

# boatman's quarterly review

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**Allen Wilson**

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Prez Blurb • Farewells • GTS 2010 Land and Water • Introducing GCRHC • Waiting  
Back of the Boat • Marble Canyon Days • Mike Castelli

## 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 CD or emailed to GCRG. 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!  
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## Prez Blurb

**G**REETINGS. River season has arrived and the Canyon is in bloom!  
The GTS was a great time—as usual. The native foods event was a neat way to experience different cultures through food. It was so exciting to see those agave hearts coming out of the roasting pit. It was also thrilling to see one of the original jet boats that made the up run in 1960.

Thanks to everyone who had a hand in making it such a successful event. Thanks to Steve and Sarah Hatch for letting us take over their warehouse once again. Thanks to Simone and her awesome crew for the great food. Thanks to all our speakers for sharing their wealth of knowledge with us. And thanks to Lynn for putting it all together!

We are still waiting for more news about the over flights EIS. This and uranium mining are important issues that are still on the forefront. Stay tuned for more information.

You can help GCRG out this summer. There are still a number of beaches that need adopting—adopt a beach if you haven't already (or adopt another one if you have). You can also tell your passengers about GCRG. Many of them will fall in love with the Canyon and their experience. Becoming a member of GCRG is a great way for them to stay connected.

Have a great season!

*Emily Perry*

**G**RAND CANYON RIVER GUIDES extends our sincerest condolences to the Hatch family for their loss. When Sarah Hatch sent us Ted's photo, I have to admit it brought a smile to my face, and misty tears to my eyes. This is a man who simply adored Grand Canyon, reveled in its challenges, with a love of weaving stories so others could share his sense of wonderment and fun.

For those of you who would like to learn more about Ted and hear some of his stories, the BQR issue with the Ted Hatch oral history interview is available on the GCRG website at: <http://www.gcrg.org/bqr.php>. Just look on the right hand side for Summer 03/ 16:02.

For another fun interview, check out the oral history spreadsheet on the GCRG website, scroll down to Ted Hatch and click on the URL. Interviewer Lew Steiger has a fine time jawing with Ted Hatch and Fred Burke about their experiences “back in the day.”

*Lynn Hamilton*

## Farewells

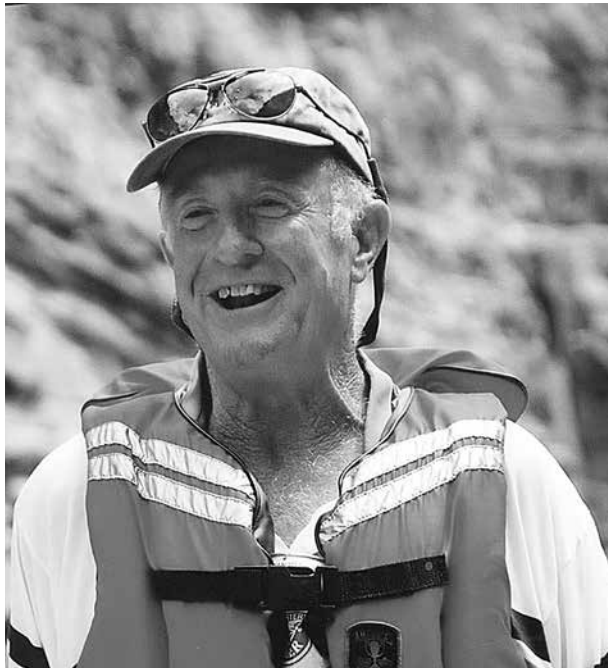
TED HATCH—DECEMBER 29, 1933–APRIL 18, 2010

TED HATCH RAN HIS LAST RAPID on Sunday, April 18, 2010, in Vernal, Utah. He was doing about what you'd expect Ted to be doing before river season; out in the yard, a project in hand, a friend nearby to joke with, and no doubt with a big smile on his face, when he was felled by a stroke. It was all over in about the time it would take to scout an unfamiliar rapid, decide it was easy, and walk back to your boat. At his funeral service in Vernal, complete with his drift boat decked in garlands, equipped for his last trip with cooler and sunscreen and church key—and a big cooler full of margaritas at the back of the hall for those of us who weren't going with him—all agreed that no matter how sad they were at his passing, that it was the way to go for him. And besides, Sarah Hatch said, he never did like to say goodbye.

Ted was born in Vernal, Utah, on December 29, 1933, the youngest son of Bus and Eva Caldwell Hatch. He grew up in Vernal, served in the army during the Korean War, and attended the University of Utah, graduating with a biology degree and teaching certificate in 1959; Don and Ted both became teachers so they would have their summers free to be on the river. The next year, Ted married Pat, and took his first teaching job in Vernal. Within a few years, he became principal of the high school in Manila, Utah. But his first love was the river; Ted had been around boats and rivers practically since he could walk. The first time he ran a rapid on his own, he was 10 years old, on the Yampa on a trip with his dad. They were in a wooden boat with an outboard and inflated tubes along the sides, a kind of hybrid. In Big Joe Rapid, Bus yelled to go right; Ted, thinking he meant push the motor handle to the right, went left into the waves. The motor sputtering, the boat awash, they barely made it to shore; it's easy to imagine what Bus had to say about

that run.

So when Bus died in 1967, Ted and Don left teaching so they could manage Hatch River Expeditions. In the next ten years they set the standard for river running outfitters, becoming a household name for everyone from regular passengers to the Kennedy clan. In 1977, they split the company, and Ted took over the Grand Canyon operations. Here he came into his own, for Ted loved the Grand Canyon, how big it was,



how challenging; and he liked to show it to people. Ted made sure that his clients had a good time on the river: that they were well fed, that they had great rides, that they had a pillow in their sleeping kit, that they enjoyed themselves. His dad used to say “the passengers are your bread and butter, so treat them like friends you haven't met yet.” And that's how Ted ran the company. He built a very loyal clientele because he treated people well and genuinely enjoyed being around them, and showing them the Canyon.

By the time he retired and sold the company to his son Steve, Ted had built Hatch River Expeditions into the best known, if not the biggest, company in the Grand Canyon. Until recently, the company didn't need an advertising budget, because their trips were completely booked by word of mouth. Ted was also a member of the Western River Guides Association and the Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association, and worked actively with the National Park Service and other organizations to ensure the quality of the Grand Canyon river experience.

Everyone who's been around the Colorado for any length of time will have at least one Ted story. An oft-told favorite is the time he gave the test for Utah boating licenses in the warehouse in Vernal, sitting “in hilarious mock sincerity at the front of the room,” reading the answers and telling his guides “Miss a couple so it looks good. And don't all miss the same ones.” Or the time he asked a nervous rookie guide,

gathering at the boatyard for a training trip, “Whose beer is this?” in a firm disapproving voice. “Don’t you know this is a Hatch River Expeditions training trip?” Then, with his usual laugh, he said “this is not going to be near enough beer.”

Earl Perry, a Hatch guide in the 1960s, remembered Ted, “sipping a bit of whiskey from a Sierra Club cup, delighted to have a delighted audience,” telling about the time a whole tail dragger frame tore loose and came off the back of the boat when he got stuck in the big hole in Crystal: “What the hell? The boat’ll do just fine. And I got a motor and a motormount. I’ll just run the rest of the rapid with the motor planing this son-of-a-bitchin’ motormount.’ Well, somehow it didn’t work out. Plan B, thought I could do me a Parnelli Jones with that Merc 20 and that motormount. But I just kep’ slidin’ backwards into that hole, and all that howlin’, it sorta turned into one glug. Boys, it took me til I was 20 feet down and that motormount was whackin’ on the bed of Crystal and it was cold, dark and wet enough down there, ‘fore I decided to let go my buckin’ strap and try Plan C.”

But for every story that brings a laugh, there’s a story of generosity, of giving a ride in his plane for the sheer joy of it, of helping someone who needed it, of giving a boatman a second chance. One time a burned out guide, at the end of a long season, blew up at Ted, told him “I quit!” and roared out of town. A while later the phone rang; the guide had a flat tire and no spare. Ted told him “I’ll be right there,” and drove off to help him out. A characteristic shared by all the Hatch clan is a strong sense of family, and Ted valued his family above all else—his wife, Pat, his sons, Steve and Bruce, and his daughter Susan, his grandchildren, and the many other Hatches—but it also included his large extended family of friends, clients, boatmen, people from the community, eager historians. Once you were accepted into the Hatch family, you were a member for life.

Ted’s other passion was flying; he truly loved his Cessna 210 and flew as often as he could. At his funeral one speaker asked who had flown with Ted; most of the audience raised their hands. When he asked who had seen the underside of the Navajo bridge, there weren’t that many fewer hands. Ted loved anything with a motor; snowmobiles, powerboats, airplanes. He was a member of the Utah State Aeronautical Committee for several years, and a long time member of the Aircraft Owner’s and Pilot’s Association.

The night before the funeral, when family and friends were gathering at the Vernal funeral home for the viewing, a bunch of us were standing outside drinking Corona and Chivas from a big cooler in the

## Ode to Ted Hatch

Always smilin’, full of lore  
Ted was special, that’s for sure

All the boys he turned to men  
Long to run with him again

Hatch—the best job I have known  
Second father, far from home

Sleepless nights, the river’s roar  
Call from Phantom, to report

Tent City, Bat Caves, Canyon floor  
Always home and wanting more

Circus trucks, winch trucks, lit’l Brice  
D-rigs, dusty roads, sleep the price

Knife and pliers, rope and chain  
All rigged up to run again

Race for campsites, duffle lines  
Kitchen first then quiet times

Tellin stories round the fire  
Of Ted’s tales we never tire

Run-ins, run-outs, back to backs  
In flies Ted to take up slack

Seasoned boatmen, green trainees  
All the dudes they worked to please

March trip schedule, can you go?  
Sure thing Ted, don’t mind the snow

Marble Canyon, there’s his plane  
Ted’s around and raising cane

Dropping big rocks off the bridge,  
Explosions echo down the ridge

Rangers coming, getting near  
Head for V.C., have a beer

Shootin’ pool, tellin’ white lies  
But always kindness in those eyes

And all the boys he turned to men  
We long to run with Ted again

—Steve Tinney



Ted and Don Hatch.  
photo courtesy of Roy Webb

back of a Hatch pickup, the Vernal police conspicuously looking the other way as they drove by. The last time some had been there was for Don's funeral, in 1994, and we were trying our best not to be somber, because somber is not something that could ever have been said about Ted. As we grappled with the real-

ity, talk turned to where Ted was now. Russ Perry, a long time friend, said he liked to think that Bus, Ted, Don, Tommy, and Shorty Burton are sitting at the best campsite you can imagine, the day calm and warm, the river flowing by, the sun lighting up the cliffs, waiting for one of Shorty's dutch oven pies, having a cocktail, telling stories and laughing about what the rest of us are doing back here on earth. It's a comfort to those of us who'll miss him to know that there's little danger of Ted Hatch being forgotten. Ted had a big laugh, a big heart, a big life. As long as people go down the river in boats, someone will be reminded of Ted and tell a story about him, and that's part of the legacy he's left us all; his family, his many friends, the memories we all share, the stories we'll all tell for years to come.

Roy Webb

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## STUART UDALL

STEWART LEE UDALL, great-grandson of both Jacob Hamblin, the "Buckskin Apostle," and Lees Ferry founder and ferryman John D. Lee, and Secretary of the Interior under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson from 1961–1969, died March 20, 2010, at his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico. "Stew" was a "son of the west," having been born January 31, 1920, into a Mormon family in St. Johns, Arizona, to Arizona Supreme Court Judge Levi Stewart Udall and Louise Lee Udall.

Also a U.S. Representative from Arizona, as was his brother Morris K. "Mo" Udall, the *New York Times* stated that "at his death, Mr. Stewart Udall was a senior member of one of the nation's last and largest political dynasties—in the West it was often said there were 'oodles of Udalls' in politics." As Secretary, he presided over the addition of around four million acres into the National Park system, including Canyonlands National Park and Marble Canyon National Monument (signed into existence under the Antiquities Act by President Johnson on his last day in office, January 20, 1969). He helped secure passage of the Wilderness Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, the Water Quality

Act, the Solid Waste Disposal Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

In 2006, President Bill Clinton's Secretary of the Interior and former Arizona Governor, said that "Steward Udall, more than any other single person, was responsible for reviving the national commitment to conservation and environmental preservation." He "initiated the first White House conference on conservation since the administration of Theodore Roosevelt and stated his credo at the beginning of his tenure: 'Nature will take precedence over the needs of the modern man.'" In his book, *The Quiet Crisis*, he wrote: "We cannot afford an America where expedience tramples upon aesthetics and development decisions are made with an eye only on the present." Regarding Marble and Bridge Canyon Dams, in 1996 he told National Public Radio: "My own people from Arizona were desperate to build these dams. Some of them still dislike me because I helped stop the construction of these dams." [Representative Morris K. Udall and 36 of his colleagues from Arizona and California introduced the Colorado River Basin Project Act, passage of which

would have authorized Marble and Bridge Canyon Dams.] “But he also used his political power to push for some major dams, including the one that drowned Glen Canyon...and helped create the boondoggle Central Arizona Project that delivers Colorado River water to desert farmers and rampant urban sprawl.”

Yet Stew did not abandon the needs of modern man. “Beginning in 1978, he and a team of investigators—including four of his six children—spent years probing the reasons for higher rates of cancer among people who had lived near a nuclear test site in Nevada in the 1950s and ’60s. He kept up the legal fight for more than twenty years and helped draft the 1990 ‘Radiation Exposure Compensation Act,’ which offered reparations to the families of cancer patients affected by atomic radiation.” Signed in 1990 by President George H.W. Bush, “the law issued a formal apology for harm done to those who were ‘subjected to increased risk of injury and disease to serve the national interests of the United States.’”

“Stew also played a critical role in helping to spur a reconciliation between descendants of the Fancher-Baker Party attacked at Mountain Meadows [in 1847], descendants of John D. Lee, the sole person [tried and executed for the massacre there, and the Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints]. Stew’s mother was John D. Lee’s grand-daughter, and it was a legacy Stew said she always struggled with. His efforts culminated in the erection of a monument in 1999 at the site of the massacre, with a dedication ceremony involving descendants of both the victims and the perpetrators. At a special reinternment ceremony the day before, Stew, ‘with great emotion,’ read a poem he had written years earlier and dedicated to the memory of his mother”:

THE MOUNTAIN MEADOWS (1990)  
for Louise Lee Udall (1893–1974)

*There was a massacre in these hills.  
Four generations have come and gone,  
but the deed that haunted the children  
that haunted the lives of the militiamen  
hovers over the silent land.*

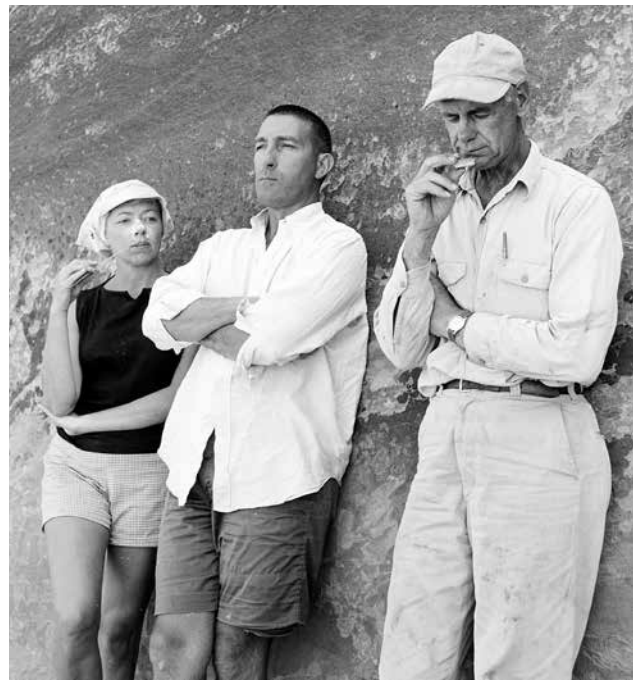
*Now descendants of the slain  
and sons and daughters of the slayers  
come, arm in arm, to end the tragic story,  
to share a burial rite, perform  
a ceremony of atonement.*

*But how to cleanse the stained earth?  
To erase old griefs and grievances?  
To quench long-dying embers of anger?  
To forgive unforgivable acts?*

*The balm they bring is love,  
the only ointment God offers  
to heal wounds too deep for healing.*

—STEWART LEE UDALL

In 1964, P.T. Reilly and Martin Litton ran a dory trip, the second one, through Grand Canyon. Francois Leydet was also on the trip, which resulted in his classic Sierra Club publication *Time and the River Flowing: Grand Canyon*. On May 12, just below Whitmore Wash, they received a message flown in and dropped by NPS ranger John Riffey, warning them that “the gates of Glen Canyon Dam were closed yesterday morning (May 11). The river flow has been cut to 1,000 CFS.”



Lee Udall, Stewart Udall, and Frank Wright.

photo courtesy of the Tad Nichols Collection  
Cline Library, Special Collections, NAUPH:99.3.1.20.13

Rather than hike back upstream and out the Whitmore Trail, the crew’s “decision was unanimous. ‘Let’s flush on down,’ somebody said, and this became our war cry for the rest of the trip, our cry in defiance of the dam builders, of the Bureau of Reclamation, of the whole Philistine cabal of Grand Canyon spoilers.”

As Secretary of the Interior, Stew got caught between a rock and a hard place, between the devil and the deep blue reservoir. Juggling the needs of the upper and lower basin states, power generation at Hoover and Glen Canyon Dams, and the protection of

Rainbow Bridge, in early 1963 Udall “had ordered the closing of the gates of Glen Canyon Dam so that the filling of Lake Powell could begin...By March, 1964, he ordered the opening of the gates in order to maintain elevation 1,123 at Lake Mead” and ensure power generation from Hoover Dam. Two months later, he again closed the gates at Glen Canyon Dam. The “Flush On Down” crew “did not envy Secretary Udall his job... The basic problem, of course, was that the states of the Colorado River Basin were trying to develop and divide more water than was available.”

In reference to the above scenario, in the mid-1970’s some Grand Canyon boatmen referred to the extreme fluctuations in water released from Glen Canyon Dam as “the Udall factor,” with boats left stranded high and dry as victims of it. In all fairness, the application should be to “the McKay factor.” Douglas McKay was President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Secretary of the Interior when the Colorado River Storage Project Act became law on April 11, 1956. McKay actually resigned on March 9, but his resignation was not effective until April 15, four days after the Act’s passage. However, the Udall name has a significance that McKay doesn’t, all due to the high public profile and heady accomplishments of Stewart Lee Udall.

At 84, at the end of his last rafting trip on the Colorado River, Stew hiked to the rim on the Bright Angel Trail from the bottom of the Grand Canyon and celebrated with a martini, a fine culmination of a great river trip—and a grand life.

*C.V. Abyssus*

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**FLOYD DOMINY**

**F**LOYD DOMINY DIED AT AGE 100 on April 20, 2010. If there was anyone who personified the “man over nature” mentality of the dam-building days, it was Floyd Dominy, commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation from 1959 to 1969. Dominy considered the building of large public works such as Glen Canyon Dam and the creation of Lake Powell among his greatest achievements. In doing so, he remade the American West, spurring on the intensive development that followed. Dominy made no apologies for his controversial decisions. In his own words:

“I was a crusader for the development of water. I was the Messiah. I was the evangelist who went out and argued persuasively for the harness of water for the benefit of people.”



*Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall and Floyd E. Dominy at the dedication of the Navajo Dam.*

*photo courtesy of the Parker Hamilton Collection  
Cline Library, Special Collections NAU.PH.2003.17.1.45.5*

# Guide Profiles

## Joe Bennion, Age 57

**WHERE WERE YOU BORN & WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?** I was born at Latter Day Saints Hospital, Salt Lake City. I grew up in Orem, Utah.

**WHO DO YOU WORK FOR CURRENTLY (AND IN THE PAST)?** Tour West.

**HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN GUIDING?** Since 2003.

**WHAT KIND OF BOAT(S) DO YOU RUN?** 18-foot Avons.

**WHAT OTHER RIVERS HAVE YOU WORKED ON?** Main Salmon and Cataract Canyon.

**WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES/PASSIONS/DREAMS?** Gardening. Walking in the deserts and mountains of Utah. Spending time anywhere with my wife or kids. I spend my Fridays volunteering as a chaplain to a group of American Indians at the state prison in my county. I dream of Liberty and Justice for all.

**MARRIED/FAMILY/PETS?** Married since 1976 to Lee Udall. We raised three daughters: Louisa who guides for Tour West and writes in Southern France; Zina who runs outdoor programs for a private boarding school in Utah; and Adah who trains baristas in New York City.

**SCHOOL/AREA OF STUDY/DEGREES?** Master of Fine Arts with Ceramics emphasis from Brigham Young University.

**WHAT MADE YOU START GUIDING?** Lee and I were invited on a small, poorly equipped and inexperienced private trip in 1992. We flipped in Badger and got maytagged. Scotty Stevens pulled us out and showed

us which way was down stream. A few days later at the Little Colorado, Bob Melville took us under wing and pumped us up, talking about the runs downstream. At the end of the trip I asked Lee if she would ever do that again. "With or without you," she said. After running 16 private trips over the next ten years I found someone willing to hire a 50-year-old guide. Forty trips into it Lee still goes with me when she can and enjoys the peace and quiet when I am gone. This year, we will fulfill a long time dream and do our one boat, two-person private trip.



**WHO HAVE BEEN YOUR MENTORS AND/OR ROLE MODELS?** Besides Scotty and Bob, Christa Sadler has been an important mentor and friend. Kevin Johansen tried to teach me to drive a motor-rig...old dogs and new tricks—oh well. He has taught

me a lot about loyalty and hard work.

**IS THIS YOUR PRIMARY WAY OF EARNING A LIVING OR DO YOU COMBINE IT WITH SOMETHING ELSE?** I have been a self-employed potter since the mid-seventies. Rivers are destined to be a sideline given my late entry into the field.

**WHAT'S THE MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT IN YOUR GUIDING CAREER?** Watching my daughter row her first trip. Her run at Bedrock scared the crap out of me.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR FUTURE HOLDS?** What is retirement for a potter/boatman? I'll do both until something physically prevents me.

**WHAT KEEPS YOU HERE?** The same thing that keeps me playing with clay and fire, I can't leave it alone. I would do both even if there were no pay.



## Jacob Snyder, Age 36

**WHERE WERE YOU BORN & WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?** Born in Kansas and grew up in Montana.

**WHO DO YOU WORK FOR CURRENTLY (AND IN THE PAST)?** Canyoneers.

**HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN GUIDING?** Five years.

**WHAT KIND OF BOAT(S) DO YOU RUN?** A huge one.

**WHAT OTHER RIVERS HAVE YOU WORKED ON?** Just the Grand.

**WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES/PASSIONS/DREAMS?** Playing music, traveling.

**MARRIED/FAMILY/PETS?** Getting married and having a baby.

**SCHOOL/AREA OF STUDY/DEGREES?** University of Colorado, speech pathology.

**WHAT MADE YOU START GUIDING?** I ran with Canyoneers as a passenger, fell in love with the Canyon and her

river, and was lucky enough to get five trips that summer.

**WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE?** I came to Grand Canyon to hike and never left.

**WHO HAVE BEEN YOUR MENTORS AND/OR ROLE MODELS?** Too many to list—I have been very fortunate to work with and meet some extraordinary folks in this unique community.

**WHAT DO YOU DO IN THE WINTER?** Work at Snowbowl tuning skis and fixing snowboards.

**IS THIS YOUR PRIMARY WAY OF EARNING A LIVING OR DO YOU COMBINE IT WITH SOMETHING ELSE?** This is it in the summer.

**WHAT'S THE MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT IN YOUR GUIDING CAREER?** Camping in the rockgarden at Crystal for 22 hours on my first pilot.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR FUTURE HOLDS?** I'll let ya know.

**WHAT KEEPS YOU HERE?** There's no place else I'd rather be.



## GTS River Trip 2010!

ON APRIL 1ST, THE 2010 GTS launched from Lees Ferry. We had two trip leaders for the price of one, Park Service employees, a fantastic assortment of scientists and speakers, several skeptical but well-prepared Hualapai, quite a few dubious-looking river guides and a whole lot planned. Our first day came through with the meet-and-greet, some snow below the bridge, unaccountably chilly weather and a river-wide panorama of ear-splitting grins. Oh, to be back on the Colorado!

The highly educational aspect of our GTS began at Soap Creek where Kassy Theobald walked us through the Park's efforts at obliterating the myriad social trails and fire pits at the camp and demonstrated the efforts to re-plant historic high water vegetation using

Canyon-collected plants and seedlings, ollas (self-watering clay jugs), and continual maintenance. We had a layover at the Unkar Delta, where Kassy and Larry Stevens pointed out the camelthorn we were there to eradicate along with many other Grand Canyon plant species. There was, of course, a discussion about tamarisk, the ecological niche it has assumed, possible effects of the introduced beetle and how, as a species, it might not be as villainous as we have made it out to be. Nps had brought two barrels along to burn the piles of camelthorn that have accumulated at Unkar and Crystal and that morning, we got to work. While several dedicated their time to cutting new camelthorn growth (below the root crown to minimize recovery), some of us got to assemble the barrels and begin the

burning! The camelthorn gave new meaning to the term noxious weed as towering columns of thick, grey-green smoke billowed up from our burn sites. Downstream, some hiked Boucher, but most of the group continued to give the camelthorn “what-for” at Crystal, where there was new growth all over the scout hillside and old piles to be decimated. It was extremely satisfying to wreak some havoc on that dastardly, pervasive plant and have enormous steel-drum fires to boot.

Carp, A.K.A. Geoff Carpenter, gave us the shake-down on the poikilothermic ectotherms (reptiles and amphibians) that we might run into on our trip. He handed out the beautiful brochure he’s compiled of the usual suspects and taught us about diagnostic fecal boli, lizards push-up profiles (tree lizards perform push-ups with both pairs of legs, side-blotched lizards only use their front), femoral pore exudates, procrystis and sneaky copulations. We went desert fishing for tree lizards at Trinity Creek with modified fishing rods, Dave Desrosiers found a Grand Canyon pink rattlesnake at Saddle which was caught and examined in Carp’s snake tube, and we sat in the dark at 140-mile listening to an overwhelmingly magical chorus of Canyon tree frogs and Woodhouse’s toads. In an effort to better understand the species present in the Canyon and their distribution, Carp requested photographs of interesting herps, with the location of the photo, conditions and any useful observations.

Peter Huntoon joined our trip at Phantom Ranch with half a century of geology under his belt, a penchant for trundling rocks, some colorful language and not a single change of clothes. We sat in the sand, instructed not to pay attention to all that biology, we tromped recklessly across the landscape (cryptobi-otic soil be damned!), we were warned about all the arm-waving geologists that we love so much and we were challenged to use our brains, because really, it’s “red, white and blue.” At Deer Creek, Peter pointed out the historic river channels, the debris left by the land slumps and the boatmen’s archeology that is all over the valley. At National, we hiked up and sat, entertained and enthralled, as Peter explained the on-going mystery that is the formation of Grand Canyon. The Canyon was virtually the same over 25 million years ago, except the river ran the other way, and in spite of the “Precocious Gully and Cave Theories,” the geographers’ discoveries and all the work Douglas and Meek have done, the one fact he left us with was that we honestly have no idea what happened, which is half the fun of it all. At Whitmore Trail, the group hiked up to the Rim and Peter, with much arm waving, described it sweepingly as “really sexy stuff.”





Gary Alpert was our ant man, or myrmecologist to those in the know, from Harvard who was on the trip to collect specimens with Larry Stevens and change our minds about the “bane of boatmen,” the harvester ant. There hasn’t been anything published about ants in the Canyon since 1905 and everyday Gary disembarked the Park boat and regaled us with new tales of wonder and discovery. He discovered a completely unreported and utterly unique scarab beetle at Eminence, enchanted us all with the microcosms at our feet that are so often overlooked, illuminated the fascinating lives of social insects and advised not to let anyone sprinkle cookies on us as we slept if we wanted to avoid getting stung.



Larry Stevens filled our notebooks with his sweeping expanse of all-things-Grand-Canyon and kept our mouths hanging open with his almost completely dry runs. He pointed out astounding examples of the wild and wonderful biogeography: there are no rabbits, horny toads or kangaroo rats in Grand Canyon; the vegetation changes completely depending on the aspect of the Canyon walls; and each and every native species has a life story related to the landscape. He brought us into the pre-dam ecosystem that was the Colorado River and then led us to a better understanding of how it functions as a system today. Any and all questions directed his way were met with an incredibly scientific and detailed answer and the sense that somehow, he was pulling your leg. Jeri Ledbetter amazed the group with her stories amassed over 25 years of river running and then, by stuffing herself completely



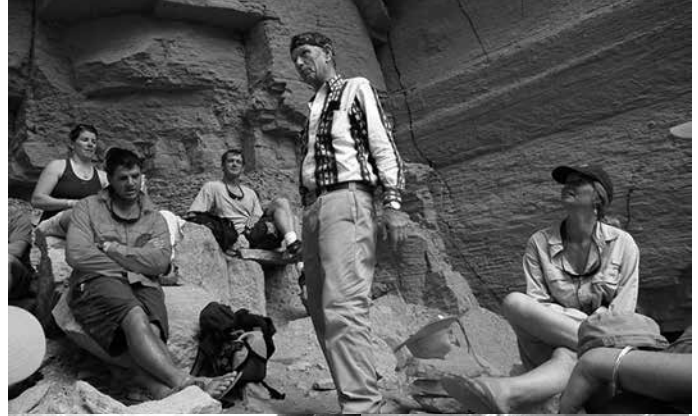
into a kitchen box while wearing a fleece onesie. Their tag-team trip lead was an incredible mix of expertise, illumination and the ability to go along with Plans A through Z.

Norm Hanson, representing the Whale Foundation, read us the poetry of Amil Quayle and reminded us that there is a community that exists once you leave the river. Zeke Lauck rowed a bucket boat with the most astoundingly customized frame and championed Adopt-a-Beach, a program still looking for volunteers.

We had an incredible trip—although they all are, right? It was surreal having six-person cook crews, no one to take care of, able-bodied hikers, walking encyclopedias and an entire group of enthusiastic people who really understood what was going on. The wildflowers were blooming (Oh, brittlebush! Oh, prince's plume! Oh, ocotillo and yucca! Oh, hedgehog and claret cup and prickly pear and fishhook!), the weather was all over the place (we had two Lava days due to an impressive series of storms and an excellent camp at Cove), the wisdom was doled out and absorbed and the Canyon took us for a ride once again. We got to know one another, instead of just waving as we cross paths on our way downstream. We had epic campfires (while the wood lasted) with sing-alongs, recitals and two guitar harmonies. There were push-up contests, songs of humpback chub, river beards, dreadlocks, lots of boat-swapping, a flip, some swimmers, bad jokes, unbelievable talks and a return to the reason why we are all here. It's astounding and humbling to find so much knowledge and passion rattling around in such a rag-tag group. Larry Stevens cautioned us to guard our hearts, because sometimes it is too much to give everything that we would like to. But Mark Yeston left us with this: "We are all here because we love this place. Drink your beer, gaze awe-struck at the stars, make love on the sand (consensually, of course) and remember what it is that keeps you coming back to the river."

*Kelsey Wogan*

*Snapshots from the GTS Upper trip (p.10-11) courtesy of Paul Hirt, and from the Lower trip (p.12) courtesy of Kathy Bennett.*



*Attached to this letter is a poem I wrote on our trip through the Canyon with Azra Discovery between April 14 and 27, 2010. Inspired by the Canyon (as well as Kevin Greif's love of poetry), I asked our fellow rafters each to give me their favorite few words to describe the Canyon and then I put all of their words, as well as my own, into rhyme.*

—Barbara Cort Counter

#### DESCRIBING THE INDESCRIBABLE

America the beautiful  
From sea to shining sea  
No place on earth is grander  
Than this Canyon's majesty.

The depth of spirit forged by  
Mother Nature and Father Time  
Has generated magic grace  
Breath-taking and sublime.

Energizing, mesmerizing  
Frightening in it's splendor  
Fierce, ferocious, wild and vast  
Peaceful, haunting, tender.

Prehistoric, monolithic  
Timeless, ancient strand  
Primal and primordial  
Iconic, vedic land.

Stimulating, awe-inspiring  
Soulful and transcendent  
Blissful, soothing, sleep-inducing  
Ineffable, resplendent.

Wonder of all wonderments  
Spectacular, enchanting  
Inspiring and sensational  
Ecstatic and enhancing.

Stupendous and extravagant  
Then tranquil and protective  
Rugged, looming monuments  
Transforming and reflective.

Ever-changing, mind-eclipsing  
Wondrous and hypnotic  
Trance-inducing rhythmic sound  
Melodic and rhapsodic.

Awesome, gruesome, overwhelming  
Beautiful, gigantic  
Cacophonous, then silent streams  
First lonely, then romantic.

Tear-inducing, fear-producing  
Powerful, serene  
Mysterious and nurturing  
Divine, profound, pristine.

Grandiose and gorgeous with  
Exquisite unconformity  
Dynamic and enduring  
Both in comfort and enormity.

Powerful and threatening gasps  
Of endocrinal rushes  
Shades of every color stroked  
By nature's painting brushes.

With every vista it seems sure  
We've witnessed nature's best  
And then the beauty magnifies  
Around each Canyon crest.

Dear Azra Maestros, thank you so  
For gestating our second birth  
For guiding us through rapids  
That expose our place on earth.

## Guides Training Seminar 2010

IT WAS AN AMAZING AND WONDERFUL weekend again this year at the Guides Training Seminar at Hatchland in Marble Canyon. The weather was beautiful, superb food was prepared and served by Simone and Tim and their assistants, a number of very knowledgeable speakers shared their thoughts, the party and music were fantastic on Saturday night; and as always an interesting mix of four-legged friends showed up to entertain and be entertained. What more could we ask for to usher in the 2010 river season!

Saturday offered a variety of indoor and outdoor activities. After spending most of the morning absorbing copious amounts of information we stepped out into the sunlight and took part in a Native Foods Celebration. During the celebration participants had the chance to help prepare and eat a variety of Native foods from the plateau such as agave. The celebration included a lunch of a hearty mutton stew, among other foods, which was gobbled up in no time. A back injury prevention, stretching, and yoga clinic led by Laura Fallon and Judy Stratton gave us a chance to loosen up and reminded us to take care of our bodies while on the river. Laura and Judy imparted to us a few quick but complete stretching movements to implement while in the Canyon. Two historic Cataract boats the *Sandra* and the *CamScott* made an appearance along with one of the jet boats from the 1960 up-run. Everyone had the chance to marvel at the crafts at close range and to ponder their historical significance.

Saturday night was loads of fun. The raffle contained great donations and Kirk Burnett and the Johnny Lingo Trio kept the party rocking. Sunday came along too soon, but our speakers gave us the chance to chew on a plethora of issues such as water law facts, dental emergencies, watershed perspectives of the Colorado River, uranium mining problems, and the tamarisk beetle and its recent expansion. After lunch it was time to clean up, load up, and say goodbye.

It has probably been said thousands of times that the best way to start the season is to come to Hatchland for the Guides Training Seminar. The GTS facilitates a way for us to stay connected to one another, and to renew old relationships and build new friendships. The human connections we make at the GTS and other gatherings like it are of utmost importance. Thank you to all the speakers, sponsors, and donors for all your support! Thank you Lynn for all your patience and persistence in pulling everything together!

*Latimer Smith*

**NOTE:** The annual GTS is sponsored by GCRG in cooperation with the Grand Canyon commercial river outfitters, Grand Canyon National Park, Grand Canyon Association, Native Voices on the Colorado River Program, Grand Canyon River Heritage Coalition, and Chaco. We deeply appreciate our GTS partners!

The GTS is made possible in part through funding from the Grand Canyon Conservation Fund, the commercial river outfitters, and the Grand Canyon Association. Thanks to our funders for their wonderful support!



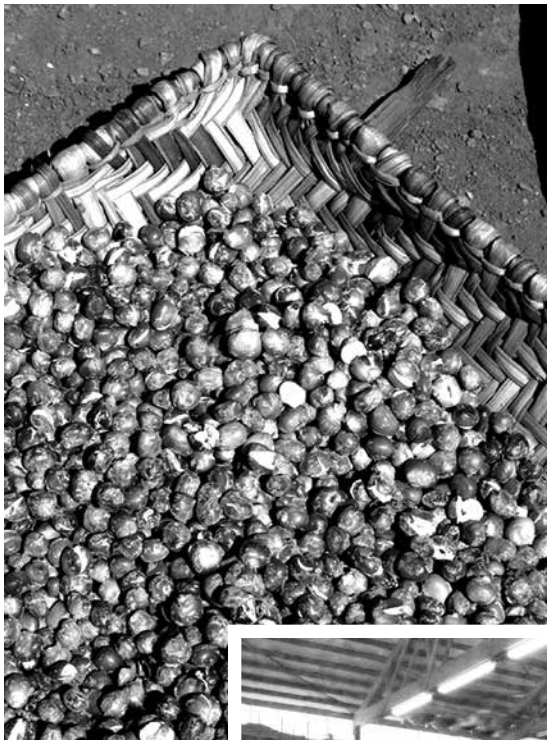
*Emily Perry, Drake Havatone, Nikki Cooley.*  
photo: Brad Dimock



*Making twine from yucca fibers.*  
photo: Geoff Carpenter



Ruby Chimerica parching corn.  
photo: Brad Dimock



Ruby's parched corn.  
photo: Brad Dimock



Connie Tibbets with agave hearts.  
photo: Brad Dimock



The attentive crowd.  
photo: Lynn Hamilton



Liz Jackson, Greg and Tanner Reiff,  
Sandy Nevills Reiff.  
photo: Lynn Hamilton

## The Boats Will Speak: Introducing the Grand Canyon River Heritage Coalition

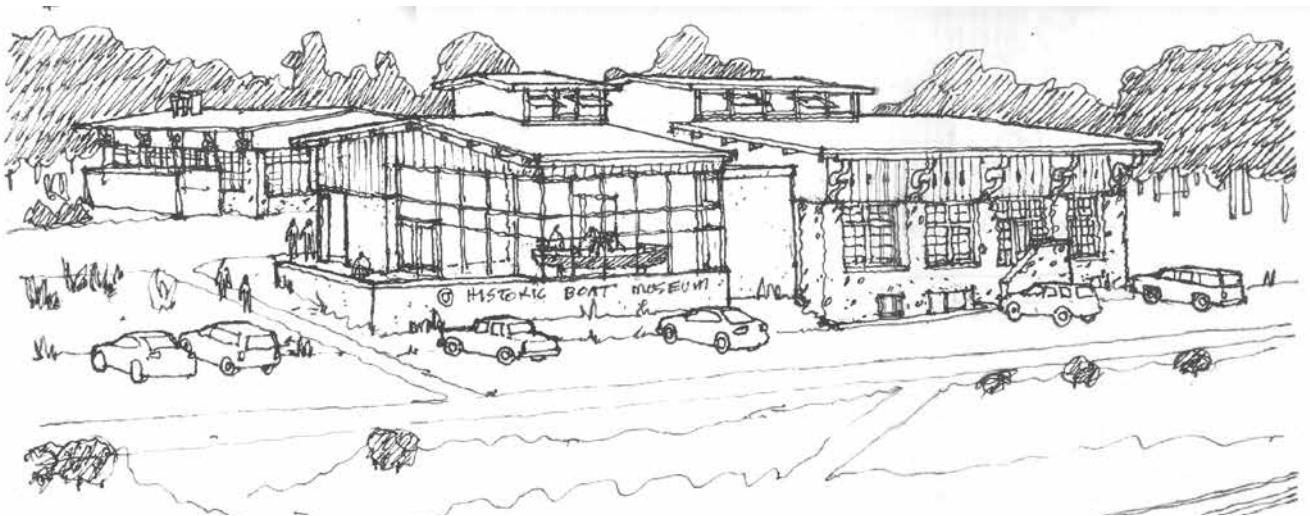
For such a diverse, colorful, and independent-minded group as Grand Canyon river runners tend to be, there is one thing that uniformly makes them wax nostalgic. In a single word: boats. The stories, and perhaps a few beers, start to flow freely, and they're immediately transported by their love of boating, their passion for the river, and the traditions that bind us from John Wesley Powell through to the present. For years now, conserving some of the quintessential craft of the Colorado River has been a labor of love, propelled forward by a few passionate boatmen and outfitters, the National Park Service, and the support of the now-dissolved Grand Canyon National Park Foundation. As those of you who attended the Guides Training Seminar at Hatchland know, we are incredibly excited to take that next step down the road to our dream of a Grand Canyon River Heritage Museum.

Back in November, the Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association (GCROA) invited Grand Canyon River Guides (GCRG), the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association (GCPBA), and the Grand Canyon River Runners Association (GCRRA) to join with them in launching the Grand Canyon River Heritage Coalition (GCRHC)—yet another acronym to add to the list of “GC organizations”. And how to pronounce it? Your guess is as good as ours, but Brad Dimock swears that if you say it just right, it sounds just like the noise a

cricket makes!

Levity aside, by working cooperatively with our partners, the Grand Canyon Association and Grand Canyon National Park, GCRHC hopes to have the best chance yet of bringing the long-talked-about River Heritage Museum to life within one of the principal historic buildings at the South Rim, in a manner consistent with existing NPS planning. As we have evolved, our broad-based coalition now extends beyond core river groups to include many “at large” individual participants as well as other important member organizations such as the Coalition of NPS retirees, the Grand Canyon Trust, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Imagine our excitement to attend the “show and tell” of preliminary design concepts from the museum feasibility study that is now in full swing, spearheaded by the Pfau Long architecture team out of San Francisco. The museum will be housed in the old stone Laundry Building which is ideally located just south and along the railroad tracks from the Bright Angel Lodge at the South Rim of Grand Canyon, and very close to the disembarkation point for the train. Plans show that the building will retain its architectural and historic integrity while being transformed into an aesthetically pleasing state-of-the-art museum, complete with a large display area, a display/boat demonstration area, a theater, and a gift shop. Ultimately, the Grand



*Architect's rendering of Grand Canyon River Heritage Museum looking north from Bright Angel Lodge.*



Canyon River Heritage Museum will provide a critical link between “the Rim and the River,” while serving as a key component of the National Park Service’s overall South Rim “Village Interpretive Center” redevelopment plan.

And what of content? Of course it was the boats themselves that started us down this road, but the words “river heritage” more accurately describe our passionate commitment to the broader scope of the project with the inclusion of running artifacts, river history, social aspects, boating evolution and more. Working with historians, river guides, interpretative experts, educational institutions and libraries, we envision an exceptional, state-of-the-art museum that brings these boats, stories, and museum displays alive in creative and thought-provoking ways. The challenge is no less than preserving the very essence of the Colorado River experience and the adventurous spirit that exemplified early Grand Canyon explorers which lives on in river runners today.

So how can you help? The specific goal of the Grand Canyon River Heritage Coalition is to fund the advocacy needed to support the river heritage museum proposal. This should not be confused with fundraising for rehabilitating the Laundry Building or for designing and installing exhibits. That will come

in time as the Coalition eventually “passes the baton” to the Grand Canyon Association who will fundraise specifically for the museum itself. Rather, your assistance at this juncture will help the Grand Canyon River Heritage Coalition to build momentum for the project by “getting the word out” through public outreach tools such as our outstanding “These Boats Will Speak” brochure, our new website, [www.gcriver-museum.org](http://www.gcriver-museum.org), and other materials.

Creating advocacy, excitement and interest is essential if we wish to fulfill our dream of a Grand Canyon River Heritage Museum at the South Rim of Grand Canyon, and this is where you come in: donate (tax-deductible contributions can be made by mail or on the GCRHC website), spread the word far and wide, pass out brochures, tell your friends, let us know of any other potential donors, whether individuals or foundations. Consider this a call to action for the river community—a time to come together and provide a strong and united voice in support of protecting and preserving our colorful river running legacy for future generations to enjoy. Make no mistake—this will be a long road, but what an honor to be part of it. This is our heritage. Let’s share it with the world.

*Lynn Hamilton*

## Waiting

**I**F I HAD REALIZED that I would have to sacrifice being on the river in order to be on the river four years ago when I took this job, I probably would have never taken it. There are quite a few aspects of this lifestyle that if I thought about, I would never do. Everyone in it can say the same thing. Guess it’s not something that one should ponder too much. Better off to just do it. Four years—one for each of the directions. Planned or not—acceptable or not—it is the path that I am to take in order to get a boat with this company and work with the people that I most want to run with.

Everyone has to pay to get a boat. The Bear swamped fifty trips before he got his. Art grew up in the business and still did five years in the warehouse, sucking up enough toluene, glue, and paint fumes to twist his genes forever. Matt has been at it as long as I have, somehow managing to keep both me and the boats together. We all have to pay. Not just the dues that come on the river. It’s a given that you might get hung up on a rock or clunk a lower unit at some point. But the way it is with us, nobody leaves and everyone

is too good to get fired so you have to anti-up with some sort of sacrificial sweat. The price of a ticket to this show is paid for with pieces of your soul. It’s like some unknown entity looks into you and says, “what is this person’s best talents and how can the company milk the most of it before moving them on along to the river.” For me, that would be Vegas.

Las Vegas, Nevada, the absolute opposite of the Grand Canyon. The Anti-Canyon. The big puckered up hole of the universe. A totally man-made place that has absolutely nothing to do with the Grand or any of us called to work there except for its convenient location. Our folks begin and end their Grand Canyon journeys there. For them, it’s a six hour bus ride to Lees Ferry beginning at 4:45 A.M. and a three hour trip back from Pearce that takes an eternity.

Some of our passengers like to share their adventures with me when I pick them up. I don’t ask anymore. It’s just easier to hope that they got something from it and maybe even gave something back. Hopefully the time they just spent with the people I love—in that magical place—had some sort of positive

impact on their lives. Words are primitive anyway, especially when trying to express something so “Grand”.

Their experiences do come through though, from the moment they step off the jet boat until I pass them in the elevator on the way to the airport, on the way back to their lives. Their stories are told by the look in their eyes, the uninhibited smiles that boil up from a touched heart, or in the way they eat their ice cream at the Star Market in Dolan Springs. Like kids with big bright eyes, focusing on the dripping cones as if they were the most amazing creation of all times.

Most run the gambit between feeling “something” to having a life changing event. Like Angie, the nurse from Georgia who went home, sold her house, bought a truck, and moved out west, eventually ending up at the South Rim Clinic. Another life turned right side up by a seemingly innocent vacation.

I guess that Regina would have to be my most special little angel passenger. It was late in the season and I still wasn't getting on the river. The hook was already firmly set in my jaw so the need for any extra carrots was gone. I was dying, sick of the whole mess and becoming a grumpy displaced boatman. I went down to set the room for orientation when I noticed a small figure sitting in the dark waiting for the show to begin. I don't like it when people show up too early. They're excited and want to talk, a lot. They want to hear some kind of war story or for me to guarantee that they'll get to go where their neighbor did when they did the trip. Consumed with a bad Vegas attitude, it was getting hard to pamper the overly needy. I wasn't in the mood for any interruptions.

After going about my chores, I finally looked up to see a tiny elderly lady watching me be a determined ass. I asked her if she was ready for the trip and her words or more the power of the emotion behind them made me stand still and silent. She chuckled and calmly told me that she was very old and really didn't know but, she added with enthusiasm, “my spirit is ready.”

Her spirit was ready! Her words melted my ugliness in an instant and I was brought back to why it is that we do what we do. Why we take people down in the first place. I am all too often critical of the insensitive few that resist letting themselves be touched by the Canyon. Becoming jaded at how quickly they want to know about the stock market or the latest headlines. But there in a dark meeting room at the Las Vegas La Quinta Hotel was Regina reminding us both about what really mattered. She did go on to have a great trip and was able to be at ease with her concerns about her frail body and yes, her spirit was indeed ready. If we hang around long enough we all get gifted with the special ones that come to us through the river. Regina

was certainly a blessing for me.

Getting to have the before and after view of the folks that go down stream with us is a pretty cool thing. A reminder of the outstandingly talented people I get to work with. A Dineh elder once told me that to sacrifice means to make something sacred. I can't imagine how anything could be more sacred than being on a boat in the Grand Canyon and I know that I could be right now instead of being on this bus. A bus hopefully going to pick up more touched souls. But that old man was right and the truth is that this sacrifice isn't just to get on the river; it's for the privilege and honor of getting to do it with the people that I most admire.

The first year I was just trying to belly up to the bar—get in and find a place. The second, I just wanted to get through and get as much precious river time as possible. The third was a series of repeatedly surrendering my willfulness to the reality that the river has its own plan for each of us called to work there. This, the fourth year, will show itself to be what it is in its own good time, just like a river trip. I do know this though, it isn't just the outfitters that decide who works down there. It is the River and the Canyon itself.

I make a terrible spectator and patience certainly doesn't come easy for me. This job is easy and being on the water is the easiest thing in the world. The agony is in the damn waiting. I seriously can't believe that I have held out this long. Life continues to be full of surprises like that. Again, guess it's not something that one should think about too much, better off to just do it.

*Roger Patterson*

**NOTE:** This article was written twelve years ago and the author is still running boats in the Canyon—still hooked!

# Back Of The Boat— The Whale Foundation News Bulletin

## YOUR FOUNDATION

WITH THE TURN OF THE DECADE, the Whale Foundation is reaffirming who we are and our purpose in serving you, the River Community. As you will see in our insert in this issue, we are looking for your thoughts and feedback about the Whale Foundation: what is working for you—and what isn't. Send us your anonymous input about our programs and projects; your experiences with our services (case managers and/or providers); your suggestions for future Liaison Trainings, or whatever. It is easy; there is new Feedback Box on our website's homepage. ([www.whalefoundation.org](http://www.whalefoundation.org)). We look forward to hearing from you!

## 2010 FALL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SEMINAR AND LIAISON TRAINING

- Date: Saturday, October 23<sup>RD</sup>
- Flagstaff Photography Center—Flagstaff, AZ
- This educational event is *free* and open to the entire river community.
- Lunch is provided and mileage stipends are available for out of town attendees.

Our Health Services Committee will host this day-long workshop. The HSC will provide tools for the river community about real life challenges that guides, passengers, friends, and/or family members may experience on the river. For those wondering "What's the main role of a liaison?" It is simply:

1. Know about the Whale Foundation and its services. Be familiar enough with what we do to inform someone else and answer questions.
2. Be able to recognize problems.
3. Respect confidentiality.
4. Be a listener.
5. Be objective about the problem and the person who is experiencing the problem.
6. Be non-judgmental.
7. Be able to make yourself accessible. You are comfortable talking to people about personal issues. You are comfortable approaching someone or someone approaching you.

Mark your calendars now. To sign up or to get more information, call Fran at 928-774-9440.

## GTS 7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HEALTH FAIR

Sixty-eight guides spoke with our providers about their medical, mental, or dental issues at the GTS Health Fair. These guides were screened for potential problems such

as cardiovascular disease, leukemia, liver and kidney function, electrolyte imbalances, diabetes, thyroid function, anemia, infection, women's health and prostate issues. We also had screenings for dental health, depression, skin cancer, and physical therapy advice. We handed out free mammogram vouchers for those at risk for breast cancer.

Our volunteer providers are the key to the success of this "health awareness" opportunity. We would like to give Wyatt Woodard, FNP a *huge round of applause* for organizing another successful fair! Also, we owe many thanks to the healthcare providers who volunteered their time and expertise: Dr. Carl Bigler; Dr. Jane Bigler; Susan Ash Ghiglieri; Susan Hamilton, RN; Beth Kennedy; Dr. Jim Marzolf; Dr. Pearish Smith; Kelly Rowell, PT; and Laurie Steinhaus, FNP. We would also like to thank Sonora Quests Medical Labs and Northern Arizona Radiology for their contributions and support for this event and Hatch River Expeditions for providing the space for another great Fair and GTS.

## SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DEADLINE—JUNE 1, 2010

The money raised at the February WingDing makes this scholarship program possible; we want to again send a profound thank you to our sponsors/donors for their generous support. Awarding scholarships to guides in career transitions is one of the best things the Whale Foundation does to support the river community. Kenton's legacy and spirit is celebrated in each of these awards.

We encourage guides to apply for these grants since the scholarships are given to those with traditional and non-traditional educational paths. To insure impartiality all applications are blinded before a rigorous review. Applications may be downloaded from the website or mailed to you from the office. Please have *all materials* submitted by the June 1, 2010 application deadline!

## WHALE FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The 2010 Board of Directors includes: Bianca Bauch, John Crowley, Alida Dierker, Dave Edwards, Dan Hall, Susan Hamilton, Sharon Hester, Elena Kirschner, Pat Rose, Christa Sadler, Derik Spice, Alex Thevenin, and Wyatt Woodard. Thanks to these committed individuals for donating their considerable talents and time to support of our river community. If you are interested in volunteering for the Board or in other capacities, please give us a call. We look forward to hearing from you!

## Marble Canyon Days

LOOKING UP FROM MY BEDROLL, it seemed that the rim of the Canyon was almost out of sight in the sky. Layer upon layer of gray limestones, red shales, and yellow sandstones were piled upward for some 4,000 feet above our campsite. We were located on a sandy talus pile at Mile 41 (below Lees Ferry) of the Colorado River in Arizona.

The soothing sound of the running river made us all want to continue our sleep, in spite of a crisp wind that blew dust into our faces. Who would weaken and get up to start the communal campfire? Finally, most of us gave up, rose, and hurried into our pants and shoes. It was after 6:00 A.M. and time to start the day.

A lonely hawk looked down on us and was puzzled by the presence of humans. Even in 1950, few adventurers came this way, but we did have an excuse. We were investigating sites that would safely support a high concrete dam. This nearly inaccessible area—along with several others—was being inspected, the Canyon cross-section measured, and the geological features evaluated. Preliminary core drilling was then considered if the management showed sufficient interest.

We felt that we were veterans by now. Some of the team had come from Boulder Dam and had also pioneered at Bridge Canyon in 1946. The crew was enlarged with World War II vets for the Glen Canyon exploration in 1947–50. We were now tackling the more difficult conditions in Marble Canyon. An attractive site was found at Mile 32.8 below Lees Ferry. Further, downstream, the Mile 39.5 alternate was also to be examined.

Great ingenuity had been required to transport the drill barge, core drills, pipe, compressors, shop, and camp to the Marble Canyon Dam site. It had been necessary to move the equipment from Lees Ferry overland some eighty miles to the Rim of Marble Canyon. At this point the rim was over 2,500 feet above river level. Here, the Bureau of Reclamation team performed a small miracle. With limited funds and construction experience, the team built tow high-lines; the upper one had a 2,100-foot drop and the lower one a 400-foot drop. The exploration equipment and men could then be lowered to river level quickly and safely. Actually, we thought “quickly” was the more descriptive of the two. After our first cableway trip down to the river, my boss turned to me and asked, “Are your fingerprints indented in this steel angle iron like mine are?” Every trip down and back was an adventure.

Moving our war surplus boats to Mile 32.8 on the river had not been easy. During the initial run from

Lees Ferry, one boat was dumped in Soap Creek rapid and some equipment lost. Several of the crew didn’t want to try that swim again! Incidentally, during the next year, one of the few adventurers trying to run the river was drowned in this same rapid. Today, with the controlled river flow and much improved boats, Soap Creek is probably not so formidable.

Returning to the story...two days prior we had lined our boats through two large rapids, ran several small rapids, and established a camp at Mile 41. The engineers thought the Mile 39.5 canyon cross-section was comparable to the dimensions at Mile 32.8 and would also gain thirty feet of hydraulic head. So the examination proceeded. Tom, the veteran topographer, had noted a convenient chimney in the steep canyon wall. He believed that by climbing this chimney, critical survey points could be established several hundred feet above stream level.

As you may know, climbing one of these chimneys involves moving upward by placing your back against one side and your feet against the other side of a “V” or “U” shaped, near-vertical indentation in the canyon wall. In this case, necessary surveying instruments had to go along. At least they weren’t encumbered by modern rock climbing equipment. I guess such equipment had not been invented, or at least it was not in common use in the U.S. Our men had only boots, fingernails, and guts. Off went Tom and his rodman. After looking at their proposed route, I was glad my job description didn’t call for my participation. I spent the day making notes on the local geology near river level.

The two surveyors were back by suppertime, and Tom, in his calm manner, said they had a good day. After chow, the rodman, who looked pale, confided that he had a nervous stomach. While at the top of their climb, he said he couldn’t decide whether to stay up there and starve to death, or fall down and get things over with quickly. He added that he couldn’t understand how an old guy like Tom could climb like that and act like he was just crossing the street. Actually, they were both extraordinary individuals and would have been great companions to our modern rock climbers.

We all hit the sack shortly after dark since we were 350 miles from Las Vegas, had no electricity, and had to conserve the fuel in the one available Coleman lantern. Soon everybody was snoring—except me. The first winter storm was passing through. A light snow fell on the rim but little precipitation reached the floor of the Canyon. However, the temperature had dropped to



*Looking south at Mile 32.8 site. Note camp tents in upper left of photo.*

about 35 degrees Fahrenheit in contrast to the 101 degrees I had left in Boulder City three days before. I was huddled in my summer bedroll (a 1935 kapok number) that must have been designed for summer in the Sahara Desert. About 2:00 A.M., I was cold and still trying to go to sleep. The scene was very quiet with the sound of running water forming a background broken only by an infrequent bird's cry or a snort from my sleeping companions. Then, in the far distance, I heard rocks rolling. In a few seconds, the sound became appreciably louder. A flash thought told me, "There is so much room out here, no way could those rocks hit us." The noise became louder with each second and I decided

to awaken the other men. For a few more seconds, we were hypnotized by the approaching sounds that were continuously increasing in volume. Following a cry of "hit and ditch," we all fell through the black night into a steep-sided gully that split our talus pile campsite. Then in a rush and a crash came a shower of rocks raising a cloud of unseen dust. After the excitement died down, we decided that the original rock dislodgement must have occurred 3,000 to 4,000 feet above us. Probably over a minute elapsed from the time I heard the first noise until the missiles arrived. During this period, I discovered how many thoughts a person can have in such a short time.



*Cage nearing river level on lower highline.*

After daylight, we traced the path of a three-foot diameter piece of sandstone. That rock had missed my bedroll by four feet and had passed within six inches of the bedroll next to mine. After that disclosure, I always felt more kindly toward my kapok bedroll. If it hadn't been so worthless sleepwise, the rocks might have surprised us to death.

I learned a lesson there in Marble Canyon: Don't locate your camp on a talus pile below a high, steep cliff.

The next two days were spent surveying and making a preliminary study of the geologic structure and rock formations. At Mile 32.8, the very substantial Redwall limestone formation formed the abutment and foundation. At Mile 39.5, less competent Cambrian limestone and the limy siltstone beds of the Muav were encountered. A gradual northerly dip of the formations as well as the cutting action of the river caused the older formations to surface in the canyon as one proceeded downstream. We were particularly interested in the total thickness of the Muav formation and the location of the Bright Angel shale that was not acceptable as a dam formation. To see the critical strata, it was necessary to go several miles downstream. We had been advised not to enter the Grand Canyon National Park because, even in those days, people were afraid we would contaminate the scenery.

Our plan was to reach a point where the top of the Bright Angel shale showed in the canyon wall. Then we would measure the true thickness of the Muav forma-

tion. We estimated that this job would take one long day. Fortunately, we didn't know how long that day was going to be.

Before daylight, Danny, our ex-Marine boatman, loaded fuel, water, food, and required equipment into one of our boats. Danny was a strong, curly-headed daredevil and, fortunately, adept at shooting rapids. At daylight, the other two geologists and I gathered our gear and jumped into the boat. Off we went in high spirits because this was going to be a day to remember. We were going to see the Grand Canyon.

Two men were to keep track of the stratigraphic horizons as we went downstream. The other was to help the boatman avoid rocks and to use an oar occasionally. Fortunately, our 40-horsepower outboard (large for those days) was dependable and would do most of the work. After a few enjoyable miles, we were confronted by a rapid and Danny said, "Let's line the boat through this one." We all piled out, unwound a rope from each end of the boat, and carefully let the boat float downstream in the shallow water near shore. Then back in the boat and away. This was fun!

Shortly, Danny asked, "Want to shoot this one?" We all agreed. There were several high waves to traverse, but they appeared to be conveniently spaced. Soon we went into a trough, up to the crest, down in the trough, up to the crest, down into the trough and slosh right through the last wave. Going through a wave is not sensible because you get wet and the boat takes on water. Danny got the boat ashore and exclaimed, "Let's dry out! We don't want to stay wet all day." Soon a roaring driftwood fire warmed us enough to take off most of our clothes. We dried them hurriedly because, as I had said before, fall had come to the river. The boat was bailed out and we were on our way again. This was still fun.

The day was beautiful with mostly bright sunshine and scattered puffy clouds. The river was flowing about 4,000 cubic feet per second so some places that were rapids then would hardly be noticeable with the present water releases from Glen Canyon Dam.

After shooting some minor rapids and lining through a large one, we hit a smooth stretch of water and were soon at a point we believed to be the National Park boundary. Our map said Mile 50.5. This section of the river provided an opportunity to see the Upper Rim. The colorful sequences of the entire geological section, from the Cambrian greenish Bright Angel shale to the conifer covered Coconino Sandstone at the North Rim, were really impressive. For a few minutes we were tourists and had a tremendous reaction to this great vista. We even thought to take some photos.

Our objective was to measure the total thickness

of the limy Muav formation. Soon a suitable location was noted on the east side of the river. We needed a location that we could climb, as well as be able to see each group of strata. Glen Lasson, the senior geologist, was having stomach trouble that day and he left the climbing to us. Up we went, making reasonably rapid progress since detailed rock descriptions were not critical at this time.

About 1:00 P.M., we reached the top of the Muav formation some 600 feet above river level and we were quite satisfied with the morning's work. Seemed like it was time to eat so we opened a can of WWII meat and vegetable stew, and we celebrated. The celebration was due more to our enjoyment of the wonderful scenery than to the food. We could see upper walls of the Canyon far to the west. This panorama gave us an entirely different perspective than the river-level views. Being there fills a person with a wonderful appreciation of being alive.

While "dining" we looked downward at those two ant-sized creatures who made the trip with us. They looked really small. Why were they jumping up and down and waving at us? Bill said, "How come they are making such a fuss? We didn't do anything great...just climbing up here."

After a little thought, I suggested, "Maybe they want us to come down. Maybe Glen is ill and wants to go back to camp. Or maybe the boat has sprung a leak." We hurriedly started down by slipping on outcrops and sliding on talus. Sure was easier than going up. Upon getting within earshot of the men below, we yelled, "What's the problem? Are you ill or what?"

Glen and Danny looked rather sheepish and indicated that they had some bad news. Bill and I could hardly wait to hear the bad news, particularly considering our awkward position of being on the downstream end of our travels.

As we reached river level, Danny said, "You know how our extra fuel is carried in five-gallon GI cans? Well, we have only the remaining gasoline in the outboard tank and one full GI can." Here Bill cut in, "What's wrong with that? We can make it back easily on that much fuel." Danny continued, "The only trouble is that the GI can contains diesel fuel which we use for our camp stove and heaters. It was dark this morning while I was loading the boat and I just picked up the wrong can." This statement was a bomb!

Disturbing thoughts flooded our minds, like, "We can't walk back: Will the outboard motor run on diesel fuel? Can we shoot the rapids upstream?"

We would have soundly cursed out our boatman if we hadn't been so far from camp. Bill and I looked at Danny and sarcastically asked if we must walk or

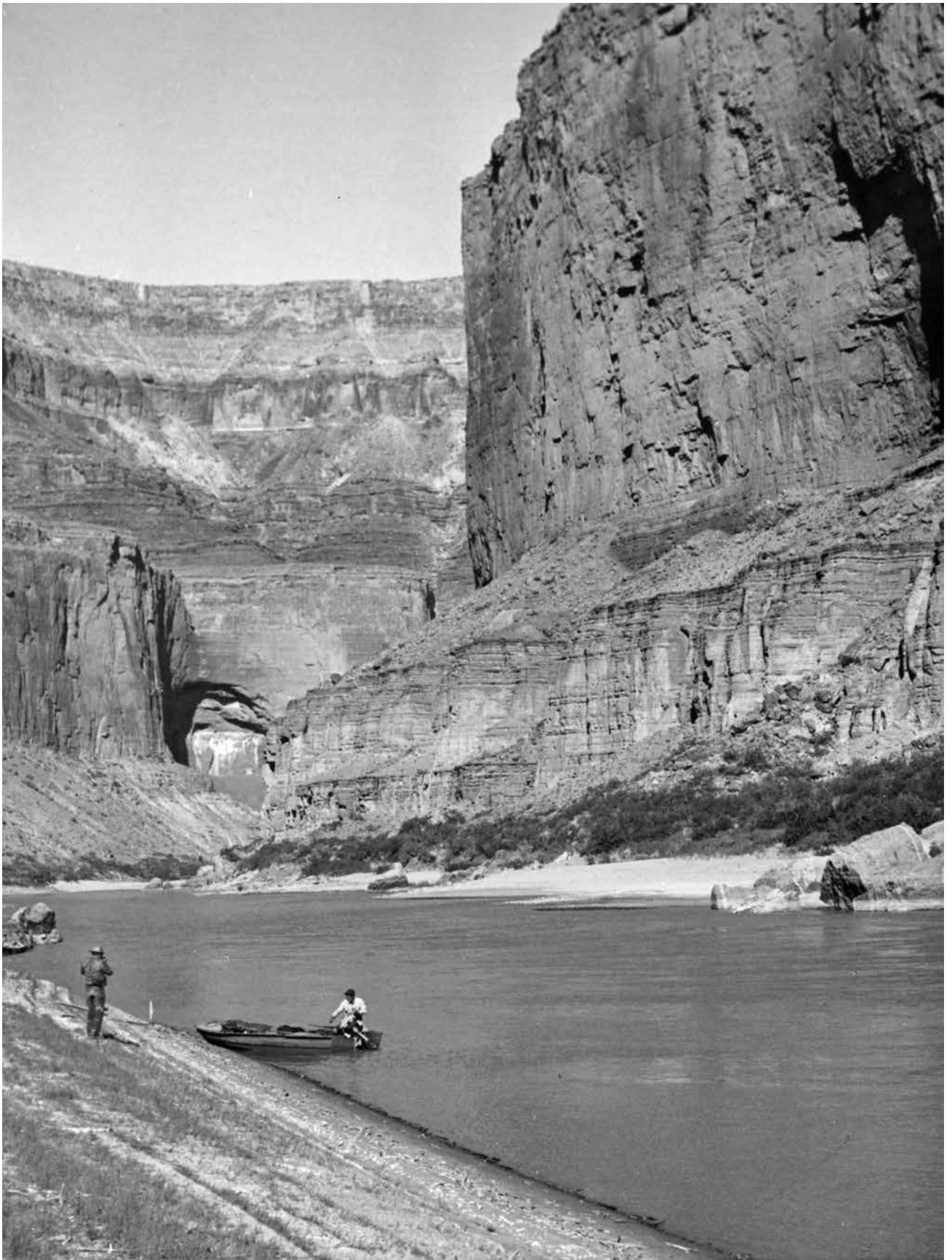


Route of 2500-foot elevation highline to rim of Marble Canyon.

ride the ten odd miles back to camp. It was 2:00 P.M. by then. We were not prepared for an overnight stay as far as clothing, sleeping bags, drinking water, or food, so immediate action was imperative.

Danny had been thinking. He figured that the outboard motor would not run on pure diesel but if we could dilute the gasoline in the tank in correct proportion, the motor would run. He poured diesel into the two-thirds full tank and we took off upstream.

I don't know how often people run *up* the Colorado River, but we found you can do it. Other than a cloud of blue smoke, the outboard motor seemed okay—for a while. We went up a minor rapid, lined the boat through a medium rapid, started to run through another small one and barely made it. Next came some relatively smooth water which was a relief. Then came another small rapid, which we thought we could run. In the middle of the rough water, our weakening motor would only hold the boat even. It is a silly feeling to look at shore and realize that you are just sitting there without progress. A flash thought in mind was of Laurel and Hardy (the old-time comics) in this situation. I wondered what they would do. Danny yelled, "Grab the oars and row like hell! We don't want to back into that fast water!" We rowed as instructed and gradually worked our way up through the swift water. Unfortunately none of us had taken Rowing 101 in College.



*Glen Lasson and Danny Daily prepare the boat near Mile 50 for return to Mile 40 camp.*



We were making progress and had covered several miles, but the daylight was fading already. Darkness came early in this deep canyon.

We had lined the boat through the next rapids and traversed the more quiet water at a gradually decreasing rate. Every once in a while, Danny would add some diesel to the outboard motor tank. The increasing amount of blue smoke and waning strength of the motor told us that we were nearing the end of its usefulness. We kept near shore and lined the boat at every opportunity. Dark was approaching as we reached the last major rapid. While going through the “lining” procedure, it was necessary to cut off the outboard motor as usual. We prepared to leave from a gravel bar on the east side of the river. Our camp was located about three miles further upstream and on the other side of the river. We crossed our fingers and spun the starter, but couldn’t even get a sputter. After numerous tries, with no results, I suppose due to the straight diesel fuel in the tank, three of us decided we would stay all night on this gravel bar. At least our rescuers would be able to find us easily.

Danny, true to his U.S. Marine training, didn’t give up. He said, “I got you guys into this mess and I’ll get you out of it. Start a big fire with this driftwood and I’ll show you how to do it.” We started the fire and the next thing we knew, Danny set the GI can, which contained the last of the diesel fuel, right in the middle of it. I expected an explosion that would blow us all to camp or elsewhere.

We positioned the boat so we would cross the river above the rapid, providing the motor started. Danny told us he planned to pour boiling diesel from the GI can into the outboard tank. Then, wearing heavy leather gloves, he did just that. We spun the motor and eventually it caught. Amid a cloud of smoke, we all jumped into the boat, grabbed the oars, and started across the mighty Colorado. The motor was sputtering in a low horsepower mode and we were rowing as hard as we could. In the very last light of day, we were half-way across. We could see that the current was affecting our route more than anticipated. Our landing place was going to be near the house-sized rock at the head of the major rapid. Between oar strokes, I thought, “God, what did I do to deserve this?” Twenty feet from shore, the motor coughed and died in the dark—permanently. Fear spurred our rowing and nearing shore, Bill jumped in with the mooring rope. Another ten seconds and we would have been running that rapid backward, without power or lights. In the years since our trip, I’ve thought of that rock many times and always called it President Harding, after the name of the rapid.



*President Harding rapid in the daylight.*

After catching our breath, we took inventory and found in the darkness that we had no drinking water, two cans of peaches, and one flashlight. We drank the juice, ate the peaches, and took off in single-file for our camp some three miles away. There was no trail. The route lay over rocks, into shallow water, up talus piles and whatever. Danny, with the only flashlight, led the way. Due to the black night in the canyon bottom, two of us couldn’t see where we were going and did a lot of stumbling and cursing.

After about four and a half hours of this routine, we made it to camp just in time for the last hand of cards. The other campers looked at us, without concern, and said they had planned to go to bed early so they could get up and look for us tomorrow. The camp cook, whose kitchen had arrived during the day, generously offered to prepare a meal. We were playing it cool and said we would be happy with leftovers. I was pooped and even thought my inadequate bedroll sounded good. Bill punched me with his elbow and said, “Let’s have a game of Gin before we turn in.” Behind his hand, he added, “They’ll think the geologists are soft if we go right to bed.”

Two days later, I took the long drive through Zion National Park and Las Vegas to Boulder City. Thus ended my last fieldwork for the Bureau of Reclamation. It had been fun.

*Robert L. Wilson*

## Crazy Al

**Y**EAH. 1969...OR NO...that would have been '70. Later we found out the flow was around 30,000 [CFS]. The thing about Lava at that time was the big wave at the bottom, right next to the black rock, was this surging wave. It would just go down, and then come way up, maybe eight to ten feet, then down. It was pretty interesting. We had been running low water motor trips mostly, then all of a sudden we got this high flow that caught us off guard. Mike [Castelli] made a good run. When you're standing on the black rock—which I was that day—that hole was right by my feet, and that's where Tim [Allen's] boat flipped.

The rock wasn't covered up completely and there was enough there...I could jump. I had to literally just jump from shore to get onto that rock. I should have never done that jump, actually. And if I had stayed on shore I would've actually been in that picture! [laughter] Hindsight, huh?! My mouth would've been open too! [more laughter] But I had to go jump on that rock! Well, anyway, that wave had that incredible surge. I don't know what Mike did, but Mike ran it...we drew straws, because we knew this was going to be like the epic thing for us. We'd never seen water like that before. Nobody, of course, thought we were going to have a boat go upside *down*. I can't remember if we thought about the left. I think a trip prior to that I'd tried to run more left and ran the ledge hole, and I came out of that with this great insight that you certainly don't want to do that! That was a fold-the-boat-in-two job, man. Nobody got hurt, thankfully. So the next trip we realized you couldn't do that kind of a run and so...we just had to run basically down the right side. Mike went through and the surge was down. When I went through, the surge was coming up and it stopped my boat dead in the water and it dropped down and...you could feel it happening you know, and I just went on out. But because the current was so strong in there I wound up getting my boat pulled ashore on the right side, quite some distance downstream. Mike, he pulled over to the left side and parked his boat there, the typical little spot when you're doing photography stuff...

Tim was running that last boat, and the assistant was John Benedict, which is really who you see in the picture...you can see he's falling out of the boat and Tim is back behind him a little bit. He's more engulfed. "Oh shit!" [laughter] What I really think happened there, he looked like he had a straight on run, but he probably got a little bit off as that surge came up and it just went like that, you know [*mimics current*

*catching upstream edge*]...His entry and everything looked good. It looked good to me. [chuckles] We didn't know about the bubble-line run at that time. If we'd've run the bubble-line it would've been a different story...My boat was way downstream and I had all my people up there, so when that boat went over I leaped off that rock like it was nothing and everybody...we started hustling people down and I helped people who needed help, and we just tried to get down there, quick as possible. But it still took quite a bit of time before I was able to get going. But the fortunate thing about that was—it was sort of a stupid thing for me to have unloaded my boat there with all the people like that—but on the other side of the coin, the time it took to get them back made it so that I was able to go over to the spring, on the left side of the river and pick up two people that made it to shore right there. There were people on the shore just down through little Lava that I picked up. Then I started collecting stuff from the boat, all the way along the river, and caught up with Mike and everybody else...I don't remember the exact mileage, but we went a mile and a half or so downstream, or maybe a little bit more than that, where he got the boat to shore and then we disassembled it and put it back together again. I'd forgotten about this point, but Mike mentioned that he and Richard, I think, his assistant, motored across the river and walked back up to take a look for more debris and stuff and as a result of that they saw a helicopter flying by, one of those little piston-jobs. They waved it down and that guy came back and landed on a sandbar just downstream from where our boat was. Mike asked them if they would please contact Jim Elliott and gave them a phone number...tell him that we were going to be a day late. So he did, and being a day late we were able to continue on and do our trip as a normal trip, and nobody seemed to care, which was the good part. So it worked out good. Nobody was hurt. There were two older ladies on the boat that were just scared shitless. I mean they were really scared. Everybody was pretty scared.

A couple of things happened. We camped that night down at Whitmore, where the horses would come down, and everybody pooled their booze, and we had an incredible...everybody got pretty drunk. Which was a good thing. The next morning the two ladies came on my boat, and I just had to treat them with kid gloves, you know? It was just a sales pitch the whole way to get them to get on the boat. I just had to make sure I didn't get any water on them the rest of



Tim Allen's infamous boat flip.  
photo by Kenneth Klementis

the trip, which was pretty easy to do. Treat 'em gently. The next day or the day after they were pretty much back to normal. But, aww those poor girls, I felt really sorry for them. Everybody else thought it was pretty exciting.

Then Henry Falany of course, later, had the classic... "I'm going to paint ARTA on the bottom of all my boats!" [laughter] I thought that was a really good one. [more laughter] I heard that Sanderson... the ranger told me he was pretty sure that Sanderson flipped a rig like that prior to us. He wasn't certain. He said "I found out about it, but they tried to not let it be known." He says "You guys are lucky, because you've got a big picture!" [laughter]

\* \* \*

*Allen Wilson, in his day, was a typical ARTA (and now AZRA) boatman. In other words: one of a kind. Totally unique (but also: funny as hell, wildly enthusiastic, super smart, and extremely competent too). When Allen started, they still had the swimming pool at Phantom Ranch. You could camp there. People cooked on wood. They had to dig outhouses, sometimes, back at company headquarters just to get a job in the first place...*

*This interview took place at Allen's house in Gold Beach, Oregon over three days starting October 28<sup>TH</sup> 2007, thanks to the generous adoption of Allen by Mike Castelli, another typical ARTA boatman, who, Allen kept*

*saying then, really should've been getting interviewed himself. Allen, already getting educated as to how drawn-out this Adopt-a-Boatman deal sometimes is, finally just adopted Mike himself by recording and transcribing a little interview on his own (take note, prospective adopters)—a pretty hilarious segment of which will be in this issue too if we're lucky.*

*These pages, as usual, are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what we actually recorded, and Allen's memories of all the wild and crazy times he really had...*

\* \* \*

**WILSON:** My dad was Ira Wilson. He was born in 1891 on the plains of Kansas in a sod house, and lived there until he was sixteen. Then they auctioned their farm off and went by train to Washington state. To give you an idea of what that was like, as kids they went out and picked up buffalo chips to cook their meals with. There were no buffalo there but the chips were still there and they were still using them for fire. I've got an incredible picture of my granddad sitting in front of the sod house with his long rifle and a buffalo skull up on the roof and his hat tipped back, not a cowboy

hat...but sort of. He did dryland farming. My granddad died at an early age and my dad, being the oldest boy of six boys and one girl, had to take over. So dad wound up basically having to work, and went to painting on a bridge over the Columbia River, and he was watching those steamboats going by under there, so finally he went down to the docks and got a job shoveling coal on a steamboat on the Columbia River. Eventually he wound up in Myrtle Point, Oregon, where he met my mother. My dad had a service station there. Then in Gold Beach they became a consignee, that runs a company-owned bulk plant. They did it for Union Oil, and ran that for basically thirty years, and in the process opened up a tire shop just down the street a short distance, and had Firestone tires, and then my dad put a cap shop in, and I worked there as a kid a lot. He got the contract to supply all the earth-moving tires for the construction of a hundred miles of Highway 101 as it is now, which was done in the late-'50s, early-'60s. So all this highway, he supplied the tires for. Which was an incredible amount of earth-moving tires. They were six, seven feet high, standing up. I got involved in a lot of that when I was eighth grade, ninth grade, in high school.

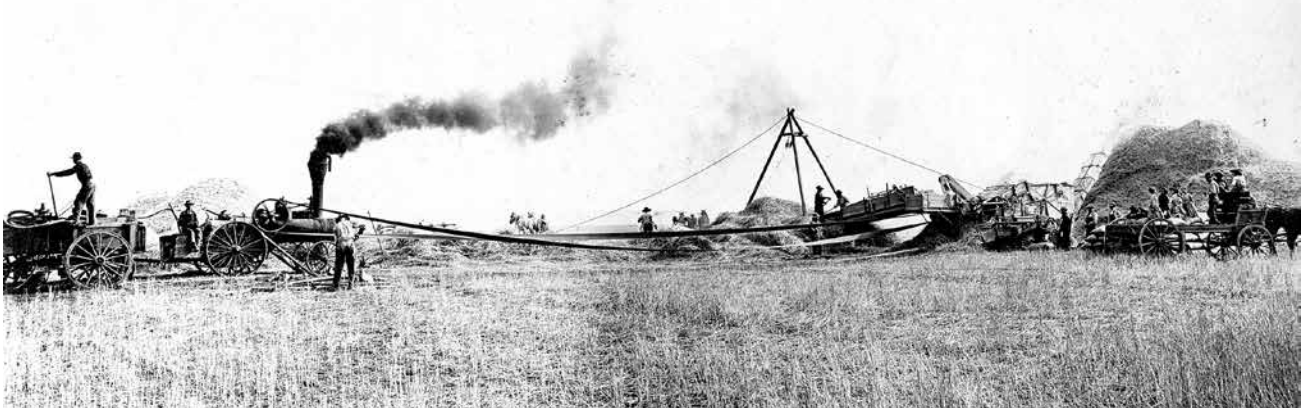


Photo top: Allen's grandfather at Wilson family sod house.  
Photo bottom: Ira Wilson working engine on thrashing team, circa 1914.

Never much on the river. My dad loved to fish and had a boat, but when I was born, he got rid of all that stuff. [laughs] I think his life just got too busy. Anyway, I never did anything on the river. My dad decided he was going to teach me to swim and took me up Hunter Creek, just right up here, and held on to my trunks and demanded that I do this stuff. But I just couldn't do it so... [laughter] I remember that real vividly. I never did learn to swim. So I always wore a lifejacket, everywhere I went! [more laughter] I mean I could paddle around. I actually felt very comfortable in the water.

**STEIGER:** How did you come to the Grand Canyon?

**WILSON:** Well, basically I spent three years at a junior college up in Coos Bay, Oregon. My parents bought me a little trailer and put it in this little trailer park. A lady in the park came one day and asked me if I wanted to work in her A&W Root Beer stand, so I went to work for her and wound up managing that place and going to school at the same time. I had these weird hours, like a full-time job at the A&W, and I was most of the time doing twelve credits, so I was burning both ends of the candle... I was doing a little book-keeping and all that, which I look back on now and go: "How in the world was I ever able to even think about doing that? But it was a good job... short-order cook, I'd wait on cars... the car-hops went out... people parked, they'd haul the tray out. I mean those girls got some good tips sometimes! [laughs] But I wanted to travel, so I bought a 1960 Volkswagen bus for about a hundred bucks, but I had to get an engine... I found one someplace and put that in it and started driving it around. I just wanted to travel the U.S., and that was my goal, and I was going to do it in this bus. I painted it red, and I'd get ready to go, and it would break down. I'd have to delay my departure. I didn't have enough money to fix it, so I had to go back and work at the A&W... I had like five "going-away" parties. [laughs] And never went away! Finally I got the hell out of there...

I stopped in Palm Springs and talked to an old friend of mine, who was retired from working for my dad in the business, and he said "You know, one thing you've got to do is go to the Grand Canyon, and if you can, get on one of those boat trips that goes down the Colorado River." He had a *National Geographic* with this story in it. He said "You just have to try and do that." That was in 1969. So I took it to heart. I just went up to the South Rim and met a couple people there that camped with me. They were a Jewish couple, real young... I was twenty, so they were probably in that 20-21 range... and in the process, I also met five guys from New York City, and did a lot of hiking around

the Rim with them, but I mean I was such a novice, and so naive... I had no clue about anything. So we're talking about going to Phantom Ranch. I said "Ok." Well that day came and I got to thinking, "you know I really would be better off if I went the next day," so I said "Well I'll just walk down to Indian Gardens." I got down there and looked back up, I go "Awww shit!" You know? There's no way I'm going to go back up then back down the next day. So I just went on down with them. Well, we're standing in the line there... I don't know if you ever had the opportunity to stand in line at the window? Where they'd roll the window up and they'd say "What do you want?" Then they'd slam the window back down. I was standing in line and one of the guys from New York, I don't know how he picked up on it, 'cause we all walked down the Bright Angel Trail and came up the river... But he spotted these boats parked on the sand bar. He said "You know, there's these boats there and this is a boatman right behind you. You ought to ask him if they need any help." So I just turned around and walked back in the line and asked him if they needed any help. He says "You know I'm quitting at the end of this trip and one of the other guys is too and they actually do need some help." He says, "Go down and talk to Deubner. He's down at the boats." So I got my drink and went down there and talked to Deubner. He says "Sure, you can work for us. We're going to need some help." So he drew a little map in the sand that showed how to get down to Meadview and South Cove, where they were taking out. I hiked back out, and wound up going to Meadview. But the thing about that hike was I'd never hiked in conditions like that before, and I... being a diabetic, I just thought that I could hike down to Indian Gardens and right back up again and I didn't have to take my insulin with me. So I wound up spending the night down there, over-eating tremendously, and when I hiked out it was hotter than hell and I was so cooked from the sun and so dehydrated, my blood sugar had to've been, you know, 12,000... I mean it had to have been really really high, and I was sick. I was throwing up. I was crawling. I just had an awful time... So that was my first Grand Canyon experience. [laughs]

Well I drove to Meadview and I'm talking to these people there and they were just excited! They just loved these guys—the ARTA boatmen, were these gods, you know. So, Jim Elliott shows up and they're just really talking nice about Jim, what a good guy he is. Jim came with the first van-truck, like a two-ton truck with a van on the back and a lift gate. It was a used Hertz truck or something like that. So he shows up and they're all out there looking at it. I'm just sitting in there drinking coffee and he comes in. They say, "Oh,

and by the way here's Allen Wilson. Deubner hired him to go on the next trip." And Jim just went berserk. [laughter] He goes "Oh God..." you know, and cussing and swearing. They're going "Wow! We've never seen this part before!"

**STEIGER:** So Jim didn't think that was such a great idea?

**WILSON:** It wasn't a good deal because he had these other two guys with him, that he'd already hired. And they were car thieves from San Francisco. [laughter] Jim and Lou [Elliott—the founder and patriarch of ARTA] had this really, really close friend who had... I don't know, they were his daughter's kids or something. They were in a lot of trouble. The cops were after them. They needed to hide out. They were just like high school kids—sixteen, seventeen years old. I worked with them for quite a little while. They were really funny. Like up at Lees Ferry, the first night at the Ferry, the bats come out and were flying around. They were so scared they crawled into their sleeping bags and just huddled under there the whole night. [laughter].

My first trip was with three boats and that was with Alan Deubner and Steve Dupuis and myself and Hugh Wingfield and then Johnny Elliott. That was my very first trip. Then the second trip was a four-boat trip where we split it into two. Then Hugh and I ran on into October doing trips, and of course all the other guys went back to school, because they were college kids, or high school kids, one or the other. Then Hugh and I were just doing two-boat trips after that. So, I wound up that first summer I got seven trips in and I started... I was on the river when the first man walked on the moon. 1969. Yeah.

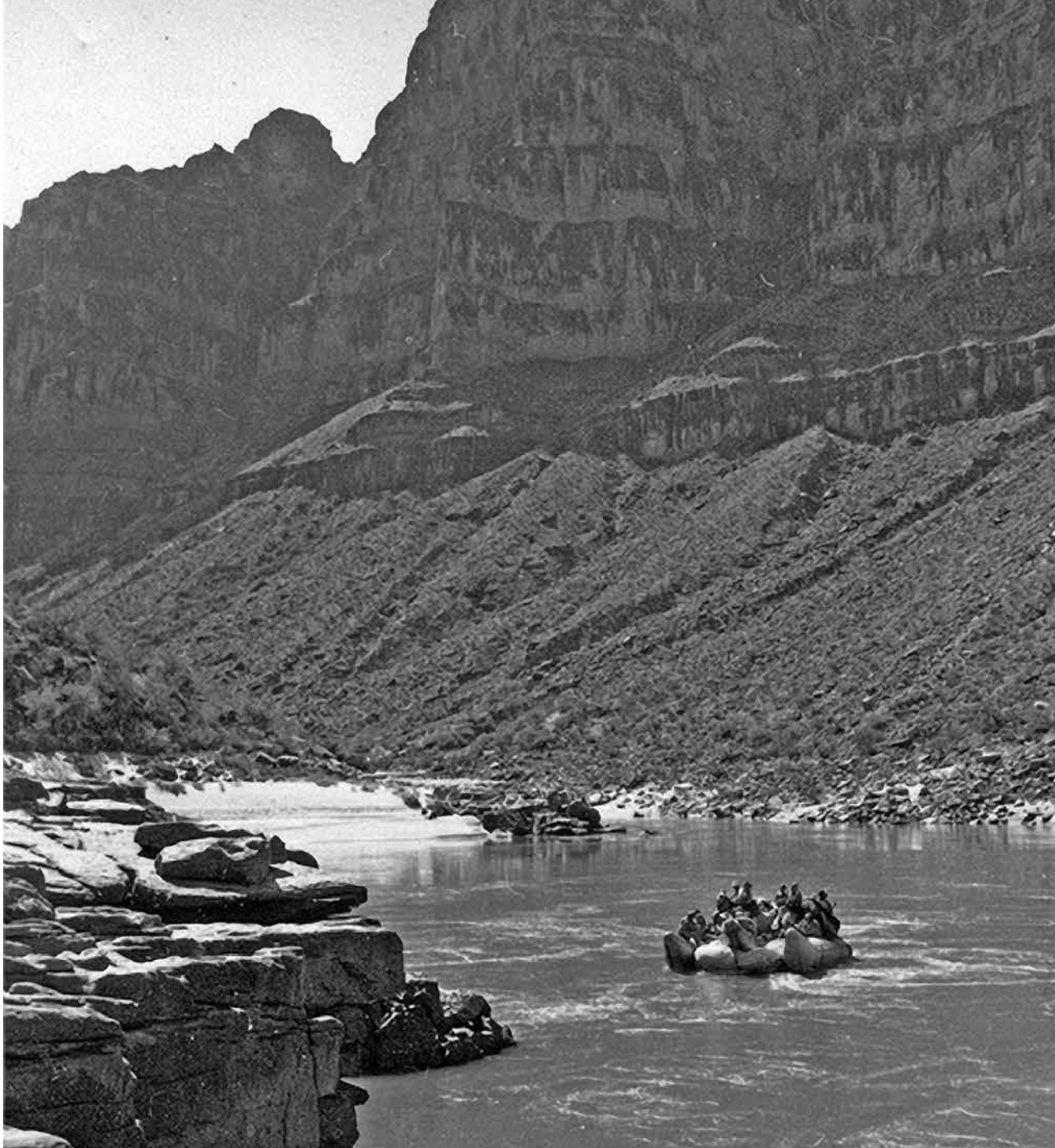
**STEIGER:** And John wasn't related, even though his name was Elliott? But Jim Elliott was Rob's little brother? And even though Jim was pissed about it, you still got the job?

**WILSON:** Yeah. Jim hung on to me. We got to be good friends. He got over it. Well, you know, like I always have a tendency to overdo things... he gives the three of us our first job... dig a new outhouse hole. The old outhouse was unusable because the shit was piled clear up into the hole; at the warehouse, which was out at the Burris Ranch. You know where Dennis Prescott, Bill Gleockler and those guys had their warehouse? Where the dome was, yeah. It was just back from there about a half a mile. We were down there renting the barn and a sort of a bunkhouse thing. But there was no water there, and no toilet so the three of us got to dig this outhouse hole. So I encouraged them to dig a hole that was about six feet deep, and we would take turns getting in the hole and shovel-

ing dirt as best we could into a five-gallon bucket and then we'd lift it out. We got this hole dug and put the outhouse over the top, and we just didn't have anything more to do. 'Cause Jim figured it would take us two days to do it, I think. We were sitting around there when they came back from town, and Jim goes, "Well, how come you're not digging the hole?" "Well, it's done." "You mean, you put the outhouse back over the top too?" I said "Yeah. Go take a look." So he goes in... Jim is such a funny character, I just love it. He goes in there and he gets down on his hands and knees, sticks his head way down inside that hole. He goes "God-damn!" [laughter] "How deep is that thing?!" He comes out, "Well, good job, you guys!" [laughter] So that was the beginning.

Lou Elliott ran the show and he was in Oakland. I didn't know who Lou was until that winter when I went back to Oakland. Alan Deubner was running the river part of it; Jim Elliott, Lou's son, was running the shore part, which included... basically Jim made his money by shuttling cars so he did a heavy-duty car shuttle the whole time we were on the river... so he kept all that stuff going and then if we needed anything like—one time he bundled up a bunch of lifejackets with a pump in the middle because Deubner forgot his pump and Jim figured that out, so he flew over the Grand Canyon and found where they were and dropped this pump in the lifejackets... just smashed the shit out of it. It wasn't any good. [laughter] Alan loved to tell that story because, well they punched a hole in a tube, you know, and they had to blow their boats up by mouth and it was quite an ordeal. [laughter].

I guess I should tell this, though I hate to do this to Lou... but Lou had the really good stuff and the bad stuff like we all do, and Lou was great, you know he just loved what he was doing and he talked about it and created enthusiasm, and provided all these different river trips. He had the largest river company in the world, when I was working for him. They had several hundred boatmen, and they were doing stuff in Australia—and that was before SOBEK—but Jim and Lou were at Lees Ferry one day, putting us on the river, and here's Lee Eastman, and he was very capable, big guy, and he had the other boat. He'd had two trips on the river: one as a passenger and the other as a helper, and he was running this first trip of his with his own boat. So he gets this motor that wouldn't run. I mean we had three motors that didn't run and we had two boats to run down the river. Well, Lou's there, and it's embarrassing because we can't get this motor to run. It'll start but it won't continue to run, and just on and on and on, you know, and so finally everybody hears



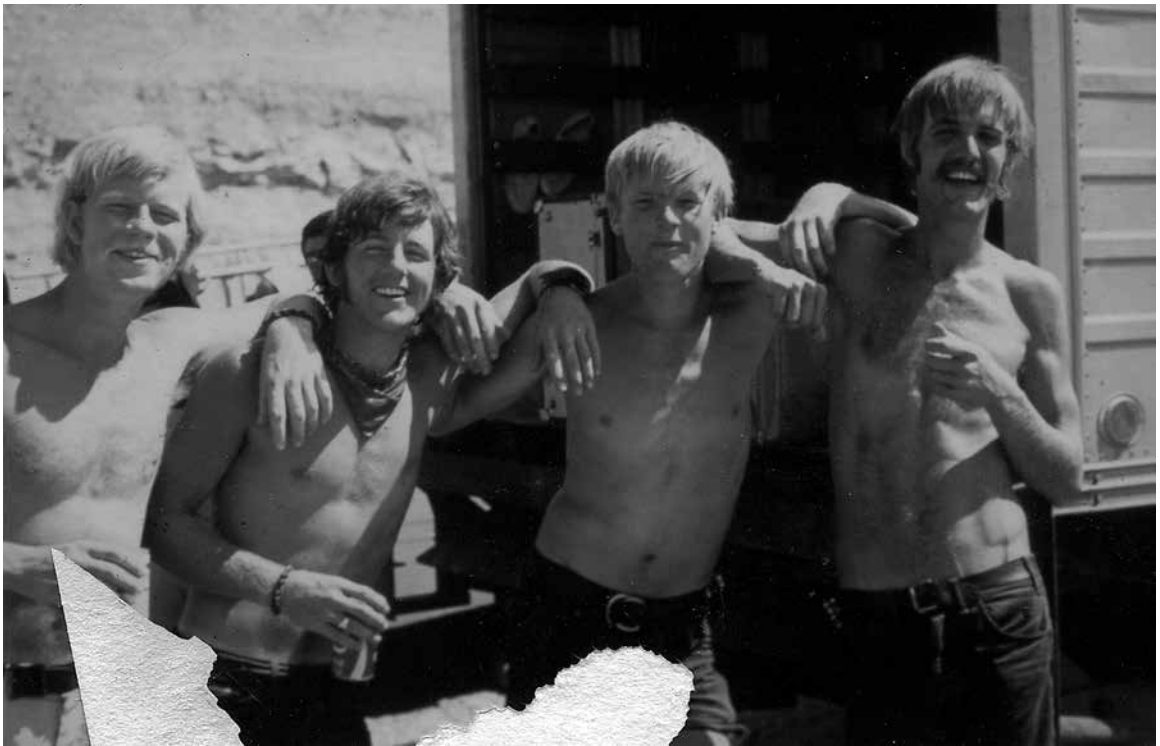
*Traveling downstream, 1970.*  
Photo by Bob Krips

Lou tell Jim “Well, push ’em off! They’ll get it going!” [laughter] So, you know, here’s Lee drifting down the river and he can’t get this motor to run.

**STEIGER:** Lou has Jim push Lee off, because he just doesn’t want them sitting there working on this motor at the Ferry? [more laughter]

**WILSON:** Exactly. So we wound up going down in the Paria riffle. Lees boat got stuck on the rocks there. I tried to bump him. I tried to push him to the left, but the way he got pushed off, he was way too far right there and the current just kind of took him down and

we’d drift along there, and I couldn’t get over on the rocky side to push him because it was too shallow. I couldn’t keep my motor in the water. Nothing worked, you know. Anyway, he got stuck down there. So, Jim Elliott rolls his pant legs up and wades out there and they settle down to figure out what’s wrong with the motor. And Jim was very mechanically inclined, so he found out that it was the fuel pump that was bad. We didn’t have an extra. There wasn’t even an extra one on the motors, because they tried all the others, none of them worked. So there was a little, ten-year-old boy



1970 ARTA crew, Bruce Simballa, unknown, Allen Wilson, Richard Nielson.

on that trip who squeezed the bulb the whole trip. [laughter] The most important part of the trip, was that little kid! [more laughter] But...having that experience...you know it would take us hours to assemble our boats and do all the rigging that it took to tie all the pieces together...but it was such an incredible learning experience and it was so...Aaah it was just... It was neat, you know? It really was. It was just really neat. And given the antiquity of the equipment, we were able to...we really got some good trips in—a lot of really really good trips. Partly because we were so enthusiastic about it. I think that's the reason why they called me "Crazy Al," is my enthusiasm was way overblown from what it should have been. I mean I was from this other world that was...look at...I grew up here, you know? I didn't even know what a desert was until I got there. And I certainly had no idea what the Grand Canyon was like. The next thing I know, I'm down there. I'm running a boat in the Grand Canyon. It was just remarkable. At least for me it was remarkable.

\* \* \*

**WILSON:** I have to tell a low water Crystal story. My first year—we actually had some incredibly low flows. In October they did clamp the water down on the

dam. In '69. That was the trip that my mother and dad came on. We had been running...

**STEIGER:** So you got them there right away?

**WILSON:** I got them as quick as I could. My dad was getting older. When I was born he was 56. So here I am, I'm twenty—so he was 76 years old. My mom was quite a few years younger than him (24), but he was a very live-wire character, and was doing quite well. So he wasn't somebody to worry about, but you never know, you know? So they came on the trip. We had some really low water, but none of the *really* low stuff where you had to make a far right run in Horn Creek or something like that. I don't know now where we did camp above Crystal, but we wound up getting to Crystal and never seeing it as low as it was. So Hugh and I, we start walking down to take a look at this thing, and you know, it's a long walk if you're going to go all the way to the bottom of Crystal. We got down where the island is, and we were looking at the island and I go, "Gosh," you know, "We don't want to walk all the way down there." Hugh says, "Let's just go run it. We'll figure it out as we go." [laughter] Here we are with these two motor-rigs, and we had to run...you know the hole. Where the hole ordinarily was at that time was a rock sticking out of the water. So we cut around that and then we headed back over to the left side of the river. That's where the main channel really



was. But we could see, as we got further down, that the channel was more or less blocked and we were just trying to weave our way through...but it was hard to do, you know, unless you tried to back all the way down, and that wasn't a viable option. So both of us got stuck on rocks below the island on the left side, really pretty close to the shore. We wound up using those old oars that we had, trying to pry the boats off. We were close together. Finally Hugh, got his boat unstuck and motored around below me and we off-loaded all the people except for three or four guys, and we just got in the water and started lifting my boat up and shoving it through this little pile of rocks that were probably only two feet high. It wasn't bad, but it took some work.

That was a pretty interesting thing. That whole idea

“We'll figure it out...” you know? I always laugh about that. We didn't want to walk down there and look. There really wasn't a way. Once we were in there it was obvious that it wasn't going to be an easy trip.

\* \* \*

**WILSON:** Did you ever meet Vern Taylor? Geology Professor at Prescott College? I ran into Vern a lot because he was running these oar trips with kids, from the college. And it was neat. They had several Army ten-mans, doing these trips. So I had the opportunity to talk to them a lot and sometimes I'd see them for two trips and talk to them. I always enjoyed just talking for a few minutes and then going on. Well, one



*Cooking on the river, circa 1970.  
Allen Wilson (shirtless), brother Bruce Wilson  
(squatting) and assistant Tony (plaid shirt).  
Photo by Bob Krips*



Bruce and Allen Wilson, 1970.  
Photo by Bob Krips

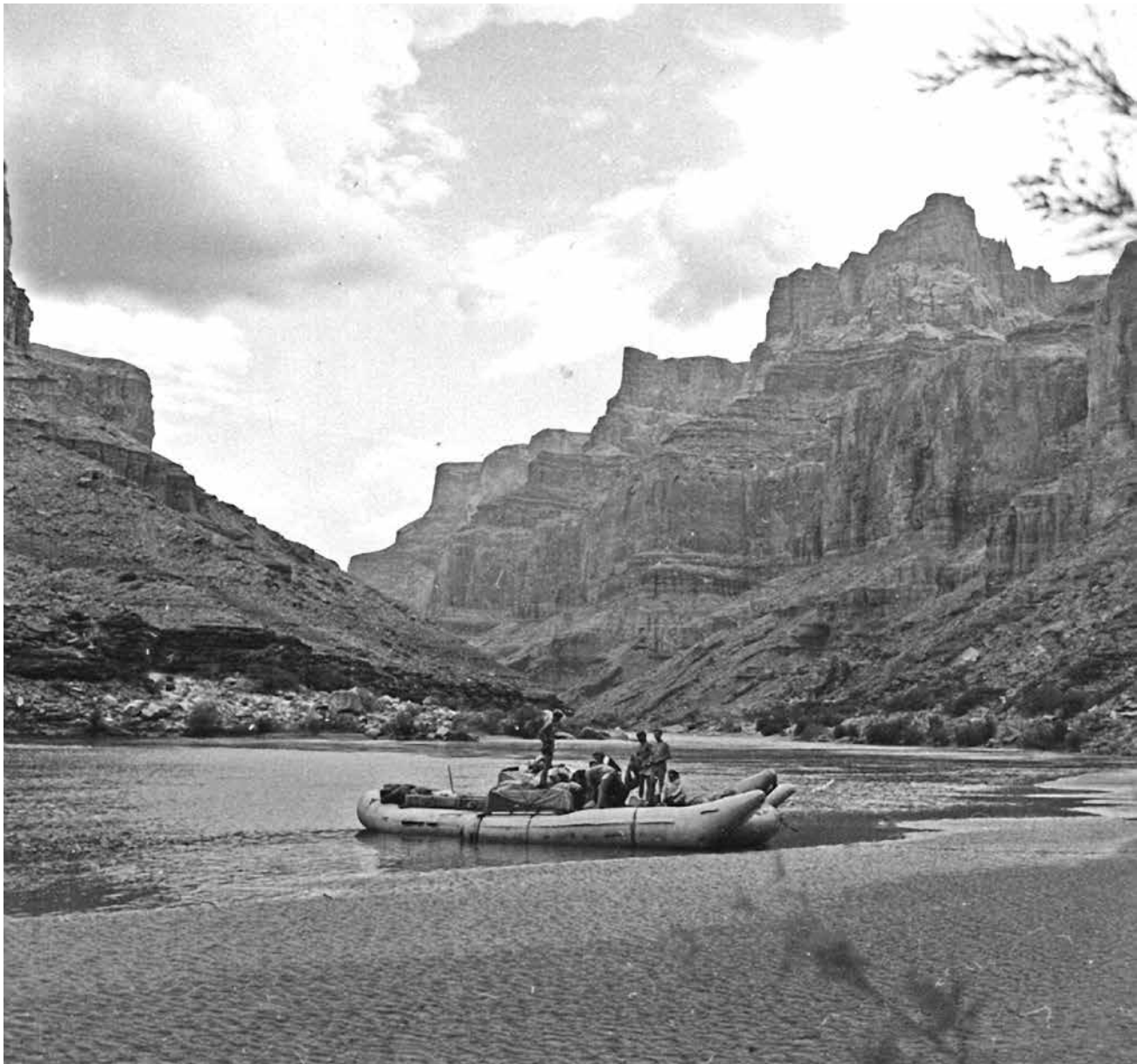
time...Gosh, I have no idea what the flow was, but it was probably ten- or 15,000... we came across him, he was at Horn Creek, standing there on the right side looking at the rapid and they had...you know these little rubber duckies you could buy them at K-Mart? They weren't plastic, they were Taiwanese rubber with a little screw-valve, yellow. Yeah. They had a little floor in them and they were pretty small. Well, he took two of those and tied them together and he and another guy were paddling this thing down the river. They carried a spare; it was small enough they could carry a spare; and they had freeze-dried food and stuff with them. So when we got to Horn Creek...you know I never owned a camera down there and it kills me because that would've been a perfect picture. Anyway, I see him there, so we stopped at Horn Creek. I already had run into him earlier somewhere on an earlier trip. I walked down, looking at the rapid. I asked, "Well, you want us to wait around for you, see how you do?" He says, "Aww no, we'll be alright." But I could tell he was pretty nervous about it. So we went ahead and ran down, and I got down to above 94-Mile Creek, and I'm thinking, "You know, I should never have motored away from him...so I turned around and motored back upstream, got right up to the base of the rapid just as they flipped. One guy was drifting downstream

and I picked him up. Vern was stuck in the eddy on the left side. You know, that tiny little spot, beating against that rock cliff there. His boat was in there and he was standing on shore, it was upside down, it was just a catastrophe. So I was able to motor across the river. I just plowed across and smashed into that little tiny eddy and a couple of my passengers got off and helped him get all his stuff up on the boat. I had to keep the motor running full power, because I was going to leave, you know. Got all the stuff on the boat, and we crashed out of there. [laughs] Literally crashed out of there and went downstream. He spent a couple of days, two or three days with us. [laughs] Didn't want to get off that big boat, yeah. We had good food, too! He had a little bit of, oh, Southern Comfort, which I later—a year or two later—got really sick on. So he shared his little flask of Southern Comfort with us as we were going down the river that afternoon. [more laughter]

I'm really glad I went back. I felt so bad about not doing it at the beginning but I just sort of took him literally when he said he didn't need any help, which wasn't the thing to do. But anyway...so I got to know Vern a little bit because of that, which was really pretty nice. He told me a lot of interesting stories about how he got involved with the Hopis and, apparently...he was talking about how he found the Sipapu and led them to it, and some things like that. He claimed to me that he found it for the tribe. They didn't know where it was, it was lost in their legends. I'm sure he told me that.

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**WILSON:** In 1971 I was trying to get people to come on the river, on a private trip, who had experience with geology. I also wanted to get some people who had a lot of experience with photography, and natural history. I wanted to do individual trips...I was particularly interested in the Hopis and what was going on in the Canyon. But the first thing was the geology. I was primarily interested in that. So I went over to NAU that summer, into the geology department and I see a bunch of guys in a room there so I walk in, "Is anybody interested in going down the Grand Canyon?" and they just all, "Yeah!!!" [laughter] "What you got going?" I said, "Well, I have this boat and I want to take some people who understand the geology of the Grand Canyon, I'm wanting to learn about it." So they're all going "Well, god, you know..." and they just went around the room and finally, "You know, none of us can do it. Nope, none of us can go." It turns out that all of them were writing their thesis. So one of the fellows was John Hendricks. At the end of the summer



*On the river, 1970*  
Photo by Bob Krips

I was in El Rancho, it was late at night and there's John Hendricks. I'd forgotten about him, but he comes running up to me "I've got the perfect guy for you to go on a river trip with! He wants to go now." It was Don Elston, and that was the beginning of a long and very interesting and fun experience, you know, working in the Grand Canyon for Elston.

They were taking core samples and doing paleomagnetic work for a variety of things they were trying to find out. So we drilled thousands upon thousands of vertical feet of red rocks in the Grand Canyon. We got to see some places that have probably only been seen by a few people, because of places we had to go

to get the red rocks. It was just a neat experience. Don was quite a character. And I got to know Ivo Luchitta on those trips too. The first trip I did with Elston, Ivo was on it.

There was a USGS lab at the Forest Service Station out on Highway 180... They had these big coils where they stored the rocks to keep them from losing their magnetic field. They had two magnetometers for measuring the magnetic field in each core. Students from Cal-Tech would come with Gene Shoemaker to work with the red rocks, and they would live in some of the other buildings at the station. They'd go out on field trips, collecting cores then come back to the lab and

spin these samples.

Basically, Don or Gene wanted to drill all the red rocks in the Grand Canyon. The red sedimentary rocks have iron in them. When the particles lay down in the water they orient themselves to the North Pole as it was then. We would put a tube over it with a little slot in it so they could scribe the core with a brass marker and then we would orient it for strike and dip, the note-taker would come along and detail the geology of the location, and they take that information back and spin that core at the lab. With all that data they had, and the notes in the field, they could spin it and create a magnetic field. They could tell where the magnetic pole was at the time by the sediment particles in that rock... That's been a long time ago. I knew more then than I do now... the Flagstaff USGS had a machine shop and so they had all this equipment built there.

The McCullough chainsaw motor had a... basically it was a water cooled one-inch diameter diamond bit, and we had to haul the water. We were hauling water up cliffs to cool this core-drilling machine... but with Don that was the primary goal, to get these cores, you know, that, and then we of course had steak and whiskey! [laughter] The huge beach across from the Tanner Trail, we would camp there for like four or five days straight, and we just went up all those red-beds, up through all that Precambrian sedimentary rock. We worked hard in those sections up there. Very interesting. As you go up, you know, you also wound up going way back into those canyons.

**STEIGER:** So you were basically the outfitter for the USGS?

**WILSON:** We used our oar-powered snout boats and they had one boat of their own. Marilyn [Sayer] and I together had two boats. They built one of their own, which they called the Giant Arthropod. So we used those three boats, and then I was their guide, and I



*Allen Wilson sitting on snout rig with Marilyn Sayer on early private trip.*

worked in the field. I did anything, from packing the water, which was one of my big jobs, to boring the holes, to even orienting the cores. I never took notes. They didn't trust me in that department. [laughs]

**STEIGER:** And that was before the Park made the quota, huh? So anybody then could've started a river company?

**WILSON:** No. They'd already said "No new companies." Earlier there were twenty companies, then Vladimir Kovalik got one more.

**STEIGER:** Not just Vladimir, that was Vladimir and Ronn Hayes together.

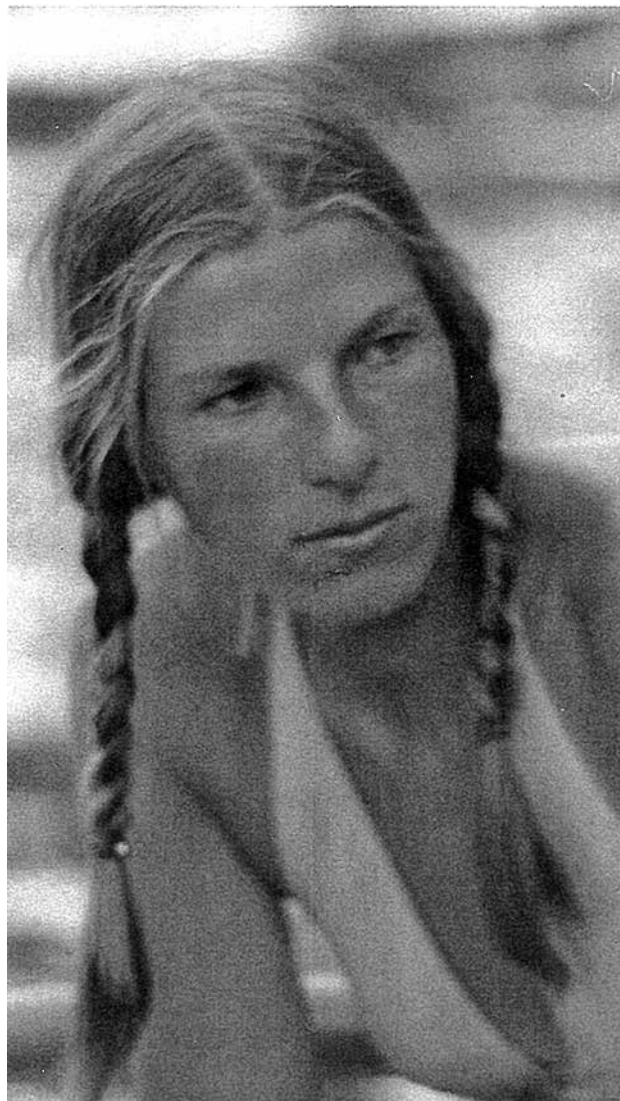
**WILSON:** Yeah. You know I ran into them a lot in Flagstaff during that time. They were around there a lot, trying to get that together. They stayed one night with Marilyn and I in our trailer house. Then I got to see them on their first commercial trip down there. Well, they seemed to be doing all right. It really was funny. I didn't know they were on the river. But when we ran House Rock I... you do that little right hand cut and if everything works out right, which ordinarily it does, you slip around the holes and you go on down the river. Well I just cut a little too close to the

shore and I spun in there to where they had the boats parked. So I just reached under the load and grabbed a six-pack of beer and I threw it to Vladimir "Here's some beer for you!" and I just backed out and left. Like I meant to do it! [laughter]

But prior to that October trip with the USGS, I did two private trips, and David Kay, from the Oakland ARTA office, helped me get some people together for that. I charged 'em three hundred dollars a person for a three-week trip. Actually, I was making money, because the cost of the trip was way under that. David got some pretty well to-do people on some of those trips for me. But you know the funny thing of it was, I perpetually would forget to fill out the form for the permit, and so I called, it was Warren Hill, I believe, was the ranger then...I'll never forget, this one time I gave him a call and said, "You know I've got a private trip coming up in just a month and I'm hoping I can get the permit for that." He says, "Oh, what day?" and I told him. He goes, "Well I'll tell you what, I'll mail the permit up to Lees Ferry and you could just fill it out up there and everything will be free and clear for you." So when I got to Lees Ferry the ranger said, "Oh, well you've gotta do this..." and so I, real quick, filled out the form it wasn't much. So both of those trips, actually, were done *really* spur of the moment, with no hassle, and the next year was the same way, but after that, it became more popular, and they had to start figuring out how to control that.

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**WILSON:** Marilyn Sayer. Yeah. She was really the first woman to work commercially on the River—after Georgie. I'd been on the river for three years when we got together, I met her on one of our commercial trips. Her and a friend came down and she stubbed her toe one night on the ledges, and I doctored it for her, and we kind of got together on that trip. Then I went and visited her in the Bay Area. I learned...she had a top-secret clearance from the Air Force; worked as a programmer for General Electric. It occurred to me at this point in time, it was all having to do with rockets and launching facilities off of aircraft, you know, that type of stuff, munitions, programming and software to make these things work, I guess. But it was really top-secret...So she took a leave of absence, which they gave her for a year, just so she could come down to the Canyon. She had hooked up with me and decided that she wanted to give it a try: living with me and working on the River. I mean a capable, capable person. The first deal was, that nobody would hire her as a guide. She could be my assistant all she wanted, but she could



Marilyn Sayer, 1971.  
Photo by Louise Teal

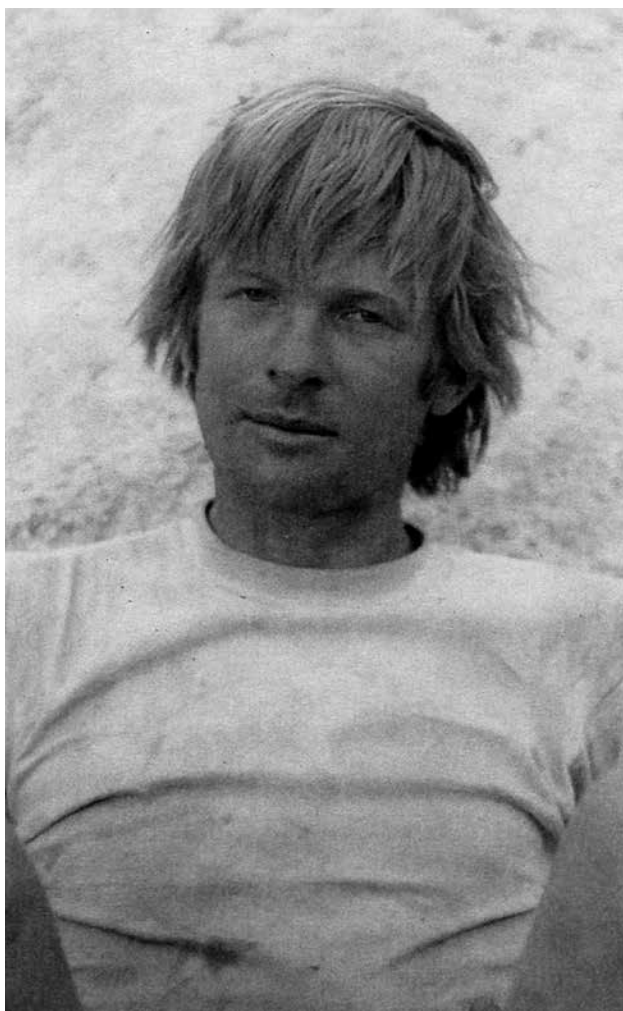
never run a boat. This is from the ARTA office. It probably was Lou [Elliott] and David Kay. David Kay was office manager, and he sort of ran the day to day operations of the company out of Oakland, and Lou was there, and of course they had to make a decision, and they didn't feel comfortable having a woman do that back then...so what we wound up doing, one winter I called companies up in Utah, trying to see if we could get a job working together up there where she would have her own boat, because she already had that snout experience with me. We'd done several of these trips where she was rowing a snout; and we had other trips where she was running motor-rigs. So she had a lot of experience; was very skilled with her river-running...I mean she was just plain great. She understood how the water flowed. She also understood how to keep an

engine from getting broken all to pieces. She just knew how to do it, you know, and talk about a back-packer! It was pretty cool. She was very, very good at all that stuff. Very personable. People loved her. She was a neat person.

She finally got to work down there because ARTA hired a manager, I believe his name was Mike Wells, and ARTA had just moved to Parks, like the the first year there...Marilyn came into the picture before that. But we wound up moving out to Parks, and the first area manager there was this Wells guy, and so, you know, we went to him and said, "Hey, could Marilyn—would you let her run a boat?" "Well sure!" [laughter] So he put her on. She'd already done a bunch of trips, you know, running her own oar boat, especially. So she just got in there and started doing it, you know. I don't know what more to say. That was it. Some of my best days in the Grand Canyon were with her.

**STEIGER:** What year was that she started?

**WILSON:** I'm thinking it must be '72. I basically ran



Allen Wilson

three years of motor-rigs with some snout boat experience in there...and they didn't want me rowing...that was the other thing. I couldn't get a job working on the snout boats, because I was too small. They were bringing guys down from Idaho. A bunch of big, muscular characters...John Seppi is a good example, if you ever ran into John...Those were the guys that were pretty much doing it. Peter Winn was doing it and he was smaller, but that didn't count. I didn't know how to row, period. So I just decided, "Well screw it. I'm going to build my own boats." I went to Las Vegas—to Buck's War Surplus—and bought two snout tubes that were brand new, they still had the powder on them. I came out to Oregon, here to Gold Beach where my brother was, and he worked for a machine shop and got me a bunch of steel for twenty bucks or something, and then in my dad's tire shop we welded it all together and I loaded it on this trailer—it was an old trailer house, and we just cut the trailer house part off, and I hooked it onto the back of my El Camino and I went to Flagstaff with my new boat! (laughter) I had to do a lot of work on it once I got there.

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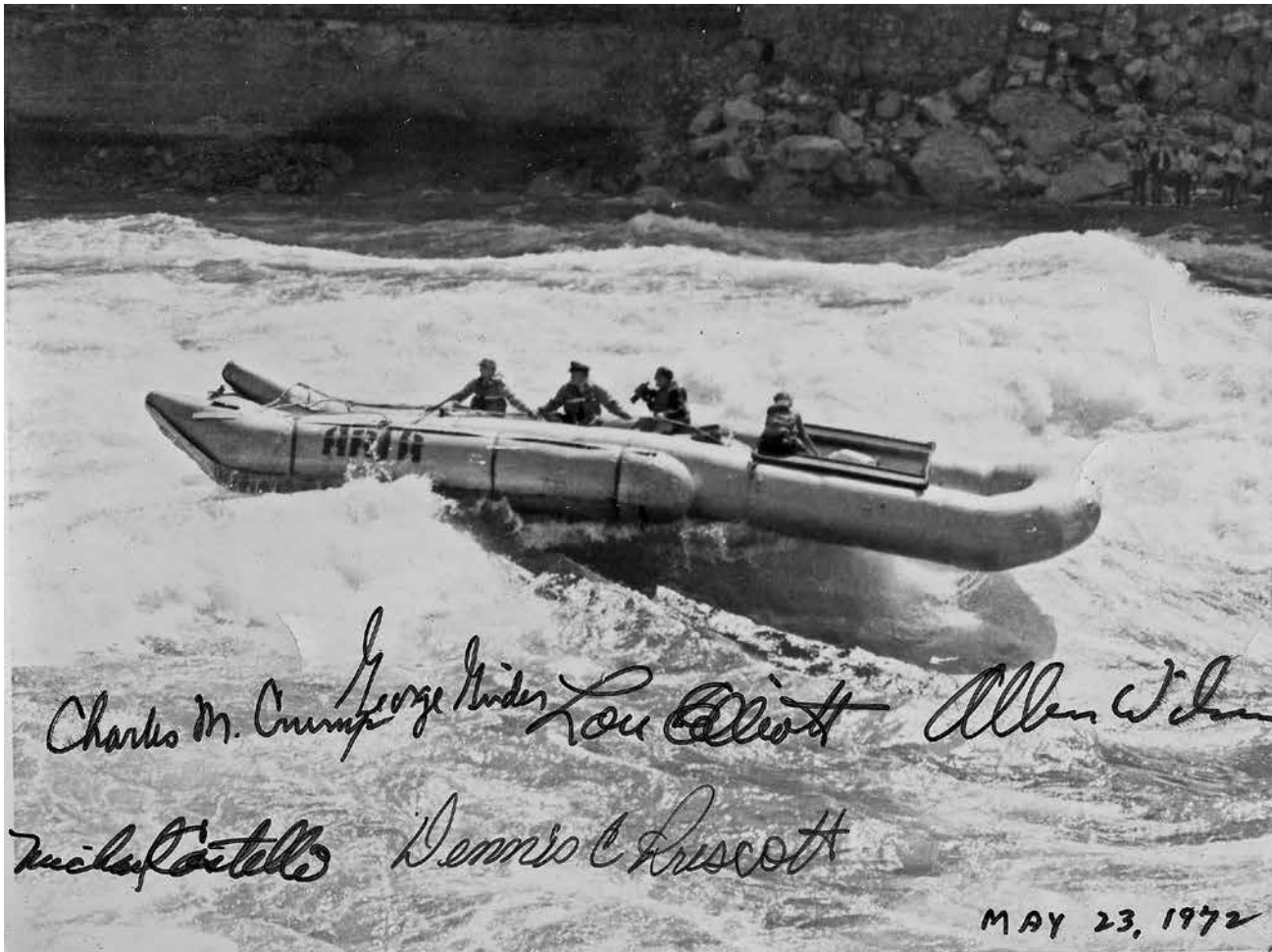
**WILSON:** The Wee Yellow was one of those Hamilton jet boats that went upriver. What year was that?

**STEIGER:** Like '56 or something like that—somewhere in there? Big water.

**WILSON:** Yeah. That boat sank in Grapevine. The first couple three years I worked down there, that boat was layin' in the bottom on the right side, at the bottom of the rapid. Lots of trips we'd go by and the water was low enough that the whole works would be just layin' there in the rocks and we could see it. It was pretty cool. And now, I'm learning a little bit about how it actually sunk there. That's one of those things...I got to see it quite often actually. One year it just disappeared. It wasn't there anymore. Were they wood-hulled? Yeah, it could have broken up. But it looked like just a full-blown boat layin' there. I always wanted to spend some time and go in there when the water was really low and grab ahold of it with ropes and try to drag it along. (laughs) But I never did, never had time to mess with that.

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**WILSON:** Our first Niagara Falls trip, as a test trip, was May 23, 1972. We were using 35-foot pontoons with two outrigger snouts, and I don't remember what we were usin' for motors, but they were probably twenty-horse Mercurys or somethin' like that. Lou Elliott had been



Boating at Niagara Falls.

communicating with George Grider. George Grider was a guy who really wanted to run the Whirlpool Rapids on the Niagara River. There's the Maid of the Mist in the falls, so the falls are upstream, and on the Canadian side you can go down to the river and do the Maid of the Mist trip, which is a boat ride out into the falls. There's like a big pool there below the falls, and it's a huge area. On the American side, they've built like half a bridge. It's a tower with an elevator in it, and this bridge thing comes out far enough so that you can stand out there on the end of it and look out and see the falls really well. That's right next to the edge of the American falls, the lesser of the two falls.

So Lou got in cahoots with George Grider and then Lou came to Arizona wantin' to find somebody who would go back there and do the trip. Well, Mike Castelli and I volunteered for that, and then they got Dennis Prescott from his motor contracting company, RELCO, to go too. Mike and I took an old International pickup and loaded two boats into it, with some motors and all that stuff, and drove from Flagstaff to Niagara

Falls. We also had this frame, and I forget who did it, but we had this motor frame that we had to be able to break it down into parts, because the only way down there was through this elevator off that half a bridge that I was talking about. So the first trip, we carted everything up onto this bridge, put it into the elevator, went down, and started putting it all together then slid it off into the river. Then we did the first run of the rapid. I've been thinkin' about it. It was a 52-foot drop in a mile. It's a considerable drop and it's a considerable distance. It's got huge waves in it. It's a wide rapid, also, and on both sides, basically, you've got calmer water, and the left side in particular there's calmer water, but there's more rocks over there. In the center are these huge, really, really big, plus-Hermit-size waves. And the whole thing was a thrill ride rapid.

**STEIGER:** The whole trip was you were gonna run this one rapid, and then that's it?

**WILSON:** That was it. They planned to make the run two or three times a day. You would motor through the rapid, and then there was a calm spot below the

main rapid, and then the river constricted right there, and created a set of waves that ended in the whirlpool. Above the whirlpool is a tramway that spans the whirlpool. The whirlpool is huge. Then you wind up goin' by the bottom ends of all these power generating plants. And it's these power generating plants that are controlling the flow of the water above Niagara Falls. They have these towers above the falls that are sucking, just suck the water in, and then they run tubes underground, clear underneath the city, downstream to these power generating plants, which hold the water in tanks at night. So they cut the flow of the falls in half during the day, and at night they cut the flow in half again. So you're getting 25 percent at night; during the day you're getting 50 percent. And they stockpile that 25 percent so they can up their generating capacity during the day. So they're getting 75 percent of the river during the day for power, and the river's getting 50 percent. Therefore they've got some falls for people to look at. Otherwise, the falls wouldn't be interesting. So we were running on—these numbers have escaped me—but it seems like 150,000 or 200,000 CFS—a pretty big flow.

We wound up makin' the first trip, and it was a success. Then we still had more testing we wanted to do. George figured it out...I forget how many million people visited Niagara Falls every year, but he quickly understood that if they could just get a small percentage, like half of a percent or something, they'd just become rich over this thing. And they were already building the trailers to haul the inflated boats on, and all this.

**STEIGER:** So you weren't gonna have to de-rig?

**WILSON:** It was just like they do in the Grand Canyon now, where they take the side tubes off and the main pontoon goes up on the trailer. One of our big jobs, it turned out...we weren't just running the river, but we were also building—they bought a tower...If you're around logging operations, there's what they call a donkey, and it's a machine that's got an engine on it, and drums of cable, and a tower that goes up. You have one cable as a main line, which can actually be anchored in a secure spot, so you've got this way to move things up and down on a sheave. So then you have a haul-back line that moves the sheave up and down, and then you hook your boat onto that sheave and you raise it up, and you blast it off the cliff, hangin' on this cable, and it goes down and you drop it in the river, and you've got a crew down below to unhook it.

George had a contract with this welding company, they built a big tubular frame that had these straps that came off, and we'd strap it around the tubes. We left the straps on the boat permanently—so all we had

to do was just couple 'em into the hooks and we'd lift the boat up and lower it down. Well, we spent two or three weeks building this, getting this thing set, and there was quite a crew that came from Arizona by then. There were a couple guys from Hatch, and a variety of different people.

**STEIGER:** I remember Breck O'Neill was in on that.

**WILSON:** Breck was there, that's right. Oh, God!

Breck! Now there's a character! You know, I hate to deviate, but Breck was really somethin'. In New York we found out right away that you could go into a bar and there'd be a bunch of sixteen-year-old girls in there! The drinking age was eighteen, but like everywhere... The bars apparently fudged a little bit. There were a lot of young girls in these bars. We'd go into a bar, five or six of us, and Breck would be there, and he was a girl magnet. It was incredible! It was absolutely incredible. And he got into more trouble, because we were living in a house that...Oh, the morals! The owners of the house were older folks who had high moral standards so there were no girls to be allowed on the front porch, let alone inside the house. Breck got caught one morning with a girl in his room, and man, that night we were gonna be out on the sidewalk, but George Grider, of course, bein' one of the richest men in the area, and our boss, placated that whole deal, and we got to stay there. But he said, "Goddamn it, you guys, quit that shit!"

Anyway, we worked a long time on this tower, and got it so the boats instead of landing in the trees below, would actually land in the river, and all that stuff... One of the Hatch boatmen turned out to be a really good operator of this donkey. It wasn't easy, because it was a matter of clutches and levers. You'd push the clutch in and the drum would release and let the cable down. You pull a lever to engage it, to get it to wind back up. You had to be pretty coordinated for that, and a lot of people were halfway decent at it, but he was the best, and he got to do most of that. I wish I could remember his name. I just can't. Those guys' names have just sort of disappeared out of my mind. I never had any written record of 'em.

But what happened, after the first trip, then we got our act together and got the boats so we could lower 'em down into the river. Then we started runnin' test trips. It was obvious we needed to do test trips, because where the constriction was at the bottom of the main rapid, was a huge wave, and it was a sharp one. It wasn't like an over-the-rock kind of wave, it was just down and up. And then the up-side was, my God, probably twenty feet or something. It was really, really big. It had a little curl on top, and it was pretty standard shape all the time. We figured we could run



around it. Actually, you could run around it on both sides, but I believe we ran the left side to get around that wave. Well, on the first or second or third trip after we got the frame put together, George Grider and his attorney and myself and Dick Overguard were on the boat. And Dick was sitting across from me...and poor Dick, he had the notoriety from flippin' a motor-rig in Badger Creek. He got stuck on a rock on the left side of Badger Creek and decided to take the side tube off to free it. And when he took the side tube off, it flipped. And that was a single-boat trip. He had a hell of a time. It was terrible.

But anyway, Dick was back there. I wanted to find out if it was possible to ferry from one side of the river to the other, and I thought we could at the bottom of this rapid. There was a lot of water and a lot of current there, and our motors were really pretty good, and it was an empty boat, except for just these three or four people on it. So when we came out of the rapid, I just pulled over to the right side of the river, then I turned back around and I ferried back across. Well, all of a sudden I found out that I was not gonna make the ferry, and I'd better get lined up and get ready to run this last little rapid here. So I turned the boat around, and the only thing I could do was just point it straight into the wave, rather than miss the thing. And that boat just went straight over backwards like that, a total endo. It was so funny, because Dick and I are both sittin' in the motor box, and he goes, "Crazy, we're gonna flip!" [laughter] We went over. And that created immediate hysteria. Every trip after that, there were helicopters. I'm surprised they didn't crash into each other. Wantin' to shoot another flip, yeah. So then a little later, the next big trip...I just, after the flip, I really wanted to get the hell out of there, really. I had what was, in effect, a verbal contract to spend two months, which was nearing the end, and then I was gonna go, because I had Grand Canyon trips scheduled. And so the sooner I could get out of there, the better. I ran a couple more trips after that, but I just decided, "Why do I need to do this?" I kind of lost my energy for it. The flip sort of took a lot out of me. The final trip I was involved in was the "Press Trip." The Hatch boatman who ran the donkey ran the boat and I went along as an observer. George got all of these TV people on board. They had TV cameras, microphones. They were packed, facing out. They were just packed in there. We hit the first big wave, and we figured out, to avoid some of the major tragedies in the center of the main rapid, that we would do a cut out over to the left side and then swing back in again, and we'd bypass one big wave. Well, in the process of doin' that, one of the side snouts started to peel off the boat, and it just

peeled. I was the guy that was watchin' the people, to make sure they all stayed on board, and the Hatch guy was runnin' the boat. The rings that were the clasps where you snap 'em together, those rings all broke. So that snout just took off and went on down the river on its own, and only one person fell off, but he was right in the front of the boat. So I ran up through all these people and I got up there, and I just jerked that guy out of the water! You can really get a lot of adrenaline goin' on something like that. Anyway, that was filmed close up. That was amazing. After that, I was on the news every night. I finally got so tired of the reporters, that on these test trips, the news cameras would be at the take-out, and I would have the assistant motor the boat up to shore, and I'd get off the boat before everybody else, and I headed down to a bunch of trees down the other side of the gravel bar, and let the assistant do the talkin'. (laughs) It wasn't long and I was outta there.

They were still coming out of the 1800s there in Niagara Falls, New York. The thinking processes were really...I mean, this is an east coast industrial area... The puritanical stuff there, the religious stuff...and here's these weird characters from California, beards and cutoffs with pockets hangin' out the bottom, and all this stuff, comin' in there, chewin' tobacco,...And runnin' the Niagara River was really big news.

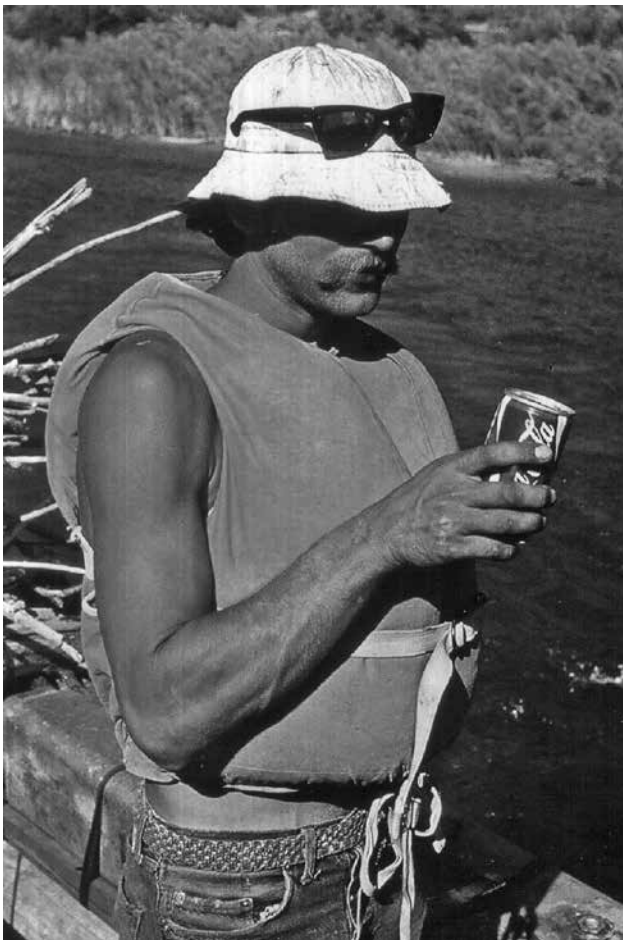
The Canadian government just said, "Do not touch our soil." They didn't want to have anything to do with it. The whole thing was a really, really big deal. The next year...there was a core group of guys that stayed there. They did start taking people down the river, but that winter George went to some university and had 'em design a boat, rubber raft, that would be "unflippable." They built this big thing, and there was a picture in the newspaper. I think I've got the picture in my scrapbook, wherever it is here, of that boat upside down. It flipped, and from what I understand, they had seatbelts for the people, so they wouldn't get thrown off the boat, and six people drowned in that episode. It was just not supposed to be able to get upside down. That ended the business, and George Grider was in lawsuits for years over that. That was too bad, 'cause he was a really nice person: submarine captain in World War II, wrote a book about it; vice-president of the Carborundum Corporation. I mean, he was a big man in town, and a really, really good guy. I took him several runs down through the rapids, and he just loved it, he thought that was the coolest thing in the world. Nothing seemed to faze him. There was no end of nerve in this guy. He had it.

\* \* \*

**WILSON:** Terry Andrews and I married ourselves in September 1987 up Saddle Canyon and lived together five years prior to that. We spent many many days running the Rogue, did several low water *IK* trips on the Illinois River and tried in the late '80s to get a permit to run commercial trips to no avail. Later we got the bright idea of running the upper Wild and Scenic Chetco and spent a lot of exciting days exploring the river with *IK*'s and backpacking the Remote 500,000-acre Kalmiopsis Wilderness.

\* \* \*

**WILSON:** I'd like to specifically talk about Mike. Mike Castelli and I worked together. Our training involved one or two of the same people, but at different times. And Mike is the person who "adopted" me for this interview now. I have to really thank him for doing that. But if it were to have been done right we'd have Mike and me sitting next to each other. Because we did quite a little bit of stuff together. We did a lot of simultaneous single-boat trips. I really loved a single-boat trip over a two-boat or a three-boat trip, and he seemed to



Mike Castelli

too. So we managed to pass each other on the river all the time, just have a little bit of fun right along as we would go. He is an important person in my life in that respect, and I've kept in touch with him. He's always helped me.

In 1970, I think, Mike went to Lou and asked if he could put together a river clean up trip, with one of ARTA's boats. So in September, October, they went down on a private trip and took all the equipment for screening the sand on the beaches. By the time they got to Phantom Ranch they had a thousand pounds of charcoal, and they took the sand and dumped it in the river. But they got rid of all the charcoal, and put it in bags...

**STEIGER:** And actually carried it all the way out?

**WILSON:** Well no, the ranger told them that they could take it to Phantom Ranch and they'd get rid of it down there. Well that meant all these mule trips of charcoal...a thousand pounds is a considerable amount. The Phantom Ranch ranger was a little discouraged when...he didn't even know that that promise had been made! But they made some phone calls and they unloaded the charcoal and the mule people had to haul it out. [laughter] But, to my knowledge that was probably one of the very first... "the" very first clean-up trips ever. And it was a brilliant idea that Castelli had. You know they cleaned up a beach that was just incredibly horrible at 168, Fern Glen? There was an area on the downstream side of that beach, you just couldn't get away from charcoal anywhere on the beach. It was everywhere. I remember going back the next spring, it was pristine. It was really cool, you know? You've got to hand it to Castelli. He did a lot of pretty cool things like that.

**STEIGER:** So what was his story? He started the year after you, or later that same season?

**WILSON:** If I don't get my numbers off, I think he did a couple of trips in 1967. Then he went back and worked for ARTA on the Stanislaus and the Rogue for a couple of years, and then he came back in 1970 and started doing full seasons there and we wound up working together a lot during that time...doing parallel single boat trips...and being close by helped me 'cause I had a tendency to break motors every now and then. [laughter] I mean that's about all Mike can talk about—is my engine damage! [more laughter] But the one he didn't know about, or he'd forgotten about, was a really good one—I was letting the assistant run the motor while I got it tied up one day at Nankoweap, but it was up...you know the upper end of Nankoweap Rapid below the main tongue on the right? That was a little beach that I loved to camp on, but it was kind of a rocky shoreline there and he backed over a rock

and broke the lower unit off, so I had to walk downstream—Mike was camped way down below at the main camp and I had to walk downstream and bum his spare motor, and I carried it back! My spare didn't work. So had to bum a motor from him. I wish I'd never told him that, because he'd forgotten about it. [laughter] Long walk. [more laughter]

\* \* \*

**STEIGER:** My goodness. I love these pictures in this scrapbook, just of those early motor boats. Far cry from what they have today. Just the whole routine.

**WILSON:** Yeah, you know, I lived in my sleeping bag for six years straight, all year long. And I worked on the river for eight. When I got together with Marilyn there, actually for three years when I was with her, we rented a place to live. But the rest of the time, I was just on the road. I lived in my car, wherever, whatever.

**STEIGER:** What did your parents think about that?

**WILSON:** They were worried about it, until I took 'em on a Grand Canyon trip, and they realized that it wasn't death-defying, like everybody had been reading in the papers. I think my mother was particularly really good, because she had this feeling that whatever I needed to do, I needed to do. My dad, he told me, "You know, I'm really glad you're doing this, because I missed my opportunity. I wanted to go sailing the South Seas, and I never did it." He actually seemed very enthusiastic about what I was doing. Of course, he was a lot older. He died while I was working down there.

**STEIGER:** It's funny, because just from the way you described them, it seems like they were very practical and definitely hard-working people. Your dad was a businessman and pretty straight up in that regard. And yet here, when I first got here, I'm thinkin' back to you showin' me this scrapbook...and that was your dad that made that for you while you were out living it up?

**WILSON:** No, my mother actually did that. While it was happening, yeah.

**STEIGER:** That's really cool to think of them—you know, you're sending back all this stuff, and they're puttin' together that thing...And then too you had a good time takin' 'em down the river?

**WILSON:** Oh yeah, that was a lot of fun. Another thing—the guy who really turned me on to the Colorado was the older fellow who used to work for my dad, and had retired, and was living in Palm Springs—I had the opportunity to take him on a trip before he died. He had never been down it before. Just read *National Geographic*.

**STEIGER:** Hadn't even gone.

**WILSON:** No. You know, even at \$300 a head, that was a little too much money for most people to spend on doing that. But I got 'em in for practically nothin'. I got Ernie my older brother, Norm Baker the guy who got me goin' on this, and Doug DeVoe who was a good friend of my brother's. The three of them, they loved to drink, and so it was a perfect deal! [laughs] Yeah, they kept each other entertained, and other people entertained also. [laughter] Ernie had the distinction of falling off the boat in Lava, so that was good—my brother.

**STEIGER:** Did he have to work at that, or how did that go?

**WILSON:** Nah, he was on Marilyn's boat, and somebody there just grabbed him and pulled him back in. But when he talks about doing it, that's one of the first things he mentions is fallin' off the boat in Lava.

## Mike Castelli

INTERVIEWED BY ALLEN WILSON

I BECAME INVOLVED SOMEWHAT through my own interest and a lot through circumstances and really good luck. It had to do with my interest in the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society. At that time I actually had been able to work for them doing satellite kind of work, not a major player or anything. I really enjoyed being outside, and with the Sierra Club—especially with their mountain climbing and mountaineering component.

My first job was down in Bolinas as trail builder actually. There was a family that I was involved with—Dore Schwab and the kids, his son named Dore Schwab III, who worked for ARTA on various rivers. I was also involved with their daughter Mary. The family was involved in the early river communities.

Early in 1967, I was actually working at a ceramics factory in their clay room. There was this family—it turns out—had just been on a river trip in the Grand Canyon. They totally fell in love with the Grand Canyon. Because they were a conservation oriented family they recognized, especially at that time, that certain sections of the Grand Canyon were in peril, that people needed to know the kind of resource that was there. They thought they could pressure people in Congress to keep from ruining it with dams, was pretty much what was going on. When they got back in town they told me that ARTA was short...ah what did they call it at the time? Short of swampers for their river trips. They said, "If you can get yourself down there then maybe you can go on some trips." Which

sounded really good. I had no idea what a river trip in the Grand Canyon was at that time. But I got myself down there and I was to meet the ARTA crew behind the City Market in downtown Page—the summer of '67, maybe August, September—and I needed to be there when the guys came to buy groceries.

I grew up in Marin County and had never been on an airplane or had any experience out of state other than with my family, but I went off on my own to try to hook up with these guys. I did arrive in Page. I went around the back of City Market and there was a big four-wheel-drive Dodge Power Wagon that looked like it had been brushed lightly against the cliffs in narrow canyons: cleaned off all the necessary equipment you find for normal operation; and an equally beat up trailer. I walked around the other side of the rig there and saw groceries and soft drinks you would buy to get a river trip together; and there laying on the ground in a knock down drag out fist fight was Bob and Jimmy Elliott. I could not believe I was seeing that out in public, but there these guys were banging around working out some kind of curve ball in the ARTA operation, back behind the City Market. It wasn't just a one or two blow thing, either, they were deeply involved in this fist fight. It took a little while to resolve but shortly they both popped up and pretended it never happened. You know, they went on with the business of the day. That was my introduction to ARTA's way of conflict resolution at the time.

And then...ah, you know, river trips are like that. You kind of sneak up on them and they show you a new way. It was a very very positive experience for me because it was so out of my normal experience. You can't really describe a river trip in the Grand Canyon. You put on a first class trip, you give people a good introduction, but they will not know, they will not be prepared to take a river trip and understand what is going on down there. That was exactly what was happening in my life at the time.

The first trip two trips I did, Bob Elliott was the head boatman on both of them. One of the boatmen was Don Colvin, another boatman was Steve Gantner—a Berkley student—and Gantner...these guys were friends of Elliott's. Coming down there and being boatmen in the Grand Canyon, I think was just another aspect of what those guys did. They were pretty accomplished watermen. I was lucky to be able to be on their boats.

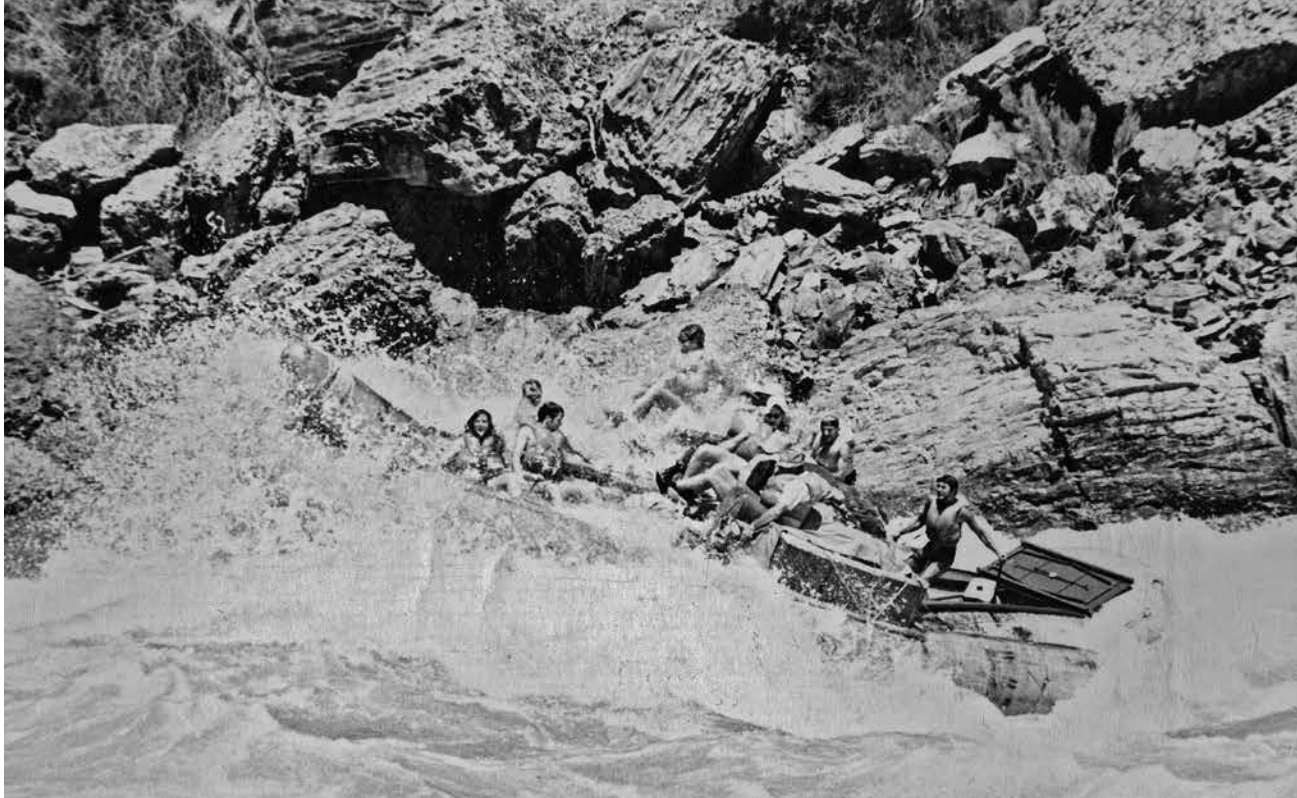
After that, at the market there, I don't know if it was in the parking lot or shortly after that, Bob Elliott encountered the head boatman from one of the Hatch groups and it turned out there was a bunch of Hatch guys staying in town. They invited us to come and

play with them after we got our work done and had a chance to clean up for the day.

So at the end of the day we met those guys in front of their motel. I could tell that they were very rough. They had a lot more...how do I put this delicately... ha ha...They were Rough!! Anyhow these guys on the lawn out there had a cooler full of beer and cokes in bottles—back when they had bottles. I was listening to these guys going on and on about some kind of river story that I can't remember now, but what I do remember from that party was the head Hatch boatman asked Bob Elliott if he knew how to—if he was in a bar and was going to be in a fight—if he knew how to blow the bottom out of a beer bottle or a coke bottle for a nice sharp weapon. Ah, Bob said, "No." That might have been a mistake. I don't know. But the Hatch boatman grabbed this fresh bottle of beer, held it just an inch from the rim of the bottle, and then it looked like he tapped it with his hand and blew the bottom out of the bottle. Of course Bob had to follow suit so he got a beer bottle and ah I think he had to hit it a couple of times. He ended up being able to maintain that bravado with the Hatch boatman. So I tried to hit the bottom of a beer or coke bottle and I remember having a sore hand after that.

So that was pretty much it. We drove down to Lees Ferry and boats left over from the last trip were tied on a buoy out in the middle of the river. I remember that Bob and probably Steve Gantner took off all their clothes, jumped in the river, and swam out to get their boats tied up on these buoy's. It puzzled me that these guys would do that without any kind of hesitation or anything. It was just like they threw their clothes on the couch and lay down to watch TV. Jumping in the river and swimming out into the current, just was really natural. I mean these guys even at that early time were very accustomed to the water and the river.

That's what I really remember about my first trip on the Colorado with ARTA. But the first rapid we ran was Badger. That was an event in itself. We got down there, it was low water, not sure exactly how low, but it was very low water and I was on Bob's boat and he sailed through the rapid, but the fellow behind us, who I think was Don Colvin, he hung his boat broadside on this rock. I think it was top right in the rapid. It was against this rock so my first experience of a rapid was a big 33 ft boat, at the time those boats were rubber canvas. They were a little bit tender, so Bob stopped at the bottom of the rapid and Colvin did this and that to try to unstick it. He couldn't unstick it and eventually Bob and I got out of his boat down in the eddy and walked back up to the top of the rapid on the shore opposite the boat. We weren't that far away 'cause it was very



*Mike Castelli in Lava.*

low water. We were watching him go through a bunch of motor gyrations trying to get this boat unstuck. There were six or eight, maybe as many as ten passengers on the boat. The helper on the boat was Johnny Elliott, not related to Bob. Eventually Colvin got to the point where he decided he couldn't get the boat unstuck and he just jumped in the river swam down and eddied out. But there was this log stuck at the bottom, he got raked across this log by the current, then hit the sand and ran up to the top. There with Bob, they conferred about what he should be doing. Then he ran up shore fifty to 75 yards, jumped in the river and... he may or may not have had a lifejacket on. They were very casual. But you gotta remember, the water was warm in 1967. It was such a delicious refreshment, when the water was calm, the passengers spent a lot of time in the river floating along with the boat. It was something everybody did. If there were churning boils and that kind of stuff. That was something that everybody did. So people floated along. They didn't check in or anything, they just got in the river and cooled off. So you didn't have that issue of really cold water, having sixty seconds to get out. You could get in the water for ten to fifteen, twenty minutes and feel very comfortable you know.

Colvin swam out into the current and he swam back out to the boat. He did a pretty good job swimming broadside up to the boat and John Elliott had a little rope that he threw and it was only a couple feet long, not long enough to reach the boatman. So Col-

vin ended up getting swept under the boat and swimming the rapid again. The amazing thing was that he did the same thing, got raked across the log at the bottom, jumped on shore and ran up to where Bob was, said "hi" as he passed by...and passed on by—running up to where he was before. He ended up jumping back out in the river, taking another pass at it. Most people would have made a little drama about that, he didn't.

You know Badger isn't that big a rapid but it is full of rocks. Swam back to the boat and Johnny had gotten this rope together. He got Colvin back up on the boat with it.

Then what they did, and I remembered this lesson, and I used it many times after that. They had everybody up on their feet and one end of the boat was further downstream than the other. It wasn't like it was sinking, those rafts were so pliable that it kind of rapped like a piece of cloth or fabric around this rock. So, had them get to the furthest downstream point, they were all standing on the boat down there, then they all started jumping up and down in unison. Shook the boat loose and it bounced down through the rapid.

But that was my first experience with a rapid. Any kind of rapid, any kind of boat: watching this drama unfold. Watching this boat getting unstuck from this rock. It really opened my eyes, that this was going to be this really different kind of experience.

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## Announcements

### LOST

Gold wedding band somewhere above the LCR the week of April 5. If by some remote chance somebody finds it, please contact [phowe1@yahoo.com](mailto:phowe1@yahoo.com).

## Businesses Offering Support

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

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## Adopt-a-Boatman Update

**Y**OU WILL NOTICE ANOTHER INTERVIEW in this issue funded through our Adopt-a-Boatman program—the public funding mechanism for GCRG’s Colorado River Runners Oral History Project. What a gift to be able to capture those stories for posterity and while sharing them with the world! There are several open “adoptions” that you can put your money towards. The amount in parentheses is what is still needed to complete the adoption.

- Brian Hansen (\$60)
- Amil Quayle (\$700)
- Pete Gibbs (\$750)
- Mike Boyle (\$700)

Contributions can be made directly from the GCRG website at [http://www.gcr.org/oral\\_history\\_aab.php](http://www.gcr.org/oral_history_aab.php) or you can mail a check to GCRG at P.O. Box 1934, Flagstaff, AZ 86002. Any amount will be appreciated as each adoption can have multiple sponsors. These are stories that need to be told!

*Lynn Hamilton*

*Please note, we are not accepting contributions towards any new adoptions at this time.*

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### 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 \_\_\_\_\_

\$16 Short sleeved T-shirt Size \_\_\_\_\_

\$18 Long sleeved T-shirt Size \_\_\_\_\_

\$12 Baseball Cap

\$10 Kent Frost Poster (Dugald Bremner photo)

\$ 8 Insulated GCRG 20th anniversary mugs with lid

**Total enclosed** \_\_\_\_\_

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## boatman's quarterly review

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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, the Adopt-a-Boatman sponsors, "Circle of Friends" contributors, and innumerable GCRG members for their generous and much appreciated support of this publication.

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### Gravity Wins Again

WHILE "Snowmageddon" was walloping Flagstaff during January of 2010, rocks were falling and rolling in the Grand Canyon. Big boulders rolled down from the south side of Lava-Chuar Creek, put divots in the creek bottom, and then bounced up on the north side to crush the mesquites. Yikes!

And the shady ledges at Lower Lava?—new rock fall there has made the pull-in a sport move, and the walk from the shade ledge to "what's left of" the upstream sun beach is a fourth-class traverse. Double Yikes!

*Greg Woodall*



*New hardscaping at the shady ledges below Lava.*