

Editor's Note

The following reflection was written for the Dennis Kelley Archive by Patrick "Rick" LaValla, who worked alongside Dennis Kelley and other leading figures involved in the early development of inland search management in the United States. Rick, of course, is a recognised pioneer, researcher, teacher and author in his own right.

Rick's account offers a personal perspective on the period in which modern approaches to search planning, management and training were beginning to take shape.

Evolution of Search Management and Planning: the Dennis Kelley Factor

Patrick 'Rick' LaValla, who was there in the beginning.

In the early 1970s, a number of pioneering SAR individuals in locations across the West Coast of the United States independently recognized that land search planning and management were lagging behind the principles and practices already used in maritime and aeronautical search planning. Line "deluge" searching was labor-intensive and did not produce effective results.

In late 1971, I was hired by Washington State Civil Defense to serve as assistant to Hal Foss, Washington State's first SAR Coordinator and the founder of the National Association of Search and Rescue Coordinators (NASARC), which later evolved into today's National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR).

The established principles of land search planning and SAR management that we recognize today were largely absent. Recognizing this need, Hal began examining the US Coast Guard and US Air Force National Search and Rescue School, along with the Civil Air Patrol's mission coordinator schools, as possible models for inland SAR management training.

The National Park Service (NPS) was also beginning to recognize the need for formal search management training. Bill Syrotuck, an early author on land search probability, probability of detection and lost-person behavior, was promoting the idea that the principles of land search planning and management could be taught in a structured course, much like the Coast Guard, Air Force and Civil Air Patrol mission coordinator schools. Hal Foss said to me, "Look into all this and come up with a scheme!" Along with many others... I did. Read on.

1973 was a pivotal year. Perhaps we should call it the "Year of Inland Search Planning and Management Enlightenment.". It was the year in which many of the pioneers of land SAR planning, together with their publications and ideas, came together. Bill Wade of the National Park Service (NPS) received funding to develop search and rescue management training. Dennis Kelley published his book *Mountain Search for the Lost Victim*. Jon Wartes's papers on field searching and its effectiveness were widely distributed, as were Bill Syrotuck's publications. Many others were attending and presenting their land search methods and techniques at the early NASARC meetings and conferences.

Another very important event in 1973 was that Dennis began publishing *SAR Magazine* to communicate ideas and best practice throughout the SAR community. Besides having a general readership, it also served as NASARC/NASAR's membership magazine.

So many good ideas and techniques were evolving! Now, how could all this best be brought together in a training course? Bill Wade and the NPS began this endeavor. On behalf of the Washington State SAR program, and directed by Hal Foss, I joined Bill's course development team (along with many of the early pioneers "thinkers").

Now enter Dennis Kelly and his seminal book. This was the first definitive text on land search planning and management theories and practices; the book consolidated all information relevant to the activity that were known at this time. In part, Dennis's book became a framework for the evolving training course "Managing the Search Function". His "*crucials*" of search planning and management became the foundation for 'how best to do it'.

I first met Dennis at Washington State's 5th State SAR Conference in the fall of 1973. He featured an article about this event in the first issue of *SAR Magazine*. This event marked the beginning of exchanges between Dennis, Syrotuck, Wartes and other contributors to the emerging field of search planning and management. Formal meetings were later sponsored by the NPS as development of the training course continued.

Dennis and I quickly became good friends. Dennis was extremely affable and always had a big smile. He had a mischievous sense of humor and always enjoyed a good story or joke (he also had many to share). The course development team (Dennis et al.) very much enjoyed each other's company, along with the mutual hospitality and fellowship we shared. This was important to getting the job done. I often think we all came together for the frivolity as much as for the course development!

What was always evident was that he was extremely passionate about saving lives through better SAR management and search planning.. As his book gained readership and he gained in popularity, he remained humble, often downplaying his important contributions.

Dennis was a regular presenter at the early NASARC (National Association of Search and Rescue Coordinators) annual meetings and conferences, presenting updates as well as fresh ideas. It should be noted that Dennis was an aerospace engineer by profession and well versed in probability theory and the related mathematics. However, you would not readily recognize his education and expertise, as he related easily with SAR personnel of all levels of education and never talked down to his audiences. As a presenter and teacher, he was well spoken and engaging; it was a pleasure to be in the audience!

Dennis and I occasionally spent time together enjoying the outdoors. A favorite memory is a Grand Canyon trek (North Rim to South Rim) with Dennis and Bill Wade in the mid-1970s. While we spent much time pondering the meaning of the universe and life whilst looking at the canyon geology and night skies, our conversations always gravitated back to the development of the training course: "What are we missing?"; "Is there additional information to add?"; "Who else has contributions?" Dennis never lost sight of his theme: "Search is an emergency!"

Besides his writing, publishing and course development work, Dennis was also involved in the early days of NASARC (established in 1970), which evolved into NASAR (circa 1976). He served on committees and, once NASAR was formed, on its Board of Directors. He recognized NASARC as a means of developing and distributing SAR best practice, one of the organization's principal goals, and was therefore an active participant.

The Dennis Kelley Factor

Needless to say, the state of inland search planning and SAR management as we know it today would be very different if early innovators such as Dennis had not come together to support Bill Wade and the National Park Service in developing search management training. He was a very important part of the training development group. All those involved today in search planning and SAR management studies, publications and training owe Dennis (and the other pioneers) a tremendous debt of gratitude! To be sure, the state of the art and best practice have improved considerably, but we must remember how it all started.