

# **The Mountaineers**

## **Outdoor Leadership Seminar**

### **SCENARIOS**

Each scenario is set in the context of a particular activity, but the basic principles are common to all activities. The scenarios are adapted from situations that have actually taken place on Mountaineers trips in the activity described or on trips in other activities.

## **Scenario 1A – Time: 15 minutes**

**Purpose:** Develop a working definition of leadership and identify basic responsibilities of leading a trip.

### **1A PART ONE**

Harold checks the roster for his hike the Wednesday before his Saturday trip and finds that he has a full trip of 12 people and a waiting list. He does not recognize any of the names of people who have signed up as people who have been on any of the trips he has led and he is not sure if he has hiked with them on trips led by other leaders.

Harold knows that the online trip sign up process does some initial screening of trip participants in that only people whose waivers are current, whether members or guests, can sign up for a trip; guests can only sign up for two events before joining the club; members must be current in their dues as of the date of the trip to be able to sign up; for technical trips with prerequisites (climbs, scrambles, kayak trips, moderate and above snowshoe trips, etc.) the website will only let individuals sign up who have met the prerequisites – either having graduated from specified courses or are currently enrolled as students in courses for which the trip meets a graduation requirement.

The morning of the trip, at the carpool location listed in the trip write up Harold finds 8 people who have signed up for his trip – 3 of them are in blue jeans and/or sneakers and/or with very small packs. The other 5 people appear to be

properly outfitted and equipped for the trip. Harold has room to take 3 or 4 passengers in his car, depending on how cramped the people in the back seat are willing to be. Seven of the 8 are not willing to drive and had so stated in the carpooling preference on the website. The 8<sup>th</sup> person is willing to drive but only has room for 1 person in his pickup.

**If you were in Harold's shoes, how would you sort out the issues of blue jeans, sneakers, small packs, and carpooling while you are waiting to see if the other 3 people to show up? Knowing that everyone had to have acknowledged reading and understanding the Activity Preparation Guidelines in order to sign up for the trip, what, if anything, would you discuss with everyone as a group and/or with individuals in a private conversation? If you think there would have been any benefit or need for a pre-trip email from the leader to the participants what should that email include?**

### **1A PART TWO**

Harold is reviewing his trip roster on Thursday before the Saturday trip. As he scans the names of people registered he sees that John Steward has signed up. Harold remembers John from a previous trip that was a little more strenuous than the current trip. John had presented himself as an experienced hiker but he clearly had difficulty on the trip. Every time the group stopped for a water break or to adjust clothing or equipment, John sat

down or found something to lean on. He did manage to get through the trip but Harold was left with some concerns about whether John had an underlying medical condition that he didn't disclose to Harold or the MOFA leader or whether John was not in proper condition for the trip. Instead of the stipulated two liters of water, John brought only one half-liter of water and a pop top can of caffeinated soda. For food only an apple and some crackers since he was trying to lose weight. Also, John talked constantly throughout the trip so that some participants later told Harold that they would not carpool with John in the future. Since the last trip Harold has learned from other leaders that John manages to never have quite enough money to pay the driver what the driver asks even though the drivers rarely ask for as much as the mileage rate stipulated for Mountaineers trips. The trip, quite simply, had not been as pleasant as Harold would have liked because he found himself constantly watching John to make sure he was doing alright and that he was drinking and eating along with the rest of the group. Harold didn't feel that John was really up to the trip OR that, he, Harold, wanted the added stress of having him along.

**With these reservations, what should Harold say to John? (Note that everyone who registered for the trip, including John, had to click through the "I read and understand the activity preparation guidelines" screen.)**

## **Scenario 1B – Time: 20 minutes**

**Purpose:** Develop a working definition of leadership and of good leadership and identify basic responsibilities of leading a trip.

Everyone shows up at the carpool and/or trailhead on time and with appropriate gear and clothing. As the leader you find this all very encouraging as the group heads up the trail and all is going well until one of the following things happens, testing our mettle as a leader:

### **1B PART ONE**

After an hour on the trail one of the faster hikers asks you if it is okay for him/her to go ahead. You say, "No", because \_\_\_\_\_

You say, "Yes", but with these guidelines \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you, the leader, stay with the faster group or the slower group? Does it make a difference in your decision if the slower group is slower because they are making frequent stops to take pictures or because they are just slower hikers who cannot or don't want to maintain the pace of the faster group?**

### **1B PART TWO**

After an hour on the trail you realize that the larger group has split up into at least two smaller groups that are not within sight or sound of each other.

**What do you, the leader, do – if you are with the group in front, with the group in the middle, with the group at**

**the back? How would what you do change if someone in the small group you are in trips and is unable to continue up the trail? What if it turns out that there aren't three clearly defined groups but a general scattering of individuals and dyads along the trail?**

### **1B PART THREE**

On the way down from the summit/lunch one member who is out ahead uses his FRS radios that he is going to go down a different route: "I don't like the route you are taking, I'm heading west over the ridge and will meet you." He heads over the ridge and out of radio range.

**What do you, the leader, do?**

### **1B PART FOUR**

On the way down after lunch you are hiking at the back with the slowest hiker whose knees can't tolerate a fast descent. The hiker you are with needs to go to the bathroom. You offer to wait, to which the person (older than you) barks at you, "I can find my way down, I'm not a kindergartener!" You head down the trail, meeting the rest of the group at the trailhead where you all wait for the last hiker to join you. When this doesn't happen you find yourself in a situation reminiscent of a Keystone Cops episode: some of you talking about what to do while one person trots up the trail on his/her own to search. As you ponder what to do now that two people are off alone, the searcher returns alone, having seen no sign of the laggard. As you are mulling over

what to do next, a car drives up with the lost hiker who had taken a wrong turn and ended up at a different trailhead where, fortunately, there was someone who understood what had probably happened and was able to provide shuttle service.

**Where could/should you, the leader, have done differently at various points on the trip?**

### **1B PART FIVE**

After an extended stop one member of the group has to take a bathroom break and tells the other hikers standing near her what she is doing and where she is going. When she gets back to her pack she finds that the entire group has gone on. She catches up to the group only to find that the leader did not realize that she was not with them.

**Is there anything that you, as the leader, could or should have done differently at different points on this trip?**

### **Scenario 1C – Time: 20 minutes**

Purpose: Develop a working definition of leadership and of good leadership and identify basic responsibilities of leading a trip.

#### **1C Part One**

Steve, a new kayak trip leader, arrives at Owen beach to meet a group of Kayak students. He has listed an early June afternoon kayak tour across to Gig Harbor. He listed the pace as

moderate, and that everyone should meet at 3:00 p.m. A breeze is just developing and creating some rough water off Point Defiance, exactly where his group is heading. The area can be difficult to navigate in rough water, wind or strong current. Steve had checked the NOAA marine weather forecast a couple days ago and there was no significant wind forecasted, and nothing from on King 5 news last night. It appeared the tide was going out. He meant to check the tide table last night, but forgot.

While the days are much longer Steve knew they would likely be returning around dusk. He wished he had reminded everyone to bring headlamps and/or other means to illuminate their kayak to other boats. He hoped they otherwise had all their required gear. The last trip he led with new students everyone seemed to forget to bring something or another.

**What issues have you identified so far? Surveys of participants on Mountaineer outings identifies the following as three of the key attributes for an “Excellent Trip:”**

- good weather, being prepared, and on time
- reached objective, clear goals
- safety

**Does it appear Steve’s outing is going to result in an “Excellent Trip?” What are some things he could have done to ensure it will be successful before he even meets his participants?**

## **1C Part Two**

The remaining four participants arrive. They are a confident group and eager for the trip. Steve points out the breeze and rough water and asks them if they are still up for it. They all agree citing they will just turn around if it gets too sketchy.

They all get their kayaks down to the water and take off, headed towards Point Defiance. Immediately Nick and Jed take off and are well out ahead of the group. Steve yells out to them but they are out of earshot. In the meantime, Jeremy is struggling to keep his boat upright as waves come over his spray skirt. After a couple of near-capsizes, Jeremy finally tips over and comes out of his kayak. In the process he loses his paddle, water bottle, and paddle float. Tony, Jeremy’s friend, takes off to collect the gear while Steve helps Jeremy get back into his boat.

**The remaining identified key attributes for an “Excellent Trip” are:**

- Good people, teamwork, get along well, good group dynamics
- Decision making, communication
- Learning new skills, teachable moment
- Everything! “Could not have asked for a better experience!”

**How is Steve doing with these remaining attributes? How might he have set the tone for teamwork and developing positive group dynamics? Were there teachable moments?**

## **Scenario 2A—Time: 20 minutes**

**PURPOSE:** Exploring the importance of team building on a trip, and as a responsibility of the leader to foster same.

Paul scheduled a 2-day climb of Ruth Mountain-Icy Peak Traverse, a basic glacier and rock scramble climb. It was intended for those Basic Climbing students who had marginal skills and fitness; and had been struggling throughout the course.

**In preparing for a climb of this nature are there special considerations for Paul? What steps might he take to ensure everyone is successful and/or has a positive experience? Are there steps Paul could take to foster teamwork?**

Paul had 10 participants including himself. Three participants, Chuck, Tom, and Sue, were qualified as glacier rope leaders and had quite a bit of experience. Sue's husband, Don was also on the trip; they were inseparable and seemed to go on every outing together. Don had completed the Basic class; however Paul had been on previous trips with him where he developed various health issues that prevented him from fully participating. Those health issues ranged from headaches, blisters on his feet, and light headedness. He would get so far on a trip and suddenly be stricken with an issue and most often have to stop or at the least, move very slowly. Paul was apprehensive about having him along, but wanted to help Sue get another

glacier rope lead and didn't want to create friction by refusing to allow him to go.

**With Paul's concerns, should he say anything to Don or Sue?**

The first day into high camp went slowly as several students were in poor condition. Tammy was afraid of exposure and slipped a couple times on soft snow while traversing on a moderate glaciated snow slope around Mt. Ruth. Don and Sue, who were on her rope, took her under their wings and provided encouragement and instruction on how to step properly.

Early the following morning Paul woke everyone for a traditional alpine start. He learned Tammy was emotionally not up for climbing and wanted to stay in camp. Otherwise, everyone else seemed eager to get going.

Upon reaching the rope up point to the glacier Don said his asthma was acting up. He announced he was going to wait on the rocks and insisted he would be fine and no one needed to wait with him.

**How would you handle this situation? What are your options? What are the pros and cons of those options?**

The team went on to a successful summit. Spirits were high as the students had a great sense of accomplishment. They returned to get Don and back to break down camp and head home. Upon arriving at camp, Paul learned Joe had blisters that were bleeding. It was going to take some

time for him to properly bandage them. Sue, Don, and Tammy had already broke down their tent and packed. They were ready to head down and didn't want to wait for Joe to bandage his feet and others that were slower to pack up. Don and Sue approached Paul and announced they were going to head down with Tammy since they expected she would be slower. Paul knew they were right about Tammy but was reluctant to allow them to go that far ahead of the group in case Don had more health issues and Tammy kept falling.

### **How would you handle this situation?**

Paul had Don, Sue, and Tammy begin their descent with Tom, one of the very qualified rope leaders on the trip...just to be sure there was enough support on the rope team. Paul and Chuck remained with the other group to assist them in breaking camp, and bandaging blisters. The descent was very slow and by the time the last of the party made it back to the trailhead, Don and Sue were very agitated and refusing to remain for a quick debriefing. A debriefing is conducted at the end of an outing and are used to reinforce what went well, how it could have gone better, lessons learned, safety concerns, etc.

**Would you allow Don and Sue to leave? Why/why not? What would you discuss as a group in the debriefing? Would you talk with individuals? Who? And what would you say? Is there any other follow-up you would consider?**

### **Scenario 2B – Time: 20 minutes**

Purpose: Exploring importance of team building on a trip, and as a responsibility of the leader to foster same.

You have a much-sought after permit to backpack in the Olympics and listed the 5 day trip on the website as a strenuous backpack. You want to be able to cover a lot of ground, with a lot of elevation gain, at a fast pace and state that in the leader's notes on the website trip listing.

Your trip fills with 5 people who present themselves as experienced backpackers, giving you a total of 6 people including yourself. In the group are 3 people who backpack together on a regular basis and have apparently developed a system for sharing food, fuel and equipment amongst themselves. The 3 other team members (including yourself) have backpacking experience but have not been on trips with each other or with the team of friends. The 3 of you are backpacking on a self-sufficient basis with no share-ware.

The morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> day you wake up to find that it is raining non-stop. The good humor of the first two days seems to evaporate as fast as the rain is coming down. The 3 friends quickly rig up their tents and a tarp they have to form a communal shelter large enough for them – clearly something they have had experience with in the past. You find yourself slogging back and forth in the rain, checking each tent, to make sure everyone is safe and dry. You are comfortable with your gear and clothing

and confident that you can weather the storm but are concerned that the other two singles might be heading for hypothermia. The group of three seems to be safe, dry and quite jovial, with each other, but not particularly concerned about the condition of the rest of the team.

**What should/could you do to pull the 6 of you together into one, safe, dry, cohesive group, now that the weather has turned and soaking up the beauty of the scenery is clearly not going to be enough?**

### **Scenario 2C - Time: 20 minutes**

**Purpose:** Exploring importance of team building on a trip, and as a responsibility of the leader to foster same.

You're leading a climb up Mt. Rainier with your friends Jake and Ted. It is about 5 am on summit day and it's a beautiful July morning. Currently you're a little above 12,000 feet on the Ingraham Glacier and you have been going since 1 am. Both you and Jake are getting frustrated by your slow progress. With the exception of one other team, you seem to be the last group making for the summit. Ted did seem to be moving a little slow the day before going up to Camp Muir, but today he is moving at a snail's pace. With the crevasses behind you it would be nice if you could pick up the pace, but Ted wants to take yet another break. Ted has been eating and drinking enough and he says he is not feeling sick. After discussing the situation, Ted says to you "You two go on, I've got to quit, I'm just

too tired to keep up."

Out of Ted's hearing Jake says, "I've never summited Rainier and I really wanted to make this! I've been training for the last 3 months and this was the only weekend this summer that I could do this. I really don't want to stop now."

While you're discussing your options, the two-member party that was behind you finally overtakes your group. You recognize the leader, John, as he stops to get a drink and say hi. You explain your situation to John, and he offers to take Jake to the summit with him and his team mate. Neither John nor his partner has a climbing helmet and their summit packs are clearly too small to be holding helmets or much in the way of extra clothing. To make matters worse his partner is wearing an old pair of blue jeans. Jake is clearly excited about the prospect of being able to leave you to cope with Ted and head to the summit.

**Note for non-climbers:** safe glacier travel requires a rope team of 3 people minimum. The temperature at 12,000' in the middle of summer reaches a high of about 36 degrees. The UV rays are very intense.

**What are you going to do?**

### **Scenario 3A – Time: 20 minutes**

**Purpose:** To explore leadership in a mid-trip conflict situation; to explore problems of sexism/ageism.



The trip is a ski trip on Saturday. Friday night's avalanche report says: "It has just stopped snowing, leaving a total accumulation of 24" over the past 24 hours. Avalanche hazard is extreme. Backcountry travel at all elevations is hazardous and is not advised." Lisa, the leader, is a woman in her 20's and a graduate of the backcountry skiing class two years ago. She calls all the signups and changes the trip from Saturday at Mt. Rainier to Sunday at White Pass/Hogback. Saturday and Sunday are supposed to be clear – no more snow – which gives some time for the snowpack to consolidate a bit and Hogback is pretty gentle terrain with no avalanche hazard if you go in the right places. Saturday is clear, Sunday looks okay, and everyone shows up and off they go up the ridge. They reach the high point of the ridge and now they must decide whether to go right onto gentle terrain similar to what they've just climbed, or go left down a steep, 30° (prime avalanche potential) open slope into a basin, and then climb back up to the ridge.

Besides Lisa, the leader, we have several others, of varying skill levels, experience and abilities. As they rest and look down the steeper slope, which is beautiful untouched powder at a perfect angle for a proficient skier, Lisa says, "Given the avalanche situation today, I don't think we should ski this slope. I think we should go over to the right on the safer terrain."

To this, Gary, a gung-ho skier in his 70's and one of the instructors for the ski

course, replies, "Nonsense! I've been skiing since you were in diapers, young lady, and this snow looks fine to me. I say we go for it! Man, you don't get snow like this every day!"

**How could/should the leader deal with this situation? Use role playing to present your recommended solution(s).**

### **Scenario 3C – Time: 20 minutes**

**Purpose:** To explore leadership in a mid-trip conflict situation; to explore problems of sexism/ageism.

The trip is a moderate snow shoe trip for Saturday. Lance, the leader, has been a member for a year, is in his early 30's and is a graduate of Snowshoe II. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> snowshoe trip he has led for the Branch. All of the people on the trip are students in this year's Snowshoe II course and need a moderate snowshoe trip to graduate. Friday night's avalanche report says: "It has just stopped snowing, leaving a total accumulation of 24" over the past 24 hours. Avalanche hazard is extreme. Backcountry travel at all elevations is hazardous and is not advised." Lance was busy and didn't see this report until too late to make any changes other than a last minute cancellation. He was reluctant to do that and felt it would be a good day to be out in the snow even if they had to stay at a low elevation.

Lance met the group at the carpool location and advised them of the avalanche situation and said that he

was ready to take the group up to Mt. Rainier National Park and see what they could find to do around Longmire since he did not expect the road to open up to Paradise that day. When the group arrived at Longmire, in two cars, Lance checked in with the Rangers and decided that the group could safely snowshoe through the Old Longmire Campground and out toward Skate Creek Road. There was heavy snow which would provide good practice in breaking trail. When he told the group of the plan he told them they could carry their ice axes but they did not have to as they would not be using them. One trip member, George, in his 70's, barked, "What do you mean? This is a moderate trip? If we don't use our ice axe, can we still get credit for this trip? We need the credit you know!" And, as an aside, "What kind of people do they let lead trips anyway? Kids who don't know what they are doing?????" To the people who rode up with him, George says, "Come on, we're going home!"

**What to do? Use role playing to present your recommended solution(s).**