



Mountain Light Photography

Galen Avery Rowell (1940-2002)

Galen Avery Rowell was a photographer, adventurer, and author who was born in Oakland, Calif. August 23rd, 1940 and lived most of his life in Berkeley, Calif. He spent the last two years of his life in the Eastern Sierra town of Bishop, Calif., with his wife and business partner, Barbara. Together, they owned Mountain Light Photography, Inc., which continues to operate a stock agency to distribute his edited collection of 400,000 photographs for publication as well as a large gallery in Bishop selling Galen's fine-art photographic prints and books. In the tradition of Galen's own popular photo workshop program, Mountain Light continues to offer photographic workshops and seminars with top photographers.

Galen attributed his early exposure to wilderness as the catalyst for his adventurous career of travels to the seven continents and both poles. Annual High Sierra pack trips with his family from the age of 10 led to roped climbs in Yosemite at 16 and more than 100 first ascents of technical rock climbs by the time he was 30.

In 1973, less than a year after selling his small automotive business, he landed his first major magazine assignment—a cover story for National Geographic. Further assignments and more than 40 international expeditions have taken him to into the mountains of Africa, Antarctica, Canada, China, Europe, Greenland, India, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Patagonia, Peru, and Tibet.

As a climber and frequent leader of Himalayan expeditions, Galen made cutting-edge first ascents of technically challenging peaks, such as Cholatse, Great Trango Tower, and Lukpilla Brakk, as well as attempting new routes up K2 and Mount Everest. He was also the first to make one-day ascents of Mount McKinley and Mount Kilimanjaro as well as to traverse the Karakoram Himalaya in winter—285 miles across the glaciers of northern Pakistan. Until the time of his death days before his 62nd birthday, he had continued to climb new routes in the High Sierra and was the oldest person to have climbed the face of Yosemite's El Capitan in a single day. At 54, he won his age group in an ultra-marathon trail run with 8,500 feet of elevation gain, and had stayed in shape with equally long "fun runs" into the Sierra wilderness, where formal competitions aren't allowed.

In 1984, Galen received the Ansel Adams Award for his contributions to the art of wilderness photography. Some of his other eclectic honors included Time/CNN Hero of the Planet during the millennium year, a National Science Foundation Antarctic Artists and Writers Grant, the Lowell Thomas Award for Travel Photography, the Canadian Tourism Commission's annual first prize for travel journalism, Annual Guest of Honor at both Banff and Telluride Mountain Film Festivals, and Yosemite's Photographer Laureate during the park's centennial year.

Major exhibitions of Galen's photography have shown at galleries such as the International Center of Photography and Nikon House in New York; The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.; The Field Museum in Chicago; The Ansel Adams Gallery in Yosemite National Park; The Nature Company's Wrubel Gallery; and The California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. He has also had international one-man shows in London, Milan, Salzburg, Toronto, Sydney, and Victoria. In 2004, his stunning color photographs of Pakistan's Karakoram Himalaya toured Italy in a two-man show alongside late-19th and early-20th-Century black and white photographs by pioneering mountain photographer Vittorio Sella.

Galen photographed and wrote major features for *Life*, *National Geographic*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Outside*, and *Time*, to name a few, and published a popular illustrated monthly column in *Outdoor Photographer* for the last 16 years of his life.

He published the following 18 books of photo and text during his lifetime:

- *The Vertical World of Yosemite*, Wilderness Press, 1974
- *In The Throne Room of the Mountain Gods*, Sierra Club Books, 1977 and 1986
- *High and Wild*, Sierra Club Books, 1979
- *Many People Come, Looking, Looking*, Mountaineers Books, 1980
- *Alaska: Images of the Country* (text by John McPhee), Sierra Club Books, 1981
- *Mountains of the Middle Kingdom*, Sierra Club Books, 1983
- *Mountain Light: In Search of the Dynamic Landscape*, Sierra Club Books, 1986
- *The Yosemite* (text by John Muir), Sierra Club Books, 1989; Yosemite Assoc., 2001
- *The Art of Adventure*, Collins, 1989; Sierra Club 1993
- *My Tibet* (text by His Holiness the Dalai Lama), UC Press, 1990
- *Galen Rowell's Vision: The Art of Adventure Photography*, Sierra Club Books, 1993
- *Poles Apart: Parallel Visions of the Arctic and the Antarctic*, UC Press, 1995
- *Bay Area Wild*, Sierra Club Books, 1997
- *Coastal California*, Compass Guides, 1998
- *The Living Planet*, Crown/Random House, 1999
- *North America the Beautiful*, AAA/Edizone Whitestar, 2001
- *Galen Rowell's Inner Game of Outdoor Photography*, Norton, 2001
- *California the Beautiful*, Via Books, 2002

Galen served on the board of a number of non-profit organizations, including but not limited to the following:

American Alpine Club
American Himalayan Foundation
American Land Conservancy *
Californians for Western Wilderness Advisory Board *
California Wilderness Coalition Advisory Board*
Committee of 100 for Tibet *
Denali Foundation
Four Corners School of Outdoor Education
International Campaign for Tibet
Restore Hetch Hetchy*
Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation *
Tuolumne River Preservation Trust
Wildlife Associates *