



## AAC Publications

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### **Michael J. Ybarra, 1966-2012**

The eldest of three, Michael was the consummate big brother: self-assured, protective, and always the leader. From an early age he exhibited superior intellect and a desire for adventure. Michael was full of boundless energy and always mischievous. As a child and teenager he loved to swim, take long walks, waterski, bike ride, and scuba dive. As a young adult living in San Francisco, he embraced the outdoor lifestyle: hiking, kayaking, skiing, and running marathons.

Threaded throughout all of his endeavors was a sense of unparalleled drive and passion, whether in his intellectual achievements or his outdoor adventures. Despite Michael's unassuming manner and humor, he was a successful journalist and author as well as a serious climber. Michael spent years researching and writing his award-winning book *Washington Gone Crazy: Senator Pat McCarran and the Great American Communist Hunt* (Steerforth, 2004). An equal amount of meticulous study went into the climbing arc of his life: from endless months at a time practicing, taking lessons and attending clinics, to careful planning and preparation for his expeditions.

At a dinner in Yosemite on September 28, 2012, which would have been his 46th birthday, his friend Rosa Tran told me she once asked Michael how he became so proficient at ice climbing. His reply: "I spent every day for three months practicing." Classic Michael.

In addition to the physicality of climbing, the problem-solving skills it required appealed to him and it also provided a sense of community. Michael was a seeker, and the transcendent quality he found in nature filled his soul. He truly loved the outdoors and sought to convey this to a broad audience in his articles as the extreme sports correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*.

The adventurous little boy from the San Fernando Valley grew into a teenager who loved going to heavy metal concerts, and then into a young college graduate who moved to Washington, D.C., Chicago, and San Francisco to work for the most prestigious national publications. He traveled the globe and ended up in the place he loved most: the Eastern Sierra.

Though my family and I miss him profoundly, there is comfort in the knowledge that Michael's last few days were spent with friends, and in the mountains from which he derived such sublime happiness. We hope the spirit of this wonderful man—whom we call a son, brother, uncle and friend—is soaring in the very mountains that he loved so much.

## Images



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