

## Introduction to *Tribute Series* by author Bill Oliver

April 2008

The genesis of this six-part series came about in the early spring of 1989. I was then SPS Chair and we were thinking about a program for the annual December banquet. I don't recall all the details but I liked history and someone or I came up with the idea of having Glen Dawson – well, then why not Jules Eichorn too! I recall being somewhat surprised to verify that these two esteemed “dinosaurs” were still living. [It didn't hurt that they were only nineteen in 1931 when making the first ascent of the East Face of Whitney.] And then I was stunned that they each accepted our invitation. My life was changed forever – and greatly enriched.

I embarked on “Tribute Part I - On the Way to Whitney” [period from Genesis to 1931] to appear in the Nov-Dec *Sierra Echo* handed out at the banquet, 12/13/89. We also needed to get member approval in that fall election to award the honorary memberships - which proposal readily passed. [This SPS honor had been bestowed once before: to Norman Clyde in 1960.] It ultimately turned out that Jules was unable to attend the banquet due to a flu bug, but he sent down a quickly prepared short video. With his brother Muir's help, Glen provided a very insightful and entertaining slide show on early Sierra Club mountaineering. “Part II – Beyond Whitney” [1932-33] appeared in the March-April '92 *Echo*. In the course of that short period I was blessed to be welcomed and befriended by so many amazing people, all of whom also happened to be quite gnarly early climbers. Jules and Glen, in particular, were welcoming beyond belief and very generous in countless ways. [At the '89 banquet Glen presented me with his old Shuster Haus climbing hammer and three pitons, rusty but quite serviceable.]

Part III should have appeared later that year, well then the next, well then the next. Life has a way of filling up one's day. I cannot readily account for the fifteen-year gap before the appearance of “Part III - Development of the Rock Climbing Sections” [1933-34] in the July-Sept '07 issue. I was certain of this, however, that although virtually all my wonderful old friends had one-by-one passed away, including Jules at 88 in 2000, at 96 Glen was still hanging in there. I imagine he may have some additional reasons for doing so, but deep down I knew he was quietly, patiently just waiting on me to complete the series. [Let me note that fifteen years later I also had a great many more photos available, thanks to Bob Cates and John Ripley of the Angeles Chapter History Committee.]

OK, then in quick succession came “Part IV – Adventuring Beyond the U.S.” [1935-36] in the Oct-Dec '07 *Echo*; “Part V – Return to Whitney” [1937-38] in the Jan-Mar '08 issue; and finally “Part VI – Passing the Torch” [1939 to Present] in the April-June '08 issue. A few days ago I came across a note a reader had sent me a few years back related to these stories. He said I wrote with “heart.” Hmm, I think I write with heart and soul, as I cannot do otherwise. I have a passion for gnarly adventuring and a passion for *writing* about gnarly adventuring. Thanks to all of you *Echo* readers for enduring my passion - and special thanks to my gracious and good friend Glen for patiently hanging in there.