

FIGHTING FOR YOSEMITE

Rock climbing and epic destruction

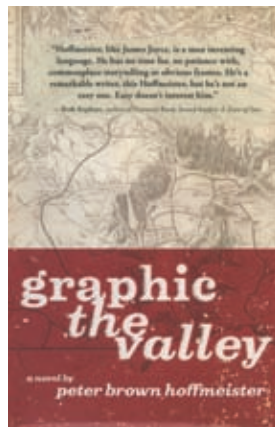
Graphic the Valley (Tyrus Books, 271 pages, \$16.95), a first novel by South Eugene High School teacher Peter Brown Hoffmeister, is an ambitious and complicated read. The book draws together rock climbing, an attempt to correct the wrongs done to Native American history in Yosemite National Park, a Samson and Delilah tale, eco-sabotage and the tragedy of what man does to nature.

Tenaya is named for a defeated chief of the Yosemite, who have been written out of the park's history. Tenaya is perplexing — he is violent yet loving, out of touch with civilization yet able to drive and loves French fries, once he tries them. The 18-year-old was born in a car, illegally raised in the park, steeped in the history of the valley and

with his parents has survived on the proceeds of a legendary pot score and dumpster diving. He falls in love with Lucy, a Miwok Indian, but bit by bit things unravel as a plan for developing hotels and fast food in the national park is unveiled.

Perhaps it's because I already knew the story of Churchill High School wrestler Kenny Cox and his death at age 31, but it's at that point where Tenaya begins camping, climbing and "dirtbagging" with Kenny — who was Hoffmeister's real-life friend — that *Graphic the Valley* came most alive for me. Kenny draws out Tenaya's past, as much as he can, and helps give reasons for Tenaya's willingness to destroy in order to protect the valley. Hoffmeister's descriptions of rock climbing in Yosemite are vivid, and his passion for the sport and the park make even a non-climber want to scale Pywiack Dome.

Like Tenaya, Cox's character, in all its complexities, is so well drawn that even as he tells the story of how he accidentally killed a dog in a graphic and horrible way, you sympathize with him rather than hate him. And graphic is



a fitting title for the book. Hoffmeister's novel is not for the squeamish. He's as detailed in describing death and injuries as he is in describing the drama and beauty of Yosemite.

There are moments of heavy-handedness — the Samson and Delilah metaphor may be a bit much for some readers. But at the same time those moments balance the rest of the novel's intricacy and transitions in time and history. Hoffmeister's characters are complex, and like the struggle over nature and development in the park itself, Lucy, Tenaya's parents, Kenny and his other love interest McKenzie all reflect the duality and

the power nature holds over man.

Hoffmeister, who is also the author of the memoir *The End of Boys* and the nonfiction *Let Them Be Eaten By Bears: A Fearless Guide to Taking Our Kids Into the Great Outdoors*, will be having a release party for *Graphic the Valley* and a reading at Tsunami Books 7 pm July 18. He will also hold an author reading in Portland at Powell's Books at 7:30 pm Aug. 1. ■

EUGENE WEEKLY'S NEXT BIG THING

**Come see the semi-finalists compete
on the community stage at
the Lane County Fair!**

FRIDAY, JULY 26TH

4:00pm	Scott Austin
4:45pm	Paris Green
5:30pm	Those Willows
6:15pm	Tita Louisa
7:00pm	The Crescendo Show
7:45pm	Robert Meade
8:30pm	Dubious
9:15pm	The Great Hiatus

SATURDAY, JULY 27TH

1:45pm	Caroline Bauer
2:30pm	Michael Conley
3:15pm	Elena Leona
4:00pm	Edeward

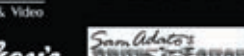
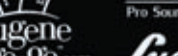
SUNDAY, JULY 28TH

1:45pm	Speaker Wave
2:30pm	Sol Seed
3:15pm	Steel Wool
4:00pm	Barefoot Leroy

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LANE COUNTY FAIR JULY 26TH - 28TH
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