

# Tehipite Topics

October 2004 ☞ Vol. 50, No. 7

[www.tehipite.sierraclub.org](http://www.tehipite.sierraclub.org)

## The Hmong Connection

by Larry Fahn, Sierra Club President  
Kevin Hall, Tehipite Chapter

In her book about the Hmong community in California, called *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, Anne Fadiman relates the story of a Hmong student taking a French class at Merced College. When assigned a five minute presentation on making Fish Soup, the student explained that to get the fish, you'd need to fish, to fish you'd need a hook, to choose the hook you'd need to know the size of the fish's mouth, to know the kind of fish you'd need to know if it lives in fresh or salt water, and that ultimately without this chain of knowledge there'd be no soup. Fadiman writes that the Hmong phrase, "to speak of all kinds of things," reminds people that "the world is full of things that may not seem to be connected but actually are, that no event occurs in isolation."

The Sierra Club's founder, John Muir, an immigrant himself, wrote something strikingly similar in 1912, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe." Local leaders of the Sierra Club; Sierra Club Executive Director, Carl Pope; Board President, Larry Fahn; and leaders of the Hmong community in Fresno explored these similarities (and differences) in a meeting earlier this year after someone associated with our board elections made racist comments about the Hmong, which were quoted in the March 16 *Times* article entitled "Bitter Division for Sierra Club on Immigration." The meeting was a chance to hear the whole story. The Hmong people's history is little known here, but is deeply tied to our own and is full of lessons we'd all do well to learn.

Some 5,000 Hmong people, natives of Laos, began to arrive this month in California from refugee camps in Thailand, where they've been since the end of the Vietnam War. During the war the Hmong fought alongside the

CIA's Special Forces, and rescued thousands of American pilots shot down by the Viet Cong's air missiles. As a result of their loyalty to Americans and their effort to rout the communist penetration of South Vietnam, the Hmong were targeted when the U.S. Government pulled out of the conflict in 1975.

Facing persecution at the mercy of the Communist Lao government, hundreds of thousands of Hmong fled to Thailand for safety. Despite being so closely allied with the U.S., Hmong people who immigrated here in the 70s, 80s and 90s found themselves to be deeply misunderstood and alone in this country.

Now, as a new group of Hmong refugees prepares to come to the U.S., our communities should seek to ease their arrival and not repeat a history of continued abandonment and marginalization.

The Hmong are mountain people who came to Laos from China thousands of years ago when invasion and foreign domination overwhelmed them. They are fiercely independent, family oriented people who also hold a deep connection to nature. In her book Anne Fadiman lists, for example, two word expressions that demonstrate "the intimate relationship the Hmong of Laos had with the natural world." A few examples include: "*Zug ziang*, a cicada singing; *xuj xuav*, a snake undulating; *rhuaj rhuav*, birds shuffling through leaves looking for insects; *xuj xuav*, a long easy all day rain."

Our communities are connected to one another not just by our care for the environment but also by our underlying philosophy. We are united not only in the fight for clean air in California's San Joaquin Valley, where a large Hmong community resides, but also in the yearning that our communities and organizations will begin to welcome and understand one another. We hope that other communities and organizations will take the time to hear the whole story and that they too will find themselves "hitched to everything else in the Universe." ☞



**SIERRA CLUB**  
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***Tehipite Chapter***

*Chapter phone . . . . .(559) 229-4031*  
*Web . . . www.tehipite.sierraclub.org*

***Officers***

***Chapter Chair***

Richard Sloan . . . . . (559) 297-5367  
. . . . . RiverRich1509@aol.com

***Chapter Vice-Chair***

JoAnne Armstrong, .(209) 726-0636  
. . . . . sierrafer@peoplepc.com

***Secretary***

Aimee Leyva . . . . . (559) 438-8670  
. . . . . aimee\_leyva@yahoo.com

***Chapter Treasurer***

Joe Ruff . . . . . (559) 436-4880  
. . . . . lpsh@msn.com

***Executive Committee Members***

William Fjellbo . . . . . (559) 642-4511  
. . . . . jbfjellbo@sierratel.com  
June Gill . . . . . (559) 224-4105  
. . . . . junegill@cvip.net  
Ron Mackie . . . . . (559) 683-0293  
. . . . . rmackie@sierratel.com  
Carolyn Ordway . . . (559) 449-7780  
. . . . . jbord606@yahoo.com  
George Whitmore . . (559) 229-5808  
. . . . . geowhit1954@comcast.net

***Chapter Committee Chairs***

***Awards***

Gerald Vinnard . . . . (559) 431-9606

***Hospitality***

Ray Marx. . . . . (559) 641-7589

***Tehipite Topics Editors / Website***

Marcia & John Rasmussen. . . . .  
. . . . . (559) 332-2419  
. . . . . Rasmussen@BigBaldy.com

***Membership***

Marian Orvis . . . . . (559) 226-0145  
Ione Scott. . . . . (559) 665-0460  
Ray Marx. . . . . (559) 641-7589

***Newsletter Distribution***

Marian Orvis . . . . . (559) 226-0145

***Outings and Outings Leader Training***

Bruce Busch. . . . . (559) 225-8935  
. . . . . tehipite50@netzero.net

***Political Committee***

Emily Templin. . . . . (559) 486-3138  
. . . . . emtem79@hotmail.com

***Programs***

Heather Anderson . . (559) 434-2510  
. . . . . ha062@cvip.net

***Conservation Committee***

***Conservation Chair***

Heather Anderson . . (559) 434-2510  
. . . . . ha062@cvip.net

***Air Quality / Transportation /***

***Global Warming***

Kevin Hall. . . . . (559) 227-6421  
. . . . . hallmos@aol.com

***Kings Canyon National Park /***

***Giant Sequoia National Monument /***  
***Sequoia Forest***

John Rasmussen. . . . (559) 332-2419  
. . . . . John@BigBaldy.com

***Sierra National Forest***

Tom Eliason. . . . . (559) 439-7195  
. . . . . tomeliason@comcast.net

***Wilderness***

Ron Mackie . . . . . (559) 683-0293  
. . . . . rmackie@sierratel.com

***Yosemite National Park***

George Whitmore . . (559) 229-5808  
. . . . . geowhit1954@comcast.net

**Chapter General Meeting**

**SKIING THE HIGH SIERRA**

*presented by Dan Saunders*

Wednesday, October 13th, 2004  
7:00 P.M.

Unitarian Church  
4144 N. Millbrook  
Fresno, California

DAN SAUNDERS will present some of his superb slides from an April ski tour along the north border of the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Don't miss this wonderful vicarious experience. It should pique our enthusiasm for the coming winter outings program. We enjoy dinner with our speaker at The Old Spaghetti Factory, 5:15 P.M., before our program. Everyone is invited. (Please call Richard Sloan, (559) 297-2971 to reserve.)



**Executive Committee Nominations**

The Nominating Committee for the Tehipite Chapter is once again soliciting suggestions for candidates for the 2004 Executive Committee election. Any Chapter member is eligible to run for election. Anyone who might be interested in serving on the Executive Committee, or who knows of someone who might be, should contact a member of the Nominating Committee. Nominations will close on October 22, 2004. The members and their contact information are:

Gerald D. Vinnard ..... 431-5780 .....gvinnard@cvip.net  
Beth Leacox ..... 355-7529 .....careleebeth@juno.com

# Merced Group

## Conservation Committee and Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, October 21st, 7:30 P.M.  
Merced School Employees Federal Credit Union  
1021 Olivewood Dr., Merced

## General Meeting

Thursday, September 16th, 7:30 P.M.  
Merced School Employees Federal Credit Union  
1021 Olivewood Dr., Merced

### *Asthma and Air Pollution in the Central Valley —a Public Workshop and Discussion*

JoAnne Armstrong and Annette Allsup will facilitate an “Engaging Our Community” workshop with a focus on San Joaquin Valley air quality—or the lack thereof! There will be some introductory information shared and then we’ll break out into smaller groups to share collective knowledge and brainstorm possible solutions. Please bring any specific documents or facts that you can share to help us define and address the issue. Also think of relevant local, state, and federal channels that can be used to effect change.



**SAVE THIS DATE!** Annual Banquet of the Merced Group Thursday, December 2nd.

Stephen Johnson, acclaimed and published photographer, will share from his newly released book, *With a New Eye: The Digital National Parks Project*. Details will follow in the November Topics.

## OUTINGS

Sentinel Dome / Taft Point and the Fissures  
Saturday, October 16th

Sentinel Dome Trail: Stunning views with a minimum of effort!

The trailhead off the Glacier Point Road in Yosemite National Park leads to a granite dome a full 1000 feet higher than the Glacier Point lookout. Vistas in all directions and an unusual perspective on Upper and Lower Yosemite Falls. This payoff from 1.1 miles of nearly flat trail with just a short climb at the end. We’ll return to the trailhead and head out in the opposite direction for our second destination.

Taft Point and the Fissures: This easy hike is also about one mile each way. At its end is another breathtaking view—this time of Yosemite’s north rim and the valley floor. Particularly memorable are the fissures—huge cracks in the granite of the point, some of which are hundreds of feet deep and plunge down to the valley floor. There’s also a piped railing along the edge of the cliff, so you can lean over and test your acrophobia rating.

Meet at the Methodist Church in Merced (899 Yosemite Parkway) at 7:45 A.M. for carpooling. We’ll pull out promptly at 8:00. Lunch, snacks, water, and cameras are in order. We should return by 5:00.

For more info contact JoAnne Armstrong, (209) 726-0636, cell (209) 261-2851.

# Merced Group

### Group Chair

Ione Scott . . . . .(559) 665-0460  
. . . . . iones@thegrid.net

### Group Vice-Chair

JoAnne Armstrong . . .(209) 726-0636  
. . . . . sierrafer@peoplepc.com

### Group Treasurer

Urla Garland . . . . .(209) 722-3749

### Group Secretary

Annette Allsup . . . . .(209) 723-5152

### Member-at-Large

Jake Kirihara . . . . .(209) 394-7028

### Conservation Chair

Marsh Pitman . . . . .(209) 723-2986

### Publications

Rod Webster . . . . .(209) 723-4747

### Agriculture

Charlie Magnuson . . .(209) 394-7045

### Membership

Tammy Johnson . . . . .(559) 665-5507

### Publicity

Rod Webster . . . . .(209) 723-4747

### Population

Tammy Johnson . . . . .(559) 665-5507

# Panamint City Hike

by *Richard Sloan*

I hiked Mt Whitney last Friday and then went into the Saline Valley. I checked with the Highway Patrol who said both North Pass and South Pass on the Saline Valley Road were closed. I decided to go around the "Road Closed" and "Flooded" signs and traffic barriers. The road turned out to be okay for high clearance vehicles. I didn't need four wheel drive. There were a few places where water had washed away part of the road and there were a few water cut trenches across the road, which I crossed at an angle.

This road is never to be taken lightly. I had all kinds of tools with me, a tire repair kit and compressor. I also carry enough extra water for a week in case I get stranded. The road getting closed due to rock fall, water cuts, snow and mud, happens each year.

I knew Warm Springs in the Saline Valley would be hot because the weather report said it had been in the 115 range

taker, Lizard Lee, was gone. A sprinkler was on, watering the healthy fescue lawn. Even though the temperature was so hot, the goldfish pond, fed by the hot springs, had some very healthy, large goldfish swimming in them.

The place was otherwise deserted. I drove the half mile to the upper springs and saw one more person operating a remote control car on the road. There was one tent set up. Some palm trees planted only a few years ago next to one of the hot tubs have gotten fairly large and bushy and provide some protection from the wind now.

There is an open air shower set up at each area. A shower really felt good, but amazingly, with the temperature showing 101, my teeth started to chatter from being cold and I had to jump into the hot tub to warm up. Thinking it would cool down as soon as the sun set I went to the shade of the lower springs and sat at a picnic table and had dinner. Several people appeared. Declining to join me for dinner, they sat around and talked with me. A donated bottle of wine capped off the dinner and good conversation.



before the start of the trip. It was supposed to cool down. As I came in over South Pass, the temperature was in the low 80s at 5:00 P.M. I had hopes of cooler weather, but they were dashed as I watched the thermometer climb to 104 as I neared the hot springs.

The intersection to Warm Springs had been flooded over and a lot of brushy debris left behind. I would have missed it if it had been dark. I only passed one other vehicle on the way in. Arriving at Warm Springs, I could only spot about five vehicles and saw one person near a camp.

As I walked into the lush shade of the lower springs, a lady suddenly appeared and informed me that the resident care-

I went back to the upper springs and soaked in a hot tub for a while. There was a tremendous amount of lightning coming from the Death Valley area. In August, there was a surprise storm that cut many miles of road in the National Park and closed it for ten days. The thought crossed my mind that the Saline Valley Road could be cut by oncoming rain (it didn't happen). A bat dipped into the hot spring for an in flight drink several times. There were shooting stars. At midnight the temperature in the truck still read 101, although I thought it felt a little cooler. I slept on a cot in the open with only a sheet. There was a fairly robust breeze at times.

In the morning it was 80 degrees and a morning soak was in order before leaving. Somebody hiked up from the lower springs

and joined me for a soak and to watch the sun rise. I had a large mug of hot apple cider. The sunrise and shadow changing on the Inyo Mountains is spectacular. You must get up for this show if you venture out.

Leaving the hot springs at 7:30 to avoid driving in the heat, I made a quick stop at the Lower Beveridge Cabin. It is now in the Adopt-A-Cabin program and is being restored. It boasts a working flush toilet and a shower! There are supposed to be three waterfalls in the canyon behind the cabin. I will explore those next time. ❀

# Elderhostelers Seek Adventure in the High Sierra

by June Gill

**D**o you love being in the High Sierra but hate sleeping on wafer-thin Ensolite pads and eating freeze dried foods for days? I do, so I was delighted to discover the Lost Valley Pack Elderhostel. On a bright Sunday in July, my friends Peggy, Ruth and I and our group of sixteen hostelers took the ferry across Florence Lake to reach the trail to Lost Valley. After a bountiful lunch at the lakeside, we hiked an easy four miles along the San Joaquin River with Richard Ross to the Lost Valley Ranch. Richard's family has owned the ranch for over fifty years and he is a keen student of the area; he stopped along the way to show us all the highlights of local history. When we arrived at the Ranch, we devoured a three course dinner of salad, roast chicken, and peach cobbler in the open air dining area, then, around the campfire, listened to Richard talk about how his father came to settle in this remote paradise. At ten, most of us retired for the night on cushy mattresses in our roomy two-person tents located along a rushing stream in the pines.

At seven the next morning, I rolled out for a yoga session in the meadow (optional, of course) and by eight I was luxuriating in a hot shower in a rustic bathhouse with its own wood-fired boiler.

After a buffet breakfast at the Big House, I packed my bag lunch and headed out for the botany field course I had chosen from among the three or four courses offered each day. Our instructor, Jane, one of the many genial volunteers at the Hostel, helped us spot many Sierra native wildflowers, while other groups took geology, local history, and river ecology walks. My class wound up, fortuitously, at the hot springs, only one mile from the Ranch.

After a soothing soak, shared with some dusty, chatty hikers of the John Muir Trail, we cooled off with a swim in the pleasant little lake only fifty feet away.

Day two brought more field courses, but I chose to go birding in the meadows, hike along the river, and take another swim instead, followed by a nap amid the creek side aspens and a long soak in the steaming shower. Ah, wilderness!

On day three, my friend Peggy and I were joined by 78-year-old Luann for an eight mile hike into John Muir Wilderness in the direction of Evolution Valley. Meanwhile, our buddy Ruth took the all day horseback ride up to lovely Sally Keyes Lakes and Selden Pass. On day four, Peggy was ready for a hot stone massage offered by the Muir Ranch masseuse, while Ruth tried out her new digital camera on the stone sculptures created in the stream by the art class members.

The last night's campfire sing-along was nostalgic, as we all hated to leave Lost Valley...but we already have plans to return! If you're interested in more information on Lost Valley Elderhostel, see [www.elderhostel.org](http://www.elderhostel.org). ❧



# ECOVIEW

by *Marin Orvis*

I don't know about your real mailbox, but ours has been overflowing with cruise offers too good to pass up. If you give in to some of these hard-to-beat offers and are truly caring for the environment, beware! While an ocean cruise might be your ultimate vacation, it can also be the ultimate nightmare for the environment. The activist group, Bluewater Network, indicates that between 1993 and 1998, cruise ships were involved in 104 detected and confirmed cases of illegal discharges of oil, garbage and hazardous wastes, and paid more than \$30 mil in fines. To make sure your travel \$\$ don't support unsustainable activities, consult Bluewater Network at [www.bluewaternet.org](http://www.bluewaternet.org), Center for Marine Conservation at [www.cmc-ocean.org](http://www.cmc-ocean.org), or International Ecotourism Society at [www.ecotourism.org](http://www.ecotourism.org).

I've told you about the "Take Back Your Time Day" previously. This year, creator John de Graaf indicates the day will be October 24, and he and thousands of like-minded people will take the day off of work and participate in activities geared toward catalyzing a "much-needed national conversation about work/life balance and how we can reclaim it." His reasoning? Americans work, on average, nearly nine full weeks (350 hours) longer per year than western Europeans do. Also, working Americans take an average of about two weeks of vacation per year; the norm in western Europe is five or six weeks. De Graaf feels Americans are literally working themselves to death by "overwork, over-scheduling, and overstress that is threatening to overwhelm our lives." (For those of you who know me, I admit to being guilty of this. I felt it a good reminder for self-reflection.)

November 11, Martinmas

St. Martin of Tours—patron saint of tavern keepers, wine growers, beggars, and drunkards—was a fourth-century Roman soldier who later founded the first monastery in Gaul. Legend has it that, stumbling upon a drunken and near-naked beggar one freezing night, he ripped his cloak in half, sharing it with the unfortunate soul. Tom Cowan, author of *The Way of the Saints* (Putnam, 1998) suggests that Martinmas, occurring as it does on the doorstep of winter, is the perfect time to follow St. Martin's example by sorting through old clothes and coats, giving what you haven't worn in the past year to charity. In many French and Italian towns, Martinmas is celebrated as a time to sample the first new wine of the year. So you may want to uncork a bottle of your favorite vintage with friends after you've all dropped boxes of warm clothes at the local homeless shelter... maybe even before dropping them off...

Well, folks, apologies for not sharing any funnies this month. Next month will be fascinating, right? ☘

## One Earth, One Sky, One Future Vote November 2



**In 2000, literally millions of committed environmental supporters did not vote in the presidential election. In many states, just a few hundred or a few thousand votes decided the election. We're confident that environmental voters can make a difference in 2004!**

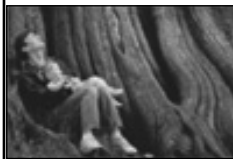
Through the Sierra Club Votes campaign, we're reaching out this year to hundreds of thousands of people who care deeply about the environment, but don't always get to the polls in November. We're focusing our efforts in eleven key sites, including: the state of New Hampshire; Tampa, Florida; Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota; Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada; Albuquerque/Santa Fe, New Mexico; Columbus, Ohio; Portland, Oregon; Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

We'll be organizing volunteers to talk to their neighbors about the environmental records of presidential candidates George W. Bush and John Kerry. Together, we'll educate voters about the environmental issues affecting our communities and our families. And we will encourage everyone to vote on Election Day!



Recent polling shows that there are millions of voters for whom the environment is the single most important issue in terms of informing their voting decisions. But, while environmental values have steadily

increased in America since 1970, voting by environmental supporters has not kept pace. Our most important challenge in 2004 is to close this gap.



Over the next few months, the Sierra Club will be reaching out to you and your neighbors in an effort to engage people who care about the environment. We'll ask you to help us spread the word about the candidates' environmental records, volunteer in your communities, and take important actions to protect America's environment in 2004.

Please register now at [www.sierraclubvotes.org](http://www.sierraclubvotes.org) to become part of the Sierra Club's grassroots effort to make the environment count in 2004! ☘

# Trip Schedule

## Outing Ratings

| Distance          | Elevation Gain         |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1) up to 6 miles  | A) under 1,000 feet    |
| 2) 6 to 10 miles  | B) 1,000 to 2,000 feet |
| 3) 10 to 15 miles | C) 2,000 to 3,000 feet |
| 4) 15 to 20 miles | D) 3,000 to 4,000 feet |
| 5) over 20 miles  | E) over 4,000 feet     |

Our Tehipite Chapter Outings Chair is Bruce Busch (559) 225-8935 or [tehipite50@netzero.com](mailto:tehipite50@netzero.com). Please contact him with any questions concerning our outings program. Contact the trip leader directly if you are interested in one of the listed trips.

Tehipite Chapter outings are free and open to the public. All leaders are unpaid volunteers assuming responsibility for a good trip, and your cooperation is mandatory. For your safety, participation on a trip is at the sole discretion of the outings leader. Please call the leader well in advance for details, reservations, or if you plan to cancel. Outings officially start at the trailhead. Travel responsibility rests on each participant. Carpooling is encouraged, but leaders can not be responsible for the organization of carpools. The Sierra Club does not provide insurance for transportation. Drivers are normally reimbursed five cents per mile by passengers. No guns, pets, or radios are permitted on trips.

## October 2nd - Saturday

Day Hike (2B) Moderate  
Nellie Lake  
*Walt Taguchi (559) 435-2818*

## October 9th - Saturday

Day Hike (2B) Cross Country  
Mt. Ian Campbell and (if time permits) Kings Castle. We will leave Fresno at 6:00 A.M., from a location to be announced.  
*Gerald Vinnard (559) 431-5780*  
*gvinnard@cvip.net*

## October 8th-11th, Friday-Monday

Car Camp. Leave Friday evening and drive to Ballarat and camp out. In the morning hike 6 miles to Panamint City Ghost Town located in a juniper/pinon pine forest. That evening we will have steaks at Panamint City and camp at China Garden or the hot springs in the Saline Valley. Sunday we will explore the Saline Valley or Lookout ghost town depending on what the group wants to do. Monday morning will be exploring and then return to Fresno. Panamint City hike is a fast paced (3D) hike.  
*Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971*

## October 16th - Saturday

Day hike (1A) Easy to Moderate  
Pincushion ridge. Millerton lake recreation area. A gentle climb up to a tabletop hill to view the lower river canyon and Millerton lake.  
*Don Redmond (559) 268-1537*

## October 16th - Saturday

Merced Group  
Sentinel Dome / Taft Point and the Fissures  
*See page 3 for details.*

## October 23rd - Saturday

Day Hike (1A)  
Moderate-Cross Country  
Dewey Point  
*Walt Taguchi (559) 435-2818*

## October 30th - Saturday

Day Hike (2B) Moderate  
Twin Lakes and George Lake  
*Kathy Hart (559) 229-1752*

## November 6th - Saturday

Day Hike (2B) Moderate  
Brewer, Tocher, Beryl Lakes  
*Walt Taguchi (559) 435-2818*

## November 13th - Saturday

Day Hike (2B) Moderate  
Goat Mtn.  
*Don Redmond (559) 268-1537*

## November 20th - Saturday

Day Hike (1A) Easy  
Eaton Trail, Walk at Woodward Park  
*Aimee Leyva (559) 438-8670 or (559) 301-3977*

## November 28th - Sunday

Day Hike (2B) Moderate  
Squaw Leap  
*Kathy Hart (559) 229-1752*

## Meetings

Conservation Committee - Wed., Oct. 6, 7:00 P.M.  
General Meeting - Wed., Oct. 13, 7:00 P.M.  
Executive Committee - Wed., Oct. 20, 7:30 P.M.  
Conservation Committee - Wed., Nov. 3, 7:00 P.M.

Unitarian Church  
4144 N. Millbrook  
Fresno

## Pear Lake Ski Hut

The Pear Lake Ski Hut in Sequoia National Park uses a lottery for reservations. You must return the reservation form that is available from the Sequoia Natural History Association ([www.sequoiahistory.org](http://www.sequoiahistory.org)) by November 1 to be entered in the lottery. The skiing can be difficult depending on the snow conditions, but the scenery is well worth the effort and you don't have to brave the elements in a tent. Cost is \$22 per person per night (\$18 for SNHA members.)



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TEHIPITE CHAPTER

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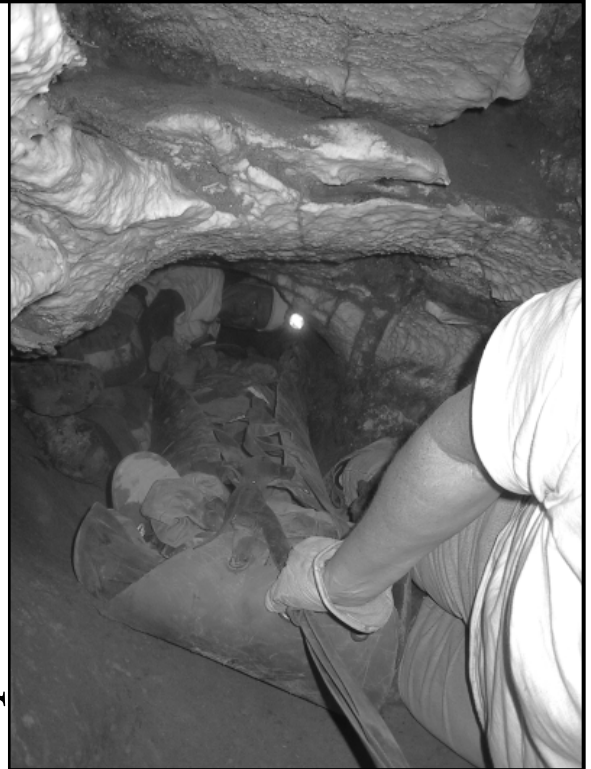
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Near the summit of Mt. Whitney,  
on the Whitney/Panamint outing in July.

### *Early Topics Deadline - October 10*



One of your *Topics* editors packaged and ready to go! We will be taking another cave rescue seminar from October 16 to 24. Please get your *Topics* articles in early or the *Topics* will be late. [Rasmussen@BigBaldy.com](mailto:Rasmussen@BigBaldy.com)