



SIERA News



Volume XXI, Number 4

APRIL 2010

PUBLIC SERVICE:

We've heard this expression many times over the years. Most of us haven't thought much about it, other than it seems to be a catchall, somewhere between Emergency Communications and rag chew. "Public Service" is a statement commonly used for what we're asked to do for bike rides, road rallies, marathons and the like. We do these things because we enjoy the fun and the challenge. Most of these activities do include a public service, meaning they benefit some group or another.

The PEX project, almost all volunteers (horsemen and radio operators), has a very positive financial impact on our own Historical Museum and helps keep the Genoa operation alive and well.

AMBBR is of considerable financial assistance to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, being one of many such activities raising \$8.5 million for the cause. It also raises funds for the Lake Tahoe Bikeway. Some of the funds are used to hire folks to run the activity, which enhances businesses in Lake Tahoe.

The Death Ride is a positive financial assist to Alpine County, literally keeping the Chamber open and well staffed which, in

turn, does all the things necessary to bring in additional tourists to help the economy. The local library, S&R volunteers, Friends of Hope Valley, volunteer fire department, Early Learning Center, and even the volunteer group that tends to the watershed all benefit financially from this big time bike ride. The county would not be the same without the Death Ride.

Towns like Ely benefit greatly from the two road rallies held there every year. The motels are full, the restaurants do big business, and the local NAPA sees more customers in three days than during the rest of the year. Ely manages to struggle along, year to year. Imagine the greater difficulty without the Robinson Mine and the substantial amounts of money left in town by the rally participants. NDOT says those rallies cannot operate without hams.

There are many more examples where our volunteerism benefits local economies. Think about the employment in providing food, whether local or on the trail. Consider the clean-up required and the business that sees some income. Some sponsors hire full time help, an assist to the employment rolls. Even the kids are collecting and selling the aluminum cans for pocket money.

Consider other hobbies that many folks enjoy. For the most part they are activities of interest only to the participant and a few like minded friends. One I can think of is building and flying model airplanes. A great hobby, giving considerable individual satisfaction. Most other hobbies fall in this category. I did a lot of 4wheeling in my time. Fine personal enjoyment, but didn't do much for anybody else. There is any number of hobbies falling in the same self-satisfaction category. They are justified pursuits.

What we do, as volunteer radio operators, gives us that same great individual satisfaction. It usually also has a very positive impact on our surroundings. Our efforts, in the interest of "Public Service", are fun for us, and enjoyable. We also help our communities as few other groups can.

We are proud of our service to our neighbors and our surroundings.

Justifiable proud!

SAGs

"SUPPORT and GEAR" is a very important adjunct to any bike ride. SAGs can take more than one method of operation. Most will be larger vans, driven by a

person with knowledge of bike repair and the ride course. AMBBR and the September ride are both good examples of van SAGs. They repair bike breakdowns on the course and, later in the day, pick up bike and riders worn down by the heat or course length. SAG drivers used to be left to their own devices. Then, a few years ago radio operators were placed in the vans, first with HT's (which had dead spots along the course) and later with portable 50W units giving full course coverage. This works out quite well and has had a dramatic positive impact on the ability to maintain up to the minute communications. A "rider down" message results in a SAG van being made aware and dispatched immediately. AMBBR will have 5-7 vans on the course.

Death Ride offers a different challenge. The roads are so narrow that vans can't negotiate well without putting the bikers in jeopardy. So motorcycles are the DR SAGs. Not as neat a system as vans, since the motorcycle guys don't have ham radios and they can't take a radio operator with them. Also, many seem to march to their own drummer, making it hard to keep track of them or communicate with them. On the other hand, there are 12 on the course, so they become readily available to perform the SAG function.

SAGs are an important attribute to almost any on the road activity, keeping the macadam clear of impediments to travel and looking after the ride participants. Riding with a SAG is a neat experience for the radio

operator. Not only do you get to tour the whole course, gaining an appreciation for the difficulties and enjoyments, but you learn a lot about bike riding and the many nuances of being a ride coordinator. Oh, yes, you also get to stop at the best spot for eats.

If you've had experience as a water stop radio operator, and would like to broaden your view, consider volunteering as a SAG vehicle radio operator. You'll be performing the same communications function, add to your knowledge of the ride and have a lot of fun too.

THE DOCK RAT

Having a keen interest in outdoor sports since a tike, was reading an article emanating from an outdoor sportsman's show. "Most kids today wouldn't know a deer from a dog" to quote one outfitter. Many of the outfitters stated that the majority of their clientele are "older men" and almost no youngsters. One grizzled day boat Captain recalled that "30-40 years ago there'd be a dozen kids (dock rats) begging to go along on the boats and willing to do any task. Today there's none."

Most pinned the blame on one thing: video games. Video games, texting, cell phones, Xbox, whatever?

A little imagination and we see that many once prominent activities are having great difficulty surviving. Amateur Radio is competing with the outdoor sport industry, which is competing with the 4wheel drive family, which is competing with the local flying club, and on down the

line. We all are looking for that dozen kids on the dock and we're competing (without even knowing it) for them. Trouble is the dozen kids aren't there anymore.

Is there an answer? Sure! We can't wait for the dozen to show up; we have to find them. Our future resides with our ability to instill interest in some younger folks. Ours is a great hobby and we can perform a valued public service. We all need to be alert to the heralding from afar of others who might be interested in what we do. If a community is going to find the "dock rat", let's make it us. Each of us need to stay alert for the interest signal from others. Adopt a dock rat!

2010 CALENDAR

April 24	– Social Bkfst
May 1	– EmCommWest
May 22	– Social Bkfst
June 5	– Meeting 1pm
June 6	– AMBBR
June 8–12	– PEX Re-Ride
June 17	– ReRide Potluck
July 3	– Meeting 1pm
July 10	– DEATH RIDE
July 23	– DR Dinner
July 24	– Social Bkfst
Aug 7	– Meeting 1pm
Aug 28	– Social Bkfst
Sept 4	– Meeting 1pm
Sept 12	– Tour de Tahoe
Sept 25	– Social Bkfst