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## 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

Y<sup>A'AT'ÉEH</sup>, HAPPY NEW YEAR and many more blessings to all of you in the upcoming season! The New Year most commonly brings about resolutions: eat healthier, lose weight, dress better, be happier, etc. Those are for the “average” citizen but for us boatmen/women, I am curious as to what they may be. Could your resolutions be: pack less when going on a trip, do not pack the night before I leave for a trip, take more photos on a trip or use more sun-screen? Well, whatever your resolutions may be, try to squeeze in a resolution that includes more knowledge and advocacy for a place that is so important to us, the Grand Canyon and Colorado River. The canyon and river offer us a place of solitude, beauty, friendship, adventure, monetary comfort, and not in the least, offer passengers and fellow river guides a lasting education about one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

Speaking of memories, we start the New Year with a heartfelt farewell to one of our river community's best-known adventurers, *Tim Whitney*. Personally, I did not know Tim very well, but what I do know is that whenever we crossed paths, he was always generous with his smiles and kindness. Since beginning his Grand Canyon runs in 1973, Tim was on the founding board of GCRG in 1988 and served as a board member again in 1990 and 1995, while subsequently serving as president of the Whale Foundation in 2006 and 2007. By doing so, he gave so much of his time and energy to protect the canyon, the river, and the community he loved, and for that, we will always be deeply thankful. Tim has also gone on to leave a legacy of adventure in the form of international travels culminating with the travel company he began with his lovely wife, Pam. I am sure the river community has tons of stories to share about Tim and we all will celebrate the life of a man who truly did live life to the fullest. We offer the Whitney family our wholehearted condolences in their time of sorrow.

On a happier note, we come into the 2012 season celebrating a phenomenal victory—Secretary Salazar announced a twenty-year ban on all new mines in the Grand Canyon watershed!!! This is not to say that there are not *any* mines in operation as there are mines operating under existing or pre-approved permits. We appreciate everyone who submitted his or her individual comments or participated in group petitions. We have also worked very hard on scoping comments on the development of a Long Term Experimental and Management Plan for Glen Canyon Dam, and we urge all of you to become even more involved when the

draft EIS comes out in December. It takes all of us! This is the reason why *your* membership with GCRG is vital because your dues and additional donations help GCRG voice our concerns and opinions on critical issues such as uranium mining, overflights, and dam flows.

Having said that, this is also where the *Boatman's Quarterly Review* comes in, because you get articles straight from the sources, and as members you are welcome to send in your questions, concerns and opinions to GCRG. This is something many of you have done and I encourage you to continue doing so. Remember, the BOR is a literary gathering place for all who care for how the Grand Canyon and Colorado River is managed, and the issues that affect them. If you are not a member yet or haven't renewed your membership, please do so today.

And coming up soon is the annual Guides Training Seminar (GTS) at Hatch River Expeditions at Marble Canyon! This annual event is such an amazing time to meet and listen to an amazing lineup of speakers, which range from Mike Kearsley (NPS) talking about the Grand Canyon Vegetation Mapping project to a stretching clinic hosted by Laura Fallon and Judy Stratton. In addition, Superintendent Ueberuaga will join us for the entire day, so make sure you make it a point to meet and talk to him. He may not be a seasoned river rat yet, but he is willing and enthusiastic about learning more and being a part of a unique and amazing river community.

In closing, I would like to encourage you to continue your education about the historical and contemporary knowledge about the Grand Canyon and Colorado River, including the organizations and programs that protect and provide knowledge. One of these organizations is the Grand Canyon Association (GCA) who continually provides financial support to Grand Canyon National Park. For example, this may come in the form of the monetary support for wilderness trail restoration, or providing funds to implement benches and water pumps for hiker relief at Ribbon Falls. In addition, GCA publishes trail guides, and provides lecture opportunities featuring folks like Brad Dimock. I am encouraging you to check out GCA lectures, books and their field institute for educational opportunities that can only enhance your knowledge about the canyon and river. This is vital as many of you are going into the 2012 river season, which will bring new and returning clients and guides, thus new memories, adventures and friendship.

Let's go boating!!!! Be safe and good runs!  
Ahéhee'!

Nikki Cooley, DINE

## Dear Eddy

GREETINGS FROM THE headwaters of the San Juan and Grand drainages to the folks of Argonne National Laboratory, IL (is Illinois between Nevada and Utah?)

Its snowing here and our mountain water storage project slowly begins to fill. This snow will ultimately turn to water and roll to the sea or into the heavens as vapor. This process has supported life in our region for at least three million years—a small chunk when considered through the lens of deep geologic/cosmic time. Yet by some ironic twist of fate, we find our infant to adolescent species as the rightful managers. Our short history of river management is comparable to a teenage boy taking daddy's car for a joy ride, grinding the transmission and running the oil dry. We have not been around long enough to know how to drive this river system and, ultimately, the very complex ecosystem of the southwest. As we look to the future in this Long Term Experimental Management Plan, I offer this public comment and general theme: We can't put the excrement back in the horse and if we try we will undoubtedly come out covered in, well, excrement. We made an awfully big pile with Glen Canyon Dam and all the dams downstream. Now it seems we're elbow deep trying to hide our mistake. Or to put it more civilly—we can control our actions, but we cannot control the extent, duration or character of their impacts. We have made a ripple in the water, building dams and big cities in a historically arid land, that cannot be stopped. Every attempt to curb its impact has resulted in another ripple that creates another ripple of impact. It's time for humility as the root of our management plan. Its time to get at the source of our woes. Its time to look at some of the few remaining undammed rivers for advice. If we're going to try to restore anything let's start with water and dirt. (Heaven help us if we introduce another non-native species to fight a non-native species. Even the angels will burst out in "what the hell are they thinking!" laughter.)

### WATER AND DIRT

So how do we clean up this pile instead of trying to shove it back in the horse? To start we have to bypass the pile while we clean it up. Equalize dam releases to the level coming in from upstream. Lake levels will begin to drop and sediment will begin to appear as cut banks of a new river channel. Let the river form a new channel and let the dirt cave off into the new river. As this channel begins to mature, allow it to flow around and through the dams.



We should begin to decommission Glen Canyon Dam and all dams in the system as a Long Term Experimental Management Plan. If the NPS is committed to “reestablish natural functions and processes in parks unless otherwise directed by Congress” (NPS Management Policies, Section 4.1.5) and if the commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, Mike Conner, is true in his saying, “it is certainly my goal over the next decade that the Bureau of Reclamation becomes as well known for its expertise in river restoration as it is for building dams, maintaining dams, and building and taking care of other water supply infrastructure,” then we must begin to truly restore. Any attempt that starts before we fix water and sediment is a fool’s paradise. As the river drives its own restoration process we study, observe and get out of the way. This will no doubt hurt in the short term, but the long term benefits of decommissioning dams will far outweigh the short term costs.

This is the new direction of our economy, our people, our culture. Restoration and simplification. After every cultural and economic bust those that come out the other side find a way to simplify and reconnect to the things that support their existence. If the NPS and the Bureau of Reclamation are committed to the “Long Term” we have to stop looking at the Colorado River in Grand Canyon as an amusement park or science experiment and realize that it is the life blood of our existence in this region.

#### RESTORATION ECONOMY

So the river begins to restore its old channel as Glen Canyon Dam and others downstream and up begin to decommission. What happens to our cities and economies based on the old model of reclamation?

This is a difficult idea for fear of the economic, environmental, and social impacts. Despite our fears, things are changing and those who have historically thrived and survived changed their behavior just ahead of the curve. This is nothing new nor that dramatic, but if we continue to wallow in our own crapulence we will no doubt pay the price. Just like all those who have laid idly behind the curve.

If we adapt, so will our culture and economy. Jobs and livelihoods will be based around rivers and river restoration.

The Bureau of Reclamation could be the driving force or an old dinosaur slowly turning into a fossil in the sands of time. The NPS could be a visionary edifice or a bureaucratic joke of history. The ball is in our court and right now it’s in the hands of these two agencies of the people. Will they be brave? Will they make right the mistakes of our past? Will they try to put it back in the horse or clean it up once and for all? Ah well, as they say, “we can conjecture many things.” But doesn’t it seem like we’ve pretty well ruled out dams in the desert as a viable reclamation model? (That old evaporation and sedimentation conundrum, dang ol’ losin’ storage from the top and the bottom.) In the meantime we wait and hope for the best.

*Ryan Howe*



*Blooming Strength - Serena Supplee*

## Tim Whitney

**T**IM WHITNEY, a founding board member of GCRG and past president of the Whale Foundation, made his last run on January 30<sup>TH</sup> after a battle with cancer. His roots run deep in our river community which he loved. He will be deeply missed.

We did not have time between Tim's unfortunate passing and publication of this issue of the BQR to write a proper "Farewell" article for Tim. So look for that in the next issue of the BQR. In the meantime, you can look on our website for Tim's oral history which was published in BQR volume 21 number 3, Fall 2008.

Here are some words from Pam, Tim's wife...

First I want to thank you for all the love and support you have provided to Tim and me over these past few weeks. I know that for many of you his passing was a shock and it seemed to have come very quickly.

Last Thursday, January 26<sup>TH</sup>, we found out that his treatment was not working. We both knew it was time to get ready for the next part of Tim's journey. We both were relieved. We could finally relax and spend the rest of his time just talking about plans, desires, memories and our love for each other. As he moved forward he was with me and the family members who meant the most to him.

Many of you have asked about a service. Tim and I decided to wait until early summer so we could have it here at our house. June is the tentative time frame.

For our east coast family and friends we will have a gathering in Northfield, Massachusetts tentatively planned for some time in early August.

As we start this new chapter of our lives without Tim I know that the inspiration he has given each of us will stay in our hearts. I hope you will be comforted, as was he, by this part of his meditation prayer:

*"May I be a protector for those without protection. A Leader for those who journey. And a boat, a bridge, a passage for those desiring the further shore."*

Peace to all of you, our guy is finally through that last rapid and it was a perfect run. Now he can enjoy the calm water and just drift.

Tim's sparkly blue eyes, kindness and laughter touched all of us. The best way to communicate with Tim's wife, Pam, right now is through the mail. She appreciates receiving cards. Her mailing address is:



Pam and Tim Whitney

Pam Whitney  
12620 N. Copeland Lane  
Flagstaff, AZ 86004

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## Definitions

*Tim sent this submission to the BQR in November, 2011.*

**I**HOPE IT'S NOT TOO LATE for this little tidbit. I've been wondering and asking for years and finally found this definition from: Facts on File Writers Library—*The Facts on File Encyclopedia of Words and Phrase Origins* by Robert Hendrickson.

**sockdollager.** SEE *quicker than hell can scorch a feather*

And this is what the definition of *quicker than hell can scorch a feather* says:

Davy Crocket is given credit for this Americanism, as well as for *singing psalms to a dead horse*, *ripsnorter*, *sockdollager* and *fine as silk*. He did not of course coin a *Crockett*, for "a violent person," or a *sin to Davy Crockett*, [for] "anything extraordinary."

*Tim Whitney*



# The Death Of Meaning

*“All these objects...had died once they had been removed from their contexts, the lands and histories to which they belonged, and they had come to this place which had no understanding of them.”*

Anita Desai, *THE ARTIST OF DISAPPEARANCE*

**A**RTIFACTS HAVE MEANING, important meaning. They are reminders of the past and are the tangible evidence of those who lived here long ago. Artifacts tell of trade and human connections. Pottery designs tell us about site age and artistic accomplishment. Concentrations of artifacts tell us about activity areas where people of the past lived out their daily lives.

The science of archaeology is about understanding the people of the past. Along with the knowledge shared by the Grand Canyon’s traditionally associated American Indians, artifacts and other archaeological materials are the primary way through which we learn about those who came before. The science of archaeology relies on the spatial relationships (context) between archaeological materials on a site to help tell the story about what happened there. When that context is disturbed, by human activities, erosion, or other means, the archaeological meaning of artifacts is diminished.

Many of us understand this. But for some, the urge to share their discoveries can sometimes overtake their

better judgment. They collect artifacts into piles for others to see. Once moved from their original locations such artifacts lose much of their archaeological meaning. They lose some of the qualities American Indians believe the items possess.

## A NEW PARADIGM

National Park Service Management Policies and our tribal partners guide us to preserve archaeological materials in place as much as possible. Grand Canyon archaeologists no longer collect artifacts unless, like the recent river excavation project, we have no other way to preserve them. Our goal is to preserve archaeological sites and the materials they contain “on the lands and with the histories to which they belong” for those who visit here in the future.

Help us spread the word and preserve the past by teaching others not to collect artifacts or gather them into piles.

*Ellen Brennan*

CULTURAL PROGRAM MANAGER GCNP



*This collection pile has destroyed some of the archaeological information these artifacts once possessed.*

# NPS Staffing Updates

## BRIAN BLOOM, RIVER DISTRICT RANGER

BRIAN BLOOM was hired as the new River District Ranger last November for Grand Canyon National Park, responsible for managing the river corridor and all that it entails. Brian has been a backcountry ranger



at Grand Canyon since 2002 and a supervisor since 2010. Brian is a flight medic and has taken a leading role in search and rescue operations for Grand Canyon throughout his career. He has been instrumental

in many of the river rescues managed by the Park Service. Brian is a competent oarsman but is unique, in that he is the first River District Ranger in the history of Grand Canyon who has paddled a rescue board through Grand Canyon.

Brian is originally from western Massachusetts but moved to Flagstaff in 1994 and graduated from Northern Arizona University in 1998. Brian's first job in the river industry was working in the warehouse at Arizona Raft Adventures, where he learned river operations from the ground up. Brian joined the National Park Service when he got a job working on the trail crew at Grand Canyon as an emergency hire to help repair the Trans-Canyon pipeline after it was damaged by flooding. This prompted Brian to pursue a career as a Park Ranger with the National Park Service. He spent three seasons at Sequoia-Kings Canyon and one year at the remote station of Dangling Rope in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area before coming to Grand Canyon. Before becoming a permanent Ranger, Brian spent five seasons working as a ski patroller at Arizona Snowbowl.

Brian left the Park Service for a three-year hiatus to work as a helicopter pilot in Portland, Oregon, but missed the Park Service and the Grand Canyon and returned in 2009. Brian is very excited to work with friends, old and new, in the river community. Brian currently lives in Flagstaff with his wife Leah and their two dogs, Henry and Mabel.

## CHELLY KEARNEY, RIVER PATROL RANGER

CHELLY KEARNEY was hired to the permanent River Patrol Ranger position last November after working the past two years as a seasonal law enforcement river ranger for Grand Canyon. She is also an NPS park medic. Chelly was first introduced to the river in 1995, while pursuing a geology degree at NAU, and has been in love with the river and the Canyon ever since. Chelly worked as a professional river guide for Canyoneers and as an intermittent boatman for the NPS. She is a recreational kayaker, being based out of Northern New Mexico for the past 15 years.

After graduating from college, Chelly worked as a geologist at Los Alamos National Laboratory doing environmental remediation work and also conducted graduate research at the University of New Mexico on nutrient cycling in riparian ecosystems. Finding herself increasingly stuck in a cubicle working on a computer, she gave up her geology career to pursue her other passion for snow.

She has spent the past 12 years working as a professional ski patroller. She has been an assistant route leader and a member of the howitzer crew performing avalanche control work at Taos Ski Valley. This led to seasonal work



with the NPS as a law enforcement ranger in Yosemite Valley, the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, and Rocky Mountain National Park, where she got a taste of Colorado River politics at the headwaters.

She also acquired

a nursing degree along the way to support herself financially. When not on the river, she continues to work part-time as an emergency room nurse and as a ski patroller in Taos, New Mexico. Photographed with tsv dogs, Riley and Tigger.

## Kyaptsi: “Respect” for Ancestral Connections

*“When we visit the Grand Canyon and we come to this area...we just don’t show up empty handed. There’s great preparation that goes into coming down here...we bring offerings for allowing us to come through the passage of this place. As we make our way down here, there are several places that we stop and give these (offerings). We pray for all good things and humanity, great health and life, and abundance-ness from the rain, so that all living species and people throughout the world...can prosper from the growth. These prayers are placed at special areas, such as here (LCR/Colorado River Confluence)”*  
—Merv Yoytewa, Hopi

EVERY YEAR, A SMALL, unknown number of Hopi people visit the Grand Canyon. Some stand on the rim and gaze into the canyon’s depths, some venture onto the trails and walk paths their ancestors first established, and some climb aboard boats and launch into the heart of the Canyon (the latter group is exclusively Hopi males, more on that later). No matter what their intentions or reasons for coming to the Canyon, for many of these Hopi visitors, to experience the Canyon is to tread upon Holy Ground where their ancestors dwell. Much has already been written in these pages concerning the special place that the canyon holds in the hearts and minds of Hopi people. So what more can be said? Well, as you guessed it, plenty still remains.

As commercial guides, we are often asked by our clients, friends and fellow boatmen, “What does the Grand Canyon mean to Hopi people?” If there was ever a can of worms to second-guess opening, this is it. Suffice to say, these few pages of writings are not sufficient to fully answer this question, but as guides, we must, in the spirit of good faith, attempt to provide some insight of the Hopi connection. The reality is that a whole 16-day trip could drift by and in that time, we would barely begin to untangle the many viewpoints that exist among Hopi people.

That is as a good a place to start as any in this journey of sharing. The reality being that there is no one single Hopi perspective about the canyon and the river. Hopi society consists of a diverse set of histories, ideas, and beliefs. This has always been the case. With over 30 Hopi clans, distributed among three mesas and 13 villages, there are differences in how individual Hopis regard the canyon landscape. Just as the view changes with each bend in the river or with each layer of geology ascended or descended, the Hopi perception all depends on the cultural “ground” within which the individual is rooted.

Some Hopi clans have very direct ties to the canyon, often based in epic pilgrimages to places like the Sipapuni and Hopi Salt Mines. Other clans may have had very little interaction within the canyon, at least in the historical past. In addition, gender also plays a

part in the degree to which a Hopi person experiences the canyon. Hopi females, as a cultural rule, are not advised to enter the depths of the canyon. This is due to the fact that while the canyon is considered “Holy Ground,” it is also a place of danger, which can manifest itself in the physical and spiritual realms.

Females, by their ability to birth, raise children and thus perpetuate Hopi culture, are cherished within Hopi society and thus are afforded certain protective status. To place a Hopi female in harms way, by means



Hopi tribal members on the 2009 Hopi Cultural Trip cross Havasu Creek.  
Photo : Lyle Balenquah

of entering the canyon, is considered a cultural taboo. Some may say this is a just another form of gender discrimination, but you must ask yourself, from which cultural “ground” is one making that statement? Nevertheless, Hopi females play an important role in maintaining the cultural connection with the Canyon as they provide the males with various traditional foods and prayers that are ritually offered prior to entering the Canyon. These offerings ensure safe passage not only for the Hopi men who venture down the river, but also include the non-Hopi boatmen and personnel who accompany them.

Thus the specific cultural knowledge a certain individual Hopi may have about the canyon depends on a



wide array of factors. All that being said, I feel there is a general perspective that most, if not all, Hopi people have about the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River. This perspective is evident even if a Hopi person has never hiked, rafted or visited the canyon at all. It is a perspective that is rooted within the overall ideology of Hopi culture, and applies not just to the Grand Canyon landscape, but all of ancestral Hopi lands (which includes all of the Southwest, parts of Mexico and further south, again depending on specific clan histories).

Within Hopi culture is the belief that the *meaning of the past is what it contributes to life in the present*. This belief underlies the inherent connection that Hopi people have with the landscapes of their ancestors. How this connection manifests itself, often daily, is in the cultural knowledge and traditional know-how a Hopi person maintains. This knowledge is evident in many forms within traditional Hopi culture; the crops we grow and eat, the homes we occupy, the tools we use, the art we create, the ceremonies we enact and the language we speak. All of which is really an accumulation of ancestral Hopi experiences, learned over countless generations.

Within the canyon, and throughout the Southwest, are thousands of areas both natural and human-made that are imbued with a powerful sense of meaning and connection for modern Hopi people. Today, when a Hopi person visits such places, we don't simply see the remnants of a bygone era, we see reflections of who we once were and what we have now become. We witness the artistic and technical accomplishments of Hopi ancestors, and we recall the spiritual accomplishments of our ancestors as well. We are reminded that in order for the present generations of Hopi to flourish and prosper, we are dependent upon the gifts of our departed ancestors. Ferguson and Kuwanwisiwma write (2004),

Ancestral villages that have fallen into ruin are not dead places whose only meaning comes from scientific values. The Hopi ancestors who lived in these villages still spiritually occupy these places, and these ancestors play an integral role in the contemporary Hopi ceremonies that bring rain, fertility, and other blessings for the Hopi people and their neighbors throughout the world. 'Itaakuku'—footprints—are thus a part of the living legacy of the ancestors, and they play a vital role in the religious activities essential to the perpetuation of Hopi society.

In essence, by acknowledging our ancestors existence, they acknowledge ours through the answering of our prayers. This understanding provides a con-



Left to right: Merv Yoytewa (Hopi), Bennett Jackson (Hualapai/Hopi), Howard Dennis (Hopi) during the 2011 Native Voices river trip.  
Photo: Nikki Cooley.

tinual connection between modern Hopi people and their ancestors. This connection is contained within the landscapes, wherein Hopi ancestors interacted with their natural environments, leaving a legacy behind that their descendants must now strive to continue.

For the fortunate Hopi males who venture into the canyon on annual river trips, sponsored by the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office through partnerships with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation and other agencies, there are opportunities to renew spiritual connections with ancestral landscapes. These trips also serve another purpose, which is to combine aspects of traditional Hopi resource knowledge, with the modern needs of monitoring the effects of the Glen Canyon Dam operations on resources along the river corridor that remain important within Hopi culture.

The work the Hopi groups conduct during the river trips is successful in demonstrating the vast and complex set of knowledge that Hopi people still retain about a region that is located well outside modern reservation boundaries. But let's be honest and say that political boundaries, such as the reservation, are quite arbitrary and meaningless for most Hopis. Our connections to lands have no boundaries, just as our knowledge about these places traverses boundaries and wipes them off the map. The idea of a mental cultural landscape remains within traditional Hopi knowledge.

During these cultural trips, Hopi "researchers" (everyday Hopis representing various clans, religious societies, artists, ranchers and farmers) document Hopi perspectives concerning cultural and natural resources found along the inner river corridor. For many of these Hopi men, this is their first time being within



Howard's shirt with Hopi placenames reads "Sipapuni," Emergence Place, "Öngtuvva/Öngtuvva," Salt Canyon, "Pisisvayu" Colorado River, with rain cloud symbol over the canyon, river and Sipapu. He traded for the Moki Mac hat from another guide who was on the 2011 GATS trip. Photo: Lyle Balenquah

the canyon and on the river, yet they come well prepared and knowledgeable about this landscape. Many of them had heard of these places through the oral tradition as passed down from their own elders.

Thus they come with a wealth of cultural knowledge, which helps to bring the Hopi presence within the Grand Canyon from the prehistoric (a static archaeological

perspective) into the modern era. Hopis have always stated we are a *living* culture. That is the knowledge about our history isn't relegated to just the past, it lives in the present amongst the Hopis who retain and continue to use such information in our daily and ceremonial lives. Whereas strict archaeological perspectives portray ancestral Hopi lifeways as relegated to the "prehistoric," Hopis view these lifeways as a continuation over time, constantly evolving with the interactions within our environments.

As a part of the Hopi research within the canyon, hundreds of ancestral Hopi sites, as well as plants and animals that hold central roles in modern Hopi culture were documented. So it comes as no surprise to the Hopi groups that remains of these plants and animals are also found during archaeological excavations conducted along the river. It proves that our knowledge of the natural world has traversed time, carrying on from one generation to the next. The concept of the *living* culture of Hopi shining brightly in the archaeologists' excavation pits, yet more importantly, within the minds of modern Hopi people.

The Hopi term, *Kyaptsi* translates as "Respect." Maintaining the living culture of Hopi requires respect, not simply saying the word, but putting action

into the meaning. One way this is achieved is through the continued practice of Hopi culture, including the visitation and protection of ancestral homes such as the Grand Canyon. Only through these continued efforts will future generations of Hopi people have their own cultural ground to stand upon; providing them the opportunity to interact with their ancestral past as we have done since time immemorial.

When Hopi ancestors "emerged" into this world, they were among the first to experience the spirit of the canyon, establishing a presence that is a vital part of the history of this unique landscape. Thus the modern Hopi tribal presence within the canyon has helped show to the outside world what we have always known; *We Are The Canyon*.

Lyle Balenquah (HOPI), Nikki Cooley (DINE)  
and Joelle Clark (FRENCH)

*Stay tuned for more tribal articles from the Native Voices on the Colorado River Program.*

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# Back Of The Boat— The Whale Foundation News Bulletin

## FREE GTS HEALTH FAIR

**M**ARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW: the Health Fair will be held at the spring GTS on Saturday, March 31ST. Last year over 100 guides took advantage of these free services. At lunch, look for our tents outside the warehouse on the Hatch pad where our healthcare professionals will offer the full package: screenings for skin cancer, colon cancer, breast cancer, diabetes, cholesterol, blood pressure, oral exam, eye exam, family health histories and more. If you are an uninsured (or under-insured) member of the river community, we strongly encourage you to take advantage of this incredible opportunity. Early detection can save your life! Better yet, save your buddy's life by making him or her visit the tents. Did we mention it's *free*. Many, many thanks to the doctors and clinicians who volunteer their time, Sonara Quest Labs, and especially to Wyatt Woodard who oversees the program.

## KENTON GRUA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

The Whale Foundation awarded two scholarships in 2011. The recipients were Kristin Huisinga Harned and Kent Wagner. Support from the community has allowed the Foundation to award up to three \$2000 scholarships annually. We encourage all guides with at least five years experience here in the Grand to apply. Grants are awarded to guides with traditional and non-traditional educational paths. All applications are blinded before a rigorous review to insure impartiality. See our website for more info: [WhaleFoundation.org](http://WhaleFoundation.org).

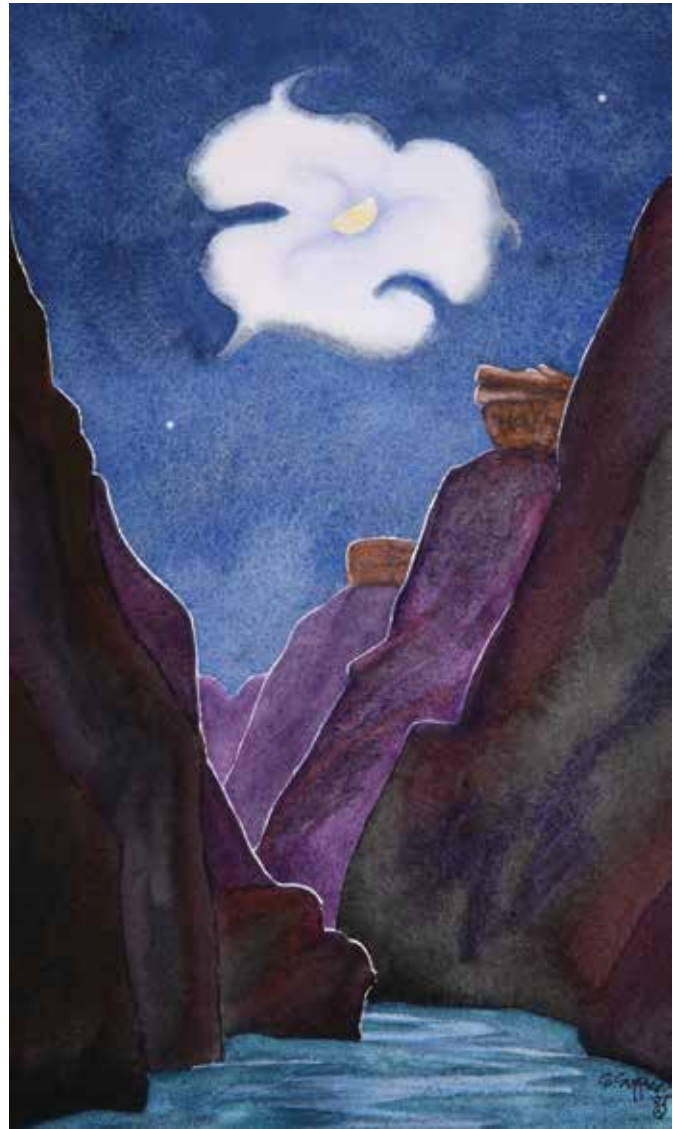
The next application deadline is June 1, 2012

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We would like to welcome Laura Fallon and John Napier to the board. Laura is an AZRA boatman who teaches Yoga here in Flagstaff. John runs the warehouse over at Grand Canyon Youth. He tried to run me over many times when he was motoring for Western years ago.

If you are interested in volunteering for the Board or in other capacities, please give us a call at 928-522-8822. We look forward to hearing from you!

*Dan Hall*  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Moonflower - Serena Supplee

## Notice Anything Different?

**W**E ARE EXCITED to announce that the Boatman's Quarterly Review is now a full color publication. Technology and willing printing partners have made this dream a reality.

Finally, the photos, art and illustrations we receive in color will be able to shine. We hope you enjoy this new look as much as we do.

*Lynn Hamilton*  
*Katherine Spillman*  
*Mary Williams*



## Youth + Rivers = Transformation

**C**HANCES ARE if you are reading the BQR you have been transformed in some way by the river experience. Perhaps it gave you a new perspective on what is important in your life or a needed break from the electric buzz of our modern society.



At Grand Canyon Youth, we believe that the combination of adolescence and this type of experience creates something special.

On our summer open enrollment programs, we have young people from all backgrounds on small (group size is ten) river programs. On one trip, there could be a youth from the Bronx, inner-city Chicago and Phoenix along with youth from Flagstaff, Hol-



brook and South Carolina. Many of these youth would never have had the chance to experience a river trip. Even if they might have had the chance, these programs offer a unique combination.

The river is a great unifier. Money means nothing once you've departed Lees Ferry. There are plenty of opportunities for the group to work together whether it's preparing a meal or removing invasive plants.

The common experience creates a sense of community. I had the good fortune to work with a group of youth last June. It was inspiring for me to witness how this group crossed barriers and came together in the context of being outdoors. After the trip, a young man from New Orleans who had never been on an airplane before his GCY trip sent me a thank you. In it he writes, "Thank you all for making this summer one of the best summers of my life... In school, I had seen pictures of the Grand Canyon in a social studies book, but I never thought that I would be able to see it in person."

Our 2012 program season is approaching. Please help us spread the word about our programs to youth, teachers, or parents. Interest forms can be filled out



electronically on our website: [www.gcyouth.org](http://www.gcyouth.org). Also consider taking a handful of "Working Together for Grand Canyon" brochures on trips with you this year. These brochures highlight the different organizations (including GCY) that are involved and invested in Grand Canyon and the people who work there. You can pick them up at GCRG or our office. For more information about our program or to hear more stories of fabulous youth feel free to contact us.

**OFFICE:** 2131 N. First Street, Suite B, Flagstaff, AZ 86004  
**MAILING:** Please send all mail to PO Box 23376, Flagstaff, AZ 86002  
**PHONE:** 928-773-7921  
**EMAIL:** [info@gcyouth.org](mailto:info@gcyouth.org)  
**WEBSITE:** [www.gcyouth.org](http://www.gcyouth.org)

*Emma Wharton*  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## The Bright Angel— John Hance Tells Winfield Hogaboom How That Place In The Grand Canyon Got Its Name.

**M**ANY ANOTHER VISITOR to that tremendous hole in the ground, the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, has wondered, as I did, how the Bright Angel trail ever got such a name. There is a sort of poetical, romantic tinge to it, but when you come to think it over, there isn't any sense to it. That's what lead me at first to think there was a story behind it, and set me to nosing around for the story.

About all the headway I made was to learn that Buckey O'Neil gave it that name, until I found Capt. Hance. Then I got the story.

"Yaas, Buckey O'Neil give it that name," he said, reflectively, spitting at the stove door.

It was doubtful if the captain would proceed. Conditions had to be favorable for him to tell a story. He liked large audiences, a dozen listeners at least, and I was the only one upon this occasion. But finally he spat at the stove door again and said: "I'll tell you how 't was." Then I knew it was a go.

"We never did know where she come from, ner how she got here, but all to once she was here, and 'peared like she'd come to stay. She was sickly; you could see that, but she never complained none; she was allers jest as doggone cheerful as a sunshiny mornin'.

"Gad! but she was beautiful. She had fluffy hair that was like a streak o' sunlight streamin' through a winder and her skin was soft as velvet, and jest white and pink, and she didn't look like a person that was intended to live on earth; leastwise in no such outlandish place as this.

"An' tho girl was jest as good as she looked, I want t' tell ye. The boys all fell in love with her; Pete Berry, over at Grand View, an' Bass, down at the ferry, an' I

guess I had a sort o' tender regard like fer her myself.

"She ust t' go down th' trail nigh on every day, walkin' slow and lookin' at th' wonderful sights in th' canyon with them big blue eyes o' hers, that was like little patches of th' sky. The boys ust t' watch her, standin' on the rim, till she'd get t' be nuthin' but a tiny spec o' bright color, movin' along th' trail. Sometimes there'd be moisture in Buckey's eyes, an' I dunno but

mine, too, when we was lookin' at her, and feelin' mabbe she wasn't goin' t' last long.

"Buckey ust t' say she was an angel; he knowd she was, an' he turned out t' be right, fer one day she went down th' trail an' never came back. There was a sort o' haze like hangin' in the canyon that afternoon, an' long about sundown th' light struck it slantwise and colored it up like gold. You couldn't see fer into th' canyon, but Buckey claimed he seen somethin' floatin' up through th' mist, white an' sort o' transparent like, but he know'd it was her.

"There wasn't no doubt about her bein' an angel after that, an' so he named th' trail 'Bright Angel trail,' an' that's how it come.

"Ye see, Buckey was a sentimental feller, anhow, natcherly, an we'd bin a-

callin' her th' 'Bright Girl,' after we found out 'twas Bright's disease that ailed her, so Buckey says: 'We'll make it Bright Angel.'"

That was the way I got the story from Captain Hance, but later, when I found that he claimed to be the man who made the Grand Canyon, I didn't know whether to believe him or not.

— W. C. Hogaboom, in the *Los Angeles Herald* via *The Coconino Sun*, December 27, 1902.



## History Mystery

*Everett Ruess: His Short Life, Mysterious Death, and Astonishing Afterlife* BY PHILIP L. FRADKIN, University of California Press, 2011 ISBN 978-0-520-26524-4, 279 pages, \$24.95

GRAND CANYON AFICIONADOS are likely to recognize both the subject and author of this book: Ruess was the twenty year-old artist who vanished in the desert south of Escalante Utah in 1934; Fradkin is the author of *A River No More the Colorado River and the West* (1981), a definitive history of the development of the Colorado River.

Everett Ruess has become somewhat of an icon for the exuberant youthful exploration of the deserts of the American Southwest. Although frequently associated with the canyons to the north of Lake Powell, along the Hole in the Rock road (where he was last seen), Everett actually spent more time exploring other out of the way places—Yosemite and the high Sierras in California, Monument Valley, and Tonto National Monument in Arizona—and, of course, the Grand Canyon, which he visited four times between 1931 and 1934. On three of these trips he crossed the canyon from rim to rim with his burros, twice smuggling his dog Curly who was “illegal below the rim.”

Everett was fascinated by prehistoric ruins and modern Native Americans, and spent time with the Navajo and Hopi Indians. He also managed to meet some of the notable Westerners of his time: including photographers Edward Weston and Dorothea Lange (whose portraits of Everett have been often reproduced.) Once, a dehydrated Everett, his burro Pegasus, and dog Curly got a ride from Tad Nichols as they were struggling towards Flagstaff after a visit to the Hopi villages.

While there is no shortage of books and articles about Ruess, Fradkin’s book is the last word, and in many respects the most definitive of the entire bunch. Well written and carefully researched, Fradkin’s book is liberally laced with Everett’s own words, many

culled from letters he wrote to his family back home. This makes it possible for the reader to form his own opinion about what Everett was really like...although the evidence, in many cases, is less than clear cut. In spite of his considerable posthumous publicity, Ruess remains, in many respects, a mystery. No doubt this is a large part of the attraction.

Did Everett really intend to become a serious artist, or was this a temporary adolescent fascination? Did he fall in love with a Navajo girl and just drop out of white society? Or alternatively (as some have suggested)—was he gay? Or—perhaps more likely—was he totally inexperienced and/or confused about his sexuality? Could he have been manic-depressive, maybe even suicidal? Or was he a typically confused teenager, not much different (except for his mysterious and romantic disappearance) from those who don’t choose to pursue their dreams in the desert?

Fradkin presents lots of clues—mostly in Everett’s own words—but no definite answers.

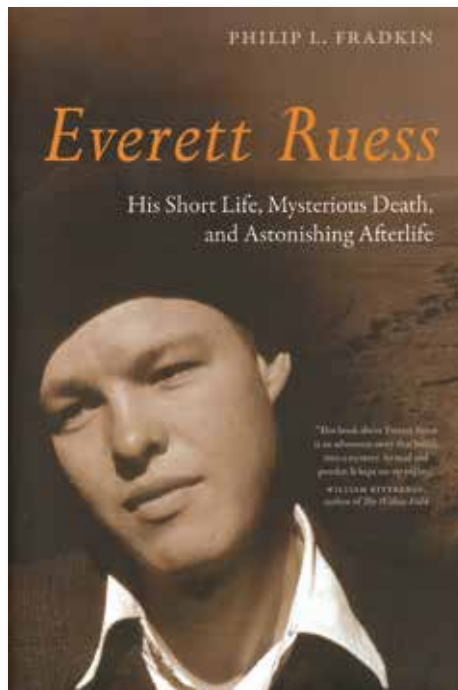
Four major theories about Everett’s disappearance have been advanced over the years: 1) he died in an accident; 2) he was murdered; 3) he committed suicide; and 4) he staged his

disappearance and survived somewhere, doing something...and never looked back to contact old friends or his family.

Part of the attraction of the Ruess Myth is that we just don’t know...although arguments advancing each of these theories have been popular for years. But each also has problems, as well. For example, the murder theory: the body was not found, and—as the myth grew—too many people confessed. There just weren’t enough Everetts.

What we do know is interesting on its own merits: Everett attracted the attention of writers like Wallace Stegner, Edward Abbey, “Bud” Rusho, and others, lately including climbing authors Jon Krakauer and David Roberts. Each of these contributed to Everett’s ever growing reputation.

Escalante, Utah has an annual art festival called





“Escalante Canyons Art Festival—Everett Ruess Days.” There is an “EverettRuess.net” website where you can buy block print reproductions and t-shirts. Google “Everett Ruess,” you’ll get over 500,000 hits in 0.22 seconds. There is even a movie: *Lost Forever Everett Ruess* (2000)—which is well worth viewing, if you can find a copy.

As interesting as the questions about Everett’s character and disappearance are, the most significant section of Fradkin’s book is the last, dealing with Everett’s “Astonishing Afterlife” in a 2009 media event of still mostly unrecognized significance. In brief: in an attempt to revive the failing *National Geographic Adventure Magazine*, the 10TH anniversary issue featured an article by David Roberts alleging that Everett’s body had been found at last—not near Davis Gulch, along the Hole in the Rock road—but nearly 100 miles away, near the top of Comb Ridge, overlooking Chinle Wash on the Navajo Reservation, a location on the other side of both the Colorado and San Juan rivers from where he was last seen.

Roberts’ identification of the remains was based on [I kid you not!] a *half-century old, second-hand hearsay story (adjusted to fit the occasion)*. Years ago, a long-deceased Navajo named Aneth Nez told his granddaughter how many years earlier he had watched two Utes chase and kill a young Anglo guy, then steal his mules and gear. Afraid the murder would be blamed on Navajos, Nez carried the body to the top of Comb Ridge where he hid it under a ledge. More recently, the granddaughter repeated the tale to her younger brother, a “traditional Navajo” who determined to find the body. Eventually he did find one, which the FBI pronounced a Native American burial...but the finder, David Roberts, and *National Geographic* knew it had to be Everett: after all, *it was confirmed by a dust devil kicked up by Everett’s long deceased spirit*.

Make no mistake about it, Roberts is a skillful—if reality challenged—storyteller. I am not the first to notice that he doesn’t let facts get in the way of a great tale. He also mentioned a DNA test done by the “experts” *National Geographic* had hired that was “not conclusive,” mentioning that the samples seem to have been “contaminated”—*but he failed to mention that the contamination was from the hands of the “expert” doing the lab work*.

Shortly after the 10TH anniversary article was published, *National Geographic* issued a press release saying the Comb Ridge remains had been confirmed by a 2ND DNA test as Everett’s “beyond all reasonable doubt.”

The trouble was that not all the evidence could be made to fit. There was, initially, skepticism about details that didn’t make a lot of sense. Some noticed how

unlikely it was that a Navajo would handle a dead (Anglo) body (in spite of traditional taboos) and haul it to an obscure cliff top location (to conceal a murder), leave his own saddle (presumably blood encrusted) at the same location (thus implicating himself), and then neglect the traditionally required cleansing ceremony for decades, until he came down with cancer.

It also came out that Everett’s dental records—which Roberts had missed—did not correspond to the teeth of the remains found out along Comb Ridge. Roberts—and his “forensic genius” Dennis Van Gerven (University of Colorado)—denied the validity of the dental records, maintaining that the DNA results were “irrefutable.” If so, Everett’s teeth must have lost their fillings and healed up postmortem...certainly a first!

After urging by Utah state archaeologist Kevin Jones, the surviving Ruess family, to their credit, authorized another DNA test, this time by the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory in Rockville, MD—real experts with lots of experience at using old (as well as fresh) material. And this (3RD and final) DNA test showed the remains were of a Native American, and not those of Everett Ruess, in spite of all the hype and publicity.

Fradkin draws the proper conclusion from this affair, namely that DNA tests, which are done by (and for) human beings, are not the “Golden Standard” of evidence that they have been alleged to be. It really does matter who does the test (and why), how much they know about what they are doing, and how good their laboratory technique is.

While all this was going on, there was an article in the *New York Times* (August 17, 2009) about Israeli researchers who had demonstrated that it is possible to fake DNA evidence. In Everett’s case, it was done by accident and incompetence.

David Roberts’ book *Finding Everett Ruess* is another entertaining account of this affair, but you won’t find Everett there—although you will find lots of David Roberts. This is an entertaining but self-serving account of how Roberts—and his alleged “experts”—managed to get it all wrong in their rush to come up with a story that would put *National Geographic Adventure* magazine back on the map. It is full of contradictions, muddled thinking, and—I think—outright prevarication.

In the end, Roberts thinks Everett is still out there somewhere along Comb Ridge, they just found the wrong body. As for the “irrefutable” DNA result that was completely wrong—it was a “software error.”

*Drifter Smith*

## More Books

*Big Water, Little Boats—Moultly Fulmer and the First Grand Canyon Dory on the Last of the Wild Colorado River*, BY TOM MARTIN, Vishnu Temple Press, ISBN 978-0-9795055-6-0, 240 pages, \$25, soft cover.

There was a time when river runners built their own boats and rowed the Colorado River through Grand Canyon on free-flowing water; no permit problems, no high-tech gear and not much in the way of backup. What they did have were cameras, lots of film, cans of food, life jackets and journals to keep their logs in. Tom Martin has chatted with a number of the guys and gals still standing, then scoured libraries, attics, and garages, to find the stories and pictures the others have left behind. He built a replica of the Grand Canyon's first decked McKenzie River dory from photographs, notes, and the original wreck the boat builder left behind, and has since rowed it through the Canyon three times. Ten years in the making, *Big Water, Little Boats* tells the story of Moultly Fulmer, Brick Mortenson, P.T. Reilly, Dock Marston, and their friends on river trips on some of the highest water of the last century. He has included lots of stories of other trips during the same time period—the 1940s through the 1960s—including the development of recreational river running and boat design on the Colorado.

From the back cover:

*Moultly Fulmer was bitten by the river running bug during a San Juan River trip in 1942. After a chance meeting with a McKenzie River dory builder, Fulmer constructed his first dory and rowed the San Juan in 1947. Traveling through Grand Canyon in 1948 on a Norm Nevills expedition, Fulmer met Colorado River historian, Otis "Dock" Marston, and they went on to run rivers together and correspond for the next thirty years.*

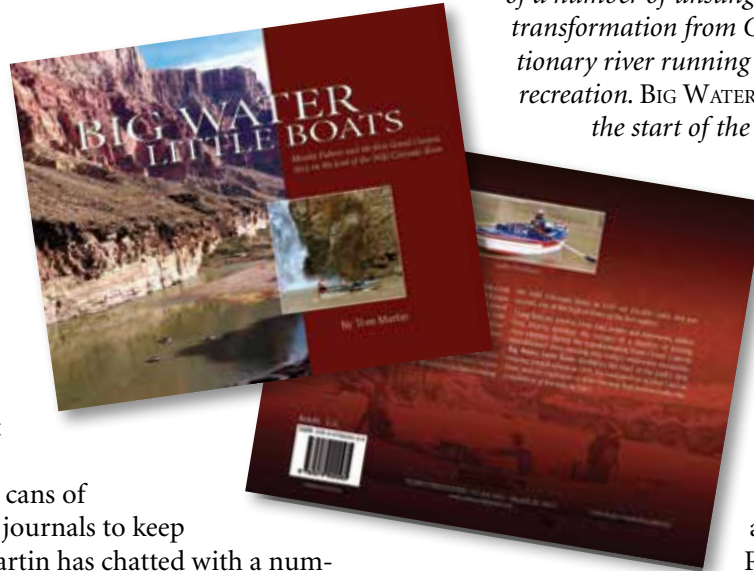
*Fulmer built his second dory, the Gem, specifically for big water. Joining forces with Pat Reilly in 1954, they ran the Grand Canyon five times in home-built boats. Their adventures included rowing the wild Colorado River in*

*1957 on 126,000 cubic feet per second, one of the highest flows in the last century.*

*Using historic photos, river logs, letters and interviews, author Tom Martin recounts the voyages of a number of unsung river runners during the transformation from Grand Canyon expeditionary river running into today's whitewater recreation. BIG WATER, LITTLE BOATS chronicles the start of the park's river running permit*

*system in 1955, the construction of Glen Canyon Dam, and the explosion of river running that occurred after the completion of the dam in 1963.*

Order at [www.vishnutemplepress.com](http://www.vishnutemplepress.com) prior to publication for \$20 and you will save \$5.00. Publication date is May 1, 2012. The book is scheduled to ship May 1st.



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*The Ballad of Gutless Ditch* BY KATIE LEE, Katydid Books and Music, 84 pages, limited edition of 500, \$75.

*The Ballad of Gutless Ditch* is Katie Lee's newest and wildest western saga. Katie Lee, one of the Southwest's most eloquent writers, has just published a wild, free-verse Western adventure. The tale is set in Gutless Ditch, a Western mining town of the late 1800s and stars the handsome lawyer Matt Kinkade; Potrero, Matt's ornery black stallion; Danielle, the petite schoolmarm who captivates Matt with charm and beauty, only to suddenly disappear; and "Mat-a-low," a child with big round eyes who magically appears nine years later in a bewitching glade outside of town. There are as many provocative and captivating twists through love, lust, betrayal and redemption as the sinuous canyons of the great Southwest canyons that Katie has explored and written so evocatively about. Its inspired mystical ending is as unexpected as it is entrancing.

Robin Anderson, nationally renowned artist from Jerome, Arizona, has illustrated the book with twelve remarkable etchings. In the 2002, internationally

famous artist, Robin John Anderson once again took up the etching needle, during which time he concentrated on his prodigious painting career, rivaling the output of such artists as Picasso and Vincent van Gogh. The illustrations seen in this book are the result of his relearning the craft that he mastered at the young age of twenty-six.

*The Ballad of Gutless Ditch*, published by Katydid Books and Music (Katie's company), is a very finely designed, limited edition of 500, all numbered and signed by the author and illustrator. Once the edition is sold out, no other editions will be published.

Katie's broad palette of achievements as a writer, folksinger and environmental activist includes books, recordings and videos inspired by her knowledge of cowboy songwriters and travels in Southwest canyons and rivers. She's been featured on numerous interviews on national and international radio and television shows. In 2011, she was inducted into Arizona's prestigious Music Hall of Fame. "Katie's special gift is a remarkable ability to transport audiences and readers into the magic kingdoms that inspire her creativity," says long-time friend and author, Diane Rapaport.

Katie Lee has a wide-ranging, eclectic and raucous palette of achievements: *Ten Thousand Goddam Cattle* celebrates the history of cowboys through their songs. *Glen Canyon Betrayed* takes her readers into the doomed heart of the canyon. *Sandstone Seduction: Rivers and Lovers, Canyons and Friends* is a collection of stories.

Her film, *The Last Wagon*, honors two of Arizona's cowboy legends. The film won the 1972 Cine Golden Eagle Award. Numerous CD's and videos feature Katie singing about cowboys, rivers and canyons.

Katie has been interviewed on National Public Radio and been featured on many TV specials. Highlights include Mark Riesner's *Cadillac Desert*; Alexandria Cousteau's *Blue Planet* (co-sponsored by National Geographic, Ocean Foundation and others); *Wall-to-Wall Water*, *The Dilemma of Dams* (Japan); *Mein Amerika* (Germany); and *Naked Planet* (Britain).

She has received many prestigious awards, among

them the Glen Canyon Institute's David Brower Award for outstanding environmental activism, 2001; Culture Treasure Keepers of Canyon Country Award, 2001; The Lawrence Clark Powell Lifetime Achievement Award, 2005; Entrada Institute's Ward Royslance Award for Commitment to Arts and Outdoor Education, 2003; she was inducted into Arizona's Music Hall of Fame in 2011.

When asked about the inspiration for *The Ballad of Gutless Ditch*, Katie comments:

There are countless excuses, desires or provocations for the writer who begins to tell a story. Whether it be reality or fiction, whatever triggers that beginning will often remain a deep, dark mystery.

As to what booted up *The Ballad of Gutless Ditch*, I have no clue.

Between 1954 and '63, I was still a working folksinger on the road, traveling from one gig to another all across the continent. Somewhere during that time, heading west through flatass Kansas, the beginning conversation in this story simply fell out of the sky; to this day I have no idea what I was thinking at the time, what the story would be about, what form it would take, who would be in it, how long it would be, where it would take place, or how it might end. That would take many years and countless car rides.

The book is available at [www.katydidit.com](http://www.katydidit.com) for \$75 plus \$5 shipping. For more information: [www.katydidit.com](http://www.katydidit.com)

*The gold of the old West, a gripping romance, an almost miraculous conception, villains and saints and heroes, cataclysmic events, and a brush with the metaphysical.*

—Warren Miller, Educator, Folklorist, Banjo picker

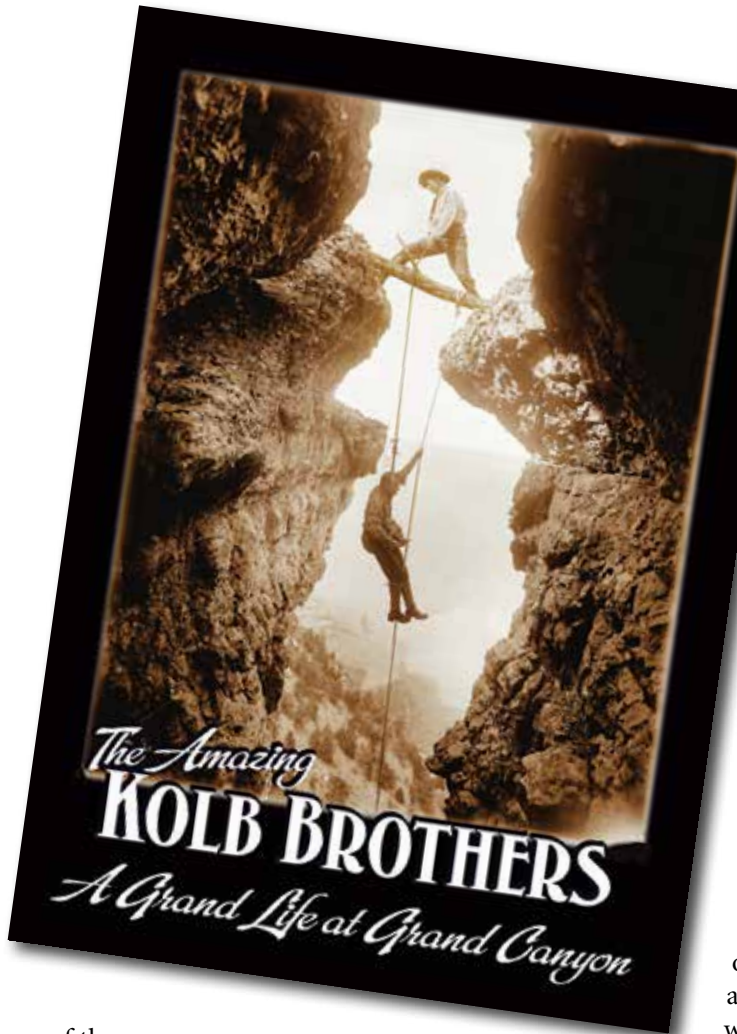




## On The Backs Of Mules And From The Rivers Of Images:

The Amazing Ellsworth and  
Emery Kolb of Grand Canyon

**T**HE KOLB BROTHERS, Ellsworth and Emery, arrived at the Grand Canyon 110 years ago, began taking photographs of mule trips and canyon scenery soon thereafter, built a studio and home on the brink of the canyon, and embarked on their “Big Trip,” on the river through the canyons of the Green and Colorado Rivers, taking the first motion pictures



of the canyons and fastwater that they ran in sixteen-foot wooden boats.

On the centennial anniversary of the “Big Trip,” coinciding with that of Arizona statehood, it seems

EXHIBIT OPENING AT GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK

PLEASE JOIN US FOR AN OPENING RECEPTION  
**THE AMAZING KOLB BROTHERS:**  
*A Grand Life at Grand Canyon*

Wednesday, January 4, 2012

10:00 A.M. - Noon

At Historic Kolb Studio

South Rim Village, Grand Canyon National Park  
Refreshments will be served.

The Kolb brothers are legend at the Grand Canyon for their pioneering spirits and treasure trove of photographs. Ellsworth and Emery arrived at the South Rim in the dawning years of the 20th century, long before the Grand Canyon was designated a national park. Stories of their adventures, their family, and their enduring photography business on the rim are told for the first time in exhibit form and displayed in their historic studio. Open through September 4, 2012.

Presented by the Grand Canyon Association, Northern Arizona University's Cline Library Special Collections and Archives, and Grand Canyon National Park. Additional funding is provided by Pink Jeep Tours, Las Vegas and Sedona; Ms. Penny Schultz; and the Babbit Foundation.

only appropriate that Grand Canyon National Park and the Grand Canyon Association help to celebrate their adventurous story, with the first-ever exhibit devoted entirely to Ellsworth and Emery and their family. It is planned to be semi-permanent and opened in December 2011, and will run until September 2012, returning in December 2012 for another nine months.

As their story is remarkable and there is a wealth of information about them, they are very deserving of a full-length biography. Many are the stories, sometimes approaching legendary myth, and as I wrote the exhibit text, I approached them as new information and attempted to verify their truthfulness. You may be surprised, as was I, of certain “facts,” among others: why was Ellsworth called “Ed” when he had a brother named Edward?; Emery gave Ellsworth credit for naming Cheyava Falls based on a Hopi word meaning intermittent, but does it?; and can “carved in stone” really mean “unchangeable” when referring to the dates on Ellsworth’s and Edith’s headstones in the Grand Canyon Pioneer Cemetery?\*

Though the Kolb Brothers built their Grand Canyon business on the backs of mules and received their reputation from their rivers of photographic images,



The Kolb family entertain Grand Canyon National Park interpreters, Grand Canyon Association staff, and assorted Kolb fans.  
 Photo courtesy Wayne Ranney.

the exhibit is much more than that, with topics covering: the family and the community; other boating and Grand Canyon experiences; the “Grand Canyon Film Show,” lectures and publications; the history of the studio cascading down over the edge and its renovation; and where to find more information about Ellsworth and Emery.

Though you will undoubtedly want to see the entire layout with artifacts, including the canoe that contained “the bones in the boathouse,” until that time you may see the exhibit panels online through the Grand Canyon Association’s website: <http://grandcanyon.org/kolb/currentexhibit.asp>. Also online are over 10,000 photographic images at Northern Arizona University Cline Library’s Colorado Plateau Archives: <http://archive.library.nau.edu/>.

An experiential highlight of the exhibit took place on January 4th, when the Kolb family attended the grand opening reception. Emery Kolb’s grandson, Emery (Sonny as a lad and Smokey in later years) Lehnert, son of Carl and Edith Kolb Lehnert, his wife Ruth, their daughter Jennifer Draper, and her daughter Kerstin Feldhaus, along with Emery and Ellsworth’s

youngest brother Ernest’s grandson Steve and his wife Susana, attended the gathering. Emery and Ruth had not been back since after his grandfather Emery died December 11, 1976, at almost 96 years of age, the oldest resident at Grand Canyon. Smokey stated that there was nothing to come back for: his grandparents were gone, the house was empty, and the Park Service owned the house and closed it. For many years, Emery and Ellsworth Kolb had some ongoing acrimony with the Forest Service and the National Park Service concerning their business ventures. Kolb fan Brad Dimock explained: “It’s an interesting thing to see the Kolb family and the Park Service on amicable terms. There used to be a three-way battle between the Kolbs, the Park Service, and the Fred Harvey Company, and it was vicious....So, it’s cool to see the Kolb family come back as special guests to the park.” The family was so appreciative of the efforts that the Grand Canyon Association took to stabilize and restore the house and studio and of the concern and support Grand Canyon National Park has taken for the building and the history of the Kolb Brothers. Emery and Blanche’s daughter Edith eloped to Mexico to marry Park Service



employee Carl Lehnert; their son Smokey also was a long-time Park Service employee. Superintendent Dave Uberuaga and Deputy Superintendent Barclay Trimble were both on hand at the opening and hosted a luncheon for the family.

On January 5th, the Kolb family treated many of the GCNP rangers, interpreters, GCA staff, and other appreciative attendees to a get together to share reminiscences of living at and visiting the Grand Canyon and to answer questions. At first Smokey's grandmother Blanche, Emery's wife, received only brief mention. I finally asked about her: Smokey lowered his head a bit, somewhat overcome with emotion, and softly said "she was a wonderful woman." With a little further prompting by other's questions, Emery, Ruth, and Jennifer opened up with some wonderful stories of Blanche, obviously a dear person to their lives and memories, who holds a cherished place in their hearts. I always thought that it was lucky that Emery won the coin toss with Ellsworth in 1924, as "Ed's" wanderlust would probably have doomed the Kolb Brothers business, while Emery's perseverance worked towards success. Jennifer countered with the fact that Blanche really ran the business, that it was her hard work and business acumen that was the real cause.

After all these years, there is finally an exhibit dedicated solely to the Kolb Brothers, their lives, business, and family. It will be in the Kolb Studio through September 4, and installed again in December. But please don't put it off – you owe it to yourselves, and the Kolbs, to view it, learn from it, and enjoy it.

\* Ellsworth had a Chinese cook who had trouble pronouncing his name, so "Ed" it was. There is no Hopi word starting with Ch, or even C, or many other letters; Cheyava may be based on some Hopi, or perhaps other language, word that has a beginning sound similar to Ch. Ellsworth's birth date is December 27, 1876, not January 4. Edith's year of death is actually 1978, not 1979.

*C.V. Abyssus*



*Emery and Blanche's great granddaughter Jennifer Draper, great great granddaughter Kerstin Feldhaus, grandson Emery "Smokey" Lehnert, and Brad Dimock, in front of Brad's replica Kolb boat "Edith."*



*Kerstin, Jennifer, Ruth (Smokey's wife), and Smokey.*



*Kerstin, Smokey, Ruth, Susana and Steve Kolb (Steve is the grandson of youngest brother Ernest). In front: Jennifer. All Photos courtesy Wayne Ranney.*



# Musings On The Long Term Experimental And Management Plan EIS

**W**E FEEL LIKE WE RAN A MARATHON. Phone calls, meetings, tons of research, emails flying through cyberspace, drafting comments—suffice it to say that November, December and January were very busy months courtesy of the scoping process for the Long Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP). GCRG not only submitted our own thirteen pages of comments, but we also worked together with other recreational stakeholders (Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association, Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association, Grand Canyon River Runners Association and American Rivers) to provide comments from a recreational perspective. All of these comments can be found on the GCRG website, [www.gcrg.org](http://www.gcrg.org), under Advocacy/Glen Canyon Dam. We threw ourselves enthusiastically into the LTEMP process because we felt that GCRG should have something substantial to say about a new Environmental Impact Statement for Glen Canyon Dam and our vision for the place we love. It was also immensely gratifying to collaborate with other groups and solidify our working relationships by finding common ground.

But how did the process resonate with the river running public at large? Well, not so much. Argonne Laboratories, the contractor for the LTEMP, received 447 comment documents. This is a far cry from many of the EIS processes we've worked on lately such as the overflights issue (close to 30,000 comments) or uranium mining (close to 300,000). Clearly there are several factors at work. Granted, it's hard to get all worked up to submit comments when there isn't anything tangible to comment on at this early stage. Timing also affected public involvement—the holiday mode isn't exactly conducive for getting work done. Thank goodness our friends at GCPBA asked for an extension of the comment period, which was subsequently granted. That was a huge help. But most of all, we realize that dam operations and their ramifications seem very dry, mysterious, overwhelmingly complex, and hard to grasp for the river running public. It's not as simple as the overflights issue where everyone can relate to the importance of natural quiet, or the threat of uranium mining pollution on the doorstep of our icon park. But please believe us when we say that it is every bit as important.

On a positive note, we hear that the LTEMP comments that were submitted were well thought out. Bravo! Not only did organizations step up to the plate, but we know many of our members did too. For what

we may have lacked in quantity, we certainly made up for in quality, which is fantastic. The LTEMP team was looking for substantive comments, and they got them. The quality of the Draft EIS will be reflective of that. Our many thanks to all of the organizations and river stewards who took the time to weigh in with observations and suggestions for the development of the LTEMP EIS for Glen Canyon Dam. Your efforts will help frame the future of the Colorado River, hopefully preserving and improving the values for which Grand Canyon National Park was created.

GCRG's involvement in dam issues has been a continuum from our work on the initial Glen Canyon Dam EIS, to our passionate support of the Grand Canyon Protection Act, and through all of the years we've been participating as the recreational river running stakeholder in the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program. And we'll be back at it next December when the LTEMP Draft EIS comes out for public review and comment. GCRG will be counting on the river community to step up to the plate and really get involved at that time. If you are not already on GCRG's guide or general member email list and would like to be added for alerts on issues such as this, please email [gcrg@infomagic.net](mailto:gcrg@infomagic.net). The river community is an incredibly powerful force when we speak up. But it takes all of us to protect Grand Canyon...

*Lynn Hamilton*  
GCRG EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Sam Jansen*  
AMWG REPRESENTATIVE

## Tales From The Truck— Thundering With Thunder River

**I**N AUGUST OF 2001, on a rowing and paddle trip with Colorado River and Trail Expeditions (CRATE), we camped at Stone Creek and planned on spending the majority of the next day hiking and relaxing in the Tapeats and Deer Creek drainages. We gave our guests the option of hiking the Tapeats-Deer Loop via Thunder River and Surprise Valley or riding the boats downstream and hiking up Deer Creek to the patio or



Walker and Latimer having lunch before Latimer's fall.  
Photo courtesy Walker McKay

Dutton Springs. The group split fairly equally, three boats stayed in the mouth of Tapeats to be picked up later by myself and others hiking the loop in reverse. Our other four boats, including myself, floated downstream towards Deer Creek.

At some point during the morning at Stone, Tapeats, or on the way to Deer, Walker (McKay) mentioned to me the possibility of the two of us scrambling and climbing into the cave of Thunder River and “checking things out.” At the time, I had not realized this was doable and had never considered it before, but I was undoubtedly game for an adventure. [Jon] Toner overheard our conversation and with extreme caution in his voice said, “Be careful! If you fall there you don’t just get hurt really bad, you die.” I briefly contemplat-

ed Toner’s warning; however, I did not fully appreciate what he was saying until later on that day. We vowed to Toner that we would be extra careful and continued our plan of getting to Deer and hiking with our guests to the patio.

Once our guests seemed content and relaxed at the patio, Walker and I saw our chance to take off. We quickly made the decision to hike as fast as possible to Thunder in order to maximize our time there. I have rarely hiked as fast as we did that day. We pushed each other nearing our limits up the Deer Creek drainage past Dutton Springs and up to and across Surprise Valley and down to Thunder River. We ate a quick lunch at the base of the first long cascades of the raging torrent. Scrambling and climbing up to the cave was sketchy in two places, the first was making a move around a protruding nose of limestone and the second was climbing the steep face of slick and polished strata just before entering the cave. We moved deep into the cave with our backs against one wall and our feet against the other. We had only one headlamp, which was strapped to Walker’s head. The stream raged on making it tricky to hear each other. Some distance into the cave the headlamp died and suddenly it was pitch black. We turned around and headed towards the exit with great trepidation and eventually made it into the daylight.

On our way down, I was relieved to get past the two sketchy places without much difficulty. However, once nearing the conclusion of the limestone face we were navigating, I found myself perched a bit higher than I wanted to be. I decided to step down from the ledge I was on to another narrow shelf about three feet below. I had our camera in my back pocket and as I stepped down I felt the limestone face pushing against the camera and my side. I quickly retreated with my leg before committing my weight to the lower shelf. I fished the camera out and asked Walker to hold it as I attempted the move again. I lowered my foot to the shelf and again I felt the face pushing against me, but this time it was too late for me to pull back, I had already committed my weight and momentum to the shelf below. The face pushed me hard enough that I missed the lower shelf completely and began my fall.

Time stood still for a moment and Toner’s words rang through my head, “If you fall there you don’t just get hurt really bad, you die.” The moment passed and I found myself crashing, back-first through a mesquite tree. The commotion of clothes tearing and branches

snapping was intense. Leaving the tree in splinters, my freefall began. I couldn't see anything but sky, carnivorous limestone, and my feet as I rushed through the air. Then I bounced, striking my back again, hitting hard rock and talus and fell through the air a bit more before colliding with a slope and careening downwards along rubble and coming to a halt next to a large cottonwood log that we ate lunch next to one hour earlier.

Immediately, I felt positive that I was not seriously injured. My back was searing like it had a massive strawberry burn on it, but I felt my spine was not damaged and I was convinced I did not hit my head. Despite my certainty about the condition I was in, I stayed down and did not move my head, neck, or back. Walker was by my side in a flash and did a phenomenal job of staying calm and collected. He administered to my needs and conducted a thorough focused spinal assessment, which I passed. I stood up and he took some pictures of the abrasions on my back. I had some minor strawberry burns on my face as well, and my shirt was torn to shreds. I gazed up at the point at which I fell; it must have been fifty or more feet above me. We slowly plodded downwards towards Tapeats Creek and came upon Toner. He had been waiting for us and was far enough away he did not see or hear my fall but immediately recognized I was walking wounded. The three of us



At Upset Hotel, one day after Latimer's fall.  
photo courtesy Kimo Nelson



Latimer minutes after the fall, back at the lunch spot.  
Photo courtesy Walker McKay

hiked together gradually down the drainage and eventually made it to the Colorado. I felt good at this point, but was becoming extremely sore as the adrenaline had worn off. Luckily two other CRATE guides, Emile and Adam, had shuttled two of the three boats to Deer, leaving just one for the three of us. We finally made camp that night below Deer on the left and cleaned up dinner in the dark, which was by far the worst part of the day.

In September 2010, my dad and I hiked up to Thunder from the river. I showed him where I fell and crashed through the mesquite, bounced, and backslid over rocks and debris before coming to a stop next to a big cottonwood log. I reminisced for quite some time about that day in August nearly a decade prior. I don't think I would fare so well with a fall like that today. It was a good thing it happened to me when I was twenty instead of thirty. As time and life unyieldingly continue downstream, I have realized how truly lucky we are to intimately experience places like Deer and Tapeats Creeks, and Thunder River.

*Latimer Smith*



## To Be Of Courage, To Be Of Heart

IT IS THE RIVER and the Vishnu Schist that draw me back most every year. And the women. This river, known as the Colorado, sliced, scraped, lapped and swirled her way down through the belly of the Earth until she reached the Vishnu Schist and made the Grand Canyon. Precambrian, the schist is black, smooth, dense, shapely through its relationship with water, and angular where granite thrust itself up into fissures, made the schist from the heat of the Earth's core. Solid, deep, and ageless, there is wildness here, essential nature, the impersonal largesse that unfolds the Mystery of life. Whatever is sacred about life can be found here. The women sense this, or they wouldn't come.

In the presence of rock, water, and wind that have collectively moved in and out of each other for more than five million years, I am humbled. My self-importance diminishes more each time I run the river, while my self appreciation and gratitude for my life increases. I am not alone in this. It is there, in the face of every woman who has come to love the wilderness, rawness, and nakedness of this place as part of themselves. In the Canyon we lay aside our masks together, and become who we really are, without our titles, jobs, accomplishments, social importance or possessions. The need for courage is tremendous, for the heart gets split open, becomes enlarged, pregnant with the land, ripe with the moment, vulnerable to a new way of loving.

On each two-week Grand Canyon all-women river trip, I have partnered leadership with a close friend, Ann Rockefeller Roberts, Charlotte McGuire, Mary-Lou Mowrer, and a head boatwoman, Ruthie Stoner, Teresa Yates or Ote Dale, who all became good friends. Every trip is a gathering of women from far corners and all walks of life. We are as diverse as plants and animal configurations upon the land. Outside, under the sun, stars, full moon, rain and hail, we make room for each other in our beliefs, tears, passion, fear, hunger, tenderness and vulnerability. It is a call for community, a circle, the notion of inclusion without dogma. The land and her mystique make the circle complete, whole, without guile.

Boats are launched at Lees Ferry. There the river is wide and shallow, beginning her descent through the rock formations. Kaibab, Toroweap, Coconino Sandstone, Redwall, Bright Angel Shale and others, give way to one another, all resting on the Vishnu Schist. Invariably, most everyone eventually harbors a special affection for a particular layer. The one that most reflects

the formation of her own life's story, or the qualities that are most precious. On a river trip with Ote Dale, I danced the Schist one night on a sandy floor, lit with torches and growing moonlight. The schist has become my body, the temple for the wilderness that lies in my core.

Travelling by water through the Canyon, with anyone, on any kind of boat, is enough. At first. For the six years I lived on the South Rim of Grand Canyon, she called to me, and others, with the passion of a new lover. My hunger was deep, visceral, urgent. I recognized the hungry others. Their eyes sparkled, sometimes flashed. Laughter was often raucous, humor irreverent, loyalty to this place fierce. Again and again we would go, for here was "enoughness," roots beyond reason or heritage, a bowl large enough to contain the world's passion. There are few cathedrals where all of love is welcomed, where snakes, lizards and scorpions are known to be part of paradise, where kneeling, the divine is felt in a mix of adrenaline and skin, pressed against a rock older than imagination. This cathedral, this place of lovership with life, layer by geological layer, strips you down to the bones. To that core where marrow births the substance that drives your heart, where joy and fear meet in trembling.

It was here, in the Vishnu Schist, that I began to understand courage as the call of "coeur," the French word for heart. It was here, to this cathedral, bone-place and river-vessel, I dreamed of traveling with women. Believed we could be a community and have communion here without competition, encompassing



*Connor Saver and her mother, Tib Wheeler, 1987.*



1992 trip end-of-the-day crew meeting. Pat Haddad, Eve Hansen, Teresa Yates Matheson, Bev Aderhold Caifa, Ruthie Stoner, Karen Kazan, Mary Williams.



1987 crew members, Martha Clark Stewart and Suzanne Jordan.

our bright and shadow selves, stretching each other into our fullness, daring to never be the same again, daring to enjoy the ripeness, fullness, of everything around us, even through our verdant tears. So we came, all of us, risking.

Relationships born in the wilderness carry a uniqueness, like a birthmark, inscribing the event for life. My mother, Tib Wheeler, came on my first all-women's river trip. She was 67. We birthed a real adult friendship there. It was a difficult trip for me, the first out of my dream. I, clear with intention, thinly skilled in my new mythos of community, was heavily invested in particulars. She watched me struggle with group responsibility and partnering leadership, revel in the Canyon and move beyond my fears. I watched her sleep under the stars amidst her fears of snakes and spiders, ride through huge whitewater, experience being honored as an Elder, dip naked in all the Canyon waters, loving it. We made new friends together, and marveled at each other. Since that first trip, again and again I have witnessed a similar unfolding in the transformation of women internally, with each other and with the land. It bears witness to my challenges and growing ease, as well as their own. The birthmark is unmistakable upon those of us who have journeyed together this way. Our circle grows each year.

In the Canyon we explored new territory in ourselves. Some of us pushed through looming terror of riding water and waves large enough to grind huge boulders as though they were pebbles. Some of us inched our way over high, water-carved ledges, petrified of heights, allowing help from others. We

reached ecstasy jumping from moss and fern-laden outcroppings into cold, clear pools, standing under pounding waterfalls, paddling as a team of one through tricky rapids, walking through cities of cactus in bloom. Sitting amongst Anasazi ruins and pot chards, we considered our own ancestry, our destiny. Drifting on calm water we listened to the lilting song of the Canyon Wren, oars squeaking and drizzling with rhythm, laughter, silence. We attained timelessness, transcendence.

Some of us were well-versed in ceremony and the skills of drumming, singing and dancing. Others of us were new to this, needing some prodding and support to try something so new and different. Full moon nights found us dressed in skirts, tights, veils, sweat-pants, engaged in a give-away ceremony, or dancing to the echo of drumbeats off canyon walls. Dancers Re Newday, Sue Berlin and Billie Swegle inspired the drums, drawing other dancers to the sandy floor. Drummers Laura Lilly, Rhonda Karls and Sarah Teofanov carried dancers high on a driving beat, or deep with a slow, hypnotic one, converting boatwomen Ote Dale, Teresa Yates and Mary Williams into aspiring drumskin devotees. When Diana Bigelow or Nancy Helin sang, the whole canyon listened, dazzled. On some trips, the boatwomen brought instruments and

serenaded us. Lora Colton and Maureen Smiley were true fiddle queens, Julie Sullivan made songs leap from our memories with her guitar, Teresa Yates would coax a few tunes from a harmonica, and all of them, given an opportunity, would gladly give their rendition of our drumming, banging on pots, pans, metal canteens, plastic buckets, and anything that would roll us into laughing convulsions.

We found a way to weave together those of us who were religious or spiritual, using prayer as a summons for safety, with those who were not religious, and chose practicality and common sense as their main call. We learned to accept each other. It was risky and hard sometimes, yet we did it. Each morning we gathered in a circle for plans of the day, a meaningful reading, and a prayer. We took turns. We were Jewish, Hindu, Christian, Native American, Buddhist, Eclectic, agnostic. We were women and it worked.

Like an onion peeling, we became juicy, often moving those nearby to tears. Courage prevailed most in our intimacy of bonding, authenticity presenting itself like a freshly minted jewel. Talking circles at night helped us come together after days of sun, supreme joy and ease, or harsh weather, cold and hardship. We shared stories of our lives, those that took us to the refugee camps in former Yugoslavia, through divorces, the challenges of being lesbian, losing children, taking

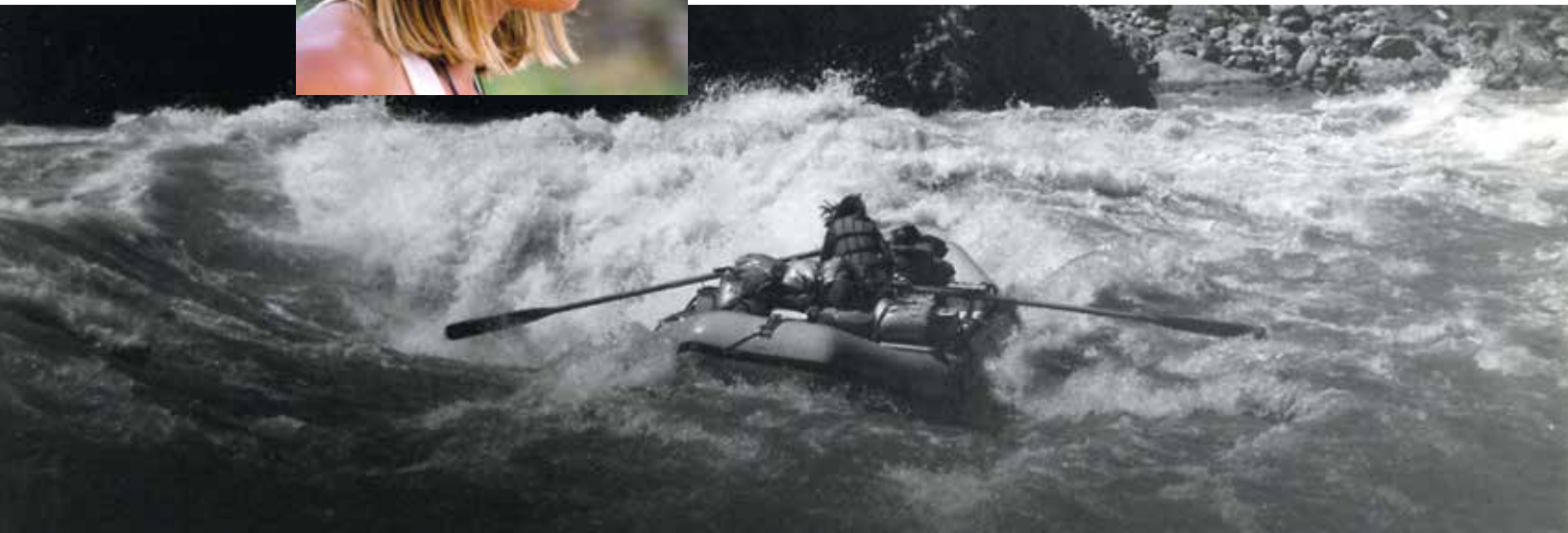
a life in self-defense, having breast cancer, heading a national organization, staying home to raise children, being a woman of color or mixed heritage. Hands that would row or paddle boats, unload gear, chop vegetables, pump water filters, pack and unpack waterproof bags, would also massage sore muscles, brush and braid hair, hold a hand smeared with tears and sand, tenderly. We all did everything, except those things that took us past sane limits. We found our niche, what we had to offer.

The boatwomen who row our boats or captain the paddleboats will always, always, steal your heart. Many are slim wisps of a woman, some beautifully muscled like body builders. All are strong, have sharp eyes, a keen sense of humor, and an inscrutably intuitive sense of water: moving, powerful, river water. If ever the goddess Artemis lived, these women are her daughters. Their collective range of wilderness knowledge would fill years of instruction at any university, their love and admiration for each other infectious, the stuff our dreams of sisterhood are made of. It is an honor to be with true heroines. These women watch out for each other, as well as everyone else. They confer with, defer to, wait for, and trust. There is no “conquering the wilderness” frame of mind, only regard, awe, connection, understanding the requirements of humility and fitnesses. They are beautifully human.

Karen Kazan was one of those daughters that no heart could resist. Neither man, woman nor child. She could be found skirting the big hole at Crystal Rapid, oars snug in her hands, hair flying in the wind, aiming for the big roller wave near the bottom of the rapid, loving gusto. On calm water you'd see her standing on



Left: Karen Kazan, 1992  
Below: Karen rowing through Crystal





the seat of her river ship, book in hand, reading poetry or her favorite *Jumping Mouse* to everyone close enough to hear. She had a way with sarongs, adorning them with a toolbelt when in camp. At Lava Falls, that world-renowned whitewater rapid, she orchestrated a rescue of two men and their boat out of the "corner-pocket," a place you never want to be, overturned. Then there were cookies. Only Karen would go through a whole box of Mystic Mints, taking a careful bite out of each one, replacing them, knowing that the community love for chocolate would find her humor and eat them anyway.

In January [1994] she died in a car accident, with her husband, being hit head on by a drunk driver. Ruthie Stoner and Teresa Yates, two of our oar-sisters and two of our lead boatwomen, were weeks away from spending a month with her in the Canyon, at Nankoweap Delta, doing Eagle studies. We were all a few months away from being on the river together on our next all-women's river trip. Many of us on the first trip with Karen wrote things for a river memorial. Sara Patton wrote, "Karen, who would have thought that I'd be writing to you from one side of the River, you now on the other side. I believe I have the harder task of trying to fathom the unknown while your spirit is now soaring free and totally knowing..." Rhonda Karls wrote, "I can see her moving to the rhythm of the drums, moving like an African dancer, with her tool pouch hanging around her waist, using the spatula with the extended handle that served as a hamburger flipper and dance staff..." Alta Tingle shared, "... My mind knows that she is gone, my heart does not recognize the Truth." Sara Teofanov wrote, "And so you go to the place of memory. The place that renews us, frightens us, empowers us, waits for our return." Death, its numbness and grief, has not escaped our community. Death, like a sentinel to the genius of life, made each one of us aware how quickly, deeply, profoundly, we had come to love strangers. On the April trip that Karen didn't make, we offered an honoring ceremony to her at Nankoweap, her favorite place. Even the women who never knew her bore witness, shed tears. That night two of the boatwomen hiked the steep trail to the granaries, lighting candles in the window to burn through the darkness. Southern Comfort, Karen's favorite, passed hands, toasting one damn fine woman, masking a deep, welling grief. It was our vigil. The lights still burned at dawn, a miracle. Our circle grows every year.

Being on the river for several weeks with no recourse from what you find is not easy. It is exhilarating, nitty-gritty, physically taxing, psychologically demanding, emotionally unsettling, spiritually renew-

ing, potentially dangerous. It is supreme. The women who come on these trips are as remarkable in their lives arena as the boatwomen are in the Canyon. On the River, in our community, we each are experienced, inexperienced, young, old, silly, wise, fearful, brave, grumpy, joyful, ordinary, extraordinary, all of it, at one time or another.

On our September trip this year, our paddle boat flipped in Horn Creek Rapid. It is a treacherous, squirrely place to be in the water. Our boatwomen managed a five person rescue from the water and upriver shore, two women having managed to flip themselves up onto the capsized paddleboat, crawl into that belly. Cody Sontag had a close call, becoming hypothermic. She was stripped, dressed in very warm clothes and sandwiched between two women. We camped quickly at Trinity, and within minutes, everyone was either being taken care of, or tending to a task. Emotions ran high, purpose ran deep, tears emptied out, waves of gratitude and concern rippled through camp. We were safe. We each were important. We were there for each other, however beautifully, imperfectly, or awkwardly.

Every morning I go to the water, pray, offer Hopi cornmeal, honor the power of the river, the power and privilege to be gifted life. Sacredness in the Canyon is simple, truthful, born of the heart. I give thanks for all life, my life, for the lives of the women who choose to meet, venture, and love the Earth in this way, for my husband and son who love and support my passion for being here. The call to come to the Canyon is heard by thousands every year. The call to come to the Canyon in This Way, is heard by few. Everything that is sacred about life can be found here. The women sense this, or they wouldn't come. They came. Our lives are still entwined. Our circle grows, every year.

*Connor Sauer ©1994*

# Serena Supplee



**M**Y FIRST TIME, I went down Westwater, and a woman named Kathy Howe, who lived in Moab at that time—she let me row. I think I was thirteen, and I really, really liked it. When I was going to school at NAU, I actually worked as a school bus driver, so I took the kids to school, I went to school, and then took the kids home. I had nights off, holidays off, weekends off. But I didn't have summer work. So I ended up coming here [to Moab] and working as a river guide. I did dailies for Tag-a-Long Tours. At that time, you actually rowed like 26-miles, all the way to the bridge. Now, they have what they call the BLM takeout, and it's only a 13-mile trip, which is a lot easier than 26.

I ended up working as a river guide for nine seasons—1980 being the first one. I graduated from NAU in '81, and then I moved to Moab like it was gonna be my career, but I guess that's kind of how it turned out anyway. I worked for Tag-a-Long for '80, '81, '82, and then in '83 I really wanted to be in high-water Cat, and the new owner of Tag-a-Long at that time, Bob Jones, did not want to send me (although Bob Jones is different today). And so I quit, and as other people did, I freelanced. I just moved on, because I knew they

needed Cat boatmen. And it was very exciting, running high-water Cat.

Seems like I remember...like, 113,000 [CFS]. Anyway, I was totally into it. And I swam a few times, but I never did flip. I only went in the Gut once. But *that* time I had three really, really big guys in front, and two big women in back. You know, we were talking about the people you see that are around 250 pounds now. I had 'em on that trip. And who knows, maybe that's why I *did* go to the Gut. Not that you have really any control when you're in the Big Drops at that water level. At that time it never really occurred to us to go right of Niagara, which is kind of what they do in high water now. We just went down the tongue. In the 90s when it got big—and granted there was more insurance and liability things than there were in the 80s—what a lot of the commercial guides did then is they just sent the boats down; the Park Service picked up the boats, and they walked the people. They called it “ghost boats,” and that was really common in the 90s.

In the 80s—and I'm not quite sure why they did it—they had the ranger set up *above* Cataract at Spanish Bottom. Then come the 90s, they had the ranger set up below the Drops to pick everything up. When I

went down there last year, when it got up to 65,000, it was the same thing, they had the rangers down below pickin' up the boats. I actually got a ride from Western, down to Big Drop One, got a backcountry permit, camped there for a few days, and then had Western pick me up again. So I didn't actually row a boat, but I was down there, I had fun helping all the people that were gonna scout tie up their boats, and watching their hands shake, and watching flips every day. It was really fun, I had a blast.

People were flipping every day. And I got some great wave drawings done.

**STEIGER:** I guess we should say here, for anybody reading that doesn't...you're known throughout the river community for your artwork.

**SUPPLEE:** I love painting the river.

**STEIGER:** And so when you got the ride to between One and Two, you were there to paint?

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah. I brought my paints.

**STEIGER:** And that's some of the work we looked at here this afternoon?

**SUPPLEE:** Uh-huh.

**STEIGER:** Striking stuff. Now, when you were rowing Cataract in the 80s, were you motoring too?

**SUPPLEE:** I did *some* motoring. I got trained on it and everything, but actually I really liked rowing.

**STEIGER:** What kind of boats?

**SUPPLEE:** When I worked for Tag-a-Long, we had these 18-foot Salmons. They were the really old, heavy material. Then a lot of the companies went to Havasus. So those were the boats I rowed, 18-foot rafts. I worked in Desolation off and on for a few years too, and we would just strap a little seven-horse motor on the back. But I never worked as a motor boatman in Cataract Canyon, on the J-rigs, as they call them here, or the snout-rigs.

**STEIGER:** So you ran through Cataract at 100,000 plus? In a little bitty Salmon or Havasu. Not once, but...?

**SUPPLEE:** I don't know how many times. I did a bunch of trips. I tried to go every week.

**STEIGER:** I've been in the river business in Grand Canyon since 1972, and I just ran my fourth trip ever in Cataract Canyon. This one was on about 20,000. I did one in low water in '77 when the Grand Canyon was shut. Another one was a couple of years ago, and it was low too. No big deal, didn't think much of it. I mean, I thought it was nice, but it didn't leap out at me as being scary or anything. But the one I did at 40,000, and the one I just now did in a dory at 20,000—those just blew me away. You talk about a big-ass, gnarly stretch of whitewater right there! At Mile Long and the Big Drops, I mean, that is a ferocious stretch of river.

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah. When you had 40,000 it was the North Sea. Like Rapid 7–8 was really, really big. Well, what did the old Cataract boatmen teach me? When it's high-water Cat, you can't count the rapids, you count the canyons. So you gotta learn your side canyons, figure out where you are.

**STEIGER:** Because it's just all waves and boils and...

**SUPPLEE:** (laughs) It's just all *big*, and you're just tryin' to get 'em all straight. And the other thing about high water in Cataract is the waves move positions. It just boils *up*, and then there's a big wave. You take two pull strokes to the right, but then you're in that big wave that you thought maybe you were gonna avoid, because it moved over. The boils are amazing! Really, you try not to go in the eddies, because the eddy fences are so high. They're the worst.

**STEIGER:** That was Grand Canyon in '83, too. Any time it's up over 30,000...

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah, I think that is—that's an over 30,000 thing.

**STEIGER:** If you want to be conservative in that kind of water, go down the middle, stay the hell away from the edges.

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah. (laughs) None of this "cut the run." It's not about making the cut, it's just whatever's coming your way, hit it straight.

\* \* \*

I remember one private I went on, and there were eighteen of us. I think this was in '85, and it was maybe running about 72,000, which is still really big. We had hired a sport boat to be at the bottom of the Drops for us, for rescue and so on, so forth. So we're at the Drops, and it's hours and hours, and finally the shade has hit the Drops, and we're like, "He didn't show. We're gonna have to just run without him." Of the eighteen people on our trip, thirteen of us swam. My boat didn't flip, but I did get knocked out of the boat in Big Drop Two. It went up the big wave, and it just, you know like sometimes—there was a little window, but sometimes the window was a crushing wave, and sometimes it was open. And when I got there, it was a crushing wave. Turned my boat sideways, and I got knocked out of the boat. My passenger went out in the Gut. When the sport boat guy we had hired—John Williams—when he comes upstream to start the rescue, the first thing he sees is my boat, no people. So he ties it up to shore, and then just makes his way on up, pickin' up bodies.

**STEIGER:** He was coming from Hite? Got there a little bit late, but not too late?

**SUPPLEE:** But not too late. But that was one of the



Rum Lava Rum - Serena Supplee







Running the Grand

more amazing times ever. I remember I swam as hard, hard, hard as I could, so I wouldn't go in the Gut—me, myself, my body, when I'm in the river. But I went over the big pour-over at that next rapid they call Powell's Pocket Watch, because they found a really old watch there. Even though it was probably from the 1923 survey trip, they still called it Powell's Pocket Watch, because it sounded better. I went over some big domer there and ended up in this eddy filled with logs, and that was actually the most brutal part of my whole swim, was being in this eddy filled with trees, and trying to get to shore between the trees: going underneath and trying to bob up and not get hurt, and not hurt my head between the trees. But I did finally make it, and I was okay. Yeah. All the other times I stayed in the boat, it was really good. Lucky. A lot of people swam. Big 33s would flip—say they'd flip in Satan's Gut, and I'd be comin' down there on a raft, and somehow made it and everything, and I would pick up swimmers. The thing I will never forget about the people that flipped in these big motorboats is they all felt like...*reborn*, like they had died and now they were in the blessed land, and this was the beginning of the rest of their life. That is one of the beautiful things about that high water. If people do have a swim or something, there's a rebirth.

It's like they've faced or had the most amazing experience, and they lived through it, and so they feel...I don't know what-all they let go of, but it brings 'em a whole new inspiration.

**STEIGER:** A swim is not just, "Oops, we went over, and now I gotta swim back?"

**SUPPLEE:** Right.

**STEIGER:** It's more like, "Holy shit, I'm a goner!"

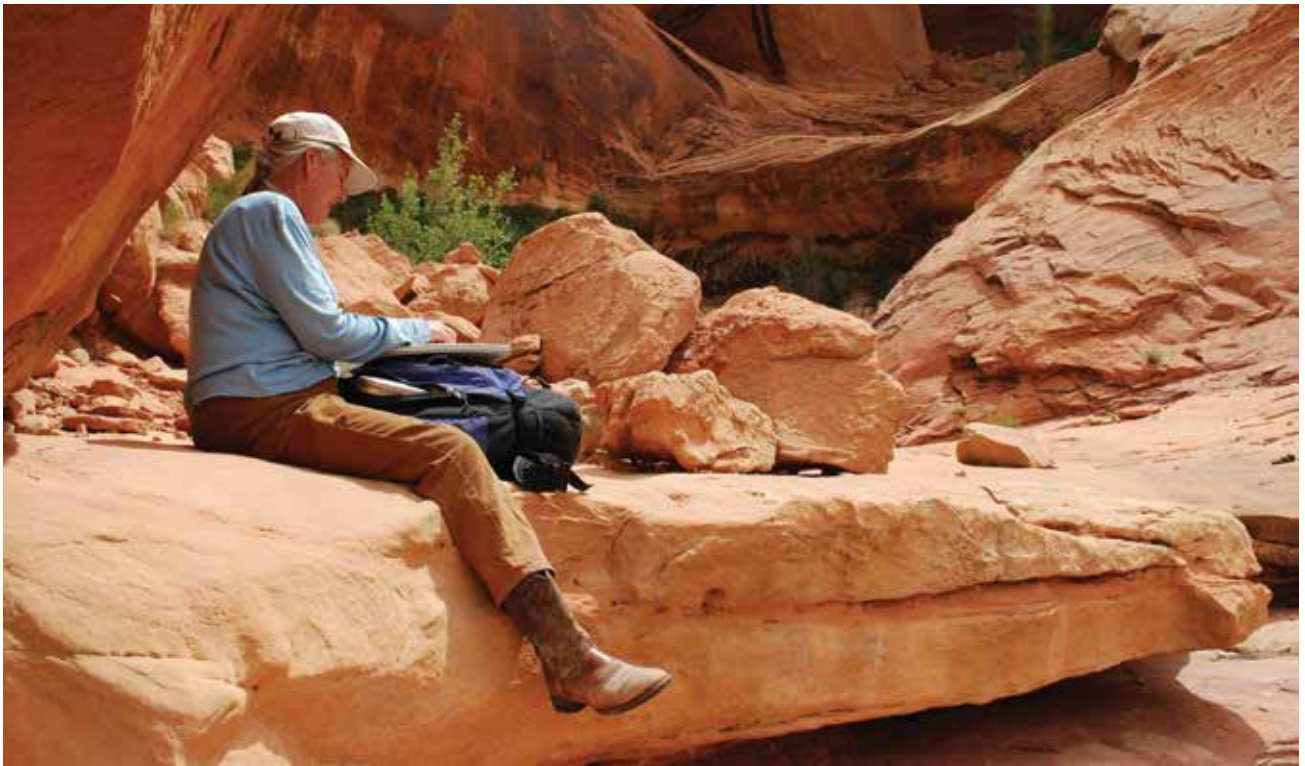
**SUPPLEE:** It's like, "Holy shit, I'm a goner!" and then "Oh my God, I'm still alive!" and finally "Oh my God, I lived!" But that's the sense I got from the people in the 80s, at the bottom of the Gut.

\* \* \*

*Serena Supplee, though she worked mostly up North, ran a lot of baggage boats for the Dories in Grand Canyon and still runs trips here today for the NPS. She did one for Grand Canyon Youth, too. We know her down here mainly for her beautiful artwork, which you can't miss if you rattle around the Grand Canyon river scene for very long. She did GCRG's t-shirt last year, and she has a big show coming up in Page this spring. This Adopt-a-Boatman interview was conducted in July of 2009 at Serena's lovely little sanctuary in Moab, Utah.*

\* \* \*

I was born in Waverly, Iowa, which I always thought was funny—I ended up on the river. My father was in the Air Force (I was born on an Air Force base) and he became an air traffic controller. In my childhood, I lived different places for two to three years, and then we moved, and then we moved, and then we moved again. By that time there were four kids. My dad believed in having a three-week-long family vacation every summer, which was awesome. He did get lots of time off, which was really great as a kid. We did a lot



*Painting on the San Juan*

of family things. Our whole family went camping. He got into four-wheeling, and took us all four-wheeling. We went to the San Juan Mountains in Colorado a lot. And then we came to Moab a few times. The first time I came to Moab I fell in love with it. I was probably eleven. Then I got to come again when I was thirteen. By the time I had my own car and all, I would come here in the summer. I have an aunt and uncle that live here in Moab, so it was super-comfortable and super-fun. My uncle, Tom Rees, was a river guide in the 70s. So I was introduced to the river at that point. When it came time for me to go to college, I kind of did a whole Southwest tour, because I knew I wanted to live in the Southwest, and I chose NAU. I have a bachelor of fine arts from NAU. As soon as I graduated, I moved to Moab.

\* \* \*

**STEIGER:** What was it like being a woman boatman in Moab in the early 80s?

**SUPPLEE:** There were actually quite a few that were hiring women at that time. It wasn't half and half, but maybe one-third were women. It was more accepted, yeah. Although, in the early 80s, I did do trips for Kenny Ross, and he was one tough goat. He really didn't like women on the river. And if I did a trip for him, because he'd gotten older and he didn't row, he

would always sit on my boat. (laughs)

**STEIGER:** Just to keep an eye on you?

**SUPPLEE:** Yes! To keep the tension alive, you know (laughs)—it seemed as though he liked a little tension, I think. It made him feel alive.

**STEIGER:** What was he like, in general?

**SUPPLEE:** Knowledgeable, liked the people, and enjoyed his rough character. Yeah, he really did. But look what he pulled off. Wild Rivers, last November, had its fifty-year anniversary. Last year they bought a hog, and they fed that pig all summer, all the leftover river food, and then there was a big pig roast last November for the fiftieth anniversary of the river company. It was really a great party.

\* \* \*

**STEIGER:** Do you remember which year was the highest water?

**SUPPLEE:** I think it really was '84, although I couldn't tell you for sure. A lot of that just mushes together.

**STEIGER:** Man, we had all that carnage in the Grand Canyon back then too.

**SUPPLEE:** I did baggage boat for the Dorries then also, in those years, for Martin Litton in the Grand Canyon, in '85. I ran Grand Canyon when...I don't think I ever did 50,000, but I did 30,000 several times, and 40,000. One of my flips that I've had—I've had three flips, all



at Lava Falls—it was in Lava Falls at 40,000 and in the *second* big wave comin’ off of the black rock, my boat went over...I’m trying to think who was on the trip. I know Bego [Gerhart] was on the trip, and maybe Kenton [Grua], and maybe Brad [Dimock]. I did trips with all those guys. I did baggage boat like maybe once a year in those years. I would do that, and then I’d get on a private in the winter. I did a lot of winter privates.

\* \* \*

STEIGER: There’s something about the nature of this river up here.

SUPPLEE: Yeah.

STEIGER: I guess it’s that salt dome thing. The geology’s so different. You don’t have such a well defined channel. That river’s just rippin’ through there, and there’s these gigantic rocks at random...

SUPPLEE: Well, Cataract Canyon was totally formed differently than Grand Canyon. It’s a fracture thing, where there’s a fracture, a big chunk of the canyon wall falls off into the river, so you’re going to have these huge boulders that water did not *move* into the river, but that actually fell from the cliff wall into the river.

STEIGER: And the water’s just gettin’ through it any way it can.

SUPPLEE: Exactly. And the channels change a lot here. I mean, having run Grand Canyon over the years, it’s not that none of the channels have changed, but I run the daily section or whatever here, and the channels here change.

STEIGER: On a daily basis?

SUPPLEE: No, but every few years it’ll move from one side of the river, back over to the other side. I’m not quite sure why all that is, but the channels change here.

STEIGER: I think rivers in general are all changing all the time. You know?

SUPPLEE: Yeah, I do.

STEIGER: Just on a scale we don’t always notice. It takes us a while to comprehend that none of this stuff is permanent—nothing. You watch Havasu get blown out a few times, and the Havasu of today is nothing like the Havasu we first saw. And so on. Deer Creek. Remember Deer Creek, up above, before it burned the first time? All those big old cottonwood trees?

SUPPLEE: Yeah. It’s true, it does change. One of the things I really notice here *and* in Grand Canyon is whatever beaches there are, the plants are taking ’em over. It’s kind of like there’s so fewer beaches than ever before. I’m not quite sure *why* it is that the plants are takin’ the beaches. It’s like, yeah, well, we’ve had *some* low water, *some* high water, but maybe not consistently enough, because people always talk about, “Oh, it’s the

fluctuating water.” But I don’t even know if it’s that anymore.

STEIGER: Well, if it was *just* Grand Canyon, we could blame it on the dam.

SUPPLEE: But we can’t. It’s up here too. The plants are taking over the beaches. I have such fond memories of just floating in my life jacket alongside my boat, and then going to shore and running the beach for a while, and then back into the river, jump on the boat.

STEIGER: The great big, plain, white, sandy beach that went on forever...

SUPPLEE: Remember ’em?

STEIGER: Yeah, I do.

SUPPLEE: That is a beautiful memory I have.

STEIGER: Pre-1983. I remember the beaches being a *lot* bigger than they were after all that. And being just exponentially fewer now. Or tamarisk trees back then, they were just gettin’ in there, I guess. Now we have this beetle up here goin’ to town. We’ll see what it does.

SUPPLEE: It’s doin’ it! It is eating all the tamarisk, and they’re all turning rust, and then after they turn rust, then all the leaves really fall off, and then they look like they’re burnt, and that’s our new landscape—until the BLM comes in and either chainsaws ’em down and then tries to burn the roots and replant something else. It’s all gonna be interesting.

\* \* \*

STEIGER: I wonder what to ask about changes you’ve seen in guiding up here since the 80s?

SUPPLEE: Well, we could talk about how I decided not to be a guide anymore, which was a beautiful thing.

STEIGER: Ok. How?

SUPPLEE: Actually, I was on a San Juan trip, and the woman that was my passenger on my boat, she refused to put her feet in the mud. I had to carry her to and from the boat every day. And then when I got to Clay Hills, I ended up putting her on a cooler, and pulling her across the mud on that cooler. And right there I knew, “I wasn’t meant to do this. I really want to be an artist.” So even though she drove me over the edge, she was the gift.

STEIGER: Okay, tell me more about this woman.

SUPPLEE: She was from Texas. She was doing this river trip and had to get off just in time so she could go buy some prize dog. She was there with her husband. Her husband basically wanted nothing to do with her. I was working for Wild Rivers, doing a San Juan trip. Probably eight days. Low water. It had just dropped out. It was super-muddy. I was just trying to get her downstream without listening to her bitch and

whine. So I carried her on and off the boat, because she couldn't get in the mud—so she said.

**STEIGER:** Now this woman...you get to the first stop, and she's like, "Well, I'm not walkin' across that!"?

**SUPPLEE:** Right, and I just left her on the boat for a while, and didn't deal with it, and then ended up carrying her into camp once. And then I did it more. She was smaller than me—which was good. (laughs)

There was another boat, and I think I was in charge. There might have only been six, seven people on the trip. But by the time I got to Clay Hills...Clay Hills is the take-out, and there's a hundred yards of mud. Maybe only fifty. But a long ways—a *long* stretch of mud, and you had to drag all the equipment across the mud. It's not like you can just clean it up. You clean it up back at the warehouse. You roll the boats up in the mud. You just take everything back and then blow it all back up, and then clean everything there. That's how we did it on the San Juan, because it was impossible. You can't get stuff clean. The San Juan doesn't really come off of boats anyway. You almost have to use...well, it's not the green scrubby, but they've got those ones that are reddish. The San Juan comes off with the red scrubby. (laughter)

I realized, "How am I gonna get this woman across here?" And then I came up with the cooler. I just realized that I was not meant to fetch and tote for these people anymore.

**STEIGER:** What had you been doing with your art before then?

**SUPPLEE:** Not as much. Thinking I was going to get so much done at the end of the season, and then realizing my experience when I was a full-time guide was: I pretty much worked until maybe mid October, and then it really took me 'til mid-November to be back to being an artist, and being who I really am. And then it was the holidays. You know, Thanksgiving and then Christmas, and then it was January, and then I thought, "Okay, here it is mid-January, and I'm just now really getting back to my painting." But the bottom line is, I wasn't getting any better. I'd kind of pick up where I'd dropped off, doing stuff, and I don't think I was getting better. Although I did always make time to draw. Whether I got to paint or not, I did get better at drawing during those years, because I would make time to draw, but I don't think I became a better painter. But she just woke me up. It was like, "Wait a minute! I want to be an artist! What am I *doing* here?!"

**STEIGER:** Now this is when you're dragging her on the cooler?

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah. It's what? A hundred yards of mud, at that time.

She just helped me realize I didn't want to be a

guide anymore, and I really wanted to be an artist. I wasn't being who I really wanted to be anyway.

**STEIGER:** What year was that?

**SUPPLEE:** In '88.

**STEIGER:** So how'd you do it?

**SUPPLEE:** Well, I came back here, and I was really broke, fast. But there was a lot of movie work here then. Actually Bego kind of saved the day. He'd already kind of gotten into the movie business.

**STEIGER:** Bego became the Upper Basin's Brian Dierker?

**SUPPLEE:** He did! He would just tell 'em to hire me, and they did.

Oh, all kinds of crazy stuff. One job, I had to make sure the stunt men had their clothes on just like the actor. Another job, they put all the cameras on me. I was the same size as the actress, and so when the actress came on, everything was all set for her. I cooked. I actually cooked for ABC when they did a wildlife series here. Whatever they needed. Whatever I got a job doing, I did it.

**STEIGER:** And then artwork-wise? How did *that* evolve?

**SUPPLEE:** Well, *that* was like a whole lot of work quick and fast. It wasn't seasons long. I slowly started getting shows. That dribbled off, and what I wanted to do started dribbling forward. And it all worked out.

**STEIGER:** Just tell me a little more of the particulars there.

**SUPPLEE:** Well, I started a series of note cards in 1983. Took out a pretty big loan. I bought my first raft, and I bought my first series of cards, and slowly paid that off. I did another series of cards. I think in '85 was the second series. The third series was in '88. Actually, after the third series—and this was like twelve different designs in every series—they started to sell, finally.

**STEIGER:** When you say you "buy a series"...?

**SUPPLEE:** That means I had a thousand printed of each image. In those early series, there were twelve images. So offset litho printing.

**STEIGER:** And then so they box them? Or, here's a set of twelve, you had to do it yourself?

**SUPPLEE:** I did everything. They come in boxes all the same. But you have to count 'em, and count the envelopes. It's not hard, it's just marketing.

**STEIGER:** Here's your stack of a thousand of this, and a thousand of that. So you take one of each, put 'em all together?

**SUPPLEE:** I didn't actually sell them as sets. I sold everything as singles. And I'm not quite sure why I made that choice...How did I market those? Out of my '61 Dodge panel wagon.

**STEIGER:** You just drove around to wherever they



A Yabba Dabba Do Time! - Serena Supplee

were selling cards?

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah, and asked 'em to look. And would they carry mine.

**STEIGER:** How'd that go?

**SUPPLEE:** Well, like I said, I started in '83, and nothing really happened 'til '88, even though I never gave up. Took five years to get it goin'. And now it's easy.

**STEIGER:** So did you change, or did something else change? What was up with that?

**SUPPLEE:** I think they just didn't initially... They didn't believe me.

**STEIGER:** Did the work change?

**SUPPLEE:** Oh yeah, the work got better too. I got better. I think there was just something about where I kept coming in and buggin' 'em. Just like the river guide business, if you keep going in that same office, they're eventually gonna say, "Yeah, we *do* need you." "Yeah, we *do* need cards." I don't know.

Young artists now ask me, "How do you do it?" I'm like, "I have no idea." I would leave Moab with fifty bucks in my pocket, and thousands of cards, and hope I made it home! (laughs) That's not how kids today do it. They've got credit cards and stuff. See, I didn't have credit cards, so it's a whole different deal.

**STEIGER:** So 1989-1990, you have fifty dollars to your name. You've got a thousand cards that you just paid thousands of dollars for. And you're gonna drive around and sell these *wholesale*...

**SUPPLEE:** Wholesale. Whatever they'll buy. I always did good in Bluff, which was thankful.

**STEIGER:** You're gonna sell 'em for twice what you paid for 'em? Is that how that works?

**SUPPLEE:** Basically, yeah.

**STEIGER:** You sell 'em for twice what you pay for 'em, and they sell 'em for...?

**SUPPLEE:** Twice what they paid for 'em. Yeah, that's basically how it works.

**STEIGER:** Well, tell me about the work. How do you get better, if you want to be an artist?

**SUPPLEE:** Oh, you just do 'em. You know, young artists, they say, "I want to learn how to do this." I respond, "Well, show me one of your paintings, and then tell me what you do and don't like about it. Then I'll help you with the part you don't like." But it needs to be their idea. You keep doing your ideas. I think you just keep doing it. You do a hundred paintings, then pick out ten that you really, really like out of your first hundred. Then you do a thousand paintings, and you're probably going to have a hundred really good ones. Pick out a hundred really good ones, you can start making a living.

**STEIGER:** But you've got to do a thousand to get the hundred?

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah.

**STEIGER:** Does that mean you've got to do it every day?

**SUPPLEE:** Well, I don't, but I'm more of a binger. I really like my painting binges. They're just hard to create for myself. I talked to Terry Tempest Williams once, and she said, "You know, I just quit answering the





Violet Vitality - Serena Supplee

phone, I don't return e-mail, I don't do *anything*—in order to create the space for me to do the writing, to have my focus, to do the writing I need to do. So that's how some artists do it. I don't know. I like people, and yet I try to create some space for myself each day to paint. So I just do my best. I'm not a person who has been able to create a routine. I thought having a routine might solve some issues, but here I am over fifty, and I haven't created one yet. So maybe I'm just fine without one. (laughs)

**STEIGER:** Apparently so! You seem to be doin' pretty good here.

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah, you see what I mean. When Tatiana came to [plaster] the walls, she said to me, "I really want routine." I told her, "Well, if you're lookin' for routine, this is probably *not* where you want to come." She said, "No, I can create routine for myself." I asked, "Within this chaotic environment?" And she replied, "I'm gonna do it!" And she pretty much has, to her credit.

**STEIGER:** We should say, for the record here, Tatiana is Serena's "intern," would you say?

**SUPPLEE:** No, she is a young boatwoman who is not guiding this year, and she's putting a coat of cob adobe coating on my big, seventy-five-yard sandbag wall.

**STEIGER:** Which surrounds one corner of Serena's property here, which also is this kind of beautiful and whimsical space in a quiet little corner of Moab. There's two monumental sculptures sitting out in the yard that we just went and toured before this interview, that are quite spectacular. You can see the Serena touch to 'em. They have a feeling that's akin to the paintings and the watercolors we've all seen.

**SUPPLEE:** And rock and water—you can feel rock and water.

**STEIGER:** Yeah, you can feel the Southwest here, you can feel the redrock country for sure. But it's a long way from a watercolor to these big sculptures. (Supplee chuckles) And there's a pelican or a heron or some kind of bird out there, taking shape right now.

**SUPPLEE:** Uh-huh.

**STEIGER:** So you don't sit around and go, "I'm gonna make this, and make this much money out of it?"

**SUPPLEE:** No, I haven't ever looked at it as "if I build

this, I'll make this much money." You know, I've listened all my life to people that work the nine-to-five, and their story is, "I work forty hours a week, and I only come home with *this!*" My story is, "Well, I work *sixty* hours a week, and I might get paid *someday!*" (laughter) Yeah, I don't get it. But I'm so lucky, because I really have gotten to do so many of my ideas. I've gotten to do *so* many projects I'm passionate about. I'm pretty lucky that way.

**STEIGER:** And to what do you ascribe that luck?

**SUPPLEE:** I think I just decided to do it, no matter what it took. And usually the helping hands just kind of come along. Like when I wanted to start making sculptures, this one guy that hangs out at Dave's Corner Market—and I don't know if he really works or not—but he figured out, "She's gonna need a sculpture cart." He built me a sculpture cart and came over with it, he said, "What are you gonna trade me for this?" And we found something to trade for the cart... Well, it can only take 500 pounds, and most of the sculptures I've built have actually had to go on the dory trailer, because they've been *over* 500 pounds. But when I start buildin' the sculptures that are *under* 500 pounds, I've got this beautiful sculpture cart. But it's the *thought*.

**STEIGER:** What did you trade for it?

**SUPPLEE:** A mat cutter, because I really don't want to cut mats and be framing that much anymore. But I actually had a spare mat cutter in case this one broke, and he got the mat cutter, so it was a good trade.

**STEIGER:** Out in Serena's yard are two really nice dories that she's accumulated over time, both 16-footers.

**SUPPLEE:** No, a 14- and a 16-

**STEIGER:** Before we sat down for this interview, we looked at a painting of "Capsize" here, and a painting of "Big Drop 2," where Serena went and did a one-boat trip down Cataract, big water Cat, where you go by yourself, and you do it so that you can paint, and you stop at a place when you want to paint, and you stay there for however long it takes. So you finish that, and then you worry about going downstream and hooking up with another trip to safely get there. Then you talked about, there's this beautiful painting of Hance, and you said you spent five days there doing that. Tell me a little bit more about that process where you're goin' out there, and you're gonna sit in one place. You're gonna sit at Hance for five days in July to make a painting? What's up with that?

**SUPPLEE:** Well, I didn't really choose July, but it's when the Grand Canyon Expeditions boats were not full, and they could give me rides.

**STEIGER:** So you decided you wanted to go down the river, have time to paint, and you made a deal with Grand Canyon Expeditions, with Mike [Denoyer] and Marty [Mathis]?

**SUPPLEE:** I'm gonna start even a little before that. To celebrate the millennium, Phantom Ranch was planning this *huge* millennium party. I've had this job to do a t-shirt design at Phantom Ranch since...1995 was my first year, and they basically invite me down. I go and paint one, and then that becomes their t-shirt, is the job plain and simple. I love it. When I get to the ranch every year, it's a great reunion, and so on and so forth. So all the maids and cooks at Phantom Ranch, they pooled their money and put together \$3,000 and they wanted me to do a mural for their bunkhouse for







the millennium party. I said, “Well, you already have thirteen people living in this one building. You don’t need a fourteenth. Because it’ll probably take me a few months.”

**STEIGER:** But they say, “We’re gonna give you three grand. You give us a mural for the bunkhouse.”

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah. So that was the beginning of these big oil paintings, because I really had just been doing watercolors, thinking, “I’m gonna get back to oils someday.” And this was just the foundation that was created for me to buy the supplies and take the step and do it. So I created the first big oil painting. It’s four feet by six feet, and it’s still in the bunkhouse at Phantom Ranch. So I continued to do the big oils somewhat. But part of my thing when the millennium happened, a lot of people thought, “Okay, the world is gonna change.” Remember the Y-2-K? The thing I thought about for myself is I had paintings strewn all over the countryside, and I wanted to get out of all the galleries and bring everything home, and then just re-evaluate what I’m doing. It actually took me a year and a half to get all the paintings home, because you gotta get the gas money together, and you’ve got to have the days off or whatever, to drive there and get ‘em and bring ‘em home, and box ‘em up and organize ‘em all. I did all that, and it took me a year and a half.

So I brought them all home. At that point, it came to me that I’m gonna try museums. Dennis Willis, who was the head river management guy for the BLM in Price, invited me to have a show at the Prehistoric Museum in Price. “Please come and spend a couple of years in Desolation Canyon and do a hundred paintings.” So I did! And it was a blast! I had the big show, and I loved that, and it was totally awesome. It was called “Destination Desolation.”

**STEIGER:** You took your little dory to Desolation?

**SUPPLEE:** Took my little dory. Except one of the summers, 2002, was super, super low, and then Bego loaned me his seven-man... Anyway, I took his itty bitty little raft with the itty bitty little oars, and didn’t hit a rock! It was kind of cool, too, because all the commercial companies, it was so low they quit running Desolation, so I had it all to myself.

The show itself, I think—because I sold some of them along the way—was seventy-some paintings. It was great! So after I got done with that, because I did some of the whitewater in Desolation, I just really wanted to paint rapids. I really wanted to paint the rapids in Grand Canyon. It was almost like the idea of painting the rapids in Grand Canyon happened when I was in Desolation. So I just tried to do everything I

*You Gotta See This - Serena Supplee*



could to move that idea forward. I wrote a proposal to the Grand Canyon Natural History Association, GCA, at the time. They said yes. Mike Denoyer said he'd do anything he could to help me accomplish that project, and he also told me to write a book, which I did. It just all kind of came into play.

**STEIGER:** How did that connection get made?

**SUPPLEE:** Mike and I were in a first aid class together. (laughs) Yeah. He's been a patron. He's bought a lot of paintings over the years. I have a memory that if I hauled the paintings to Kanab, I knew I'd get by. I had a really good thing goin' in Bluff for a while also, and I thought, "As long as I can get to Bluff I could probably come home with \$500–\$1,000."

**STEIGER:** Get through another couple months.

**SUPPLEE:** Exactly. "As long as I can get to Kanab, Mike might buy one and I'll be fine." But there were years like that, yeah. And the exchange in Bluff has changed in the sense that...it kind of started, I guess in '96, and then '97, '98, I used to go down there. Sometimes I'd have these shows in Flagstaff and *nothin'* sold—I mean, zero, nothing. I'd come into the Twin Rocks Trading Post in Bluff and the Trading Post brothers would ask, "Well, how'd your show go, Serena?" Because by then we were already friends—they're sellin' the cards by then and so on. "Didn't sell a thing." They said, "Well, I don't know if it's such a good idea for you to go home with all the same paintings you went with." I said, "I know, it feels really weird." And they'd say, "Bring 'em in." So they'd trade me for rugs and things, and I got all this...Well, now I have a cedar chest, because I gotta have a good place for all those rugs, right? (laughs) It was just so interesting how it all unfolded.

**STEIGER:** So back to this Grand Canyon thing and GCE—you write a proposal, GCA says yeah, so you're gonna have a show at Kolb Studio. But now you've got to go down there and spend "x" amount of days to paint?

**SUPPLEE:** I think it was 2003, I spent the month of July there.

**STEIGER:** And that happened then just because that's when those guys had space available to trade?

**SUPPLEE:** Right. Well, they first dropped me off at House Rock, and it's really, really hot. At House Rock it shades up quick, so that was kind of neat, no big deal. Then in the heat of the day, there's a little cave up there, and I hung out in that cave, and the raven hung out with me. Then I kind of figured out...

**STEIGER:** Wait. What raven?

**SUPPLEE:** Whatever raven there was.

**STEIGER:** He just spotted you and said, "I'll go hang out...?" Were you feeding him?

**SUPPLEE:** No. He came to hang.

**STEIGER:** "Hey, you're in my spot? This is where it's cool?"

**SUPPLEE:** Maybe. "This is where it's cool." Then I figured it out, just follow the ravens, they know where it's cool. So that's what I did. And if there were a bunch of ravens, like when I was at Hance and it was so blinkin' hot, every once in a while there'd be a bunch of ravens, like kind of in the delta part, below the beach, but before the cliff, there's a small creek delta. There would be a certain time of day where all the ravens would be there. So I'd just go down there then, and pump on water and stuff, because it'd be nice and cool. But I *did* figure out: follow the ravens, because they knew where it was cooler. (laughs) I hadn't been in real summer Grand Canyon heat ever before, and so it was new to me. I took a sleeping bag, but it went in the river and on top of my tent more than it was anywhere. I would take the whole sleeping bag down to the river and put it on top of my tent. But then if it was so wet that water dripped through, I couldn't paint in the tent either, because it was still dripping. There was just a lot of stuff I had to figure out. I can remember times where it would finally cool off. I'd tell myself, "Okay, it's cooler now. Do you want to eat, or do you want to paint?" Those were sometimes the choices, it seemed like. Do I want to cook, or do I want to paint? I can remember thinking that.

I usually don't go boating in the summer anymore,



River Rapture - Serena Supplee

but that's changing, I guess, again. After that July, I really haven't gone boating in the summer.

**STEIGER:** How long were you out there for on that journey?

**SUPPLEE:** (hums while thinking) Twenty-six days? Two days at House Rock. And then where did I go? Five days at Hance. Two days at Sockdolager. Five days at Phantom. Two days at Horn, and then I went out. So that was only one, two...it was only three weeks, 21-one days. Because I remember Bear [Neal Shapiro] was the boatman that picked me up, and I just went out with Bear and Roger [Patterson].

I was there to look at the water and paint the rapids. And I didn't get that much done. It was too hot. That's why Mike and Marty made another great deal for me. They traded big oil paintings of mine for, I think, a 20-, 21-day trip in April. "Let's get some painting done. Let's take Serena where she wants to paint."

**STEIGER:** How'd that go?

**SUPPLEE:** Really good. I got a *ton* done. It was awesome. Mike and Marty were so generous.

**STEIGER:** Sounds like a pretty good deal all around.

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah. I think they were happy doing it, and I was *so* happy to get to do it.

I'm still very much interested in painting water and big rapids. I've got a new drawing that's gonna be a big oil from this last [Grand Canyon Youth] trip, from the top of Deubendorff. We actually camped at Stone, but I walked all the way back up and did a big drawing of the entry of Deubendorff, how those waves fold into each other and create the big wave. I'm not done—it's just the show's over. (laughs) And I actually have my next show. Part of that whole thing, my whole vision of doing all these paintings of the river, was also in this early 2000 period. I took these meditation classes, and then I started seeing this stuff, and I did these paintings. I called them the Vision Series. Nobody was really interested in 'em but me, but it doesn't really matter. But one of the things that came out of all of that was looking at the river as an analogy of a life path, where okay, yeah, you have these big things that happen to you, like a big rapid, and part of yourself folds in on you, and yet you just keep moving on, and you just get over it, and go on to the next thing. And there's other times where you're the thin braided river, and you've got so many irons in the fire you can't focus on a single one, or barely. All these ideas came forth for me at that period of time, looking at my life, and comparing the things that happened to me as if it was a river. Looking at myself as if I am a river. So here you are, you're with a river! (laughs)

**STEIGER:** Well, it's sure beautiful work that's coming from it.

**SUPPLEE:** I'm already onto the next thing, to tell you the truth. Not excluding the river, but my idea of taking it to the next level is actually looking more at sanctuary. You know, like the one painting I showed you where I had all the temples. So this next show that I'm gonna do—I don't even know where yet—but there'll be these paintings of the temples in Grand Canyon, and stories and little poems and things about what temples mean, getting to the point of sanctuary. Then paintings of places that have helped me find sanctuary, even if it's after you swam the Big Drops. These people who got rescued that had this whole idea that their life has changed and they're reborn. I mean, that's another kind of sanctuary. So just looking at this whole concept of what sanctuary is, and what makes you feel good and happy with your life. And ultimately I think the show will just kind of come into the very end, where we all create our own sanctuary.

**STEIGER:** I'd have to say that piece you showed me in your yard, the sculpture, if that isn't a sanctuary right there—they're two little chairs, and they're all kind of nestled in there.

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah. See? So I'm already on this, aren't I?

**STEIGER:** Yeah. It's interesting, here you are, all focused on water, but there's a rock too. Rocks are always there in your stuff too.

**SUPPLEE:** Right. Well, rocks create the interesting river. Or does the interesting river create the rocks?

**STEIGER:** Uhhhh.

**SUPPLEE:** See? I know. But it's that balance, that intertwining, the one without the other. It's the male and the female. Or maybe they're both males, maybe they're both females—it doesn't even really matter. But it's that interaction, that's where the juice is.

\* \* \*

**SUPPLEE:** I guess for me I'm just tryin' to figure out how to be in the Grand Canyon and not be a guide. Or maybe I *am* a guide again now. I don't know. It's like I love the Grand Canyon, and I love rowing boats, but I'm really an artist, and so where does that fit in? I feel like I have this beautiful opportunity with the Park Service, because they know if I go, I'm going to want to paint, and we seem to have that agreement that I can. I guess we'll see what happens.

**STEIGER:** Do you have something against guiding? Was it that traumatic experience you had with the mud lady? Or is it just when you say "not being a guide," you mean because for so many of us, that's all we can do in order to be in the Grand Canyon?

**SUPPLEE:** I guess I never figured out a way to get a painting done or do my drawing when I was a guide.

Guiding is a very demanding job. To be good, I mean, it seems everybody's working every night.

**STEIGER:** I think it comes down to how we each define it to ourselves, what that job actually ends up being.

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah, maybe so. I know I always feel like if I'm painting, I'm not doing the full guide job.

**STEIGER:** But if you thought the point of it all was to keep that Texas lady's feet out of the mud, that'd make you crazy? I don't think I could do it if I didn't think it was about something else other than that.

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah.

**STEIGER:** I mean, sometimes you gotta do a little of that. (laughs)

**SUPPLEE:** Right, *sometimes* you do. I guess maybe I got a thought pattern goin' on that if I'm an artist, I can't be a guide—I can only be one or the other. Maybe that's what it boils down to.

**STEIGER:** Because you can't do both jobs at once?

**SUPPLEE:** Not well, I don't think.

\* \* \*

**SUPPLEE:** There was an old painter who told me what often happens...if you're gonna be an artist, you often don't "make it" until you're fifty. It takes those thirty years to develop yourself. And that seems to be fairly true for me.

**STEIGER:** But you'd better start when you're 25, working at it?

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah. There was a young artist, actually, from San Francisco here the other day, and she saw my work downtown, and she called and said, "Could I just come over and talk to you for a little bit?" I said, "Sure, come on over." I talked to her, and just assured her

that, you know, you can have a show and nothing may even sell in that show, but that doesn't mean those paintings aren't going to sell. You just have to trust in that, and it might take twenty years. And if you're up for it, that's great. If you really think you ought to go do something else, then go do something else.

\* \* \*

**STEIGER:** I'm trying to think of any of your work I've seen where there's a...I don't remember seeing any ravens in there.

**SUPPLEE:** I actually have done a couple.

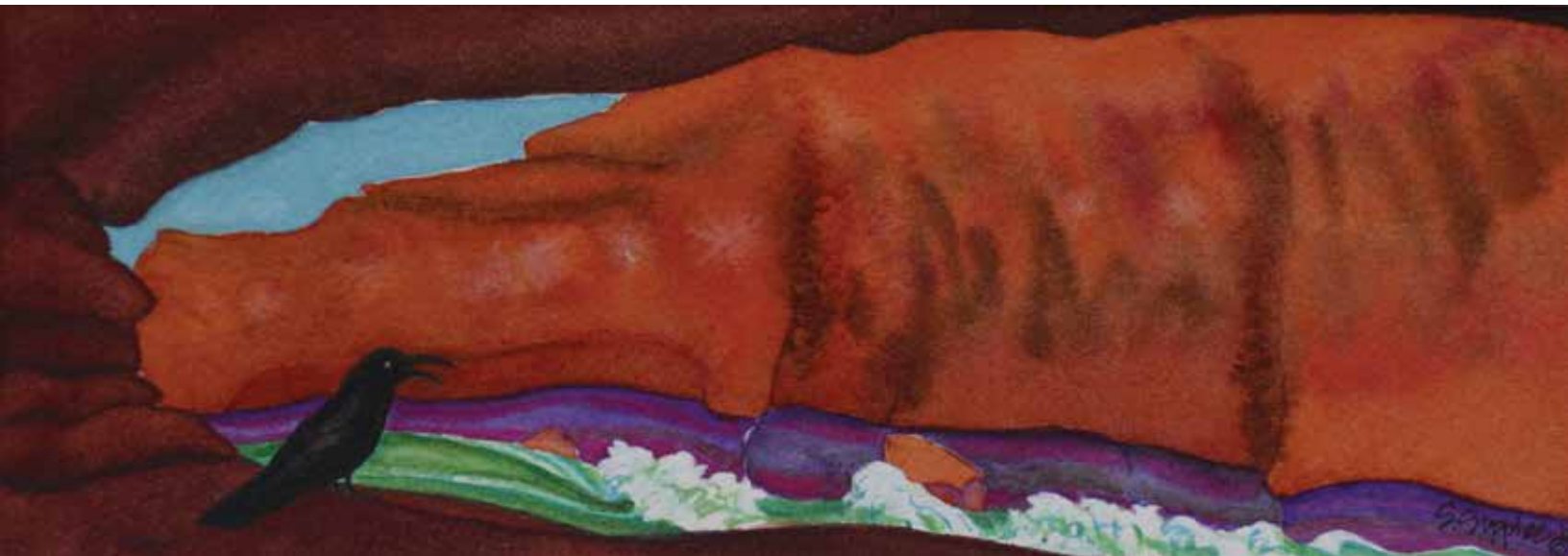
**STEIGER:** Did you put some in there?

**SUPPLEE:** Yeah, I have.

**STEIGER:** Okay, good. So you would follow those ravens, and you'd find their places, and then you're sitting there painting whatever, and...

**SUPPLEE:** They just hang out with you. Yeah. But they're never still. Like they're still really hard to draw, because they never stand still, they never sit still—not that much. I no more get my pencil and paper, "Oh, he moved. Oh, he moved again. Oh, he moved again." And then another one comes in and then they have their own little dance. They don't sit as still as an egret or a heron. I've drawn some of those birds. Even bighorn sheep are stiller than the raven. (chuckles) But ravens aren't still life, they're movement—which I love 'em for.

Riverside Attractions - Serena Supplee





## GTS Update

### GUIDES TRAINING SEMINAR LAND SESSION MARCH 31 – APRIL 1, 2012

WHERE IS THE ABSOLUTE best place to be at the end of March? At Hatchland in Marble Canyon, of course, for the Guides Training Seminar over the March 31<sup>ST</sup>–April 1<sup>ST</sup> weekend. The cost is \$45 unless you're sponsored by your outfitter, in which case they pick up the tab. That covers dinner from Friday night, March 30 through lunch on Sunday, April 1<sup>ST</sup>. The event is open to the public. Whoever you are—a young guide, a wanna-be-guide, or just someone who adores Grand Canyon and the Colorado River, this is *the* place to be to learn more about, well, just darn near everything...Do you want to learn more about springs and travertines, or the latest on the dates of Grand Canyon rocks? Do you want to better understand the native tribes who consider Grand Canyon their spiritual home? Do you want to know about the tamarisk beetle invasion, desert bighorn sheep, condors, or all those snakes and lizards you see in the canyon? Do you want to learn more about the resource challenges? This is the place! To top it off, the new Park Superintendent, Dave Uberuaga will be joining us. We'll be showing a few excellent films including *Chasing the Light*, the fabulous new film documentary by Ed George about a February river trip on the Colo-

rado River with artists, photographers and musicians. Then, we'll dance the night away to Wade Lashley and the Rounders, Flagstaff's best country band. So much great stuff!!

We'll be posting the draft agenda on the GCRG website (under Guide Resources on the Guides Training Seminar page) so you can see how the weekend is shaping up. You can pay online or send in a check made out to GCRG at PO Box 1934, Flagstaff, AZ 86002. Bring a small camp chair, dress warmly and in layers and join us for the best weekend of the year!

### GTS RIVER SESSION

APRIL 2 – 8 (UPPER HALF), APRIL 8 – 16 (LOWER HALF)

The GTS river session takes the premise of the land session and puts it on the water for interpretive learning in the best classroom in the world. We have fabulous speakers coming out of our ears this year, so you will be learning more than you ever thought possible whether you go on the upper half, the lower, or the whole thing. Cost is \$275 for the upper half and \$350 for the lower half, which again, if you're sponsored, will be paid by your outfitter. The freelance requirements and application can be found on the GCRG website.

## Job Announcement

ANGEL'S GATE TOURS is looking for experienced Grand Canyon guides to lead sightseeing tours, day hikes and the occasional backpacking trip in Grand Canyon. We are specifically recruiting experienced Grand Canyon boatmen and other Grand Canyon backcountry professionals. Please contact us if you meet the following requirements:

- Minimum WFR certified, with CPR. (More advanced med certs are also acceptable).
- Good driving record. (1 minor ticket is usually OK)
- Must be able to pass Arizona DOT physical (this is pretty simple, basically it verifies that you can see, hear and move well enough to drive a vehicle).

- Outstanding Grand Canyon knowledge. (You know your schist from Shi-nola, and can present complex material in an entertaining manner).
- Hiking experience on all South Rim trails.

This is an excellent opportunity for Grand Canyon backcountry professionals that need to spend more time in town due to family, children, dog issues or other constraints. The majority of our tours and hikes depart from and return to Flagstaff daily. Please visit our website at [www.SeeGrandCanyon.com](http://www.SeeGrandCanyon.com) and call (928) 814-2277 to schedule an interview. Angel's Gate Tours is an EOE.

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You can pay securely on the GCRG website at [www.gcr.org](http://www.gcr.org) or send a check to: Grand Canyon River Guides, PO Box 1934, Flagstaff, AZ 86002-1934. Note whether you're a guide member or general member.

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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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*Ellsworth Kolb Filming at Shoshone Falls, Colorado River.  
Courtesy of Northern Arizona University  
Item number: NAU.PH.568.8991  
Creator: Unknown  
Date: 1916*