

ed a grant from the Mazamas, Tom Bennett, Harvey Schmidt, Ph.D., and I, in conjunction with Dr. Mauri Pelto of Maine, participated in the North Cascades Glacial research project, which studies glacier ablation and global warming.

On April 25 and 26, Tom Bennett, Ian Wade and I are planning a Mazama conference entitled "Mountaineering Issues of Tibet" with historical and modern themes. The conference is co-sponsored by Barbra Brower, Ph.D., editor of the *Himalayan Bulletin*, with the Geography Department at Portland State University. The 25 proposed speakers include Khandgo Chazotang, the niece of His Holiness the Dali Lama, Stephen Venables, author of *Himalayan Alpine Style*, Lowell Thomas Jr., author of *Out of this World* and *Silent War in Tibet*, Edwin Bernbaum, author of *Sacred Mountains of the World*, AAC past president Lou Reichardt, and Oregon Section member Ian Wade as master of ceremony. For information contact Bob McGown at 2535 S.W. Palatine St., Portland, OR, 97219.

BOB MCGOWN, *Section Chair*

*AAC, Sierra Nevada Section.* 1997 brought the Sierra Nevada Section continued growth and success spiced with daunting new challenges. With the addition of western Nevada to our geographic region plus an increasing number of Southern Californians wanting to affiliate, our section now contains well over 400 members.

Six events sprinkled throughout the year brought us together. Our traditional Ski Weekend at Grover Hot Springs south of Lake Tahoe drew an enthusiastic crowd of skiers and soakers bent on late-winter fun. In April, a capacity crowd convened at the beautiful San Francisco peninsula home of Dr. Jim Fries for our spring Wine & Cheese party, which featured a lavish slide show by member David Keaton. Flowering dogwood forests and raging waterfalls formed the backdrop for our Yosemite Valley campout in May. More than 30 Sierra Nevadans, plus a family of party-crashing bears, came together to celebrate Allen Steck's birthday and enjoy the superb weather, perfect crack systems and huge friction slabs of the Valley.

Two other campouts, one in June at Lover's Leap near Lake Tahoe and one in September at the Owens River Gorge, completed our outdoor get-togethers for the year. At the Owens Gorge event, John Fischer, a well-known mountain guide and section member, gave an excellent presentation on the Leave No Trace organization and its philosophy. As a result, we have decided to help raise awareness in the climbing community of the ideas and activities of this organization by distributing literature and inviting representatives to speak at our events. We have also helped member Nick Shiestel promote community activities of the Sierra Mountain Guides, who offer excellent climbing safety instruction events free of charge under their Climb Smart! program.

Our Annual Section Dinner in November was beautifully planned by Jane Koski and our out-going Section Chairman Eric Brand. The City Rock Climbing Center in Emeryville (whose space was provided by owners Mark and Debra Melvin) boasted a lavish buffet and bar and was filled with oriental carpets loaned by art entrepreneur and member Gene White. More than 100 attendees lounged, feasted, hobnobbed and enjoyed a slide show about guiding in the Alps by Armin Fisher, a California native and the first non-Italian to become a certified UIAGM guide in Italy. With section enthusiasm running high, a contingent of almost 20 Sierra Nevadans shuttled up to Seattle in December for the AAC Annual Meeting.

The Sierra Nevada membership is greatly enriched by the many distinguished authors of mountain literature among us. Outstanding achievements this year included publication of *High Altitude Medicine*, a definitive work on high-altitude mountaineering and medicine by the late Dr. Herb Hultgren, who had long and illustrious careers in both fields. Prolific author

John Hart won his second Commonwealth Club Silver Medal in five years for his new book, *Storm Over Mono: The Mono Lake Battle and the California Water Future*. Also, to be published in the spring of 1998 is the third edition of John's *Walking Softly in the Wilderness: The Sierra Club Guide to Backpacking*. First published in 1977, the book's extensively rewritten *Third Edition* discusses just about everything one can think of in the line of techniques and gear, with a very strong low-impact emphasis. Chris Jones' ever popular *Climbing in North America* was reprinted as a paperback edition with a new foreword. Galen Rowell published a beautiful new book, *Bay Area Wild*, that highlights wildlife and wilderness around the San Francisco Bay Area. And readers throughout the world will be happy to know that Steve Roper and Allen Steck worked diligently all year to put together the next edition of their renowned publication *Ascent*, to be published by the AAC Press in 1999.

Of continuing concern to our section and the world climbing community are the changes being proposed by the National Park Service for Yosemite Valley. Instigated by devastating floods that struck the Valley at the start of 1997, these sweeping changes include the radical re-configuration of campgrounds, traffic patterns, day-use access, concessionaire-related housing and lodge units, and visitor controls. The efforts we have devoted to maximizing section communications have paid off in our ability to react quickly to these challenges. Many of our members attended on-site walk-throughs in the Valley, submitted extensive written comments, spoke out at open houses and workshops conducted by the National Park Service throughout California, and kept up a continual dialogue with park planners to lobby hard for our ideas and positions. As a result, the Park Service has amended some plans, allowed extensions on public-comment periods, and remained open to our suggestions for minimizing the impact of automobiles and people upon the quality of experience in Yosemite Valley.

Still, it's important to realize that changes proposed by the Park Service, which they want to begin implementing in 1998, could make climbing in Yosemite Valley logistically difficult or impossible for most of us. These changes would force any Valley visitors without pre-arranged reservations (up to six months in advance, credit-card payment required) for a campsite or hotel room to leave their private vehicles at gateway communities (30-60 minutes away) and take a regional bus into the park. It is unclear how often these buses would run, what their cost would be, or what the price or security levels would be for parking at the gateways. Visitors then would have to transfer to electric shuttle buses at a transit stop constructed somewhere at the El Capitan end of the Valley (various sites are being debated). Those visitors with reservations could drive directly to their accommodations, but then would be prohibited from driving anywhere else, except to exit the park. This obviously would severely limit climbers' ability to visit the Valley on a spontaneous basis, bring and store necessary gear and equipment, and get to the base of some of the most popular climbing cliffs. Similar changes are being considered for other national parks as well.

At this point, there are very few firm answers to the many major questions such a system poses. The Park Service is asking for ideas from the user public, and our section members are doing their utmost to ferret out ideas and represent all climbers in these issues. An ad-hoc committee consisting of Lou Reichardt, Nick Clinch, John Middendorf and Linda McMillan continues to communicate our needs to the Park Service planners. If you have questions or ideas relating to these issues, please contact the committee members directly.

During this year of Yosemite gloom and doom, there was, however, one resounding success. Stanley Albright, newly appointed Yosemite Park Superintendent, told us at the end of 1997 that after reading Steve Roper's popular book and listening to vigorous lobbying by our section members, he decided to start his term by setting at least one thing right after decades of neglect: He will change the lackluster name of Sunnyside Campground back to historic, traditional, and world-famous Camp 4.