

boatman's quarterly review

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MIKE BOYLE

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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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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.

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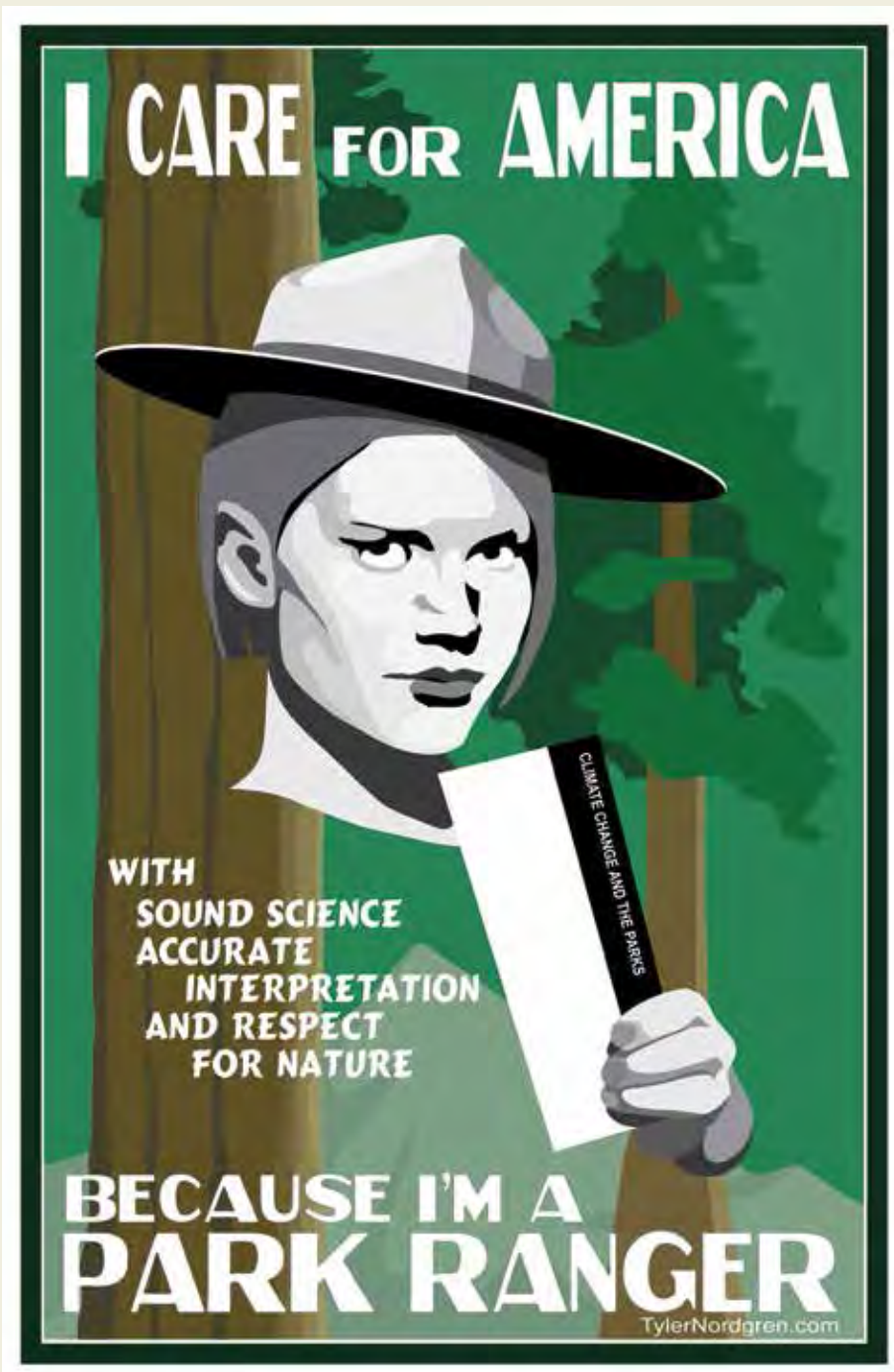
Prez Blurb

ALTHOUGH PRESSURE had been building for some time, the storm that broke in November 2016 was unprecedented, unexpected and moved in waves through the beginning of the New Year. Shocked, many mumbled words in disbelief, numb to the realization of our current reality. Others celebrated, like the invertebrates lying dormant in dried-up desert potholes, now gyrating in overflowing pools. By the end of January, twenty feet of snow had fallen in twenty days in the Sierra, the Wasatch accumulated over 300 inches of the deep and fluffy, and the San Francisco Peaks lay buried under 96 inches of snow in one storm. The powder hounds rejoiced! After riding the deepest snow in many years, many went home and wept about the current divisive political condition we are facing, and how this unrest could impact the places we care about most. At least this was what it felt like among the folks I tend to hang with.

After Donald J. Trump surprised the world with a victory in the Electoral College, I resigned myself to patience in giving our new president a chance to do good. Certainly there was a percentage of Americans who were unhappy under our last administration, and the least I can do is accept that it was someone else's turn. Regardless of political views, the conflicts in Congress have been blocking progress for so long now, it's understandable that the American people wanted something to change. However, tuning into any media platform since the election has related to a deluge of fear-based sentiments, many involving issues of social justice. So much so, that on January 21st, 3.3 million Americans united to march in locations across the country—to stand for women's rights, for equality, for freedom of religion, race, rights of indigenous people; even for the air we breathe and water we drink.

The list of concerns goes on and on—as the reporters and commentators tend to do on NPR. But living a life in fear is no way to live at all. Perhaps it is easier to focus on the next snow storm, to find solutions to getting stuck in the snow or what to do if the lifts get buried under wind-drifts (as they did at Mammoth Mountain, California). But high avalanche conditions have persisted this winter, and timely decision-making will continue to be critical to ensure a prosperous future. Ignoring a problem won't make it go away.

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Cover photo: Mike Boyle with a big ol' rainbow trout.



that we love. Because ecology teaches us that everything is connected, when we see threats to this ecosystem we must fight. We must protest threats to rescind Bears Ears National Monument, to re-open uranium mining, and oil and gas development next door to our National Parks. Contact your Congressmen, encourage your friends to do the same, organize protests—if needed! While we will undoubtedly face many challenges ahead, I am confident this community will react calmly, collectively, and without hesitation.

Beyond this political circus, there is a lot to look forward to. River season is right around the corner, and before the first commercial trip launches there will undoubtedly be more powder days to come. With all this snowpack, projected water releases will be above average this summer, making those often-windy spring rowing trips a little easier.

In December I had the opportunity to meet the new Superintendent, Chris Lehnertz, and I am happy to say she made a great impression! She is thoughtful, strong and compassionate. All indications are that she will fight to protect not only the park, but also the experience for all employees and visitors. I feel like we have a true ally at the helm. I hope that everyone will get a chance

As river guides we learn how to react, how to adapt and how to make split second moves when things don't go exactly as planned. Moving forward I have witnessed so many of my friends and family, river guides and National Park Service employees—past and present—rally together to stand up for what they believe. In this time of political unrest we have an opportunity to strengthen as a community and fight to protect the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River

to meet her at the Spring GTS Land Session, April 1st and 2nd. This year promises to be informative, fun and with another all-star cast of speakers and band for Saturday night. There will be lots to talk about after this winter. I hope you will be there, so we can take a stand together—refusing to compromise the integrity of the Canyon.

*Ben Reeder*

# Farewells

Jack Currey August 20, 1933 – November 18, 2016

ON NOVEMBER 18, 2016, the river community lost one of its most iconic, pioneering and innovative members. Jack Currey's love of rafting began in 1957 on the San Juan River aboard a makeshift boat made of balsa wood. The raft didn't last long but his very being was imbued with a desire to be one with the current.

The next year Jack started forming his own full-time river running business. By word of mouth and by printing one-page brochures, Jack created Western River Expeditions and began building neoprene rafts with wooden frames and building new types of "pipe" oar pins and proprietary fiberglass coolers to run trips on the Green and Yampa Rivers, Idaho Main Salmon, Middle Fork, Selway, and then Westwater, Cataract Canyon and one-day Moab. His innovative cooking and menus became the new standard for rafting. Jack self-learned the skills of building boats, rowing, navigation, boat repair, motor maintenance, cooking, geography, photography, film making, hospitality, and business. In his warehouse in Stanley, Idaho, Jack created the first self-bailing boats by using plywood floors attached with chains to D-rings.

An avid handball player, Jack began hiring other players as crew to help run his expeditions. Many of today's river companies were given "wings" after the boatmen had worked for Jack. Amil Quayle, Dave McKay, Art Fenstermaker, Paul Thevenin, Lynn Keller, Henry Falany, and Art Gallenson to name a few. Jack's adventurous heart, mind and spirit were what drew others' trust and to join his expeditions into the wild. Highly disciplined and a natural leader, Jack had a stoic disposition. He,

with his flat-top haircut, was handsome, strong, confident, and charismatic. Undaunted by challenges, he mastered organization, planning, and execution.

In 1963 at the age of 29, he encouraged fifteen other hardy souls to engage in the first decent of Mexico's

Rio Grijalva in El Sumidero Canyon. North flowing from Guatemala to the Gulf of Mexico, El Sumidero Canyon dropped 1,000 feet in sixteen miles and contained nineteen rapids and eleven waterfalls, some with 65-foot drops. The expedition was featured in *Time* magazine and received international acclaim.

Guatemala's Ucumacinta River in 1964 was the next trip. *Maya Discovery* was the film of a successful archeological trip to discover Mayan ruins. With 16MM film stock and photographs of the expeditions, Jack began doing

lecture tours around the U.S. including the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, Carnegie Hall, Brooklyn Academy and the GMC Flint Auditorium filled with 2,500 people. A few years later, Jack produced a full length documentary film aptly named *Run the Wild River*, and was featured in movie theatres around the U.S.

In 1965, Jack took his self-made 22-foot pontoon rafts down the Grand Canyon, running Easter trips, an unprecedented thirty boats with staggered launch times, from Lees Ferry to Phantom Ranch and helicoptering the equipment out at the end. Jack wanted to run the safest trips possible, so in 1968 he invented a raft to run in Grand Canyon that was forgiving of boatman mistakes, difficult to flip and comfortable. He invented and patented the "J-Rig." The many years that he ran the "J-Rig" in Grand Canyon, one never flipped.



Jack sitting on a J-Rig in the Micronesia, early 1970s.



Jack in Cataract Canyon, 1964.

photo credit: Stuart Reeder

Jack created the Canyon River Outfitter's Association (CROA), organizing the commercial outfitters to battle the NPS for rafting rights. While in Washington, D.C., for a meeting, he was invited to the office of the Secretary of the Interior. The Grand Canyon Dam controversy was in full force and Stuart Udall was in charge of whether to place dams in the canyon. Jack invited the Secretary down the canyon so that he could make an informed decision about the impact the dams would have on the canyon. At Redwall Cavern, the Secretary said to Jack, "The dams will never be built, the canyon is too narrow for lake effect and too beautiful to desecrate."

In the winter months, Jack explored rivers in the Southern Hemisphere, but also created scuba diving excursions in British Honduras (Belize) and to his leased atoll island Jilang, in Micronesia. He sold Western River Expeditions in 1977 but continued running rivers until the age of 79.

Jack Currey was generous, fair, kind and humble. He never cursed. He was honest. He was lighthearted and fun. He was proud, not prideful. He was brilliant and strong. If asked, he gave excellent advice. We are deeply honored by him. We will miss him.

CoCo Currey

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## Marauding Mussels— Quagga Concerns In The Grand Canyon

ON ITS OWN, a single adult quagga mussel seems to lead a rather mundane life. Rarely bigger than the diameter of a quarter (and usually much smaller), this striped Ukrainian filter-feeder lives quietly, filtering water through its body, digesting what it can and expelling what it can't. Even in its youth it avoids excitement; the larval form of a

to six weeks, until at a hefty 0.2 mm long it is large enough to settle down and begin the age-old process of reproduction.

At this small scale the quagga mussel, known to scientists as *Dreissena rostriformis bugensis*, doesn't appear to be that threatening. It's not until dreissenids are looked at through a larger lens that their



Shopping cart left in zebra mussel infested water for a few months. photo credit: James F. Lubner, University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute, Bugwood.org



Find the Mussel. photo credit: Michael Massimi, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Bugwood.org.

quagga mussel, known as a veliger, prefers to free float in calm waters rather than experiencing the swift. This conservative approach to life is understandable, considering its microscopic size and inability to swim more often than not results in the veliger being destroyed by things like rapid currents. But in smooth water, a veliger grows slowly over the course of one

devastating ecological and economic impacts can truly be appreciated, and why western states are working together to prevent their spread.

Introduced to the Great Lakes in the late 1980s, quagga mussels (and their cousins, zebra mussels) didn't make it west until 2007, when reproducing adults were confirmed in Lake Mead. Prevention methods

undertaken by state and federal agencies slowed their expansion but they ultimately found their way into other areas, including the Grand Canyon. Evidence of their existence was confirmed in parts of Lake Powell in 2012, and two years later in Lees Ferry.

Living as invasive species outside of their natural environment, dreissenids in the United States have no natural prey to keep their population in check.

Since a single female quagga mussel produces up to one million eggs a year over the course of her five-year lifespan, it comes as no surprise to learn that water bodies hosting reproductive populations of quagga mussels have seen their numbers explode.

As ground zero for the North American quagga and zebra mussel infestation, the Great Lakes area has proven to be an unfortunate example of just what can happen after dreissenids take hold. In the Midwest, these prolific breeders have formed unyielding mussel beds on surfaces hard and soft. Left to grow, they attach one on top of another and are capable of creating beds as much as three to four feet deep. As a result, mussel infestations can slowly seal water pipes much like plaque can slowly close the arteries to the human heart. Twenty-seven years after their introduction to the United States in Lake Erie, population estimates of quagga and zebra mussels are thought to number in the hundreds of trillions.

Above the surface, they have left beaches littered with thousands of tiny, sharp shells mixing with the stink of rotting algae and dead dreissenids along the water's edge. They have significantly altered the scope of hydroelectric power dam maintenance costs, and diminished the amount of energy created during maintenance closure periods. Mussel growth has threatened to squelch the flow of water treatment plants that serve entire communities. They have increased water and power bills of residents in areas serviced by infested waters. State governments spend millions of dollars annually in the fight to keep pipes, dams and associated water reservoirs operational.

Below the surface, these little filter-feeders have "cleaned" some portions of the Great Lakes to death and shifted the balance of aquatic nutrients in others.



Let's not turn Grand Canyon beaches into this! Quagga shells about a foot high all along the shores of Lake Michigan. photo credit: Kim Schwaiger

In a domino effect of aquatic nutrition, they have tipped the scales in favor of toxic type E Botulism which threatens the survival of native species and is also thought to be a contributor for the increased frequency of bird die-offs. Dreissenids have sunk buoys, rendered boat engines un-useable, and permanently destabilized fish populations that commercial fishermen

have historically relied on to provide for their families.

As they escape through water pipes from the Glen Canyon Dam, veligers have found hospitable locations to colonize in the upper fifteen-mile stretch of the Colorado below the dam. Recently, the wet underside of a plastic water bottle located along the shoreline was found covered with them at Six-Mile Camp. Lees Ferry fishermen have found adult quagga mussels in soft pocket water downstream of river rocks. Thankfully these little harbingers of doom are unlikely to take over and cover the walls of the Grand Canyon itself; the higher flow, colder average temperature and general chemical composition of the water makes the popular rafting section of the Colorado River inhospitable to the establishment of a large dreissenid population. The influx of water in the form of flash floods will also help to periodically flush the system of them.

However, just because there is a low chance of a large quagga population taking hold does not mean that those quagga veligers who actually manage to make their way through the dam and some rapids won't find areas to colonize. Back eddies and soft pockets behind rocks will always be spots for them to attach. They will also happily colonize a raft's more hidden locations which stay relatively wet or humid during long float trips down the Colorado. And if they haven't colonized by the time a raft trip is finished, veligers are happy to hitch a ride and make a new colony elsewhere.

Veligers are clearly making their way through the Glen Canyon Dam into the Colorado River downstream, and no current eradication method exists to stop them. Due to the impressive magnitude of their breeding capacity, veliger quantities escaping through the dam will only increase with time. And though there are technological advancements being

sought to eradicate dreissenids, the best solution remains prevention.

That's why western states have joined together to educate water users of all kinds on the importance of making Clean, Drain, Dry a habit. Floating the Grand Canyon already takes some planning, so a few extra minutes taken pre-launch to plan for the process of cleaning, draining and drying at the take-out benefits everyone. It not only prevents the spread of quagga mussels to un-infested waters, it prevents the spread

of invasive species in general. Having a plan will help make the end of a river trip go that much smoother when everyone is tired and just wants to head home, drink a beer and take a shower. And it will help prevent that one seemingly innocuous quagga mussel from hitching a ride from the walls of the Grand Canyon to shores further afield.

*Marya Spoja*

INVASIVE SPECIES ACTION NETWORK

## Clean—Drain—Dry!

ONE OF THE MOST concerning aspects of quagga mussels in the Grand Canyon section of the Colorado River is not that they will colonize in high densities; it's that they exist at all in such a popular waterway, one that attracts people from all over the world every year. Their resilient nature makes dreissenids easily transportable for rafters to take back home as unintended souvenirs. Rafting trips lasting from a week to a month provide the perfect time frame for these mussels to colonize the hidden crevices of a boat. In addition, veligers are capable of living in a range of wet or humid environments for up to 27 days, which makes quagga mussels capable of eventually hitchhiking out of the canyon into other waters if boats and gear aren't properly cleaned, drained and dried.

Just like the rest of your trip, some forethought will help make things go smoother. Before heading out to the river, take a few minutes to come up with your expedition's Clean, Drain, Dry plan. Whether you take out at Diamond Creek or Pearce Ferry, it's important that you clean off your boat before leaving the take-out area in order to leave any potential aquatic hitchhikers where they found you. If you see someone at the take-out struggling as they try to do the right thing, do your good deed for the day and help them out. Your help may mean the prevention of another infestation elsewhere and give visiting boaters the Clean, Drain, Dry message to their home waters. And as you travel home with your boat in tow, make sure to stop at any boat inspection stations you come across. The more people looking to stop these guys from spreading the better!

### CLEAN

Whether you've been on the water for a day or a month, take a few minutes to clean your boat before leaving the take-out area by removing mud, plants, algae and any aquatic critters you see clinging to your

boat. It's also important to do the same for the anchor, motor, truck bed, trailer...anything that mussels and other invasives can attach to.

### DRAIN

Drain any standing water from the boat. If the boat has a drain plug, pop it out and leave it out until the next time you put on. If the boat has any compartments that can hold standing water, drain them too. Engine cooling systems, bilges and live wells are all sneaky places mussels like to hide.

### DRY

Always check local laws about dry times and other regulations that affect you, but a good rule of thumb is to dry out your boat, engine and other gear before re-launching on another water body. Arizona recommends that after exposure to water bodies where mussels are suspected, a boat should be left to dry for five to seven days between May and October, and 18 days between November and April (due to ambient heat and humidity levels). If you'd like to use your boat elsewhere yet you don't have time to let it fully dry, thoroughly clean it by power washing it with hot water.

For more information on Clean, Drain, Dry, the Don't Move a Mussel program and current laws addressing boating and invasive species, follow these links:

- Arizona Game and Fish Department's Invasive Species Info: <https://www.azgfd.com/fishing/InvasiveSpecies>
- Glen Canyon National Recreation Area Mussel Containment: <https://www.nps.gov/glca/learn/nature/mussel-containment-program.htm>
- Aquatic Invasive Species Network's How Boats Spread Invasives: <http://www.westernais.org/how-boats-spread-invasives>

## Archeological Serendipity

SOMETIMES WORK IN ONE field of research leads to insights in an entirely different and unexpected field. This article illustrates one such event in the context of the Grand Canyon. Readers of the BQR may find this information of some interest.

In the 1990s, I was involved in a study of the Quaternary Geology of the Grand Canyon, carried out under the sponsorship of GCES (Glen Canyon Environmental Studies). A major component of the work was mapping geologic deposits and landforms in selected sites within the river corridor of the Grand Canyon in order to determine how the Colorado River has functioned over the past one and a half million years, the intent being to provide a baseline against which to evaluate the effects of Glen Canyon Dam.

Geologic mapping is a solitary undertaking that makes it possible to observe carefully things other than geologic features, and sometimes even brings about, in the great silence of the Canyon, the rather eerie feeling that the early inhabitants of the canyon, the pre-historic Pueblos, are still out there, observing you from behind that rock.

One spring day I was mapping river-left between Espejo and Comanche Creeks, focusing on the youngest and lowest of the major terraces of the Colorado River. This terrace is present throughout the Canyon, typically ten meters (33 feet) above present river grade. The material of the terrace is predominantly very fine sand whose grains are composed of very well rounded quartz derived primarily from ancient dune deposits such as the Navajo Sandstone. Because of this grain size, the sand is easily picked up by the wind, so modern dunes cover the top of the terrace in many places. The characteristics of the terrace are such that my soil-scientist colleagues (Sid and Marie Davis) viewed it as prime agricultural ground, now however marred by accumulations of salt visible as salt crusts.

In places, the material of the terrace has a striped appearance where exposed in a stream cut. This happens because local debris from the sides of the valley moves down onto the terrace, with whose fluvial sand it interfingers. Because of this, one geologist has called the terrace the “Striped unit.” My own preference is to call it the “Archeological unit” or “Archeological terrace” because the top three meters are very rich in

archaeological artifacts such as potsherds, hearths, structures and even ancient timbers used for buildings.

The origin of the unit has been controversial. Many have viewed it as the product of large floods in which the Colorado would have risen as much as ten meters above its normal level, which corresponded to the present one. This is the view held by many archaeologists. However, it seems untenable to me because of an abundance of data that contradict this hypothesis. Instead, I consider the archaeological unit to be the result of aggradation, that is, the gradual build-up of a river’s bed with time, caused by overloading of the river when it is burdened by more material than it can carry. Most overloaded rivers are braided and flow between shallow banks that they overtop on a regular basis during flood stages, spreading out over a wide floodplain on which they deposits a thin layer of alluvium, generally fine-grained. Repeated over millennia, this process can result in the accumulation of a considerable thickness of material, as is the case with the archeological unit.

Near Comanche Creek, the archeological terrace is a flat to gently-sloping surface that has been dissected by many rills or little washes about one meter deep.

As I was working on this surface, I noticed dark bands exposed in the walls of these rills. The bands are continuous laterally, and several parallel bands are



Figure 1. Rilled top of the archeological terrace where the charcoal layers are exposed. Two of the charcoal bands are visible behind the yardstick.

photo credit: Sid Davis





Figure 2. Collection site for the samples. One dark band is visible at the one-foot mark on the tape (black arrow), and another at the 18-inch mark. photo credit: Sid Davis

superposed on each other. Looking at the material of the bands with a hand lens showed that it is rich in black particles that could be either charcoal, or the iron-rich mineral magnetite, which is attracted to a magnet. Since this material was not attracted, charcoal, composed of charred plant remains, was the most likely possibility.

How did the charcoal get into the sand? It could have been brought in by the river from wild fires somewhere upstream. Or it could be the product of local farming practices such as clearing fields and burning stubble. If the latter, one might be able to detect material such as pollen that would point to what was being farmed in the area, and  $^{14}\text{C}$  dating of the charcoal could then tell us when the farming took place.

This was very interesting, so we decided to collect the material of the dark bands in a systematic way. To do this, we cleaned out a vertical face on one of the banks to a depth of about one and a half meters. We

then sampled each of the dark bands after measuring its depth below the present surface.

Seven dark bands were visible in the face. Of these, we sampled the top and the bottom layers for  $^{14}\text{C}$  age determination, as well as two layers in the middle of the sequence, and all layers for pollen analysis. In addition to the Comanche material, we also collected samples from dark bands visible in a core obtained from the archeological unit near Little Nankoweap Creek.

The results are remarkable. Most of the samples yielded pollen from *Zea*, i.e. maize, and one at Little Nankoweap yielded cotton pollen as well as maize. According to the pollen experts (Susan Smith and John Hasbargen), maize pollen does not travel, which means that maize plants must have been growing where the pollen was found, indicating farming in the area. Therefore, the charcoal in the dark bands was charred plant material resulting from clearing the fields or burning stubble in them.

This was clear evidence of ancient agriculture in the Grand Canyon. But the question remained: just how old is “ancient”? The  $^{14}\text{C}$  analyses of charred plant remains in the dark bands gave the answer (Robert Finkel and Marc Caffee). Figure 3 (next page) summarizes the data for the Comanche area.

In the figure, the black horizontal stripes are the charcoal bands; the blue numbers are the depth of the bands below the present-day surface, in centimeters; the green or orange ovals indicate the presence of maize pollen or of charred plant remains, respectively; the red or orange numbers are the measured or extrapolated  $^{14}\text{C}$  age of the bands; and the purple or orange text lists events happening in the Old World.

Please note that the ages given are roughly in the middle of the uncertainty bands of the  $^{14}\text{C}$  age determinations. This is not a scientific paper, so this approximation is acceptable for the purpose of correlating the ages with events in the Old World.

For pollen, ages and text, orange denotes an uncertainty for those data. The band at 116 CM contains pollen but was not dated. The date shown is based on a determination of the average accumulation rate for the sediments, which was then used to extrapolate a date on the basis of how far the band is above or below dated layers. The uncertainty here stems from the assumption that the rate of accumulation for this part of the deposit was the same as the average rate of accumulation, which may not have been the case.

Maize pollen was not seen in the sample from the 140 CM band, but this band does contain charred plant remains, which must be the result of clearing fields or burning stubble, as is the case with all the other

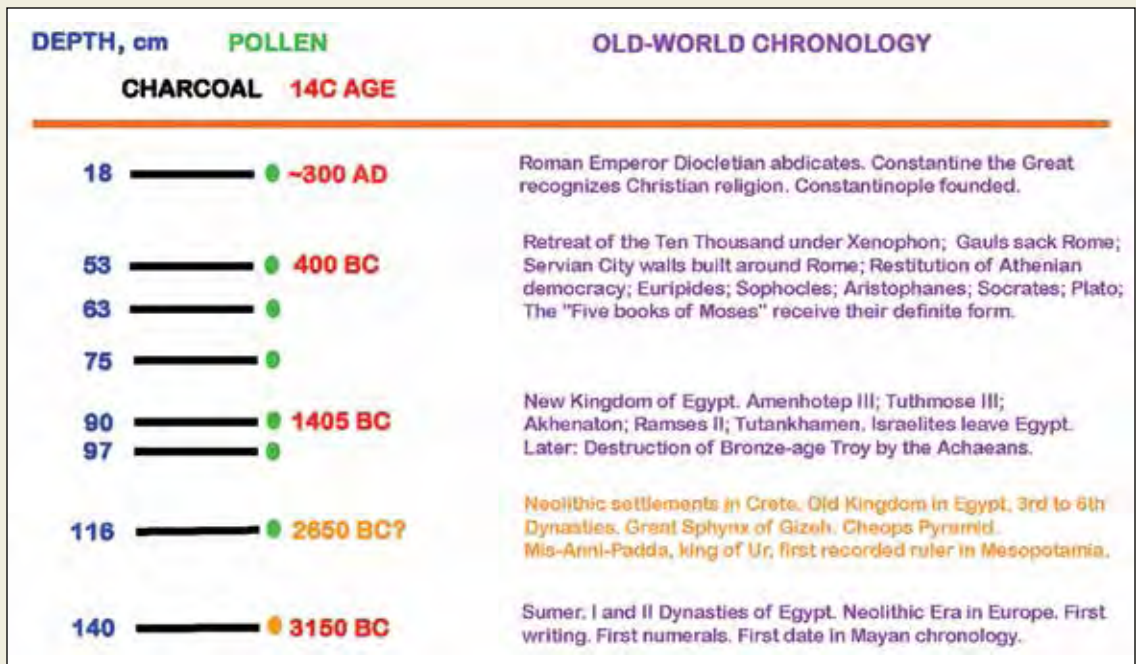


Figure 3. Pollen and 14C data, together with historical correlations.

pollen-bearing bands. It is entirely possible that pollen is present in this band also but was not seen in the sample collected.

These data tell us that the prehistoric Puebloans were definitely growing corn in the Grand Canyon as early as about 1,400 B.C. and for a considerable time before then; farming probably was also practiced as long ago as 3,150 B.C.. Cotton was being grown around 570 A.D., and quite possibly earlier (this predates any other reported ages). These are remarkable results because they show that farming was carried out in the Grand Canyon at a time that is early even in terms of Old-World Chronology, which is well established on the basis of the written record.

The 1,400 B.C. date corresponds to the New Kingdom of Egypt, whose best-known pharaohs to us are Akhenaten (and his famous and beautiful wife Nefertiti), Tutankhamen (King Tut), and Ramses II. This is also the time interval in which many of the events described in the Old Testament took place.

The 3,150 B.C. date goes back to initial agriculture and civilization in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and corresponds to the beginning of the Bronze Age.

These astonishing results would indicate that agriculture developed simultaneously but independently in places that were far apart and in no contact with each other. But there is an important nexus between these places, one having to do with the development of human civilization: the Puebloans (Colorado River), together with their colleagues in Egypt (Nile River) and in Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates Rivers), all raised their crops along desert

river banks that brought water and fertile soil to otherwise desert but warm regions.

It is the combination of imported water, good soil, warm climate, and frequent gentle and soil-building floods that gave rise to agriculture, and that in turn made possible the creation of great civilizations. Our local farmers did not create a great civilization, that is clear. But their cousins in other parts of the Americas did work out alphabets, numbers, and calendars. All that was missing is figuring out the wheel and learning how to smelt and work copper and iron, which happened in the Old World but not in the new one.

*Ivo Lucchitta*

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## Doing Nothing at Stone Creek

AS LAST SUMMER MOVED into monsoon season, the AZRA trip I was working ran Dubendorf about lunchtime on fairly high water and pulled into Stone Creek camp below. Our plan was to have a luncheon—eat, set up camp, and spend the afternoon hiking up Stone Creek. Even though the sky was

starting to cloud up, we felt good about our planned hike, being as how you're either up high on the Stone Creek hike, or the valley is wide and you can get up if you need to—at least 'til the very end. Our trip leader explained all this to our guests, and also explained that it's an out-and-back hike, giving folks a chance to turn and come back at various points. And, so, well-fed, prepped, snacked, watered, and outfitted—boots, sticks, cameras and all the other stuff—off we went.

Not to ruin the suspense, but this is not an account of a flash flood, nor a fall, nor of someone getting sick, nor lost, nor any other bad thing. In fact, this isn't a story of what happened, of what we did; rather, it's a story of what some of us *didn't* do. But it begins with doing.

We hiked up and around the first fall and into the broad valley beyond, clouds gathering and giving us some delightful shade. Guests and guides strung themselves out, due to the normal variation in hiking speed. A little wind picked up, with more clouds, and the sound of distant thunder. Then came a few spatters of rain, and a few more, which cooled us all off wonderfully. The frontrunners held up at the second waterfall until everyone got there, with a bit more thunder and a little more rain making us all look up and around at the sky. The weather seemed, if anything, like it was starting to clear, and since the valley was wide, the guides decided it was OK to continue the hike. The offer was made that if anyone wanted to turn back, that was fine; that a guide would turn back, too. Three folks decided go back at that time, seeming to be pretty uncomfortable with distant thunder still rumbling, and I volunteered to go back with them.

I love to hike, but I don't need to reach the end of every trail or the top of every climb, and I'm also very mindful of those of our guests for whom making it to the Motor Pool at Havasu is a big deal and for whom the patio at Deer Creek is not a good option. And, of course, I understand getting spooked by thunder and desiring the familiarity of camp. So we started back, and halfway down, not surprisingly, the thunder faded and the sky cleared, and there we were—four of us in the expanse of Stone Creek valley, deliciously cool, with wonderful smells rising from the plants and ground because of the recent shower. And mostly because of how delightful it was where we were, but partly because I knew it was probably hot down on the beach, I stopped us and said, "There's something I'd like us to do, if y'all are willing." They assented, and asked what. And I said, "Sometimes what I like to do out here, and what I'd like to ask y'all to do, is to do *nothing*. Let's find a comfortable spot to sit back or lie

down and just *be here* for fifteen or twenty minutes." They all agreed, with looks on their faces like I'd just given them some huge gift, and we settled down and simply *were* for a while.

After a good, long time, we got up, stretched, and walked back to camp.

Two of the three told me later that having those minutes at Stone Creek was one of the favorite parts of their trip, and it's one of my best memories from this past season, too—just doing nothing, just being. This isn't groundbreaking; there're probably lots of articles in outdoor journals and several dissertations written about the value of just hanging out in the outdoors. And I've done things like this for years, where I'll simply stop walking and look around, maybe press my hands or cheek against a tree or rock, not because I'm leading and need to let someone catch up, or to give someone a rest, or to give myself a rest, but just to take a moment to be there—to pause the doing to allow the being to be. The same sort of idea is true in talking, I think; I may say to folks in my boat, "We need to talk about this upcoming rapid, but before we talk, let's *don't talk* for thirty seconds or so." And then we'll just look around and *be* there. I'm sure many of us guides do this sort of thing. But I have rarely done it so explicitly as I did in Stone, with such positive feedback, and I think I will do it more.

But here I am talking about *doing it* again, when the point I'm trying to make is that we should take some time *not to do* things. All right, I acknowledge the irony. But, maybe this inconsistency is a token of the complicated relationship we have with *doing* while on Canyon trips. Guides are doers; we are hired because we can make it happen, and when something needs to happen, I certainly want to work with folks who can get it done. As a community, we're very good at doing things, and our guests can learn a lot from us about getting things done and about having the confidence to do more things than they ever thought they could. But, to generalize, as a community we're not as good at *not doing*, at just *being*. Maybe we could learn some about *being* from our guests—some seem pretty darn good at *not doing*! Maybe we can help them learn the value of this, or maybe this is one more thing that we can help one another learn.

The water is getting deep here, but my own take-away from my experience in Stone Creek last summer is pretty simple. I'm going to be sure to mix some explicit *being* into all of our *doing* out there. Or to put it another way, I'm going to take a few minutes with my guests each trip *not to do* things.

Jody Tinsley

## Back of the Boat— The Whale Foundation News Bulletin

**S**PRING, HUH? But the streets here in Flagstaff are still lined with the snowplows' berms as I write. It's a cerebral exercise to construct these bits for a publication that won't come out for a few weeks. A lot can change in that time. It's hard to know now what will be appropriate to talk about then. I'll give a go.

Was that a great Wing Ding or what?! It's remarkable, really, the support we have in our town, never mind the wider care and thoughtfulness that comes in from far and wide to augment the good work the Whale Foundation does. A heartfelt thanks to everyone who sponsored and contributed to our winter gathering. It's very apparent that guides and the experiences they share with others have a lasting effect on so many. And speaking of, our featured artist and musician, Amy Martin and Benjie Howard, embody that sentiment. We're all so grateful they lent their giant spirits to this event and everyone there. I, for one, am amazed at the energy they put into the world, for the world. And to Cree Watahomigie, for sharing herself and the spirit of her mother, Shana, with us all. Let us not forget we are all here for each other. We all bump up against each other, and those moments matter.

A little near-future business: this past December, The Whale Foundation, with the help of one of our dedicated Case Managers, Susan Ash, and outstanding community member, Laura Fallon, hosted a Women's Forum to close out the 2016 river season. It was built around coffee, conversation and yoga, around getting things out and plotting a way forward after an emotionally charged season and litigation process within Grand Canyon National Park. It was powerful and necessary, by all accounts, and for this initial gathering, exclusive by design. Hopefully by the time you're reading this, we'll have put together and maybe even held a follow up to that first conversation. Maybe this one was called Professionalism and Gender Issues Forum (or some such?), and a broader cross section

of our peers and profession were invited (?). That was always the plan. These issues involve every one of us and our responsibility in how we interact with one another. Please consider participating in this on-going discussion, in whatever form it comes. There's talk of hosting something on the North Rim (North Side shout out!), maybe closer to the river season. I hope you'll stay in touch and engaged in advancing the cause of mutual respect and professionalism in the workplace we all love.



photo credit: John Napier

**CORRECTION:** In the Whale Foundation's 2017 Grand Canyon Calendar, the credit for April's photo erroneously went to Jeffe Aronson. In fact, Andre Potochnik took this picture, while Jeffe slept away on the featured dory. Our apologies for not catching that error.

## Tales From the Truck— The Morning the Rocks Fell at Fern Glen

THE MORNING OF October 5, 2016, was pretty much like most of the others on a sixteen-day OARS Grand Canyon Dories trip, folks beginning to move from their bedrolls at the Fern Glen camp as the sunlight brightened, coffee starting to boil. No hurry to get going early, as trip leader Eric the Casual had set a nice, leisurely pace. It was Lava Falls day, and the dory boatmen like to run on the afternoon's lower water down the right, usually the highlight of the day and the trip's rapid culmination. It had rained a couple of times on the trip, the most when we camped at the Ross Wheeler, but it had been warm, clear weather lately; which made the sound of thunder unusual that morning. Instinctively I looked up to the blue, cloudless sky, expecting to see thunder clouds, or perhaps a jet from Nellis Air Force base hot-shotting over the Canyon, but neither. My next thought was rock fall, so I looked across the river, up the cliffs. That's when I heard the sound of pebbles, then rocks, then boulders bouncing off the cliff directly above and behind me, and hitting the beach.

I was standing next to my bedroll, only about ten feet from the cliff ringing the back of the huge camp. It only took a few leaps to get to the cliff and lean my back against it, as rocks continued to launch over my head, and onto and into the sand, and even into the river; one about the size of my head bounced off the beach and landed where I had been standing only seconds before. In the kitchen, Rondo yelled "Rockfall, get to the cliff" while ducking under the wash table. Many went to the cliff, while others were closer to the river and ran that way. Eric was on the groover, at the upstream adjacent end of camp in a tamarisk-lined cubbyhole, not far from the impact zone and only a few feet from the cliff, and quickly moved there. JB, in line at the groover, rushed to the cliff to stand next to Eric. Only then did Eric realize his shorts were still around his ankles. Betsy was lying in her sleeping bag near the kitchen when a pumpkin-sized boulder bounced off the sand and hit her in the ankle. Andrew, B, and Maia were still on the baggage boats in the river; boulders hit the water close enough to splash them.

The dorries had been pulled up onto the flat beach for a level night's repose. Andy and André watched from their dorries' decks as small black dots high up the cliff kept getting larger as the rocks increased in size on their downward trajectory. André bailed off his dory (the *Black Canyon*) to tuck under its gunwale, while a slab



Rock shatters on impact, parts of it jump toward dorries. photo credit: André Potochnik



Best shot of biggest rock trajectory with divot and really broken chair. photo credit: André Potochnik

landed within feet of Andy's dory (the *Cottonwood*). A big rock landed between the bows of the *Marble Canyon* (Eric's dory) and the *Shoshone* (Rondo's dory), and almost put the first ding in the *Marble*, the new dory built in honor of Martin Litton. Fifteen passengers were in various locations around camp, mostly upstream, scattering this way and that; at least one was in the



Rock in divot, with coffee cup for scale. photo credit: André Potochnik



Rock pulverized on cliff impact next to unit. photo credit: André Potochnik



Big rock and Andy's dory, showing how close things got. photo credit: André Potochnik

kitchen area. Only one person was sitting in a camp chair at the campfire circle; he leaped up and hightailed it towards the river before a boulder hit the chair next to him. Another chair suffered even more damage (and

is now hanging on the “Wall of Shame” at the OARS warehouse).

It was all over almost as quickly as it had begun. As folks regaled each other with where they had been, what they had done, and what they had seen, the realization seemed to get scarier, as all thought over what a disaster it could have been. Amazing that only one person got hit and by the next day her ankle swelling had gone down somewhat and she was moving about fairly well. Boatman and geologist André determined it was Redwall Limestone, possibly triggered by a desert bighorn sheep, and took the accompanying photographs. It was also his milestone 65<sup>TH</sup> birthday, and he figured it was one heckuva way for a geologist to celebrate with a rock fall. Running Lava Falls should be a low-anxiety piece of cake after that.

*Richard “Q” Quartaroli  
(with input from crew)*

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## The LTEMP is Here—Now What?

**A**FTER SEVERAL YEARS of hard work, deliberation, and analysis, the Bureau of Reclamation and National Park Service finished the Glen Canyon Dam Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement (LTEMP EIS). The culmination of this multi-year effort is the LTEMP’s Record of Decision, or ROD, which sets the stage for the

next twenty years of dam operations and what river guides can expect to see in terms of average water flows, high-flow experiments (HFE), and continuing research.

After evaluating the impacts of seven different alternatives, the BOR and NPS ultimately decided that Alternative D was preferred because it “best meets the resource goals of the LTEMP.” This alternative is a middle-

of-the-road attempt to balance hydropower and the downstream effects we have all come to experience firsthand. It does this by featuring “a number of condition-dependent flow and non-flow actions that would be triggered by resource conditions.” For “base operations,” the nuts and bolts include:

- Minimum flows of 5,000 CFS at night (7 P.M. – 7 A.M.) and 8,000 CFS during the day (7 A.M. – 7 P.M.)
- Maximum flows of 25,000 CFS
- Fluctuations no greater than 8,000 CFS per day
- Ramp rates of 4,000 CFS per hour up and 2,500 CFS per hour down
- A pattern of monthly releases that will be more even than the Modified Low Fluctuating Flow (MLFF) regime that has been in effect until now.
- A bevy of experiments at their disposal such as: sediment triggered HFES in the spring and fall; short 24-hour “proactive” spring HFES in high-volume years\*; potentially long-lasting (up to ten-plus days) fall HFES of 45,000 CFS; reduced flows after an HFE; mechanical trout removal by the mouth of the LCR; trout management flows; low summer flows for the second ten-year period of the LTEMP; and sustained low flows for the aquatic food base.

\*Note: Neither the Spring HFES nor the short 24-hour proactive spring HFES in equalization years can be conducted in the first two years of the LTEMP. Also, Spring HFES will not occur in the same water year as an extended duration fall HFE (greater than 96 hours). To read all the myriad details of the new plan, you can access the ROD at: [http://ltempeis.anl.gov/documents/docs/LTEMP\\_ROD.pdf](http://ltempeis.anl.gov/documents/docs/LTEMP_ROD.pdf).

Of course all of these experiments and flows are dictated by the contractual commitments that the Western Area Power Authority (WAPA) is obligated to fulfill as the operator of the dam. In addition, the water delivery commitments will continue to play a significant role overshadowing the management of the dam. Therefore it is not surprising that there is a wild card to depart from these parameters for “operational flexibility.” Even so, this was a collaborative effort on part of all stakeholders where there was a lot of give and take, but overall from an ecological and recreational standpoint, it is a step forward.

So at the end of this long process, what does it mean for you as a guide or river “frequenteur?” It’s difficult to predict, but more than likely it will mean more even monthly flow release patterns, more potential HFES (which may maintain or improve camping beaches), and a healthy dose of science to better understand if the tools available to dam operators can minimize some of its downstream effects. According to the ROD, these changes to dam operations should result in improved



HFE Success—Eddy sand deposits scoured and beaches rebuilt! Hot Na Na Beaches before (above) and after (below) the November 2016 HFE. photo credit: Greg Woodall

conditions for humpback chub, trout, and the aquatic food base; improved sandbar building potential and conservation of sediment; sustained or improved conditions for reservoir and river recreation; improved preservation of cultural resources; further respect and enhancement of Tribal resources and values; and all with only limited impacts on hydropower resources. As with everything, time will tell—we have the next twenty years to find out.

*Dave Brown*  
AMWG REPRESENTATIVE

## The Other Speed Run

IT WAS THE START OF THE NEW YEAR when my phone rang. It was Mary, a co-worker and friend. Her son Seth, a member of the U.S. Men's Whitewater rafting team, was in a bind. For the past year, along with his team, he had been planning an attempt at the Canyon speed record. The record has gained huge attention since Kevin Fedarko's *The Emerald Mile* hit the bestseller lists.

The U.S. Men's Team team was determined to use their skills as international racers, along with a custom built, 48-foot cataraft, to complete all 277 miles of the Canyon in under 34 hours. They had some pretty amazing support from Chaco in making this dream a reality. Several other adventure companies, including Jack's Plastic, NRS, Cataract Oars, Yeti, and Black Diamond took an interest in the project and chipped in gear and expertise along the way. Only one snag: just three weeks before their permit, the team's veteran Grand Canyon boatman dropped out. That boatman was going to support them with critical navigational knowledge of the river so they could run big-boat lines without scouting, especially at night.

In the months prior to the fateful phone call from Mary, I had received updates on the team's progress from Seth's dad, Lindsey. I became particularly interested in the effort after hearing about their boat: a very unique craft, one of which the Canyon had never seen before, and may never see again. This boat, which is ten feet longer than any Canyon motor-rig, required a crew of eight: six oarsmen, one man on each oar and three to a side, one person manning a rear-mounted sweep oar, and one rotating through a rest position. A "motor" rig with six human motors. The boat was constructed around an aluminum and carbon/composite frame and ran on two 48-foot long Jack's Plastic Cat tubes that Jack repurposed from another project and generously donated for the team's use. The guys affixed six, rear-facing, sliding seats to two parallel aluminum rails that ran the length of the frame. Each seat could be locked out for improved bracing in big whitewater. Twelve foot long carbon oars, straight off a racing shell, propelled the boat downstream. A solar panel, a 100-pound battery, and a bank of LED lights provided much needed illumination of river features at night. High tech GPS devices would help the team track their speed and allow the support crew to monitor progress.

In the months leading up to their January permit, the team was able to test the raft's performance on the Moab Daily, Westwater Canyon, and then

from Diamond Creek to Pearce Ferry. A round of design modifications followed each test and the craft continued to evolve until, at last, they felt it was Canyon-ready. Their plan, after nine months of training, boat design, and logistics, was to maintain a pace of 8.4 MPH, which would put them at Pearce Ferry in under 34 hours.

When Mary was done sharing that the team had lost their Canyon veteran, I butted into the phone conversation and told her that I knew a couple of young bucks with lots of experience that might be a good fit. Silence blared from the other end of the conversation.

"They were hoping you might be interested," Mary shared.

"Ooooo" I said. "I need to talk with Julie on this one."

"You might want to call Seth too," she added.

A couple of days later, commitments were made on both ends and I became a member of the team. Why not? Sounds fun in a demented way that only a boatman might understand. Six days before the launch, I drove up to Vail to meet the team in person for the first time. We considered that a better option than introductions on the Lees Ferry ramp. It kind of felt like I was pirating a private trip setup over the internet. One outstanding concern expressed by the team was that our schedule had us running Lava at night. No problem, I thought. Use the easy setup markers on the right, make the cut and straighten her out, Lava does the rest. As long as the lighting systems worked close to what I had come to understand, I figured we were good to go.

I missed the rigging of the boat at Lees Ferry, which the rangers gave us permission to do a day early (thanks to both the riggers and the rangers for that), but arrived in time to get an afternoon of upstream practice before our launch at 11 P.M., January, Friday the 13TH. During our practice session, dodging and cutting around the buoys at the Ferry, my confidence wavered. I couldn't get the team's pre-determined commands down and struggled to move the boat in the way I had envisioned. I felt a little intimidated being the odd man in. This was going to be more challenging than I originally thought.

Not much sleep, but some rest greeted us at Marble Canyon Lodge. As much rest as we could get, anyway, with numerous law enforcement personnel armed with assault weapons stealthily shadowing an unbalanced tourist that had been called in during



our quiet, pre-launch winter evening. Classic. A nice somber sendoff followed, with a small group of friends and family waving us off from the beach in a steady drizzle of rain.

We were hoping to meet daylight around Unkar, while catching and following a 20,000 cfs flow to Lava. Hance and the beginning of the gorge in the dark was not an option we were interested in entertaining. My plan was to avoid calling for correction strokes, to keep our “mo” going and not disrupt the flow of the machine-like oarsmen, steering with just the sweep instead. I soon found out this was not a viable option. Because of the strength of the oarsmen, turning with the sweep alone was not effective and the boat didn’t respond anything like a motor-rig, which tends to pivot on its nose. The night was still young and I knew I could not keep putting out so much effort fighting with the sweep oar for 277 miles. I started using more commands to maneuver the boat, finding mixed results.

Our first big test was, of course, House Rock Rapid. In a motor-rig, I work to get the biggest rides available in Marble Canyon. For the speed run, we wanted to be fast and smooth—stay in the current and stay right of the massive wave train running down the left side. Pegging our choice line would have been easy in a motor-rig, except this was definitely not a motor-rig. We got our angle but lost our “mo.” Off we went into the big boys, not teed up, but dead-sideways. We high-sided and stayed upright, but just barely! We needed to regroup, adjust and come up with a new plan. We decided the two back oarsmen, would turn around and face forward in the big whitewater,

giving us more eyes downstream and a couple of oars to help steer. My role changed to more of a narrator, providing blow-by-blow descriptions of obstacles, markers, channels, and route options as we descended on them. It worked. We found our A-Team setup. With my river knowledge to help him pick his lines former Grand Canyon guide Matt Norfleet manned the sweep for the difficult drops. Soon, our confidence and speed increased and we started clicking off the miles and rapids. We reached Hance at daybreak, ahead of schedule. We aced everything in the gorge. Everything up to Crystal, anyway, where an early entry, right hand run found us straddling a shallow rock that slammed down the middle of the boat, breaking most of the lower crossbars of our frame. We kept running and repaired two of the most severely damaged crossbars with cam straps, fiberglass tape, and a couple of spare paddles we brought along, all while navigating the Jewels at top speed. With the miles and rapids falling by the wayside, we were feeling good. We lost daylight below Havasu, but we were still on our pace.

Nighttime navigation started up again. We had barely missed a stroke for 178 miles, in less than twenty hours, and were ahead of schedule to break the record. The team fell into silence, each man lost in his own thoughts, as we prepared for a night run of Lava. Nerves were up, and we weren’t sure what to expect. Then, illuminated starkly by the LED light bank, there was the horizon line, racing toward us. Nailing the entry to Lava, we hit the “V” wave perfectly, which lined us up for the big Kahuna. When we hit that last wave, the forward twelve feet of boat pierced the green water and the forward section of each tube began to



rise, trying to float to the surface and straining against two aluminum extensions that ran forward from each corner of the frame. All while the remaining 36 feet of boat, still sliding down the back of the wave behind, kept driving them deeper underwater. As we crested the wave, our elation and shouts of success were punctured by the explosive crack and sound of rushing air. One of the frame extensions couldn't bear the stress, broke, and put a four-inch tear in our right tube. We limped to Tequila Beach with a sixth of our boat submerged in the river along with a couple members of our team. There we worked on patching the hole, the boat still in the water, fully rigged. Wind and sand were blowing, the eddy surged against the boat, and the rain continued falling. The whole scene was illuminated by the eerie glow of the LED lights.

We had a hard time getting the patch to hold and lost close to three hours on that beach. Knowing it was impossible to break the record at that point, our energy levels and some of our motivation dropped. Sleep deprivation set in with full force. By then, most of us had been awake for thirty-plus hours. Guys were falling asleep on oars, waking up only when an oar crabbed or a stumble nearly resulted in a swim. We rowed on through the night and into the early

afternoon hours of Sunday, fighting the wind, pushing a limp tube with gallons of water in it, and fighting the desperate urge to sleep. We nosed up on the beach at Pearce Ferry, exhausted, but not defeated. Total time elapsed for our run: 39 hours and 24 minutes.

Spending time in the Canyon for me is often a spiritual journey into my life and its interrelationships with the world, something to take my time with. So I was left wondering why I had such a rewarding time, trying to get through the Canyon as fast as we could? I have come to the conclusion that, to be able to do what we did, on some level we must have been completely in sync with the "Canyon." I like to think so, anyway. Maybe it was just a lot of fun. The trip was a one-of-a-kind experience. I entered this adventure the odd man in and left feeling completely welcomed and privileged to be a part of the challenge. Plato said, "You can learn more about a person in an hour of play, than in a year of conversation." I got to play with these guys for close to forty nonstop hours and loved every second of it. That adds up to a lot of learning. Thanks Seth, Ian, John Mark, Matt (Norf), Jeremiah, Kurt and Robbie. It was one Canyon trip I will never forget.

*Marty Borges*



NOTE: Marty Borges has worked in the Grand Canyon as guide for over thirty years. He lives with girlfriend, Julie, in Pagosa Springs, Colorado where he is the director of an alternative high school program. His program uses the outdoors as a medium to help teach academics, teamwork, leadership skills and the value of putting forth an honest effort. He is also a bit of a freak when it comes to the Grand Canyon. He loves boating in it, climbing it, hiking it, talking about it, living it, and sharing it.



River shots are from the Diamond Creek to Pearce Ferry test run.

Crew shots are from the speed run attempt, launching from Lees Ferry.

Photos by Forest Woodward

## Pondering Promises



**T**HE GRAND CANYON Escalade proposal has conjured heated debate since it first made its appearance in 2012. This 47,000 square foot resort with restaurants, retail stores, artist studios, RV park, gas stations, hotels, a public safety office, and a gondola to the bottom of the Grand Canyon has divided the Navajo Nation and the local community of Bodaway-Gap, Arizona.

The principal Confluence Partner and developer of Escalade is Lamar Whitmer, a Scottsdale resident. He was quoted in the September 2016 issue of *National Geographic* as saying, “We’re going to employ an awful lot of people in an impoverished area and help them save their culture. What’s better than that?”

With the promise of employment, revenue, and much needed infrastructure, it is hard not to be swayed by the Confluence Partners, LLC. Many of these problems are discussed at chapter meetings all across Navajo Nation with employment being one of the top priorities. And the resort sounds like a tangible way for individuals to support their families and stay closer to home, where they can tend to elders and remain immersed in their culture. Revenue from this development is promised to revitalize a failing government, where mining natural resources is obsolete and unhealthy to the environment. There is also a demand by many to have electricity and running water, a luxury to many individuals, but a hassle for those who have to drive at least eighty miles one way to obtain water.

Mr. Whitmer’s quote about saving our culture brings about many thoughts.



Above: Navajo group, Bosque Redondo, New Mexico.

Army Signal Corp photo

Left: Confluence at sunset.

Pete McBride photo

It has been nearly 150 years since the Navajo People were released from Bosque Redondo. At a time not too long ago, our Dine’ ancestors were forcibly removed from their homeland and housed at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, much like a concentration camp; this traumatic experience is known as the Long Walk. With a promise to return home, our ancestors signed a treaty relinquishing their freedom rights, and agreeing to live within an assigned boundary imposed by the United States Government. Our ancestors returned home and have been trying to heal from this trauma ever since.

Within the treaty was a mandate that all Navajo children be educated according to western principles. Old soldier forts were converted into schools and housed children from all corners of the Navajo Nation. Richard Pratt’s view on indoctrination in the late 19<sup>TH</sup> century was to “kill the Indian, and save the man.” All children were forced to speak English and punished if they were caught speaking or praying in their native tongue. As the generations of youth followed, the assimilation into mainstream western society is seen in our youth; a loss of cultural identity and language are of great concern of all Dine’ families.

After the Long Walk, the Navajo Nation Council was created in the 1930s to negotiate natural resources lying underneath Navajo Nation soil. With the incoming corporations claiming stake to oil, uranium, coal, and natural gas, so came the promise of the very same

thing Mr. Whitmer makes today: jobs, water lines, electricity, and revenue for the Navajo Nation. With a newly established government we gave up lands, water, resources, and our identity for these promises. Instead we face the abandonment of uranium mines, drought, and mismanagement of funds. And we have never received the water or electricity lines to our homes.

This Escalade Development is a promise like all the other drive-thru, quick-money schemes. But this promise comes at a very different price. Whitmer says that he will save our culture? How can you save culture by destroying culture? How is he saving our culture by building a resort at the western edge of the Navajo Nation boundary? Whitmer will never understand what this western boundary at the Canyon means to us “poor, underprivileged, third-world living Indians.” He does not understand the songs, prayers, and meaning behind offerings. And I mean that literally, because he does not understand the languages of many of the tribes he will be impacting. He has not felt from his heart and spirit our connection to this land and what our ancestors have gone through to preserve and protect the land for the future human beings.

The Navajo Historic Preservation’s Hataalii Advisory Council responded with a Position Statement Opposing the Escalade Project at To’ahidiliih (Confluence):

“To’ahidiliih is a traditional cultural property, which is defined generally as one that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (a) are rooted in that community’s history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community (DOI, NPS Bulletin 38, Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties).

After discussing the project and the sacred character of the To’ahidiliih of the Little Colorado River and Colorado River, we are unanimous in our conclusion that the proposed Escalade Project including the rim top development, tramway, and walkway development will:

1. Pose detrimental irreversible harm to the sacred qualities of the To’ahidiliih;
2. Pose a degraded spiritual experience by Navajos conducting offerings or prayers from overcrowding and reduced visibility by visitors who visit To’ahidiliih for recreation;
3. Pose harm mentally, physically, and spiritually to the People who visit the To’ahidiliih without respect and reverence;
4. Threaten to destroy a significant cultural resource, and set precedent for future opportunities to protect our cultural resources as a Navajo Nation.”

What the Escalade partners and cohorts do not realize is that this place has always been and will forever remain a place of reverence and spirituality. Placing a building at the western edge of our boundary will not symbolize and show its sacredness. A resort is not a temple, synagogue, church, or any other holy temple, which you may showcase our heritage, culture, and our identity as human beings. But it will show how money and man, have once, again, defeated another culture in the name of prosperity, tourism, and the “American Dream.”

The Escalade is one of many monsters that we are fighting against around the Grand Canyon. All tribes that have ancestral rights to the Grand Canyon face uranium mining, contamination, exploitation, water shortages, over-grazing, and relocation from developments and expansions of land for others. The truth in this whole matter is that the need for wealth and commercialism are destroying our homelands. When our homelands are destroyed by resorts, pipelines, mines, wells, and overrun with people, what will happen to people of the land, the environment, the history, and all that we have worked to protect for the future generations? The balance of life is shifting and we are not paying attention to the signs of climate change, movements of mother earth, and living beings disappearing from this world. The world has already tried to erase us from existence which did not work, so the shift is to have our own people erase us out of our own existence. But until that happens, we human beings from all nations will stand up and fight for what is ours, whether that is through the laws in place, creating laws which will further protect and preserve our ancestral lands or through resistance, we will always uphold what was taught to us from our elders with their guidance.

At this time, the Escalade Development legislation has been introduced within standing committees and has not been voted on by the Navajo Nation Council. Save the Confluence is doing everything in its power to lobby the Navajo Nation Council and advocate why people from around the world and Navajo citizens do not want this development impacting the place we all love, the Grand Canyon. Thank you all for your support and encouragement.

Please visit us at [www.savetheconfluence.com](http://www.savetheconfluence.com) or follow us on Facebook: Save the Confluence.

Ahe’hee!

*Sarana Riggs*

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR FOR STC

# Canyon Pioneer— Dick Griffith's Early Days of Rafting and His Final Run on the Colorado River

**H**E MAY BE THE BADDEST-ASS boatman that ever lived—or that ever plied his oars to the age of ninety. In April 2017, just two months before his ninetieth birthday, Dick Griffith will make what he says is his final run of the Grand Canyon. Griffith has been boating now for more than seventy years and he's seen colossal changes in the rivers, the canyons, and the sport itself. What has not changed is that whitewater still runs through his blood.

In a recent letter to a friend, Griffith wrote, "Had a 24-day trip last February [2016]. Only flipped one boat. I look at the rapids on You-Tube and don't know what I am doing there. But I need that adrenalin rush."

## DRYLANDER

Griffith couldn't have come from dryer beginnings. He grew up near Saratoga, Wyoming, where his father attempted to wrest a living off a drought-struck land. It was during the Great Depression where much of the country had become a dustbowl. It was a hard life, but farming and ranching on the open range allowed Griffith to travel many miles on and alongside his horse. His father puzzled to see his son sometimes trotting on foot next to the horse, but Griffith enjoyed moving under his own power.

In 1946, at the age of nineteen, Griffith built a Huck Finn type of raft and launched into the White River at Rangely, Colorado, thus launching his boating career. It was a dubious start, however. His plan was to float to the confluence of the Green River but not long into the trip a low cable strung across the river swept Griffith off his raft. The raft floated downstream, never to be seen again. Thus, with a rifle, bullets, and a blanket he'd managed to salvage from the mishap, he launched a parallel

career of wilderness trekking—by hiking the next one hundred miles to Green River, Utah.

By 1948, at the age of 21, Griffith had refined his methods, building a ten-foot wooden boat using a design he saw in *National Geographic* magazine. His father drove him to Ship Rock, New Mexico, to launch a 250-mile trip from the San Juan River to Lees Ferry on the Colorado River. As they stood on the banks of the river, Griffith's father tried to bargain with his son.

"I'll buy you a horse," his father said. "If you want to go the length of the river, travel it properly and follow it on horseback."

Dick grinned at his cowboy father and shook his head, "No thanks."

Rivers would transport Griffith from a life anchored on the ranch into a world of whitewater and adventure. He named his first boat the *Padre*. Father.

## MEETING HARRY ALESON

The problem with Griffith's boat is that he didn't know how to row the damn thing.

"I thought I could drive it like a team of horses, pull on the left oar and go left, pull on the right and go right," he said. "It was a disaster."



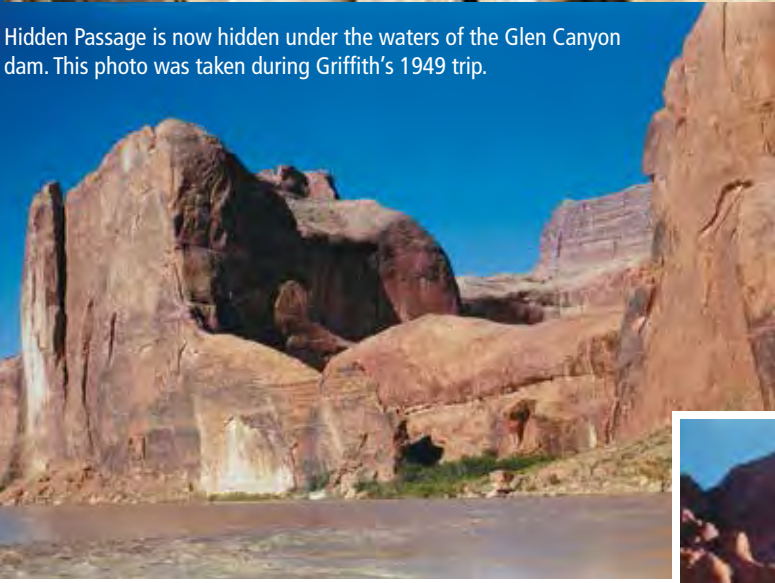
Ashley Falls, shown here in 1949, is now under the waters of the Flaming Gorge Dam.



Dark Canyon rapids was the last rapid in Cataract Canyon. It was here, in 1949, that Griffith met a group of explorer scouts, led by Kenny Ross, who were the first to traverse Dark Canyon. In this photo, Griffith descends the rapids with Jon Lindbergh, the son of Colonel Charles Lindbergh.



In 1949, Isabelle Galo was a Hungarian beauty with eyes for young boatman, Dick Griffith.



Hidden Passage is now hidden under the waters of the Glen Canyon dam. This photo was taken during Griffith's 1949 trip.

The Glen Canyon Hole-in-the-Rock monument, where 250 Mormon pioneers crossed the Colorado River in 1880, is now mostly under the waters of Lake Powell. This photo shows Isabelle during their 1951 trip.



Left: Glen Canyon's Navajo Mountain and entry into Aztec Canyon in 1951.





Dick and Isabelle Griffith at the end of a 900-mile float from Green River to Lees Ferry in 1949.

By the third day, a collision with a tree broke the boat's oarlock, complicating Griffith's difficulties. At Bluff, Utah, he maneuvered the damaged boat to shore to consider his options. By now he knew he had some things to learn about being a boatman. He was fighting the current rather than harnessing its energy. With his back facing downstream, he wasn't able to see the hazards until it was too late.

After getting supplies in town, Griffith returned to the river to discover three ten-man inflatable rafts lined up on the bank. A group of Explorer Boy Scouts were being directed by a small energetic man who clearly knew what he was doing.

Dick introduced himself to their guide, Harry Aleson. The rafts were World War II surplus boats and Aleson planned to take the boys down the San Juan River through the Glen Canyon and on to Lees Ferry. Aleson invited Griffith to accompany them for as long as he liked.

Several years later, in 1953, Harry Richfield, who was on that Boy Scout trip would write about their encounter with Griffith: "*Dick came in alone on the San Juan from Shiprock... He was pretty low on grub. Hungry... Tall, very genial, no worrier. Husky, most*

*rugged, 'goingest' runningest young man I've ever seen in action on rough ground. Nothing conceit about him. Absolutely trustworthy."*

The group had seen Dick's antics earlier on the river and called out to him. However, he "*Appeared to not hear any of our Scouts yelling to him—riding the crests of the main sand waves running plenty high—facing downstream, pushing on oars or wildly chopping the water... As his boat rode the high sand waves like a cockle shell, it really was a 'buckin' bronco."*

During the day that Griffith traveled with Aleson, he learned the Galloway method of rowing, facing downstream.

"Harry was a true 'river rat' and taught me everything I know," Dick said. "Now I could slow the boat down, have directional control, and spot rocks and holes ahead instead of looking over my shoulder. Without Harry's help, I wouldn't have made it very far."

Aleson noted Griffith's aptitude and work ethic. He later contacted Griffith, offering him a job as a boatman for the upcoming season. Griffith was thrilled. He promised to cook, ferry boats, and do any sort of camp work required of the job.

In a letter to Aleson dated March 12, 1949, Griffith wrote, "As far as money goes, I would like for you to pay my expenses down and back which would not be to(o) much and a dollar a day to take care of what films I would use and wear and tear on my clothes."

During 1949 and 1950, Griffith made four trips with Aleson from Bluff, Utah, to Lees Ferry. Aleson would pay Griffith four dollars a day, and Griffith would pick up an unexpected companion.

#### GOING THE DISTANCE

Isabelle Gallo was one of Aleson's clients on a San Juan River trip in 1949. She was a fiery Hungarian beauty from Milwaukee with a yen for adventure. She kept copious journals throughout her travels and took special note of a bronzed shirtless boatman by the name of Dick Griffith.

Isabelle had just learned to swim and on a hot day decided to go for a dip near the floating rafts. The wind came up and suddenly caught the boats, pushing them like sails against the current. Meanwhile, the river pushed Isabelle downstream. In those days, rafters rarely wore life jackets and Dick could see that Isabelle was clearly in trouble. He dove off the boat and swam to her rescue.

Around the campfire, Isabelle was intrigued when Dick talked about his plans later that summer to retrace the 1869 1,200-mile odyssey of Major John Wesley Powell. The trip would take them from Green River, Wyoming, to the lower end of the Grand





In 1951, Griffith, his wife Isabelle, and Johnny Schlump were the 144th, 145th, and 146th individuals to make the traverse from Lees Ferry to Lake Mead at Hoover Dam. Only a handful of people had made the entire 1,200-mile trip from Green River before this trip. (Courtesy Northern Arizona University, Cline Library Belknap Collection)

Canyon at Lake Mead. To date, only a handful had ever completed the trip. Dick had a buddy, Jim Gifford, but they had no money and still needed another boat to help supply their long journey.

A medical technician, Isabelle just happened to have uncashed paychecks that she was using as bookmarks. She had an idea. She would fund the trip including the boat, food, and a pickup to haul their gear with just one stipulation—that they take her along.

Dick agreed and the threesome began their trip on July 8, 1949. There were miles of lazy river laughter as they traveled downstream. In the evenings around the embers of their fire, Dick played the flute and Jim played the harmonica. They slept under starry skies.

As their only guide, Griffith brought along a copy of Frederick Dellenbaugh's *A Canyon Voyage: The Narrative of the Second Powell Expedition*, first published in 1908. Dick knew that beyond the Gates of Lodore, one of Powell's boats had been crushed and three men nearly lost. The wreck had cost the expedition two thousand pounds of gear and one third of their food supply. Powell had aptly named this portion of the river "Disaster Falls."

With Dick and Isabelle in the inflatable and Jim at the oars of the *Padre* they came upon a thunderous roar of water. From a distance they could see no rocks or obstacles and decided to run the rapids, foregoing their usual habit of checking the falls first. Dick and Isabelle went first while Jim followed.

Dick soon realized their mistake. They were headed over a waterfall but it was too late to pull to shore. While he searched for a place for the inflatable to slide off the falls, Jim bore the *Padre* to the right.

"The little red boat plunged down into the boiling water, shot straight up into the air, then tipped backwards end over end," Dick recalled. "Jim was thrown from the boat into thrashing undercurrents without a life preserver."

As Dick and Isabelle watched, Jim and the boat swept past them and disappeared. They followed, frantically scanning the water and bank for signs of Jim and the boat. Downstream they discovered Jim lying bruised and exhausted on the shore. The splintered *Padre* was wedged on a rock midstream, broken nearly in half.

That evening the threesome were subdued as they considered their close call and the loss of Dick's



This 1951 photo shows Dick Griffith making a left hand run of Lava Falls. He was the first to run Lava Falls in an inflatable raft.

boat. While Isabelle cooked dinner, Dick and Jim got out Dellenbaugh's book and came to an incredulous realization.

"We had wrecked our wooden boat in Disaster Falls at almost the exact spot where Major Powell had lost one of his boats eighty years before," Dick said.

At Green River, Utah, Jim called home and learned his mother needed him to return immediately. His departure resulted in a stand down between Isabelle and Dick. She insisted on going with him to complete the trip. He refused. It wasn't proper, he told her. She was a lousy swimmer and the upcoming Cataract Canyon was too dangerous. When she still refused to budge, Dick threw her off the boat and left without her. Stubbornly determined, Isabelle hitchhiked to Hite, where she caught up with him and they continued their travels through Glen Canyon—this time with Farnum Young, a young Mormon, as their chaperone.

At Lees Ferry, nine hundred miles from the start but three hundred miles short of their destination, time ran out and Dick had to get back to college. They vowed to return someday and go the entire distance.

It turned out it was not the only vow they made. One year later, August 30, 1950, exactly one year after completing their nine-hundred-mile adventure, Dick and Isabelle were married.

#### A FIRST THROUGH LAVA FALLS

In 1951, Dick and Isabelle began the Powell expedition again, this time with companion Johnny Schlump. They launched two ten-man military surplus inflatable boats from Green River, Wyoming, on July 1. In those days, many boatmen—Norm Nevills (tho Norm died 2 years earlier)—scoffed at the idea of inflatable boats. The boats of choice until then had been wooden crafts. However, the u.s. military was dumping surplus rubber from World War II and rafts were inexpensive. They were also portable, and carried a heavy payload. When Dick and Johnny attempted to line boats through a section of Hell's Half Mile, the advantage of the rubber boats became obvious. Wedged between two rocks, with water roaring over the top, their stuck raft drew herself up, folded inward into a "v" and broke loose from the massive rocks.

Once again, the threesome traveled through soaring

canyons, visited Hole-in-the-Rock where Mormon settlers crossed in 1880, and hiked up to Rainbow Bridge. Griffith's photographs from the trip show the stunning canyons that would eventually drown under the waters of Lake Powell. The construction of the 710-foot high Glen Canyon dam began in 1956, five years after their trip, and was completed in 1966,

Dick, Isabelle, and Johnny entered the Grand Canyon on August 14, 1951. Ahead was unfamiliar territory including Lava Falls, rated ten at all levels of water. They visited the gravesite of young David Quigley at Harding Rapids and ran across the wrecked boat of Bert Loper. To date fewer than two hundred people had ever rafted the Grand Canyon.

With one look at the roiling waters, rocks, and deep holes at Lava Falls, Johnny and Dick decided to line their boats through the rapids. It took six hours to portage the first 450-pound boat. Dick looked at the second boat and thought the hell with it. Earlier in the day he'd just missed being struck by a coiled rattlesnake and he was feeling lucky. Rather than line the boat, he would run the rapids.

Isabelle protested but to no avail. Dick set up his camera and instructed Isabelle to take photos of what she was convinced would be her husband's death. Johnny prepared his boat and a tow rope for a possible rescue. Instead, Dick was successful in making the first run through Lava Falls in an inflatable boat.

The event highlighted the viability of the inflatable boat which would soon become the customary means of traveling through the Grand Canyon.

It took Dick, Isabelle and Johnny 69 days to make the 1,200-mile journey from Green River, Wyoming, to Boulder (Hoover) Dam, Nevada. In 1951, the Griffiths and Schlump became the 144<sup>TH</sup>, 145<sup>TH</sup> and 146<sup>TH</sup> people to traverse the Grand Canyon. In that 1,200-mile expedition, they saw not a single other boat until they reached Lake Mead.

Although they had just finished one long trek, Dick and Isabelle were nowhere near finished with their canyon explorations.

#### GRANDFATHER OF PACKRAFTING

The Barranca del Cobre (Copper Canyon) in northern Mexico had become the Holy Grail of unexplored canyons. Only the Tarahumara people who lived on the terraced cliffs of the canyon knew the place and no one was known to have traversed the Urique River canyon end to end. In 1952, Dick was hired as a guide to Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Bill Matthews to attempt the first descent.

The water was low and before they launched Dick ruthlessly insisted that the party lighten their loads.

Even so, the portages were beyond grueling. Their rafts were too large. By the end of eight days, they had traveled only ten miles. The Colonel and his two companions realized they would not have time to complete the trip and decided to call it quits. Dick and Isabelle, however, ditched the big boats and decided to go on.

Building small wooden rafts with shoelaces and driftwood, Dick managed to ferry their gear across the larger bodies of water. He built, disassembled, and rebuilt these makeshift rafts dozens of times as they hiked through a place that rivaled the Grand Canyon in both its depth and grandeur. By the time they reached the village of Barranca del Cobre, Dick knew they needed to regroup. They hiked out of the canyon, trekking up and over the Sierra Madre Mountains. By the time they reached Croix, they had hiked more than three hundred miles. Isabelle's shoes were literally falling off her feet.

Not to be deterred, two weeks after leaving Mexico, they returned to finish the canyon's descent. Dick was determined this time they would succeed. One thing was certain—he would not be building rafts with driftwood and shoelaces. This time, they would trek through the canyon using a small Air Force survival raft to ferry people and gear through the waters between sheer canyon walls. Dick hired three Tarahumara Indians to help portage food and gear.

Dick's yellow raft became the precursor to the modern day packraft. The Griffith's trip in the Barranca del Cobre was the first documented use of the packraft for wilderness river running. Later, in Alaska, Dick's use of a portable boat in the Alaska Wilderness Classic Race would precipitate the packraft as a standard piece of outdoor equipment.

When Isabelle, Dick and their companions made the first descent of the Barranca del Cobre, the only recognition they received was a short article dated April 27, 1952, in *The El Paso Times*: "Pair from Colorado Walks Entire Length of the Barranca." Years later, when others claimed the first descent, Dick's friend, Roman Dial, would set the record straight.

Dick shrugs about the achievement. He did not make the trip for recognition—it was just a personal quest to finish what he started and explore virgin territory.

#### NORTH TO ALASKA

Dick and Isabelle came to Alaska in 1954, where they had two children, Kimmer and Barney. Isabelle continued to enjoy the outdoors as she tended to the needs of the family. Long treks, however, no longer interested her. Domestic pursuits did nothing to

dampen Dick's enthusiasm for adventure. He worked a job and eventually retired from the FAA at the age of 63. During those years he was a weekend warrior exploring Alaska's wilds with hungry enthusiasm.

The Alaska Wilderness Classic Race began in 1982 and he was an "old man" of 55 when he signed up for the first race from Hope to Homer, Alaska. The idea was to get from Point A to Point B by human power across 150–200 miles of wilderness. Rules of the race offered ample warning: *"Any decision you make is your own and you are responsible for it. Your injuries or death are not our responsibility."*

This was Dick's kind of race. In the forty years since its inception only about half of the competitors have finished. One person has drowned. Another competitor punished his feet so severely, he later had to have all of his toes and part of his foot amputated. On that inaugural race, the young bucks looked at Dick's white hair and wondered whether the old guy would make it.

One of the obstacles during the race was crossing the Skilak River. The water was deep, fast and deadly cold. Several race competitors, including Roman Dial, camped at the river's edge hoping that by morning the water might subside. Their plan was to swim across. Dick came upon the group and scoffed.

"Whadda you guys doin' here? I'd expected you to be halfway to Homer by now. I can't believe you let an old man catch you."

Then he pulled out a Viking hat and reached into his pack for a small vinyl inflatable raft. Dick handily crossed the Skilak in a "rubber ducky" while the other competitors gaped.

"You guys might be fast, but old age and treachery conquer youth and skill any day," Dick crowed.

After his crossing, Dick stayed at the far shore to make sure the others made it safely across the turbid, 33-degree river. (One of the men had to be rescued when the rope around his waist slipped to his feet, hogtying him as he was swept downstream.)

Dick never won the race—he slept when he was tired. While the handful who finished the race often staggered, hallucinating, on trashed feet across the finish line, Griffith looked stronger at the end than he had at the starting line. Until recently Griffith held the record of completing the most races—seventeen in all—finishing his last at the age of 81.

In the interim, wilderness travelers like Roman Dial, clamored for a tough, lightweight, packable boat to use for backcountry travel. Shortly thereafter the Sherpa packraft made its debut, the first designed to tackle tough rivers. In Dial's book, *Packrafting!*, Griffith was christened the "Grandfather of Packrafting."

## OUTLAW

It was a wild ride in the dark. Some areas of the river were bathed in moonlight while other places were shadowed by the canyon's walls. Griffith was traveling under cloak of night on an illegal trip through the Grand Canyon.

He had applied for a permit but permission had been denied by the National Park Service. Packrafting was in its infancy and Griffith knew it might take decades to get a permit for what he had in mind. He was 64 and didn't figure he had time to wait. Over the years, amidst his Alaska adventures, Griffith always found the time to come back to his roots in the canyons. He was on the Colorado River at least every other year.

As always, Griffith took along his two white-haired trolls for luck. He would need all the help he could get. Because he'd packed light, he swiped a seat cushion from the airplane to use as a life preserver.

The packraft was five feet long and three feet wide. In calm waters, the craft was as maneuverable as a kayak. But through the rapids, Dick stashed the paddle and rode the waves hanging onto the boat. For all its lightweight advantages, it was not a comfortable ride. He was kneeling in cold water most of the time.

At one point he was seen by eagle researchers from a viewing platform at Nankowep Granaries. When backpackers later took his picture below the Little Colorado, he hoped he would be out of the canyon before they had the opportunity to develop their film.

He was nearing the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers when he happened upon four large motorized boats tied to the bank. As he paddled backward into an eddy to avoid being seen, he nearly bumped into a smaller motorized boat with antennas. The two boatmen were startled to see a white-haired man in a five-pound raft.

The men were well-known boatman Brian Dierker and fish biologist Randy Van Haverbeke.

Dierker said, "Tell us a story and we'll give you a beer."

Griffith was not in a mood to further incriminate himself. They chatted briefly and Dierker shook his head, "You have brass balls." Dick continued on downstream, relieved that the men were not rangers. Dierker promised to give him some gorp if they met up again downstream.

It turned out they would meet again sooner than later. In the last of a series of small rapids, a whirlpool sucked Griffith's packraft backward, flipping him out of the boat. He hung onto the paddle which was tied to the boat, and managed to get on top of the overturned vessel. As he made his way to shore, shivering, he was devastated that he had been dumped by an un-named rapid.

On shore, huddled around a small fire, Dick was nearly hypothermic when Dierker came upon his meager camp and convinced him to spend the night with them. Dick agreed, left his gear, and spent the evening swapping stories around a warm campfire. Dick talked about all the changes in the canyons since he had been a boatman working for Harry Aleson. Dierker gave Griffith a decent life preserver. They agreed to meet up again at Diamond Creek where Griffith planned to end the trip.

They never made their rendezvous. Dick woke up one morning in the full grip of a virus. Chilled and sick, he and his raft tumbled through Hance Creek, Sockdolager, and Grapevine rapids. By the time he reached Phantom Ranch, he was feverish, out of food, and out of steam. The biggest rapids were still to come. He decided to stash his gear and go home. He'd come back and finish the trip when he felt better.

That decision likely kept him from being discovered. By the time he returned two weeks later, park rangers had stopped looking for him. It took six days to complete his run to Diamond Creek. He portaged some rapids but ran Horn Creek, Crystal, and the lower end of Lava Falls. At the end of the trip, he asked for a lift from a couple of park service contract boatmen, but they refused. Griffith was too "hot" and they didn't want trouble with the National Park Service. They offered him beer and food, however, and suggested he leave sooner than later.

Griffith hitchhiked out with a group of young people who had been drinking and Griffith said "the rest of that night would be the most hazardous journey since leaving Lees Ferry, 226 miles upriver." A fight between two of the young men left the owner of the truck on the side of the road while the others drove off with Dick still in the bed of the truck. With the vehicle weaving all over the road, Dick offered to drive. They agreed.

"I was now driving a stolen truck and my new friends had just passed out," Dick said. He pulled into a hotel parking lot in Flagstaff, placed the \$50 he had promised them on the dash, and walked away.

#### LIVING LEGACY

Griffith would go on to travel solo, on skis and pulling a sled, more than 6,000 miles across Alaska and the Canadian Arctic. Most of those miles were traveled after his retirement. In his 80s, when trekking with a bum knee became more challenging, he continued to ride horseback into Alaska's backcountry. He still runs the Grand Canyon almost every year, calling the raft his "wheelchair with oars."

Over the years, Griffith has watched dams be built

and drown many treasured places in his memory, places like the stunning Glen and Red canyons. Rafting the Grand Canyon has evolved from a handful of daring pioneers to 30,000 tourists each year. (He commends the National Park Service for keeping the canyon pristine.) Boats have changed from wooden vessels to state-of-the-art, self-bailing rafts. The water in the Colorado River has gone from milk-chocolate in color and warm enough for swimming, to clear and cold from the 49-degree water being released from the bottom of the dam. Photography has gone from 35MM film to Go-Pros with videos that upload instantly to the internet.

Griffith still refuses to carry a cell phone.

In April 2017, after more than seventy years of boating, Griffith says he is hanging up his oars for good. It will be his ninetieth year, as good a milestone as any to enjoy some red wine, a good dog, and a warm fire. Time will tell if the call of wild water will lure him back.

*Kaylene Johnson-Sullivan*

NOTE: Kaylene Johnson-Sullivan is Griffith's biographer and author of other non-fiction books. To read more about Griffith's travels and adventures, read *Canyons and Ice: The Wilderness Travels of Dick Griffith*. For more information, visit [www.canyonsandice.com](http://www.canyonsandice.com) or [www.kaylene.us](http://www.kaylene.us)



Dick Griffith is making what he says will be his final run of the Grand Canyon in April 2017, just two months before his 90th birthday. Here he tells stories at camp on the Grand Canyon in 2015.

## Mike Boyle



Mike Boyle with friends at a Sing Sing celebration in Papua New Guinea.

**T**HE WATUT RIVER [*in New Guinea*] was a fantastic trip: Class v rapids through a dense canopy of jungle all over the top of the river—a muddy river, because there was a gold-mining operation upstream. Primitive villages along the way, that saw nobody other than Sobek [*an international river company*] trips on the odd occasion. Pretty wild rapids. The river started out really steep in the beginning, and then would gradually get less and less steep. At the end, you're out into the flats in a broad river valley. You started right away into the big whitewater. It was the most challenging whitewater I had ever seen at that point. The kind of thing where you can hardly scout a rapid because of the dense foliage all along the way, and you'd get walled-out by rock formations and cliffs, so oftentimes we'd be hanging off tree branches, on slippery rocks on the sides of cliffs, looking out to see what was down there. Tim [*Whitney*] would say, "Oh, there's a big hole on the right, big hole on the left. Stay in the middle and go for it." You had to read and run. We always had the threat of logs in the river because

of the rainfall. In some areas in New Guinea it'll rain an inch a day, so the river would fluctuate quite a bit. Trees fell constantly into the river. One trip we came around the bend and the entire river was choked off by a log. It was in a place called The Vault, where the river was only about, oh, maybe 25, 30 feet wide. But there was a tree about two feet in diameter all the way across. Luckily we had a place where you could duck down in the boat and scoot underneath it. We would carry axes and saws, and we'd be out standing in waist-deep water in the middle of a rapid, hacking away at a log to get rid of it so we could get through the rapid.

The villages, the people who lived along the Watut, were every bit as exciting and as adventurous as the river. They were so happy to see us, and we were so happy to see them. At times I didn't know if I was showing my clients the culture and the people along the river, or if I was doing the opposite—showing the people along the river *my clients!* Because we would have flashlights and backpacks and all these things from our world, and they had nothing. The wealthiest

man in the village of Taiyak was the guy who had a Coleman lantern, because he could light it up at night. He was highly revered in the village, he was a wealthy guy.

We made a classic mistake early on, on the Watut. We took a soccer ball to the village of Wowiss, lower down on the Watut, because the center of the village was a makeshift dirt soccer court. The next trip down, we presented it to one of the head men of the village, and oh! everybody went wild! It was like the World Cup had come to town. They're out playing soccer, and we watched them and had a great time. We come on the next trip, and we get to the village... everything's quiet. The soccer court is empty. We said, "How come nobody's playing soccer?" They said, "The guy doesn't want to play today, so nobody's allowed to play." We said, "The ball was for the whole village, for everybody!" But we had made the mistake of handing it to one guy, so that was his ball in his mind. From then on we tried not to give people anything that would change things in the village. We would try to give them perishables—took papers and pencils for the kids for their little makeshift school. Tried not to give them anything that would elevate one person above another in the village. Kind of an interesting education for us all there.

STEIGER: When I contemplate the Sobek tale... talk about being in the right spot at the right time! Suddenly, here's the first generation where it was actually viable to zip all over the world [*thanks to modern jet travel*].

BOYLE: Exactly. Kind of the last great era of exploration on rivers. Sobek started out running exploratory trips on rivers nobody'd ever even *dreamed* of running before—especially local people would never really consider that. It was hard enough for them to get *across* rivers, let alone go down them for fun! (laughter) Sobek forged ahead in that, and subsequently other companies have sprung up, going out and running the same rivers, then going out and doing other rivers, too, that Sobek had *not* run, because there's no way they could do them all.

STEIGER: The model now...even Sobek finally figured out they couldn't really afford to send the core crew all over the world. Much better to get somebody there on site, and teach them how to run the program. I guess that's the new paradigm, which makes sense.

BOYLE: It *does* make sense, because businesses are there to make money. Although I think in the early days of Sobek, a lot of the philosophy was, "Let's make enough to keep having fun, and send the boys around the world as much as we can, having a good time. If we make some money on the side, that's good, too."

Because everywhere I went—your first trip to a place like New Guinea, you paid your own airfare, and then you'd get paid a wage while you were there working on a river trip, or other kinds of trips, too. You'd make several hundred dollars while you're there, but you'd spend several hundred dollars in airfare, so your first trip somewhere, you pretty much broke even as a guide. I was willing to do that, sounded like a fair deal to me. I think I worked for them for fifteen years, and I probably worked for an average of about ten dollars a day.

I'll never forget Tim Whitney telling me that \$2,500 is all he made in one year. Then he said, "But I went around the world twice!" (laughter)

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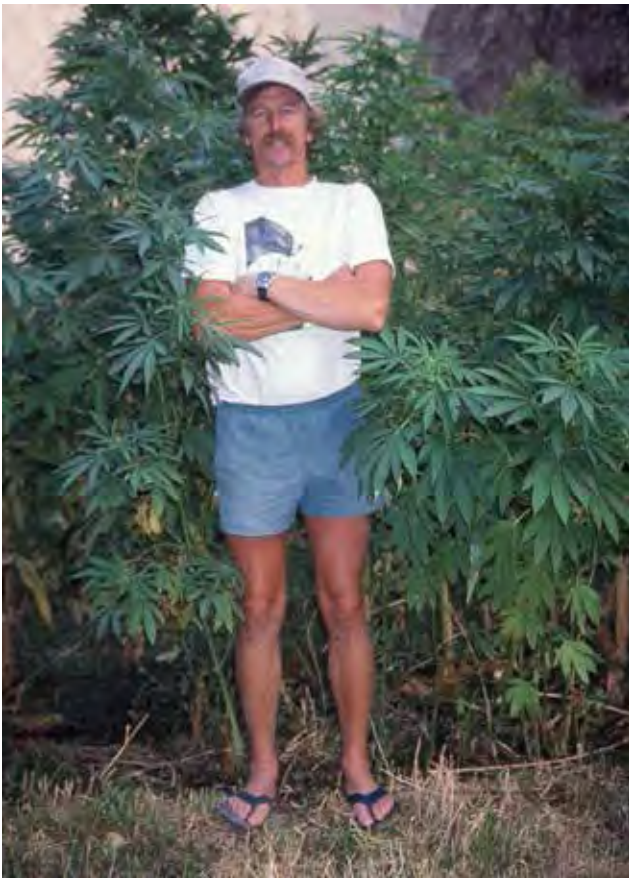
*Mike Boyle is basically straight out of central casting for the part of river guide: a big, brash, hearty Irishman. Always upbeat and really fun, truly the life of the party.*

*This Adopt-a-Boatman interview was conducted by Lew Steiger on January 16, 2007, in Sedona, Arizona, following a Sobek Reunion river trip in Cataract that Boyle was unable to attend. Edited for publication by Richard Quartaroli and Lew Steiger.*

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In 1978 I was living in San Francisco. I played rugby with a guy who played rugby with John Yost [*a founding partner of Sobek*] in Nairobi. I was leaving, taking off into the mountains, didn't want to live in the city anymore, and thought I'd look up John Yost, because I'd heard he had this company that traveled all over the world and ran river trips—I didn't really know what that was.

I showed up at Yost's office in Angel's Camp, and he wasn't around. OARS was headquartered there at the same time [*because George Wendt gave Sobek office space to help them get started*]. I hung around a couple days, waiting for Yost to get back, talked to some people; sort of figured out what was going on with the river trips, and the local rivers, the Stanislaus, the American. Yost came back and we had a good time talking about the rugby connection. I asked about Sobek. He asked if I had any experience. I said, "Well, I've run a canoe down a river or two here and there back east," but no, I didn't really have any river experience. He sent me to OARS, and they had already hired their guides for the year, so they offered me a job as a shuttle driver. "Okay, well, I could use a few extra bucks." Right away I figured *that* wasn't going to work. I didn't want to be the guy driving back to town. I finally got trained and hired



Field of Dreams on The Yarkand River, China

as a guide, and got to work on the local rivers. I told Yost—I'd gotten to meet Rich Bangs [*another founding partner of Sobek*] at the same time—I said, "Hey, you guys, I'll go *anywhere* at the drop of a hat." Yost called me into his office. He said, "I really need somebody to go to New Guinea and run the Watut River." I said, "Great! I've wanted to go to New Guinea my entire life! You bet! I'd love to go!" We talked about it a little bit, he gave me some stuff to read, said, "We'll work out the details." I jumped in my car and headed for the library to find out where in the hell New Guinea was. (laughter) About two weeks later I was on a plane headed for New Guinea to run the Watut River. I met up with Tim and Bob Whitney, and started on the Watut in New Guinea. That was 1979. About six months into my river running career, I was off to New Guinea!

I was down there for about three months, maybe four months, and came back to the States. Obviously had a great time, told John "I want to expand on this, I want to go wherever I can." Then I worked for OARS and kept bugging John until he finally put me on other places. I went back to New Guinea several times over the years. They needed a guy to go to Brazil one time, into the Amazon. I'd been going down to the tropics,

and Rich Bangs said they needed a cook for a geologic team going down to the Amazon on a gold exploration expedition. Off I went. I think the next place I went was the Bio-Bio in Chile, and ran down there for probably ten winters in a row. And back to New Guinea. Went back to Brazil another time.

Did some stuff in Peru, some exploratory work on the Apurímac River. Then one year in Chile—this was 1986, Sobek decided they were going to run some Halley's comet-watching trips in the deserts in Northern Chile. That was interesting. It wasn't river running, but it was certainly an adventure, going out into the desert in the middle of the night with a telescope, and looking at the stars with astronomers. It was absolutely great fun, a once-in-a-lifetime experience, because the comet's not going to be around again for 76 years. I was working in Grand Canyon at the same time, and then in the summer went up to Alaska, running the Tatshenshini and Alsek Rivers. Was lucky enough to be on the first Sobek trip of the Alsek, which was incredibly fun, with Jim Slade and Joy Ungricht. The three of us were on the trip. I got asked to go on a couple other different things. We did the Yarkand exploratory in 1989, in Northwestern China, and that was an interesting experience getting to the river.

I never did make it to Africa. I always wanted to go there, but there seemed to always be someplace else to go. I spent time in Chile, Peru, and Brazil. Then New Guinea. Went off to China, and passed through the Soviet Union on the way to China. I was working for Sobek *and* OARS. In the beginning, I was working for OARS in California, but eventually branched into the Grand Canyon. As soon as I did my first training trip in Grand Canyon, I knew I didn't want to run rivers in California anymore. (laughter) That was pretty much a no-brainer. Started getting four and five river trips a year in Grand Canyon, and eventually worked myself into a schedule where I would work the Grand Canyon in the spring and fall, Alaska during the summer, and Chile during the winter. I kept going all year round, turned it into a full-time profession, and would spend nine months out of the year working on rivers around the world.

I started later than most guys. I was 28. I was out with guys who were in some cases a few years younger than me, in some cases they were a *lot* younger than me—which was fine, I was the new guy, the novice who didn't know as much as these old-timers who were younger than me (chuckles), which was fine. We got along great, there was no problem with that. But New Guinea absolutely opened my eyes to the world. I saw things I never even dreamed I would see. I grew up in



Ohio, and didn't imagine things like that even existed. They used to do some things other than rafting too, because New Guinea was a fairly short river trip. It was only a six-day river trip on the Watut, and it was pretty far to go, so we combined it with other things: scuba diving trips and four-wheel drive trips into the highlands. Geez, we did trips where we'd go up into the Sepik River area and hire motorized canoes and go upriver, to look at and buy primitive art.

The Kokoda Trail [i.e., *Track*] was a wild adventure over there that we hiked for about five or six days—that was a big campaign in World War II, when they drove the Japanese out of New Guinea—I think that was only one of two groups that made it the whole way on the Kokoda Trail. A lot of people, it was too difficult, they bailed out, passengers said, "Forget this! This isn't fun!" There were some adventures that just didn't work out all that well.

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I probably went to New Guinea seven or eight times. I think I went twice in one year for a couple different periods. There are lots of classic river stories of rapids and things that happened in rapids—flips and people going under logs, and wrapping boats. I was in an in-flight magazine for Air New Guinea. They did an article on the Watut River, and the photograph and the article were me standing on a rock in the middle of the river with my passengers, and you could see about a foot of my boat.

STEIGER: Oh great, thanks a lot.

BOYLE: "Let's go on a river trip with *these* guys!" *Wrapped* around this rock. That was a pretty wild story because it was a two-boat trip, just Jim Slade and I, and Slade was on shore with a throw bag. I'd wrapped my boat, so Jim had tied up and come back upriver to try and help me out. He gets a throw bag out to me, and the boat starts peeling off, because the rocks were all greasy, because they were so muddy. The boat starts to come off, with my two passengers and me. "Okay, we're going to run across this rock, we're going to jump on the boat, whether it's upside down or right side up, because we don't want to be in the middle of the river on a rock *without* a boat." Luckily the boat was right side up. We land in the boat. It's full of water. We start downriver, and that throw bag goes tight, and snapped like a bull whip. One guy did not land in the boat, he was out in front of the boat. The rope goes by us floundering around in the boat, and hits this guy in the water and wraps around his neck. Here's the rope, tied to my frame, and it's tied around this guy's head in the water. "Swim to the boat, John! Swim to the

boat!" The rapid's coming up, and this guy's trying to swim real fast, so I grab the rope hand-over-hand, and dragged him by the head back into the boat. Pull him up, throw him in the boat, and about that time we drop into this huge rapid—full of water, rope everywhere, no oars, just a mess. Somehow banged down through the rapid—absolutely no skill involved. Get out at the bottom, and get the rope out of the way, and then get a couple of oars on, and somehow got to shore. Got bailed out, and then Slade comes bouncing down through, and we're sitting there, "Oh yeah, that was fun."

STEIGER: Did the guy have any rope burns on his neck?

BOYLE: No, he was okay. He was a young kid, pretty tough, probably 25.

A lot of whitewater thrills. There were big rapids, and they would come at you pretty fast. There was one section of river, I was reading Dave Shore's notes, because we always kept real good notes on the rivers, because you didn't know if you were coming back, or if somebody else might be coming back in your place. In this case, I was going back to replace Dave Shore, who had left Sobek at that point. "Just read and run. It's about twenty minutes of running down through nonstop rapids." And that's exactly what it was. There wasn't any direction like, "Big hole on the left." It was all solid Class IV, bouncing down through there, trying to stand up in the boat and see what's ahead of you, and then jump back to the oars. We always made it. We never really lost any boats on the Watut, and certainly never lost any passengers on the Watut. But it was some wild times.

I went to Peru for a couple months and did an exploratory there. That was a classic. Yost gave me 150 bucks. He said, "Go find a new section of this river to run." (laughter) I was leading some treks across the Inca Trail, and I went down there to find this new section of the river, because there was a rebel group called the Sendero Luminoso, the Shining Path, and they were hell bent on disrupting life in Peru and overthrowing the government. Bad guys with guns. Their main headquarters was in the town of Ayacucho, and that was take-out on our river trips. We wanted to go upstream and get away from that whole thing. I went a couple hundred miles upstream, and hooked up with some Peruvian river runners in Cuzco, real nice guys, and we put together a little ragtag exploratory team with three rafts. This guy had a truck—had to cross a mountain range, but the road didn't go all the way up and over. We got as far up as we could, and then we still had to cross this pass of about 13,000 feet. We had no choice but to hire mules in the village, and then

carry as much as we could, and abandon some stuff, and trek up and over this mountain range and down to the river. We hire these guys and get everything loaded on the mules—an adventure in itself, loading mules that didn't want to be loaded: they're bucking all over the place and throwing coolers and food all over. We had to stop before we got to the top of the pass because it was getting dark. We camped that night. There was another little village fairly close, and all our mule drivers—*arrieros*—go out and get toasted drunk that night. We wake up in the morning. They're all gone—mules and all—gone. “Now what are we going to do?” Luckily I was with these Peruvian guys, and they took about a day, but they wound up finding more mules and some guys, made sure those guys were sober. We loaded the mules up again, and took off, and finally got to the river.

During this whole process, I found out that one of the guys who's going along has never rowed a boat before—a guy who's supposed to row a boat. He had been in paddleboats. He said, “I know rivers, I can do this. How hard can it be?” (laughter) We did this one section of the Apurímac. We had three or four portages, and oh, it was *tough!* Biting insects, pretty big whitewater, portages. We worked our *butts* off. We did run into some kayakers right before we left, and asked *them* if they wanted to go. Lars Holbeck was one of them, a pretty infamous guy. John Armstrong, also, who surfaced later in other Sobek adventures. They helped us a lot in scouting. They weren't much for portaging rafts. (laughter) Good guys nonetheless. I remember they'd be down at the bottom of a rapid, and they'd hold their paddles straight up if they thought we should go down the middle; or they'd hold it to the left, or hold it to the right. Because we got tired of scouting rapids. “Let's try *this* system for a while.” We made it through the trip and figured out all the logistics, all on \$150, and then wrote the whole thing up, and wound up running a couple more trips that year. I'm pretty sure Sobek is still running that particular stretch of river today.

Peru's difficult in the respect that the rivers are real steep, and pretty good water volume, and big, giant boulders in the Apurímac—house-size boulders in the river, all over the place, that had fallen off big walls along the side of the river. It was pretty interesting.

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BOYLE: Did you do the Bio-Bio?

STEIGER: I went with [Bill] Gloeckler and [Jon] Stoner. We just did it for fun, just because it was always on everybody's list, and then suddenly we got word it

was the last year. They were damming it.

BOYLE: That was so sad. I quit a couple of years before that, 'cause I didn't really want to watch the Bio-Bio die. Ten winters in a row I went to Chile to run the Bio-Bio, and for a while hooked up with a fly fishing operation, and would spend six months in Chile during the winter, usually spent October-November in the Lake District, and then come December and January, I'd work for Sobek on the Bio-Bio, and then March and April I'd go back to the fly fishing. I was married in Chile, because I was down there for six months, and we'd tried to get married in Alaska the year before, but the weather got too bad, and we decided it wasn't a good time to get married, so we put it off. “Well, we'll try Chile next year.” That was fun.

The Bio was the kind of river... Love-hate relationship. I kind of hated running the big day of Milky Way, Lost Yak, and Lava South, which were three *big*, giant rapids back to back. To prepare for it, we'd do a layover day and climb a 10,000-foot volcano to get in shape to go down and run the big rapids. “It's just every other Saturday we gotta worry about.” Every other Saturday you'd have to run those three big rapids. They were big and they were scary, especially in the really high water. I got tossed out of my boat in Lava South and busted a couple ribs one time—bit through my tongue and all bloodied up.

STEIGER: I remember Brad Dimock told me a story, how you got him down to Chile, and then you were hurt. Was that when you broke the ribs?

BOYLE: Exactly. Brad was down there to take my spot when I had to go back to the states. I've broken a lot of ribs over the years. The Bio-Bio was ripe for accidents. You'd have thought there'd have been more, because steep drops, big rapids, out-of-control boats. At the end of Lava South is a really nice section of river about a hundred yards probably, at best, of calm, deep water, and then the river drops off a waterfall and goes into a 90-degree turn against a blank wall. If you're out of control coming through Lava South—which most people were—you had a very short period of time to get your boat under control. (When I was running down there we didn't even have self-bailers in the beginning.) It was called Cyclops because it had this eddy on the left. The river turned to the right, but there was an eddy on the left like on the right side of Granite. You get in there and it'll take you the rest of your natural life to get out of it at certain water levels. It was like the eye of the Cyclops. But we flipped a fair amount of boats on the Bio-Bio, that's for sure. A lot of them were spectacular flips, too, where the boats take off flying up in the air, and people sailing out of the boats.

Great ranches there. I've got a rope out in the front hallway I bought off a guy, a cowboy, a *huaso*. He rode into our camp one morning, in full *huaso* regalia—his poncho and his Chilean hat, and his wooden stirrups on his saddle. I'm talking to him as best I could in my Spanish, and he had this beautiful rope—hand braided rope hanging on his saddle. I asked him about it, and he said he had made it. "Ah, it's beautiful! You wouldn't want to sell that, would ya?" He said, "Well sure!" I wound up giving him about twenty bucks for it. It's just an incredible piece of work. I showed it to everybody, and I've got a great souvenir. The next trip, we camp at that same place, and here comes the guy, he's got two or three ropes for sale. (laughter) Oh boy! The gringos are buying ropes these days!

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**BOYLE:** New Guinea, the Wahgi exploratory... It was back in 1983. (laughs) The real version. From the guy who tipped over. There was a particularly nasty, ugly, big, huge, giant rapid. The right side of the river looked like certain death, so we wanted to get out of that current, but there was this huge pour-over on the left, so you wanted to come in right below that pour-over, and you had to go down through some really big giant tail waves. I came through with a downstream ferry, trying to get in below that pour-over and came in a little too high, and wound up rowing right into it, I guess is the easiest way to say it. (laughter) Whoops! I went out of the boat immediately. The boat spun around and I think it got sucked underwater and pulled over nose first. The other two people got out from underneath the boat and swam to shore. I was stuck in this recycling hole, and got hammered around in there, got sucked down in the water. I came up from underwater, and here comes John Kramer on *his* run through, and knowing that I'm in there, he's trying to get pretty close. I grabbed onto Kramer's boat, and somebody grabbed hold of my arm and pulled me in the boat. "I'd better grab ahold of this 'cause I'm not doing this on my own!"

I get in the boat, and then Kramer has to deal with the rest of the rapid, and it was big whitewater. I was up in the front of the boat at this point. He was lucky *he* didn't flip in the tail waves. We get through that, and there's my boat on downriver, we don't have any choice, we've gotta chase it, 'cause it's going off into the unknown. Kramer turns around backwards and starts hauling ass for the boat, rowing and rowing, and we're gaining on it. Suddenly a helicopter comes flying in and hovering. Looked like he was trying to blow the boat over to shore with the prop wash, and

hovers over the boat and gets closer and here comes Rich Bangs, *leaps* out of the helicopter and lands on the upside down boat! A feat in itself! Look at *that* crazy guy. The helicopter takes off, and we're still chasing, trying to get up to Rich, and the river takes a bend to the left, and the boat—I think Rich had gotten the bow line unloose at this point—comes up to this wall and hits, and starts climbing vertically. Rich is thrown right off immediately, and the boat comes over, still upside down, and makes the bend and off it goes, and then Rich is washed over to some rocks. We keep on going by, "See ya, Rich!" after the boat and finally got up close. I jumped in the river, swam over to it, got that bow line, and got to the downstream side of the boat and swam out ahead of the boat, and then swam over to shore and wrapped it around a rock and was able to get it to swing over to shore.

All we really knew from our helicopter reconnaissance the day before was that downriver was nothing but ugly, unrunnable rapids, so we didn't want the boat to go through there, because it was going to be a total loss. A certain amount of pride, too, in getting the boat back. *Rich* didn't get the boat back, I got the boat back. Kramer was the hero, because Kramer did all the rowing. All he could do was collapse at the oars when he finally got to shore.

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I think Alaska... Stan Boor, who I worked a lot with—and Jim Slade, too—they always talked about Alaska. "Boyle, you gotta go to Alaska. You're going to love it. We get to carry *guns* up there!" (laughter) I was trying real hard to work in Grand Canyon, because I really wanted to be part of *that* scene. I always wanted to be two places at once. If I was in Grand Canyon, "Oh, man, I should be up in Alaska!" Or if I was up in Alaska, "Oh boy, I should probably be down in the Grand Canyon right now," or over in Chile. "Aw, I should probably be in Africa." I always wanted to kind of do it all. I finally went up to Alaska, because I'd heard the stories so long, and everybody told me I would love it up there. Cold weather, out of the heat of Grand Canyon in the middle of summer. When I first went, everything they said was absolutely true, and I loved running up there on the Tatshenshini. The first Sobek trip wasn't really an exploratory on the Alsek, because the Alsek had been run before. We had all those notes. It was the first Sobek trip there, so I was fortunate to be on that kind of exploratory. It was a first for us, anyway. It was absolutely spectacular. The wildlife was incredible. I think we saw 23 bears in the course of twelve days; and moose, wolves, wolverine,

and mountain goats. It was cold, but it was paradise. If you get a nice sunny day, it was tee shirt weather. That wasn't the case most of the time. A lot of glaciers and snowcapped mountains all around.

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**STEIGER:** If you were going to put the Sobek experience in some broader context, I wonder what would leap out at you about it all?

**BOYLE:** Probably making clients—the clients we would have were largely Americans, and taking them into foreign countries that we were so comfortable in, where we felt at ease traveling through the country, whether it's on buses, or treks to get to rivers to do river trips, that kind of thing, showing Americans—and oftentimes Americans with some money or clout or influence—showing them these wild places...maybe that helped make a little bit of a difference or a mark in their life—or helped develop their philosophies on how we *should* deal with those kinds of things when they do come up. A guy like Doug Tompkins, who started Esprit, the clothing company, he got hooked on river running and climbing—climbing, I think, first, and then got into river running and kayaking—went down to Chile and wound up buying a section of Chile to protect the old-growth forest. There's a guy who could *afford* to do it, and he bought a *huge* tract of land in southern Chile, all the way from the ocean to the Argentine border, to the Andes Mountains, and basically cut off the country of Chile, and had some problems with the Chileans. He had some death threats against him, but he made it work somehow—worked



Mike Boyle and Butch Carber on the Tatshenshini River looking at the Netland Glacier. Bert Sagara photo



Rowing through icebergs on the Alsek River. This appeared in the 1992 North Face Catalog. Bert Sagara photo

with the people. I don't know, maybe river running, and some of the people he hooked up with, and seeing foreign countries, made him do that kind of thing. He probably always had those tendencies, but quite possibly that helped out and added to it. Who knows, maybe that has helped out in other areas we're not aware of, where people have taken river trips. Like you and me, it changed our lives. Why wouldn't it change our passengers' lives?

How many guides started their river experience as a commercial passenger, and then decided, "This is what I want to do!?" Did you?

**STEIGER:** Sure did. My dad took me, at a very impressionable age.

**BOYLE:** The Sobek experience—the way Sobek was prior to the merger with Mountain Travel—was very

unique. It was a very short window of time, less than twenty years of exploration and camaraderie and fun. (laughter) I think we all broaden our horizons doing that, and who knows what influences that had, and its far-reaching tentacles to somebody who did a river trip with Sobek back in the day?

**STEIGER:** Likewise Grand Canyon, too. That's a whole 'nother topic.

**BOYLE:** It is, but it's so closely linked, because almost every Sobek guide worked in the Grand Canyon at one point. You can't be a river guide or a boatman and not go down through the Grand Canyon. That's Mecca. I guess this day and age, Mecca's probably not a very good analogy. (laughter) I know a couple Sobek guides who've only done one or two private Grand Canyon trips, they never worked any commercial trips. But for the most part, everybody worked in the Grand Canyon too.

You know what it's like sitting around on the boats, whether it's in the Grand Canyon or the Bio-Bio or

the Tatshenshini, it seems like you're always going to have the guides, and usually with a bottle of hooch or a couple of beers, telling river stories. So many of our stories, you don't have to have been there to know what it was like, because you know the guys who were there. When I say "guys," that's generic. Those times on the boats are what I miss, without a doubt. Don't necessarily miss running Lava South.

There's a classic reference. Here are Sobek guides going off and doing the Bio-Bio for the first time. You have the luxury of being able to name the rapids. What is the biggest rapid on the Bio-Bio? Lava South, after Lava Falls in the Grand Canyon. The biggest rapid on the Alsek, up in Alaska? Lava North. Wasn't it the Coruh in Turkey, there was a Lava East? (laughter) I don't think there's a Lava West, but there probably will be someday. It's tough to cover it all. There are so many years and so many experiences. Those river trips, they get a little tough to distinguish between. Let's see, who'd I work that trip with? It's almost like you started at Lees Ferry and you end up at Dry Bay. It all blends into one river.

**STEIGER:** It'd be nice if they had one that went in a circle, huh? Or it went and kept going clear around the whole world.

**BOYLE:** No takeouts!

**STEIGER:** No takeouts! Do you see yourself doing any more boating?

**BOYLE:** Oh, absolutely, I would love to. It's just now that I'm working on my *third* career—I don't know what that's going to be. I would love to get back into boating. I don't necessarily need the Class v thrill. I'd rather get on something with Class II. My biggest release these days is fly fishing in rivers. But I love getting on a river trip just to fish. It's a lot easier to do that when it's not rapids strewn all over the place.

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**STEIGER:** The hips are working good?

**BOYLE:** Hips work good. Got pretty bad arthritis. Knees are pretty bad—wrists, ankles, shoulders. If it moves, it hurts.

**STEIGER:** I wonder, maybe this might be inappropriate: What about this cancer deal for you? Do you even want to address that? Got any words of wisdom on that?

**BOYLE:** I don't mind talking about it. Probably the words of wisdom are that if you do get something like cancer or whatever kind of physical problem you may have, or whether it's a disease or any injury that's taking you down, don't ever forget your friends, because your friends are going to help you through it, without



On the Alsek River. Bert Sagara photo



Hiking on Goat Herd Mountain above the Lowell Glacier on the Alsek River.  
Bert Sagara photo

a doubt. I do know some people who have kind of closed in, not wanted a whole lot of contact with friends because of their problems, and I think that's absolutely the wrong way to go. My friends are such a great support team for me. Luckily my cancer is not life threatening at this point. It's something I've gotta deal with and live with. But the support of my friends is worth its weight in diamonds. We all start falling apart. That's part of the game. Some guys can hang in there longer than others, but I got shoved out pretty early with my hips going south on me. There again, you can't let it get you down, because if anything, there's only one thing in this life we can control, and that's our attitude. If you keep a good positive attitude about things, that's the best medicine in the world.

**STEIGER:** Hard to do sometimes.

**BOYLE:** *Very hard*—especially in the quiet times when you're sitting there by yourself, and got a case of the woe-is-me's, and "I'd rather be down in the Grand Canyon with all my buddies, or up on the Tatshenshini freezing my butt off, or over in Africa running big giant whitewater," or whatever the case. It's good to know they're still out there doing it. I get the odd postcard every now and then from an exotic place: "Hey, wish you were here." When you've got all those memories, and you know all those people, that in itself is almost like being there. You can sit there and think back on stuff, and it brings a smile to your face, some of the crazy shit we did.

In the case of the Whale Foundation, too, and that recent intervention we got together and did—it's great to have a group of people that will recognize and jump

into action to help out a pard. You might not even know them that well, but they need help.

Boatmen are like that. How many guys do you know who have jumped into rapids? Was it [Billy] Ellwanger down there, when the lady got washed out the mouth of Havasu in a flash flood?

**STEIGER:** That was Whitney. Ellwanger and Kirk Burnett ran down with Ellwanger's Sportboat and got another gal, but that was Tim who jumped in all by himself. I was so proud of him for that. I don't know if I'd have done it. I mean, I would now.

**BOYLE:** You would.

**STEIGER:** But thinking about it, jeepers.

**BOYLE:** You don't have time to think, though, you just react.

**STEIGER:** No, he didn't. That was the one shot that lady had.



Evening light on Mt. Fairweather, Alaska. Bert Sagara photo

**BOYLE:** A series of rapids on the Bio-Bio, it was the Royal Flush. It's that last big set down there where the dam was. We were scouting the Ten, because there were a couple of pocket eddies along the wall that boats could get trapped in. I was trapped in there once. (laughter) You can't get your oars in the water, and your boat's in this tight little eddy with raging current going along the wall. Butch Carber and I were downriver. I forget who was running the boat through, but they got stuck in there. Butch was on one side of the river, I was on the other side, and we were up probably a good ten feet above the water, with throw bags, getting ready to rescue people. We saw the boat in there, then this guy gets washed out of the boat and goes into a little pocket eddy that we coined The Phone Booth. This guy was getting beat up. Finally he washes out, he's face down in the river in his life jacket, and he's floating down right by us. I started to yell to Butch, because the guy was a little closer to Butch's side of the river, "Butch! Butch!" As I look over, Butch is in midair diving head first, *in a life jacket*, which is really hard, and hit the water, grabbed the guy, and turned the guy over. The guy was fine, he was just holding his breath, waiting for everything to calm down. That was great! Kind of like being on the same wave length—knowing what has to be done, not a moment's hesitation, dive head-first into a river, into a rapid.

\* \* \*

**BOYLE:** It's funny, I finally coerced a bunch of my old high school buddies to come out and do a trip with me on the Tatshenshini, and they all, to a man said, "Why haven't we done this before?! You've been telling us for years how cool this was, and we never did it, and now we're finally doing a trip, and heck, your career's winding down, you're not going to do this very much longer." At least I got some of them out there. Diana, my wife, and I did a private Tatshenshini one time, just the two of us in a one-boat trip. Everybody told us we were absolutely nuts: "A one-boat trip on the Tatshenshini?! Bears and all kinds of crazy stuff going on out there!" "Ach, not afraid of anything." We had a ball. We had a great time. She tells it a little differently, but...(laughter)

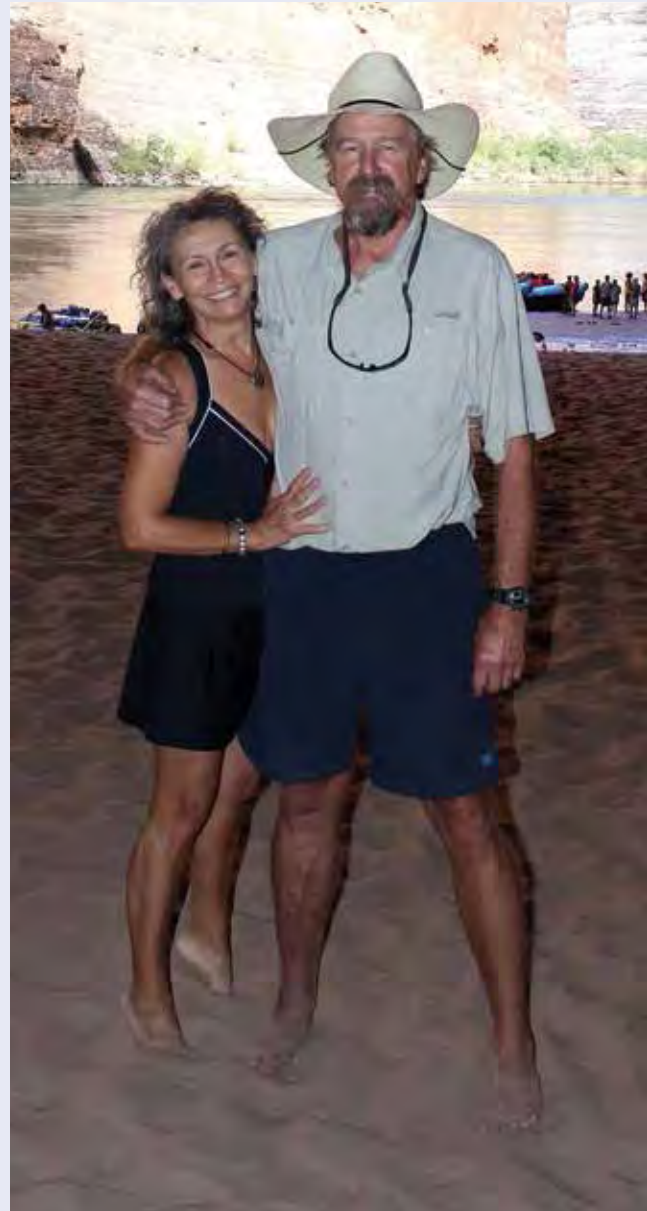
**STEIGER:** She thought it was a little colder?

**BOYLE:** A little colder, a little more dangerous than I thought it was.

\* \* \*

**BOYLE:** The Rio Roosevelt was something worth talking about. It was one of those classic Sobek trips, in

1992. A guy named Charlie Haskell put this all together. He was a newspaper guy from back east, who had some money and wanted to put together a trip where they retraced Teddy Roosevelt's journey on the river that now bears his name. In 1914, Teddy Roosevelt, after he had lost his bid for the presidency, went off to Brazil, just on an adventure because he was that kind of guy. Said it was his "last chance to be a boy." Went down there with his son, Kermit. As an ex-president of the United States would be, he was welcomed with open arms by the country of Brazil, and they challenged him to go off with the major explorer of the day, a guy named Candido Rondon, who was responsible for putting the railroad through Brazil, I believe. They



Boyle and Diana McVeay at Redwall Cavern on a trip in 2013.



The Rio Roosevelt Crew. Left to right: Mike Boyle, Jim Slade, KelleyKalafatich, Joe Willy Jones, Joe Kaminsky, Tweed Roosevelt laying down.

were going to run this river that no one had ever done before. It was called the River of Doubt. They had to make dugout canoes. They had equipment that was common in the day, which is not exactly state of the art like we have. It was an epic journey for T.R. and his crew, included almost dying in rapids, and having to portage, and having their canoes smashed to bits, and having to make new canoes—just an epic, epic adventure where T.R. almost died because of an infection in his leg. Once he finished the trip, he came back to the United States and presented this to the Geographic Society. Some people said, “No, he didn’t really do it.” He said, “Look at these maps we’ve made.” They made incredible maps of the river. Subsequently someone went out to try and do the trip again, and retrace it to verify it, and they were never heard from again, lost completely. Another trip, I believe in 1919, went down and successfully retraced the River of Doubt that Teddy Roosevelt had done. It was renamed the Rio Roosevelt, and still that’s what it’s called today on maps of Brazil.

Charlie Haskell got the idea to retrace that journey, and he put together a group of people: photographers and journalists, some scientists from Brazil. But he

needed somebody to run the boats. Sobek got the call. We went and Jim Slade was the expedition leader. Jim is a *great* expedition leader. There’s no other way to put it. He was certainly put to the challenge on *this* trip, with all these crazy people who had their own agendas. I went along with Slade and a couple of other guides—Kelley Kalafatich got on. They wanted a woman guide, so Kelley got on there, not necessarily because she was a woman—Kelley’s very good, too—but she was the woman who got the call. A Brazilian guide, and another guide, Joe Willy Jones, came on. Also Joe Kaminski, Sobek’s videographer back in those days, who came along and kayaked the whole thing to document it, and wound up producing a documentary film for PBS. It was an epic adventure through the Brazilian wilderness. Nobody had been on the river since 1919, and here it was 1992. We started out up on the edge of the Pantonal, the high central plateau of Brazil, on the Rio Roosevelt, which flows into the Aripuana, and then into the Madeira, and into the Amazon. It keeps getting bigger, until you get down to the biggest river in the world. We were out there for thirty days, through the jungle, and we took Tweed Roosevelt, a great-grandson of Teddy Roosevelt, on the trip. We wanted to do



everything like T.R. did, only with modern equipment. Tweed Roosevelt was an amateur entomologist, and so was Teddy Roosevelt, so we took a generator and gasoline, and everything we needed to support Tweed's collecting insects, just like Teddy Roosevelt did. Every night in the Amazon—this was through the Amazon Jungle, right through the Matto Grosso, the densest, nastiest jungle in the world probably, he would set up a sheet every night along the river in camp and we'd fire up the generator and turn on a halogen light and every insect for about 400 miles would come to that sheet. He would collect insects there all night long, and put them in little vials, and took them all back to the museum in New York.

The river got bigger and bigger, and there were *huge* rapids along the way. We used the maps they had made on T.R.'s trip, and they were absolutely exact. We knew exactly where we were on the river at all times. We had to portage rapids, even though we had rafts. They were *way* too big to run. Of course it was infested with insects. We had to wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants tucked into our socks, gloves, hats, bandanas, just to keep the absolute minimum of skin exposed, because everything was trying to eat you alive. We had a swarm of honey bees that followed us for about three days. You'd get stung ten, twelve, fifteen times a day, just commonplace, because the swarm wouldn't go away. There were 400 million different kinds of ants, especially the leaf-cutter ants. They'll go out and chew off little pieces of leaves, and take them back to their nest, but when they take them back, it's like they're walking in a formation, but they're all carrying leaves, and it's amazing. They will absolutely eat their way through anything. I set up my tent on what turned out to be a leaf-cutter ant trail one night. I woke up in the middle of the night being eaten alive. I turn on my flashlight and look around, there's a hole this big through the side of my tent. Ants are streaming through it. They would have eaten their way right through me, I'm sure, if I wouldn't have woken up. I spent that whole night patching that hole in my tent, because you couldn't sleep or the insects would take over. Flying insects, biting insects, ants everywhere. Half a dozen different kinds of poisonous snakes, several of which we saw on the river. We were sitting in an eddy one day, having lunch. One of the guys just said—"cobra" I think is the word for snake in Portuguese. We looked up, here's a coiled snake in a tree branch right above us. It was a mad scramble just to get out from underneath that thing.

We were breaking camp, and somebody threw some plastic or something into the fire. This is the only thing we can think of why this happened. Sent some

fumes up into the trees, and poisonous caterpillars came raining out of the trees—*big* caterpillars, two-, three-inch-long caterpillars were *everywhere*. They have poisonous spines on them. One guy brushed up against one and got all inflamed on his arms, big welts erupted immediately. They're dropping in the boats, and we had to move the boats. Rained on us most of the time. It was absolutely an epic adventure. Just *getting* to the river took us days and days. We had three different Jeeps, and only one of them got there. We kept having to pare down the gear and load it into the last remaining vehicle, and shuttle loads, because we were cutting a road half the way through the jungle, much like Teddy Roosevelt did.

When you float any kind of jungle river, you get what's called the edge effect. The river corridor is open to the sky for the most part when the river's real wide, and the vegetation along the banks gets all this sunlight, so it gets dense. You can hardly even walk through it. That can be thirty feet thick. We had to hack that out, just to get through it, to get underneath the canopy of trees, so we could get in there and carve out a place to camp. We made it a rule of thumb to try and get into camp at about three o'clock. We had about three hours to carve out a camp and set everything up for the evening.

In the portages we would have to hack out a trail. Fortunately, a couple of places there *were* some trails. We discovered what was a pretty good road, right around one rapid we were going to portage, and the road led right to a stump of a mahogany tree. Somebody'd gone in there, found the mahogany tree, carved a road right to it, cut it down and hauled it out for the wood, and then the road was slowly growing over. We used that to our benefit.

The river runs through the Cinta Larga Indian Reserve. Cinta Larga to this day are not very keen on having people go into their area. We had two Cinta Larga chiefs along with us on the trip, guaranteeing our safe passage through the Indian reserve. I always take a fishing rod with me everywhere I go, and I'd fish every day. I did manage to catch some black piranha, a good twelve to fourteen-inch fish—a flat pan fish. You pull them out of the river, and what are you going to do now? You're not going to try and pick them up, you gotta beat them to death with a stick. I wanted to eat them, so I filleted them as best as I could. I was going to take the carcass and throw it back in the river, and these two chiefs are looking at me, "What are you going to do with that?" I told them I was going to throw it away. They said, "We'll take that if you don't want it." With the guts and the bones and what little scraps of meat were left, and scales and teeth, they would throw it all

in a pot with some rice and boil it, and when they were done, there was nothing left but the bones. They would eat the whole thing—guts and scales and everything. They didn't let *anything* go to waste.

It was one of those trips that was very difficult to lead, and Slade did a tremendous job, keeping everybody together, putting out all the fires. The still photographer was butting heads with the videographer. The two expedition leaders, the one, Charlie, who was the main leader who put it all together; and then Slade who was leading the river portion of it, *they* would butt heads over certain things. Tempers were flaring. Charlie carried a shotgun on the trip, and everybody was afraid he was going to start shooting us all at one point, but that never happened. It made everybody nervous that he *did* have a shotgun.

It was an incredible journey to go out and retrace something done so long ago by such an incredible guy like Teddy Roosevelt, and find his maps were right on the money, and the conditions were basically the same. We just had a little better equipment, so we were able to do the trip a little faster. We did run a lot of rapids he had portaged. I think we were on the river for thirty days, all told. Probably in country, we were there about six or seven weeks.

**STEIGER:** Now what kind of drop were you dealing with typically?

**BOYLE:** Not very much, because large sections of the river probably wouldn't drop more than about five or six feet a mile—much like Grand Canyon. Then you get to a big drop, and it'd cut through the jungle, and it would be real braided, jungle rivers with logs and trees. We would come along basalt outcroppings that the river would go around, and that would be a real bad place for rapids, with big boulders. Sometimes it was incredibly difficult to get down to scout a rapid, because you had to hack a trail, and you had to go through the jungle, up and over logs, up and down hills. You're fighting all the bugs and the snakes. Every bush and tree has thorns and jaggars. Everybody had their own little incident of some insect bite they suffered from. Tweed Roosevelt took off his shirt one time to go in and take a bath, and got out of the water and dried off—before he could get his shirt back on, he must have had a hundred bites on his back. A swarm of something blew in and chowed down on him for the *short* period of time that he had his shirt off.

Tweed didn't want us out there bothering him while he was doing his insect collection and making his notes, but he would invite one of us over on occasion to come on out and sit down with him in the evening and collect bugs. He called me over one night; we didn't have much booze on the trip because it had to be pretty spartan because of the portages, so we didn't



First Grand Canyon trip (1979) rowing Hermit Rapid in a Green River baggage boat.



At the top of Lava Falls

have any beer. Everybody was allowed the luxury to bring one bottle of something for medicinal purposes. I was sitting with Tweed. Tweed said, "Would you like a drink?" I said, "Sure, I'd love a drink, Tweed, but I don't want to dig into your stash." He goes, "Aw, I've got plenty!" "Oh you do? How come?" He said, "When I kill these insects, I kill them with grain alcohol." He handed me a drink, it's a thimble, but it's pure alcohol. Just that little sip, and you catch this major buzz. I said, "So Tweed, you're out here sitting around, drinking, having a good 'ole time every night?" "Yeah, you think I'm going to do this *sober*!?" It was hilarious! He was a great guy. When I first met Tweed, you know how you evaluate people in the beginning. I looked at him and thought, "Oh my God, this guy's not going to make it." He doesn't *look* like he could make it. He was, pound-

for-pound, as tough as anybody on the trip—not through physical prowess, but I think sheer will of the fact that he was a Roosevelt. Incredibly strong-willed man. He turned out to be this great, great guy. In fact, we're still friends today.

It was one of those epic Sobek adventures that you wonder why you're there, wonder why you wanted to go out there and do it, portaging all this stuff through the jungle, and the film of the whole thing is enough to make you wince when you watch it. But we made it through, and got off the river, and were somewhat civil throughout the whole thing. We got back to the States, and of course we all had to check in with our local doctors and have things carved out of our skin. I had a botfly larva that had to be carved out of my arm.

The really neat thing at the end, we were honored by the Roosevelt Society and given medals for the trip. They had a dinner on the *Roosevelt* aircraft carrier, named after Teddy Roosevelt. It was pretty cool. The Roosevelt Association organized that. It was also very nice to be honored for just doing what we'd always done—a river trip in the middle of nowhere. The Amazon's a pretty amazing place. Lots of wildlife—birds and flocks of macaws fly over you. We saw river otters swimming in the rivers. Amazing in that respect. I don't think I ever want to go back.

STEIGER: What would you say the volume was?

BOYLE: Hundreds of thousands toward the end. It got bigger every single day. It started on a small stream, 5,000 CFS maybe, at best, and probably ended up at a quarter million. On some of the rapids, you could hear them, and it wasn't in a canyon, like Grand Canyon, things echo. This was more wide open than that, but, boy, you could hear the rapids they were so big, off in the distance, so you knew you were getting close to them. Not very fast current, a lot of rain; the river would fluctuate daily. Didn't see any people or anything along the river. But it was one of those trips you'll always remember, because it was *such* a wild place, and such a wild adventure.

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STEIGER: I wanted to ask you about the Whale Foundation and—because of what you were saying—the topic of aging and how you deal with that.

BOYLE: The transition. The Whale Foundation is a big help. As we all know it's there to help out Grand Canyon river guides. It's an incredibly difficult thing to take a lifestyle as a boatman for Sobek, and a Grand Canyon guide, and then have that cut short for maybe physical reasons, or financial, or whatever reason somebody has to end that career and feel like they

have to move on and do something else—it's difficult, because guides have incredible skills, but in my case, especially, I didn't know it. I thought to myself, "Now what am I going to do? What skills do I have? I can row a boat. What else can I do?" Largely the support of my wife is what helped me there. She said, "You've got all kinds of skills!" I didn't really believe her. But I thought, "I gotta give it a try." I was lucky enough to be able to go back to school and got another degree. Then through a boatman connection, I got a job with Steve Carothers who started SWCA Environmental Consultants. I guess he had been talking to everybody's favorite guide, Tony Anderson, and T.A. told him, "You oughta hire Boyle." T.A. convinced Carothers that he knew me. "Yeah, Boyle's living in Austin. You got an office in Austin, go hire Boyle, he's great!" I got hired, and Steve and I became good friends. It was all the Grand Canyon guides—lots of mutual friends. In making that transition, and *not* really believing in myself and what skills I didn't realize I had, went in there and tried to make the best of it. I started working in an office environment. From rowing a boat and sitting on a cooler all my life, to sitting at a desk and running a computer, it wasn't too long until I started realizing, "Wow, a lot of these people *don't* have a whole lot of skills. Why are they doing it like that? Why wouldn't they do it like this?" Because what do boatmen do? They figure out the easiest way to get something done. (laughter) It wasn't long until I figured, *I do* have skills. And *all* boatmen do. We have to go figure out difficult logistics in obscure places. You're given a pocketful of money and a world atlas and sent off with a passenger list and figure out how to run river trips in foreign countries. A lot of skills involved in that, that you don't even realize: communication and logistical skills. It turned out to be doable for me to put that all together and get into another career.

I did write an article for the BQR [*Transitioning Careers*, Summer 2003, Vol 16:2 p8–9], so other guys could realize they *can* go out and do other things. It's tough, and the hardest thing about it is the mental aspect of leaving and doing something else, because nobody wants to give it up. That's why *you're* still doing it at your age. The Whale Foundation goes much farther than that. It was very unfortunate to lose such a good friend as Whale, but he also started something I think is getting better and better all the time, and a lot of people have benefited from it. Now we're offering scholarships to help them *make* that transition. A lot of guides don't put a lot of money away. You don't *make* a whole lot of money, and oftentimes you get large blocks of time off where you *don't* have a job, and

you've gotta rely on your savings. The financial aspect of it gets pretty tough sometimes.

STEIGER: I was thinking—I won't name any names—but Brad [*Dimock*] was telling me how it seemed like you single-handedly jumped in there and saved one of our favorite pards, calling for that intervention. That was pretty good.

BOYLE: Yeah, we did an intervention. I could not have done it without the help of all his other friends. "We gotta do something," yeah, "or we're going to lose him." That was the big fear, that something serious would have happened...he was heading for disaster, and possibly taking somebody else with him, and we didn't want to see that. We didn't want another Whale. It worked. Everybody involved in that intervention worked really hard and poured their hearts and souls out, not only to each other, for weeks on end prior to it, but then the day it happened, and then ever since. I still talk to him every couple weeks, if not more, and we're friends again. Our friendship was estranged, simply because there was alcohol involved that got out of hand. It was tough, because it was the pot calling the kettle black. We're all sitting around, trying to wrestle with that one, too. Hey, we're all pretty heavy drinkers. We like to tip them back on occasion, and here we're telling this guy he's gotta quit. Who are *we* to say that?! He even asked us about that: "You guys going to quit too?" "Well, no, but..." It was very successful, and I'm sure glad we did it, because he's a great guy. I think there are a lot of boatmen out there who kind of get in trouble, whether it's substance abuse or whatever, who need a helping hand. There's another gal I'm trying to help now. I don't know her all that well, but our paths have crossed, and I'm trying to offer moral support. She's got some physical problems because of an accident, and she's struggling with that. But the Whale Foundation's doing a lot of good stuff.

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BOYLE: I think as far as Sobek, my career with them, and what I miss the most, it's not any one river or any one story of a river, but it's all the guys I used to run with. What an eclectic group from all over the place, but all sharing that common desire to go out and run rivers internationally and be a little farther out there on the edge than Grand Canyon or river trips in the United States were—and still are, in the little bit wilder places. Obviously we forged those bonds between river guides, whether you're running on the Stanislaus in California, or the Grand Canyon, or the Bio-Bio. When you're out there doing that, you form bonds with people—not all men, women, too, certainly. That's

something that can't be broken. I think we can not see each other for—you and I haven't seen each other for how many years? You get together with people again, and after five minutes of catching up, it's like you were together twenty minutes ago, which is great. That was really, I think, at the core of Sobek—at least for me.

**STEIGER:** And what a crew.

**BOYLE:** Absolutely. I think of Skip Horner, who has got some of the most incredible experiences of any human being I've ever met. I loved running with Skip, just a professional, the kind of guy you want by your side when you're getting in trouble—or if you're *not* in trouble, if you're just out there having fun. Slade, always full of stories. Slade can talk you to death with *his* stories, he's got so many of them. Stan Boor, too, was probably the most fun guy to run with, because he'd always look at the good side of everything. No matter what was going on, he'd find a way to make it fun, or have fun doing it. Butch Carber—I ran with Butch not a whole lot, but just a great guy to run with. And Mike Speaks...Brad Dimock certainly ran around a bunch with Sobek. Joy Ungricht—unfortunately we lost Joy a few years back to cancer. She was pure fun to run with. We were on the Alsek together, and shared a boat. Joy would come up one day, and she's got on a

new pair of pants. She'd come out the next day, she's got on a nice clean shirt. The next day she's wearing something else clean. I said, "Now wait a minute, how many black bags of stuff did you bring?" "Oh, I've just got two." I said, "I've got two black bags. I've got two pairs of pants and four shirts." She said, "My pants fold up this big. I can shove a whole bunch of them in that black bag." Brought it into perspective, because she's a tiny little thing. Miss her desperately. She was a great fun boatman to run with. All the guys we've run with over the years...Never had a bad time with any of them.

**STEIGER:** I think it's safe to say, you could take a poll, and nobody ever had a bad time with you either! That I've ever heard of. (laughter) Kind of get out of it what you put into it.

**BOYLE:** Look at the Grand Canyon guides who are still running down there after twenty, thirty years or more, some of them—*hundreds* of trips under their belts. It's truly amazing. It's a lifestyle that's hard to give up, and if you do have to give it up, everybody gives it up grudgingly. It's not that you lose the skills, but the body parts don't want to work as well...I had both hips replaced. I probably could have gotten over the hip replacements and gone back. I considered it, but

I realized I would not be a good solid guide if something ever happened. I wouldn't be able to go rescue somebody. I just wasn't as good as I had been prior to that, so I decided to make the change and do something different. It was a tough couple years, for sure. I did well, going to work for SWCA. I was an "environmental consultant." The crowning glory to that was I got moved to Flagstaff to run an office, was bidding on projects with the Park Service, and won the contract to write the environmental impact statement for the new Colorado River Management Plan [*which we're still on*]. That to me was an absolute crowning glory. I was as happy as I'd ever been at any one thing. Because here's an old boatman, retired from boating, but still had a shot to stay connected in some way, and very connected in that respect.



With British passenger Rosemarie Allott on the Tatshenshini River, Alaska.

# Mark Your Calendar—GTS 2017!

## BACKCOUNTRY FOOD MANAGER'S COURSE

- Friday, March 31, 2017
- 10 A.M to 2 P.M. at Hatch River Expeditions warehouse in Marble Canyon, AZ. Please arrive early.
- To register contact: [mgaither@coconino.az.gov](mailto:mgaither@coconino.az.gov). Cost: \$20.
- Bring a chair, mug, bag lunch, and your driver's license (ID is required).
- Dress warmly and in layers (the warehouse can be chilly).

## GUIDES TRAINING SEMINAR LAND SESSION

- Saturday and Sunday, April 1–2 Land Session (note: we will also have dinner on Friday night for anyone arriving early).
- 8 A.M. till whenever (at Hatch River Expeditions warehouse in Marble Canyon, AZ).
- Cost \$45 (includes all meals from Friday night dinner through lunch on Sunday).
- If you're sponsored by an outfitter, just let Lynn know. If not, you can send in a check or register/pay online on the GTS page of our website.
- Open to the public—come one, come all!
- Bring a chair, a mug, dress warmly and in layers.
- As soon as we have a draft agenda, we will post it on the GTS page of our website.
- Our theme this year is "*Professional Guiding as a Lifelong Career: taking care of yourself, each other, and the place we love over the long term.*" We'll explore the various facets of the guide experience in ways that are super useful and compelling. Plus, we'll be dancing to the positive energy, reggae/rock music of Ed Kabotie and Tha 'Yoties on Saturday night! With a SAR clinic and helicopter demo on Sunday among other interesting topics, both days will be *very* worth your time, *so please stay for the duration.*



Tha 'Yoties.

## GUIDES TRAINING SEMINAR RIVER SESSION

- April 3–9, 2017 (upper half, Lees Ferry to Phantom Ranch)—\$275.
- April 9–19, 2017 (lower half, Phantom Ranch to Pearce Ferry)—\$375.
- For guides who have work in the canyon for the 2017 river season.
- If you're sponsored, let Lynn know, and your outfitter will pick up the tab. If not, then you'll need to go to the GTS page of the GCRG website to see if you meet freelance requirements and download the application.
- All GTS river trip participants must be current members of GCRG.
- This is the only fully cooperative training trip on the water. This trip is for you!

## Book Announcement

BELKNAP'S WATERPROOF GRAND CANYON RIVER GUIDE  
ALL NEW EXPANDED EDITION  
*Buzz Belknap/Loie Belknap Evans*

Includes 8 additional pages!

- New Read-As-You-Run Format
- Glen Canyon Dam to Lees Ferry
- Expanded Geology Photo Section (Phantom to Mead)

128 pages; \$24.95  
Will be available at the GTS  
[Westwaterbooks.com](http://Westwaterbooks.com)



# Businesses Offering Support

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

- Apex Brewing Supply**—Brewing Equipment 916/918-9058  
**Artisan Metal Works**—Custom Fabrication 928/773-4959  
**Aspen Sports**—Outdoor gear 928/779-1935  
**Blue Sky Woodcraft**—Dories and repairs 970/963-0463  
**Boulder Mountain Lodge**—800/556-3446  
**Bright Angel Bicycles & Cafe at Mather Pt.**—928/814-8704  
**Canyon Arts**—Canyon art by David Haskell 928/567-9873  
**Canyon Books**—Canyon & River books 928/779-0105  
**Canyon R.E.O.**—River equipment rental 928/774-3377  
**Capitol Hill Neighborhood Acupuncture**—206/323-3277  
**CC Lockwood**—Photography books 225/769-4766  
**Ceiba Adventures**—Equipment & boat rentals 928/527-0171  
**Cliff Dwellers Lodge, AZ**—928/355-2228  
**Design and Sales Publishing Company**—520/774-2147  
**Down By The River Productions/FaheyFoto**—928/226-7131  
**Entrance Mountain Natural Health**—360/376-5454  
**EPF Classic & European Motorcycles**—928/778-7910  
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**Flagstaff Native Plant & Seed**—928/773-9406  
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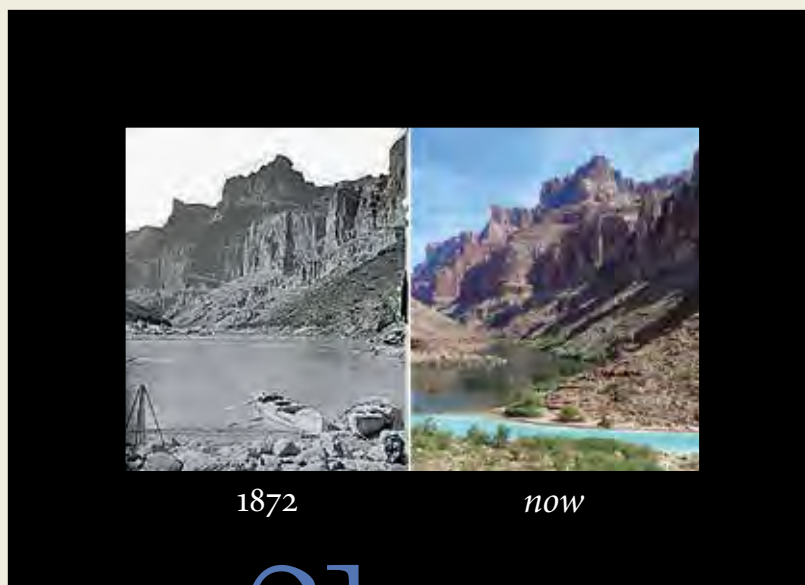
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