



Tehipite Topics

November 2010 ❧ Vol. 56, No. 9

www.tehipite.sierraclub.org

Tehipite Chapter Elections: Pages 7 and 8

George “Elfie” Ballis: “Smiling Seriously”

By Chip Ashley

I would have liked to know Elfie better. I refer of course to George “Elfie” Ballis, who according to an Indy Media story on his passing became “one with the Earth” on September 24. From what I knew of him, Elfie always was “with the Earth” and on the side of Earth. I met him in 2003 at a Peace Fresno march through downtown Fresno protesting the beginning of the war in Iraq. Who was this little camera-toting bearded character in a pea jacket and watch cap festooned with feathers?



Elfie with Cesar Chavez Fresno Bee Photo

Among many, many other things Elfie was once on the Tehipite Chapter Ex-

ecutive Committee and richly deserves the highest possible tribute in these pages. With strong ties to all three, Elfie exemplifies the organic connection among the peace, labor, and environmental movements. He understood that we are in a constant war in which the powerful attack and exploit both human populations and the environment. He knew that although the tactics and strategies have evolved, this war that started before the age of colonization continues today. He understood that the environmental movement, the peace movement, and the labor movement are one in the same.

Last spring at the Rally in the Valley Peace and Justice Festival sponsored by Peace Fresno, Elfie came up to the Sierra Club information table and handed us a copy of the July 1987 San Francisco Bay Chapter Yodeler, containing a front-page article on Sun Mountain, Elfie and his wife Maia’s home, near Tollhouse in the Sierra foothills. But Sun Mt. is more than a home; it is also a cutting-edge environmental research and education center, featuring passive solar design, an “edible/medicinal botanical garden.

Elfie and Maia put their beliefs into practice and set an example of how to live in harmony with nature.

During the protest when President George W. Bush came to Fresno in 2004, someone commented on Elfie’s smile, and he said “I’m smiling seriously.” I will always remember that bit of poetry with its graceful irony. Elfie knew that humor can keep us sane during the most serious times. We will need such humor in the years to come as human use of this planet and its resources becomes less and less sustainable.

Elfie studied photography with Depression era photographer Dorothea Lange. His photographs of farm worker families captured, according to the Washington Post, “their unimaginable difficulties—substandard housing, child labor and clouds of pesticides

Inside *Tehipite Topics*

Elfie	Cover
Fresno Meetings.....	2
Merced Meetings	3
The Lighter Side	4
Outings	7
ExCom Candidate Statements	6
ExCom Ballot.....	7-8

Deadline for *Tehipite Topics* is the second Friday of each month. Please submit material to TehipiteTopics@gmail.com.

See “Elfie” page 4

Chapter Meetings

General Meeting

No General Meeting in November
December Meeting: December 15th

December Program:

ICELAND: LAND OF FIRE AND ICE

A DIGITAL SLIDE SHOW BY HELEN GIGLIOTTI

Iceland, the westernmost country in Europe is unique with its peninsulas and intricate coastline, cut with so many fiords and dotted with rocky islands on which resides a myriad of bird life. The dramatic features of the island are shaped by 'fire and ice', the continued effects of volcanic activity and glacial weathering. The Viking heritage, the folklore, the quaint country churches, the ancient sod structures, the fog and the engaging capital city of Reykjavik make Iceland a special destination.

Join Helen as we circle and explore the island of Iceland.



Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings November 13th

The Conservation Committee meets at 7 PM

The Executive Committee meets at 8 PM

University of California Center

550 E. Shaw Ave., Fresno



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Population

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Conservation and Executive Committee Meetings

First Thursday of each month

Next meeting Thursday, November 4th, 7:00 P.M.

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. Come just to get informed or get as involved as you wish.

Merced Group General Meetings

Third Thursday of each month (except Dec. and May)

Meetings start at 7:00 P.M. and are usually over by 8:30 or so.

Next one is Thursday, November 18th, 7:00 P.M.

Sierra Presbyterian Church, 3603 M St.

(across from Merced College)

November Topic: "Native Pollinators and the Plants They Love"

Speaker from the Plant Materials Center for NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service). It's not just Butterflies and Bees. Moths, flies, birds, and even mosquitoes have a role to play in natural pollination. The importance of pollinators is often unrecognized until its significance to the food supply comes in to play. This became apparent when the crisis of colony collapse disorder in bees arose. In fact the intricacies of how and why different pollinators are attracted to their various food sources is a complex and fascinating study. Come expand your awareness and perception of what's going on right under your nose- well in your backyard anyway.

Annual Banquet

(Pot-Luck this year), Saturday, Dec. 4th

Travels to the Two Ends of the Planet- the North and South Poles

Presenter: Dr. Lloyd Bever

A new twist on our annual banquet- join us this year for a pot-luck dinner and a vicarious journey to literally- the ends of the Earth. No cost this year other than a Saturday evening and one of your favorite dishes to share.

The event begins at 6:00 at United Methodist Church in Merced, 899 Yosemite Parkway. At 6:30 dinner will begin as we explore our collective culinary talents. Announcements and the presentation begin around 7:15, with desserts and door prizes to follow. We should wrap up the evening by nine-ish.

It promises to be a great program. Dr. Lloyd Bever is well known in the area for his wildlife photographs taken in exotic travel destinations. For us he will share the images of his trips to the North and South poles. Many people think of them almost interchangeably, a huge disservice to the uniqueness of both. Dr. Bever's program includes reflections on the similarities and differences between the two continents and the animals that inhabit them. This "tour" of the ends of our planet, some 7,000 miles apart, promises to be a provocative evening.

No tickets required but please RSVP with a head count to either Rod, Annette, or Joanne (phone numbers below) so we know how many to set up for.

In the interests of a balanced diet for the evening we are recommending: A to J - hot dish, K to Q salad, R to Z dessert.

Parking is available in the lot behind the church located between Laurel Ave. and Cypress Way. Enter the social hall through the gate at the parking lot or the door on the Laurel avenue side.

A call to membership for assistance: We are looking for help on several fronts.

First of all for the upcoming banquet- we need volunteers to choose one of the following to help with publicity: (a) designing a flyer and making 30 or so copies; (b) visiting businesses around town and getting them to display the flyers in their shop windows; (c) posting flyers at the two colleges (Merced College and UC Merced); (d) door prizes—visit local businesses to request a "donation gift," e.g. free dinners, gift certificates, merchandise. We have a list of 15 or so who have been generous in the past—choose 5

See "Merced Banquet" page 4



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 _____
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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 table with columns: Individual, Joint. Rows include Special Offer, Standard, Supporting, Contributing, Life, Senior, Student/Limited Income.

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts.

Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968 or visit our website www.sierraclub.org

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"Elfie" from Page 1 sprayed on workers with no protective equipment--as well as their strength and poise."

Elfie told the Fresno Bee, "I wanted my photographs to reflect to them the power and dignity they had."

Elfie's photos of the struggles led by Cesar Chavez changed public perception of these events and helped the farm workers achieve their goals.

In the 1970s Elfie took on Big Ag to prevent the illegal use of water. According to the Washington Post, "The lawsuit brought by Mr. Ballis's tiny grassroots group, National Land for People, showed how the federal government had repeatedly violated a 1902 law that limited landowners to 160 acres of irrigated land.

"For years, the government had winked while growers ignored that law, amassing thousands of acres made arable with dams, canals and other water projects subsidized by the government. The subsidy going to California's largest landowners amounted to millions of dollars a year originally meant for family farmers.

"The richest people in the country get welfare," Mr. Ballis told The Washington Post in 1980. "It is one of the most outrageous giveaways in the country's history."

When asked to participate in the settlement after Congress legalized these illegal practices, Elfie refused. He told the Washington Post, "It's like participating in a discussion of whether you're going to be hung or shot."

See "Elfie," page 5

Merced Banquet, continued from page 3 or so or use your own letter of introduction and verification for each donor provided at the event; (e) set up at 5:00 on Dec. 4th; (f) make centerpieces for 14 tables (g) clean-up after the event winds down around 9:00, just basic straightening up (no dishes to be done, no floors to be mopped, no tables and chairs to be moved)

Can you help? Please call Rod Webster (publicity), 723-4747; JoAnne Clarke (door prizes) 726-0636; Annette Allsup (event), 723-5152.

The Lighter Side of Environmentalism

Herewith EcoNews...

By Marian Orvis

Onearth (Winter 2010) has a great article on bamboo. To wit, although bamboo is a fast-growing plant that requires little space, water, or pesticide, turning those stalks into soft fabric can come with a hefty environmental cost. Most bamboo fiber is processed chemically using caustic soda, which is one of the major ingredients of Drano. It kills aquatic life when dumped into waterways and can burn the lungs and skin of factory workers who handle the junk. A far less harmful-to-the-environment method and to factory workers is a one where bamboo can be processed mechanically, the stalks crushed and broken down using enzymes.

Contact me if you really read this column and want to know more about bamboo!

On a stranger(?) side: (Eco-Mania June/July 10) A Japanese lingerie maker has created a bra that grows rice! The bra features pots instead of cups, a plastic water hose with seedlings acting as a belt and a pair of detachable farming gloves. Its creators say the grow-your-own bra was created to raise awareness of food self-sufficiency, allowing the wearer to cultivate rice any time and anywhere. (Let me know what your success rate is, please.)

On another favorite note: The cost of caffeine according to the World Wildlife Fund: It takes almost 53 gallons of water to produce the coffee, milk, sugar and cup for just ONE regular takeout latte. (Think before you drink!)

FINALLY: ABOUT SPROUTS: An English aquarium has lowered the water level in the tank of a green sea turtle named George because his flatulence after eating Brussels sprouts can trigger overflow alarms--like it did in the previous year after he dined on sprouts for their vitamins, minerals, and fiber. (Have you experienced a better experience?)

Well, folks, happy trails until next month if our Editor finds it a fitting TOPIC inclusion.

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 Marcia Rasmussen, Marcia@BigBaldy.com, 559-332-2419. Please contact Marcia 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. Please review additional trip and participant requirements at www.tehipite.sierraclub.org/outings.

Steve Cosner (559) 281-5983, email: stevec@sfsu.edu maintains this webpage.

CST #2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California. California has established a Travel Consumer Restitution Fund (TCRF) under the California Seller of Travel Act. The TCRF is not applicable to these Outings. The law requires us to advise you that you would not be eligible to make any claim from the TCRF in the unlikely event of default by the Sierra Club. California law also requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. The Sierra Club has such a trust account.

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Sierra Club California Needs Your Help

You have great people in Sacramento lobbying to protect the Sierra and on other critical issues like climate change. Bill Magavern, Jim Metropoulous, and Annie Pham do a terrific job, and they need our help. Please go to the terrific Sierra Club California web site at www.sierraclubcalifornia.org and donate generously.

Outings Schedule

Required Liability Waiver

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the Liability Waiver before you choose to participate on an outing, please go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

December 4, Saturday

Dayhike (1A)

Albeno Munari Winery Hike (Yokuts)

We will stroll along San Domingo Rd. (about 3 miles each way) to the winery for a short tour and tasting. We will pass by historic Macaroni Flat and other vestiges of the Gold Rush. Bring lunch, \$\$, water, walking shoes, and other essentials. Meet at Cindy's Restaurant in Oakdale at 8 AM, or Starbucks in Angels's Camp at 9:15 AM. Contact Yokuts leader Elaine Gorman, 209.524.7630 or goford@sbcglobal.net to sign up. Heavy rain cancels.

"Elfie," continued

Several large newspapers carried feature stories on Elfie's passing, including not only the Fresno Bee and Washington post (quoted herein), but also the Los Angeles Times, and Kansas City Star. But one of the best stories was on Indymedia. This story focused on Elfie's End-Game party in November 2009, "where he was joined by friends and family who shared their stories about how they knew him. Agustin Lira, who is the co-founder of Teatro Campesino, first met Ballis in the 1960's when the United Farm Workers union was organizing in the Central Valley. Lira said 'Of all the photographers, George got the humanity and what it means to be in struggle, what it amounts to in terms of energy and spirit - he caught those things in the photographs. Fantastic photographs - all of the other photographers that came in tried to do that, but the only person who completed it was George.'

Longtime Tehipite and Sierra Club leader George Whitmore remembers Elfie this way: "His was a truly remarkable and admirable life. He worked tirelessly on many social and environmental issues."

"He was a peaceful rebel who believed in living as one with the Earth, and managed to practice it more successfully than most of us. The good that he did will live on."

Great

San Joaquin River Clean-up

Please contact Richard Sloan at 559-696-2971, riverrich1509@aol.com, Steve Starcher, 559-289-8874, sastarcher@gmail.com or Steve Haze, 559-970-6320 re opportunities to help clean up the San Joaquin River.

Karen Laws:

I am prepared to roll up my sleeves, pitch in and do whatever is needed for the Tehipite Chapter. I hope you will give me the opportunity to help ensure the success of the Sierra Club's mission and elect me to the Tehipite Chapter Executive Committee.

I am a retired Art teacher with unique organizational talents, skills, knowledge and experience. My family was in the timber industry and this has provided me with experience with small and large family timber farming, sawmill ownership and mill closures—the whole town closed up—reforestation and long-term land management.

I have spent nearly every summer of my life in the mountain, forest and coastal areas of the West Coast. I have lived in Fresno since I was 10 years old. My family vacationed in the Sierra each Summer, camping and fishing. Dad insisted on going way upstream past Pine Flat Creek where the trout ran wild. We got turtles and snakes and once Dad killed a four and a half-foot rattlesnake with a rock. It had eleven rattles and was right behind me. I was scared!

Looking at a tree is a religious experience that feeds my artistic soul. Respect for our environment, the land, plants and animal is as primary to who I am as the sun rising each morning. I now have the time to give to this passion to ensure that our mountains, desert and coast remain pure and inspirational far into the future.

Please fill out your ballot and vote for Karen Laws. Thank you for your consideration.

Marcia Rasmussen

I am a passionate lifetime admirer of the wild places, and I would submit that as my best qualification for holding office in the Sierra Club. A member of the Sierra Club, Tehipite Chapter for slightly more than ten years, I have been active in various aspects of the Club. I served as Tehipite Topics Editor for five years, Banquet Chair for two years, and now serve as Outings Chair and Outings Leader. I have worked on a number of environmental issues over the years, submitting countless comments and letters. Having scarcely missed an ExCom meeting in the past eight years, I think it finally time that I step up and run for ExCom as well.

The Sierra Club has a slogan that encourages us to "Explore, enjoy and protect the planet." Sometimes, as a Chapter, we lose sight of our multi-faceted mandate. We are a conservation powerhouse. And an Outings organization. Those two aspects are intertwined and

inseparable. My goal as an ExCom member would be to encourage balance. We need to support Conservation and Outings equally. In addition, we must tend to the business of the Chapter in a timely fashion. We must attract new members, coordinate our volunteer force, and provide opportunities for our existing membership to become acquainted. These are things that will make us a healthier, more productive Chapter. Please join me in these goals.

Richard Kangas

One never runs out of things to do in the Sierra Club. While on the Tehipite Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) the last two years, I have acted as Secretary; been a delegate to California/Nevada Conservation Committee (CNRCC) meetings and the Sierra Club California Convention; written comments and appeals on various projects in Sequoia National Forest, Sierra National Forest, and Giant Sequoia National Monument; and written a meadow restoration resolution adopted by the CNRCC, and assisted in leading the Sequoia Task Force Campout.

There are many additional things to accomplish in the Tehipite Chapter. One of the most important for us on the ExCom is to get more members involved. That is why I want to stay on the ExCom for this final term. There are many participatory opportunities for many of our members even if not holding elected office.

We need outings leaders, conservation activists, political activists, experts in water and forestry and air quality and energy and climate change. We need leaders to help plan program meetings and the Annual Banquet. We need leaders to go up the line in Sierra Club California and National Sierra Club activities.

I would like to continue on the ExCom for this next allowable term. We do have a two term limit, you know. So I would appreciate your vote once more. Then I will just go on with my conservation work.

David Cehrs

My name is David Cehrs. I have served on the Tehipite ExCom for the last two years and it would be my pleasure to serve you for another two years. My expertise is water (Ph.D. in hydrology). I participated in the Merced Wild and Scenic River lawsuit against Yosemite National Park that was resolved in our favor in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. Our current water battles deal

with growth and development, which are a never ending stress on our water supply. I am a climber and skier: multiple ascents in Yosemite and the Sierra as well as multiple trans-Sierra cross country ski trips. I also canoe on lakes and rivers in the area.

Connie Peterson

I have skills and passions that could be put to work in our local Sierra Club Chapter. I still work full-time as a trainer for Adolescent Programs for the Fresno County Department of Social Services, where I have been a Social Worker there for the past nine years—and an adherent to the core values of that profession, including social justice and the dignity and worth of each person. Prior to being employed as a social worker, I was a local small business owner for 23 years. I am also a defender of the environment, avid reader of non-fiction on political issues, and long time progressive activist in the Clovis-Fresno area. I am a hiker and back country skier. It is "out there" that I maintain balance. The protection of our environment and energy independence are the intersection of many issues I champion in my enduring quest for a more just, generous and sane world—which I dearly want for my two adult children and everyone. I am reliable when I commit to something, articulate, personable and can be quite persuasive in a non-authoritarian way. Please vote for me for the Tehipite Chapter Executive Committee.

Chip Ashley

I am a lifelong backpacker, fly fisher, and lover of John Muir's Range of Light, where I live with my family in the blue oak woodland of Watts Valley in Fresno County. I have served for two years on the Tehipite Chapter Executive Committee and have been editor of the Tehipite Topics newsletter for a little longer. I have also served on the Tehipite Conservation Committee as chair of the Energy, Global Warming, and Population committees. For a little less than I year I have been the Sierra Club representative on the Technical Transportation Committee of the Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG), a body which establishes local policy on matters such as SB 375 and Measure C. Recently, I was elected to the Sierra Club California Executive Committee, the governing body of Sierra Club California. I would greatly appreciate your vote so that I can continue serving you on the Tehipite Chapter Executive Committee.

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VOTING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Your ballot will be counted only if it has been received by Saturday, December 20, 2010.
2. No faxed or e-mailed ballots can be accepted. Please mail your ballot to: Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club P.O. Box 5396 Fresno, CA 93755-5396
3. Please fold your ballot so that the Chapter address on the reverse of this page is visible, and include your mailing label from the Topics so that we know it's a valid ballot. The label will be removed prior to counting.
4. The Sierra Club national office assigns a membership number to each member. Ballots not including this number will not be accepted or counted.
5. Households showing joint (i.e., husband and wife) memberships on the Topics mailing label may record both members' votes on the same ballot. Households having only one membership may vote only once.
6. Each member may vote for up to four candidates. Cumulative voting is not allowed.

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BALLOT

Vote for four or fewer

Candidate names are listed in alphabetical order

Single member or first joint member

Second joint member

Connie Peterson	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chip Ashley	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
David Cehrs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marcia Rasmussen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Richard Kangas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Karen Laws	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>