

PHILIP C. BETTLER  
1917-1979

Philip Bettler, a longtime member of the American Alpine Club, died of cancer on June 29, 1979. Phil joined the Club in February of 1949 and maintained an enthusiastic interest in the Sierra Nevada Section for the next 30 years. Phil and his wife Gretchen regularly drove the 200 miles from Reno to the San Francisco Bay Area for meetings.

A graduate of the University of Oklahoma in 1940 in physics, he returned for a MS in 1946. During the war years, 1942-1944, Phil worked at MIT in radar research. Phil had a unique experience in 1945-6 by spending the winter months on the summit of Mount Washington in New Hampshire as a weather observer. Many a later mountain trip would hear the heroics of the weather men during 150-mph winds and extremely low temperatures.

In 1946 Phil moved west to do graduate work at the University of California in Berkeley. Here his interest really turned to climbing and skiing and he joined the Sierra Club. After five years in Berkeley, the Geophysical Institute of the University of Alaska beckoned, and Phil headed for the cold north at College, Alaska. After engaging in cosmic ray research for three years, with a summer on Mount Wrangell, he returned in 1954 to graduate work at Oregon State University, receiving his PhD in physics in 1959. During this time he married Gretchen Thilo, an ardent skier from the Berkeley area. The University of Nevada offered him a position in 1961, where he remained until his retirement just before his death. In 1971 Phil and Gretchen spent eight months in West Berlin at the Fritz Haber Institute.

*IN MEMORIAM*

699

Although Phil had done some ice and snow climbing with the Harvard Mountain Club in the early 1940s and in fact suffered his only real climbing injury while rock climbing in New Hampshire requiring a month's hospitalization, his move to Berkeley in 1946 produced the stimulus for intensive rock climbing, skiing, and general mountaineering. Joining the many young Bay Area climbers, Phil made many fine Yosemite climbs and a number of winter ski mountaineering trips. He also climbed in the Tetons, Bugaboos, Waddington area, and Bella Coola mountains.

In 1950, Phil and Allen Steck made the first ascent of the northeast face of the highest peak of Mount Waddington. That same year he participated in the first ascent of Castle Rock Spire in the Sierra Nevada. Phil's last climb was on Mount McKinley, only to be defeated