

*AAC, South Central Section.* At the Club's 1994 annual meeting, French Hill discussed the idea of forming a southwest section with Mike Hall. In April, 1995, French Hill formally proposed the idea to AAC Executive Director Charley Shimanski. With a green light, Hill, with the fabulous help of Heidi Pomfret, then the AAC administrative assistant, mailed a questionnaire to all Club members in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. There was real interest from members throughout the region, with the exception of New Mexico, where a majority of members believed that their best section home was in the Rocky Mountains.

In the late fall of 1995, several members in Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas considered what to do next in order to form the new "local" section. Those members were Bob Allison, Michael Bradley, French Hill, Jack Leebron and Mike Lewis. It was agreed that the initial meeting be held at one of the region's most enjoyable climbing areas: Enchanted Rock Natural Area, outside Austin, Texas.

The South Central Section (Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas) held its first annual meeting in Austin, Texas, May 35, 1996. The event, which attracted over 65 registrants, included a Friday evening social event at Pseudo Rock Climbing Gym; a day of climbing at Enchanted Rock Natural Area; a panel discussion moderated by member Mike Hall with the top officials from Texas Parks and Wildlife on resource management and fee issues at Texas State Parks; a banquet with a dynamic multimedia presentation, entitled "A Place in the Sun," by members Mike Lewis and James Crump, depicting two decades of climbing highlights from across North America; and an inspirational keynote address by well-known mountaineer, adventure capitalist and AAC member, Rick Ridgeway. Two dozen generous sponsors helped make this first annual meeting a most successful event.

At the Section's first business meeting, French Hill was elected Section Chair, James Crump ViceChair and Bob Street Secretary-Treasurer.

On October 1819, the Section gathered at Enchanted Rock Natural Area for its fall meeting. The meeting occurred in conjunction with the Annual Gripper Climbing Competition, in which over 100 Texas climbers competed. The Club events included a dinner at which noted alpinist and member Jim Donini presented a slide presentation entitled "1976-1996: Twenty Years of Alpine Firsts." Over 50 climbers socialized, ate Texas Bar-B-Que and enjoyed Jim's fine lecture.

The Section also sponsored a workshop on self-rescue techniques, led by Mike Lewis. This workshop attracted over 20 climbers, both beginners and seasoned. Within a classroom format, the workshop offered those attending a keen sense that there is no substitute for knowledge and preparation. The workshop covered several rescue scenarios from sport climbing to big mountains, and dealt with issues like belay and rope management, hazards of pulling rappels and the importance of climber safety and helmets.

At the Club's 1996 Annual Meeting, Gail Billings was named to the Club's Conservation Committee. Outgoing Conservation Committee (Domestic) Chairman, Mike Hall, was presented the David Brower Conservation Award.

The Section has been active in conservation through its donation of proceeds from its initial meeting to the Central Texas Climbing Club, which works with Texas Parks and Wildlife to protect routes and access to climbing at Enchanted Rock Natural Area. Additionally, the Section has been an active voice, along with the Access Fund, for maintaining climbing access on Mount Magazine in western Arkansas as the mountain transitions from ownership by the U.S. Forest Service to the Arkansas Parks and Tourism Department.

Our Section has experienced 150% growth in its first year, from an initial 44 members to 109 at the end of 1996.

J. FRENCH HILL, *Section Chair*