



Tehipite Topics

January-March 2014 – Vol. 60, No. 1

www.tehipitesierraclub.org

2014: A Year to Celebrate Wilderness

From the Editor:

Wilderness50, the year-long celebration of fifty years of wildlands protections under America's truly magnificent Wilderness Act of 1964, has kicked off in Fresno with a decidedly artistic slant.

Our own Heather Anderson, former Tehipite Chapter Chair and ExComm member, and an indefatigable environmental art educator, has the entire Fig Tree Gallery in downtown Fresno at her disposal throughout February to show off her colorful and vibrant canvases of Sierra Nevada wilderness scenes from Yosemite to Mt. Whitney. Heather's unique impressionistic style portraying scenic vistas she has sketched on scene is instantly recognizable to those who know her art.

At the end of the month the paintings will be sold to the highest bidder. Here is your chance to take some of Heather's grand art home with you.

For those who like their wilderness art less abstract and more precisely representational, I have nothing but praise for the large and beautiful works on loan from the Huntley Western Art Collection at Cal Poly, Pomona, now on display in the lobby of the Fresno Art Museum through April 27. Go soon to see the "Traditions of the West" exhibit because you may want to go again. It is rare that Fresno has such a fine set of traditional Western American paintings on display. The museum, on First Street below Clinton Ave., is open from 11 to 5 on Thursday through Sunday. Admission is \$5 for non-members.

This year also marks the 150th Anniversary of the Yosemite Grant Act. Several years before the wonders of Yellowstone had even begun to register on the national consciousness, Abraham Lincoln, in the midst of the Civil War, signed legislation from the 38th Congress ceding Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees to California as a state park. This was the first instance of park land being set aside specifically for preservation and public use by the federal government, and it became a precedent for the many preservation efforts that followed, including the movement to create an Adirondack Forest Preserve, the 1872 creation of Yellowstone National Park, and the eventual groundswell of support for systems of national and state parks, national forests, and wilderness areas across the country.

Many events are also taking place around this other anniversary, and we add to that with this issue of the *Topics* highlighting Yosemite memories, art, and YARTS.

On a decidedly more urban note, Downtown Fresno Revitalization Manager (and Sierra Club member) Elliott Balch has provided a rebuttal to my impassioned defense of the Fulton Pedestrian Mall in the last issue of *Tehipite Topics*. Whatever your position on this matter, it is important that you let the city councilmembers know how you feel, as they will soon be making the decision on the ultimate fate of Fulton Mall, possibly as early as the February 27 City Council meeting.

Finally, Lee Ayers of Tree Fresno is getting weekly deliveries through April of 8-to-12-foot Aleppo, Stone, and Afghan Pine trees in 15-gallon containers for planting in Fresno and its environs. If you want to improve the air quality and aesthetics of your property, these trees are available for \$15 apiece or \$10 each for ten or more. Call Lee at (559) 221-5556 #101 or (559) 285-3906 (mobile), or e-mail him at lee@treefresno.org.

Meet the Executive Committee



Three new ExComm members were elected in December and Bill Fjellbo was re-elected to the ExComm. The Committee then chose Bill to be Chapter Chair for another year. From the upper left **Gerald Vinnard**, **Daniel Gibby**, and **Trudy Tucker** are the new ExComm members, followed by **Bill Fjellbo**, **Wayne Dill**, and **George Whitmore**, with **Bruce Gray**, **Chip Ashley**, and **Rod Webster**, all three also ExComm members, in front. Gerald was elected Chapter Vice-Chair. Wayne continues as Treasurer and Chip as Chapter Secretary. George serves as Chair of the Yosemite National Park Committee, Trudy is National Forest Chair, Bill chairs the Political Committee, and Chip chairs Energy and Climate. Rod is Chair of the Merced Group.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



Bear in mind the consequences.

The Yellowstone grizzly bear is an irreplaceable part of America's natural heritage, a symbol of the independence that defines the American character and an icon of all that is wild and free. The Bush administration set forth a proposal that would remove federal protection for the Yellowstone grizzly bear. Help Sierra Club protect our forest friends; they prefer the woods than being on display.

Get grizzly and JOIN Sierra Club.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone (____) _____

Email _____

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club.
Please charge my: Visa Mastercard AMEX

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____

Exp. Date ____/____/____

Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.



Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club P.O. Box 5396 Fresno, California 93755-5396

Copyright © 2014,
Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club
Chapter Phone (559) 229-4031
Web Site www.tehipitesierraclub.org

Tehipite Chapter Officers:

- Chapter Chair**
Bill Fjellbo (559) 642-4511
bjfjellbo@sti.net
- Chapter Vice-Chair**
Gerald Vinnard (559) 431-5740
gvinnard@hotmail.com
- Chapter Secretary**
Chip Ashley (559) 855-6376
wattsvalleypreservation@gmail.com
- Chapter Treasurer**
Wayne Dill
wd@whcpafirm.com

Executive Committee Members:

- Chip Ashley (559) 855-6376
wattsvalleypreservation@gmail.com
- William Fjellbo (559) 642-4511
bjfjellbo@sti.net
- Daniel Gibby (559) 308-8606
dgibby024@gmail.com
- Bruce Gray (559) 868-4400
olenski01@gmail.com
- Karen Laws (559) 473-9618
karen3245laws@gmail.com
- Ron Mackie (559) 683-0293
rmackie@sierratel.com
- Trudy Tucker (559) 683-6230
trudyt@cvip.net
- Gerald Vinnard (559) 431-5740
gvinnard@hotmail.com

- Merced Group Appointee**
Rod Webster (209) 723-4747
rwebster@elite.net

Chapter Committee Chairs:

- Environmental Education**
Heather Anderson (559) 681-6305
heather.anderson8@comcast.net
- Hospitality**
Karen Hammer (559) 298-5272
ecuagirl45@yahoo.com

- Membership/Newsletter Distribution**
Marian Orvis (559) 226-0145
forvet@comcast.net

Outings and Outings Leader Training
open

Political Committee
Bill Fjellbo (559) 642-4511
bjfjellbo@sti.net

Programs / Honors & Awards
Heather Anderson (559) 681-6305
heather.anderson8@comcast.net

Publicity
Karen Hammer (559) 298-5272
ecuagirl45@yahoo.com

Tehipite Topics Website Editor
open

Tehipite Topics Editor
Bob Turner (559) 203-0714
robertsturner52@gmail.com

Wilderness Committee
Heather Anderson (559) 681-6305
heather.anderson8@comcast.net

Conservation Committee:
Conservation Chair
Gary Lasky (559) 790-3495
data.nations@gmail.com

Energy / Climate
Chip Ashley (559) 855-6376
wattsvalleypreservation@gmail.com

Kings Canyon National Park
Bob Turner (559) 203-0714
robertsturner52@gmail.com

National Forest Chair
Trudy Tucker (559) 683-6230
trudyt@cvip.net

San Joaquin River
Chris Acree (559) 709-4913

Land Use / Air Quality
Gary Lasky (559) 790-3495
data.nations@gmail.com

Water / Kings River
David Cehrs (559) 875-9495
dcehrs@juno.com

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

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

Council of Club Leaders:
CCL Delegate
Gary Lasky (559) 790-3495
data.nations@gmail.com

California/Nevada Regional Conservation Committee:
CNRCC At-Large Delegate
Gary Lasky (559) 790-3495
Ron Mackie (559) 683-0293

CNRCC Delegates
Heather Anderson (559) 681-6305
Chip Ashley (559) 855-6376

CNRCC Alternates
William Fjellbo (559) 642-4511
Karen Laws (559) 473-9618



**Merced Group
of the Sierra Club**
Box 387
Merced, California
95341

Group Chair
Rod Webster (209) 723-4747
rwebster@elite.net

Group Vice-Chair
Jon Hawthorne (209) 723-5152

Group Treasurer
Lisa Kayser-Grant (209) 384-1016

Group Secretary
Annette Allsup (209) 723-5152

Member-at-Large
John Magneson
jmagneson@gmail.com

Conservation Chair
open

Publications
Annette Allsup (209) 723-5152

Agriculture
Charlie Magneson (209) 394-7045

Membership
Herta Calvert (209)384-1350
fog51city@gmail.com

Publicity
Rod Webster (209) 723-4747
rwebster@elite.net

Population
open

Merced Group Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

The first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM — Rod Webster's home, 345 E. 20th St., Merced
Conservation meeting is first and can last 30-40 minutes.

Anyone with an interest in local, state, or national conservation issues is welcome to attend.

Merced Group Monthly Meetings/Programs

Meetings are on the 3rd Thursday of each month. The public as well as members are cordially invited.
Same time and place as last year: 7:00 PM in the Fireside Room at Merced United Methodist Church.

It is located at 899 Yosemite Parkway (also known as Hwy 140 to Yosemite).

Park in the lot off of Cypress Avenue and use the entrance there.

Thursday, March 20, 7:00 PM — Jan Wagner-Tyack
of Restore the Delta discusses "Problems with the
BDCP"

The **April 17** program and the **May picnic** details are
yet to be announced. If you have questions or need
more information: rwebster@elite.net or 723-4747.

"Problems with the BDCP"

The Bay Delta Conservation Plan, very controversial
and widely panned by the environmental community,
is Gov. Brown's proposal for transporting water down
the state using two upstream tunnels to bypass the
Delta. Come hear about concerns and possible
alternatives from someone intimately involved.

Merced Group News

December Awards / Fund-Raising Banquet A Fine time was had by all!

Our awards/fund-raising "banquet" on the second Saturday
in December was a great success. First of all, our pot-luck
caterers were the best. There was a lot of variety and
delicious dishes, including special homemade ones. So we had
plenty to eat and lots of pleasant conversation around the
tables. Folks we hadn't seen in a while and some new faces all
fit in the mix very comfortably.

Our speaker was author, illustrator, and Fresno State
professor Doug Hansen. Doug used striking, colorful images of
his artwork to explain his creative process and the work that
goes into his children's books — 40 hours on each illustration!
Most of the images were from his children's books: *Mother
Goose in California* and *Aesop in California*. These books put a
new spin on the old classics, using California habitats and
animals significant and unique to each setting to tell the
stories. Very impressive was the field research that went into
the detail of each illustration. Doug traveled to a great variety
of California habitats, selecting a different one for each of the
26 alphabetical pages in his Mother Goose book. His brother,
who is a professor of wildlife biology, was a ready resource to
accurately portray the animals and ecosystems.

Professor Hansen revealed that another book is on the way,
content yet to be revealed. Those who have seen the beautiful
artwork in his first two books anxiously await its completion.

The evening also included a brief report on major topics and
issues that were the focus of the Merced Group this past year:

- the Climate Action Plan for the City of Merced
- the 2013 Bike Plan for the City of Merced
- the Merced County 2030 General Plan Update
- the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
- the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable
Communities Strategy
- the Merced River Plan in Yosemite Valley
- the Delta Tunnel Plan
- the issue of hydraulic fracturing ("fracking")

Merced Group also presented our Exemplary
Conservationist Award, this year honoring Gary Lasky, who
has done so much for the Sierra Club at various levels in the
organization. Lately he has been a valuable resource and
grassroots organizer in Merced and Madera, as well as in his
home city of Fresno. Gary has been Vice-Chair and continues
to be Conservation Chair in the Tehipite Chapter. He has
served on both the Conservation and Political Committees of
Sierra Club California. At the national level he is a
representative to the National Council of Club Leaders.

— CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 —

At all levels of involvement Gary brings organizing skills that help unite folks and show them how to be more effective advocates for the environment and their communities. At the local level Gary is especially committed to, and effective at, fostering grassroots leadership.

As a perfect case in point, just this last year Gary secured a grant from the Rose Foundation for \$40,000 to help promote public involvement in major land use decisions confronting Madera County. In October step one was to bring noteworthy environmental lawyers to town. They instructed 53 concerned citizens from Madera, Fresno, Merced, and the foothills on how to analyze a CEQA document and formulate effective comments on it. That initial educational outreach has continued with more training meetings, which will through the coming year. The ultimate goal: to increase citizen involvement and create an effective collective voice that can intelligently speak to land use decisions being made by our local governments.

Another recent mobilizing effort of Gary's is focused on hydraulic fracturing ("fracking"). His study of this invasive

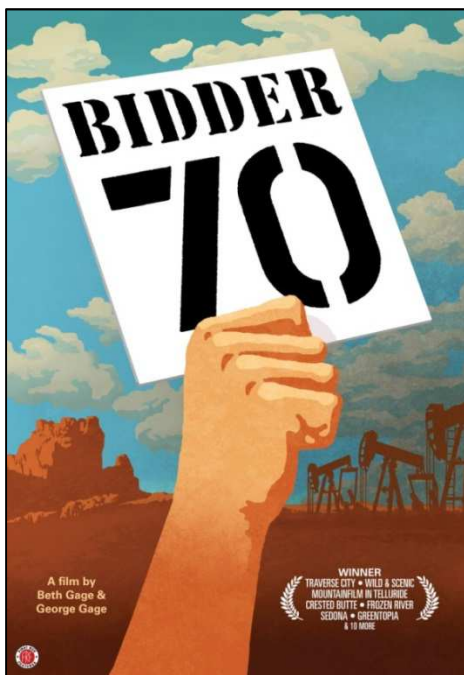
method of oil extraction became even more important when the oil industry revealed plans to frack along the length of the Central Valley. Gary's own expertise and the network of contacts that he has cultivated up and down the state have been used for fracking forums and events. He is currently chair of Fresno's Against Fracking and is helping concerned citizens and farmers in Merced County form a similar cohesive voice.

Those are just two examples from Gary's decades of involvement in environmental issues and long list of accomplishments in advocacy. The plaque presented to Gary reads: "In recognition of many years of service and leadership, for educating the public on critical environmental issues, and for fostering grassroots activism and advocacy."

That indeed only gives a 'taste' of why he deserves recognition, but hopefully a piquant one.

2013 Sierra Club Wall Calendars and Engagement Books are still for sale through the Merced Group — inspired nature photography from familiar and exotic locales around the U.S. Get one while they last! Contact Annette at (209) 723-5152.

Free Showing of 2012 Documentary "Bidder 70"



This is What Hope Looks Like

On Dec. 19, 2008 Tim DeChristopher disrupted a highly disputed Utah BLM Oil and Gas lease auction, effectively safeguarding thousands of acres of pristine Utah land that were slated for oil and gas leases. Tim entered the auction hall and registered as bidder #70. He outbid industry giants on land parcels which were adjacent to national treasures like Canyonlands National Park. When the bidding was halted he had won 22,000 acres of land worth \$1.7 million. He knew he had no money to immediately pay for the land. Two months later Interior Secretary Ken Salazar invalidated the auction. As a result of his actions DeChristopher served 21 months in prison, being released in April of 2013. CSUF CineCulture film series will show "Bidder 70," the story of Tim's brave journey from college student to nationally-known environmental activist, and founder of Peaceful Uprisings.

"Bidder 70" will be shown on March 21, 5:30 P.M.

Cal State Fresno Campus

Peters Education Center Auditorium

(Just west of the Save Mart Center in the Student Recreation Center Building)

Parking on campus is not enforced after 4 P.M. on Friday.

Post-screening discussants will be the filmmakers George and Beth Gage.

The Tehipite Chapter is one of several sponsors of this inspiring film.

Tehipite Chapter Meetings in 2014

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act

Tehipite Chapter Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

Second Wednesday of each month ~ Open to the Public

February 12, March 12, April 9, May 14, June 11, September 10, October 8, November 12, December 10

The Conservation Committee meets at 7 PM. The Executive Committee meets at 8 PM.

University of California Center, 550 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno (between First and Fresno Streets)

Tehipite Chapter General Meetings

Monthly meetings are on the third Wednesday of each month from 7 to 9 PM

except in July, August, and November

MEETINGS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

University of California Center, 550 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno (between First and Fresno Street)

Wednesday, February 19, 7:00 PM

**Jim Oftedal, Director of the Central California Consortium
for the United States Forest Service, speaks on**

Teaching Disadvantaged Youth about Wilderness and Our National Forests on Site

Jim Oftedal is a leader in the US Forest Service, a mentor in the community, and a community organizer. He began working for the Forest Service more than 30 years ago and worked his way up to a leadership position on the Sierra National Forest. For the past 15 years, he has served as the Director of the Central California Consortium (CCC), a program that was created to help the agency better reflect the demographics of California.

The CCC serves as a bridge between the Forest Service and underserved communities in Central California. One component called "Generation Green," teaches environmental education in schools from kindergarten through 12th grade. The Central Valley has a high school dropout rate of almost 40 percent. CCC works with school systems to provide visible role models, with bilingual environmental education for elementary and middle school students, a mentoring program for middle and high school students, and leadership and summer internship opportunities for high school Generation Green Club members. CCC college students become eligible for permanent career opportunities.

Jim began his grassroots approach working in the Latino farming community of Fresno County, expanded the program into the Hmong community, and most recently has been working on creating opportunities for students from African American communities in West Fresno. His continuing desire to build strong relationships in diverse communities has made a positive impact on hundreds of young people while strengthening the Forest Service image along the way.



More Tehipite Chapter Meetings for Year of Wilderness50

Wednesday, March 26, 6:00 PM

**at the First Congregational Church of Fresno (the Big Red Church)
2131 N. Van Ness Blvd. (corner of Yale), just north of Fresno High School**

Tehipite Chapter Annual Banquet

**Keynote Speaker: Jan W. van Wagtendonk,
Noted Wilderness Advocate and Fire Ecologist, speaking on**

**The Last 50 years of Wilderness History
(with a focus on our own Sierra Nevada)**

This is a free potluck banquet: A-H Main Dishes, I-P Desserts, Q-Z Salads

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!



DR. JAN W. VAN WAGTENDONK

Dr. van Wagtendonk grew up in Indiana, where he began his study of forestry at Purdue University. Summer seasonal work as a smokejumper for the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management convinced him to finish his undergraduate work at Oregon State University, where he received his B.S. in Forest Management in 1963. After serving as an officer in the U.S. Army with the 101st Airborne Division and as an advisor to the Vietnamese army, he entered graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley. There Dr. van Wagtendonk obtained his M.S. in Range Management in 1968 and his Ph.D. in Wildland Resource Science with a specialty in fire ecology in 1972. From 1972 through 1993 he was employed as a research scientist with the National Park Service at Yosemite National Park. From 1994 until he retired in 2008, Dr. van Wagtendonk was employed as a research forester with the U.S. Geological Survey at Yosemite. His areas of research have included prescriptions for burning in wildland ecosystems, recreational impacts in wilderness, the application of geographic information systems to resources management, and the role of fire in Sierra Nevada ecosystems.

Wednesday, April 15, 7:00 PM — Movie night: “John Muir in the New World” In celebration of John Muir’s birthday (April 21, 1838), we will view a documentary of Muir’s life and career set amongst landscapes of the American West. One of America’s first nature preservationists, Muir wrote and advocated to keep wilderness wild. A co-founder of the Sierra Club, he and his compatriots worked to protect the larger Yosemite basin, California’s endangered sequoia groves, the glacial landscapes of Alaska, and many other spectacular wildlands that became the core of our national park system.

Wednesday, May 21, 7:00 PM — Vicky Hoover, from the national Sierra Club office, will emphasize why the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act is such a big deal.

Wednesday, June 18, 7:00 PM — Movie Night: “Mother” This film, which we had previously scheduled last year, addresses an exploding population that will leave little room for wilderness.

There will be no general meeting in July or August.

HEATHER ANDERSON

WILDERNESS:

Views of the Sierra Nevada

– The Wilderness Act at 50 –

Fig Tree Gallery

February through March 2, 2014

Hours: Fri/Sat/Sun 12–4

(or by appointment)

644 Van Ness Avenue

Fresno, CA 93721

(559) 485-0460

www.figtreegallery.us

SILENT AUCTION

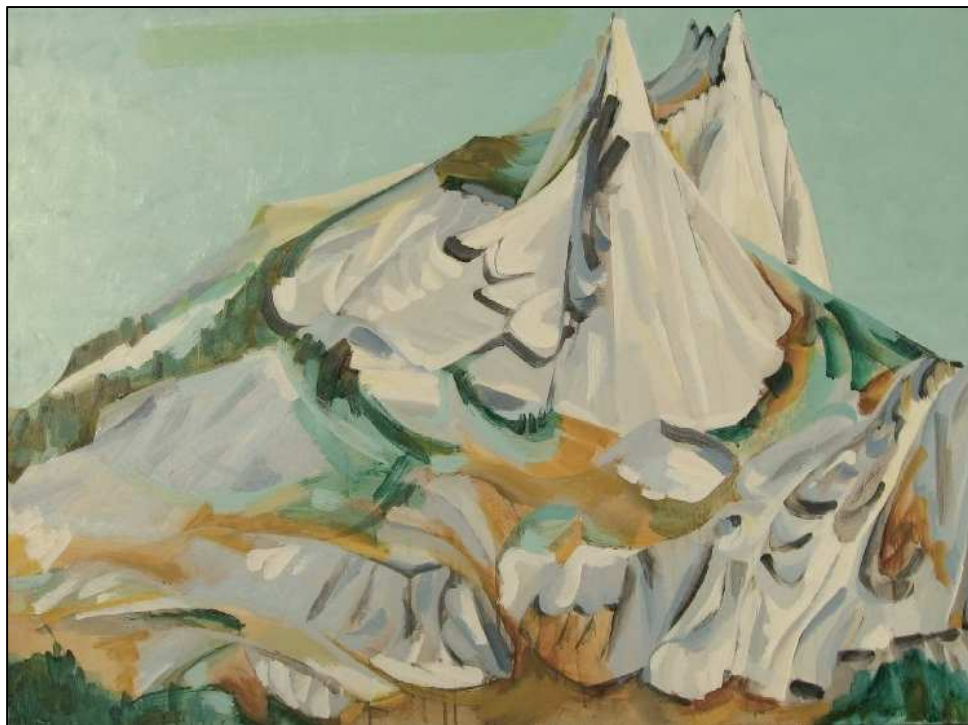
during regular gallery hours

from Friday, February 28

through Sunday, March 2

Take Heather home with you!

www.heatherandersonart.com



CATHEDRAL PEAK, YOSEMITE



2014 – Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

April 12-14, May 4-6, June 8-10, July 20-22, August 24-26, and September 14-16

Join us for a 3-day, 3-island, live-aboard tour of the enchanting Channel Islands! Hike wild, windswept trails bordered with blazing wildflowers. Kayak rugged coastlines. Marvel at pristine waters teeming with frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on unusual sea and land birds — and an occasional whale. Watch for the highly endangered island fox. Look for reminders of the Chumash people who lived on these islands for thousands of years. Or, just relax at sea. All cruises depart from Santa Barbara, California. The cost, \$590, includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, and beverages, plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to help lead hikes, point out items of interest, and give evening programs.

To reserve space, send a \$100 check, written to Sierra Club, to leader Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leader at 626-443-0706 or jholtzhl@aol.com for more info.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LARS JENSEN

YOSEMITE FALLS, BY JANE GYER (1925 - 2004)



Reproduction courtesy of the estate of Jane Gyer, represented by the Timberline Gallery, Oakhurst, California, with thanks to the Chris Sorensen Gallery.



2014: WILDERNESS 50

CELEBRATING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILDERNESS ACT

My Yosemite Wilderness Experience

My first experience in Yosemite occurred with the Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club on a hike led by Ax Nelson, a venerable outings leader of the sixties, along the Panorama trail. A friend had invited me to try hiking and with my 10-year-old son I opted to escape the San Joaquin Valley heat for the coolness of Yosemite. The hike started from Glacial Point and ended in Yosemite Valley and miraculously a car shuttle appeared and eventually transported us back to the Central Valley. I shall always remember the superlative scenery, including Half Dome and the granite cliffs of the backcountry, on my first outings hike! To boot it rained half way through the hike, soaking the unprepared neophytes. We dried ourselves at the overly large fireplace in the Ahwahnee Hotel. All in all, it was truly memorable and an etched-in-your-mind day. Ever since that magnificent day, I have been a member of the Sierra Club.

– Syd Bluestone

Yosemite Memories

We were both Berkeley students when I met him, this blue-eyed, bushy-tailed one from the Landscape Architecture Department. It was my first adventure with him, up Yosemite Falls to the very top. It was also my first hike ever in Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada. The view on top of glacially rounded domes was similar to the famous cousin across the valley, Half Dome.

Half Dome took a full day to climb, 7 am to 7 pm. After breaking camp and walking to the trail-head at Happy Isles, we started the long upward climb. At the base of the dome, we donned gloves to get a firm grip on the stout metal chain, leading to the large, somewhat level top with magnificent views of upper Yosemite country and of the valley far below.

Another hike, much later, with the former student, now husband, was up a tributary of the Merced, as far as we could go without tramping hip-deep in snow. In the valley, the Dogwood trees were in full white blossom, while up there spring had not yet come, only snow-melt, with rivulets and miniature waterfalls streaming off rocks everywhere.

Once, with our two small youngsters, we hiked into Glen Aulin High Sierra Camp and on to overnight beside the Tuolumne River's roaring Waterwheel Falls. What a joyous explosion of water, spiraling mid-air over-and-over from concave rocks beneath the river as it descended.

After some years, and departure of former husband from the family, I took our now teenagers and went into Yosemite from the Tioga Pass Road. Thinking of elevation in order to start high and hike downhill, we followed the route of the old High Sierra camps from Vogelsang at 10,000' down to Merced Lake, Sunrise Lakes and May Lake at 9200'.

The first night at Vogelsang we awakened to find bear prints around our tent. Fortunately we had slept soundly with no intrusion. While heading up the pass between Rafferty Creek and Fletcher Creek watersheds, we decided to climb Mt. Vogelsang, just to imprint our memory with the view of Tioga Valley. Next night we tented near Merced Lake; the following day we hiked on to May Lake, crowded with campers. But, we had with a nice little nearby climb up glacial rock to the top of Mt. Hoffman (10,850').

A final highlight in my Yosemite memory-bank was a walk and a chilly dip into one of the Cathedral Lakes, set in a granite basin. Of course, there was a great view of Cathedral Peak, a capstone Class V ascent for climbers. I didn't climb, just painted it. But an eye-opener was entering the valley of Tenaya Creek. There was not a tree. It was ALL GRANITE. Incredible! I painted that one too.

Almost forgotten was an early spring hike around the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir and on to camp in Tiltill Valley. The reservoir was not a beautiful setting; vegetation was dead 10 to 15 feet up from the lake because of draw-down or lake fluctuation. It didn't look like the lake with abundant hikers recreating that was promised by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, who wanted Hetch Hetchy water for their city. There wasn't a soul around. John Muir had worked until the last year of his life to save the valley he claimed equal in grandeur to that of Yosemite. Although it was not to be then, many folks (Restore Hetch Hetchy) now work to reclaim the valley and its river.

While Yosemite National Park is figuring how to accommodate the four million annual visitors and maintain a nature experience in such a unique and majestic geological valley, we will continue to hike the upper Yosemite, leaving those valley wonders for many yet to come.

– Heather Anderson

A Rainy Day in Yosemite

The lure of a fence or barrier is, to me, irresistible. Behind them lie the forbidden, the unknown, the unexplored, and the new world. Behind it lies as much of an adventure as I'm going to find in a world where there is no unexplored territory. So as I was visiting Yosemite Valley one winter, I noticed the yellow ribbon stretched from tree to tree for several hundred yards, blocking the trail that leads to the base of Yosemite Falls. I was about to have an experience that would teach me something about the importance of the unknown territory behind those barriers.

The day was a rainy day and there seemed to be more water in the valley than anything else. The banks of the Merced River were overflowing, the meadows were like lakes or swamps at best, and the waterfalls in the valley were not confined to their usual boundaries, but instead every wall seemed to have a sheet of water running down it. My friend Kari and I had just been to the base of Bridalveil Falls. We had put on what rain gear we had and walked up the path. As we walked along the rain got heavier and heavier, but soon we realized it was not rain; only mist from the falls. Since Kari had less rain gear than I, she stopped just before the end of the trail and hid behind a rock as I went on. When I reached the falls I found it hard to look right at the falls. The mist wasn't just misting down, it was blowing at me fiercely. The falls crashed against the rocks at its base with a powerful roar. This show of nature exhilarated and humbled me, yet I was not afraid.

This was truly a new experience for me in Yosemite. I was seeing Yosemite in a way, and at a time that I hadn't before. I was discovering something new, if only to me. I thought of John Muir and his experiences. I thought of his writings where he describes the glory of experiencing Yosemite during a storm. He was not afraid of the show but was totally enthralled by it. I was experiencing for myself an experience that John Muir might have gloried in.

Yosemite holds many marvels and secrets. When I was younger I had visited Yosemite many times with school groups and learned of some of these marvels, such as the alluvial flood plain at the bottom of Yosemite Falls. Each spring during the heavy runoff the creek below the falls overflows its boundaries, fans out on the valley floor, and deposits rock, silt, and debris that has been carried for miles by the creek and over the falls itself. I had walked over the plain many times in late summer when the collection of unstable rock and loose dirt was very dry and very far from the tiny creek that trickled through the middle of the alluvial deposits. More than once I had

wondered what the flood plain would be like during peak runoff, and wished I could be there to see it for myself.

Thinking back at this I looked at all the water coming down the falls and I told Kari of the floodplain, remarking that if ever there was a time when it flooded, I imagined it would be flooded now. Again I thought of John Muir and how I had read of a time when he had worked his way along a ledge below the lip of Yosemite Falls till he was behind the falls, and observed the full moon through them. Would John Muir have ventured to the falls on a day like this to observe their power, to observe the uniqueness of the flood plain? Did he once?

It was this frame of mind that drew me to see Yosemite Falls this day, and it was when I reached the trail to the falls that I saw the yellow ribbon barrier. I couldn't believe that anyone wanted to keep people away from a phenomenon that I was so sure that John Muir would have been there to see. So I walked to the barrier, and beyond.

Suddenly a voice, a ranger, shouted to me to stop. I turned around and walked to face him. He told me that the area was closed. I wasn't sure what to do. Kari was ready to jump in the truck and go. She had been a ranger once and sympathized with this poor guy who had to spend his whole afternoon in the rain, keeping people away, playing Mr. Unpopular. She told me that confrontations with authority make her uncomfortable, so she was tugging at my sleeve. I have to admit that confrontations with authority make me uncomfortable too. I knew that he did not make the decision to put up the ribbon. He was just doing his job, and arguing with him wouldn't do any good. Still, I felt justified in my desire to see the falls, so I inquired as to the authority that allowed him to keep me from going where I pleased on public lands.

"The park has authority to protect those who visit from potential dangers," he rather mechanically told me.

"What dangers exist at the falls?" I asked.

"Flash floods. Could come at any time, 'cause of the rain. So the area's closed 'cause it could be dangerous up there."

I mused at the irony of such a statement in a park where people climb El Capitan. Do they consider El Capitan safe?

"Flash floods are precisely what I've come to see!" I declared.

"Sorry," he told me.

I mumbled off a few more protests, but to no avail.

“You know,” said the ranger, “you’re the type of person most likely to get hurt up there — someone like you who doesn’t want to follow the rules.” The ranger meant the comment as an insult as much as instruction.

I told the ranger, “You don’t know me as well as you think you do.”

There really wasn’t anything more to say. The feeling of awe that had attracted me to the falls had been repressed in a few moments. I felt betrayed by the park service, who I felt should understand the spirit of exploration, adventure, and learning that I felt. I know that John Muir was at the falls in spirit and I couldn’t join him. But I felt something deeper that I was unsure of.

As I walked away I once more thought of one of John Muir’s experiences. He wrote of a time when he was inadvertently caught in an avalanche. Instead of panicking he tried to backstroke to keep on the surface of the snow as the avalanche swept him down the slope a thousand feet or more. He describes the experience as being scary, but exhilarating, and somewhat jokingly recommends the experience. John Muir was not afraid to die while experiencing life and his life was all the more rich for it.

Then suddenly, the deeper feelings I was having made sense to me. I realized that when we allow ourselves to discover the world in new ways, we enrich and add meaning to our lives. Dangerous as they were, John Muir’s experiences of riding an avalanche, and watching the moon through Yosemite Falls added immensely to his life and to what, for him, gave his life meaning. All new experiences involve risk of some sort, either physical or

emotional, and often the insight or enrichment gained from the experience is directly proportional to the risk involved.

A person who does not venture to the base of the falls because it may be dangerous limits the experiences that enrich his life. A person who goes inside at each storm, who ventures beyond no barriers, who discovers no new marvels or secrets, who takes no risks, limits his life and loses its importance piece by piece, till he has nothing worth protecting anymore. The ranger was taking from me the ability to experience life in a new way.

When I told the ranger that he didn’t know me, I meant that he didn’t know the sense of awe and discovery I had been feeling that day. If he did, he surely would have opened the gate. Instead he enforced the barrier. He didn’t know that I was trying to witness something that I had been taught about as a child and had wondered about since. He didn’t know that to me, living means more than just preserving my life.

Epilogue:

I wrote this piece almost 30 years ago. The experience I had that day was so compelling and emotional for me that when I returned to Fresno, I immediately had to sit and write about the experience. I have had many rich experiences in Yosemite and elsewhere in my beloved Sierra Nevada mountains since then. Thank you Yosemite, on the occasion of your 150th birthday, for the many lessons you have taught us, and for enriching our lives.

– Wayne D. Dill



THE LOWER YOSEMITE FALL IN FLOOD, MAY 16, 2005

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

YARTS (YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM) 20 Years Later

by Richard Wiebe

Having just completed 20 years of service as the environmental community's representative, appointed by the Superintendent of Yosemite National Park four times, on the Citizens Advisory Committee for YARTS (Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System), I thought the Tehipite Chapter members would be interested in how YARTS came about, its current scope of operations, and its prospects for the near future.

YARTS was born in 1998 out of YATI (Yosemite Area Transportation Information), which began in 1993. YATI meetings, including representatives from Merced, Mariposa, Madera, Mono, and Tuolumne Counties, led to a realization that more needed to be done than just provide traveler information. YATI was dissolved and morphed into YARTS.

The heart of the YARTS dream was a low-cost and efficient public bus system that would be an alternative to the automobile. There would be no discrimination against automobiles, but YARTS would function as a "carrot" alternative.

Due to an intransigent supervisor from Sonora, Tuolumne County dropped out. Madera County, led by an anti-federal government supervisor from Oakhurst, also dropped out. Merced, Mariposa, and Mono Counties pushed forward with the YARTS idea. A joint powers authority was formed, which allowed YARTS to receive direct tax appropriations from State and Federal Governments. A JPA does not have the authority to levy taxes. It can issue bonds. Funding for YARTS comes from counties, Caltrans, the State of California, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the National Park Service-Department of the Interior, and Congress.

Ridership has increased steadily every year since 1998. YARTS contracted with VIA Transportation of Phoenix, Arizona to operate the buses. They have been an efficient, responsible contractor and have been the sole contractor since 1998. There is a periodic "request for proposals" (RFP) to keep the contractual process open and accountable. VIA has successfully demonstrated its competence to be the contractor time and time again every quarter. VIA provides a detailed operations report as required by YARTS JPA. This report includes ridership data, accidents, missed passengers, late runs, cost effectiveness, an explanation and response to all rider complaints, and frequency of on-time runs. These are public documents available



from the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG), the parent umbrella for the YARTS JPA. You can contact Jesse Brown, director at MCAG.

Currently there are three YARTS routes: Highway 140 from Merced to Mariposa to Yosemite Valley, which operates year round; Highways 395 and 120 from Mammoth Lakes to Lee Vining to Tuolumne Meadows to Crane Flat and Yosemite Valley (operating when the Tioga Pass Road is open); and Highway 120 from Sonora to Groveland to the Yosemite Valley (also open only in the summer months). Since the retirement of the anti-YARTS supervisor, Tuolumne County has rejoined YARTS, making it the fourth county member. When linking up with the free Yosemite Valley shuttle bus system, a visitor can experience Yosemite free of driving and the costs of gasoline fuels. A one-way trip from Merced to Mammoth Lakes is \$31, a real bargain. The discount for seniors brings the cost down to \$24. The Merced terminus is the Amtrak station, linking YARTS to the state and national rail/bus system, and making possible a true "European-style" visit to Yosemite, sans car. The YARTS schedule and fares can be found online at www.yarts.com/schedules.html.

Fresno County and Fresno Yosemite International Airport have signaled and interest in a Highway 41 YARTS service. Such a service would "hopscotch" over Madera County unless they decide to join YARTS. A Highway 41 service would begin at the High-Speed Train Depot and the Amtrak Station in downtown Fresno. This would be another link to state and national train systems. At this point this is only an informal conversation.

Although subsidized, YARTS is making steady progress towards a increased funding from ticket sales alone. The goal is 75% self-funding. This is realistic according to present trajectories.

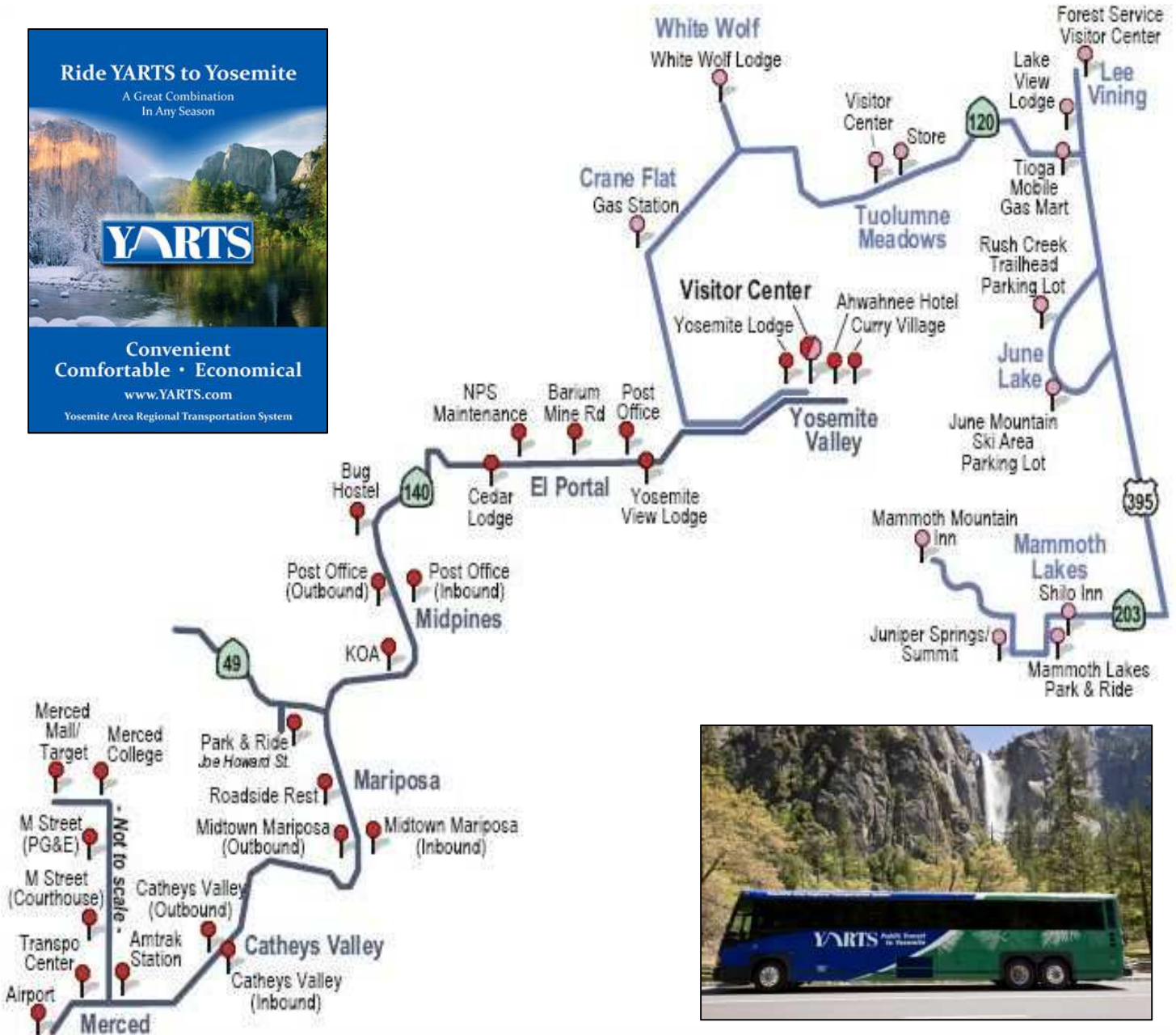
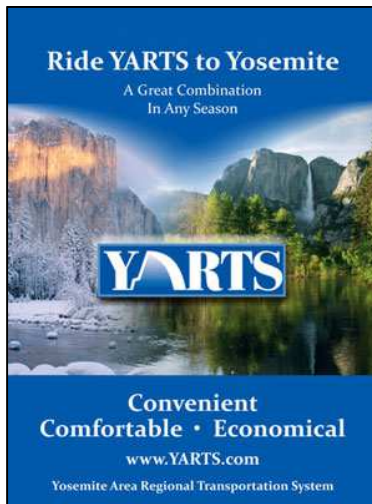
I can look back on 20 years of fruitful work with

YARTS. I have declined more reappointments wanting to give another person the same opportunity to be of service to Yosemite. I must thank Superintendent Michael Finley for first appointing me to YATI/YARTS in 1993. Despite our clashes over the Yosemite General Management Implementation Plan, he saw me as a constructive, thoughtful advocate of preservationist values. It is to his credit and that of the three subsequent superintendents that I was allowed to serve as a preservationist on the YARTS Citizens Advisory Committee. Today Finley is the Director of the Ted Turner Foundation, having retired from the senior

executive service of the National Park Service as Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park.

Try taking YARTS from Merced or Mariposa sometime. Enjoy the ride as you look at the view instead of having to eye the road in front of you. Or you can read, nap, or chat with your fellow passengers. It is a delightful way to get to Yosemite.

Richard Wiebe, a member of Sierra Club California's Yosemite Committee, formerly served as Chair of the Tehipite Chapter. He is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Fresno Pacific University and a life member of the Sierra Club.



THE YOSEMITE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM (YARTS) IS A REGULARLY SCHEDULED, FIXED ROUTE, PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEM THAT PROVIDES AN ALTERNATIVE TO DRIVING IN THE YOSEMITE REGION. YARTS PROVIDES SERVICE INTO YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK AND GATEWAY COMMUNITIES IN BUSES THAT ARE AIR-CONDITIONED AND EQUIPPED FOR RIDER COMFORT. MOST BUSES ARE WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE. RIDERS CAN BRING A BACKPACK OR BICYCLE. FARES ARE MODEST AND THERE IS NO ENTRANCE FEE FOR GOING INTO THE PARK VIA BUS.

Downtown Revitalization Manager Offers City's Argument For a Road in Place of Fresno's Fulton Mall

Data Show Downtown Vitality Lowers Emissions

by Elliott Balch

Every Sierra Club member can recall that first urge to join. For me it came at 18, as a student at Harvard working toward my major in physics, preparing for the career I envisioned as a scientist informing public policy about climate change and other environmental issues. I realized that the ways land use and transportation patterns in Fresno and Boston had evolved so differently was affecting not only the environment but every part of life, from proximity and convenience to epidemic obesity. It seemed like the lack of viable, walkable public spaces had sapped the public spirit itself in Fresno, robbing us of some of the will needed to face the range of the community's challenges together.

Returning to Fresno in 2003, I had an intuitive sense that the quiet downtown I had experienced as a student at nearby Edison High School was an important part of the problem. Downtown Fresno wasn't helping attract growth back in toward the center, the way we needed it to. No wonder status-quo developers could get away with saying there was no demand for urban living: potential downtown residents would have had to choose a product that didn't exist! That's why, since I came back from Harvard, I've been working to support new development and activity in our downtown core.

In a downtown, there isn't any kind of land use — business, residential, office, government — that relies on one mode of travel and not the others. Buildings and businesses are more pedestrian- and sidewalk-oriented in the downtown than anywhere else. Visibility from the street is important, too, because some of those pedestrians will come to the area by automobile. How many?

The Fresno County Council of Governments has been busy creating a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) under SB 375, the landmark state law that requires regional planning for growth. The SCS scenario that reflects the City of Fresno's pro-infill Alternative A for the new General Plan, plus the build-out of five bus rapid transit lines along major corridors, shows public transit accounting for 1.7% of all trips in Fresno County in 2035. That means a large share of local trips, even with good planning and



REVITALIZING DOWNTOWN MEANS FILLING BUILDINGS AND SIDEWALKS WITH LIFE. TODAY SEVEN INVESTORS ARE KNOWN TO BE ACTIVELY WORKING ON NINE FULTON MALL PROJECTS. EVERY ONE OF THEM SUPPORTS RESTORING VEHICLE TRAFFIC TO PROVIDE ACCESS AND VISIBILITY.

major investments in transit, will still be by automobile.

Before you despair completely about our “car culture,” look at the other end of the spectrum: downtown trips in one of the most walkable U.S. cities, Seattle. Here's how a 2012 survey of downtown Seattle workers shows they got to work: 49% took transit or walked, 43% used an automobile, 3% biked, and the rest stayed at home. This isn't a fair comparison with the Fresno data; these are trips to downtown only at midweek, in the peak commute hour, when transit use is highest. But that's the point: even in downtown Seattle, the mix of travel modes still

includes a large portion of automobile trips.

If a downtown business owner is going to succeed, therefore, she's going to rely on the totality of our transportation infrastructure — including the street grid — to have a fair shot at a substantial portion of her potential customers.

That's where the Fulton Mall comes in. Why focus on Fulton? Because it's our old "Main Street" — and even today, the density of buildings there is almost five times that of the rest of downtown. The density of storefronts is unmatched. This means that along Fulton, if the infrastructure is in place, you could realistically get five restaurants and bars open on every block, creating an anchor district. If Downtown is going to feel alive, this place has to work.

But like a different kind of economic "anchor," the Fulton Mall today has the greatest room to improve. Compared with the rest of downtown, vacancy rates along the Mall are double for historic buildings, and triple for office space, and office lease rates are lower by more than double compared to the citywide average. Taxable retail sales are \$79 per square foot, compared to \$203 on the nearby Kings Canyon corridor. I believe that decades of sprawl helped kill our downtown, but that doesn't explain why the economy along Fulton is in such dramatically worse shape than other parts of downtown.

After years of neglect, the City, private sector, and nonprofit partners are doing all kinds of things today to address this challenge. The City is putting in place better land use and design standards, and a host of downtown infrastructure upgrades. A property owner-funded business improvement district is spending almost \$1.5 million per year to host new events, do more marketing, and provide better hospitality to Mall visitors. (Have you been to the ice rink yet?) Private investors are responding with work on new development projects.

As part of its infrastructure commitment, the City is working on plans for reconstructing the Fulton Mall as a "complete street." The plans include narrow lanes of two-way vehicle traffic alongside wide sidewalks, fountains, existing trees, and all the existing artwork that people love in the historic 1964 landscape.

Why is this project the best way for the City to exercise stewardship of this part of our infrastructure? Remember the mix of travel modes and the role of the street grid in a business owner's viability. A survey by the City of Buffalo found that 90% of cities that had reintroduced traffic to their downtown pedestrian malls saw significant economic improvements in the years following. Of the dozens of

cities that have reopened their pedestrian malls, I have yet to hear of any thinking about closing them again.

Fulton's business and property owners already get it. Raul de Alba, whose family has owned several businesses on and around the Mall since 1981, says that "being visible to new customers is the best advertising we could have." As new and existing businesses along Fulton respond to being more visible and accessible, the area becomes more vibrant, more walkable, more desirable for upstairs office and residential use, and a more attractive destination for transit users. In the end this means a lot more to our community than just the ring of those cash registers.

That brings us back to thinking about our environment. We know intuitively that Downtown should be a magnet for infill growth — and the numbers really back it up. The cost-benefit analysis submitted with the City's successful application for federal funding for the Mall Project looks explicitly at the impact on emissions. Using published data for vehicle travel reductions resulting from development in urban centers, and assuming that Fulton Mall vacancy rates drop simply to those found in the rest of downtown, here are the results over a 30-year life cycle: emission of greenhouse gases is reduced by the equivalent of 395,000 metric tons of CO₂, and emission of NO_x (responsible for our bad air quality) is reduced by 2,300 metric tons. The overall reduction in vehicle travel from revitalizing these few blocks of Fulton outweighs the likely increase in vehicle travel along the reopened street itself by a ratio of at least 1,000-to-1.

With so much focus on reinvesting in the inner city, I am excited about the Fresno we are building and leaving to the next generation. Our downtown economy is essential to achieving smarter growth for Fresno and a better future for the Valley's environment. I hope other Tehipite Chapter members will join me in encouraging fellow advocates and local leaders to support investments in our downtown, like the Fulton Mall Project, that will help make this future a reality.

Elliott Balch, a Tehipite Chapter member and the Downtown Revitalization Manager for the City of Fresno, invites correspondence at Elliott.Balch@fresno.gov.



AT PRESS TIME THE PLANNING COMMISSION HAS RECOMMENDED OPTION 1, THE RECONNECTION OF THE FULTON CORRIDOR TO THE TRADITIONAL STREET GRID.

— EDITOR



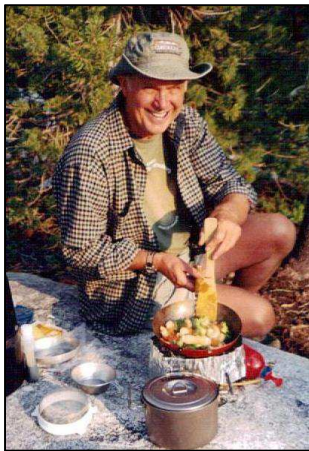
**TEHIPITE CHAPTER
OF THE SIERRA CLUB**
P.O. BOX 5396
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93755-5396

Non Profit Org
U. S. Postage
P A I D
Fresno, Calif.
Permit No. 150

Inside this issue of *Tehipite Topics*

Wilderness50 Celebration Kicks Off Cover
 Tehipite Chapter Information 2
 Merced Group Information & Meetings 3
 Tehipite Chapter Meetings 5-6
 Yosemite Wilderness Memories 9
 A Rainy Day in Yosemite 10
 Yosemite Area Regional Transit: 20 Years Later 12
 City's Argument for a Road in Place of Fulton Mall 14

Tehipite Topics is currently published four times per year. Full-color versions of *Tehipite Topics* are available on the chapter website at www.tehipitesierraclub.org. Articles and photographs from Sierra Club members are always welcome. Send contributions for the April–June 2014 issue by email to robertsturner52@gmail.com before March 20.



Tehipite Chapter Annual Banquet

featuring

Jan W. van Wagtendonk,
Research Forester Emeritus
United States Geological Survey
Western Ecological Research Center
Yosemite Field Station, El Portal

**Come celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act with us.
Wednesday, March 26, 6–9 P.M.**

at the First Congregational Church of Fresno (the Big Red Church)
2131 N. Van Ness Blvd. (corner of Yale), just north of Fresno High School

This is a free potluck banquet: A–H Main Dishes, I–P Desserts, Q–Z Salads

OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC