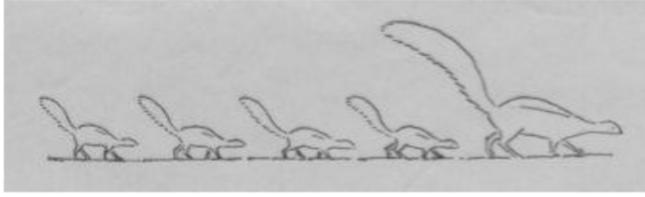


Dock Marston: Dean of Colorado River Historians and Fastwater Boatmen



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Otis “Dock” Marston, the dean of Colorado River historians and fastwater boatmen, began his association with the Colorado River and Grand Canyon in 1942 as a passenger on a Nevills Expedition commercial river trip. His immediate interest in Colorado River history followed his extensive boating career, including many seminal river trips, and lasted until he “ran the last rapid” on August 30, 1979. Though Marston wrote many drafts of chapters for his definitive history of river travel throughout the Colorado River system, his opus remains unpublished. Indeed, his set of authored publications is quite slim.

Virtually all published material on Colorado River history in the past thirty years contains references to Marston and his collection, yet there is a paucity of written works about Marston himself. Even the acclaimed and prolific author David Lavender, who based his *River Runners of the Grand Canyon* almost exclusively on Marston’s collection, devoted only one paragraph of biographical text to him.

Historian Jim Knipmeyer stands alone in this regard—he has identified twenty-eight items penned by Marston, with five of those being unpublished manuscripts and three transcriptions of recorded interviews. By various interpretations, there may be a few others, but the fact remains that Marston, while a comprehensive collector, was anything but a prolific writer over his thirty-plus year career as a historian.

Despite Marston’s recognized knowledge and expertise in Colorado River history, and the quantity and quality of material he amassed, very little of his contributions and personality has been captured and distributed to the interested cognoscenti, let alone the more general body of river runners and western historians.

I hope to provide an overview of Dock’s influence on Colorado River history through his personality and his boating and historical accomplishments, as preliminary to further research on the man himself.

Some tidbits I hope to reveal:

1. How Dock got his name.
2. How Dock got his start as a river runner and historian.
3. Dock’s seminal GC river trips, including total number of trips.
4. His influence on river history, including the 1-10 GC rapid rating scale and the 1st and 2nd 100 GC river runners.
5. River Rat as packrat; Foolhardy Canyoneer; Curmudgeons’ Chronicles; humor.
6. How Dock died.

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