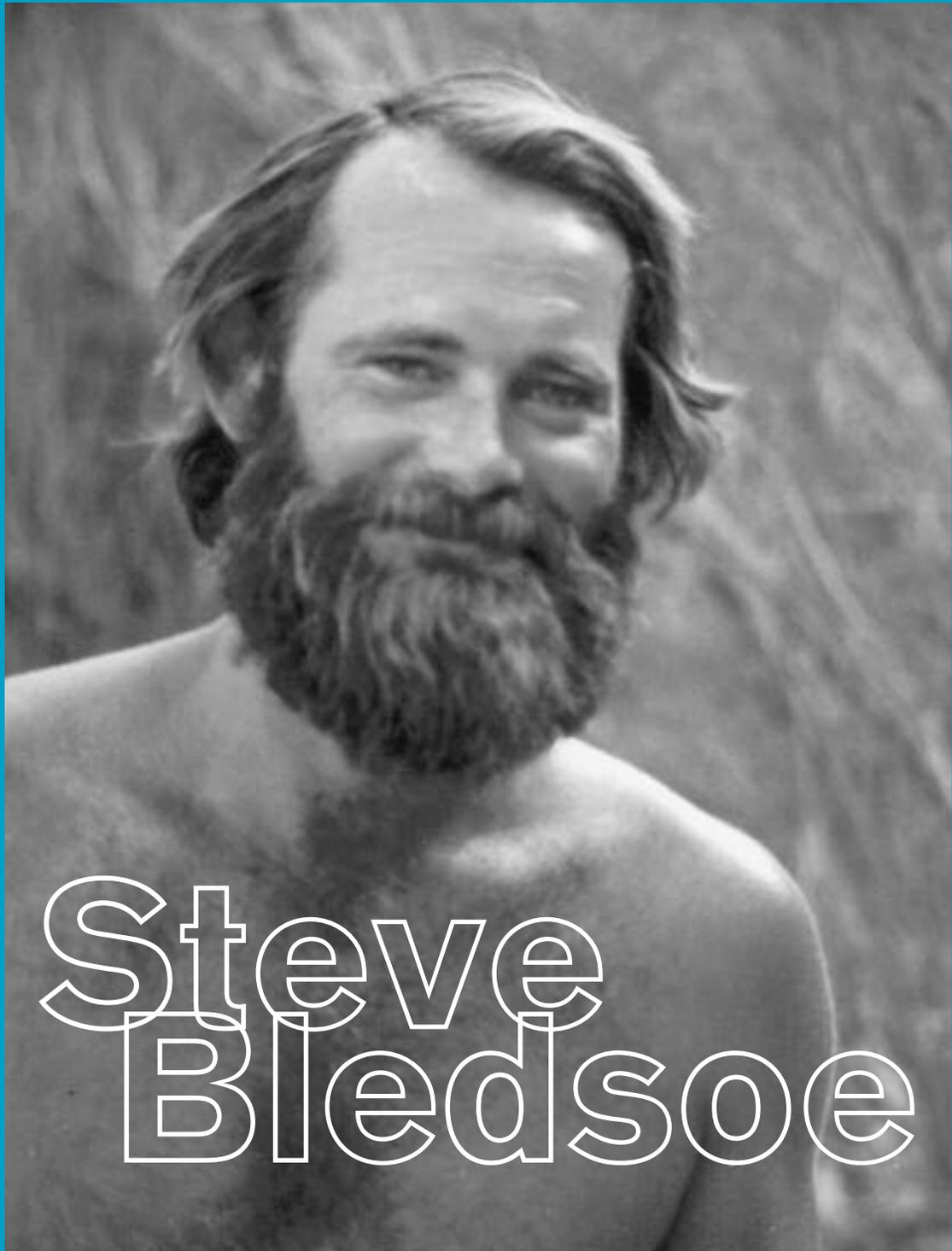


boatman's quarterly review

the journal of Grand Canyon River Guides, Inc | volume 19 number 3 | fall 2006



Steve Bledsoe

Prez Blurb • Ammo Cans • Oral History Project • Back of the Boat
Fall Rendezvous • The Last River Voyageur • Hollywood
Adopt-a-Beach Update • Contributors and Financials • Plant Guide

boatman's quarterly review

...is published more or less quarterly
by and for GRAND CANYON RIVER GUIDES.

GRAND CANYON RIVER GUIDES
is a nonprofit organization dedicated to

Protecting Grand Canyon
Setting the highest standards for the river profession
Celebrating the unique spirit of the river community
Providing the best possible river experience

General Meetings are held each Spring and Fall. Our Board of Directors Meetings are generally held the first Wednesday of each month. All innocent bystanders are urged to attend. Call for details.

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Our editorial policy, such as it is: provide an open forum. We need articles, poetry, stories, drawings, photos, opinions, suggestions, gripes, comics, etc. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Grand Canyon River Guides, Inc.

Written submissions should be less than 1500 words and, if possible, be sent on a computer disk, PC or MAC format; Microsoft Word files are best but we can translate most programs. Include postpaid return envelope if you want your disk or submission returned.

Deadlines for submissions are the 1st of February, May, August and November. Thanks.
Our office location: 515 West Birch, Flagstaff, AZ 86001
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An Oral History Retraction

WHOOPS. In the interest of journalistic integrity, I have to apologize to Stuart Reeder for not getting the facts straight as they were presented in the last BQR interview with Brad Dimock.

On the trip that led to the famous Vaughn Short poem: Stuart did not sneak over and switch boats with Brad as Brad alleged, Stuart went over there and got on Ken Sleight's boat because that was what Ken himself told Stuart to do, Ken not wanting to turn his own personal boat over to some strange kid (Brad) who Ken didn't even know yet. Further, the boat Stuart had to begin with, which Stuart turned over to Brad there at Phantom Ranch, didn't actually start leaking until after Stuart gave it to Brad.

Sorry Stuart...very sincerely and nothing personal. You know how these things go...and what happens to our memories and our fact-checking abilities as we age. For that matter, sincere apologies to countless others who've been wronged here in these pages much the same way due to late night interviews and lousy fact-checking afterwards.

Lew Steiger

Announcements

Congratulations to Jon Hirsh and wife, Leslie in the birth of their daughter, Rio, in Haines, Alaska.



Presidential Blurbatum

WHEN I STEPPED in as vice president for GCRG, I was invited by Brad Dimock to a party to stand-up and shout out as if on a soapbox. I was also told to “have an opinion” by Tom Wolfe and was encouraged as president to share my opinion by Lynn Hamilton. Although I firmly believe that much of the time spent grouching about issues is firmly rooted in a belief that vanilla is better than chocolate, or vice-versa (Mark Piller), and that too many people who spout off do so as means for hearing themselves talk, I suppose it is incumbent upon me as president to give those who want it an earful of my mind about what is important as I’ve come to find it.

I think it’s great that so many people get to be employed in and around the Canyon. It is certainly worth the attention. Livy, a recent client, exclaimed, “I can’t understand it with my head, but I can feel it with my heart.” Amen. Let that sentiment carry over to the work and study of the Canyon. Let our hearts direct our actions in the Canyon as much as our heads understand what to do. I have a couple of suggestions based on what I’ve seen and experienced. This direction from the post of your president may be late in coming, but please take it as well considered and well meaning. To some, it may seem better to give these thoughts to the Board. In the name of transparency, however, and in the name of the fact that board meetings are so sparsely attended, especially in summer I give these here.

One of the things I would charge Marieke Taney and our incoming vice president with is getting to know the players here in and around the Canyon as soon as possible. Because of your history here, you may have a good start already. If for some reason you cannot directly meet with an individual or organization, get to know who can. Talking, face to face, is the best way. Make it personal, or just about the organization, or about an issue, or about anything at all, so that when you do make a telephone call, you know who you’re talking to and can tell your replacement on the Board who to deal with about certain issues and what their take on things are. Our poor interaction with Mark Grisham (Executive Director, Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association) and some of the outfitters about the attraction site monitoring may have been averted with some face-to-face time before the fact. Lynn, or past board of directors, or others you may know would probably be happy to make introductions.

Press the issue of resource trips with the outfitters and the park. I remarked once that we guides are part of the equipment. I didn’t seem able to make the point that we fit into a fairly specific niche of the Grand

Canyon concessionaires’ scheme of things, and like other pieces of company equipment, we need upkeep and maintenance. Part of that not only includes redoing our WFRS, guides’ licenses, and interpretive training, but keeping our spirit in the game by traveling down river with our pards and working alongside the folks who work for the Park. The accomplishments of the resource trips have been well documented by Brian Hansen here in the BQR. The Park should recognize the need for the public to have a guide population that is part of the resource, not just a boat driver. Don’t misunderstand—I’m not suggesting that the trip should be about the guide. The trip should always be about the place. Guides with more diverse Canyon experiences, however, are a more valuable asset due to their ability to pull more tricks from their bags. Brian is right; both the outfitters and the Park should hear about the need for these trips to continue.

Work toward the implementation of a Grand Canyon National Park policy statement that will uphold the expedition-style trip structure we have, and steer us clear of scheduling. Codify it. So what if we run into 200 people at Deer Creek. Yes, it’s nice to have it by ourselves. We know that. If it’s too much of a break in your group’s solitude, however, go elsewhere. It’s not a tour for folks to see Deer Creek. Or give up Havasu, or Elves’ Chasm. The Canyon’s bigger than all of them. At the end of the day, of course, the guide should throw out all of the written words from inside his and her head and use the one thing that scheduling would diminish—the use of good judgment in conjunction with serendipitous occurrences of spontaneous nature as met by up to three dozen theretofore unknown traveling companions. Go have a trip. Let the folks in the office do the scheduling of the pick-up time. Take your heart, guts and wits with you and run with it.

Work toward the decommissioning of Glen Canyon Dam. I’ve told many people that one hundred years of one hundred thousand people a year may not have as large an effect on the river corridor as forty years of Dam operations has had. I’ve heard the complications, social, ecological, monetary. I’ve also seen the tail-chasing studies and experiments. Guides should all know what changes have been wrought by the Dam on the corridor. If not, pay attention. History isn’t that far away. Matt Kaplinski once said his problem with the suit by the Center for Biological Diversity against the Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was that it assumed someone actually

knows what to do. I could get into discussions about TCD's, shipping and piping sediment around the Dam, seasonally adjusted study flows to mimic natural inflow conditions, tammy and trout removal, and the ins and outs that are the work of many good, honest, hard-working people concerned about the Canyon environment. But really, we know what to do. Work toward the decommissioning of Glen Canyon Dam.

Frederick Law Olmsted was a designer of landscapes who planned accesses and thoroughfares at locations in parks like Sequoia-Kings Canyon that would shape the experience of the person using the access. His is magnificent work that more or less blends into the background and lets the natural features of a park take to the fore. Do not, however, confuse what is provided by this kind of access as a wilderness experience. Similarly, do not confuse the trips we do as access to wilderness. The type of access to the river corridor provided by our outfitters and conducted by ourselves is through an environment so wrought with changes brought about by the human work of Glen Canyon Dam that to help perpetuate the myth of river corridor as wilderness is farcical.

Through goings-on related to the CRMP FEIS, I have heard the phrase "wilderness-type experience" and I have heard interest expressed about the quality of experience for people on a river trip. One of the best things we can do as guides is explain the changes to the natural environment in the Canyon brought about by the Dam. Do not try to shepherd the willingly hopeful wilderness rafter through this place full of "wilderness character" with the idea that "the imprint of man's work is substantially unnoticeable" in this corridor. Anything may be unnoticeable, but to describe this place in terms of its ecosystem, hydrology and geomorphology is to describe a system trammled by the Dam and its operations. Pay attention and tell your clients what is up. You don't have to make interpretation of this sort negative. It is what it is. Don't, however, make it out to be anything it isn't, either. Just the facts. The corridor below the old high water line is not wilderness.

Remember, especially, it's always about the people (thanks, Bill Gloeckler). It's about the people you work with and the people you work for. I'm not crusty enough to believe that there was a time since when "It'll never be that good again. Sorry" (say it isn't so, Tim Whitney). Things change, but if you're a guide, it will always be about the people. Of course, if you're not having fun, how do you expect them to? I've certainly had a good time in the Canyon. Many of you know that I'll be retiring after this season. I have had "full time" status by Arizona River Runners standards for seven years (coincidentally, the legal length of a life-time guarantee in California). It seems that I'm just

now getting fired up about the whole guide thing. Or maybe it's all about a last hurrah. Where did the time go? An old-timer once told me at a GTS land session that when it starts to become just a job, it's time move on and let someone else have a whack at it, someone with passion. One of the best feelings I have is looking back and sensing that I have been able to give what I needed in order to instill a bit of fire tempered with truth in at least a few individuals. Remember, we are pieces of the equipment. Make no mistake about it. We are the damn finest pieces of equipment anyone could want along with them on a river trip. We are Grand Canyon River Guides.

Joe Pollock

Ammo Can Questions?

HHEY GUIDE FOLK... We know there have been some questions about the pre-CRMP (Colorado River Management Plan) monitoring that GCRG has been conducting, and we'd like to fill you in on the why's and wherefore's. As many of you know, GCRG wants to be involved with the CRMP as we move forward into the implementation stage. In fact, we feel that it behooves all river stakeholders do so. Park financial resources for monitoring activities are slim at best, and it will take all of us working together to ensure that the river experience is protected and preserved for future generations to enjoy.

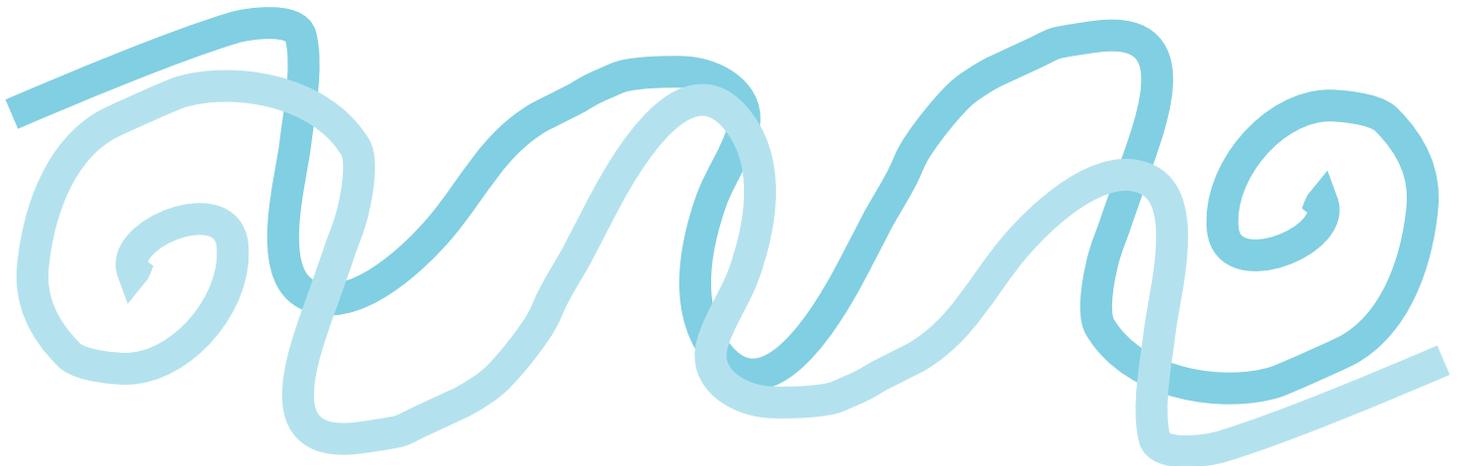
Towards that end, our board came up with a small pilot project to establish a current, pre-CRMP baseline for the number and types of contacts at four key attraction sites (Little Colorado River, Deer Creek, Elves, and Havasu) by placing datasheet forms in small (temporary) ammo cans that anyone could easily fill out at these four locations. Before doing so, we ran the draft datasheets and the concept by Grand Canyon National Park for their input and support. Slight revisions in the data sheet resulted, and we implemented the plan quickly since the river season was already in full swing.

Grand Canyon National Park's own efforts this summer are similar to the old attraction site monitoring program, where data is collected by observers at a few sites for only seven days as a sample period. Our efforts, while small, may help ground truth their method by augmenting data collection beyond what the Park is capable of conducting. If we can pinpoint distinct problems (like eleven boats and over 200 people at Deer Creek on a single day that the park observer noted during this summer's monitoring), then they can be addressed both positively and proactively.

Our small pilot project is only a segue into next year, when a comprehensive visitor use monitoring program will be implemented by Grand Canyon National Park, with input and involvement among organizations such as GCRG, the Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association, and the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association. As the park designs the implementation plan, input from these stakeholders and from social scientists will help determine new ways to gather the needed data and make it as useful and as scientifically credible as possible for GCNP. The ammo can project may or may not be part of that picture. Multi-site forms given to trip leaders may be a less intrusive alternative, for example. Broader stakeholder support anticipated for 2007 should result in more (and better) monitoring options.

The CRMP is so complex and all-encompassing—it will change many things possibly in ways that we cannot anticipate. Monitoring will therefore be a big focus of Grand Canyon National Park in the ensuing years to make sure that resources including the visitor experience are not further degraded. GCRG involvement is critical to ensure that a guide perspective is brought to the table. Towards that end, GCRG welcomes your input to help us make well-informed decisions that are representative of this community, both now and in the future. You can reach us anytime at gcrg@infomagic.net and your perspectives will be shared with the officers and board of GCRG. We will keep you informed of future developments either through the guide email list and/or the *Boatman's Quarterly Review*. We've got a lot of work and challenging times ahead, and your perspectives can help us along that road. Thanks!

Lynn Hamilton
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



River Runners Oral History Project

AMAZINGLY ENOUGH, Grand Canyon River Guides' River Runners Oral History Project has produced over eighty (count 'em 80!) interviews, many of them featured in past issues of the *Boatman's Quarterly Review*. The extensive (and very impressive) list below shows you how busy we've been over the years, and how totally committed we are to capturing these stories for posterity. This list gives you the interview subject (alphabetical by last name), the program under which each oral history was produced, and whether that interview has appeared in the BQR with relevant volume number. I'm sure this is an eye-opener for many of you who had no idea that some of these important folks have been already interviewed. Just the other day a Western guide was talking about sponsoring Paul Thevenin for our new Adopt-a-Boatman program. He was surprised to learn that we had featured that interview back in Volume 9:1 (Winter 1995/1996) of the BQR, and I gave him a copy to take back to his warehouse. While I don't want to part with our archival copies, anyone can check out most of these interviews by going to our website, www.gcr.org and clicking on the *Boatman's Quarterly Review*. The BQR's are posted by volume number, and as an additional bonus, all of these issues are searchable by keyword!

Grand Canyon River Guides feels that it is our

responsibility to continue our oral history endeavors by bringing you these stories direct from the folks who lived them. These oral histories are also archived at Northern Arizona University's Cline Library so they will continue to live long after the rest of us are gone, and many of them can be found online through their website: <http://www.nau.edu/library/speccoll/>. As we've outlined in Volume 19:1, our new Adopt-a-Boatman fundraising program will keep this oral history project moving forward by involving our members directly in the process. GCRG members (individually or as a group) can now "sponsor" an oral history interview with a subject of your choice. GCRG's website will feature a new Adopt-a-Boatman section so that you can see what interviews have been either partially or completely sponsored (and by whom), their status, and details on how to participate in this program. This extensive oral history list will also be posted with a link to the Adopt-a-Boatman section so that folks need not be confused over what's already been done. We strongly urge you all to become personally involved in this oral history project! This is your heritage—a glimpse into the past may help us to understand where we're going in the future.

Lynn Hamilton

River Runners Oral History Projects List

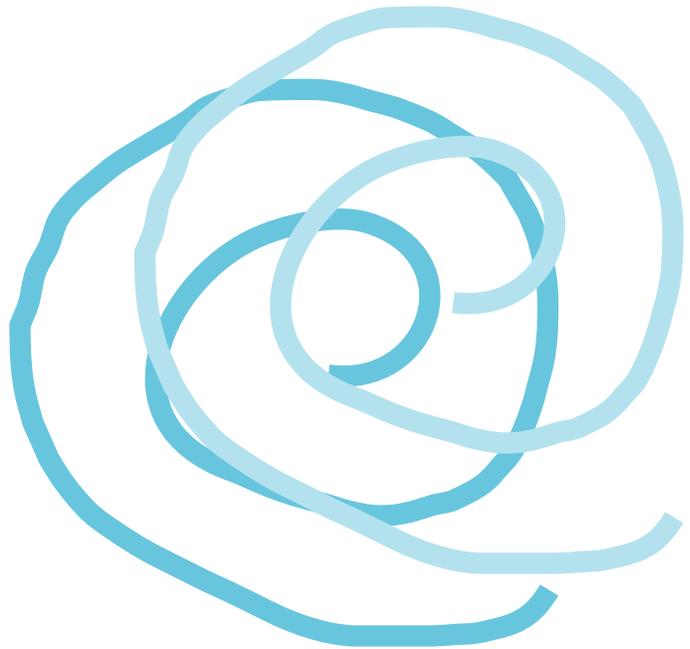
GCRG	USGS (Old Timers/Legends)	NAU	Other	Adopt-a Boatman	BQR (published)	NAU (online)
GCRG	USGS	NAU	O	A-A-B	bqr vol:#	X

Jeffe Aronson	GCRG			John Cross, Sr.	USGS	
Bill Beer	GCRG, bqr 9:4			John Cross II	USGS, bqr 10:2	
Steve Bledsoe	GCRG, bqr 19:3, X			Kim Crumbo	GCRG, bqr 8:1	
Alistair Bleifuss	USGS, X			Jack Currey	GCRG, X	
Don Briggs	GCRG, bqr 17:3			Lois Jotter Cutter	USGS, bqr 10:4, X	
David Brower	GCRG, bqr 10:3, X			Duffy Dale	GCRG, X	
Dana Burden	GCRG			O'Connor Dale	GCRG, bqr 14:1, X	
Fred Burke	GCRG, bqr 9:2, X			Ote Dale	GCRG	
Fred & Carol Burke	GCRG, bqr 9:2			Regan Dale	GCRG, bqr 18:2, X	
Harvey Butchart	GCRG, NAU, bqr 16:1			Dan Davis, Sr.	GCRG, bqr 16:3, X	
Ann Cassidy	USGS, X			Michael Denoyer	GCRG	
Georgie White Clark	GCRG, NAU, bqr 12:2, X			Brian Dierker	USGS, X	
Martha Clark	GCRG			Dan Dierker	GCRG, bqr 15:1	

Brad Dimock	GCRG, USGS, bqr 19:2, X
Dave Edwards	GCRG, bqr 14:4
Rob Elliott	GCRG, bqr 18:1, X
Bob Euler	GCRG, bqr 13:4, X
Henry & Grace Falany	NAU
Kent Frost	GCRG, bqr 8:4, X
Bill Gloeckler	GCRG, bqr 8:2, X
Barry Goldwater	GCRG, bqr 7:4, X
Kenton Grua	GCRG, bqr 11:1, X
Kenton & Diane Grua	USGS
Jimmy Hall	GCRG, bqr 16:2
Jon & Joyce Hamilton	GCRG
Don & Mary Harris	GCRG, bqr 6:3
Ted Hatch	GCRG, bqr 16:2, X
Bruce Helin	GCRG, X
Bart Henderson	GCRG, bqr 19:1
Jimmy Hendrick	GCRG, bqr 14:3, X
Sharon Hester	O
Willis Johnson	GCRG, bqr 8:3
Les Jones	USGS, bqr 14:2
Karen Kovalik	GCRG
Kyle Kovalik	GCRG
Vladimir Kovalik	GCRG, bqr 18:4
Jeri Ledbetter	GCRG
Katie Lee	GCRG, bqr 10:1, X
Martin Litton	GCRG, USGS, NAU, bqr 6:1 and 8:2, X
Jake Luck	GCRG, bqr 11:2, X
Dave Mackay	GCRG
Garth Marston	GCRG, X
Eldon McArthur	O, bqr 12:4
Dick McCallum	GCRG, bqr 7:2, X
Tom Moody	GCRG, bqr 15:2
Bill Mooz	NAU
Rod Nash	GCRG, bqr 9:2, X
Don Neff	GCRG, bqr 12:2, X
Joan Nevills-Staveley	USGS, X
Tad Nichols	USGS, bqr 13:2, X
Nels Niemi	GCRG, X
Rudi Petscheck	GCRG
Bob Quist	GCRG, bqr 7:3, X
Sandy Nevills Reiff	USGS, X
Woody Reiff	USGS
P.T. Reilly	GCRG, NAU, bqr 15:4, X
Nancy Streator Reuling	NAU, bqr 11:4
Bob Rigg	USGS, bqr 10:2, X
Bill Sanderson	GCRG, bqr 18:3
Jerry Sanderson	GCRG, bqr 7:3, X
June Sanderson	GCRG, bqr 7:3, X
Jack Schmidt	USGS, X
Bob Sharp	NAU
Gene Shoemaker	USGS, bqr 13:1, X
Bill Skinner	GCRG
Ken Sleight	GCRG, X
Phil Smith	NAU, X

Wesley Smith	GCRG, bqr 9:3
Tony Sparks	GCRG, bqr 7:3, X
Cam Staveley	GCRG
Larry Stevens	USGS, bqr 12:1, X
Dave Stratton	GCRG, X
Ivan Summers	NAU
Cliff Taylor	NAU
Paul Thevenin	GCRG, bqr 9:1, X
Ellen Tibbetts	GCRG, X
Connie Tibbitts	GCRG, bqr 13:3
Howie Usher	A-A-B
Jorgen Visbak	NAU
Bob Webb	USGS
Roy Webb	USGS
Dave Wegner	GCRG
George Wendt	USGS
Bruce Winter	GCRG, bqr 8:2, X
Tim Whitney	A-A-B

Note: As you can see by the list, river runners' oral histories can derive from sources other than GCRG. Some interviews occurred prior to the inception of our official GCRG Oral History Project, and some interviews require further recording time for completion or follow-up. Lastly, the majority of those interviews published in the BQR are also available on GCRG's website, www.gcrg.org, so check them out!



Back of the Boat— The Whale Foundation News Bulletin

2007 WHALE FOUNDATION CALENDAR

THE 2007 14-MONTH CALENDAR is now available and makes a great gift, a handy organizer and a nice source for a quick daydream, too. You may download an order form off the website at www.whalefoundation.org and mail us a check with your coordinates (PO Box 855; Flagstaff, AZ 86002) or stop by the office and pick one up at 515 W. Birch Street in Flagstaff. The price is \$10 out of the box or \$13 shipped. Like last year, supportive retail outlets also have the 2007 calendar for sale.

KENTON GRUA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS— JUNE 2006

“Blind Review”—In an effort to keep the scholarship application review process as fair and impartial as we can, all applications, upon arrival, are coded and have the applicant’s name removed so that the review committee is “blind” to the person’s identity. We have also added a second round of scholarship awards in December so there will now be two rounds per year. The second 2006 deadline is November 1st for anyone interested in applying.

The money raised during the year and at the WingDing in February makes this scholarship program possible and is one of the best things the Whale Foundation does to support the river community. We award scholarships to guides in career transitions. We want to again send a profound thank you to all the sponsors and donors for your generous support of this important program. Kenton’s legacy and spirit is celebrated in each of these awards.

This summer’s scholarship recipients are:
Ken Baker—Freelance/Science
Eric Christenson—AzRA
Sam Jansen—Canyon Explorations
Lars Niemi—Freelance

FALL MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

The Whale Foundation Health Services Committee will hold a fall training session, “Mental Health Training: Sexual, Substance Abuse and Hazing Issues,” on Friday, November 3rd from 8:30AM to 4:00PM. This workshop will focus upon those tools and skills required to deal with disrespectful situations on the river. We are offering this seminar in response to the many requests the Whale Foundation received on last spring’s sexual harassment questionnaire. Watch our website (www.whalefoundation.org) for more details. The workshop is free and all members of the river community are encouraged to attend. Lunch will be provided as well as driving

expenses reimbursed for our out-of-town attendees. Call our business line to register (928-774-9440).

WINGDING V

Mark your calendars now! The Whale Foundation will hold our fifth annual WingDing on Saturday, February 3, 2007 from 6–11PM at the Coconino Center for the Arts (2300 N. Fort Valley Road) in Flagstaff. This wonderful, river community event is a Whale-of-a-celebration for hundreds of our family and friends. If you have a little free time this fall, love a party, and would like to volunteer, please call our business line (928-774-9440). We could use help with food, beverages, registration, raffles, silent auction, and set-up and clean-up. We welcome any and all volunteers with a little or a lotta time.

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE VOLUNTEERS

At the Whale Foundation, we are enormously grateful to the many professional mental and physical healthcare providers who volunteer their services to our organization. Year-to-date in 2006 (through July) these generous individuals donated services valued at \$12,341. With this support, the Whale Foundation is able to provide assistance to many uninsured (or underinsured) guides. Many, many thanks to each of the providers for your support of the river family.

MISSION

In loving remembrance of Curtis “Whale” Hansen, the Whale Foundation provides confidential access to mental and physical health care professionals and a network of support services designed to restore, promote and celebrate the well being of the Grand Canyon River Guiding Community.

The Whale Foundation
PO Box 855
Flagstaff, AZ 86002
On Call Help Line 866-773-0773 (toll free)
Business 928-774-9440
www.whalefoundation.org

Fall Rendezvous at the South Rim

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! Grand Canyon River Guides will be hosting a “Fall Rendezvous” at the South Rim over the November 4TH weekend. We’re moving away from the mini-GTS format of some previous years, towards a more hands-on, productive format that can really help guides “set the highest standards” for the river profession. As we envision it (although details are still being nailed down), the November 4TH rendezvous weekend will shape up as follows:

ACTIVITY #1 AT THE SHRINE OF THE AGES

Emergency evacuations from the Colorado River through Grand Canyon can be always stressful and challenging even under the best of circumstances. What better way to build a stronger comfort level and greater continuity of care than to meet directly with NPS personnel, view (or take part in) a simulation, and take a hard look at the whole scenario! Come and discuss your concerns and questions from a guide perspective and exchange information directly with the relevant park personnel—NPS river ranger Mike McGinnis, SAR coordinator Ken Phillips, pilots, helicopter crews. These interactions will build your understanding of the protocols for emergency evacuations as you get to know the people who are involved with them. If guides can better understand the people and the process, we’ll all be more in sync and better coordination and communication will be the result.

ACTIVITY #2 AT THE HISTORIC BOAT EXHIBIT

You’ve been reading about the historic boat restoration project spearheaded by the Grand Canyon National Park Foundation in past issues of the BQR. This is *your* heritage, so let’s check it out! The new rotating boat exhibit opens in October and is located in Grand Canyon National Park. We’ll take a jaunt down there, and Brad Dimock will regale us with all the fascinating stories those boats have to tell. You’ve read about some of these early boats—now come and see them!

ACTIVITY #3 AT MATHER CAMPGROUND

We’re planning on reserving a group campground (50 people max, multiple tents) for Saturday night, November 4TH. We’ll also extend an open invitation for any NPS personnel to join us for dinner so we can get to know our park counterparts that much better. It’s “pot luck” for dinner so bring something to share, and bring your own beverages. GCRG will supply breakfast the next morning before we head for home. Bring your musical instruments, camping gear, food, and a bit of firewood or charcoal, and let’s get together for a relaxing evening with your fellow guides under a full moon!

This Fall Rendezvous should be something that will benefit everyone (guides and NPS alike), as well as being a great community building event. Guides will be able to get into Grand Canyon National Park without paying the entrance fee if you tell them you’re there for a meeting with the NPS. The employees at the gate will be informed of the meeting in advance. We’ll be sending out a postcard to all guides and outfitters when we get a bit closer with more details. Mark your calendars and plan on joining us on the South Rim this fall! This will be an RSVP event so we can get a handle on numbers, so please let us know if you can attend. Can’t wait to see you there. Grab your guide friends and join us!

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES

GTS land session – March 31–April 1, 2007
GTS river session (upper) – April 2–8, 2007
GTS river session (lower) – April 8–16, 2007
Wilderness First Responder
Recert Course – January 19–21, 2007
Wilderness First Responder
Full Course – February 5–11, 2007

Look for more info in the next issue of the BQR, and mark your calendar.

Steve Bledsoe

I WAS BORN IN FT. WAYNE, INDIANA. Actually, we were living in California, and my mom and dad went back to Ft. Wayne to have me, and then turned around and went right back to California. We lived on the Rogue River for a while, traveled quite a bit. My dad was in construction. Then we ended up in Southern California. My dad worked construction, and then he got a job with an electrical contractor when I was in junior high—actually, no, in grammar school, like the third grade. Then my brother, Dave, and I would work on the weekends.

STEIGER: And Dave is like a couple of years older than you?

BLED SOE: He's a year-and-a-half, yeah. So we got to know this guy, electrical contractor, and he kept us pretty busy weekends, where we could make some money and buy cars and stuff. We got into high school, and this guy, Jim Custer, he belonged to the Southern California Tuna Club, and we'd go up to Lake Mead. We'd skip school, my dad would take us out of school, and we'd go up to Lake Mead with them and set up these big camps for the Southern California Tuna Club. They were just fishermen, millionaire fishermen. They'd go out there bass fishing. But we'd go in with a backhoe, and they were at Devil's Cove. We'd level places for them to camp, dig latrines.

STEIGER: Why did they call it the Tuna Club?

BLED SOE: I don't know. That was forty years ago. (**STEIGER:** Maybe they caught tuna somewhere else?) Or they were just hurtin' for a name, it sounded cool or somethin'. Oh, they'd bring these huge barges up with huge gas ranges. They'd cook on these gas ranges. And tents, huge tents full of beer and liquor. They'd have stag movies and have canopies over...we'd build tables, picnic tables, big long tables. It was a kick! (laughs) Then they'd give my brother and me a boat. We'd help the cook—that was our job, was helpin' the cook and just layin' stuff out—pretty much like a river trip. Yeah. They would take off early in the morning, we'd help the cook clean up, then we'd pack the boat full of beer and whiskey (laughs) and go play.

STEIGER: And you guys were like how old?

BLED SOE: Let's see, I think I was in

junior high. (laughter) Yeah, somewhere around there. So that was kind of an introduction to camping and cooking. Right. (laughter) Perfect setup for a river trip: eating, drinking, and camping. (laughs) And fishing. So then my parents kept coming back to Temple Bar, and eventually...Well, when I got into high school, a few of these guys, Jim Custer, they *bought* Temple Bar, and they hired my dad to come up and build a hotel, rebuild the restaurant and the bar, and put in a campground. So my mom would go up there, too. Then my parents would just disappear, and we were in high school, and we had the run of the town, and "Yippie!" They pretty much moved up to Temple Bar.

STEIGER: But you guys stayed in California to go to school?

BLED SOE: Yeah, in Newport Beach.

STEIGER: (mock regret) How awful for you! (laughter)

BLED SOE: It was an ongoing party (laughter) until I rolled my car, and then I thought, "Well, I'm not gettin' anywhere here," so I joined the Navy in 1964. Then on a leave, I went back to Temple Bar to see my folks and met Mack Miller. He had run the canyon the year before in sportyaks with...Who ran those? Bill Belknap,



1964 - Beeville, Texas

yeah...Let's see...It was like, 1963 when they closed the dam, closed the canyon. And Mack Miller had an *Argosy* magazine with him on the cover from this trip he'd done. That was pretty cool—in a sportyak. “Wow! that looks interesting!”

STEIGER: And the Navy?! Now, had your folks been in the service, or your family or anything like that?

BLED SOE: My dad had been in the Navy, yeah. It was kind of a thing, guys that were raisin' too much hell at that time were (laughs) joining the service. It wasn't my parents' idea, it was just kind of my idea. Some of my friends had joined, and it was like, “Wow, maybe this'll straighten me out or somethin'.”

I ended up in Beeville, Texas, Naval Air...I was a squadron artist. (laughter) I kind of made my own job there. They were gettin' ready for Vietnam and they were arming some of these planes for practice. These guys would go out and they'd shoot cattle for practice, and then all hell would...They'd kind of veer off their track and just sort of go out on Farmer John's and “Hey, there's a moving target!” And then they'd crash 'em and stuff like that, and my job was to plot out where they crashed the planes, where they shot the cattle. Then I was doin' logos for planes. Yeah. (laughter) It was pretty easy goin'. I had two or three guys workin' for me in the “art department” there.

So anyway, Mack Miller. This was in 1964. He goes, “Oh, you want to see the uprun of the Grand Canyon in jet boats?” and he had a copy of that. So we sat and watched that one night, and he goes, “Would you be interested in doin' that?” “Hell, yeah!” He goes, “All right. Well, let's go tomorrow morning.” So my dad and I and a guy named Mike, and Jesse Gaddis [phonetic spelling], he had another jet boat, and we filled it up with jerry cans of gas, and took off. Well, Mack Miller's wife, Lee—this was around Thanksgiving—said, “You bring back a goose for Thanksgiving.” “Okay.” So we took shotguns with us (laughter) and headed up the canyon.

The water, you know, Lake Mead was *way* down, the log jam was *way* out in the lake. I mean, I don't even know *how* far out it was. So we kind of circled around this log jam, until Mack finally said, “Aw, screw it!” and just punched it. (laughter) Voom! right over the log jam. “Yippie!” And here comes Jesse right behind him. We got up by Pearce Ferry and the silt banks were twenty-, thirty-foot tall. You're goin' up through sand waves, dodging standing sand waves. (**STEIGER:** 'Cause Lake Mead had *been* way up, and now it was...) *Way* down, 'cause they were still filling Lake Powell. (**STEIGER:** Because the river had been turned off.) Right. (**STEIGER:** For that whole year.) Yeah, while they were filling Lake Powell, right. So we went up to Quartermaster and made our base camp there, and then started lookin' for ducks and geese and whatever we could find to shoot. We were

cruisin' around (laughs) with these loaded shotguns, in a boat, hittin' these sand waves. You'd see the geese kinda land on top of these silt banks, and Mack would go, “Go get 'em!” (laughs) I'd run and jump and try to climb these—oh, they're just silt, you know, just slidin' and fallin' and shit, and finally got to the top of one, and there were the geese right in front of me, and I ran for 'em and they took off and I was just ready to get a shot and fell, *ka-boom!*, and missed 'em. Back into the boat. We're chasin' this flock down the river. Mack would sit on top of his seat with his feet in the seat itself, you know, watchin' these geese. Wham! we hit a sandbar about three inches deep. It threw him forward and split his eye open. Jesse Gaddis was right behind us, and he almost rammed right into the back of him too. So we doctored up Mack. He goes, “Aw, I'm all right.” I think we got *some* ducks. We took 'em back to camp. But we were up running rapids and stuff. I don't know how far we went up.

STEIGER: But not as far as Diamond Creek?

BLED SOE: I don't *think* so...We spent several days up there, playin' around. That was a kick. And that was kind of my introduction to Grand Canyon. Then I got out of the service, and in 1967 I went back to Temple Bar and was helping, working on the docks, just workin' around Temple Bar, and watchin' these river trips comin' in. “God, these people get off and they're all scroungy and dirty and ‘Yippie!’” Georgie would come in, and “Yahoo!” “What the hell's goin' on there?!” So I spent the summer and then went back to school in California. My brother stayed on—Dave—and it was the last trip of the year, a Hatch trip that came in, and all the boatmen just piled out of the boats, grabbed their personal gear, and took off for Las Vegas—I don't know who they were—and left this truck driver to de-rig the boats. So this poor guy was lookin' around, tryin' to find somebody to help de-rig the boats. (**STEIGER:** They just *left* 'em?!) Yeah. (laughs) Well, that's the way it was. So Dave said, “Sure, I'll help.” And the guy goes, “Well, if you help me, I'll get you a trip down the Grand Canyon.” So they de-rigged the boats, and Dave went up with him, got on a trip, the last trip of the year, and came through the canyon and loved it. That was 1967...Uh-huh, the old tail-draggers. Who'd he go with? Could have been Dennis Massey and [that] gang—Earl the Squirrel [Staley]. But yeah, Dave came over to California and said, “Let's do this!” So we wrote Hatch, and he goes, “Yeah, I've got a training trip the winter of 1967, over Christmas vacation.” “Okay, we'll be there.” So that was the winter that Flagstaff got snowed in.

STEIGER: Oh yeah, I remember that. Yeah, that was a *huge* winter. I remember we got out of school in Prescott for three weeks 'cause of snow. It was snow up to the rooftops in some places. Huge drifts.

BLED SOE: So we couldn't make it. Ted goes, “Well,

come on out in the spring.” So I think it was in March we met Ted in Page at the Pageboy Motel. We walked in, and here’s this redheaded guy. “Hey, boys! Let’s go party!” (laughter) I thought, “This looks good.” (laughter) And there were a bunch of us that were new. Let’s see, I think Earl Perry, that was his first trip. I think Al Holland was up there. He’d been down before. God, I’m tryin’ to remember who-all was there.

STEIGER: So this first trip was gonna be a commercial trip?

BLEDISOE: Yeah.

STEIGER: “Okay, never mind that training trip.” (laughter)

BLEDISOE: Well, actually, it was me and I think there were three other guys on the boat we had, and we were just carrying duffle. I don’t think Ted was on it, but I remember him at the Ferry telling us, “Well, boys, if you make it through alive, you’ve got the job.” (laughter)

* * *

We know this now: there’s no such thing as “the best boatman on the river.” Never was or will be—might as well try and pick out the best leaf, best twig, best piece of flotsam. Thirty-five years from now, hopefully, river runners in Grand Canyon will look back at stuff we’re doing today and laugh at how primitive we were, how hard we used to make it on ourselves in the olden days. Hopefully, they’ll marvel at how much better things are in the golden present.

Thirty-five or forty years ago it was a semantic thing, people still talked and thought in less evolved terms, and among the handful of names usually prefaced with “best boatman on the river” was Steve Bledsoe. Bledsoe was the best, one of the five best, three best, top ten...however you looked at it—then or now—he always has been and always will be way up there in terms of respect from his peers.

An oral history interview started at his house in Flagstaff back in 1998 got him going just a little, and opened the window ever so slightly for another backward glimpse at one of the wilder chapters that’s unfolded along the way in Grand Canyon.

We picked up the pieces with another session this week, August 15, 2006, to round things out.

* * *

STEIGER: Do you remember how many boats were on that first trip?

BLEDISOE: There must have been at least four—some-thin’ like that—four or five, and we were there to carry duffle.

STEIGER: So these are still tail-dragger, outside rigs?

BLEDISOE: Oh, yeah.

STEIGER: But when it got scary, you would just tilt the motor up and row ’em through?

BLEDISOE: No, we’d take the motor completely off. We’d stop...Well, we stopped at Hance, Crystal, and Lava. We’d always row those. We’d pull in, take the motor completely off, and set it right—well, lean it up against the back of the tube where we’d usually sit and motor, and then we’d just tie it with hemp rope—tie it in there—and then get on two sets of oars. So you’d row through, then you’d have to hike back up and row the other boat through. The people usually walked. You’d row through, and the most experienced boatman would be on the back set of oars, so he could jump back—drop his oars, jump back, take his knife, cut the hemp rope, throw the motor on (chuckles), plug it in, fire it up, and get to shore before you... (laughs)

STEIGER: Because you couldn’t necessarily row into shore.

BLEDISOE: Not necessarily, no.

STEIGER: And so *everything* was probably tied down with hemp rope, huh?

BLEDISOE: Uh-huh.

STEIGER: That was the whole boat, lashed down with rope.

BLEDISOE: Right. It was easy to de-rig. Sharpen up the knife. Ted would just buy a big spool every time we’d rig, and you’d just rig with that, and then cut it all off, throw it away at the end of the trip.

STEIGER: Boats still had floors in ’em?

BLEDISOE: Yeah, you’d have to bail ’em.

STEIGER: How was *that*?

BLEDISOE: I don’t know, I didn’t do the bailing.

(laughter) The people bailed. I mean, you’d get *hundreds* of buckets of water.

STEIGER: So let me get this straight. These people walk around, you guys run the rapids, then you’d pull in and say, “Okay everybody, better get down there and bail this boat!” (laughter)

BLEDISOE: (shrugs) It was an expedition.

STEIGER: How did it work, doin’ the runs? You were runnin’ Hance down the left or somethin’?

BLEDISOE: Uh-huh. (**STEIGER:** How was *that*?) I don’t know, there was one we’d always wrap on. (laughter) (**STEIGER:** Maybe you went to the *right* of that rock that everybody rows to the left of now?) It *could* be, ’cause there was one down there...I don’t know, I’m running to the right all the time now, so I don’t even look at that other side. Who was it? Oh, Snake and I got wrapped on that rock. (**STEIGER:** Jerry Hughes?) Yeah. That was pretty funny. That was maybe—well, that had to have been maybe 1969, 1970. We got wrapped, and Jerry had just been havin’ a bad trip, and it was his boat. So we got hung up, and he said, “Screw it!” So we got the beer bag and we’re sittin’ behind the duffle, tryin’ to sip a beer, but people are throwin’ ropes at us, and we’re, “Hey, careful!” (laughter)

STEIGER: He said, “Screw it, let’s just have a beer.”

BLED SOE: “We need a beer!” Tryin’ to hide from the passengers behind the duffle, drinkin’ beers.

STEIGER: So he was really takin’ it seriously, too.

BLED SOE: Yeah. “Hell with this!” And we wrapped pretty good. A couple of other boats rowed through, and then I think Kenton [Grua] came down, and I guess he thought he was gonna push us off, and he was rowin’ straight towards us, stern first. You know, those old tail-draggers, they have those two-by-eights...

STEIGER: Stickin’ out the back end.

BLED SOE: Uh-huh. And we’re kinda watchin’ him, you know, sippin’ our beer. We go, “Oh, shit!” (laughter) And we’re goin’ “No!” and he’s pullin’ away. You could just see this recognition on his face, and he goes, “Oh, #@\$!” and tries to...

STEIGER: Oh, ’cause he realizes that here comes the two-by-eights.

BLED SOE: Two-by-eights, headin’ straight for us. And it just hit the boat and just started ripping—probably a ten-to twelve-foot rip, just takin’ out chambers as it went. (laughs) But, it got us off. Those chambers filled up with water, and that was enough pressure, and it just pulled us right off... Of course that didn’t make Jerry’s job any easier! I think we tied him to another boat and drug him down to Phantom, and then camped at Phantom, and he spent a lot of time sewin’ and patching. I think his girlfriend Carol, who’s his wife now, was on the trip.

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STEIGER: Well, now, let’s see, Crystal. So Crystal had just gotten to be Crystal not all that long ago. How were you guys likin’ that? What did you do there?

BLED SOE: We were rowing Crystal down the right side.

STEIGER: Oh, you were *gettin’* to the right.

BLED SOE: Uh-huh. Just pullin’ hard. I think we were pullin’ in that little beach down below it, just right around the corner. Yeah, the middle beach there.

STEIGER: Was there an art to rowin’ those? I mean, how the hell did you... Would you row ’em just like you’d motor ’em, kinda? Try to get the steep angle and just...

BLED SOE: I don’t think we had that figured out. (laughs) Just row like hell.

STEIGER: Somehow, some way. (chuckles)

BLED SOE: “I know I want to be over there,” so you just bust a gut. I don’t think we really figured out... Well, we’d hardly even figured out how to cheat rapids. “Oh, we want to be over there?” ’Cause it was always down the middle.

I remember this one trip, I’d gotten off a ten-day trip—this must have been in 1968 or 1969. I’d gotten off a ten-day trip, Ted Hatch was waitin’ for me at Temple Bar, and flew me up to Utah to do an eight-day trip. I



Hatch crew,
1970.

Left to Right:
Tom Cromer
Pete Reznick
John Cromer
Steve Bledsoe
Perry Owens

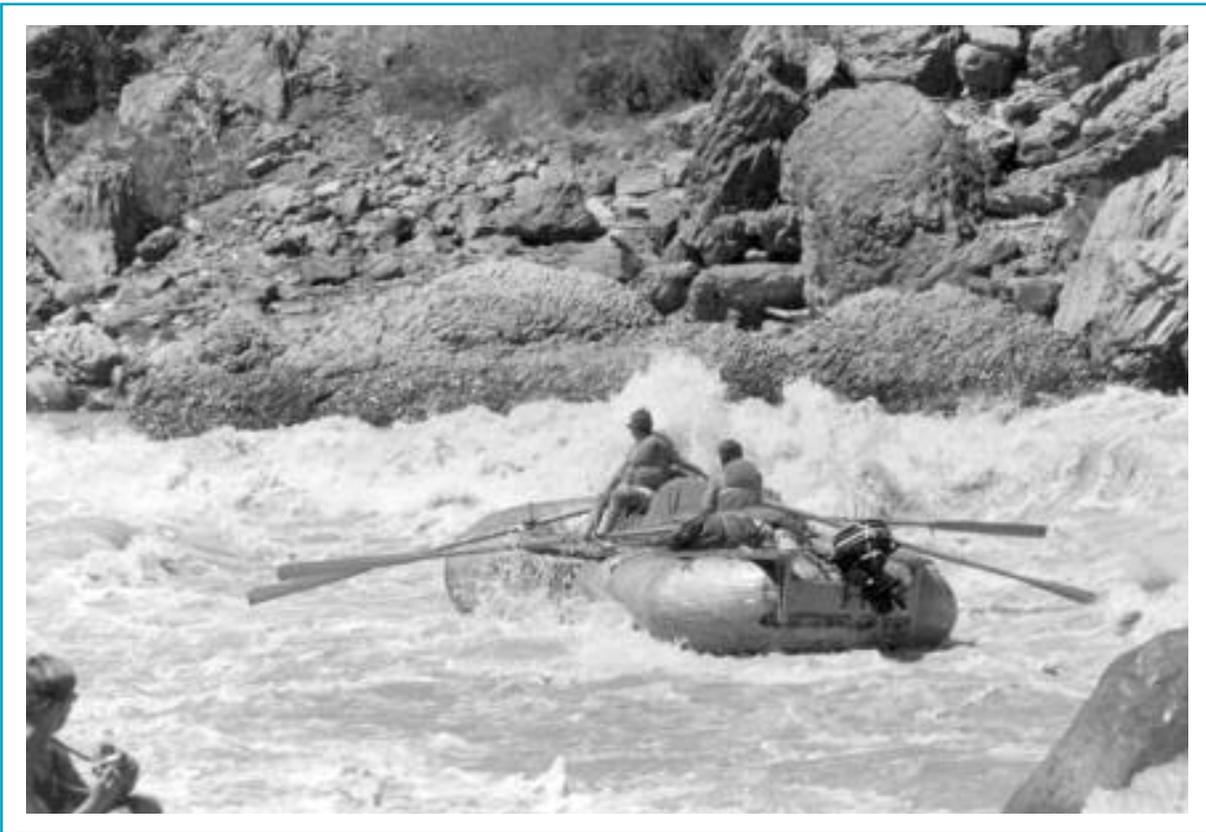
Squatting:
Rich Bangs

photo:
Patti Gales



Steve Bledsoe on back oars, Roy Cromer (?) on front, Carol Burke on duffel pile, in Lava Falls, 1968
Series of three photos





got on the trip that same day, did an eight-day trip, got off that, Ted took me from the boat, put me in his plane, we flew back to Marble Canyon, and I went down and got on a boat. That trip had already left.

STEIGER: Earlier that morning?

BLEDISOE: Yeah. Now I'm goin' down the river (whistling blithely). There were no guide books or anything then. Where the hell am I? How far are those guys? I'm goin' along... (**STEIGER:** Do you have a swamper or anything?) No, I was all by myself. (**STEIGER:** All by yourself, outside rig, tail-dragger, all that stuff. Floor in the boat, gotta bail). Floor. I came to House Rock and I see some tents and stuff. Great! At that point, I didn't really know about cutting rapids. I knew I wasn't gonna miss that camp, though, and I came in, it was high up, high water, I guess, 'cause I just started cuttin' hard right, whipped in, pulled right into shore without touchin' a wave. Dennis Massey comes down and he goes, "That was the most beautiful run I've ever seen." (laughter) "No shit?! What did I do?" I *knew* I wasn't gonna miss that camp, that's what it was.

STEIGER: So that was how you learned to make a cut?

BLEDISOE: "Huh! If I point the boat *this* way, I'll miss all that shit over there. All right!" (laughter)

STEIGER: So up until then, House Rock or whatever, you'd just line it up... Could you pull your motors very good on those things? You could get 'em out of the water and clear?

BLEDISOE: Yeah, you could reach back.

STEIGER: So you could go over a rock that way.

BLEDISOE: Yeah, those motors were Johnsons, and they had sheer pins and you'd duct tape the cowling on—otherwise they'd flood out—oldies.

STEIGER: Twenties?

BLEDISOE: Uh-huh, twenties. I think there were even some smaller ones, whatever Ted could round up.

STEIGER: So what was the campin' routine like, say, from a passenger's perspective? How did you deal with all that? What did you supply, and how would you orient everybody, and what was the typical day like? What was the typical routine like?

BLEDISOE: I think we told everybody they had to wear their life jackets, and to dig a hole with a shovel when they had to go, and that was about it. (laughter) When we called breakfast, lunch, and dinner, be there or you miss out. That was the orientation.

STEIGER: Everybody just had to bring their own sleeping gear and all that?

BLEDISOE: Yeah.

STEIGER: It was packed in whatever it was packed in, and you guys would just throw a tarp over it all, and that'd be it. No waterproof bags, no ammo cans?

BLEDISOE: I don't think so, no. I think it was pretty much a mess.

STEIGER: And people loved it.

BLEDISOE: Uh-huh. I think people just knew they

were goin' on an expedition. I think it was a younger, wilder crowd than nowadays.

* * *

STEIGER: I've heard those guys talk about these big thirteen-boat trips.

BLED SOE: Seventeen boats.

STEIGER: You were on a *seventeen-boat* trip? Was that a Sierra Club deal?

BLED SOE: No, that was Don Baars.

STEIGER: Geology lecture?

BLED SOE: Uh-huh. Right. He'd put together these trips, 160 people. Then with the crew, you know, it'd be like 180 people on one trip. Camping and cooking was real interesting.

STEIGER: So you'd have twenty crew members?

BLED SOE: Uh-huh. Well, I think my brother was runnin' the cook boat on one of the trips, and they'd tear down the kitchen and everything after we'd leave, and then run ahead and set it up, which wasn't much. I mean, it was just a table and they started up the fires.

STEIGER: Set up the fire irons and throw the buckets in there.

BLED SOE: Uh-huh, build fires.

STEIGER: They'd probably have to fetch the wood, huh?

BLED SOE: Yeah.

STEIGER: Which would be some work, but it wasn't probably that hard to get then, either, huh?

BLED SOE: No, there was *lots* of wood.

STEIGER: Wood everywhere, and I guess the beaches were...? I guess campin' that many people was less of an issue than it would have been today?

BLED SOE: Oh, yeah, the beaches that we used to camp at are gone now, due to vegetation. Well, House Rock used to be a big beach. Below Lava-Chuar on the left there was a huge beach. I remember we camped there, right above that island on the left. It's all overgrown.

STEIGER: Espejo or somethin'.

BLED SOE: Yeah. And I think that was the same trip that Dean Agee—we were comin' up to Hance and we decided we were gonna go ahead and run it with the motors. But he'd gotten way behind, and he came around the corner and he didn't see anybody and didn't know which way to run Hance (**STEIGER:** With the motor.). So he was comin' up—you know that big rock out there in the middle...

STEIGER: The one we call Agee Rock.

BLED SOE: Exactly! (laughter) Agee Rock. He started to the left, and he [said to himself], "No, no, no. To hell with it!" And I guess he turned and he was gonna go left of the rock, and he just wrapped on it.

STEIGER: Oh, man! And you guys were like running

Sock [Sockdolager Rapid] about then?

BLED SOE: No, we actually pulled in down below. You know, down below that little riffle below there. We saw him enter, and then "Oops!" So we hiked back up with some ropes and stuff. There was no way to get to him. He was out there in the middle of the river. We didn't have throw lines then. So he got out there with his oars, and he's pryin' and pryin', trying to get the boat off, and nothin's movin'. He's broken, I think, all but one oar, and then the water surged or something, and he got a bite on it and it broke loose. He fired up the motor out there in the middle of all those rocks and I guess he hit one of the big holes and three or four passengers went overboard and one guy went through the prop. (**STEIGER:** Oh, shit!) Caught his pant leg. By the time they got to us, we picked the guy up, and his leg was just solid black. It didn't cut it, didn't cut his leg, but we drug him in, and this guy thought that was just cool as hell! (laughs) Yeah. And we're goin', "Shall we get you out?" He goes "Hell, no! I wanna go on down!" I think we all went out and left the boats and a few boatmen went on down and took a few people on down the river, and we went out to go back for another river trip. This one guy thought it was great. He's got scars from the Grand Canyon.

* * *

STEIGER: What were those boats like to run?

BLED SOE: Oh, they were sloppy. You know, they were the old cotton boats, so they were just... You had to leave 'em soft, or they'd blow up. Two frames. There was like a triangle in the back, and you'd hang the motor off the back of that. And that was chained to "D" rings. Then there was another, the rowing frame that sat in front of that, with—I think they were two-by-eight frames. Anyway, two sets of pinned oarlocks. And then just a flat floorboard up in front. Well, actually, no, we didn't even have a floorboard then, 'cause we had to bail 'em... You had to deflate that whole back end too, so you were dragging the whole back end. They'd cavitate otherwise.

STEIGER: What was it like to run stuff, to hit big waves?

BLED SOE: Well, you didn't want to take Hermit down the middle, I found out. (laughter) I think it was Jimmy Hall and I... Well, whenever you'd take Hermit down the middle, it'd snap that rowing frame. I mean, just, you know, snap it. And we found this old timber, it was a *huge* long timber below there, and if you had a really good group, you'd take Hermit down the middle, deal with the snapped frame, pull over, saw off a piece of that timber, patch it, and keep on goin'.

STEIGER: If you wanted to give everybody a ride.

(BLEDSOE: Yeah.) “Okay folks, we’re gonna go down, break this frame, fix it, and then go on.”

BLEDSOE: Yeah. But I almost flipped end over end. Jimmy was behind me, and I decided to give these people a ride, and I hit that big third wave, and the boat came over, and the people in the front of the boat, their feet were hangin’ in my face, and it went over and it twisted at the last moment, and we washed through the rest of it backwards. (STEIGER: Whoa!) Jimmy saw that and he went hard left, and he was just bouncing along the left shore. (laughter) Jimmy’s in Hollywood now. But he came by and stayed with me for a while and stuff, but he hasn’t left a phone number or how to get in touch with him. Yeah, he swamped for me for (STEIGER: A long time, huh?). (Bledsoe nods) He didn’t want to run a boat yet. Good storyteller. He swamped a whole summer for me.

STEIGER: Which was unusual in that company, huh? Or was it? Would you have guys that had to be swampers for a whole season?

BLEDSOE: No, you went from being on a boat to a boatman, just boom!

STEIGER: If you lived, you got a job! (laughter)

BLEDSOE: I think Ted was payin’ 35 [dollars] a day then.

STEIGER: What would a swamper get paid?

BLEDSOE: Oh, swampers didn’t get paid, so you wanted to be a boatman. It was funny, we made good money, too. Well, for college kids, you know, just room and board and money—and a party.

STEIGER: So there was a party like every night?

BLEDSOE: Uh-huh. No rules, no laws, no holds barred.

STEIGER: Cooked on wood, buried the [human waste] in the sand. Did you guys work on your interpretive skills and stuff? How did that work?

BLEDSOE: Well, if we knew there was an Indian ruin, we’d stop there. But there wasn’t a lot of information on that stuff.

STEIGER: How about the geology?

BLEDSOE: Nothing. We didn’t have anything on that. Ted gave us a list of the rapids.

STEIGER: That was what you had?

BLEDSOE: On a white sheet of paper. If you got ’em out of order, you just... (laughs) Just switched ’em around and get caught up.

STEIGER: “This is...uh...Sockdolager!” (laughter)

BLEDSOE: And then you get to Hance. “Oh, oh, here we are.” Then you’d start off again. “Okay, Hance.”

(STEIGER: “This is Hance. I know we ran that before, we’ll run it again.”) (laughter) “Now, *this* is Hance.” (laughter)

STEIGER: So there wasn’t even the Les Jones scroll map or anything?

BLEDSOE: They were around. I saw a couple of ’em, but...But it was mainly just getting through.

STEIGER: But you guys kind of—I always had the impression there was a period there where Hatch kind of *owned* the river, it seems like. I mean, just to hear people talk about those days. I know that isn’t the case. But do you remember seein’...Who else was down there? Georgie, Sanderson, Western? Do you remember seein’ those guys?

BLEDSOE: You didn’t see many people. I mean, that was what was great.

STEIGER: Was that the exception, rather than the rule? I mean, would you do trips where you didn’t see anybody at all? Would you typically see maybe somebody?

BLEDSOE: Well, you know, it’s like now, depending on when you launch. You know, I think everybody was doin’ the longer trips ’cause everybody had to go to Temple Bar, ’cause there was no Pearce Ferry.

STEIGER: How about Diamond Creek? Was that even...

BLEDSOE: That wasn’t even really happening for a couple more years.

STEIGER: So it was a ten-day trip?

BLEDSOE: Uh-huh. Let’s see, we’d pass Diamond, we’d



Rowing tail-dragger through Lava Falls.

go a *long* day. Well, actually, we'd *try* to get to, what is it? Sandy Point, out on the lake. Spend the night there, and then go into Temple Bar the next day. We'd take oars and make big canopies to put over everybody. I mean, there wasn't much partyin', we were always out of everything by then. But it was fun, 'cause my folks were down at Temple Bar, and if we'd run into a fisherman, and they were goin' back to Temple Bar, we'd tell 'em, and then my folks would come out with beer and ice and pop and make it a *lot* nicer.

STEIGER: Yeah. As far as *that* went, did Hatch supply alcohol?

BLED SOE: No.

STEIGER: So you guys had to buy your own beer...

BLED SOE: There goes the paycheck! (laughs)

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STEIGER: Was there like a "boatman's uniform" in those days? (Bledsoe chuckles)

BLED SOE: It was long Levis, cowboy boots, Sierra Club cup, the big knife, and pliers.

STEIGER: You mean, when you started, you went down there and wore cowboy boots and long Levis?

BLED SOE: Uh-huh. (laughter) Well, it was kinda what everybody was wearin'. You know, they were comin' out of Utah and Idaho and stuff, and everybody kinda had that western look. (in John Wayne accent) "We're goin' to the West!" (laughter) That was kind of the outfit. But then it was like, "God, your legs all..." (**STEIGER:** You're freezin'!) So everybody just started cuttin' their Levis off. Now, who would have thought of wearin' swim trunks? You wouldn't look like a cowboy, you know. Or a boatman.

STEIGER: But the pliers, that was for handlin' the hot stuff on the fire?

BLED SOE: Uh-huh, and undoin' that hemp rope. The knife was for cutting everything—cutting out those knots you *couldn't* get out, and the pliers were for dutch ovens and griddles, and the griddle holders—you know, those fire stands.

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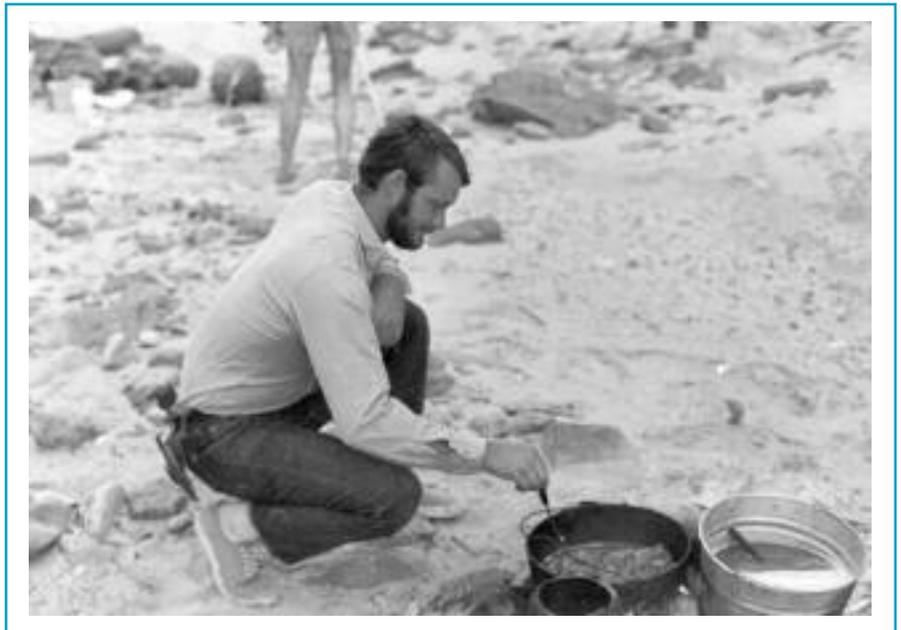
STEIGER: Could you describe the evolution of your boating skills, if you remember how that went?

BLED SOE: I remember I think it was Earl the Squirrel and I—Earl Staley—and I were doin' a runout, and we

came up to Lava, it was about 11:30 at night, and we'd been drinkin' Jim Beam, and we had our two boats tied together, and Earl was up—this was probably in 1969—was up on the bow—1968 or 1969. We'd been taking the motors off and rowing through, and we were comin' up to Lava, and he had a flashlight, and he's goin', "Left, left, left!"

STEIGER: You guys decided you're gonna just run it?

BLED SOE: We're just gonna run it. "Screw it!" We had a bottle of Jim Beam, we were invincible. (laughter) We didn't care. So we're comin' up on it, and I see the flashlight flicker, and he's divin' for the duffle pile. I go, "What am I doin' back here?" (laughter) So I grab the motor, pull it up, dove for the duffle pile just as we went in. It was so dark, you couldn't see anything anyway.



Cookin' the old way.

The boat spun, and we're waiting and waiting, and a couple of little booms, and we're through! We turn on the light, we're lookin' at each other. "We're *through!*" And so we started perfecting that classic Hatch turn-around run. (**STEIGER:** On the left?) Yeah. Used to come in on the left and put your boat over that rock.

STEIGER: You mean, that's how you invented that run?! (laughter) Are you kidding me?

BLED SOE: Unt-uh. "Huh, I wonder if we could do this during the day?!"

STEIGER: On purpose! (laughter) I'll be damned.

BLED SOE: Yeah. Well, the next time we stopped and looked at it. "Well, let's see, if we got through before..." And the motor's hangin' off the back, you pull it up, and that's the first thing to go over, rather than goin' forward and droppin' the motor last thing *over* a rock, where the



Morning after storm at 122, August 1969.

rock'll come up and *hit* the motor. So this way the motor'll go over first...You know, in higher water we could go down the left side, or lower water, go down the right. You know, we could do both.

STEIGER: So how did the equipment come to evolve? I mean, obviously, it's a long, slow process. Do you remember when the floors, when you guys finally decided, "Maybe we ought to get rid of these floors?"

BLEDSON: When they rotted out. (laughter) Dave and I worked up in Vernal a couple of years. Ted was buyin' all these new boats, and he'd go through and look at 'em. He'd put an "A" on a boat that he'd keep in Vernal, and an "AA" which meant, oh, maybe Green River; and an "AAA" for Grand Canyon. We got on this trip in, it

was probably 1969, and it was Dennis Massey, Earl Staley, Mike Weatherwax, and Dave and I. We got down to Eminence and we pulled in, and we were unloading the duffle, and I looked down. God, I could see the bottom of the river through the front of my boat. The floor was gone. Oh, shit! So we looked underneath, and it was ripped end to end—the whole floor—33-feet.

STEIGER: Oh, my God!

BLEDSON: So I told Dave about it. I think Weatherwax looked in *his* boat, and *it* was ripped end to end.

STEIGER: But you had driven down there, and you didn't feel it when it went?

BLEDSON: Well, it gradually just opened up, I guess. It's a good thing a passenger didn't step through it!

(laughs) Oh, yeah, they'd have gone right through. Then we got to checkin' the boats, and we had two boats that were ripped end to end. One had a huge bulge on the side where the rubber was just rotten. I mean, it was about the size of a basketball. Then we started checkin' the seams, and it was rotted, too. So we had three bad boats, two good boats. So we had a party! (laughs) To figure out what we were gonna do. "We need a beer." (laughter) We need Jim Beam. So we got up in the morning and Dave and Dennis—I think that's what it was—Dave and Dennis each had a good boat. We woke up in the morning and Dave's boat was *gone*, it had floated away.

STEIGER: Oh, no!

BLED SOE: So we had to get some other boats. So Earl Staley and Dennis Massey got on the *other* good boat and took off. They said, "Well, we're gonna go see what we can do." So they chased the other good boat down. Come to find out later, they caught it not too far down, tied it up, then went on down to Phantom Ranch, caught a ride out by helicopter from some of the construction workers and people they knew there, got back to Marble Canyon, and arranged for a helicopter to meet 'em at the top of Eminence, the trail there. Then they brought these three other good boats out, to helicopter in.

STEIGER: Wow! Drove out three new boats.

BLED SOE: Yeah.

STEIGER: Just the rubber?

BLED SOE: Just the rubber. And so they told the pilot these boats only weigh 400–500 pounds. (laughter) Ah, no. (**STEIGER:** More like 800 pounds, huh?)

So we could see him up there on the top. Pretty soon we see the helicopter and he's just bookin' straight for us. He's comin' in *fast*. He comes in, he drops it off, and back he goes and brings in another one, and then goes back out. The third trip he comes in with Dennis and Earl. They're laughin', they jump out of the helicopter and this guy just, boom, he's gone. "What the hell's so funny?" Well, I guess he didn't want to take the old boats out. He goes, "You got two in, that'll have to do." He wasn't even gonna chance a third one. He just blew it off. So we had four good boats, and I drew the short straw and got to run the boat that was ripped. But the floor is what kept the boat together, from spreading. So we ran like figure-eight ropes through it to hold it together. I'd take off, and I had the same passengers, same duffle, and I would just drop so far behind. I mean, all that water was just piling up in the back of the boat.

STEIGER: Oh yeah, 'cause the motors hung off the very back. (**BLED SOE:** Right.) So that tube was catchin' it.

BLED SOE: Right. Well, it's deflated, too. (**STEIGER:** To get the motor in the water.) You know, it's just dragging. So we took the passengers off and spread 'em out on the

other four boats, and it was *still* too heavy. So we took some of the duffle off and spread it out. And then it was *still* too heavy, so I'd get up the first thing in the morning, load what duffle I could from people who were around, and just take off before breakfast. And they'd catch me by noon, they'd pull in and have lunch. I'd pull in, grab a sandwich and take off. And then they'd pass me and they'd be in camp, fixin' dinner by the time...Or I might make it for dinner, come in at dark, and just try to get the boat down the river. What we didn't figure is, I'm usin' a lot more gas, too. (laughs) And we got down to, oh, around Mile 200 and those guys had taken off. They're goin' to Diamond Creek. We were takin' out at Diamond Creek. (**STEIGER:** Uh-oh.) Yeah, I ran out of gas. (**STEIGER:** And you're all by yourself on this boat, no gas.) So it's, "To the oars!" (laughter) Remember I was tellin' you about these other guys that got off at Temple Bar and just took off to Las Vegas? I'm thinkin', those guys, they got to Diamond Creek, they got tired of waiting, and they just took off without me. And so I had a little bit of Jim Beam left. (sings) "La, la, la."

STEIGER: Have a party! (laughter)

BLED SOE: (sings) "La, la, la, la, la." Can't do anything about it, okay. I kinda go, "I wonder if I'll recognize Diamond Creek if I get there, or will I just keep on goin' to the lake?" All these thoughts kinda go through your head. Pretty soon here comes a plane, and it's flyin' around. It's Leisberg and he's wavin' his wings. I thought, "Oh, well, they know I'm out here." I guess he could see the oars, and went back and dropped them a note that I was upstream, out of gas, comin' down with oars.

* * *

It's a true fact that within most Grand Canyon river companies today, you can still see the shadows of the people who started all this way back when. Even companies that have sold a time or two still have traditions, values and procedures which occasionally reach beyond what contemporary players can remember or explain. You look at Hatch Expeditions, late '60s, and you realize this river running deal, for all of us, goes back past Ted and Don Hatch to their dad Bus—the guy whose first boats were named "What Next?", "Don't Know" and "Who Cares?" (see Don Briggs' "River Runners of the Grand Canyon" for the full story on that one...where Bus's cousin Frank Swain, the sheriff, let Parley Galloway out of jail so he could show them how to build some boats and run the river but Parley ran off instead, and then later how Doc Frazier hired them, on maybe the first commercial trip ever, to take him down the river and at the put-in he forked up the money to buy groceries, but they went and got whiskey and bullets instead, figuring they could always just hunt for food, whereas making the whiskey, now

that was gonna be a problem...which did hurt Doc Frazier's feelings a little, him being a teetotaler and all, but hey, it was after all an expedition...)

Change is a constant, though, and even the oldest of traditions does evolve, along with everything else...

* * *

BLED SOE: Well, taking out the rubber floors...How did that work? The wood floors were dropped by chains, plywood. I think we'd rope the floors down and we were runnin' 'em like that for a short time, and then they started puttin' the baskets in, 'cause it didn't work too well the other way.

STEIGER: Too soggy, too mushy? Did you have a feeling about—how'd you like goin' to side tubes?

BLED SOE: You know, we called 'em "trainer wheels," and then after you got 'em on there, "Hey, these are great!"...Well, that boat, without the side tubes, is just like a snake. It just oscillated, and you could flip real easy. (**STEIGER:** Did you guys turn many over?) Ummm, I think there were several in Lava. I was on a trip when Brick Wells flipped in Crystal...It was real low water, and we camped there, hopin' the water would come up, and it didn't. We went down and looked at it the next morning, and we were coming back, and Dennis Massey said, "Well, let's go for it." So he went, and then...I think it was a three-boat trip, and then I had a leak in my back section, so the back section was lower, so I wasn't cavitating. I went through, and made—excuse me—a perfect run. (laughs) Made the cut. And I was, "Yaaayyy!" Had arms in the air, flailing. "Yippie!" I looked down and I was just comin' past the island, I saw Dennis Massey comin' up, and he's wavin' *his* arms. He was way down below, you know, on the rock pile down there. I looked back up, and here comes Brick's boat upside down over the rock garden. (**STEIGER:** Oh, shit. Did he have a bunch of people with him?) No, we walked all the people. (**STEIGER:** So it was just the three of you guys.) Right. And so I turned around, and Dennis ran down and got in *his* boat, and we caught Brick's boat and pushed it into shore, then just started divin' to see if he was underneath it...there's duffle and all that stuff goin' down the river. It just tore the duffle pile off. There was a passenger that was comin' down, and we yelled to him, "Have you seen Brick!?" He goes, "No!" We just looked at the boat. "God, if he's under there, he's dead by now." Then he goes, "Oh, wait a minute. No, he's up here." "Whew!" So he was okay...Somebody got a movie of it, and it was *great*, 'cause he came in and he hit too soon. He hit the right shore, spun around, and it took him right into the hole, sideways. The boat's startin' to turn over, and you can see it in the video, he just looks over at the shore, "Yaaaahooooo!" (laughs) He knew he was goin'. I guess the frame came

down and caught him on the head, and he took off swimmin'. He hit shore, and this guy kept his movie camera goin', it was great. Brick hit the shore and kept on swimmin'. He was going right over the rocks. He was still swimmin'. Somebody grabbed him and picked him up, and he pushes 'em away, and then he was out of adrenalin, he just collapsed.

That was a good trip too, there were a couple of young ladies on that one. (laughter)

STEIGER: Ah, yes, "Constant safety surveillance," Fred [Burke] used to call it. Who knew those days were gonna be over so quick?

BLED SOE: Well, it was kinda neat in those days, too, 'cause it was like we were heroes, getting everybody through alive. You know, with all the patching and all the stuff we had to do, too.

STEIGER: Yeah, and it was actually—I guess it was pretty darned challenging, just to *get* through, huh? Using that equipment.

BLED SOE: Yeah, some trips more than others. (**STEIGER:** Yeah, depending on the water.) Yeah. In 1977, the water dropped down to a thousand [cfs]. There were a lot of trips leaving the Ferry, as I remember. Somebody asked us if we were gonna go, and I said, "Hatch boatmen can run on *dust*." So we made this plan on the beach before we left. We go, "Well, everybody's gonna be stacked up at Badger." Okay, we drew a little map of the rapid. "Okay, here's the rocks. Now, these people are gonna be lined up there, waitin' for the water to come up." Sooo... "Let's go blow by." (laughs) "And whatever you do, no matter if you take off the lower unit, don't blink, and don't look back. Don't pull your motor. Just go through. Stand steady." (laughter) And I had five boats in my group. Then there was a two-boat trip and a one-boat trip; so it was eight Hatch boats altogether. We all came up to Badger, and I don't know how many trips were up there, just lined up, sittin' there watchin' the rapid. We just go blasting right through. I don't know if anybody—maybe a couple of guys took off props, but we all made it through. We were close enough where we could pick up somebody if they really screwed up—you know, watchin' the guy behind us.

STEIGER: And the legend continues. (Bledsoe laughs)

* * *

STEIGER: Well, so from there, just kinda big-picture, how'd it go career-wise? How'd you get from there to here?

BLED SOE: Well in '80 I left the river and worked down in Havasupai building that school house for a year and a half. Came back—I ran a commercial trip with Ted. And then in '83 I ran a high water trip, Fred Burke called us in to...Pete Resnick and Magoo and I to run

an Arizona River Runners trip, and who was?...Dick Clark too...but it was great, I got to see the high water. We were at Unkar and the helicopter came by and dropped us a note saying it was going to 75,000. Then, we got above... the passengers went out at Phantom. They were scheduled to go out at Phantom. So we got to Phantom and took off...we were floating above Crystal and I ran into a Hatch trip, saw some old buddies, Terry Snyder...asked them if they were going to stop and look at Crystal. They go "Yeah, think we're going to stop. Are you going to stop?" and we..."Nah, everything's washed out." (laughter) So we were...I was the head boat and I'm coming up to it, and I'm just hearing this huge roar, thinking "Maybe I should have stopped..." (laughter)...and starting to peek over and look at this thing. I mean it was...I just knew: it was *hard right*. We all made perfect runs, though.

STEIGER: So...your people went out at Phantom, you said? Yeah...so that probably helped you a little in Crystal, to have empty boats.

BLED SOE: Yeah, cause I remember looking at that hole and going "I'm *not*..." and just hard, hard, hard right over that swell, I just remember a swell over there on the right and that was it. And then I thought "Oh shit, what've I done to these guys behind me?" (laughs) I'm leading them into...(STEIGER: The jaws of death, yeah!) (laughter) But everybody made beautiful runs.

STEIGER: Why did the passengers go out at Phantom on an ARR trip, I wonder?

BLED SOE: It was the ambassadors from all over the world.

STEIGER: Oh yeah, the "Dip-Trip! The diplomat trip. You guys were doing that one because Rob and those guys...AZRA had decided it wasn't smart—which might have been a good call—to go down there in paddle boats right then, and now they needed...

BLED SOE: Yeah. I remember when that helicopter came over us at Unkar, we were sitting there with the diplomats from I think it was China...China and Guatemala, and the helicopter came by and dropped that note and Pete Resnick ran over and grabbed the note and read it. He came walking back. Everybody's going "What? What is it? What is it?" Pete goes "China has just attacked Guatemala! You are to evacuate immediately!" (laughter) These guys go "Naaah..."

* * *

STEIGER: So then...?

BLED SOE: Then I had my own electrical business here in Flagstaff: petroleum equipment service. And then, well that was alright, but it wasn't the river.



Whale, (c) Steve Bledsoe.

So...got married, got divorced. Gave up the business, and then ran into Mike Walker. He goes "You need a river trip." And I..."Yeah I do!" He says, "Well, there's a couple science trips coming up." Next thing I know, I mean it's one trip after another, and I'm just loving it. It was great to be back to the river. It's an empowering place. Filled with some really good energy.

...And so Mike kept me really busy. I was doing almost 260 days a year in science trips in the Canyon. I mean we'd get off one trip, unload the coolers and re-pack them and then go out the next day. It was just boom, boom, boom. It was nice to be back there, though. It was just like "Yeah let's do it. Let's go back." I started sketching again, and you know, got back into my art more. And that's when, uh, I think it was Georgie's party...what year was that? Ninety...one or two...I got a picture of Whale up on top of the cliffs above Hatchland. I thought "Well this'll be good practice, maybe I'll do a sketch of Whale while I'm down here and that's where I got that..."[Whale's portrait] (STEIGER: While you were on the river? On a science trip?) Yeah, just sitting in camp, sketching. And, uh, I guess that's come full circle. You know, just...the



Chris, (c) Steve Bledsoe.

sketch of Whale became the Whale Foundation's logo, and at the same time it helped me to pursue my art, in order to leave the river and find another career. Which is the Whale Foundation's... (STEIGER: Whole point.)—whole point. You know, so it's...I just thought about that the other day. It was like, "Whoa, how profound?" (laughter)

STEIGER: Well, yeah...I guess off the top of my head I wouldn't say the point is so much to help you get off the river and find another career, I think it's to help you survive...

BLED SOE: Survive...well it helped me because people were going, "God, you should be doing more art! This is a great drawing, why don't you do more art?"

STEIGER: Just the feedback from that one drawing?

BLED SOE: And other pieces, but that was the one that got me going. Yeah.

* * *

Today Steve Bledsoe, off the river for a while now, lives in a beautiful, environmentally hip house near Parks, Arizona. Big windows, lots of land around him, two great dogs, and most importantly his lovely wife, Kirsten, to share them with. His home and studio are filled with constantly shifting light, he has a killer view of the peaks,

and spends his working days contemplating and messing with a light all his own—the stuff that goes into his artwork. He's doing pretty well, thank you, selling paintings and drawings at the Artist's Gallery in downtown Flagstaff and at stevebledsoe.com.

* * *

STEIGER: Ok, so in terms of the big Banzai party days...how has your attitude toward drinking and all that evolved?

BLED SOE: (chuckles) You know, those early days, we were all learning. It was just a learning experience, we were just young kids and, uh...you *have* to evolve out of it.

I mean, it's...you can't go on like that forever. I knew years ago that I couldn't be partying like that, continuously. I started slowing down and then it was like, "Ok, let's just cut this back to two beers a day." You know, when we're in camp. I managed to get that going and now it's...oh, I have a margarita with Mexican food once in a while, but naaah, it's uh, I think it is good to implement some of those laws or rules or something for the river, just because it keeps everybody a little cleaner. (laughs)

STEIGER: Well for you in your own life, let's put it this way...it seems like you've chosen to do that anyway and here you are, you're not even boating anymore, so...so why not? Why stay sober today?

BLED SOE: 'Cause I want to make good art. I want to make good art. Well, also, I'm married now, and...I don't want to be a *drunk*. (laughter) I enjoy sobriety. It's another aspect of life, and I'm really enjoying it. I'm 61 years old. I have friends ten, fifteen years younger than me, their livers are going out. It's like, "No, I want to be healthy. I want to be able to snorkel and play when I'm in my eighties." And I love the clarity. Having a clear mind instead of waiting...it taking until two o'clock in the afternoon for your mind to kinda clear up again...

STEIGER: Yeah, and then you get a half an hour of clarity and it's time to start drinking again! Well now on the boating front, just to kinda wrap up there, so you did hundreds of days of science trips. Thirteen years of science. And then, where are you at now with it?

BLED SOE: Well, I left the river in 2002 and at that point I'd gotten in a gallery and it was like..."River? Art? Ok, it's time for a change." And, oh I miss the river but this is where my love is now. My studio's right out there, that barn. So I'm 75 feet from my studio, and the dogs come in, they lay on the couch, and it's just really, really comfortable. It's really comfortable to be able to create and just walk in the house and have a snack.

STEIGER: And you're on your third round of marriage, and that's working out pretty good? Third time's the charm?

BLED SOE: Wonderful. Kirsten Tinning. (**STEIGER:** And she was a biologist and drove sport boats and all this stuff?) Yeah, she has forty trips. I'd run in to her from time to time, and then she moved into a friend of mine's rental in Mountainaire. We started hiking and biking together and next thing you know...we were going to fix up my old house and have her move in and then we thought, "You know, we need more land," and we found this place and so I just sold the other place and we bought this together. Then we thought, "Well, we've gone this far, may as well get hitched." And it's been wonderful. Wonderful, wonderful lady. I mean everything is just, it's just perfect.

STEIGER: When you look back on it, could you say what was the best part of it? Fondest memories?

BLED SOE: It's kinda like when people ask "What's the best part of the Canyon. What part of the Canyon do you love the most?" I love it all. Yeah. It was all good. There were some hard times. Some hard moments. Some scary moments. There's uh, some challenging...but now looking back, it was all wonderful. That's what makes you grow. That's what makes you become who you are. Those challenges.



Steve and Kirsten, Grand Canyon private trip, 2006.

The people...they loved the trip, you know, because they were just as crazy as we were. They were young, they were crazy too, they were into it. And they'd be right in there. You know, knock on wood, I never had an evacuation. I never had anybody evacuated. (**STEIGER:** Wow.) Through all that craziness, those boats and... (**STEIGER:** You never had one evacuation in all that time down there?) No. I helped other trips. But no. And that's pretty...that's damn good. But it didn't seem like there were people getting hurt back then. They were young, tough, and it was more of an expedition—late sixties, early seventies. Then it just boomed.

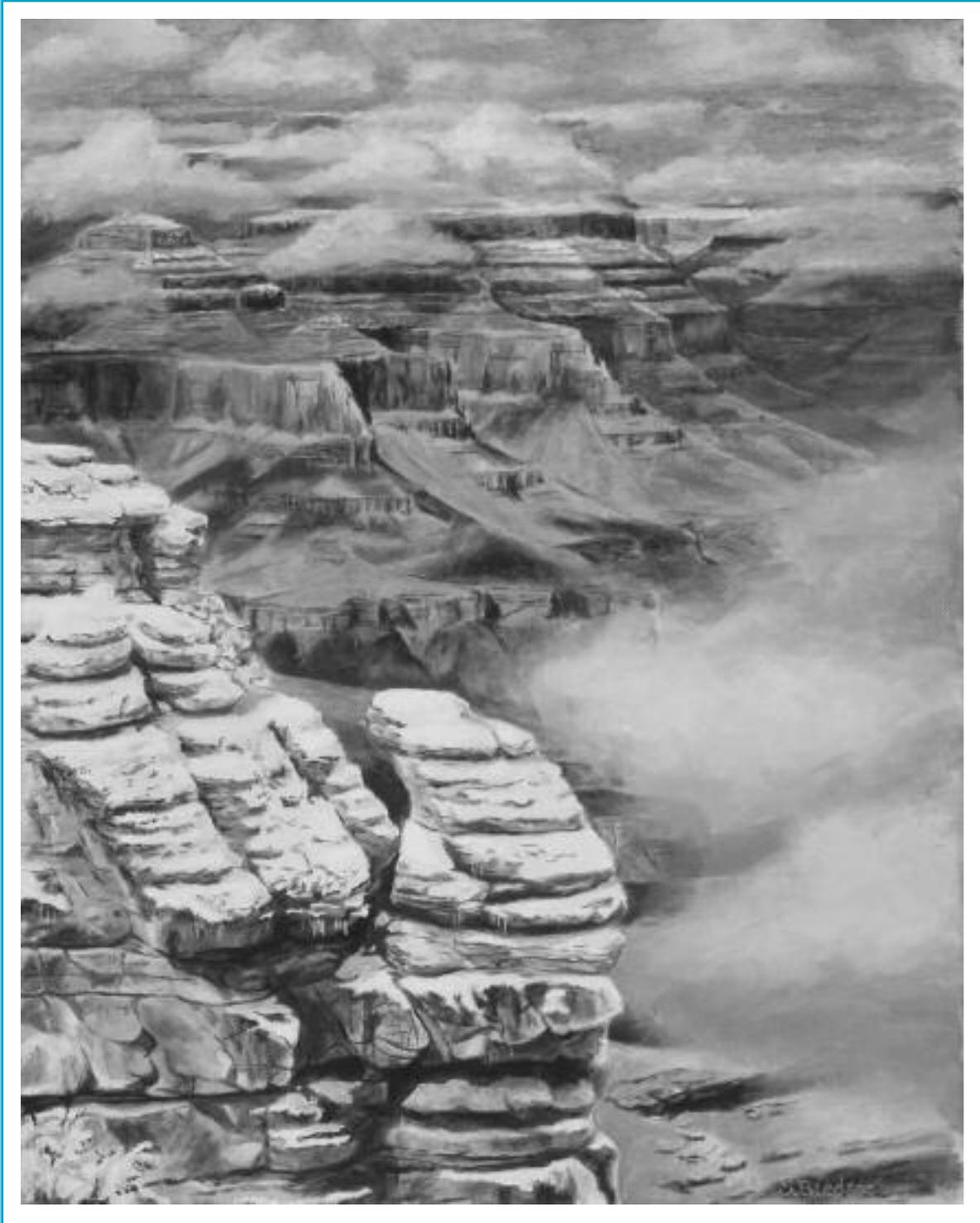
STEIGER: Ok, before I turn this off what else should I ask? Any good stories we forgot to tell?

BLED SOE: You know there's thousands of stories...if we sat down in a room we could go on for weeks with the stories.





(c) Steve Bledsoe



(c) Steve Bledsoe

The Last River Voyageur

“I planned my life backwards from most people. At 15, I retired. At 55, I took a regular job.”

—Amos Burg

IN GRAND CANYON LORE, Amos Burg is recognized as the first person to pilot an inflatable raft through the rapid-filled canyons of the Green and Colorado Rivers. It was a typical Burg undertaking—quietly audacious, well-planned, large-in-scope. Not that Burg was adverse to publicity if it might serve to fuel support for his next adventure. He had learned early on that he would have to work to finance his travels. By the time he set his sights on the great river system of the Western interior, he was a seasoned riverman who had navigated the Columbia, Snake, Yukon and McKenzie Rivers. He was, however, no Buzz Holmstrom at the oars, a fact Burg candidly acknowledged. Indeed, Burg was a much better saltwater sailor.

Besides the work of filming and photographing the journey, Burg would be navigating an unfamiliar, untested boat on two rivers whose obstacles, at times, challenged even the most skilled oarsman. To top it off, Burg (and Buzz Holmstrom) intended to run the entire 1,650-miles of river, from Green River, Wyoming to the Sea of Cortez.

What possessed Burg to make such a journey?

One clue might be found in Burg's character. Throughout his life, the native Oregonian seems to have been blessed with what Einstein called the “holy curiosity,” that ingenuous quality that often seems to fade as we develop from children to adults. Burg, however, remained genuinely enthralled by the world around him. His natural inquisitiveness propelled him, time and again, toward the next adventure, whether on the river or at sea. Often these “adventures” were also the vehicle for his study (and filming) of wildlife and native cultures. In his journals he spoke of the allure of distance, both in space and time. He also thought his journeys were a way to close the gap between people of different cultures whom he believed to be mostly the same beneath the civilized and “uncivilized” facades.

In 1930 Burg was initiated into the prestigious Explorers Club in New York. Over the next few years, he would spend more and more time on the east coast lecturing and pitching his films. When in New York he often found himself whiling away the afternoons with the likes of Frederick Dellenbaugh, author and member of the second Powell Expedition in 1871, at the “long table” in the Explorers Club. Dellenbaugh would have been at least eighty, Burg in his early thirties. Despite their age difference, the two river runners

hit it off, sharing gossip and stories of their adventures. According to Burg, it was Dellenbaugh's tales of Grand Canyon that first stirred his imagination.

A more practical explanation for the journey can be found in the 1941 Explorers Club book *Through Hell and High Water*. Burg clearly states his reasons, “We wanted to recreate, in a motion picture, Buzz's lone, epic voyage... We also wanted to make a documentary film of the world's most dangerous river and there was a third consideration—it would complete my descent of all the major North American Rivers.”

A clear-headed assessment of his own abilities complimented Burg's boldness and curiosity

To complete his numerous goals, Burg knew he needed a competent, better an equal, partner. Throughout his previous journeys on the Columbia and Snake Rivers, he had never balked at hiring knowledgeable guides whenever he felt the occasion demanded it. He had also convinced friends and acquaintances to accompany him on portions of his journeys. These partnerships may have accounted, in part, for Burg's success.

News of Holmstrom's feat must have seemed like a gift from heaven to Burg, who saw the 1937 solo journey through Grand Canyon in historic, even noble terms. Not only was Holmstrom a superior oarsman with recent, firsthand experience, he was a companionable, quirky fellow Oregonian. Teaming-up with Buzz would vastly improve the chances of getting his inflatable raft *Charlie* (16 feet in length, 83 pounds) downriver safely. Besides, Burg recognized a damn good story when he heard it.

“Your voyage down the Colorado floored me!” he wrote to the sometimes reticent Holmstrom with genuine enthusiasm in the winter of 1937–38. The two men begin to correspond. Each had something to



Buzz Holmstrom and Amos Burg, 1938.

offer the other. Both men loved rivers, and were always looking for an opportunity to return. Holmstrom, certainly, felt more at home, and at peace, going downstream. Burg's connections and film making skills offered the possibility of wider exposure which might mean more "work" on the river. A deal was struck.

Why a "new fangled" inflatable instead of the traditional hard-hulled craft? In the introduction to Burg's account (*Grand Canyon Adventure*) for an Explorers Club adventure anthology, the editor wrote, "I don't know whether Amos Burg couldn't build his own cataract boat, didn't like the idea of trying to maneuver all that weight or just wanted to try something new."

The editor's multiple speculations ring true. Time was short and boat-building is a labor-intensive, time-consuming endeavor. Burg was a man of many talents, but he was not a born boat builder like Holmstrom. As the summer of 1938 wore on, he would have had more than enough work to do in terms of logistics and organization besides his other ongoing projects. Burg, it should be noted, had a knack for planning ahead. He was always on the lookout for opportunities to continue adventuring on the water.

Further, if Burg believed himself to be at best an adequate oarsman (who was at least as interested in exploring off-river and filming the journey as rowing the river) it made no sense to pilot a heavy, unfamiliar wooden boat. (Better a light, unfamiliar boat!). Though later *Charlie* would present Burg with other kinds of problems on the river, the inflatable offered a degree of forgiveness that a wreck in a wooden boat full of camera gear could not. After the trip, in an article in *The Oregonian*, Burg half-jokingly said, "*Charlie* was an experiment in Colorado River voyaging."

After much planning and numerous delays, Burg finally caught up with Holmstrom in Salt Lake City, Utah in the fall of 1938. (The year before Burg had taken a rubber raft of dubious quality down Hells Canyon of the Snake River on a test run.) From there they made their way to Green River Lakes, Wyoming, where they intended to begin the trip. Amos had also recruited Phil Lundstrom, another Oregonian, to help with the camera work and around camp. Lundstrom, who designed Burg's postcards, would spend about two weeks with the trip before returning to Portland. Holmstrom labeled the gathering a "regular square heads reunion."

Running rivers from source to debouchment, while no doubt appealing to Holmstrom, seems to have been Burg's idea. Of course, his aspiration to emulate the journeys of the early Western explorers and trappers had been fed by his youthful reading and his exploits

on the Columbia River in his native Oregon. Decades earlier Burg, inspired by Lewis and Clark and David Thompson of the Hudson Bay Company, had decided to emulate the voyage of his heroes by running as many of the major Western rivers, source to mouth, as possible. Thanks to Dellenbaugh and Holmstrom, the Green/Colorado river system would be added to his list. Burg's keen sense of history spurred him on. He wrote, "These phantoms of the past were always with me to the degree I knew history."

An inveterate diarist from an early age, Burg would also chronicle the journey by sending daily accounts of the adventure on those enlarged "picture" postcards designed by Lundstrom. With a photographer's eye, Burg urged Holmstrom to paint the *Julius F.* red so it would stand out in the photos. If (when?) the film made money, who knows what doors might open? There was even talk of collaboration between the two Oregonians on a book about their "grand adventure." Holmstrom would write the text for the tentatively titled *Lone Voyageur*; Burg would supply the photos.

Of course, things would not go quite according to plan, on the river or off.

Able-bodied seaman, sailor, photographer, filmmaker, lecturer, writer, poet, early conservationist, and river runner—Burg's passion for natural beauty and adventure would carry him down all the major pre-dam Western rivers and around the world, more than once. In the best sense of the word, he was an unabashed Romantic, a hard-working optimist who found in Mother Nature and the world-at-large an answer to his Wanderlust, even his spiritual hunger. Like all serious travelers, he hoped to "cleanse his soul" of the barnacle-like accumulations that society often demanded in the form of duty, routine, and compromise. Indeed, throughout his life Burg seemed to open his heart and embrace what we now call "diversity." In a 1936 radio interview, Burg said "If a person is not kind and considerate, nor sympathetic, natives anywhere will seem like thieves and rogues. What we see wherever we go is a reflection of what we are. It takes money to buy things in a store but to achieve real happiness takes a certain coinage of appreciation you must make yourself."

More often than not, Burg paid his own way, financing most of his early adventures (as well as his schooling) on a shoestring. As a merchant marine in the 1920s Burg's fledgling import business (pearls, silks and rugs from the Orient) provided temporary but uneven financial support. Later, his lectures and films would just about pay the bills. He often made do with what he had and when he didn't have what he needed, he cobbled equipment, transportation and comrades together. What funds he received came from wealthy men who genuinely appreciated Burg and his

way of life. He seemed glad to have a partner. Like Holmstrom, he preferred to share the experiences that so excited him.

He approached the natural world as a place of wonder, available to those willing to reach out for its riches. In this reaching, he wore his heart on his sleeve. Again, in the 1936 radio interview Burg answered the question, "When would his work be done?" with this reply: "I'm always experimenting... you might call it extending the period of adolescence; so I don't come a point where I feel things are lost or that I have stopped growing. My purpose is to continue my quest until it focuses on some one task..."

The language of his river accounts, often purple and high-minded, harkens back to an age of honor, pure ideals, noble deeds and courageous men. Indeed, Burg grew up in the decade prior to the First World War, what some consider the beginning of the modern age. In that sense, he was a man from another time. If today his type seems to have vanished or been disfigured beyond recognition, it is perhaps because the world he inhabited has also shrunk, in space and spirit if not time, and faded away.

* * *

Amos Burg, Jr. was born in Portland, Oregon on December 3, 1902, the sixth of eight children. His father, Amos Burg, Sr., had emigrated from Christiania (Oslo), Norway to the United States in 1878 at the age of fourteen. An orphan, he had worked aboard his uncle's three-masted schooner. But when he reached the gulf coast, he jumped ship and never looked back. He finally landed in Council Bluffs, Iowa, working at the local laundry. In 1889 he married Minerva Ann James and a year later, they, along with their infant son Charles, moved to Portland, Oregon. Burg Sr. started as foreman of the Slate Laundry; later, he became a part owner. Minerva, a housekeeper, was the hub of the family wheel. By all accounts it was a loving household.



Amos Burg and family, 1912.



Berg house in Portland, Oregon.

Burg Jr. seems to have been one of those children whose natural play evolved into a growing interest that would later fuel a passion that extended throughout his adult life. Of course the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, wide and teeming with boat traffic and wildlife, would have been unavoidable, eye-catching magnets for the young boy. Both were within shouting distance of his home on Dekum Street in northeast Portland. As a boy he roamed freely over the Columbia River wetlands and boated the slough in a variety of makeshift and found craft. In his teenage years, he piloted a launch up and down both rivers, carrying his buddies as well as potential girl friends.

He was a disinterested student (he quit high school at fifteen), but an avid reader who spent hours in the school library where he also flirted with the girls. His elder sister Vera

recalled that from an early age, her younger brother "just felt hemmed in." Decades later Burg wrote, "The Columbia Sloughs were very inspiring to me and I spent days rafting and canoeing their waters. I would start out early morning with a ball of twine and fishhooks and



On the Columbia Slough.

armed with a bean shooter. I'd travel and explore, catch a few crappies or sunfish and for lunch roast a quail on a stick over a fire and maybe eat a few wild blackberries for dessert. Mother and Dad did not restrict me in any way."

To the east of his neighborhood, the young Burg could see the distant, snow-covered ridges of the Cascade Range. In his early diaries he spoke of the "blue mist" that on certain days seemed to envelop the range. For years to come the blue mist image served as both spark and reminder of the possibilities open to the wanderer. On clear days, he could not have missed Mt. St. Helens to the north or the magnificent, symmetrical summit of Mt. Hood to the east. According to Burg, he was taken aback by the dominating visual presence of Mt. Hood. He recalled wondering aloud what lay beyond the mountain range. Just where did the Columbia River begin?

One day he would find out.

In June 1917, only two days after barely graduating from grammar school, Burg signed on as a bellboy on the *Rose City*, a small coastal steamer that plied the West Coast from Portland to San Francisco and Los Angeles. He had done miserably in school but seemed unfazed. Now he carried his makeshift sea bag, plus his bugle, on board the *Rose City*. He would be paid \$15.00/month to look after the needs of the passengers. Burg's parents swallowed hard and sent the 14-year-old boy off "to sea" on his first coastal run. Captain Rankin, skipper of the *Rose City*, would become a life-long friend. (Years later Burg would purchase the *Endeavor* from Captain Rankin.) Burg held his own aboard ship and returned in time to start high school the following September, only to quit two months later. He also began a shipboard diary, the first of many.

By January 1918, Burg had shipped out on the S.S. *Lurline* bound for the Hawaiian Islands. In May, he signed on the S.S. *Ventura* as engineer's cadet bound for the South Pacific and Australia, where he intended to raise ostriches. The young entrepreneur had gotten it into his head that because ostrich feathers were no longer of commercial value, he could raise ostriches cheaply and sell the meat. He landed in Australia with six dollars in his pocket; his dreamy commercial venture went nowhere. He also experienced a severe bout of homesickness. At the first opportunity he was on his way home. It would be the first and last time he succumbed to such a serious case of the vagabond's curse. By the time WWI ended, he had traveled and



Kobe Harbor Japan, 1920s.

worked his way around the world.

Over the next several years Burg shipped out regularly on cargo carriers, working as an able-bodied seaman. He learned the craft of seamanship and rose steadily in the ranks. At one time, he considered studying for the captain's license. Wherever he ventured, he carried his set of Encyclopedia Britannica with him. While his fellow sailors roamed the ports, Burg spent his time reading, studying, and planning his next move. He was a classic autodidactic. He also began to take photographs. He passed through the Panama and Suez Canals. On board the *Katia* he got caught in a sandstorm going up the Red Sea. Later, an

engine room fire threatened to set the ship adrift. Once, off the coast of Ireland, he was swept from the deck of the *Wakiki* by a rogue wave. In the pitch darkness, he saved himself from going overboard by grabbing a life-line and hanging on as he went over the side.

His wanderlust carried him to the places on the maps he had gazed upon as if in a dream—Japan, China, South America and Australia, the islands of Sumatra, the Philippines, Vietnam, and the East Cape of Siberia. He would work as a "microscopic" photographer for Dr. William Beebe, the famous marine scientist, on the island of None Such in the Bermudas. Immediately afterwards, he began another assignment for National Geographic: to sail around the world with Julius (Junkie) Fleischmann (heir to the Nabisco fortune) and his family on board the 225-foot yacht *Camargo*, working as a photographer. Years before running Grand Canyon, he (along with Roy Pepper) navigated his 25-foot boat *Dorjun* from Buenos Aires through the Straits of Magellan, exploring Tierra del Fuego and Patagonia while on assignment for National Geographic. He would take the first color photos of the region. In time, he was able to make a living, working regularly for National Geographic, Encyclopedia Britannica and ERPI Films as a writer, photographer and filmmaker.

In his early days at sea as an able-bodied seaman, the heady lure of the Columbia, and rivers in general, never left Burg. He wrote, "At sea, when I was off watch, I would pore over maps and read logs of early voyagers who used the rivers in their quest for trade and furs. Besides, I wanted to captain my own ship—even if it was only a canoe." His childhood adventures and adolescent dreams continued to feed an imagination that was just beginning to shape a genuine vision of the future.



"Dorjun, Tierra del Fuego, 1934.

At nineteen, Burg was about to begin a twenty-year streak of pre-dam river running throughout the West that remains impressive, if not inspiring, to this day when such efforts are no longer possible. Equally remarkable would be Burg's growing curiosity and life-long interest in the people he found in the towns, villages and remote locations along the rivers and throughout the world.

* * *

To prepare for his future river journeys, Burg often rode the steamer Joseph Kellogg up the Columbia River to The Dalles. There he would launch his canoe and paddle the ninety miles back down to Portland; often as not, his was the only small craft on the river. Even then Burg was spellbound by the natural beauty as well as the historical flavor of his "backyard" river. He would take two or three days (depending on weather conditions) to reach home, usually stopping for a night on Memaloose Island, an ancient Indian burial ground east of present-day Hood River, Oregon. (The four acre island would later be reduced to one-half acre by the construction of the Bonneville Dam.)

Though the fledgling river runner put plenty of time in on the water, he wasn't forced to navigate any significant rapids. By spring of 1920, however, he was itching to go.

Paddling a 17-foot wooden Old Town canoe, Burg set out from Lewiston, Idaho with former shipmate Fred Hill on May 23. Their destination was Astoria, Oregon, a small seaside town perched on the south shore where the Columbia River meets the Pacific Ocean. Their intention was to trace the 500-mile water route of Lewis and Clark. At the start, the water on the Snake was high, the current swift. Burg wrote, "The swirling waters carried a lot of sand which produced a scratching sound as it ground on the bottom of the canoe. At first we thought it was caused by water snakes so we landed,

turned the canoe over and inspected the bottom. Gosh, no snakes. The power of the river awed us."

Despite Burg's trial runs, he later admitted that neither he nor Hill had much experience with fast water or big rapids. Apparently they did not wear life preservers. Burg had yet to convert to oars; the use of paddles, especially tandem, would have taxed both men's skills. On the Columbia, they had trouble in Umatilla Rapids. In John Day Rapids they nearly swamped. They by-passed Celilo Falls by paddling through the Celilo Canal. They barely avoided disaster numerous times, according to Burg, but managed to reach Portland on June 11.

Hill, who Burg called "Spokane," headed home when he found out his mother was seriously ill. In later years he would prove to be one of Burg's more able partners. Burg continued on alone.

The weather was fine until he reached Eagle Cliff, Washington; there it began to rain. Headwinds slowed Burg's progress to roughly one mile per hour. Not surprisingly, the Columbia turned nasty. With the canoe taking on water, Burg nearly floundered a number of times before he reached the safe shores of Astoria.

Burg, of course, made light of it.

Never one to slow down for too long, he immediately signed on as a seaman on the S.S. *Egeria*, bound for



At Celilo Falls with "Spokane".

Sydney, Australia.

* * *

Burg's dream of running all the major Western rivers began in earnest on June 28, 1922. He shipped his canoe *Song o' the Winds* by rail to Livingston, Montana. There he began what would turn out to be a 135-day, 4,000-mile solo river trip. He put in at on the Yellowstone River with his brother, 15-year-old Johnny, and another salt-water shipmate, Harry Fogleberry, who was ten years older than Burg.

Burg had brought his brother along in the hopes that the journey might “give him a better understanding of life.” Yet, Burg worried incessantly. “If anything happened to him it would be a flat tire on my auto of adventures forever,” he later wrote. Burg described Fogleberry as “square as a chocolate éclair.” Later, his estimation of his sea-going friend would change.

They paddled across Montana and at Williston, North Dakota, entered the Missouri River. But after seventeen days, Burg noted in his river log “One of my pals (Johnny Burg) left at Bismark (North Dakota); the other one (Fogleberry) at Council Bluffs (Iowa).” Two possible, reasons for Johnny Burg’s departure appear in Burg’s letters and diary: first, his younger brother was due back in school and secondly, Burg’s chronic concern for his safety. Whether Johnny Burg wanted to go home or not remains unknown. Fogleberry, ever temperamental, may have departed the trip in a huff. One of his peculiarities was his insistence on making time by paddling at night, a habit Burg thought potentially disastrous.

Burg continued on alone, traveling downstream to St. Louis. He was in no particular hurry. As he drifted along the river, he played “Over the Waves” on his hand-cranked phonograph. He wasn’t averse to stopping for a chat, better yet a meal, with the mostly friendly inhabitants along the river. In St. Louis he picked up a Johnson outboard motor to make his flat-water passages less arduous. The motor would give him nothing but trouble for the rest of the trip, a problem he would write about in lengthy, detailed letters to the Johnson Motor Company. (Eventually they would ship Burg a new motor which he would take back home to Portland and use in his outings on the Columbia Slough.) Besides engine problems, he would also suffer from chills and cold sweats, what was then called “swamp fever.” For weeks, the illness forced him to seek shelter and rest wherever possible.

Late one night outside of Helena, Arkansas Burg awoke from his slumber to a roaring sound. Across the river he saw a huge, dark whirling cloud making its way toward him. As the wind and the sound increased, he realized it was a tornado. Though the canoe Burg was sleeping in was deluged with water, he felt fortunate to have been onshore. The tornado continued on, eventually destroying buildings in a town five miles from the river.

After 1,200 miles, he finally reached New Orleans. In a hotel room he penned a Robert Service-like, twenty-eight-quatrain poem, *Song of the River*, tracing his river journey. Burg returned to Portland as a “banana messenger” on the locomotive Pacific Fruit Express. His job was to ventilate the bananas to keep them from ripening before reaching the Northwest.

Two years later, the 21-year-old Burg had the *Song of the Winds* shipped to the headwaters of the Columbia in the Canadian Rockies of southern British Columbia.

Though it was late in the season, he was determined to run from mountains to the sea. He had completed his high school courses at the Oregon Institute of Technology the past June and now was raring to go. On October 22, 1924 the snow was falling as Burg slipped the canoe into the gray water of Canal Flats, B.C., his starting point.

An old knee injury he had suffered while at sea flared up and Burg found himself hobbling about on crutches. He seems, however, to have taken things in stride. To stave off the cold he wrapped his lower body and legs with newspaper and started paddling to the Pacific Ocean, 1200 miles away. As he paddled across the Upper and Lower Arrow lakes, ice began to accumulate on his oars and gunnels. Gradually he lost freeboard; the boat took on even more icy water which in turn began to freeze. In short, the canoe was sinking. He barely made the safety of shore.

Another morning he awoke frozen in his canoe. Ever the optimist, he later claimed that “my chief protector against the cold was my state of ecstasy in realizing in reality the dream of my youth in descending the Columbia in my canoe...my imagination kept me warm.” One suspects that Burg meant what he said.

For the 170-mile journey around the Big Bend of the Columbia, Burg hired Knud Knutsen, a local guide and trapper who knew this dangerous stretch of water like the back of his hand. Burg wrote of Knutsen, “The information he imparted made the whole region of that great wilderness come alive. His manner was rough and abrasive. He was as foolish in trying to emphasize the extent and profundity of his wilderness knowledge as I was in trying to protect my poor abused ego... Five years in ship’s fo-castles voyaging the seas of the world had taught me that such talents should be duly recognized and appreciated if one is to function with them in jagged harmony. No money wasted there—just sold golden dealing with those priceless individuals.”

Burg tracked the path of David Thompson, astronomer and explorer for the Northwest Fur Company, at times even camping in the location where Thompson camped one hundred years before. Somewhere along the journey, Fogleberry departed. Burg’s river log does not mention why.

Above the town of Kettle Falls, Washington on the Columbia River, Burg found himself flat broke. He ventured into the small town where a bake sale was in progress. He managed to sell his strings of pearls he had brought back from the Orient to more than a few of the women folk. The parson came up to Amos and informed him in no uncertain terms that he had ruined the bake sale. Now no one had any money to buy the bread and cakes. Amos asked the parson how much all the cakes and pastries would cost. A price was agreed upon and Amos had all the children bring the baked goods down to the riverside where an impromptu picnic was held.

Soon Burg was on his way downstream.

He visited with Sam Seaton, who was dreaming of how much government money he would get for his ranch that lay square on the site of the future Grand Coulee Dam.

As he entered the upper Columbia Gorge, *Song o' the Wind* leaked so badly Burg was forced to put in at Arlington, Oregon. The water had seeped into the canoe, froze and made the craft unwieldy. The rock-hard ice was impossible to chip away. In Arlington, Burg turned the boat over and placed it on sawhorses; then he built a small fire beneath it. He decided to portage Celilo Falls, a wise choice.

On December 26, Burg beached his canoe once again, this time at Bridal Veil Falls. Ice in the Columbia River made travel impossible. Burg headed for Portland to visit his parents and await better weather.

After the Christmas holidays, Burg paddled into the lower reaches of the Columbia below Portland. The weather was dark and threatening, the river still running thick with ice. It looked to be a miserable climax to his voyage. He reached Astoria and waited once again. Finally, on January 7TH, 1925, Burg, under escort of Captain Alfred Rimer of the Coast Guard, crossed the Columbia Bar in his canoe into the Pacific Ocean. The engine on the 36-foot Class E Lifeboat failed twice. Later an amused Burg said he "had to come to the "rescue" of his escort after one of the engine failures."

Locals told Burg that no one had ever before taken a canoe out into one of the most treacherous stretches of water on the Pacific Coast. Burg's 73-day trip was heralded as the first complete solo canoe voyage, source to mouth, of the Columbia.

Three weeks later Lark Whealdon, while walking along Ilwaco beach in Baker's Bay, noticed a bottle in the sand. In it was a note that read "I am so cold I can barely write this. I am just starting from Lake Columbia and it is kind of cold. If you find this please send it to Amos Burg, Portland, Oregon. It will be in a brown bottle. This is my canoe (pen drawing), 17-feet long. I am going to the Pacific Ocean."

Burg's brown bottle had taken ninety days to make the journey.

Burg would make two more lengthy Columbia River journeys in 1926 and 1930.

* * *

Immediately afterward, Burg enrolled in Oregon State College. His courses included photography and journalism, subjects that would later serve him well as he tried to make a living and still pursue his outdoor adventures. By late June 1925 he had shipped his trusty canoe to Victor, Idaho. Burg had decided to run the rambunctious Snake River, the river the early French voyagers called the "accursed mad river."



On the way to the Snake, 1925.

Against his better judgement, Burg brought Fogleberry along once again. His friend was an irascible character, a saltwater sailor with a short fuse. He had been a disaster on the Yellowstone and Missouri, but Burg could not refuse his friend's request nor think of anyone else to accompany him. He hoped for the best. Before they departed, the locals told Burg that no canoeist had ever made the run before. "The Snake, at 6,777 feet, has a lot of dropping to do before it reaches the Columbia, 1000 miles to the West," wrote Burg.

On July 6, 1925, they launched their canoe from the Snake River in Yellowstone Park.

On the second day of the journey, the *Song o' the Winds* capsized near the mouth of Bailey Creek, south of Jackson Hole. A good deal of their supplies and equipment were swallowed by the river. In Swan Valley, a demented (Burg's italics) shepherd chased Burg down with his shotgun. Burg wrote "he may have mistaken me for a coyote."

A week later, the canoe itself suffered major damage in a smash-up in the Grand Canyon of the Snake River. At that point Fogleberry called it quits and abandoned the trip. Burg and his seafaring mate had "a tempestuous encounter." The trip was over. Later, Burg wrote of his companion, "Harry was elated. His tantrums, which had been mounting (for weeks) making him a wild man, ended with the wreck of our canoe. It taught me you can't just pick anybody for a companion and have a successful voyage. Not that Harry wasn't a good man; canyons simply did not agree with him."

A month later Burg returned with a brand new canoe



Snake trip, 1925.

Burg wrote that he could row up to fourteen hours a day without signs of fatigue.

At Homestead, Oregon he enlisted the services of John Mullins, a local river man and moonshiner, to guide him through Hells Canyon, the deepest gorge in North America. In Snake River of Hell's Canyon, river historian Cort Conley described the encounter: "Mullins claimed to know the canyon and every rock in the river. They departed Homestead in the canoe *Song o' the Winds* on the morning of October 20. John sat in the stern with the steering paddle; Burg had a rowing arrangement midship. They fought the breakers in Kern Rapid, had a close call at Squaw Creek, capsized the canoe at Buck Creek when a tow line broke, shattered the stern at Thirty-two Point (Sawpit Rapid), washed out of the craft at Steamboat, and nearly dumped at Copper Ledge Falls. John kept saying he "knew every rock in the river," and Burg allowed "that he ought to since he'd hit them all."

Another account has Burg making a ten-day detour to Mullin's still. At Johnson Bar, Mullins found an old range horse and rode back to Homestead; Burg continued on alone.

At Cascades Rapids (the site of the present-day Bonneville Dam) on the Columbia River, Burg met up with two newsmen who worked for Fox Movie Tone and International Newsreel. They had caught wind of his adventure and were anxious to film Burg "in action" on the water. Initially, Burg intended to use the locks to bypass the notorious rapids. It was the sensible thing to do. The two newsmen, however, convinced Burg to make an attempt—along the shore to the head of the rapids where a local fellow on shore would grab his bowline before he plunged over—with a promise of

and continued alone down the Snake. This time he equipped the canoe with oars, an arrangement that proved far superior, in Burg's opinion, than a single paddle. He drifted downstream stern first.

worldwide publicity that could not be ignored. Burg was savvy enough to realize that public exposure might bolster interest and possible support for his future adventures. Against his better judgment, Burg agreed.

Burg made the first run. The young fellow on shore grabbed the bow of the *Song o' the Wind*. All was well, so Burg thought. The newsman, however, claimed they had missed the shot because of a camera malfunction. Burg wrote, "So I had to do it again. The second time I think he must have bribed the kid, because he made no effort to grab my boat. I lunged forward to get ashore and the canoe took off. Well, the only thing I could do was go over the rapids. Everything was going fine. It was probably the first canoe that ever went over after that poor Indian maiden that was said to have drowned after her husband shoved her canoe because he wanted to get rid of her. There was a big rock ahead, and a couple of hundred people on shore. I thought I would just cut close to the rock and give them a thrill, because I would disappear from view for a few moments, and that is



On the Snake River near Shoshone Falls.

exactly what I did. I didn't realize that behind a big rock like that there is a big eddie. The water forms a big hole. Well, I dropped into that hole and I disappeared alright. I disappeared for about 400 feet. It was very cold. When I fell into the river, the cameramen were cold and they had their picture, so they went somewhere to warm up, while I was struggling down the river. They were a heartless bunch. Then, when they found out that I had gotten ashore (two miles downstream) they came down and made a picture of me, my hair all wet, wet clothes and everything."

June of 1926 found Burg, along with his old reliable shipmate Fred Hill, paddling the Inside Passage of British Columbia, north to south, Ketchikan to the San Juan Islands. Not satisfied with the 1000-mile journey along the rugged coastline, they set out afterwards for

the headwaters of the Columbia to make yet another run to Portland.

Burg took a rest from river running in 1927. He attended University of Oregon and “decided to strive for knowledge rather than a degree and took most courses simply by paying my fee and attending. Later I regretted not getting a degree for this piece of paper was invested with a certain kind of magic that proclaimed your wisdom.” By using money he had made importing Oriental silks, rugs and pearls, Burg was able to finance his education as well his future adventures.

That summer Burg shipped out as an able-bodied seaman on the *President Jackson*, a 21,000 ton cargo-passenger ship to China. When he arrived in Shanghai, cholera was raging and the ship was quarantined which temporarily halted his nascent import business. He managed to slip off the boat and by use of rickshaw and sampan, visited the rug markets. He also returned with three mounted prints of executions in China, possibly during the Kuomintang drive to capture Beijing during that year.

In 1928, Burg teamed up with Fred Hill once again, making their first trip to the interior of Alaska. Burg was determined to film all aspects of life on the Yukon River, the great waterway of Alaska, including the annual caribou migration. He carried 10,000 feet of film, his 35mm DeBrie motion picture camera and a Graffen still camera, along with chewing gum for the village children. They put in at Lake Benet and canoed 2,000 miles down the Yukon River to the village of St. Michael on the Bering Sea. In the lower reaches of the Yukon the *Song o’ the Wind* wrecked. With the help of a local Eskimo and his boat, they were able to complete the journey. The film, *Alaskan Wilds*, launched Burg’s career as a filmmaker and lecturer.

The following year (1929) Burg returned to Alaska with Dr. George Rebec, dean of the philosophy and graduate schools at University of Oregon. Rebec had a faulty heart, was on a special diet, could not paddle, and had probably never camped a day in his life. Nevertheless, Burg claimed to enjoy the old man’s company immensely. They journeyed down the Athabaska River to Athabaska Lake, then north down the Slave River to Great Slave Lake. Finally they entered the fabled MacKenzie River. The mosquitoes were relentless; the going was rough, the weather turning colder by the day. Fearing that the older man might catch pneumonia, Burg finally convinced Rebec it was time to call it quits.

He put the old fellow off at Fort Norman where he would be in safe hands.

Burg continued downriver until he reached the delta where the MacKenzie flows into the Arctic Ocean.



Amos on Porcupine River portage, Alaska.

Enough for any river runner, you would think.

Now Burg decided to ascend the Peel River. He reached Fort MacPherson where he sold his beloved canoe. He then hired a Loucheaux Indian and four pack dogs to make the 100-mile Peel Portage over the Davidson Mountains to a trading post on the Bell River. The journey took thirteen days. Burg had a small, uninflated rubber boat tied to the back on one of the dogs. At the La Pierre House trading post, he put in and floated down the Bell and Porcupine Rivers to Old Crow.

By August he was launching from Jackson Lake, Wyoming to make yet another run down the Snake and Columbia Rivers. He reported “being in a constant state of ecstasy in living so close to nature.”

In December 1930, Burg was initiated into the world-famous Explorer’s Club in New York, founded only 25 years before. His friendships would include Dr. William Beebe, deep-sea pioneer; Arctic explorer Viljalmur Stefansson; photographer William Henry Jackson; artist for the second Powell expedition Fredrick Dellenbaugh; and African adventurers Martin and Osa Johnson.

The year of Holmstrom’s solo journey through Grand Canyon, 1937, Burg found himself in England on assignment for National Geographic. He had also had his canoe shipped over from the States and launched what he called his “English Adventure” on the Thames River in London. He paddled the canals of mid-England, using over 400 of the hand cranked locks, until he reached Liverpool. He thought camping in the English countryside “delightful.”

Some time during that year, Burg made a test run down Hell’s Canyon of the Snake River in a crude rubber raft of dubious quality. He returned impressed with the raft’s performance. Then he set out to design an improved model. This would be the inflatable *Charlie*.

Aside from the “tame” Thames the year before, Burg

had not run a major river for nine years.

Of course, 1938 was the year Burg teamed with Holmstrom and Willis Johnson on their historical 70-day run through the canyons of the Green and Colorado Rivers. The trip launched, perhaps later than they would have liked. Burg saw this as an advantage: not only would the weather be clearer for photographic purposes, they would not be in competition for publicity with the Nevills party. The Holmstrom/Burg/Johnson trio would be the seventh party to make the journey through the Canyon. Burg had arranged for them to fly the colors of the Explorer flag (designed by Dellenbaugh), the 86TH expedition to do so.

Holmstrom ran every rapid, the last oarsmen to do so, and Burg rowed the first inflatable. The three river runners—Johnson, Holmstrom, Burg—seemed to have struck a healthy balance among themselves, though Johnson would say later that he felt closer to Holmstrom as the trip unfolded. Holmstrom's letters to family and friends sing Burg's praises. The film Burg made of their journey, *Conquering the Colorado*, would be nominated for an Oscar in the best short documentary category, but never make the kind of money Burg and Holmstrom had hoped for. There were rumors, though unsubstantiated, of a falling out between the two men.

In the coming years, Burg would encourage Holmstrom to write the story of his solitary journey down. The *Lone Voyager*, an apt title, was never written. Burg wrote to Anna Smith, Holmstrom's sister, "It was the grandest trip with the best partner I ever had, Buzz Holmstrom." It was also the final major Western river on Burg's wish list. He had reached the goal he set nearly twenty years ago.

In 1983 Burg wrote to Cort Conley, "I had real misgivings about Buzz's future when we landed at Lake Mead and the voyage was over. Then the fair deal fell through. I felt the documentary extolling his bravery and superman performance would give him a sense of



Amos on Porcupine River portage, Alaska.

accomplishment that would spur him onto something else for he seemed sort of lost."

Burg moved ever forward toward the next project or adventure; Holmstrom seemed to falter and lose his way. He died on the Grande Ronde River in Oregon on May 18, 1946, a likely suicide.

Close on the heels of his grand adventure, Burg's father, Amos Sr., passed on at age 75 on December 1. Burg mentioned feeling the weight of family obligations, especially toward his ailing mother.

* * *

For the next 25 or so years, Burg's ambitions and talents drew him away from his beloved rivers. A career in the Merchant Marine seemed unlikely for Burg. His hunger for adventure and natural beauty combined with his growing filmmaking and writing skills would eventually carry him around the world numerous times. While on assignment for National Geographic, he covered events as varied as the coronation in London and the lives of the natives of Tierra del Fuego. In all, he would write ten feature articles for National Geographic. He would also make over forty films, both documentary and educational. He purchased the 36-foot *Endeavor*, the boat that would serve as transportation and home for nearly twenty years, in 1939. To put bread on the table and finance his next adventure, he continued to lecture at venues like Chicago Geographic Club, Temple University, the New York Explorers Club and the Denver Museum. First and foremost, however, he considered himself a photographer and filmmaker and only then, a writer.



Amos and "Endeavor".

Whether Burg realized it or not, his feverish river-running days were mostly behind him. In 1939 however, Dr. Russell Frazier, Utah river runner and physician for Admiral Byrd's 2ND Antarctic Expedition, invited Burg to accompany him and six other Utah boatmen (including Charles Kelly, Frank and Gib Swain, Hack

Miller, Bill Fahrni, and Willis Johnson) on a trip down the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. Never one to pass up an opportunity, Burg decided to film the journey.

The Utah boatmen were piloting wooden boats; Amos rowed *Charlie*, the first inflatable to traverse the Middle Fork. The exhausting work of lining and portaging the wooden boats, the wrecks, near wrecks

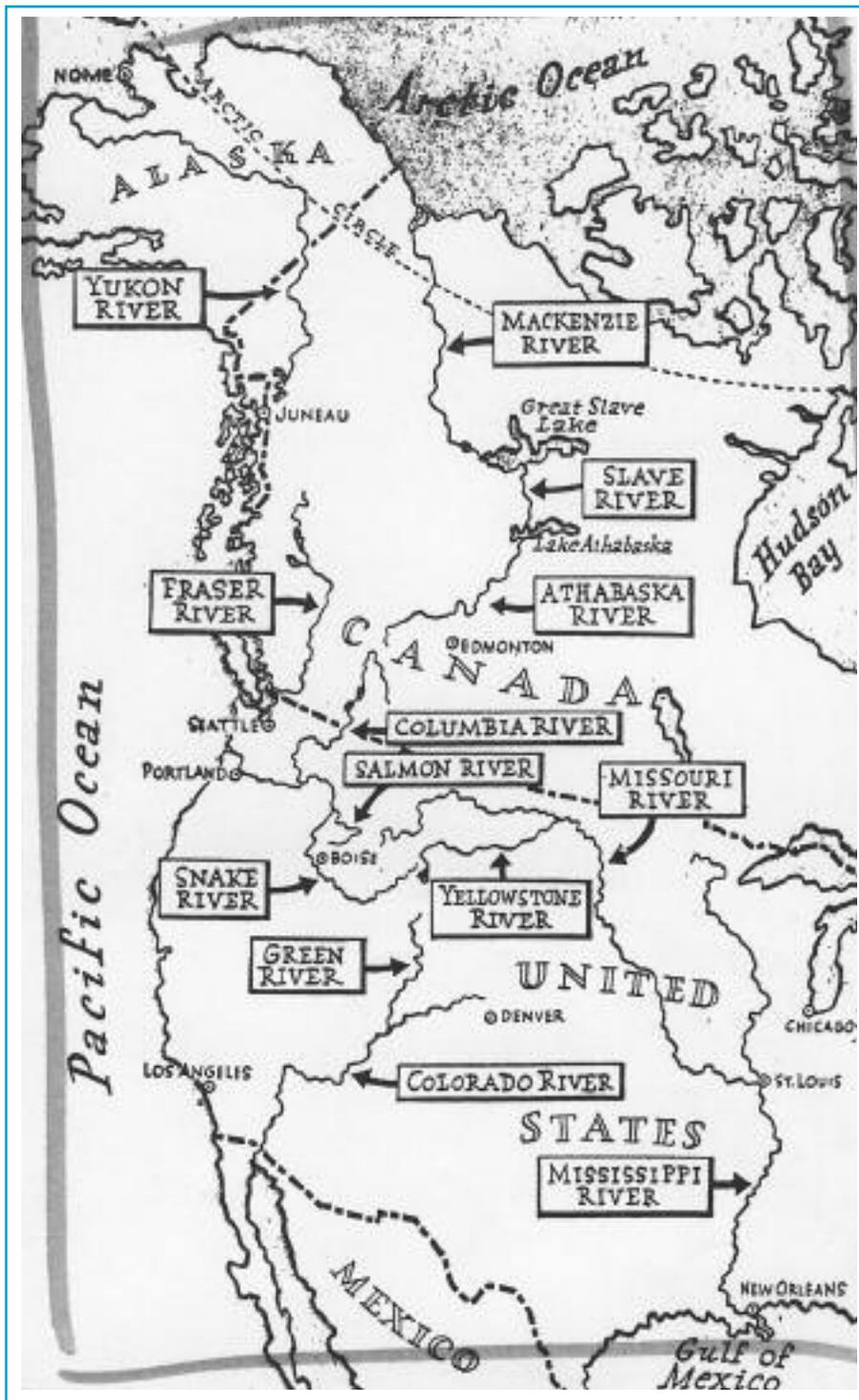
and turnovers, the leaky boats themselves, left everyone but Amos frazzled. It was arguably the beginning of modern river rafting as we know it. *Charlie* had made everything look easy. Willis Johnson wrote in his journal "We may have rubber boats next year for they add to the thrills of boating, but it will be hard to have a more thrilling or enjoyable trip than this one we have just finished. Although I believe...open boats

can be taken on through, it will be much better to have rubber boats, for Amos Burg has proven them to be far superior to any other kind of boats even though a person will have his share of upsets if he isn't on the alert all the time."

Throughout the trip, Amos wore his oxford shoes. Later he claimed they never got wet though Kelly's journal account suggested otherwise. Burg later wrote, "Although the boatmen were largely non-swimmers and despite several capsizes, their life preservers saved them." He sold *Seeing is Believing* to an eager Paramount Pictures.

At the start of WWII, Burg found himself sitting at the speaker's table at the Dutch Treat Club in New York. Lowell Thomas, toastmaster and soon-to-be TV personality, had asked Burg to repeat the presentation he had given at the Explorers Club Dinner a few nights earlier. The guests that night had included John D. Rockefeller, Eleanor Roosevelt and Dale Carnegie.

This night Burg found himself at a table with a glum-looking Herbert Hoover, the "forgotten President." Burg wrote of their meeting, "Before I was introduced by Lowell, he (Hoover) whispered in my ear, 'Call it Hoover Dam, not Boulder.' My subject was 'Conquering the Grand Canyon.' Congress had not yet changed the name to Hoover. I started my talk by saying that the voyage of seventy days in two small boats was through eighteen canyons to Hoover



Dam. Every so often I would state we were so many miles from Hoover Dam. Hoover Dam became the pivot of my talk. As I talked Mr. Hoover's face grew brighter and brighter. When I finished he bounded around the table and gripped my hand and said feelingly, "This was the finest dinner speech I've ever heard and I wish to congratulate you."

Because of his experience and travels in South America, Burg received what he called a "special assignment" from the U.S. government to work in Argentina and Chile. The details are murky but essentially Burg became a secret agent. He wrote, "My James Bond activities covered several months. The element of misrepresenting myself and the need for secrecy gave me indigestion although I came to have respect and admiration for the men who fearlessly carried on their essential work. It was a heady experience working through the embassies although I was warned, "If you get in trouble, don't call on us. We can't help you."

In September 1944, Burg teamed with Doc Frazier, Alexander Patterson and Charlie Wheeler, his Grand Canyon patron, to make a trip down the Snake River. They launched their three rubber boats at Huntington, Oregon, 75 miles above Hells Canyon. A local farmer warned Burg that they were the first group in five years to tackle the rapids of Hells Canyon. Two kayakers had tried; only one had finished. By all accounts it was a successful, if not hilarious, trip.

In the post-war years, Burg worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a patrol officer, guarding and supplying the stream guard camps of the Inside Passage. In 1955, he was appointed Information and Education Officer for Alaska Fish and Game. He would spend the next twenty years roaming Alaska making films and writing feature articles for the department's publication as well as various film companies. Under the pen name Sourdough Sam, he also wrote a popular column for the Juneau newspaper.

The life-long bachelor married Carolyn Warren in Juneau, Alaska in June 1958. They spent their honeymoon aboard the *Endeavor* cruising the Inside Passage. In the future, whenever he was away from home, Burg would write to his wife every day. Burg had "come ashore."

In 1968, the ever restless Burg took a leave of absence from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. With Vic Bracher as companion, the two men repeated one of Burg's early river trips down the Athabaska, Slave and MacKenzie Rivers to Tuktoyaktuk on the Arctic Ocean. The following year Burg, along with the Mayor of Juneau and his wife, descended the Bell and Porcupine River in the Northwest Territories. Soon after, he retired from the Alaska Fish and Game department.

* * *

At age 74, Burg's health began to waiver. Two years previously, he had had open-heart surgery. Nevertheless, the old river runner returned to his beloved Snake River for the fourth time. He, accompanied by his wife Carolyn, rowed his 12-foot Avon. In August 1978, the party of eleven put in below Hell's Canyon Dam, completed a mere ten or so years before. Six miles downstream at Wild Sheep Rapids, Rev. Don Brown, along with his son and daughter, capsized. They went for a good swim. Apparently Burg also took a lashing from the rapids. He wound up in his sleeping bag suffering from hypothermia.

After completing the trip, the Burg party turned right around and headed for Whitehorse, Alaska. They set off on a 200-mile float down the Yukon to Carmacks that included four rubber boats and three canoes.

In 1983, the Western River Guides Association awarded Burg the first-ever plaque for early and significant contributions to river running in North America. *Charlie*, nearly fifty-years-old and showing its age, was placed on display with photographs and information. The "new fangled contraption" that Bert Loper had ridiculed and Holmstrom had joked about (I wouldn't be caught dead in that contraption) was admired by one and all.

Over the next couple of years, Burg began the task of arranging his extensive collection of diaries, letters, notes, photographs, films and articles. The Oregon Historical Society was eager to house the Burg Collection. As he sorted through the mountains of material Burg mused upon his numerous voyages, wondering why, as he put it, "he had made so little of my voyages for each adventure contained several angles." At one



Amos and Carolyn, 1970s.

point Macmillan Books had offered him a contract for a book on his Canyon trip.

Burg wrote, "No, I was restless for the next adventure and the book would take six months. So off to Guatemala and the Mayan temples. There was always another adventure."

* * *

Amos Burg spent the much of the spring of 1986 in the hospital in Seattle, Washington being treated for cancer. Those days were a trial for a man who had spent his life on boats, navigating rivers and the open ocean. Despite the circumstances, he remained gracious. His gentle, but ever-ready wit did not desert him, according to family and friends. He was determined to get on his feet, even if it meant fetching a magazine from the hospital shop or chatting with the nurses.

In May he returned to his home in Juneau, Alaska. Ten days before his death, he was packing for another trip. On June 10, 1986 Amos Burg died. He was 84.

At Burg's funeral service, Cort Conley concluded his eulogy for his friend with these apt words:

"Had he been born 200 years earlier, I'm rather certain he would have been a voyageur in the service of the fur trade—at least for a spell. And in some ways he was the last of the Voyageurs; no other man alive had run the unaltered Green and Snake and Columbia rivers. Thus Wendell Berry's *The River Voyageurs* seems a suitable close.

Where the light's bells ring
Morning on the river,
Waking the town to its round of spires
And burials, is only half
The world. This very light shapes a country
Green or leaf and river
Within the sleep of dead voyageurs,
Or their death also
Is a river where morning returns
And is welcome
The scarlet bird chanting
Its renewal in a tree of shade
As constantly sings
To their earthen unhearing ears.

The ghosts of the voyageurs are gay
In the total sleep of their bones.
From the green noon shade of the river
Their vision slowly loves the sky,
Accepting bird flight, dawn and dark,
They are gentle now. Their boats, swamped
With voyages and drowned, release the stream.
Through the broad country of their sleep,

Burnished towers and belfries of the sun,
The river runs to noon forever.
The clear light rings with bees.

Burg's wife Carolyn, with Conley's help, took a boat out on the Columbia and spread a portion of Amos' ashes on the river of his youth and the waterway of his first dreams. In the distance stood the blue-misted summit of Mt. Hood.

Of course, there were other rivers that Amos loved—the Snake, Yellowstone, Missouri, Mississippi, Yukon, McKenzie, Green and Colorado and lesser-known waterways.

Over the next two decades, Conley enlisted fellow guides to carry Burg's ashes to those rivers and spread them on the waters.

Burg, the river voyageur, was home at last.

Vince Welch

Hollywood In Town

HOLLYWOOD WAS in the neighborhood recently filming John Krakauer's best selling novel *Into The Wild*, which tells the story of Chris McCandless's 1991 journey through the western Untied States and tragically ends with his death in Alaska.

Sean Penn (director) and Paramount Pictures are presently involved in an eight month film project covering territory from the Southwest deserts to the wilds of Alaska, Oregon, South Dakota, and Mexico. At one point in the screenplay, written by Sean Penn, McCandless is a solo traveler and kayaker from Glen Canyon Dam to Mexico/El Golfo, after which he heads further on his journey toward Alaska.

Emil Hirsch, 21, of *Lords of Dogtown*, stars as Chris McCandless.

Adventure Sport Services, Inc. of Flagstaff, Arizona, headed up the "Marine Unit," (A.K.A river/lake unit), in five locations along the Colorado River: Temple Bar on Lake Mead, the Topock Gorge, the Diamond Down stretch into the headwaters of Lake Mead, Lees Ferry/Glen Canyon, and Lake Powell. Under the auspices of Adventure Sport Services, this project was coordinated by Brian Dierker, Scott Davis, and Courtney Giauque.

First on the agenda was Temple Bar Marina on Lake Mead, where we filmed a variety of camp scenes and lake shots. Here Chris McCandless encounters lake life circa 1990—water skiers, speed boats, and good times on the lake. We'd like to extend credit where it is due: to Ted Cornutt and Marine Maintenance of Flagstaff, along with many Flagstaff residents who pulled their 1970's vintage boats out for the film, to the Temple Bar/Lake Mead rangers, and of course to our talented waterskiers.

In the Topock Gorge, located South of I-40 along the Arizona/California state line, filming encompassed cliff jumping, train interactions, paddling and various scenic clips. This incredibly rugged canyon is a day use only stretch of water, host to the latest in highspeed watercraft. We would really like to thank the San Bernardino Sherriff Department and the Arizona Game and Fish Department for their involvement, patience, and support during these days.

The Diamond Down segment involved a flotilla to behold. Three 37-foot S-Rigs, two Hualapai Snouts, one Snout Rig costumed up as a Ranger Boat with flashing red lights, and the full compliment of two aluminum Ospreys, one rubber Sport Boat and a host of kayaks were needed to support the total crew of 45 people. 232-mile rapid was the location of much whitewater footage, while 242-mile canyon became the location of a camping scene interchange between McCandless and some Danish campers. This undertaking would never have happened without the constant support of the Hualapai River

Runners, and in particular Elisa Suminimo and Ray Kaska. Thank you so much!!

Late June brought us to Lees Ferry to capture shots of the Ranger Station, Paria Beach, and upstream at .5-mile Sand Dune and the spectacular Horse Shoe Bend area of Glen Canyon. Up at Lake Powell, they had the opportunity to tie in Antelope Canyon with its colorful carved walls, which were highlighted as McCandless continued to explore the unique Colorado Plateau landscapes.

As on any river trip, there are plenty of stories to tell over a beer on the next trip or amongst your friends. One short vignette was told by one of our Topock team members, Tyler Williams, of Flagstaff.

In 100 plus temperatures and blasts of hot wind on the lower Colorado, a panic ensued amongst the hair and makeup department and the film crew, when the next shot required Emile's (Chris') hair to be dry, not wet. As the complete crew floated along on several boats tied all together like a barge, a massive search ensued. "Where is the hairdryer?" Is it in base camp? Somewhere in a buried box? Where is the darn thing? Generator, yes, no problem, extension cord, okay got that, where is the hair dryer?!? A deep voice rose over the chaos as Dan Dierker offered up the obvious: "Hey, you're living in a hair dryer!"

This fast paced sequence of river based filming could never have been pulled off without the amazing support of so many members of the Grand Canyon boating community. So a huge thanks to all of you. A very special thanks goes to many Grand Canyon National Park Service employees, but folks that we really worked closely with and appreciated were Diana Pennington of the Film Permitting Office, Chris Mengel of Lake Mead Recreational Area, Dave Chapman and Peggy Kolar out of Lees Ferry Ranger Office, and of course Mike McGinnis, River Subdistrict Ranger, and Joe Alston, the Grand Canyon Superintendent. You all are awesome!

Filming is scheduled to end in November 2006. So look for the film sometime in 2007.

Scott Davis & Courtney Giauque

Adopt-a-Beach Update

FOR THOSE WHO MAY NOT know, the Adopt-A-Beach program is a repeat photography project of selected beaches throughout the corridor. The project has provided a visual and written recorded history of more than forty beaches, and their evolution, since 1996. Each year, commercial guides and private boaters volunteer to contribute to the collection of photographs. They are issued cameras and brief, easy to fill data sheets. The cameras and corresponding notes are to be returned to the office of GCRG at the end of the seasons' river trips.

For the year 2005, 36 volunteers acquired 190 photos of 36 different beaches. A few volunteers collected shots of more than one beach, and a few beaches were photographed by multiple volunteers. A big thank you to all who participated! If you retained your camera to continue use this season, or perhaps forgot to bring it by the office, it's not too late to submit your photos from 2005! They are very valuable to the program.

Of particular note are the recorded changes that were made to the beaches by the November 2004 "beach building flow" of 46,000 cfs (cubic feet per second). The Adaptive Management Program of Glen Canyon Dam

designed this well-timed "artificial flood" release to stir up a significant sediment load deposited from the Paria River (a large tributary stream that joins the Colorado River below the dam). This timing maximized sediment redistribution to allow that sand, clay and silt to be re-deposited along the Colorado River corridor as the water dropped following the high release. The goal was to rebuild and replenish sandbars that are integral to the health of the river ecosystem and the recreational resource. In comparing the latest photos from 2004 and the initial shots taken in 2005, some interesting beach changes were detected. More information on this and other changes will be included in the next issue of the *Boatman's Quarterly Review*.

Also a thank you to those beach adopters who have been photographing this year. If you still have a river trip after this article appears, please consider adopting a beach (or beaches!) and drop by or call the GCRG office to receive a photography packet. Please check out our adopter list and help us fill in any gaps! Thanks again.

Zeke Lauck

2006 Adopters

11.0R Soap Creek	Jeff Sorensen/AGFD	109.4R 110 Mile	Tex Calloway
12.2L Salt Wash	Robert Southwick	114.3R Upper Garnet	Jared Weaver
	Celia Southwick,	114.5R Lower Garnet	Jared Weaver
	Andre Potochnik	131.1R Below Bedrock	
16.0 L Hot Na Na	Erica Unhold	132.0R Stone Creek	Michael Ghiglieri
19.1L 19 Mile	Kevin Johnson	133.0L Talking Heads	Chuck Manning,
20.4R North Canyon	Jan Sullivan		Mari Carlos,
23.0L 23 Mile	Ed Hench		BJ Boyle
29.3L Silver Grotto	Bianca Bauch	133.5R Racetrack	Susan Detering
34.7L Lower & Middle Nautiloid	Connie Tibbitts,	133.7R Lower Tapeats	Glenn Goodrich,
	Kristin Downing		Jan Sullivan
37.7L Tatahatso	John Palmer	134.6L Owl Eyes	Charly Heavenrich
38.3L Bishop (Martha's)	Mathieu Brown	137.0L Backeddy	Jeff Sorensen/AGFD
41.0R Buck Farm	Laura Fallon	143.2R Kanab	Glenn Goodrich
75.6L Nevills	Walker Mackay	145.6L Olo	Evan Tea
76.6L Hance	Joe Pollock	148.5L Matkat Hotel	Andre Potochnik
81.3L Grapevine	Larry Hopkins	155.7R Last Chance	Bert Jones
84.0R Clear Creek	Greg Woodall	164.5R Tuckup	Greg Woodall,
84.5L Zoroaster	John Toner		Kristin Huisinga
91.6R Trinity	Bob Dye	166.4L Upper National	Lynn Myers
96.1L Schist Camp	Stephanie Smith,	166.6L Lower National	Greg Woodall,
	Ben Edson		Larry Hopkins
96.7L Boucher	Greg Woodall	230.0L Travertine Falls	Matt Robinson,
98.0R Crystal	Shana Watahomigie		Charles Havatone, Jr.
99.7L Lower Tuna	Joe Pollock	236.0R Gneiss Camp	Matt Robinson,
107.8L Ross Wheeler	Jeff Sorensen/AGFD		Duane Parker
108.3R Bass	Marieke Taney		

Major Contributors

July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006

GRAND CANYON RIVER GUIDES proudly presents the wonderfully lengthy list of major contributors during the past fiscal year (July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006). We are always thrilled, honored and tickled pink at the depth of support for this organization and our many worthwhile programs. What a fine list!

Again, this listing does not reflect donations received after July 1st of this year, so those folks will have to wait until this time next year to see their names in print, although we certainly appreciate your support! I should mention too that this list does not reflect the innumerable five year memberships, or general contributions under \$100 (of which there were many). Each and every donation gets us that much farther down the road (or the river, if you prefer). It's quite amazing what we can accomplish with your support. The new Adopt-a-Boatman project, for example, is off to a great start with two sponsorships (a second sponsorship for an oral history interview with Howie Usher was received after July 1 of this year). Also, the highly successful Circle of Friends program raised over \$19,000 with your help! The continued quality of this newsletter is a concrete result, and we'll be looking at new and fresh ways to make our publication even better as we move forward into our twentieth year of production (the 2007/2008 cycle will be Volume 20, after all!). And truthfully, our accomplishments are also yours as well. These are things we can all be proud of, and your staunch support inspires us to reach even higher.

We apologize in advance for anyone we may have missed in the list below. Please let us know. And thanks again, not only to those listed here, but to each and every one of our wonderful members!

FOUNDATION AND CORPORATE SUPPORT

Arizona Humanities Council (oral history project)
 Ceres Foundation (general support)
 Flagstaff Cultural Partners (*Boatman's Quarterly Review*)
 Grand Canyon Association (Guides Training Seminar)
 Grand Canyon Conservation Fund (Adopt-a-Beach, GTS, Adaptive Management Program)
 McJunkin Corporation (general support)
 Teva (GCRG Fall Meeting 2005, Guides Training Seminar)
 Walton Family Foundation (*Boatman's Quarterly Review*)

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Grand Canyon River Guides, Inc.

Profit & Loss—Fiscal Year July 1, 2005 through June 20, 2006

Note: Profit & Loss Statement does not reflect hundreds of hours of donated services for BQR proof-reading, IRS annual report, Guides Training Seminar, website maintenance, clerical support, donated equipment and more...

INCOME

Membership income	\$ 39,740.00
GTS income & grants	20,456.00
Circle of Friends contributions	19,106.00
General contributions	16,233.00
AMWG/TWG grants	13,000.00
BQR grants	8,500.00
First aid class income	7,695.00
Adopt-a-Beach grants/contributions	3,000.00
Sales (t-shirts, hats, etc.)	2,870.50
Oral history grants	2,217.00
Interest income	879.63
Adopt-a-Boatman income	750.00
Meeting income	750.00
GTS overhead reimbursement	593.62
Total Income	\$ 135,790.75

EXPENSE

Payroll expenses*	\$ 36,882.37
BQR (production, printing, postage)	35,477.70
GTS expenses	20,381.07
AMWG/TWG	8,953.46
First aid class expenses	7,687.54
Adopt-a-Beach	7,118.30
Plant Field Guide expenses	5,480.78
Rent	4,840.00
Printing	3,810.37
Postage	3,635.18
Cost of sales	2,612.79
Telephone	1,745.23
Meeting expense	1,686.55
Utilities	1,286.37
Office supplies	1,135.54
Other (bank charges, taxes, etc.)	1,015.26
Oral History Expenses	743.26
Depreciation expense	521.00
Insurance	444.09
Internet	472.40
Repairs	363.37
Total Expense	\$ 146,292.63

Net Income **\$ (10,501.88)**

*includes GCRG and GTS payroll expenses

Grand Canyon River Guides, Inc.

Balance Sheet as of June 30, 2006

ASSETS

Cash in checking/savings	\$ 56,187.85
Postage & security deposits	1,944.77
Total Current Assets	\$ 58,132.62

FIXED ASSETS

Computer & office equipment	\$ 40,743.21
Less depreciation	39,148.19
Net Fixed Assets	\$ 1,595.02

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Payroll liabilities	\$ 725.61
Restricted funds	277.64
Equity	58,724.39
Total Liabilities & Equity	\$ 59,727.64

Financial Statement Explanation

WHOA NELLY! Before you jump to the conclusion that GCRG is quickly going down the tubes, please let us clarify. The deficit experienced by GCRG this past year can be explained to two factors:

1. Adopt-a-Beach (AAB) income from the Bureau of Reclamation which should have come in the 2005/06 fiscal year is late in reaching us. This is a new funder for GCRG and their contracting process is apparently quite lengthy. However the contract is in the works and we should receive a \$6,000 grant shortly (thanks BuRec!) Note: The AAB income reflected on our profit/loss statement is from the Grand Canyon Conservation Fund, a non-profit grant-making program established and managed by the Grand Canyon river outfitters. The commercial river outfitters have supported us since the beginning of the Adopt-a-Beach program (in 1996, no less), which we heartily appreciate!

2. You may notice that we had \$5,480 in Plant Field Guide expenses in the 2005/06 fiscal year, but no corresponding income, because all of the Plant Field Guide income was received in the past few fiscal years. These expenditures therefore reflect the use of the balance of that grant income (in other words, what we had left to spend). Although this discrepancy of timing between when we received the funds and when we spent them made this financial statement less rosy than we would like, the *great* news is that the finishing touches have been put on the Plant Field Guide and it should be available to the public soon! Look for an announcement in this issue of the BQR. We are proud to have been the administrative agency for this fine program. Three cheers to Kate Watters, Kristin Huisinga and Lori Makarick for pushing through with a brilliant project that will expand our knowledge of the amazing plant life in Grand Canyon. Can't wait to get a copy!

So, there you have it—things are not as they seem. Grand Canyon River Guides will live (and work) yet another day. For non-profit organizations, the term “profit/loss” isn't really applicable as we're spending the money we receive in roughly equal measure. However, occasionally circumstances may skew things a bit as they have in this case, where the loss isn't really a loss at all. The “deficit” simply is a function of income we haven't yet received (but will), plus expenses that were not backed up by income in the same fiscal year.

While this situation is not uncommon in the non-profit world, what it points up is a real need to create a buffer against just such situations. And undoubtedly, the most reliable buffer Grand Canyon River Guides can

possibly have is *membership*. Therefore, building our membership will be a top priority for GCRG this year, and *each and every one of you can help in a number of ways*:

- Keep your membership dues current—simple, but oh-so important!
- Buy gift memberships for friends and family who have been as touched by the magic of Grand Canyon and the river experience as you have. GCRG memberships make unique and meaningful Christmas (or birthday) gifts!
- Take a few newsletters on your next river trip (whether you're a guide or a general member). I can send you whatever you need, so let me know! Spread them around and talk us up. As an opportunity to stay connected with the canyon spirit, the BQR is unparalleled. And Grand Canyon always needs more advocates!
- Talk to your fellow guides (especially new guides) and let them know how very important it is that they join our organization. GCRG has so much to offer and as a mentor and canyon steward, you can make that clear both in words and by example. Joining GCRG for the first time really meant something special to many of you. Tap into those feelings and spread that enthusiasm! It can be one of the most important things you can do to give back to the cherished place that has given you so much.

GCRG represents a vibrant and diverse community of people bound together by a deep love of Grand Canyon and the desire to protect that river experience for future generations to enjoy. Being part of this community keeps our members informed and connected, but it also entails a measure of responsibility to the welfare of the whole. *The bottom line is—we need your energy and enthusiasm to carry us into the future.* Your simple efforts on our behalf can have a significant and positive impact on this organization, our mission and our goals. Please help us in any way you can.

Overall, we are so very thankful for all the kind words, the advocacy, the volunteerism, the gestures large and small, and the support we receive from each and every one of you. Without a doubt, *you make a difference.* And making a difference is exactly what Grand Canyon River Guides is committed to doing over the long term, so let's meet that challenge together!

Lynn Hamilton
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Businesses Offering Support

Thanks to the businesses that like to show their support for GCRG by offering varying discounts to members.

Humphreys Summit Boating Supplies— 928/779-1308

The Summit—Boating equipment 928/774-0724

Mountain Sports—928/779-5156

Aspen Sports—Outdoor gear 928/779-1935

Teva—928/779-5938

Chaco Sandals—Pro deals 970/527-4990

Sunrise Leather—Birkenstock sandals 800/999-2575

River Rat Raft and Bike—Bikes and boats 916/966-6777

Professional River Outfitters—Equip. rentals 928/779-1512

Canyon R.E.O.—River equipment rental 928/774-3377

Winter Sun—Indian art & herbal medicine 928/774-2884

Mountain Angels Trading Co.—River jewelry 800/808-9787

Terri Merz, MFT—Counselling 702/892-0511

Dr. Jim Marzolf, DDS—Dentist 928/779-2393

Fran Sarena, NCMT—Body work 928/773-1072

Five Quail Books—Canyon and River books 928/776-9955

Canyon Books—Canyon and River books 928/779-0105

River Gardens Rare Books—First editions 435/648-2688

Patrick Conley—Realtor 928/779-4596

Design and Sales Publishing Company—520/774-2147

River Art & Mud Gallery—River folk art 435/648-2688

Fretwater Press—Holmstrom and Hyde books 928/774-8853

Marble Canyon Lodge—928/355-2225

Cliff Dwellers Lodge, AZ—928/355-2228

Laughing Bird Adventures—Sea kayak tours 503/621-1167

Rescue Specialists—Rescue & 1st Aid 509/548-7875

Wilderness Medical Associates—888/945-3633

Rubicon Adventures—Mobile CPR & 1st Aid 707/887-2452

Vertical Relief Climbing Center—928/556-9909

Randy Rohrig—Rocky Point Casitas rentals 928/522-9064

Dr. Mark Falcon—Chiropractor 928/779-2742

Willow Creek Books—Coffee & Outdoor gear 435/644-8884

KC Publications—Books on National Parks 800/626-9673

Roberta Motter, CPA—928/774-8078

Flagstaff Native Plant & Seed—928/773-9406

High Desert Boatworks—Dories & Repairs 970/882-3440

Hell's Backbone Grill—Restaurant & catering 435/335-7464

Boulder Mountain Lodge—800/556-3446

Marble Canyon Metal Works—928/355-2253

Tele Choice—Phone rates 877/548-3413

Kristen Tinning, NCMT—Roling & massage 928/525-3958

Inner Gorge Trail Guides—Backpacking 877/787-4453

Sam Walton—Rare Earth Images, screen savers 928/214-0687

Plateau Restoration/Conservation Adventures—435/259-7733

EPF Classic & European Motorcycles—928/778-7910

Asolo Productions—Film and Video Productions 801/705-7033

Funhog Press—AZ Hiking Guides 928/779-9788

Man of Rubber, Inc.—800/437-9224

Capitol Hill Neighborhood Acupuncture—206/323-3277

CC Lockwood—Photography books 225/769-4766

Canyon Arts—Canyon art by David Haskell 928/567-9873

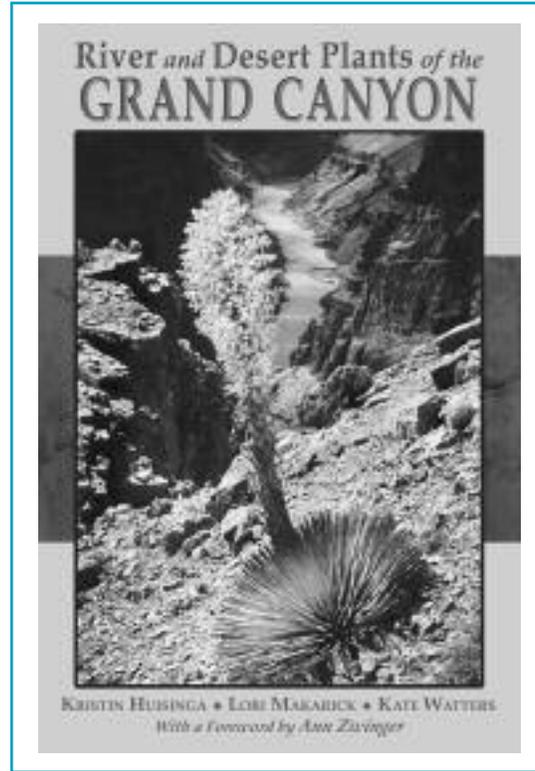
Ceiba Adventures—Equipment and boat rentals 928/527-0171

The Kirk House B&B—Friday Harbor, WA 800/639-2762

That Plant Guide

AS THE SUMMER monsoons cross Grand Canyon's vast landscape, they carry with them dreams of a colorful fall. As plants start bursting out of their summer slumber, a new companion will arrive—*River and Desert Plants of the Grand Canyon*. The book is the culmination of five years of work and includes contributions from dozens of members of the Grand Canyon community. A passion for plants shines through on the pages, and we hope the book inspires folks to call the plants by name, to share fun facts with others, and to let the flowers urge you to take a closer look.

The book, published by Mountain Press Publishing Company (800-234-5308, www.mountainpress.com), is currently being printed and will be available in September. We plan on having a



book release party in Flagstaff this fall, so look for information on that over the next few months and please join the celebration. We are incredibly grateful for the support that folks have given us along the way, and we are thrilled that this day is finally here! We can now take vacations that don't include carting around laptops, CD's of thousands of photographs, and bags and boxes full of reference books!

Kate, Kristin and Lori

Care To Join Us?

IF YOU'RE NOT A MEMBER YET and would like to be, or if your membership has lapsed, get with the program! Your membership dues help fund many of the worthwhile projects we are pursuing. And you get this fine journal to boot. Do it today. **We are a 501(c)(3) tax deductible non-profit organization, so send lots of money!**

General Member

Must love the Grand Canyon
 Been on a trip? _____
 With whom? _____

Guide Member

Must have worked in the River Industry
 Company? _____
 Year Began? _____
 Number of trips? _____

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State ____ Zip _____
 Phone _____

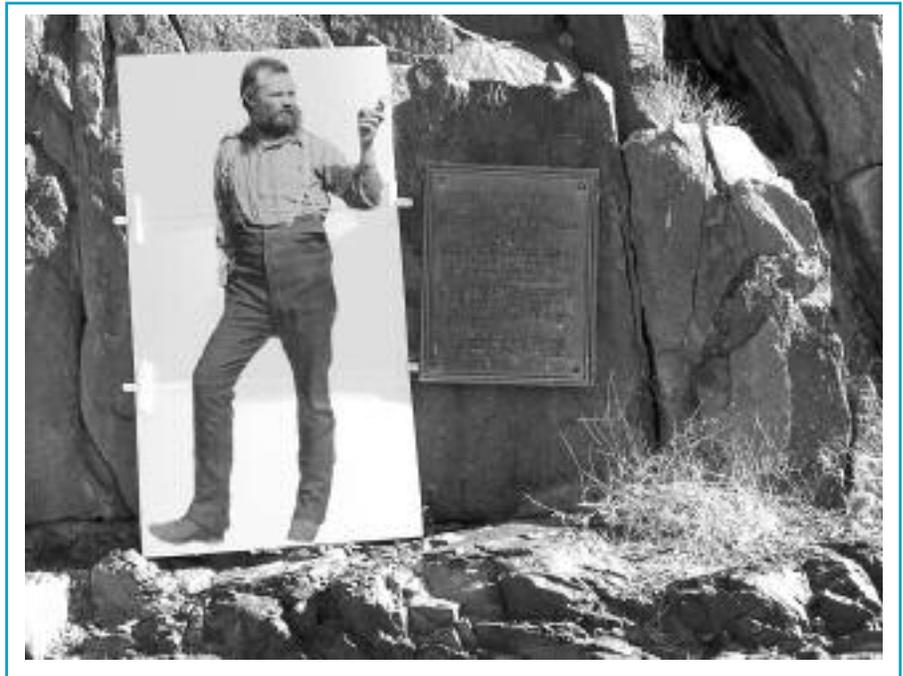
- \$30 1-year membership
- \$125 5-year membership
- \$277 Life membership (A buck a mile)
- \$500 Benefactor*
- \$1000 Patron (A grand, get it?)*
- *benefactors and patrons get a life membership, a silver split twig figurine pendant, and our undying gratitude.
- \$100 Adopt your very own Beach: _____
- \$_____ donation, for all the stuff you do.
- \$24 Henley long sleeved shirt Size____ Color____
- \$16 Short sleeved T-shirt Size____ Color____
- \$18 Long sleeved T-shirt Size____ Color____
- \$12 Baseball Cap
- \$10 Kent Frost Poster (Dugald Bremner photo)
- \$13 Paul Winter CD

Total enclosed _____

Powell to the People!?

AFTER 137 YEARS, John Wesley Powell finally returns to Separation Rapids/Canyon to look for his missing people: William H. Dunn, Oramel G. Howland, and Seneca B. Howland.

Richard Quartaroli was kind enough to give the Major a ride.



THANKS TO ALL YOU poets, photographers, writers, artists, and to all of you who send us stuff. Don't ever stop. Special thanks to the Walton Family Foundation, Arizona Humanities Council, "Circle of Friends" contributors, Flagstaff Cultural Partners and innumerable GCRG members for their generous and much appreciated support of this publication.

Box 1934
Flagstaff, AZ 86002

boatman's quarterly review

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