

***Seeing the Elephant: How Perceived Evidence in the Sierra
Nevada Biased Global Geomorphology***
Jeffery P Schaffer, Napa Valley College

This is a synopsis of my book-length manuscript of the same title, which was submitted to UC Press in early June. This book is the sequel to a generalized version of my 1990s UC Berkeley dissertation and in book form is *The Geomorphic Evolution of the Yosemite Valley and Sierra Nevada Landscapes: Solving the Riddles in the Rocks* (Wilderness Press, 1997). In that book's Epilogue was a short section entitled "Science gone astray," which is what *Seeing the Elephant* is all about.

Postmodernists' boldest assertion may be that even a hard science (one with readily verifiable evidence) can be culturally biased to render it a pseudoscience, and *Seeing the Elephant* documents an example of this postmodernist contention. I've traced alpine geomorphology back to its origins, and what was found was astounding: it is based on an 1840s false premise by a Biblical literalist and "verified" in the 1860s by an unvisited, non-existent type locality. By the 1890s, geomorphology under William Morris Davis had reached the stature of a legitimate science, but in reality it had evolved into a pseudoscience, thanks to the constraints imposed by the alpine geomorphology paradigm. For example, except for a few pages of Don J. Easterbrook's *Surface Processes and Landforms*, virtually all of the geomorphic processes and time frames accord with a literal interpretation of Genesis.

What has been discovered is that ironically in the 1890s, geologists had all the evidence necessary in the Sierra Nevada to refute the alpine geomorphology paradigm, but after some 50 years it had become entrenched, taught at Harvard and Yale, so instead geologists began to add imaginary evidence, distort existing evidence, and ignore evidence in order to conform to the paradigm. Rather than peer review correcting this pseudoscience, peer pressure enforced its dogma. The beginning of our new millennium was no different, with imaginary geology being published as fact, and computer numerical simulation models verifying what everyone knew was true.

Needless to say, *Seeing the Elephant* is very controversial, but I present more than sufficient *verifiable* (not imaginary) evidence to make my case. At the end of my book I have proposed a solution for geomorphology, one carried out by none other than the University of California, since it possesses 35 reserves that are more or less in a relatively natural state, each one a field lab for long-range studies (50 years) of interacting geomorphic/edaphic/biologic/climatic processes.

Biography: Jeffery P Schaffer grew up in southern California. Initially he went to M.I.T. to continue an early interest in yacht design. Unfortunately yacht design was not in vogue while supertankers were, in which he had no interest. Consequently, he began investigating Natural History at Harvard's Peabody Museum of Natural History, transferred to UC Berkeley, and began studying natural history, where he received a B.A. in Field Biology in 1965. He spent the summer climbing in Yosemite (where he still climbs). Returning to UC Berkeley he received a Masters in Physical Geography, and began co-authoring a guidebook on the Pacific Crest Trail, while he worked intermittently on a PhD degree. Through the years he has written 13 more guidebooks, mostly on national parks and wildernesses. In 1988 he returned to UC Berkeley to resume a PhD thesis. During his research, he discovered that evidence for Sierra Nevada uplift and glaciation has had significant problems. His dissertation attempted to use the field evidence to straighten the record; however, the research findings were controversial and the PhD was denied. As a result he published the research as a book, and again it encountered controversy. In 2006 he completed a second book, not yet published, which traces geomorphology (the study of landscapes) from its Biblical roots to today's computer modeling. In it he attempts to demonstrate that science, like religion, is largely "faith-based" that is enforced by those in power. He is currently affiliated with Napa Valley College. Note: Copies of *The Geomorphic Evolution of the Yosemite Valley and Sierra Nevada Landscapes*, including a 2007 update, will be available for purchase at \$20.00 each.