



Sierra Heritage writers continually strive to improve on their craft. As an example, I thought you might enjoy reading how one of them handled attendance at a prestigious writer's conference. Enjoy your summer.

*J. Robert Evans  
CEO and Managing Editor*

## RARIFIED AIR

Founded in 1969, The Squaw Valley Writer's Community is a juried annual event that attracts gifted, nationally recognized writers for retreat, conference and workshop days. Only the select few whose work has been submitted, accepted after critical review, and who have been able to sign the checks for their prized participation may attend...

High Camp elevation above Squaw Valley nears 8,200' above sea level, but if you hike one mile to the Watson Monument on Emigrant Peak, the elevation rises to 8,700'. During summer and early fall, you can get to High Camp by hiking a couple miles or taking a gondola from the Valley floor.

After the moisture and green recede from whatever this sub-Alpine granite rubble manages to grow, before the October- snow; there are a few short weeks when dry Mule's Ears leaves crackle in the late summer wind. Though not quite autumn, Sierra winds can howl just about any afternoon at this elevation. This August day, weather reports put gusts at 20-35 miles per hour. Leaves rattle wildly, a fierce farewell call to a passing season.

Take a hike from High Camp, almost a mile straight up, to the Watson Monument. This historical marker rests just below Emigrant Peak. From here looking east, Lake Tahoe appears a turquoise gem surrounded by giant peaks. Just down from the Emigrant Trail, the cross ridge trail ascends to Squaw Peak, adding another mile or so to the hike and raising the elevation to 8,900'. A lovely view lays out to the west: Roller Pass, Mount Judah – named for the visionary engineer of the Transcontinental Railroad, Tinker's Knob, and the Headwaters of the American River.

On the way down the cross-ridge trail, I spot an Osprey hunting. His white-cap and underside give this large hawk away to an experienced eye. He's sighted one of the many marmots that have been whistling and scurrying around the mountain top all afternoon. He dips, dives and misses. The great, dark brown raptor swoops down the hillside and perches on a red fir lookout some 200' below his ill-fated strike. He preens and smoothes his wings. The marmot waits a few moments, peeks out and finds a post behind a mound with a clear view of the Osprey. I linger awhile longer, finish a sweet Gala apple and watch the story unfold a bit more, before brushing the dust off the seat of my pants and heading down to savor sunset at High Camp over Squaw Valley.

Later, taking the gondola transport to the Valley floor, I notice a sign welcoming writers to the Squaw Valley Conference. I smile realizing I'd forgotten to apply this year. Glancing back up the mountain, I wonder if the atmosphere of those prized workshops could compare with a day in the rarified air at the top of Squaw Peak.

by Pamela Biery