

Ken Nelson Memorial Climbing Award – 2006

Normally, this award is presented by the previous year's recipient. However, Mike Ward could not make it to the banquet this year and asked me to make the presentation in his stead.

The Ken Nelson Memorial Climbing Award is presented to honor a member of the Everett Mountaineers for distinguished service to the climbing program. It symbolizes the heritage of volunteerism and leadership, which is so vital to the Mountaineers.

The award was established in 1986 in memory of Ken Nelson. Ken was a very active Everett Climbing Committee member who died in a tragic mountaineering accident on Mt. Robson. Originally, the Branch intended to dedicate a climbing rock in his name, but when the project was canceled this award was conceived instead.

None of us who presently serve on the Everett Climbing Committee knew Ken Nelson. We have no memory of his face, his personality, his leadership or of the lives he impacted while a part of our organization. We do know that his impact was such that the people who did know him well felt very strongly about ensuring that his name be remembered down the long march of years that followed his untimely demise. We honor their wishes to this very day and the name of Ken Nelson has been stated at every Awards Banquet for the past twenty years.

Written nominations for award candidates may come from the Climbing Committee or from Everett Branch members.

The criteria for choosing the award recipients are: graduation from a Mountaineers Basic Climbing Course or Basic Climbing Equivalency; exemplary service to the Everett Branch climbing program and a spirit of humanitarianism.

This year's award winner has been active in the Everett Branch for many years. He is a graduate of the Basic Climbing Course and the Intermediate Climbing Course, completing all the requirements as well as leading other intermediate students on ice and rock climbs.

His contributions to the club and the climbing community have been outstanding. He has lead and instructed many field trips and lectures for both the Basic Climbing Course as well as the Intermediate Climbing Course. He has been a member of the Intermediate Climbing Committee and has organized the Leading on Rock Class and the Sport Climbing Class.

Through this he has added value to the climbing community by bringing excellent training for rock climbers and has increased interest in Everett's program with people that otherwise may not have joined the Mountaineers. His contribution to the ICC has improved the class structure and value of the classes to its students. As a result, these new leaders are more qualified and self-reliant on climbs.

He has been active in building the new Climber's Self-Rescue Course and has been seen hanging on the walls as both victim and rescuer. He worked very diligently with the main clubhouse in writing the minimum club-wide safety standards for climbing and was the main driver in getting that documentation completed.

It is often the case with someone so involved with committees that a bit of the enthusiasm for mountain climbing erodes. It seems that the more often we sit around the big table, the more often our zest for the game wanes. However, this year's recipient shows no sign of that type of inertia setting in.

His enthusiasm for climbing is the same today as it has been from the moment he entered the program. If you have ever driven from the north of Seattle to the north of Mt. Baker with him, as I have, you will have heard a recount of his favorite routes. His near photographic recall of every crack, every nub encountered, along with the exact piece that was placed to protect each move... well, it will either make you think of driving the vehicle into the nearest bridge abutment or it will make you grudgingly admire someone who so loves the game.

The fact that I am here tonight is testament to my choice of the latter action.

Without further ado, it is my privilege to present Brian Hench with the Ken Nelson Memorial Award for 2006.