment was the purchase of a 1977 Ford crew cab truck. The old Dodge had served well, but was pretty tired. A lot of hard work by Frank Reh and his truck committee, plus a loan from Tacoma Mountain Rescue made the purchase possible. After much discussion, the group also purchased an Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) locator and was now equipped to find downed aircraft.

There were a number of other notable events including:

- 1. OMR entered into an agreement with Olympic College to "feed and nurture" the George Martin Mountaineering Collection at that library. The idea is to expand the collection and to make it more available to the public.*
- 2. OMR also went to the movies! The result, stardom for Glenn (Spencer Tracy) Kelsey, Florence Sicks and Dave Sicks in a well done safety film called "Climbing Country".*
- 3. The group also received two awards for Out-Standing community service. The first was the United Way "Gold" award in 1978, the second was The Bremerton Chamber of Commerce "Medicine Man" Award in 1981.*

Rescue activity dropped somewhat after the maximum effort in the preceding years. There were approximately 30 missions during the period and while there were no really "big swingers" there were a number of interesting problems:

- 1. OMR was called back to Mount St. Helens just before the eruption for what will probably be the last of that dubious relationship. The team was deposited by "chopper" on the summit to support a recovery from an aircraft crash.*
- 2. A team was sent to Cadaver Gap on Mount Rainier in 1979 to support the recovery activity after the avalanche accident involving the Willie Unsoeld party.*

*3. One of the unit's most rewarding missions took place in 1979 when an OMR team found an injured boy alive near Money Creek (Stevens Pass). Snow fell heavily that night and had he not been found, survival would have been unlikely.*

*4. OMR spent a really interesting day on the ridge above Lake Sutherland. Here they climbed to 4,000 feet in the sun and then rappelled into the thick fog on a 600 foot rope. Nobody knew if it would reach the bottom. The remains of the lost hunter later turned up near by.*

It was also the era of the lost hunter. For a while in 1979 it seemed to OMR teams beating the bushes that half the hunters in the state were missing.

OMR teams were also sent to places like: Twin Lakes (N Cascades), Dosewallips River, Beargrass Butte (near Packwood), Mt. Baker, Mt. Shucksun, Mt. Pilchuck, Elwha River, Steel Bridge, Chinook Pass, Klootchman Rock, The Brothers, Mt. Stone and Mt. Ellinor.

New members making a significant contribution during the 1978-1981 period included: Dale Boyle, Doug Bright, Rod Chelgren, Steve David, Ben Gauthier, Dave Genuit, James Groh, Karen Johnson, Skip McKenzie, Tim McNulty, Barbara Murphy, Elaine Neve, Paul Plevich, Hank Rausch, Gene Sementi, Don Tjossem, Sharon Tjossem. and Ted Wiles.

**Epilogue:** There is no question that the past 25 years represent a lot of solid accomplishment and each who has played a role can be justly proud.

In this regard, I would like to express a few personal thoughts. In my view, OMR has always been blessed with strong and progressive leadership. It may be coincidence, but the right man has routinely come along at the right time. Also, starting from the very first there has always been a sizable cadre of hard working members. In general, most members have remained active for many years contributing to a real continuity of operation. In fact, as of this writing, there are still 3 active members from the early days: Arnold Bloomer and Glenn Kelsey (both charter members) and Keith Spencer (signed on several months later). Strong leadership and dedicated members have been a good combination for OMR. Most organizations sooner or later lose their enthusiasm and literally fall apart for a while. This has never happened to OMR. Further, I can recall very little internal strife through the years. A few fights, yes, but no organization threatening polarization that one sees so often. Finally, OMR can be proud of its progressive programs and especially its fine rescue record. In spite of its size, OMR probably puts as many people in the field as any unit in the state. I also sense that we are pretty well respected in state rescue circles.

Creation of this 25-year history turned out to be much more difficult than I expected and I am appreciative of those who wrote and retained the meeting minutes and rescue summaries that contain the essence of this story. I would also like to thank Roger Beckett, Arnold Bloomer, Frank Chapin, Roy Etten, Glenn Kelsey, Harold Pinsch, George Sainsbury and Dave Sicks for shoring up my feeble memory. By the way, Arnie I expect no acid remarks regarding the accuracy of details in this tome. I hide behind writer's license. Also, while I've tried very hard to give credit where credit is due, there are undoubtedly a few omissions. If anyone has been overlooked for any reason, please accept my apologies. Finally, I greatly appreciate the excellent typing job by Jean Chynoweth on the lengthy manuscript.

In closing, it's been a great 25 years and I hope to see you all at our 50th anniversary.

