

OTP & OTHERS

Hiking and Debating Society

Guide Book

Mike Gessner

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Phil Rutherford

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

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for our gatherings. I believe that Jim and Jan Gardner hosted our last in-home party.

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 De Wolf, 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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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, extra supplies and equipment can go a long way to making your trip successful.

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 or 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.
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.

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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. Leave a copy of the hike info on the refrigerator door so that if you don't get home on time your spouse will know where to direct the Search and Rescue team to start their search.
8. Don't hike alone. It's safest to hike with at least one 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.
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 Gen3 personal locator beacon can save your life or a companion's.

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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.

If a fire has recently started in the area where we plan to hike, our only alternative will be to scrub the hike. The hike leader will cancel the hike and notify the hike coordinator and webmaster of an alternate hike if time allows.

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, via radio, that all the hikers safely leave the hike and the area.

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 or impede their operation.

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The Ten Essentials

There are many combinations of the ten essentials of hiking. This is one set.

- Extra food and water
- Map
- Compass
- Loud Whistle
- Extra clothing
- Sunglasses and sunscreen
- Pocket knife
- Flashlight (with spare batteries & bulb)
- Lighter
- First aid kit

Carrying more **water and food** than you expect to use on the hike. It's best to always start with a minimum of two quarts of water; more in hot weather or on a long hike. Drink frequently, even if you do not feel thirsty. Lack of adequate hydration can easily lead to heat stress or heat stroke. Consider carrying at least one bottle of Gatorade, as this contains electrolytes that are lost through sweat. If you run out of water, and are dehydrating, 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. It's the hiker's responsibility to know how to read a map.

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.

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

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. A small mirror or reflecting object like an old CD can be used to identify your location to a helicopter searching for you during the day.

The ability to make fire using a **lighter** in colder climates can be life-saving. However, always be extremely cautious with fire in the dry vegetation of Southern California. Build a fire only if absolutely necessary to stay warm during cold nights. Use existing firepits if available. It would be preferable to carry a thermal blanket for such situations.

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. Minor injuries are easily dealt with. More serious injuries would require making the injured hiker as comfortable as possible, then notifying authorities to arrange evacuation.

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Lost Sheep

The most important thing you can do is to avoid getting lost. Plan your trip thoroughly. Have some idea of the geography of the area where you are hiking. Take a map provided by the hike leader. Carry enough extra provisions to take care of unexpected problems. You must be self-sufficient. Leave a copy of your itinerary with someone at home or in your car. Use a GPS device or app.

If you do become lost, don't panic. Find a spot to sit down; take a sip of water; nibble on a cookie or something. Get as comfortable and as relaxed as possible. Try to contact other hikers with your radio.

When your friends miss you, they will try to contact you via radio. If they are unsuccessful, 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. 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.

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.

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.

If **search & rescue** have been called, and when a rescue helicopter is flying above you but cannot see you, try reflecting sunlight using a mirror or reflective object.

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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. Attempt to communicate with the lost sheep via radio and if possible ascertain their general location. If the lost sheep has a GPS device, ask for their coordinates and location relative to trail landmarks using the GPS map features.

It is a good idea to select the most experienced member of your group as search coordinator. If 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 search coordinator.

The search coordinator and the search leader should confer to decide what action should be taken. It is essential that the search party be able to communicate with the base party.

If it is determined that a member of your party is hopelessly lost, call 911 if you have a cell signal. We all have different cell providers ... try them all. Describe the problem and your location and request to be transferred to the local **search and rescue** organization. Describe to **search and rescue** your location (give coordinates) and the general location (and coordinates) of the lost hiker if known.

If nobody's cell phone has a signal, then activate a Beacon Locator (such as a SPOT Gen3) and await **response by search and rescue**.

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First Aid

Several of our hikers are retired physicians and they should take the lead if they are present, in the event of injuries.

In the event a physician is not present, the following are some basic guidelines.

Everyone should carry a basic first aid kit in their packs to treat any **minor cuts and abrasions** using antiseptic ointment and band-aids or bandages.

If a hiker **faints or passes out** he/she should be laid down in the shade, back-pack removed, and clothing loosened. They will recover once blood starts flowing to the brain. Offer water, Gatorade and a snack.

If a hiker is suffering from **heat stress or heat stroke**, he/she should be laid down in the shade, back-pack removed, and clothing loosened. Ask other hikers for thermos containers containing the coldest water (and hopefully residual ice cubes). Apply a cool wet cloth to the face, head, neck, upper chest, inner wrists and armpits. Offer water, Gatorade.

- Symptoms of **heat stress** include tiredness, headache, dizziness, feeling faint, feeling thirsty, pale skin, excess sweating or no sweating.
- Symptoms of **heat stroke** include extreme thirst, high body temperature, dry, red, hot skin, slurred speech, rapid heart rate, nausea, vomiting, confusion.
- **Heat stroke** is much more severe than **heat stress**. **Contact search & rescue** for cases of heat stroke.

Hikers who have contacted **poison oak** may develop a rash with blisters. Rinse the affected area with cool water and apply TecNu Medicated Poison Ivy Scrub or Ivy Block. Rub into affected area for 15 seconds, then rinse off and dry with a towel. This will remove the urushiol oil and mitigate the itch. Hikers should carry TecNu or Ivy Block in their back-packs. Poison oak leaves are in clusters of three and change appearance with the seasons. See the photos below.

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Spring



Summer



Fall



Winter

If there appears to be **broken bones** as result of a fall, make the hiker comfortable but do not attempt to move or bend the affected limb. **Contact search & rescue.**

If **bleeding** from a cut 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, put your thumb on it to stop the bleeding and **contact search & rescue.**

A **sprain** has some of the indications of a broken bone, only to a somewhat lesser degree. If the injured hiker can walk with assistance, he/she should be escorted to the trailhead. If the hiker cannot walk, **contact search & rescue.**

Symptoms of a **heart attack** include painful or a clenching feeling in the chest, sudden cold sweating, shortness of breath, irregular heartbeat, pain in jaw or throat,

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extreme tiredness, dizziness and fainting. **Contact search and rescue** immediately. Take a full-strength aspirin unless your physician has told you not to take aspirin.

If a hiker is **unconscious and not breathing** one person should **contact search & rescue** immediately while another person performs CPR. Place the heel of your hand on the center of the person's chest, then place the other hand on top and press down by 2 inches at a steady rate of 2 compressions per second. After every 30 chest compressions 15 seconds, give two rescue breaths. Tilt the head back to ensure a clear airway, pinch the nose and take a deep breath and blow into the person's mouth, repeat for a second breath. Resume compressions.

For all injuries where the advice is **contact search & rescue**, call 911 if you have a cell signal. We all have different cell providers ... try them all. Describe the problem and your location and request to be transferred to the local **search and rescue** organization. Describe to **search and rescue** the medical emergency and your location. Give your coordinates.

If nobody's cell phone has a signal, then activate a Beacon Locator (such as a SPOT Gen3) and await **response by search and rescue**.

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Rattlesnakes

The OTP regularly hikes in areas where rattlesnakes thrive. The rattlesnake is the only venomous (land) snake in southern California. The seasnake, found in the ocean off southern California is the only other venomous snake. Rattlesnakes are easily recognizable by the rings around the tail (source of the rattle) and the diamond pattern on their backs.



We have seen them on or near the trail many times. Avoid being in proximity to rattlesnakes. 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 only defensively. Give them a wide berth if they are close to the trail.

What To Do

1. 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.

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2. The next step is to **contact search & rescue** using the procedure detailed in First Aid.
3. Then, the victim should be kept calm and very still to reduce the spreading of the venom around the body. Do not allow the victim to walk around. Also, make sure that the bitten part of the body is positioned lower than the victim's heart. Cover the wound with a loose sterile bandage. Remove any jewelry from the area that was bitten. Remove boots if the leg or foot was bitten.
4. If possible, wash the bite area with warm soapy water.
5. It would also be better if the snake can be identified. Take note of the snake's size, color, pattern and other details. Take a photo if possible.

What Not To Do

1. Do not try to cut open the wound.
2. Do not try to suck the venom out.
3. Do not apply a tourniquet, ice or water.
4. Do not give the person alcohol or caffeinated drinks or any other medication or ointment.

Medical Treatment

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 venomous, medical treatment 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).

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.

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Communication and Navigation Tools

There are number of tools that can be useful to varying degrees.

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. Get a loud whistle. They are available in most sporting equipment stores.

An **FRS radio** is one of the more important items that you can carry. We should all carry radios. This can save your life, prevent you from taking a wrong turn or maintain contact with the others in your group. Doing a radio check at the start of each hike is important to ensure your radio is working. Carry extra batteries with you in case your batteries die. Periodically check with others in your group if you get too spread out and loose sight of each other.

Map and compass are very useful; if you know how to use them. This works best as a combination of a compass and a topographic map. It would be useful to take a course in wilderness navigation with map and compass.

A **GPS device** is very useful, either stand-alone devices or smart-phone apps such as Motion-X GPS. It will give you your location coordinates, track, waypoints, distance travelled, elevation and information about the trails and roads near you.

A **GPS Locator Beacon** will call for help in an emergency. See next section.

A **cell phone** is useful for GPS apps but don't expect to be able to make cell phone calls in most of the places we hike.

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Personal Locator Beacons

We have had discussions about calling for help in emergency situations.

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 may not 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 search & 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.

The SPOT Gen3 Locator is, perhaps, the most common type. Another is the ACR ResQLink 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 or REI for a reasonable cost.

For a little more, SPOT X is a two-way satellite phone that enables phone calls when you are out of cellular range.

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Training

A few of our hikers have taken the Sierra Club Basic Mountaineering Training Class. This has been superseded by the Wilderness Training Class.

Mike Dillenback is an instructor with the Sierra Club WTC. He can be a valuable asset to advise our group.

Some of our hikers use GPS, FRS radios, SPOT Locators, compasses and other devices. However, the hiker himself is responsible to improve his knowledge and ability.

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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 person's opinion. Please send any suggestions for improvement of this booklet to me.

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Happy Trails,

Mike Gessner