

boatman's quarterly review

Ken Sleight

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boatman's quarterly review

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

GRAND CANYON RIVER GUIDES
is a nonprofit organization dedicated to

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

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

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

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

Deadlines for submissions are the 1ST of February, May, August and November. Thanks!
Our office location: 515 West Birch, Flagstaff, AZ 86001
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Dear Eddy

I'VE ENJOYED THE PROFILE OF BERT JONES as well as his obit about Steve Mahan. He had quite a cool career.

One item to expand on was the launch date in June '83 when the Park Service was scrambling to close the river. I remember seeing OU on the ramp with us... and maybe even a private...but we too were in a rush to get on the river. Think we didn't even completely finish rigging, just jumped in with our passengers and took off. The water was moving so quickly we were well below the Paria riffle in a heartbeat before we could pull over and tidy things up.

Attached is a photo of Michael Marsteller, our lead



Photo credit: JB Irving

boatman on that trip, just before we took off...

One of my adventures I hope no one ever tops was flipping my boat in the middle of the night while tied up at the mouth of Tapeats...a tree came down in a flash, hit the spare oar and flipped the boat and then proceeded to roto-rooter whatever had been left tied in, like my black bag, ammo cans etc. The best thing was being awakened by Sandy Heavenrich getting me off the boat where I was sleeping shortly before the flip!

Keep up the good work and all you do for the Canyon.

Jim "JB" Irving
WILDERNESS WORLD GUIDE

Prez Blurp

IN THE BEGINNING—darkness, nothing, then about 13.7 billion years from a tiny dot—a point of singularity—rips an explosion of energy that expands faster than the speed of light. Pure energy. “The Big Bang.” The universe is born. In the first seconds the energy was so hot that matter could not exist. Within a minute it cooled to 1,650,000 degrees Celsius and the Higgs boson formed—the transition particle from pure energy (bosons) to mass-quarks, gluons and other fundamental particles. After just one minute, the quarks stuck together with gluons to form protons and neutrons. Then within three minutes the protons and neutrons stuck together to form atomic nuclei of hydrogen, helium and lithium. However, it took another 400,000 years of cooling before electrons attached to the nuclei to form atoms. How’s that for “special creation?” It parallels Genesis in the *Old Testament*, yet this is written not by theologians, but by quantum physicists deriving their solutions from Einstein’s equations of General Relativity. (How did he know?) Science is the basis for everything; it does not lie.

Fast forward to approximately 4,000,000 years ago. The north-easterly flow of water in the Grand Canyon region has reversed and what now is called the Colorado River is flowing from east to west and the Grand Canyon is being cut in earnest.

At about this same time period, pre-Hominids, still with tails I’m told, descend from trees deciding to make a go of it on terra firma. Equipped with only opposable thumbs to grasp and slightly larger brains than their closest relatives, they see opportunity. Forming bands, they work together and become very successful, thus the beginning of transforming the earth to conform to their needs. Transitional species die out, replaced by more advanced with special skills and slightly larger brains. Cultivation and farming is discovered. Groups discard hunting and gathering and settle in one place. Perhaps the beginning of the end, I’ve heard said.

In approximately 2,800 B.C. the written word is developed in ancient Troy, Egypt, Asia, and possibly Mesoamerica. Ideas can be written and passed on accurately. The wheel is invented. Tools, weapons, and through experiments with the Earth’s elements, gunpowder. Now we’re cooking!

The Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, are all passed thru into the Industrial Revolution and finally into the 20TH century. In 1902, The Bureau of Reclamation is established and with it the Age of Dam-Building in the West. More on that later.

Like a deck of cards being shuffled, our abilities to invent and solve problems, machines are invented and developed faster and faster. In my lifetime the atom has been split, we’ve built rockets and built machines that have landed us on the moon. We’ve sent space craft that have landed on Mars and are tooling around on the surface collecting data. The recent device traveled .9 billion miles to arrive there. And we have built the most complex machine ever—the Large Hadron Collider or LHC as it’s known to physicists, in CERN, near Geneva, Switzerland that has taken us back in time to the very beginning of the Universe, just after the Big Bang. With that we confirmed the existence of the “Higgs Boson.” In essence, we humans can do anything we want within the constraints of the Natural Laws that exist within this Universe.

Given our abilities to invent and solve problems, how hard would it be to re-build the beaches in the Grand Canyon? Not to diminish the problem, it is really “pup chow” (as my friend Lew Steiger likes to say) compared to the problems mankind has solved to get to this point in history. Next time we’ll get into how dams are constructed and a potential solution to our problem of the diminished beaches in the Grand Canyon.

It is turning out to be a consistent winter with regular storms arriving in the West, dropping moisture so much more than last year. Due to the heavy monsoonal rains in October, the brittlebush are blooming in the Sonoran Desert in January, something I’ve never seen before.

Sadly, with the prolonged government shutdown, Lynn has been unable to line up some of NPS speakers for the GTS or arrange a meeting with the provisional Superintendent. This will all get done in time but we are in a holding pattern presently. May this situation get resolved soon. Is it possible that politicians’ brains have reversed the trend for enlarging human mental capacities? An interesting question.

So the best to all, and may it keep snowing in the Rockies and Arizona. Yes!

Doc Nicholson

Guide Profiles

Jason Tea, Age 37

WHERE WERE YOU BORN & WHERE DID YOU GROW UP? Each of the four kids in my family were born in a different state, I got Ohio. We moved around a bit more until we settled back where my folks are from in Northern Utah.

WHO DO YOU WORK FOR CURRENTLY (AND IN THE PAST)? I've done all my guiding for Western River Expeditions.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN GUIDING? I started guiding in Moab after my freshman year of college back in 2003 and transitioned full-time to the Grand Canyon during the 2006 season. I now work year-round for Western in their Salt Lake office handling accounting duties and I usually get three commercial trips in a season as well as the occasional private.

WHAT KIND OF BOAT(S) DO YOU RUN? For work we run the J-Rig in the canyon. I've rowed 12-, 14- and 18-foot rafts on private trips over the years and have had fun on kayak only trips on the Middle Fork.

WHAT OTHER RIVERS HAVE YOU WORKED ON? I've worked on the Green through Desolation Canyon and on the Colorado through Westwater and Cataract Canyons.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES/PASSIONS/DREAMS? I spend a lot of my time off down in and around the Canyon. I'm not much of a trail runner, but this upcoming spring will be my ninth time running the 38 miles from White House trailhead to Lees Ferry along the Paria. Each fall a group of friends and family, mostly comprised of guides, does a backpack trip into the canyon. The most recent trip was out and back to the river along the North Bass Trail. I also boat as much as possible, anything from the mighty Provo to the Grand Canyon; though little kids have a way of curtailing that, at least for a while.

MARRIED/FAMILY/PETS? I am married to my wife Elizabeth. We spent part of our honeymoon rowing the upper end of a private to Phantom. We have two girls, one named Bridget and another named Greta,



who arrived this past October 30th.

SCHOOL/AREA OF STUDY/ DEGREES? I studied accounting at school and got my Masters while spending the summers off working on the river. I know I'm not the only one out there, but we're a rare breed, the river guide CPA.

WHAT MADE YOU START GUIDING? My brother Evan has been guiding in the Canyon since 1999. He has always been a big influence and took me down the Grand Canyon as a swamper the year I graduated high school. I figured that would be an amazing thing to do and I was fortunate enough to eventually get a job.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE? My dad spent some time living in Grand Canyon village as a five year old when my grandfather worked for the Park Service. He brought us all down as kids to backpack to Phantom Ranch and gave us our first views of the Canyon. I made my first trip to the river in the fourth grade. I've always liked coming down ever since.

WHO HAVE BEEN YOUR MENTORS AND/OR ROLE MODELS? I've enjoyed working with Western guides over the years and have learned a lot from them all. The amount of experience they have is incredible. I've been guiding now for seventeen years and am still in the younger half of guides I work with; that says a lot for their love of the Canyon and their professional approach they bring to the work.

WHAT'S THE MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT IN YOUR GUIDING CAREER? Trip leading for the first time with my wife along as extra crew. It was one of those great September trips with clear water all the way through.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR FUTURE HOLDS? I'd love to keep guiding at least a handful of trips each year going forward. I've been fortunate to get to know one of the true wonders of the world, I think a lot more exploring of the Canyon is in my future. Also, I figure one of the lotto tickets I get at Judd's Auto on the way to the Ferry will hit big one day.

Jenny Adkins, Age 37

WHERE WERE YOU BORN & WHERE DID YOU GROW UP? I was born in Amarillo Texas and lived there from 1982–1993. I lived in Tucson Arizona from 1993–2016. I moved to Page Arizona in 2016 and still claim residency there on the Page Plateau above the walls of the Arizona painted desert.

WHO DO YOU WORK FOR CURRENTLY (AND IN THE PAST)? I work for Wilderness River Adventures. Before I became a river guide, I was a personal trainer.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN GUIDING? I have been guiding for seven years.

WHAT KIND OF BOAT(S) DO YOU RUN? I run 35-foot S-Rigs and 18-foot oar Rigs.

WHAT OTHER RIVERS HAVE YOU WORKED ON? I have only worked on the Colorado River.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES/PASSIONS/DREAMS? My hobbies include photography, writing, home projects, arts and crafts, interior design, party planning and research on new and upcoming health benefits.

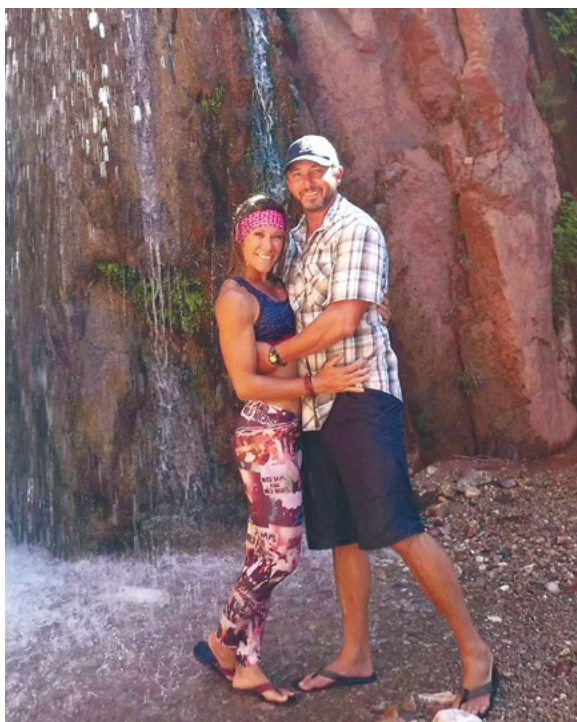
Oh boy, passions? I enjoy hiking, running, walking trails, playing on any body of water, traveling, spending time with family and friends and trying new things, whether it be food, activities, destinations, exercise, sports, etc. I also love singing, mostly to myself. I love and respect the sound of nature. Anyone that knows me best, knows that I love the sound of running water through a stream the best. I enjoy musical theater, dance and all genres of music. I am very passionate about working with people...coaching and training others has been my favorite job the past fourteen years. Yes, I am a Pisces. Guilty as charged.

The dreams that dance inside my head long for a sustained, happy, active lifestyle working alongside my amazing, supportive and loving husband, Richard Adkins, a lifetime river guide of Wilderness River Adventures for over 25 years. We met in a restaurant in 2004 and have been partners in the work force ever

since. My dreams foresee traveling, trying new things, and working in the customer service industry 'til death do us part. Whether it be guiding on rivers, trails, dusty paths, roads unknown or around the world.

MARRIED/FAMILY/PETS? I have been happily married to my best friend, lover and partner in life, Richard Adkins, since December 15, 2012 (friends since 2004). Because of Richard, I was introduced to the 'ole mighty Colorado River and all of her beauty. My family is very supportive of my love for the river. They

are also very worried and nervous at times. It comes with the territory. I have yet to bring any of my immediate family down the river with me. I am the black sheep in my family. My Grandma Donna is the only adventurous one in the bunch besides me. She went down the Colorado River years ago with a friend. She and I share wonderful stories with one another. I also have truly amazing friends (family) that have joined me in the past and continue to schedule trips, as they love the river the same as me. Since Richard and I both work full time on the river, we are unable to have pets.



SCHOOL/AREA OF STUDY/DEGREES? I went to school in Tucson, AZ. I studied Health and Nutrition at Pima Community College. This sparked my interest in Personal Training. I started training at Bally Total Fitness and was quickly offered a job as an Exercise Specialist at University Medical Center, currently known as Banner Health. This is where I found my passion for teaching and working with others.

WHAT MADE YOU START GUIDING? My husband took me on my first downriver trip with Wilderness River Adventures in 2006. I completed five river trips as a passenger—2006, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. After 2012, I decided that I wanted to be a full-time guide. I love the sound of the water, the sun on my face, the excitement of the rapids and the dynamics of the families. Applying to Wilderness River Adventures was one of the best decisions I've ever made. It changed my life.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE? I am a fan of the great outdoors and I love the warm weather. After many trips as a passenger and after I started dating Richard, I wanted to be part of the river community and be closer to him. Distance makes the heart grow fonder. Too much distance, well, is just too much distance.

WHO HAVE BEEN YOUR MENTORS AND/OR ROLE MODELS? In life, always and forever my father, Cliff Anderwald, has been my number one mentor. He is the most positive role model around. He works hard, takes risks, treats people equally, never gives up and believes in himself. He has taught me valuable lessons such as commitment, patience, and over all positive thinking. Along side my father stands my amazing and loyal husband, Richard Adkins, who has been a huge role model in my life with like qualities as my father. He guided me along the river and believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. Both of these men have made me a better person.

Ok, without writing a book, some friends and family that deserve major recognition, who have always been there for me, taught me valuable lessons in life, love, the importance of laughter, business and good character would be, Mama Judy Vinson, my Aunt Marilyn Cruce, Uncle Bill Cruce, Grandma Donna Deu Pree, Paul Jones (Okie), Julie Frogley, Michael Johnson, Steve Stratton, Jeff Cowels, John Torgenson and Amanda La Riche. Thank you to all of you for believing in me, supporting me, teaching me and loving me for me. This goes without saying, thank you to all people who bring joy and value to my life everyday.

WHAT DO YOU DO IN THE WINTER? The past few winters have been spent traveling to spend time with mine and Richard's families.

IS THIS YOUR PRIMARY WAY OF EARNING A LIVING OR DO YOU COMBINE IT WITH SOMETHING ELSE? Running river has been my only job (seasonal) for the past three years.

WHAT'S THE MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT IN YOUR GUIDING CAREER? My most memorable moment in my guiding career was my husband's proposal at Saddle Canyon, mile 47, on the Colorado River. It was one of the best days of my life! It was well-thought-out creative and beautiful. He and the passengers, many good friends as well, helped to make this moment forever cherished in my heart.

WHAT'S THE CRAZIEST QUESTION YOU'VE EVER BEEN ASKED ABOUT THE CANYON/RIVER? The craziest question I was

asked on a river trip was, "How can you drive the boat from there?" Let me paint a picture for you. On the Wilderness S-Rigs, we strap the spare motor on the top deck over the gas tank. As a Swamper, we many times stand and hold onto the spare motor as the pilot drives through the rapids. Apparently, it appeared to a passenger that, since I was holding onto the throttle handle to the spare motor, I must be driving the motor from the top deck of the boat. As they stared at me in amazement, I stared at them with disbelief. I looked at them, then looked at the pilot, then looked at the spare motor I was holding onto, that was clearly nowhere near the water. I grabbed the throttle handle and and twisted the knob making a "vroom vroom" sounds from my mouth. At that moment they realized what they had said. The boat was in an uproar of laughter. We giggled throughout the trip every time I got up to brace myself through a big rapid holding onto the "spare motor." It was very funny and the laughter was music to my ears. I always say, "Laughter fuels the soul."

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR FUTURE HOLDS? I truly believe that my future holds a place for guiding infinitely. I just know how my heart feels to be outdoors and how amazing it is to share beautiful places with curious minds. Sometimes strangers can remind us of how lucky we are to be a part of the guiding community. Outdoor recreation creates the most simple natural pleasures.

WHAT KEEPS YOU HERE? The Colorado River is a magical, unpredictable, groundbreaking underworld. It fulfills fantasies, emotions, thrills and wonder. No day is the same. No trip is the same. No passenger is the same. Everyday and every trip is a new adventure. The River keeps me alive, young, hopeful and happy.

Richard Adkins, Age 43

WHERE WERE YOU BORN & WHERE DID YOU GROW UP? I was born in Birmingham, Alabama, however I grew up in Arizona. I have traveled from the Navajo Indian Reservation, to Page, Phoenix and Tucson. All these avenues boomeranged me right back to my current location in Page, Arizona. Literally the circle of life.

WHO DO YOU WORK FOR CURRENTLY (AND IN THE PAST)? After graduating from college, I was a K-5TH grade PE teacher, sports coach and fitness coach. Teaching

allowed for me to continue my love for running river in the summer. The most consistent and recent job I have is with Wilderness River Adventures (WRA).

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN GUIDING? I have worked for WRA for 25 years.

WHAT KIND OF BOAT(S) DO YOU RUN? I run S-Rigs and 18-foot oar boats.

WHAT OTHER RIVERS HAVE YOU WORKED ON? I have run many rivers, however I have been a Grand Canyon loyalist as far as work.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES/PASSIONS/DREAMS? My hobbies have been river running, coaching, and teaching. I love working with people. My passion is to work with my wife. She has a spirit that burns so bright that it has saved my river career.

MARRIED/FAMILY/PETS? I am married to an amazing woman, Jenny Adkins. I have an amazing blood family. I have had the privilege to work side-by-side with my father, Jim Adkins and I have taken my sister, Angel Bui down the river as well. However, I also have a river family that makes my world go round. After 25 years, I could list so many people that I consider family.

SCHOOL/AREA OF STUDY/DEGREES? I studied at Arizona State University and then moved to Tucson, where I continued my education and graduated at the University of Arizona. "Bear Down." I received my Bachelors of Science in Education at the U of A.

WHAT MADE YOU START GUIDING? My father introduced me to running river when I was eight years old. Growing up in Page, Arizona made it an easy decision for me to work at Wilderness. When I was of age, I applied immediately.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE? I grew up in Page, Arizona. It was an easy place to start loving the river.

WHO HAVE BEEN YOUR MENTORS AND/OR ROLE MODELS? This could be a long list. My father, Jim Adkins, is my first river running mentor. However, I learned from



so many great guides over the years. To name a few, Mike Reyes, "Coach" (Mike Caifa), Butch Hutton, Jason Peak, "Okie" (Paul Jones), Breck Poulson and "The Hodge" (Christian Seamans). This list just names a few. There have been so many river mentors along the way.

WHAT DO YOU DO IN THE WINTER? The last three winters I have been able to travel with my wife and visit family. The years prior, I spent my winters in the classroom teaching.

IS THIS YOUR PRIMARY WAY OF EARNING A LIVING OR DO YOU COMBINE IT WITH SOMETHING ELSE? As of now, this is what pays the bills. Until my illustrious modeling career takes off, I will continue running river and live in Page, AZ. Wink.

WHAT'S THE MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT IN YOUR GUIDING CAREER? I have many to count from helicopters short hauling people off boats to crazy passengers. My favorite moment has to be proposing to my wife on the river. It was a very exciting, nerve wracking, monumental day for me! Drum roll please, she said yes!

WHAT'S THE CRAZIEST QUESTION YOU'VE EVER BEEN ASKED ABOUT THE CANYON/RIVER? The craziest question I've been asked would be, "Do you guys have all this sand trucked in here for these beaches?" "It looks just like the sand we have in Michigan." Uuummm...pause, awkward moment, pause again...How much time do you give someone to think about a question like that before responding?

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR FUTURE HOLDS? I am hoping to always be around the river in some capacity, however my wife and I are looking to branch out to try a few new things.

WHAT KEEPS YOU HERE? All of it. The canyon, my friends, the people, and the fact that everyday is a different day from the last with endless possibilities.

Mark Your Calendars— Guides Training Seminar 2019!

BACKCOUNTRY FOOD MANAGER'S COURSE

- Friday, March 29, 2019.
- 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. at Hatch River Expeditions warehouse in Marble Canyon, AZ. Please arrive early.
- To register contact: lhernandez@coconino.az.gov. Cost: \$55.
- Bring a chair, mug, bag lunch, and your driver's license (ID is required).
- Dress warmly and in layers (the warehouse can be chilly).

POINT POSITIVE WORKSHOP SERIES: EFFECTIVE CONVERSATIONS AND INTERACTIONS

- Friday, March 29, 2019.
- 3:00 P.M. to 5:30 P.M. in the conference room behind the Chevron Station next to Marble Canyon Lodge, Marble Canyon, AZ.
- This optional workshop for guides and new leaders will identify the key components of effective interactions, proactively address conflict resolution, and teach strategies to build trust and teamwork among crews. We communicate all the time and we can all stand to do it a little better; this is an opportunity to learn how!
- The workshop is *free* in 2019, sponsored jointly by the Whale Foundation and GCRG.
- Register at: www.whalefoundation.org/community-events-and-education/

GUIDES TRAINING SEMINAR LAND SESSION

- Saturday and Sunday, March 30–31, 2019 (note: we will also have dinner on Friday night for anyone arriving early).
- 8:00 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, and please check back for updates.
- Let's celebrate the 100TH birthday of Grand Canyon National Park in style! Saturday will include sessions on NPS river patrol operations,

river advocacy, Native Voices, John Wesley Powell and Centennial talks, Lines from the Ladies Part III, and more...A rockin' party Saturday night will combine fun bands from Los Angeles and Joshua Tree! "Science Sunday" will cover fish (including a fish show and tell!), new geology dating, sediment mapping, and much more. Both days will be fascinating and *very* worth your time!

- And don't forget the *free* Whale Foundation Health Fair on Saturday (11 A.M.–2 P.M.).

GUIDES TRAINING SEMINAR RIVER SESSION

- April 1–7, 2019 (upper half, Lees Ferry to Phantom Ranch)—\$275
- April 7–15, 2019 (lower half, Phantom Ranch to Pearce Ferry)—\$375
- Awesome speakers this year will cover geology, biology, springs/hydrology (including dye tracing results from the Kaibab Plateau to the major springs), Navajo culture, herpetology, river protection issues, beach change, and more. Phenomenal line up!
- Spend lots of time hiking in places you normally don't get to go!
- For guides who have work in the canyon for the 2019 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.

Back of the Boat— The Whale Foundation News Bulletin

IT'S HERE AGAIN. Spring! As we begin to shake off the lethargy of winter and consider resetting our intentions around the coming season, the possibilities of doing things differently and better for our minds, bodies, and lives in general come into focus.



Photo credit: Raechel Running

The discipline required to initiate and maintain a posture of self-care doesn't come easy (or even naturally, for some) but can make all the difference in our ability to keep pace with the long, hot, brutal summer of work (*damn, my spine just softened and buckled a bit, even thinking about it...*).

We get it: part-time job, full-time life. Whitney got it, too. While he fought to somehow make group insurance available to the river guiding community, in the end, his legacy is around overall physical health care and incentivizing responsible thinking. The Tim Whitney Wellness Initiative oversees these concerns in a number of ways.

HEALTH INSURANCE ASSISTANCE: Do you work as a guide in Grand Canyon? Do you pay for your own health insurance? Would it be nice if the burden of that premium were just a little less? If the answer to these three questions is *yes*, then stop reading this, go online and apply. You could receive a stipend of up to \$500 to offset your costs, and more if you've acquired insurance for the first time. Application season is February



1ST–May 15TH. Go to: www.whalefoundation.org/health-insurance-assistance/

The Health Fair at the Guides Training Seminar: On Saturday, March 30TH, Wyatt Woodard, FNP-C, and a full cadre of physical healthcare professionals will be on hand at Hatchland to provide a full range of screenings, from dermatology to women's health needs to bloodwork. All free, and available to all attendees of the GTS. Why wouldn't you?! And if you can't make the GTS but would like access to the lab work made available there, please call the office at 928.774.9440 to find out how to gain that access.

And if you're thinking of *life beyond commercial guiding*, now is also the time to consider two more of our programs. Applications are open through May 15TH for the **KENTON GRUA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP**. Last year, the Whale Foundation awarded \$8,000 to five deserving guides working on certifications, skills courses and accredited classes. If you're a guide and



Photo credit: Rudi Petschek

either in or enrolling soon into any of these, you're eligible. Again, applications close May 15TH—do not delay! Go to: www.whalefoundation.org/scholarships/

Finally, if you'd just like to speak with someone in a certain field such as business or a particular career field, call the Helpline (1877.44WHALE) and ask about our **MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**. We have at hand folks who have made the jump from the river life to what's next; they're sympathetic to the struggle and can be a great resource while you consider your options!

Spring! It's about cultivation and growth and turning over new ground! Get to it!

John Napier

Adopt-a-Beach Still Tracking

THANKS TO YOU, the Adopt-a-Beach (AAB) Repeat Photography program is still tracking campsite change in Grand Canyon. With the completion of the 2018 season, the Adopt-a-Beach Repeat Photography program has added another 1,180 photos to the 15,000 already in the archives. A hearty *thank you* to all who volunteered in 2018 and for the past 23 years! This comprises an invaluable dataset which documents changes in the beaches along the Colorado since 1996 and before.



Adopt-A-Beach photo of Upper Hot Na Na beach taken April 3, 2018.

Beginning at Soap Creek and continuing to Mile 250, volunteer “adopters” acquire photos at specific beaches located in “critical” reaches. These photos, and importantly, the datasheets submitted by the photographers which accompany their photos, are used to analyze seasonal, year-long and multi-year changes at 44 campsites in the Grand Canyon. Through your efforts in this “citizen science” endeavor, the river running community has a strong voice to contribute toward Glen Canyon dam operation management decisions.

The annual analysis report is submitted to the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC), the Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association (GCROA), and other interested parties. The results of your work have recently been cited in a USGS Scientific Investigation Report (Hadley et al., 2017) and have been presented at GCMRC meetings as well as the Technical Work Group of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (TWG). Thanks to presentations by GCRG’s TWG representative, Ben Reeder, your Adopt-a-Beach photos have illustrated

and conveyed to other TWG stakeholders some of the campsite quality issues we experience, which can help to influence future adaptive management recommendations. A picture speaks a thousand words, as they say!

All of the beach images which you acquire during your trips are given to GCMRC for inclusion in the online GIS Campsite Atlas. You may also peruse the entire collection through the Grand Canyon River Guides’ website. Please be patient as a software



Adopt-A-Beach photo of Upper Hot Na Na beach taken July 19, 2018.

upgrade is in process to make access easier in the very near future. Every annual report is also available through the GCRG site.

You *only* need to meet two criteria to become an AAB volunteer photographer. They are: at least one river trip during 2019, and the desire to stop for fifteen to twenty minutes at one (or more) of the beaches found on the AAB campsite list to take photos. We’ll provide everything else. Your volunteer packet includes a camera (it’s important that you use an AAB camera), reference photos that show both the views you should photograph and the location where the photographer (*you!*) should stand to acquire the images, and plenty of datasheets with checkbox questions to record your onsite evaluations. We even provide the pen! A signup sheet and Adopt-a-Beach packets will be available at the March 30–31 Guides Training Seminar, or you can contact Lynn at GCRG and she will send you the packet. If your trip(s) are in the first half of the season, please return the packet so it can be reissued in time to photograph that beach(s) again during the year. Of course you can volunteer for more than one beach!

2018 Adopt-a-Beach Program

Camp name	River mile	Adopter
Soap Creek	11.3 R	Joe Pollock
12.4 Mile	12.4 L	Celia & Robert Southwick
Hot Na Na	16.6 L	Glenn Goodrich/Orea Roussis
19.4 Mile	19.4 L	Omar Martinez
Upper North Canyon	20.7 R	Eric Sjoden
23 Mile Camp	22.7 L	Adam Stalvey
Silver Grotto/Shinumo Wash	29.3 L	Jay-Jay Marshall
The Nautiloids (Middle, Lower)	35.0 L	Julie Boyer
Tatahatso	37.9 L	Justin Gallen
Bishop/Martha's	38.3 L	
Buck Farm	41.2 R	Laura Fallon
Nevills	76.1 L	Cricket Rust
Hance	77.1 L	
Grapevine	81.7 L	Grand Canyon Youth/Will Lytle
Clear Creek	84.5 R	Matt Herrman
Zoroaster	84.9 L	Carter Mills
Trinity Creek	92.0 R	Andre Potochnik
Schist	96.5 L	West Howland
Boucher	97.2 L	Mandela VanEeeden
Crystal	98.7 R	Tom Schragger
Lower Tuna	100.1 L	Jed Koller
Ross Wheeler	108.3 L	John Toner
Bass	109.0 R	
110 mile	109.9 R	Emily Dale
The Garnets	115.0 R	Emily Dale
Below Bedrock	131.7 R	Cricket Rust
Stone Creek	132.4 R	Weston McCue
Talking Heads	133.6 L	Paul Smolenyak
Racetrack	134.1 R	Tom Schragger
Lower Tapeats	134.5 R	
Owl Eyes	135.1 L	Lynne Westerfield
Backeddy	137.7 L	Heather Snow
Kanab	144.0 R	Matt Herrman
Olo	146.0 L	Justin Gallen
Matkat Hotel	148.9 L	Andre Potochnik
Upset Hotel	150.7 L	Emily Dale
Last Chance	156.2 R	Howie Usher/John Petty
Tuckup	165.1 R	Chelsea DeWeese
Upper National	167.0 L	Ryan Lindsey
Lower National	167.1 L	Cricket Rust
Travertine Falls	230.6 L	Brad Gardner/Fort Tuthill
Gneiss Canyon	236.0 R	Cricket Rust
250 Mile	250.0 R	Brad Gardner/Fort Tuthill

When you complete your last trip of the year, please return your packet to GCRG promptly.

Funding for this program is generously provided by the U.S. Geological Survey and the Grand Canyon Fund.* We are very grateful for their support and to all of the wonderful volunteer photographers who took time to pull over, photograph their beaches, and provide valuable observations and written comments.

It takes time and effort to do this, and the dedication shown by guides has literally kept this program alive since its inception. We have provided here the AAB campsite list, and their 2018 adopters. Many thanks to all of you for your considerable efforts on our behalf!

By the way, photos of beaches that are not on the AAB dataset list are welcome as well. They can be saved as reference data, but may not be found at the online sites. So, if you happen to have shots from any of last year's erosion events (or if you happen capture some good photos during the upcoming season), please pass them this way. Thanks!

Zeke Lauck

***NOTE:** The Adopt-a-Beach Program is primarily supported by the U.S. Geological Survey under Grant/Cooperative Agreement No. G18AC00125, along with additional funding from the Grand Canyon Fund, a non-profit charitable organization established and managed by the Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association. Commercial river passengers who took a Grand Canyon river trip have voluntarily donated to the Grand Canyon Fund and those dollars are then passed along as grants directly to organizations and programs like ours with zero administrative and overhead costs. On average, over \$100,000 a year is given because the Grand Canyon River Outfitters and their passengers care about programs like ours, which help preserve

and protect the precious natural resources, as well as those programs that provide special access to Grand Canyon National Park. Thank you to all AAB partners who believe that GCRG's long term monitoring/photo-matching program is worthy of their continued support.

New (Cambrian) Age for the Sixtymile Formation and Implications for Understanding the Great Unconformity

THE SIXTYMILE FORMATION is just 60-m-thick and contains layers of dolostone, siltstone, chert, and sandstone (Fig. 1A). It occurs in only four areas in Chuar Valley. The outcrop at the top of Nankoweap Butte can be reached in a half day hike from the river; but reaching the outcrop pictured below, in Sixtymile Canyon, requires a hard day-hike from the river along the Horsethief Trail. This unit had never been dated but was considered to be part of the Precambrian Grand Canyon Supergroup because it sits below the Great Unconformity (Fig. 1B).

the trilobites from the overlying Bright Angel and Muav (blue boxes) using the 2018 geologic timescale to provide a minimum age of 500 million years old for the Muav. Thus, the entire Tonto Group was deposited during flooding of the continent 508 to 500 million years ago. Cambrian flooding, called the Sauk transgression, took place on many continents and we now know it occurred much more recently and much faster than anybody thought.¹

John Wesley Powell (1875)² recognized two major unconformities, one below the Tonto Group and the



Left: Figure 1A. Sixtymile Formation in upper Sixtymile Canyon; note people for scale and the large boulder inside the box. Right: 1B. Note the same boulder and geologist James Hagadorn just beneath the angular unconformity where Tapeats rests atop the upper Sixtymile Formation indicating a period of tilting and erosion between these two rock layers. Photos by L. Crossey.

We separated out zircon grains from the sandstones and dated them using U-Pb radiometric dating methods. Sixtymile Formation zircon grains yielded a range of ages (Figure 2). We found 1.7 Ga (1 Ga= 1 giga annum = 1 billion year) grains from the basement, 1.4 Ga grains from central Arizona, 1.2–1.1 Ga grains recycled from the Unkar Group, *and* we were lucky enough to find some “young” grains. The sandstone was deposited after its youngest sand grain formed so we discovered that the Sixtymile Formation is younger than 508 Ma (1 Ma= 1 mega annum= 1 million years). Yikes, this is upper Cambrian, not Precambrian! 508 Ma is just a maximum age for Sixtymile deposition so we dated grains from the Tapeats and found youngest grains of 505–501 Ma, and we recalibrated the age of

other below the Unkar Group. He understood these to be surfaces of great significance that record the erosion of ancient mountains to flat surfaces and new base levels before the next sediments were deposited. Clarence Dutton (1882)³ was the first to use the term great unconformity. The term now is most commonly applied to the places where the flat-lying Paleozoic rocks overly basement rocks. In Grand Canyon, up to 1.3 billion years can be missing (not recorded). That is about one quarter of Earth history that has been erased by erosion. Grand Canyon’s rocks provide an amazing record of Earth’s history, but Figure 3 shows that more time is missing across unconformities (shown in black) than is recorded! For clarity, let’s number the main unconformities 1–5 (Fig. 3A),

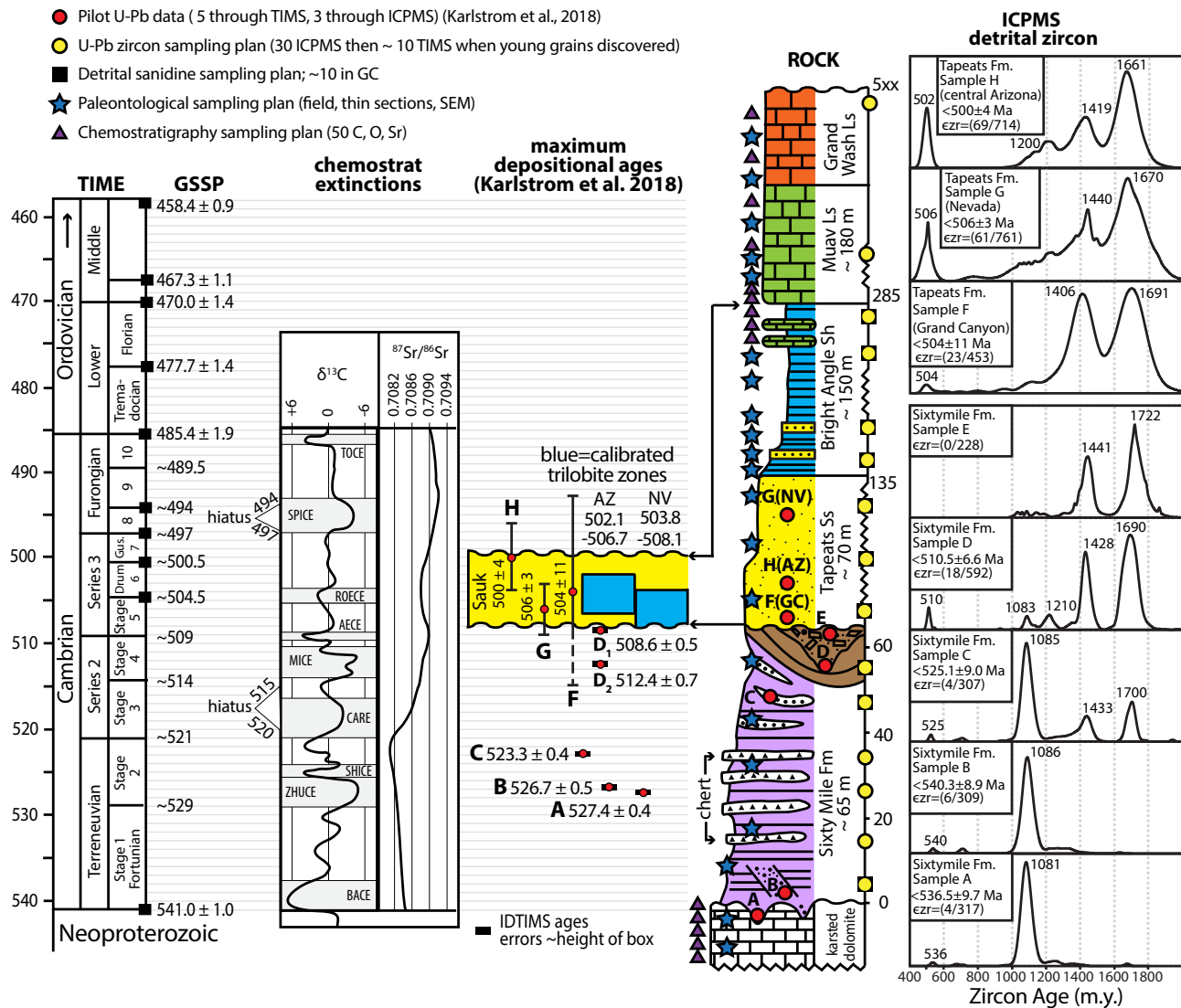


Figure 2. Left side shows the 2018 calibrated geologic timescale; middle shows our new ages and error bars of Sixty Mile and Tapeats sand grains (red dots) and trilobite ages (blue boxes). The colored rock column of the Tonto Group shows where the samples were from; the right side shows age plots of the hundreds of zircon grains we dated (read these like histograms).

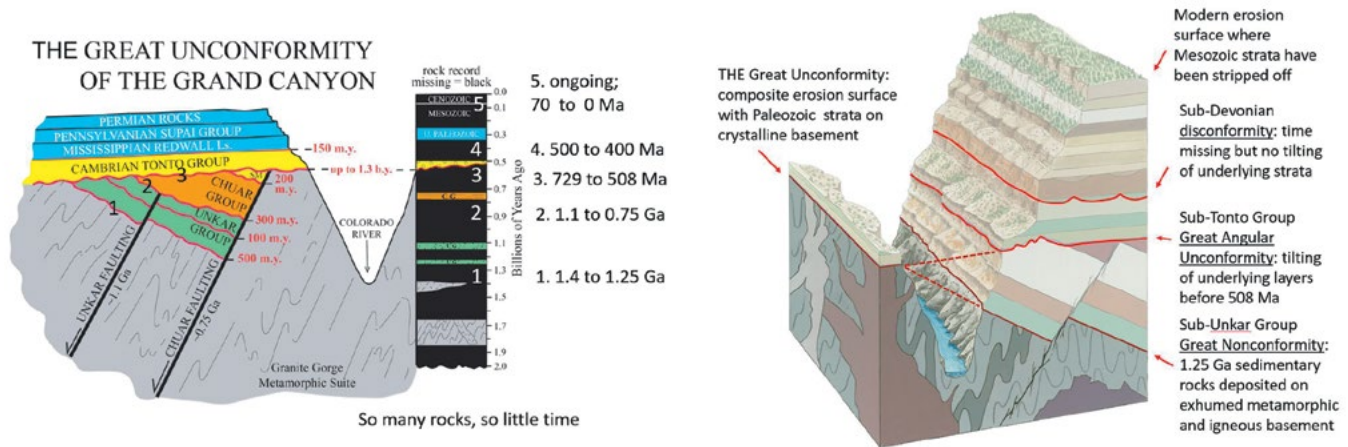


Figure 3A. The Great Unconformity at Grand Canyon is a composite erosion surface made up of other erosion surfaces. Let's call them: 1: Sub- Unkar Group Great Nonconformity, 2) Unkar-Chuar unconformity, and 3) sub-Tonto Group Great Angular Unconformity. Figure 3B defines the 3 types of unconformities.

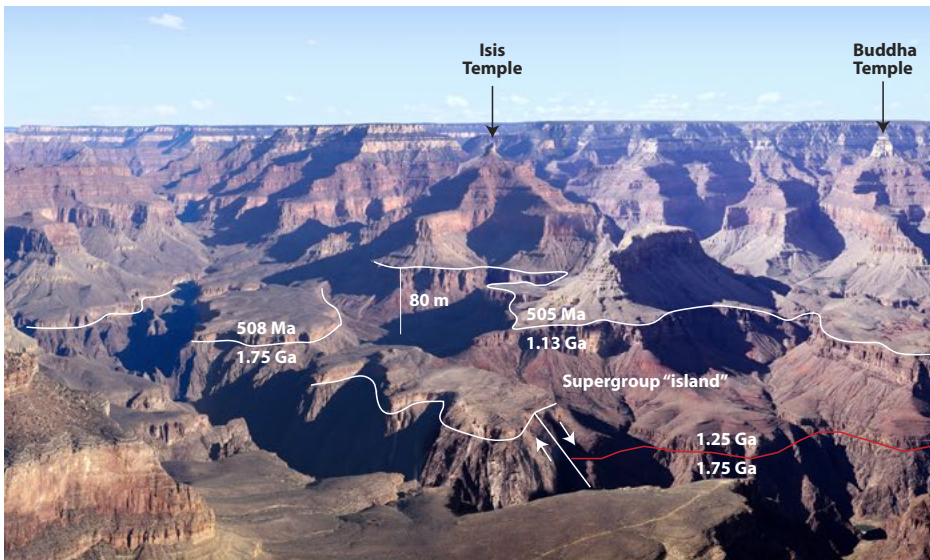


Figure 4. View from the window of Yavapai Geology Museum

and realize that 1, 2, and 3 are all within *the* Great Unconformity.

The best way to understand any unconformity is to know the ages of rocks just above and just below the erosional contact. For Grand Canyon:

- 1) The largest is the sub-Unkar Group Great Nonconformity where about 500 million years is missing and a 25-kilometer-thickness (15.5 miles!) of basement was eroded away between 1.4 and 1.25 billion years ago.
- 2) The next largest lacuna (time gap) is between the Unkar and Chuar groups where 300 million years is missing and several km of crust were eroded before 780 million years ago.

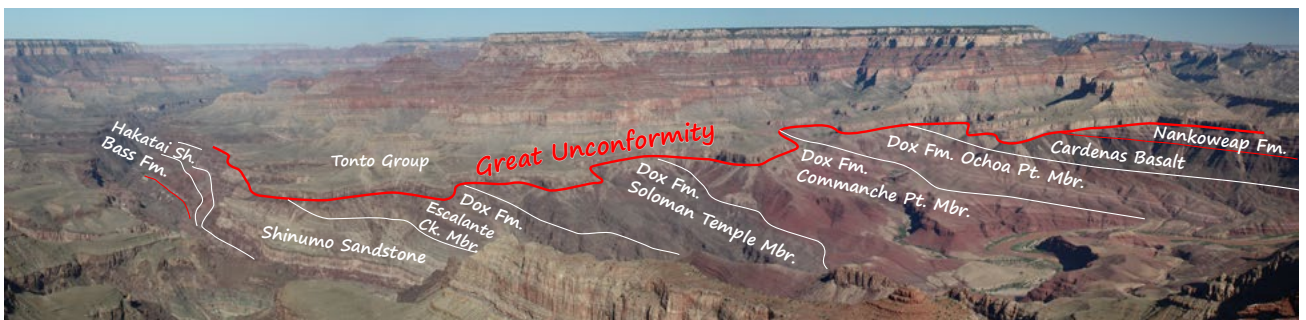


Figure 5. View of the Unkar Group from Lipan Point

- 3) The next has 200 million years missing between the 729 Ma uppermost Chuar Group and < 530 Ma lower Sixtymile Formation where up to several km of erosion took place to remove the Chuar Group in some places (but not others) before the Cambrian seas flooded across the continent. A disconformity (#4) occurs within the Paleozoic strata, and an erosion surface (#5) is forming

today as Mesozoic rocks are stripped back from the rims of Grand Canyon, but these are different stories.

Figures 4 and 5 help focus your eye in on the different unconformities. The view from the window of the Yavapai Geology Museum shows the Great Nonconformity (Bass Formation of the Unkar Group resting on basement) as well as the sub-Tonto Group Great Angular Unconformity with Tapeats

Sandstone on basement or Bright Angel Shale on Shinumo Sandstone of the Unkar Group. Can you visualize the “Supergroup island” that is preserved within the strata? Imagine the 508 Ma ancient beach sands (Tapeats Sandstone) that lapped against the shoreline? The paleo-island initially stuck up about 80 meters above the Cambrian beach and got buried by muds of the Bright Angel Shale about 505 million years ago as the sea deepened.

The view from Lipan Point shows the Great Nonconformity to the left and the Unkar-Chuar unconformity to the right. The sub-Tapeats Great Angular Unconformity has different amounts of time missing as you go from left to right in the picture. The 508 Ma Tapeats rests variably on 1,750 Ma basement, 1,250 Ma Bass Formation, 1,100 Ma Cardenas Basalt,

and 780 Ma Nankoweap Formation[†]. As Powell recognized, these tilted strata are more than twice as thick as the Paleozoic flat-lying rocks, but their great thickness is somewhat concealed because of the tilt. As you float by the 1.1 Ga Cardenas Basalt near Tanner rapids to the 1.25 Ga Bass Formation below Hance rapids, you pass through the entire Unkar Group, over 2 km thick.

But which one is *the* Great Unconformity? Let's recap. The term is best used for the biggest lacuna (rhymes with kahuna), where the 508 Ma Tonto Group either overlies the 1.84 Ga Elves Chasm gneiss (at Blacktail Canyon), or the 1.75 Ga Vishnu Schist (in Figures 4 and 5). But because Grand Canyon has the Unkar, Chuar, and Sixtymile strata preserved in some fault blocks, we can show that *the* Great Unconformity encodes a composite fault-related erosion history made up from lesser but still pretty great unconformities. The Great Nonconformity was when the greatest basement denudation (~25 km) took place before 1.25 Ga. The Great Angular Unconformity records the bobbing up and down of the continent between 1,100 Ma and 508 Ma, sometimes eroding sometimes developing fault-related basins. The punchline is that “many unconformities make one Great Unconformity;”⁵ the “when” is becoming well constrained.

But we also want to know the “why” of the Great Unconformities! Recent papers continue to put Grand Canyon's unconformities in the global limelight to study questions about the freeboard of continents. Continents are buoyant plates supported by an underlying fluid asthenosphere—think of icebergs and you have the general idea. For the Great Nonconformity, we hypothesize that the Vishnu Mountains were a high plateau region similar to the Himalayan-Tibet region of Asia. Imagine eroding the 4-km-elevation of Tibet to sea level (in the future). For every 1 km of crust you shave off the top, the root of the “iceberg” pushes the surface 4/5 of the way back up and the surface gets lowered only 200 meters. If you do this 20 times, you can exhume basement rocks from 20-km depths as you are eroding such mountains to sea level.

A different explanation is needed for the Great Angular Unconformity. We hypothesize that the ups and downs of the interior of continents (alternating erosion and sedimentary basin cycles) are driven by forcings at the edges and bases of plates as supercontinents assemble, then rift apart 1,4,5. Continent-continent collisions thicken continents and they float higher. Rifting thins continents and they float lower. Changes in thickness or buoyancy of the root of continents (like icebergs) also changes freeboard. The Rodinian supercontinent was coming together at 1.1 Ga and rifting apart at 0.75 Ga and this may explain the Unkar-Chuar unconformity.

But what about the sub-Sixtymile and sub-Tapeats unconformities? Several hypotheses have been proposed. One is that final rifting of southern Rodinia caused uplift/erosion then flooding of the continent in

the late Cambrian¹. A second is that glacial ice eroded deeply into continents globally during the 717–585 Ma Snowball Earth episodes⁶. A third is that this erosion period facilitated the Cambrian explosion of life and the first hard-bodied organisms⁷. For the second, we have seen no evidence for glacial erosion; no striated pavements or clasts at the base of the Tonto Group. For the third, the new Sixtymile age of <508 shows that the Sauk transgression took place tens of millions of years after the 542 Ma Cambrian explosion, so the timing of the transgression does not match the Cambrian explosion. But more than one hypothesis can have correct elements. For now, our conclusion is that *the* Great Unconformity is a globally important composite erosion surface where crystalline basement was deeply eroded before deposition of overlying flat-lying Paleozoic strata. Different stages of its composite history are spectacularly revealed in the same place it was named—at Grand Canyon.

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Two-Hundred-Seventy-Nine Miles Above Lava No More...

FUNNY TO WATCH THE PROGRESSION, the old adrenaline rush slowly settling like after a flash flood. Geometric cracks and ripples in mud, a footprint here and there. How the place keeps *changing*. The sheer massiveness used to make my heart pound in my ears, gotta hit every hole and feel that *energy*. These days it kinda wraps around me like a blanket, still protecting me from that other, outside world, just different. In the old days, I desperately needed our band of brothers and sisters, a tribe to belong to after escaping Chicago. Now I can just drift, finally able to just appreciate whatever floats by. In his later days, Drifter used to say, “The Colorado River through Grand Canyon is the best river trip anywhere, except for the rapids.” Now I get it.

My young pards think me too conservative, call me “Mr. Safety” and smile. Then I climb into my well-worn but now seldom-seen kayak and boof some drop and their heads crook ever so slightly, like confused puppies. Outside I’m fat, balding and slow. Inside I’m still that wild reckless bastard. We used to jump in above Hermit with the peeps, cackling at how their eyes were about to be opened, or night float below 210 mile. That was before all the best stuff was outlawed. Now I’m listening to *their* stories. Same story, different actors. I’m good with that. They don’t need some pathetic old fucker taking air-time.

Work enough free trips, get along, bust your ass, maybe you make it through to the tailwaves and are welcomed into the fold. Share some beers in the shade of the Great Umbrella. You walk up the hillside to the scout, gnarled hands like tree limbs adorned with turquoise and silver point out the rocks and holes, share the grace and growling bellies in tense camaraderie. There were others who wanted it as bad as I did. Some of ’em were better boaters. Some were, well, less cocky. Or prettier or more bronzed and muscled in the summer sun. But I led every hike

because I just couldn’t stay still in all that power. I devoured every bit of interp ’cause I groaned to know my lover better, inside and out. So them stories and my music, I guess that was part of what convinced ’em to let me in in spite of my, shall we say, idiot-syncretasies. Hell, any monkey can row a boat.

Mom sang with the USO during World War II. They’d motor her out into the Straights of Juan de Fuca to the warships returning from the Pacific, and she’d sing for the boys that made it home. She died young, so I borrowed her voice. She didn’t need it

any more anyway. It makes people feel good, slows ’em down a bit so they can have a look around. It’s one of the reasons they keep me around. Maybe the only reason, come to think about it. The crew can go have a bath, a beer, hang on the boats in the cool of the evening while I entertain. I don’t mind a bit. It’s good for my colleagues, good for the folks,



The mud brother—from left to right: ?, Dave Edwards, Jimbo Tichenor, Bob Melville and Jeffe Aronson. Photo credit: Chris Brown

keeps the callouses on my fingertips.

I’ve been watching crews for nearly fifty years. None of us are here because we fit in real well. Anti-authoritarian, smart, hard-working rogues, and damn proud of it. Talented misfits. Try keeping *your* cool for couple weeks, 24-7, when it’s way over a hundred degrees, black rocks baking your brains out, some passenger keeps crapping in the pee bucket, some helpful cook with a good back just put both cast-iron dutch ovens in the same com-box, and Lava is tomorrow.

“How do you guys do it? Man, that’s hard work!” But listen real good and you hear the tinge of envy. The part of ’em that hungers for whatever “it” is—the sharing of the sweat, backs groaning against the wind, boats reflected in the green water, sliver of sky shimmering in the heat, tired, crazed, exhilarated. It’s an intimate secret, a sharing, a gift.

Crews come and go, binding with one another, building an unspoken creed, each clan speaking a



fire, the sound of moving water, the cool morning breeze before the Great Oppressor hit the beach, the smell of the wet desert after a summer monsoon, the coffee call echoing, the shrill buzz of the summer cicadas, the trill of the canyon wren.

I'll take that with me, put it in my pocket. It wasn't about me, as much as I once needed to think it was. Stories are written about how lucky we are and all that. I get it and I feel it too. But deep down where we don't talk about it I think many of us do think maybe it's really just a little tiny bit about us, don't we? I've seen

language a little bit different from the others, a little bit the same, shaped by water flowing over boulders. You can't do this job without ego, but it's all about how it's managed. I know—I was there. We thought we were *the shit* for sure. Clients worshipped us—River Gods, class IV, couldn't miss, "Dude, nice line!" Out there I'm just another schmuck, but down here, I'm a river god. Figured it all out.

Now I get it. *Everyone* thinks they're the shit. It don't matter how we pull it off—whichever company, whichever equipment, whichever river, oar handle or motor cob, however we slice the freakin' tomatoes, thinkin' we invented it all. Wake the peeps at dawn with the recorder, paint the toenails, wear the sarong, tweet the whiskey bottle. We each must follow these ancient rituals in our turn, absolutely. I think it important, however, to try and remember our place in the progression. There's been maybe nearly sixty years of professional river guiding, give or take. The roar continues in the background, we listen to the echoes.

I remember when it first hit me. I went for a coffee at Macy's, someone saw my AZRA ballcap, started some small talk over a lattè about the best goddam trip on earth. Changed their lives it did, that river, that Canyon. Offhandedly I asked them who their guides were.

"Um, was there a Jim or something?"

I asked them what company they went with. They couldn't even remember that part.

What they *did* remember with the clarity of heavenly vision was The Canyon. The River. *Our Colorado*. The dawns and sunsets setting the cliffs on

some crazy shit over the years—pards screaming 'til dawn on some tiny beach about lost platoon buddies, a woman with cancer asking if we'd be okay if she died right then and there, hitting the stupid hole in Crystal and by some miracle coming out upright, watching a five-ton motor-rig flip with fifteen souls aboard. Folks need the extremes, it's why they're there, partly. Adds flavor. Wakes 'em up a bit after all the baloney out there. Hell, that's why *I'm* down there, partly.

Maybe sometimes life on the edge helps us see the magic in the everyday. Whacks us and wakes us to the grace of how precious each moment really is. Trip of a lifetime, changed my life. It ain't about us.

Laying on my boat, gazing up at how the black cliffs shape and mold the starry sky a bit different at each camp, tomorrow's river known; the strokes and ferry angles, which cookies to keep handy on top of the side-box for lunch, where the parking beach is for the next hike, savoring every moment as if it were the last. Not getting all belly-achy at Hot Na Na so I can eat my pancakes in peace. Watching the guests fussing with tents on night one, knowing how in exactly two days the magic will devour them and they won't even bother. I'm slower, weaker of mind and sinew, guzzling the Gatorade and shading up a lot. This won't last much longer. "Might be the last trip" is no longer just a metaphor, but that's okay. At least that's what I keep telling myself.

Relentless as water flowing downhill past sandy beaches laden with memories, a story for each and every one, now kept to myself. An easing. Easing into the flatwater, sweeping the hikes now, letting others do

the heavy lifting and not feeling *too* guilty. Watching the universe turn purple with scotch in hand after an especially warm day, the latest in a fortunate life of thousands of especially warm days. Boat gently rocking, ripples slapping the sides, soft laughter somewhere off in the dunes, that “pop!-wheet!” sound from the boat next door which is nicely within reach. I know you feel it. You want it to last forever, don’t you? Me too. It doesn’t.

Rowing over a ton of boat and blood and bone through Bedrock, dragging that old strength out of some depth, the physical and mental whatever, is slowly but surely fading in the hot sun. Handing it over to some young buck just like someone handed it to me nearly a half-century ago. Or maybe it’s taken. Both, probably. No matter. They want it, they deserve it, they’ll have it. Agile, strong, quick, hungry. They don’t care about how hard the work is any more than I did, how hot the desert gets, how much the upstream wind blows, how hard some people are to please. Maybe we bitch about it, but it’s a bitch with a smirk. How many times have *you* heard someone say “Oh, man, the Grand Canyon? It’s just a canal!”? But you just watch their face if someone offers them a job down there.

Marieke pulled into the Shady Ledges on the left below Son of Lava a couple years back, asking if they could share the shade with us for a bit, soak-in knowing Lava let them pass one more time. “Of course girlfriend, come on in!” I went about my business, napped a bit, sat up and noticed her sitting on her boat strumming her guitar for some folks, so I strolled over. She’d just finished a song, looked up and said, “I have one for you.” Simple as that. So I sat down on the cool gray limestone and listened. It was a song about an old boatman, the river, saying goodbye. Choked me up, it did. I was glad I had on my sunglasses. Not self pity, no. The kind of grateful eye-welling that touched each of you the first time you came around that corner at the end of Blacktail and *felt* it. Walk in beauty, baby. She finished, the final note, and we gazed at each other for a moment. My heart pounds just thinking about it.

I keep saying, “Can’t keep saving everybody else’s asses plus my own when the shit hits the fan in Lava forever.” It’s probably annoying. I can tell you it annoys the hell out of me to hear myself say it. I don’t want to be one of those boatmen who stayed on too long, retirement talk taboo, ignoring the head-shaking. I

guess I’m really just trying to talk myself into it. Must this end? Really? So soon? I’m ready, but I’m not ready. I’ll never be ready. I’ll die inside when it happens, and it’s happening as we speak. My world will shrink, I won’t be part of the brotherhood any longer, won’t hear the river behind everything I do and say. Oh, God, don’t let it end. Oh, God, let it end gracefully, all at

once. Drop dead right there on the edge of Lake Mead at Surprise. River gone, me gone. Sleep when you’re dead and all that.

I got me a little life out there. Lucky to have a woman who foolishly loves my idiot ass, put some money away, built a wonderful home on a pristine little whitewater river at the bottom of the world. We have lots of wonderful friends, which having been there I can tell you is all you got left on your death bed. You can hear our little river from the deck, scotch or coffee in hand.

Like shoving off from shore after a scout, you gotta get into your boat, grab the oars and head off downstream, pretending you know what the hell you’re doing, wherever it leads.

Jeff Aronson



Jeff Aronson on his boat, *Sam McGee*.

Just Over the Silver Bridge on the Way to Phantom Ranch There is a Water Stop...

OUR RAFTS, RESTING ON THE SAND at Boat Beach, were decked out in red, white, and blue bunting in celebration of the holiday. The morning of the Fourth of July also found many of our upper half group in festive attire as we stepped off on the trail to Phantom Ranch where a pay phone, flush toilets, lemonade (with ice!) and air conditioning would provide welcome relief from the heat as we awaited the group hiking in on the Bright Angel Trail.

I had hiked that trail to join a lower half rafting trip on several occasions and could relate in detail with how they might be feeling as they descended the Devil's Corkscrew and prepared to climb onto the River Trail to the Silver Bridge. On my first hike into the canyon it was somewhat of a shock, after several hours of downhill trudging, to have to then hike uphill and struggle through sand piled against black schist cliffs baking in direct sunlight. Heat exhaustion hovered around two of my friends before we found the water stop just beyond the bridge; a lesson seared into my memory as surely as a firebrand.

A few yards from the beach our guides were already prepping plastic jerry cans for refilling, and I quickly filled my water bottle with Roaring Springs vintage 2018. The faint chlorine flavor of filtered river with a dash of bleach would be put on hold for a few days! Maybe, like Scotch, it is an acquired taste for the discriminating palate.

We had just turned the corner to go up the canyon towards the ranch when we were confronted by approaching pack mules. I considered it a trip highlight to stand quietly on the side of the trail and wait as these four legged jeeps ambled by on their way to the rim, carrying mail and trash out of the canyon.

Carefully stepping around the places where the mules had "lightened their load," I purposefully ignored the trail marker pointing to the ranch, preferring the straighter, shorter path that would become the North Kaibab Trail. Cutting across at the canteen, I noted the payphone was not in use and saw our group still winding through the trees. After a quick check-in at home to let everyone know things were well and voicemail messages to my daughters since neither had answered (it must be a millennial thing), I headed inside to rejoin my rafting party.

Sometime during a second lemonade, I decided not to buy a new t-shirt (I had a good half-dozen at home still wrapped in their compressed packaging). Postcards mailed, and refreshed by the AC, some of our

group decided to hike the south bank river trail from the Silver Bridge to the Black Bridge that overlooked the beach. I meandered back down the trail thinking about the last flush toilet on the river, the likelihood of finding a ripe fig on the tree across from the water spigot, and making certain that the bridge hike crew were adequately "watered down" inside and out before crossing the river.

Just across the Bright Angel Creek Bridge I stopped to chat with a park ranger for a few minutes and noticed a couple of hikers standing near the water stop. On many other occasions I had directed hikers to cool down and top off their water before continuing up to the ranch or over to boat beach and was well into this role. I recalled a Marine Captain telling me she was seeing "butterflies" because she had tried to conserve her water when she started to run low. She had missed the first water stop, and in spite of her desert training and service in Afghanistan, confessed, "That trail kicked my ass."

Approaching the two young ladies I noted they were well equipped with floppy hats pulled low, sunglasses, and hydration packs but was pretty certain they would be in need of some advice. As I neared, one of them said, "Where's Boat Beach?" I replied it was not far and stepped between them while trying to coax them to return to the water faucet, since it was hot on the beach and there was very little shade.

From behind I heard one of them say, "That's it?" followed shortly by the other asking, "Did you know?" Maybe the heat was starting to get to me because I was confused as to why they were talking to me like that. I turned back, facing them, and only then recognized first my youngest daughter and then her sister. Stunned, I could only blurt out, "What the **** are you doing down here?"

They, along with their mother and the Wilderness River Adventures office staff, had been planning this for over a year and a half. And by this time all the guides as well as the other members of the group had known this was in the works as a celebration of my 20TH oar trip through the canyon. Rafters who I had just met six days earlier kept the secret, as well as friends who had been with me on other trips.

Canyon and river worked their magic. The remainder of the trip passed too quickly and in spite of monsoon showers around and on us, will forever, for me, be "golden."

Gary Snyder
GCRG LIFE MEMBER

The Lee Monument—Rehabilitating an Outcast

Lee became persona non grata in most Mormon circles, and many of his brethren now turned on him like a pack of dogs.

—P.T. REILLY¹

EVER WONDER WHY there is a monument to John D. Lee at Navajo Bridge? It would seem to make more sense to put such a marker five miles upstream at Lees Ferry, since he is the person for whom the river crossing is named. Park Service policies, however, discourage the installation of most memorials, so you will find Lee mentioned only on informational signs at the Ferry, as opposed to being commemorated by a granite slab almost eight feet high. Navajo Bridge, in contrast, is under the auspices of the Arizona Department of Transportation which had no similar restrictions. By the time the Lee

Monument was installed at the bridge, there were already three memorial plaques nearby: those for Norm and Doris Nevills, Lovie Reiff, and Gilbert Hansen.

The monument honoring Lee is mounted on the west side of Navajo Bridge, east of the visitor center. It was dedicated October 13, 1961, during a Lee family reunion at a cost to the family of \$1500.^{2,3} Where it now stands may not be the original location, although if it was elsewhere, it was likely within a few feet. Comparing the current location with a photo taken during the dedication shows alterations to the stonework framing the monument, changes that were made after the new bridge was completed and visitor area redesigned in 1995. Inspection of the polished granite surface reveals a number of chips, a couple of which appear to center on the Lee name. These



Lee Monument Dedication, October 13, 1961. Left to right: Juanita Brooks, Peggy Gregory and Sana Lund Williamson. Photo by John Wesley Williamson. Glen Canyon Archives.

were most likely made by gunfire, an example of that fine Western tradition of shooting up road signs and similar objects of scorn. The use of granite, as opposed to something more malleable like bronze, was probably a wise choice, as was making it too large to pry off with a crowbar.

Several hundred visitors reportedly attended the monument dedication,³ including Lee's biographer Juanita Brooks, Huntington librarian Peggy Gregory, and Sana Lund Williamson, wife of John Wesley Williamson Sr., a great-grandson of J.D. Lee. Gregory helped edit Brooks' book, *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee*. Brooks and Sana Williamson selected the wording on the monument together.⁴

LEE, JOHN DOYLE: 6 SEP 1812–1823 MAR 7, AGE 64

Lee was a loyal member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as Mormon. Religious persecutions, largely over polygamy, forced the church to undergo a series of moves west, eventually to the Salt Lake Valley beginning in 1847. Later, when church leaders feared they would be forced to abandon Salt Lake too, they sought to extend church influence into Arizona, in part as a possible escape route to Mexico.

Mormon frontiersman Jacob Hamblin first recognized the river crossing at what became Lees Ferry as a practical route into Arizona. Lee, however, settled the place. He became a ferryman January 29, 1872,⁵ using a crude boat named the *Cañon Maid* originally built on site for Hamblin. With Lee at the oars and his plural wife Rachel at the tiller, they transported fifteen Navajos to the right bank to conduct trade. Lee thus became the first Navajo trader at the Ferry and Rachel the first Anglo woman to cross. When Lee was absent from the Ferry, supervision and often the operation fell to Emma, his plural wife who lived nearby at Lonely Dell Ranch.

In 1857, a party of Mormons and their Paiute allies killed some 120 emigrants bound for California at Mountain Meadows in southwestern Utah.⁶ The causes for the massacre appeared complex, reportedly due in part to some members of the emigrant party bragging about participating in the 1844 assassination of the founder of the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith. For his part in the massacre, Lee was excommunicated from the church in 1870, after the federal government became increasingly insistent that the perpetrators be identified and punished. As P.T. Reilly explained in his exhaustive history of Lees Ferry,¹ "expulsion from the brotherhood was tantamount to a sentence of having been branded a traitor." Even as an outcast from the community, however, Lee continued to stand

by his faith and support church policies. Though excommunicated, he arrived at the remote ferry site under church direction late in 1871. He was eventually arrested by federal authorities in 1874 and executed by firing squad at Mountain Meadows on March 23, 1877. Buried at the City Cemetery in Panguitch, Utah,⁷ he was the only person ever jailed for the infamous episode. Some believe, as did Juanita Brooks, that Lee acted as a scapegoat to shield the Mormon community from further prosecutions for the massacre. Others maintained he was the instigator and leader, and, as such, solely responsible.

Lee was posthumously reinstated in the Mormon Church on May 8, 1961,⁸ and it is no coincidence that the Lee Monument was installed by the family later that same year. Some in the Mormon community still prefer to ignore and even deny that the massacre at Mountain Meadows ever took place. As Juanita Brooks stated in the preface to her book on the subject,⁶ "we have tried to blot out the affair from our history." In some eyes, that desire extends to Lee as well. *The Deseret News*, the church owned newspaper in Salt Lake City, for years referred to Lees Ferry by alternate names such as the Paria Crossing, preferring to distance itself as far as possible from the Lee name. Brooks had a somewhat different attitude, saying "I feel sure that nothing but the truth can be good enough for the church to which I belong... We will let the accomplishments of the Mormon pioneers weigh against their mistakes without apology."

Kern Nuttall

FOOTNOTES:

1. P.T. REILLY, *Lees Ferry, from Mormon Crossing to National Park*, Utah State University Press, Logan, 1999, p 19.
2. Reilly, *Lees Ferry*, p 444.
3. *Arizona Daily Sun* 1961 Oct 13, p 3: *Lees Ferry Monument to be Dedicated*.
4. Lee Monument Dedication photo notes, October, 1961, Glen Canyon Archives.
5. Reilly, *Lees Ferry*, p 25.
6. JUANITA BROOKS, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2ND ed., 1970.
7. Find A Grave website (www.findagrave.com): John Doyle Lee.
8. Reilly, *Lees Ferry*, p 53.

Cooler Research— An Evaluation of Block Ice Versus Cube Ice

INTRODUCTION

COOLERS OR “ICE CHESTS” are commonly used to store food and beverages when electricity is not available. Refrigerated storage helps prevent sickness due to foodborne microorganisms. The National Park Service “2016 Commercial Operating Requirement” states that commercial operators must keep “potentially hazardous” food at or below 45 degrees Fahrenheit (7.2 degrees Celcius). (Reference 1). This second Cooler Research article evaluates cube ice compared to block ice.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The experimental setup and protocol was described in a previous article (Reference 2) and remains the same. Experiments were conducted at a room temperature of 107.2 degrees Fahrenheit.

24.0 kilograms of ice were used in each cooler, 47 percent of the manufacturers stated capacity of 113 pounds. The block ice was prepared as described in a previous publication (Reference 2). The cube ice was purchased commercially and consisted of cubes approximately 1.25 inches tall by 1.1 inches in diameter.

Experiments were initiated by removing the ice from a freezer, loading it immediately into coolers and closing the coolers.

Each cooler lid was held down using two NRS nine-foot tie-down straps around the lid and cooler.

RESULTS

The results for each cooler are described below and the data presented in graphs. The temperature at the Bottom, Mid-Low and High sensors is plotted versus the hours since closing the cooler. For both coolers there is an initial period (Phase 1) of approximately ten hours when the freezer temperature ice is warming up. The legend in the lower right identifies the vertical position of each sensor in the cooler: (High, Mid-Low, Bottom). A red dotted horizontal line shows the Park Service upper limits for Commercial Operators. A horizontal blue line shows the freezing point of water.

BOTTOM: The results for the temperature at the Bottom are plotted in Figure 1. The temperature at the bottom sensor of the Drained Blocks cooler stays below the Commercial Operators Limit of 45 degrees Fahrenheit for 32.5 hours. The temperature is below 45 degrees Fahrenheit limit for 92 hours for the Un-Drained Blocks cooler and for 85 hours for Un-Drained Cubes.

MID-LOW: The results for the Mid-Low temperature are plotted in Figure 2. The temperature at the Mid-Low sensor of the Drained Blocks cooler stays below the Commercial Operators Limit of 45 degrees Fahrenheit for nine hours. The temperature is below 45 degrees Fahrenheit limit for 65 hours for the Un-Drained Blocks cooler and for 52 hours for Un-Drained Cubes.

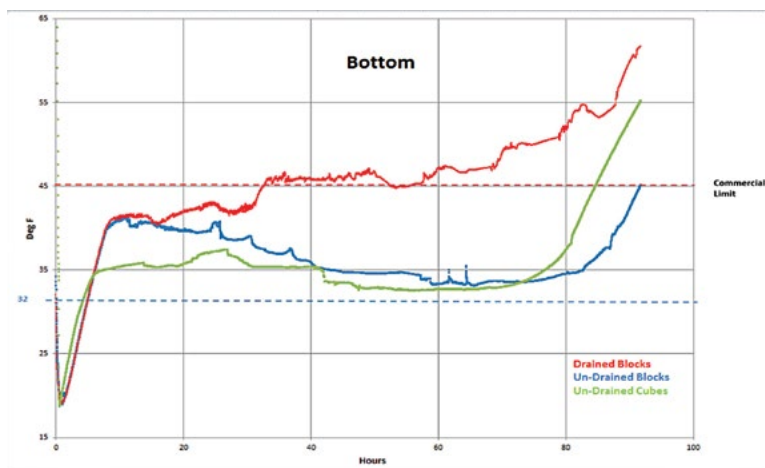


Figure 1.

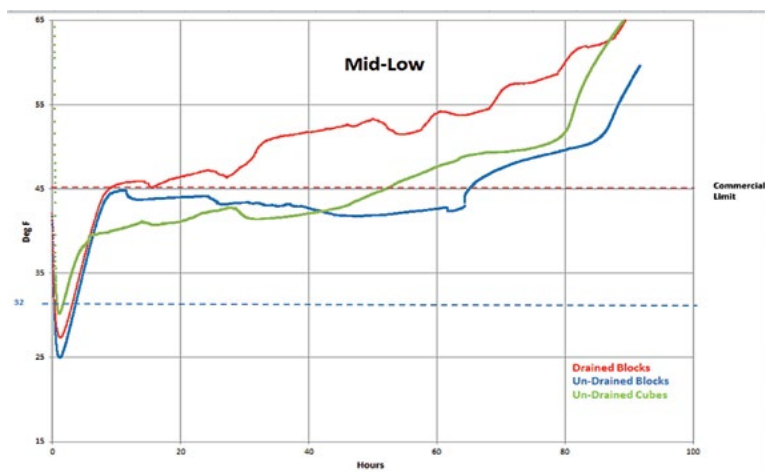


Figure 2.

High: The results for the High temperature are plotted in Figure 3. The temperature at the High sensor of the Drained Blocks cooler stays below the Commercial Operators Limit of 45 degrees Fahrenheit for approximately seven hours. The temperature is below 45 degrees Fahrenheit limit for approximately seven hours for the Un-Drained Blocks cooler and for seventeen hours for Un-Drained Cubes.

DISCUSSION

The Table below summarizes the results. It is the conversion of ice to water that is primarily responsible for the cooling effect. It takes eighty calories of heat energy to melt one gram of ice. In an ideal well stirred environment, the temperature of a water and ice mixture will remain constant at 32 degrees Fahrenheit until all of the ice has melted. Only then can the temperature of the water increase. It is the total amount of influx heat and the total mass of the ice that determines when this occurs. It is the mass (weight) of the ice and not its density that determines its efficacy.

With the same mass of ice in cubes and blocks, the difference in the results is due to secondary factors. The cubes, being smaller, have more complete contact with the lower sides of the cooler and more readily convert any inbound heat to meltwater. This effect is most apparent in the Bottom Data. The cubes maintain a lower initial temperature than the blocks. This persists until enough meltwater has formed and the performance of the cubes and blocks converge.

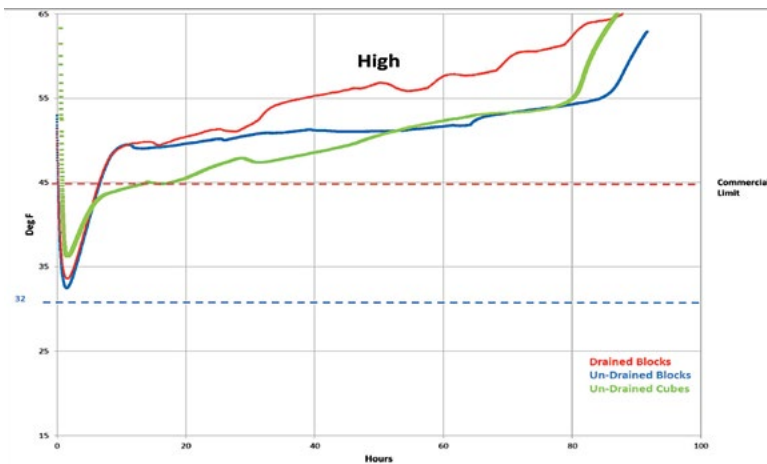


Figure 3.

Temperature and longevity are tradeoffs. The colder initial temperature for the cubes results in quicker melt and shorter ice lifetime compared to blocks.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that Un-Drained Cubes provide lower cooler temperature than Un-Drained Blocks for the initial hours.

However, at the bottom of the cooler, the temperature with the Un-Drained Blocks stays below the Commercial limit seven hours longer than with the Un-Drained Cubes.

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	Drained Blocks	Un-Drained Blocks	Un-Drained Cubes
Sensor Location	Hours below Commercial Limit	Hours below Commercial Limit	Hours below Commercial Limit
High	~7	~7	17
Mid-Low	9	65	52
Bottom	32.5	92	85

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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1. 2016 Commercial Operators Requirements, Page 18, Section 2a.
2. LACROIX AND WERNESS: Cooler Research: An evaluation of Drained versus Un-Drained coolers loaded with ice, *The Boatman’s Quarterly Review*, Volume 31, Number 4, Winter 2018–2019, pages 6–8.

Ken Sleight

“I really liked the history of each river I ever went down. Wherever I lived I wanted to know its history. That’s an important part of myself.”

—KEN SLEIGHT, DECEMBER 2018

*“They say the river can’t be run,
The waters down –It can’t be done.
But if anyone can shoot it through,
It’s old Seldom Seen and his macho crew.”*

—VAUGHN SHORT

(excerpt from “Seldom Seen and His Macho Crew,” *Raging River, Lonely Trail: Tails Told by the Campfire’s Glow*, with permission from Glen Canyon Conservancy)

FOR MOST READERS of the Boatman’s Quarterly Review, the name Ken Sleight is a familiar one. You might have worked for him as a boatman or came together for an environmental cause. Others may have had his support in starting their non-profits. Some may have shared meals with him and his wife, Jane, at Pack Creek Ranch. And some may know him through written words, both his own and other’s. Many guides will have read “Seldom Seen and His Macho Crew” by Vaughn Short while running trips in Grand Canyon or daydreamed of Seldom Seen and that precision earthquake in Edward Abbey’s, “The Monkey Wrench Gang.” To put it plainly, Ken is well known and revered by our river community.

For the past four years, I have spent most of my days between river seasons, working with Ken –archiving his astounding collection of photos, slides, maps, and letters. And some days we write, working on his memoir that is forty years in the making.

Ken has fought to protect wild places and stood up for the rights of others. He is a historian, an archivist, and a writer. His Quonset hut is a trove of river history and more, each trip list from his thirty-plus years of guiding, filed away. He is kind and endearing. When you walk in the door, without fail, he makes you feel like you are just the person he’d hoped to see that day. “Well look who it is!” You see it in the way he is with animals—his dog, Boy, or his chickens.

The stories that follow are from interviews done with Ken throughout the summer and fall of 2018. At 89 years old, these are the stories that came forth—the stories that burn bright in the mind of a man who has been intimately intertwined with the rivers and landscapes of the Colorado Plateau since 1951.

—RYANN SAVINO

* * *

THE START

RYANN SAVINO: I’m going to start from the beginning for now.

KEN SLEIGHT: What’s your name?

SAVINO: Oh, my name?

SLEIGHT: No, my name. You ask me what my name is. Ken Sleight! (chuckles)

SAVINO: How old are you, Ken?

SLEIGHT: I am now, at this late age, I am now 89, going on ninety.

SAVINO: When’s your birthday?

SLEIGHT: Sixteen August, 1929.

SAVINO: And where were you born?

SLEIGHT: Paris. (pause) Paris, Idaho, that is. (laughs) So that’s where I was born, in a little log cabin. Yeah, it was in a little log cabin...It soon burnt down so we had to move into Dad’s feed and grain warehouse. Dad then built a little room upstairs in the warehouse, and that’s where our family lived for the next ten years; that’s where I lived the next ten years, in a little dusty apartment that Dad built. Beautiful time—it was a beautiful time.

SAVINO: And you helped work at your dad’s warehouse?

SLEIGHT: Well, when I got a little older, then I helped him sweep and I helped him do little odd jobs like patching sacks. Then a little later, I chopped a lot of the grain for him, for these local folks he catered to—big hammer mill—helped me go deaf. (chuckles)

SAVINO: Was it during that time you would go to your grandparents’ for the summer?

SLEIGHT: A little later. My sister, Maxine, was born first. A couple years later, here I come along—1929. And then a couple years later, here comes a couple more—twins. So that’s getting to be a pretty big family for such a small apartment we had. So they shipped me off to my grandfolks in Ovid—Grandpa and Grandma Peterson. I lived in Ovid during much of the summertime. I used to go down there and do a lot of farming—harvest the hay, and take care of the cattle, and take the cattle down into the bottomlands.

Then I had a horse, Grandpa’s horse, a racehorse, by the name of Lady. Later on, I got her colt and named her Queen. Grandpa gave her to me. And when we moved to Utah I took Queen with me.

I enjoyed so much working down there in Ovid. I got to go down in the bottomlands and play around and run my horse through the sloughs and all that. It



Ken and his horse in Escalante Canyon. Photo by Bill Adams, Ken Sleight Collection.

was good, it was fine. I'd see a lot of wildlife, a lot of birds. During that period I had the great experience of getting acquainted with being outdoors. That was the start of my whole life, you know—outdoors stuff.

SAVINO: I was going to ask how you thought your childhood impacted the rest of your life and what you decided to do.

SLEIGHT: In regard to the outdoors, well certainly it impacted my whole life, because I never searched for anything else—not quite. I couldn't forget the outdoors, the wildlife. It certainly told me what I had to do in the future. My cousin, Norman Sleight, he and I used to go down in the bottomlands on the Bear River and play around in the creeks and the river—playing around on the boats that were down there. So it pretty well acclimated me to my future doings when I got into the river business. Very helpful.

A year after we moved to Utah, Woods Cross, Norman drowned down on that river in Idaho. That was a big shock. I wasn't there to save him, I guess. He and I pretty well set the stage for later things on the rivers.

* * *

SAVINO: So would you say your earliest memories of being around rivers and water then was with your cousin Norman?

SLEIGHT: That was one of them. I had a whole bunch of other cousins and friends that I buddied around with and went up into the mountains—it wasn't just down on the bottomlands—it was up there on the mountains to the west. Went up there with the springs and Paris Canyon, Sleight Canyon, and other areas that a whole bunch of us explored when I was five, six years old. We

were just always up there; it was a good thing. When I was in Paris, we hiked around. When I was in Ovid, then I worked on the farm.

SAVINO: You've mentioned your grandparents a lot to me; it seems like they were great people. Were they pretty important to you?

SLEIGHT: Yeah... They had a little log cabin, two-room, just a little bitty thing. That's where I lived with them. They had raised several children before that, and so, when I went there I was just a duplicate of what they once had. They were glad to see me. I worked with the horses and the cows and all. Grandma, she taught me how to shoot the .22 rifle, and

took me out in the fields to shoot squirrels. She did a pretty good job. I wasn't as expert as she was. She was a good shot! So she taught me a lot of that, taught me about the chickens.

Then there was Grandpa. Grandpa and his son, Harley, took care of the outdoors and all the alfalfa and so forth. My Uncle Harley lived next door, down the way a little bit. So I got acquainted with all the farm stuff. Great little farm we had. Harley's was really good too, his farmland. Often, I went over there and threw the hay on the wagon, and I was on top, trompin' it. Had a big runaway one time, with these horses. I'm on top of the load, the reins on the ground, watchin' the horses go toward the fence, and then they changed direction. Even at that time I thought we were gonna turn over—we didn't.

We were going right straight to the fence, and I knew at that time if we continued to go that way, and the horses made a sudden turn, the wagon would go over. But they started swervin' off earlier. They just made a big circle into the field, and I was on top. It was great fun! A little fearful here and there, but it was good. I knew what was going on; it was no surprise to me. Grandpa and Harley was throwin' the hay up on top, and I'm trompin' it, see. They laughed whenever they threw up a snake at me or somethin'. They thought it was all in fun and all that. It was fun, yeah... It was still pioneer days. We were even at that time cuttin' down lots of weeds and brush and everything, by hand, so that we could plant some alfalfa... So my whole life, it seems like, was from the pioneer day era. That was in '29 and the thirties, we were still doing that. Then when we went down to Utah, then it started changing, we started being "civilized." But those first ten years, my growing up, it

was a great era for me.

SAVINO: Did you miss those pioneer days when you left and moved down to Woods Cross?

SLEIGHT: Dad had purchased a farm when we came to Utah; that was in 1940. It had lot of fruit trees and row crops and so forth to take care of. I went from helping Grandpa to actually doing the farm jobs, and I was in charge of the horses. We had three horses. They pulled the discs and all, and I was in charge of all that. See, I was the oldest son. The twins, they were two years younger than I was, so I was told to take care of the things, and I did...

I never knew that I was going to cover such a *long* stretch from pioneer days to what we have today. They were much better days, those days, than what we have today—in my mind, of course...Much greater feeling of realness. It'd be easy for me to go back to those days, working with the horses and all, and the cows. And then they'd go out, my uncle and aunt were happy to go out and square dance each weekend.

SAVINO: Did you ever go with them?

SLEIGHT: Oh yeah, I went and watched them at times, but I didn't dance.

SAVINO: You were a pretty good dancer though, weren't you?

SLEIGHT: No, I wasn't a great dancer.

SAVINO: But you liked it?

SLEIGHT: Oh, I liked it, and then later on when I was in Utah, my girlfriend and I went down and square danced and round danced. She taught me a lot on dancing. We went and entered the All-Church dance festival at the University of Utah and danced up there in the stadium's football field. So that was fun. I could square dance fairly well. I liked to do that. Learned a little fox trot too, of course, and did some waltzing. Even at the University of Utah I took dance lessons. It was fun, but of course it wasn't my life's endeavor.

SAVINO: What would you say your life's endeavor was?

SLEIGHT: It was the river. I got acquainted with the river. That's another story because it comes in with my buddies and Bert Loper...

* * *

SLEIGHT: I always tell the story around campfires and all. Maybe I can here, I don't know. When I was at the University of Utah, I joined the Lambda Delta Sigma, a Mormon group at the University. There I met a lot of folk. It was just like a fraternity, you know. Some of the kids there, even then, were going down Glen Canyon on the Colorado River.

A bunch of us—there was Jim Dean, Bob Waite, myself, and a couple others—went down in the car, down to Southern Utah. First we drove down to Capitol Reef, a National Monument at that time... then we got a flat tire; go back and get another tire. I think that whole trip we went through about seven or eight tires, used tires... Couldn't get through all the way because of flooding and what not, through Capitol Reef, down to Hanksville, so we turned around and went back up through the area around Waterpocket Fold.

SAVINO: Waterpocket Fold later became an important place for you; you fought to protect it.

SLEIGHT: Yes, Waterpocket Fold was later important. Then we went over back to Green River, camped there, right next to the river. Then we went south to Moab and Arches, went through Arches all in one day... Then we took this trail, the road up to Pack Creek Ranch, searching for a place to lay down for the night.

SAVINO: You came up here to where you live now?

SLEIGHT: I saw Pack Creek Ranch *way* before we ever bought it. It was family-run, so we didn't stop here... we went on up to the little lakes. Warner Lake—that's where we stayed the night. The next day, well, we went down to Bluff and stayed at Father Lieber's mission there, out there on the San Juan River, up the road to Montezuma Creek.

SAVINO: How long do you think that trip was in total?

SLEIGHT: It was about a week.

SAVINO: But it made a big difference in your life.

SLEIGHT: Yeah...the essence of the thing was Jim Dean had gone down the river with this guy called Bert Loper; he knew Bert Loper quite well. Back in 1949, Loper had either drowned, had a heart attack, or something. Anyway, he died down in Grand Canyon at 24½ Mile Rapid. Of course I knew all of this because



Ken with Bert Loper's intact boat, *Grand Canyon*.
Photo by Bill Adams, Ken Sleight Collection.

of the news and all. I always wanted to meet Bert Loper, period. Later on of course, I saw all that he had done at the town of Green River and I learned about all that he had done in Glen Canyon. So he was a hero of mine.

While on that road trip, Jim Dean says, "We've got a bunch of friends going down the Lodore Canyon in a few weeks. Would you like to go?" He said Al Quist, Moki Mac Ellingson, and other friends were gonna be on the trip. So I decided to go with them, and I went there...got there just in time, just a couple of weeks before I had to go into the army, because I already enlisted, or more or less told them to take me. But we went down that river, a great trip. That was my first river trip on the Green River system—part of the Colorado River System, actually. We had four of the 10-man neoprene rafts—four of 'em we took down with different tillers who told us how to do it. We were not rowing, but each of us on each boat had paddles.

SAVINO: Were they all paddle boats?

SLEIGHT: That's the way they did it with the Boy Scouts that they were taking down on their other trips, so that's the cheapest we could do. But we went down, two boats went over—not mine, though! Not mine. Jim Dean was the captain of my boat. We went through without any problem, but Moki flipped his, and somebody else flipped another one. I think one of 'em was up there, was Hell's Half or something like that. I've got it in my notes. It was rainin' like hell too... And I said, "If Moki can do it, then I can do it, too." That's what I was gonna do when I grew up...

SAVINO: You knew on that first trip?

SLEIGHT: That first trip did it...

* * *

SLEIGHT: That all started with Bert Loper, really—the story of Bert Loper—my Glen Canyon stuff and the river.

Blaine Busenbark, he's the nephew of Bert Loper. He was on that auto trip down through the parks with me and we talked a lot about Bert. Okay, we talked about the river, we talked about Bert. Actually, the whole trip is two-thirds regarding the rivers, where they had, of course, Moki Mac. Well, Moki Mac wasn't on that



Top: Making Breakfast on one of Ken's early trips. Ken kneeling in front of the griddle with Jack Brennan (front, in blue shoes). "Jack Brennan he loved to cook bacon—to flip 'em over." Ken Sleight Collection.

Bottom: The way it was: the chef at breakfast. Ken's kitchen, Cataract Canyon, 1964. Photo by H. Bennett, Ken Sleight Collection.

ride, but they told me about Moki Mac. They talked about Al Quist, they talked about all that. And so I just automatically slipped into it. Out of that friendship cruise we took, well...But yet, I had to finish school, had to finish the army, had to...But that trip we had, spring break, that turned my whole life about.

It introduced me to the whole thing, what all my friends were up to. They were all hikers and all enjoyed the outdoors, so I just fit right in. My big mistake from not gettin' in the river earlier was that I had to go into the army. Once I was in, I was in, and I couldn't beg out. I didn't try. But all during the army, well, I had my mind pretty well set on getting back and doin' the rivers. After Korea, I came back and finished my schooling. That's when Firestone came in...

* * *

SLEIGHT: ...After I graduated from the University of Utah, I went to Firestone Tire and Rubber, the district office in Salt Lake, first really paying job I had. A lot of paperwork, of course. I became the head guy on the payment of employees as employed in Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Utah. I was taking care of their payroll. But after a year there—that was my first job after graduating—they asked me if I wanted to go to Logan, Utah, to start manager training. “Oh, that sounds great! I’ll go to Logan.” That’s pretty close to, you know, Bear Lake, so it was a natural hook-up; so I took them up on that. There I learned how to sell tires and other equipment. My problem with that was I still remembered my river trips, I wanted to be a river outfitter. And so I decided one day, “I’m going to quit this job.” Great job. I really enjoyed my time with Firestone, but I also wanted to go river running. During that period I went and bought a number—I believe it was about five or six of the boats, rafts, 10-man rafts, the same type of stuff that they used in Normandy, I guess—a lot of surplus stuff—bought all that in anticipation of working on the river. But once I quit Firestone, the salary quit coming. If I don’t work for Firestone, I don’t get any money, so I went and got another job down near Salt Lake, at Woods Cross for Sure Seal Corporation. It was a wax factory type of thing. They get their wax from oil and so forth from the Uintah Basin... Well, after a little while, the company went broke... They had all that stuff to sell. I said, “I can sell all that.” So they turned the whole thing over to me. I even took the cans and the wax down to Dad’s building in Bountiful and stored them in the basement...

Okay, while that was going on, I was pushing river trips. I catered to the Boy Scouts to come with me down Glen Canyon. The trouble with the Boy Scout groups is that they had to raise money so they could come with me. So I gave them all these pots and these pans, cans, and the wax, told them, “Go sell it!” Which they did. I even went down and told them how to do everything and all that. That’s the way that some of the groups got enough money to pay me back to take them down the river. So that was the start of that.

Then after Sure Seal, I had to continue bringing in money to live on. So I said, “Okay, I’ll apply for a job with Salt Lake City School District to substitute teach.” I had a lot of education classes I had taken at the University of Utah. I knew what I was getting into, more or less, more or less. So I applied. Hell if they didn’t accept me! During the winter, or when I wasn’t on the river, they called me and asked me to substitute



Ken and wife, Jane, forever lovebirds at Pack Creek Ranch.
Photo by Tim Turner.



Ken and his family at the exhibit opening of
Glen Canyon: A River Guide Remembers, 4 May 2018 at the John
Wesley Powell River History Museum in Green River, Utah.
Left to Right: Jane, Jeff, Ken, Mark, and Gay.
Photo by Sarah Burnett, Glen Canyon Exhibit Collection.

this class and that class. And that Salt Lake City School District went all the way from the major high schools to junior high, so I was called all the time. They were disappointed when I said I couldn’t do it. When I was running the rivers, I told them I couldn’t teach during that period, “but after I get back, do call me,” and they did. Substitute teaching was a big part of my life... I taught in nearly every school in the district, I’m sure—junior high and high school. It was a very fruitful time for me, because it was the first time I ever taught.

SAVINO: You really liked teaching, didn’t you?

SLEIGHT: I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed it.

SAVINO: That’s what you were doing on the rivers, too.

SLEIGHT: Well, it's the same thing. That's what gave me the impetus that I could do that—the river trips—talking to people one way or another. It got me out of much of my timidity, which had been an albatross all during my growing-up years. The rivers certainly brought that out of me. One needs to communicate, to talk to people. I learned to do it.

* * *

SLEIGHT: ... So I substituted for about four years and I became good at it, I thought. When I went to East High School I always told 'em some stories about the river and all. This one English class—why they called me for English, I don't know—but anyway, I went there and met these students—Ron Smith, Art Gallenson, and Art Fenstermaker. After the class was over, after I told 'em about the rivers, they came up and wanted to talk more. So I became quite acquainted with them through my teaching 'em. At that time, all three of them were protesting East High School lunches; their lunches were terrible, they said. They were campaigning for better eatin' when they were there. So I said, "These guys must be pretty good." After a little while I said, "Well, let's get together on the river."

I was taking scout groups out at that time, and I invited them down to Glen Canyon to help me take care of some trips with the Scouts. They came; they decided they liked it themselves. Ron Smith decided he was gonna be a river outfitter. He did a good job. (Ron founded Grand Canyon Expeditions with his wife

Sheila in 1964). Art Gallenson, after many river trips, well he decided he wanted to fly planes and got jobs in the Las Vegas area—Boulder. Fenstermaker, he came every once in a while to run rivers. He became a Union organizer type of thing, convinced others to join the Union. I had a great time with those guys—most of the trips were in Glen Canyon or Desolation Canyon... These three, boy, they excelled, so I kept 'em on as long as they'd stay... They were easy to teach, to learn. They were always interested in history, so it was a good deal.

* * *

RIVER DAYS

The year was 1955 when Ken, with the help of his high school buddy, Ralph Larsen, started his outfit, Wonderland Expeditions. Most of his trips for the first two years were river trips through Glen Canyon with Boy Scout troops and different Mormon church wards in the Salt Lake Valley. However, pack trips were always a part of Ken's outfit as well—leading exploratory trips over the years in Grand Gulch, the Powell Plateau, Escalante, Kaiparowits, Canyonlands and Arches National Parks, to name a few. In 1979, Ken turned over his Grand Canyon river permit to his son, Mark. Ken continued to run his other river trips out of Green River with the help of his other sons, Jeff and Steve. All the while, he kept his pack trips going. First in Green River and then later, in partnership with his wife, Jane, at Pack Creek Ranch on the foothills of the La Sal Mountains.



Above: Ken's kids as children in Yosemite — Steve, Mark, Kerry, and Jeff. Ken Sleight Collection.

Left: "Cooling off time." Ken pours a bucket of water on his sons, 1966. Ken Sleight Collection.

Ken never worked under another outfitter but learned how to run trips through his own experience, guiding from the Yukon to Peru, always with the desire to explore and experience the landscape and its wonders.

* * *

SAVINO: So when you started doing river trips, and throughout the years, what were all the different river stretches you ran? You started in Glen Canyon right?

SLEIGHT: The first trips were mostly—took a lot of trips in Desolation Canyon, and up in Lodore Canyon of Dinosaur National Monument. Then, of course a whole bunch of trips in Glen Canyon. But I'd have to say, in the very beginning, it was Desolation and Glen Canyon that got me going into river running.

SAVINO: And then over the years, you did trips in Grand Canyon, Cataract Canyon, and the Usumacinta in Mexico. How many times did you run the Usumacinta?

SLEIGHT: Three times in Usumacinta. I took all these other trips, but I included Big Bend National Park because I was driving down through Texas to Mexico, and then to Usumacinta. So why not include Big Bend?...I knew that there was a river that could be navigated, so I decided to take trips down there, and the Park Service agreed to my running down there. So that became just like the other trips I was taking up here with the Park Service and all. But when I didn't

keep going down to Mexico, after a few years, I gave up the Big Bend trips.

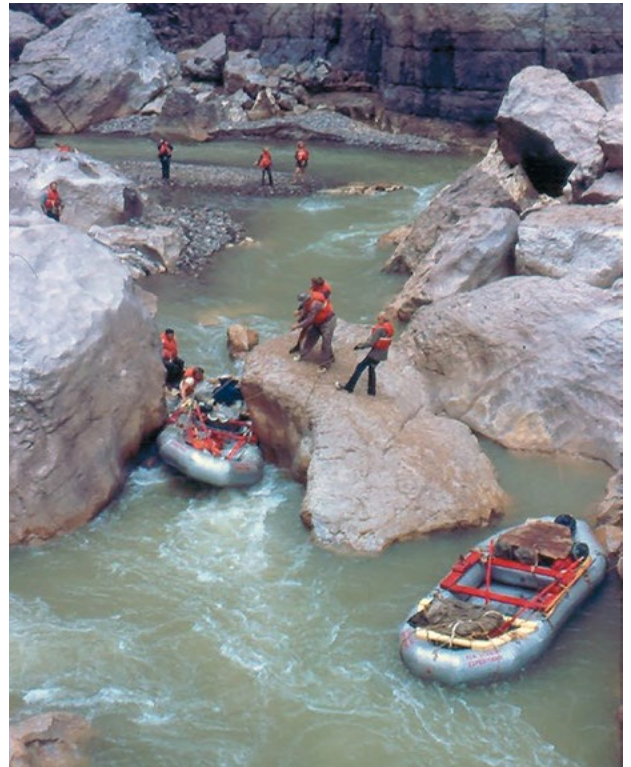
The distance to Texas and Mexico was killing. It's a long way from here clear to Big Bend. And the amount of money I could make off one or two trips, or even three trips...if I stayed down there for a while I could do pretty good, but then it interrupts with what I was doing up here in Utah. That was the trouble with new trips, just like when UCLA asked me if I'd run a few trips down there in Mexico and South America for them. I first met them down in Mexico, see. They were taking stuff out of the *cenotes*. They invited me to come and chat with them at UCLA to get a permanent job, a "real job" maybe. So I went down to UCLA and they offered me that, and I thought about it and thought about it. The trouble was, it would have interfered with the trips up here I had—Grand Canyon and Glen Canyon. If I was down there, I couldn't take the trips up here, unless I delegated them out, like some of the outfitters learned to do. But I couldn't do it. If I couldn't be on the trip, I felt very uncomfortable.

SAVINO: Was Grand Canyon really the only place where you had other people be trip leaders for you?

SLEIGHT: Mostly, and Desolation Canyon. Glen Canyon was pretty much myself, during those years, but... the Grand Canyon was another ball of wax. One thing about Grand Canyon, you could enlist clients better than you could all the others. That's the way it was then and it's still that way...But, it did take much



Carrying the boat at the take-out for the Usumacinta River in Mexico, Jack Brennan in back, January 1969. As Ken remembers, "All those little kids, they loved it." Ken Sleight Collection.



A "side trip" in Big Bend, Ken and others on the Rio Grande, circa 1973. Photo by Bill Adams, Ken Sleight Collection.



Mark Sleight, Amil Quayle, Kelly Shuldberg, and Ken Sleight. Ken Sleight Collection.

more preparation. What Grand Canyon was, you were preparing for lots of rapids, as you know. You've got to take care of the food and everything else you carry with you—and of course the people themselves. Grand Canyon was much more of a challenge than the other rivers. Glen Canyon wasn't bad—load up your boat, don't even have to have the rigid type of equipment, tie-downs and everything that you did have on the Grand Canyon. But we did that too, we did that too. So it wasn't too bad, my gradation from Glen Canyon to Grand.

The reason I went to Grand Canyon—it wasn't one of my initial trips—my initial trips were, of course, up in Glen Canyon and Cataract Canyon and Desolation Canyon and Lodore. That was the initial things. And the ones I kept taking more and more people down, wasn't Grand Canyon *until* 1963, when they closed the coffer dam. That changed things. Then I had no further river in Glen Canyon. *Then* I started running Grand Canyon, at that time—not before. It was the dam that decided I'd start tripping down into Grand Canyon. I took quite a number of trips down there. It was great, but there was no more Glen Canyon as we knew it.

Then I took a lot of trips up in Desolation and Cataract. Even Cataract started being less of an attraction because of the reservoir coming up into it. It took out a few rapids, but we still went down there quite a bit. Most of my river running was in the Upper Colorado Plateau.

I could only take on so many trips a year. I could farm out trips, which I started doing, and I really didn't enjoy that, just sitting back and not being on the trip. I'd just as well be selling tires for Firestone, as a river trip if I'm not on it. I thought a lot about that. The reason I started my company was so that I could go on all the river trips. Not to make a business, per se. I could have stayed with Firestone. So I felt uncomfortable sending out trips without me on it—but I did. Got a good group of boatmen, guides. I turned the head guide, Kim Crumbo, and Mark, his brother, he was there. So were others—Brad Dimock, Amil Quayle, Kathy Howe, Myron Cook, Brad Udall, my sons. And... Oh, you know him.

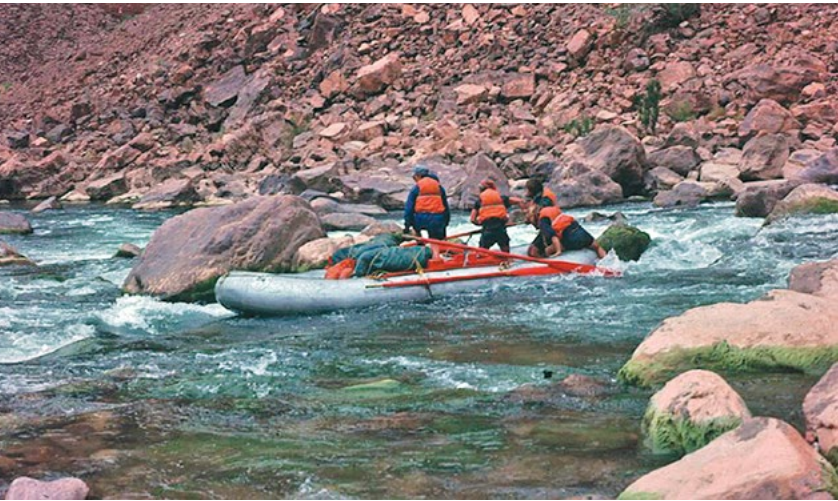
SAVINO: Stuart Reeder?

SLEIGHT: Oh, Stuart. He kept coming on the scene, and I kept hiring him back. That was the Green River stable. And many others; I had greatest guides.

I'd pick them up. It depends on how many people you've got on the trip. How many boatmen do I need? Okay. I've got my stable of river people, but sometimes I needed more. Called Stuart, "Okay, Stuart, whatcha got on the..."... Check him out, see what you got going this week. Then you grab him, tell him, "I've got a job for you. The wage is low, but at least you've got a job," that type of thing. (laughs)

SAVINO: The Quists worked for you sometimes, right?

SLEIGHT: When they came back from their missions



Boatmen navigating Hance Rapid on Ken's 1977 low water trip. Vaughn Short Collection, courtesy of Carolyn Short.

"...Six days gone, we're still at Hance.
The people swear, there's not a chance,
But the Boatmen do it, possible or not--
Shoot their eight-foot boats through a six-foot slot!"

Excerpt from "Seldom Seen and His Macho Crew"
by Vaughn Short.

and from the service and all that, well...Both of them, Clair and Bob. They started boating' with me...boated with me a lot. And of course there's Moki Mac right there.

SAVINO: And he'd come on your trips?

SLEIGHT: Oh yeah. Yeah, you bet. He was on that boat, the big pontoon, hit Dark Canyon rapid. That motor went zooming' out, broke up, now down in the bottom of the reservoir there at Dark Canyon. I can show you where you've got to drain the reservoir so we can get that motor out. It's still there, of course. But it went zooming. I remember, I saw it. Moki Mac was at the helm. "It wasn't me, it wasn't my fault, Moki!"

SAVINO: One thing I think is really special is that it seems like everyone who you mentioned who was a boatman for you, they're all still good friends. Bob Quist came and visited today. I see Stuart Reeder here often. How do you think that happened—that these people who were employees for you and you were their boss, were also your friends?

SLEIGHT: It becomes like a big family...Every once in awhile something comes up—good, bad, or whatever, however you look at it—but they're still family. Even though they're each very much different, I feel like they have a tremendous amount of influence...That's



Ken's 1977 historic low water Grand Canyon trip. Boatmen working to free raft in Unkar Rapid. Kim Crumbo (third from left) and Ken (at the bow) working the line. Vaughn Short Collection, courtesy of Carolyn Short.

what makes them great guides, boatmen. They have to meet, they have to get along with all the others, and at times we had little difficulties here and there. You just chat your beliefs out. That's what we all did as a family of river guides.

And the same with other outfits being on the river: you get to know different people, especially the outfitter themselves. And a lot of that, differences of opinion on varied issues. That's what it was with Western River Guides Association. I got to know all the outfitters and many of the guides. So you know what other outfits and guides overall are doing.

In 1967 Ken took his turn as president for the Western River Guides Association and continued to bring environmental causes and wilderness protection to the forefront of the organization's work.

* * *

SAVINO: Could you tell me about your last trip in Grand Canyon?

SLEIGHT: I don't remember the date exactly but the last trip that I took down Grand Canyon was in 1979 and was when I met my future wife, Jane. She was the de-facto leader of the trip really, and she got a whole bunch of folks—her friends—from Jackson Hole, Wyoming. They were of the Republican stripe really. Met 'em at the Page Boy Motel. After meeting them I told them to hop in the truck and drove them down to Lees Ferry. Herded them on the boats and started down river. And Dan Lehman was with me; he had his own boat—big pontoon.

SAVINO: Did Dan come on a lot of trips for you?

SLEIGHT: Lots of trips.

SAVINO: What was he like?

SLEIGHT: He was a big tall lanky boatman of German heritage. He made a lot of sauerkraut, which he brought with him on the trips. He sang beautifully. He played the guitar and entertained, entertained, and the whole group would just fall in love with him and all. He used to boat with Harris-Brennan Expeditions, and when I needed another boatmen and another boat, Dan was a good person. At that same time I also took Jack Brennan on a number of trips to help me out.

SAVINO: It seems like Dan was pretty fun. Whenever I've heard you or Bob Quist talk about him, there is always a lot of laughter. Was he one of your go-to guys?

SLEIGHT: Yes, I'd have to call him a regular boatman. He came with me on dozens of trips. He entertained; he danced and so forth. Put on crazy costumes. You'd have loved him; everybody loved him. He was similar to Vaughn Short. They were two that used to come with me on a lot of trips.

Dan Lehman on the oars. Photo by John Appel, Ken Sleight Collection.



SAVINO: When did Vaughn first start coming on trips with you?

SLEIGHT: On a river trip down in Glen Canyon.

SAVINO: So you met Vaughn on a trip when he was a passenger but then he became one of your really good friends?

SLEIGHT: Yes, he came on a number of trips and because he wanted to help out, well, I started not chargin' him 'cause he was working so much. Especially because he helped on getting dinner ready and telling people how to put up their tents... Vaughn enjoyed coming because he could participate. He could recite his verses—his poems. He'd entertain my clients, same as Moki Mac did.

SAVINO: It seems like a lot of the poems Vaughn wrote, he wrote on trips with you.

SLEIGHT: Oh yeah, quite a number. He could concoct a poem in just a few minutes. We'd hike down the trail and at the end of the day he'd recite his poem that he'd been thinking about all day. He had so many poems in his head. So he joined me on many of my commercial trips and we also hiked together on a few trips, just he and I. He taught me a lot. I took some pointers from him on how to do things and so forth. Vaughn, to me, he was the old school. He wasn't a farmer but he had that make up of a rural person. A little like me.



Lunching with Ken and Moki Mac Ellingson, day three of the river trip, 1965. Photo by Marty Maricle, Ken Sleight Collection.

So those two are Dan Lehman and Vaughn Short; they were both a great help.

Dan was with me in Grand Canyon when my boats got away. We were camped above Unkar on the right bank and I went to bed early. I told him, told Dan, to lash the boats to a big rock to keep them from going downstream when the water came up at night. He went to bed without doing it, after entertaining the troops. I never really blamed him, that was my job. But the one rope was not fastened right and the water came up, because it did, you know, because of the dam, the boat came up and loosened my two lashing ropes. One got off and the other one slipped off the rock also. And the boats went down. I

got up about two o'clock. Go down and look at the boats. Because I always did that in the early morning, two or three o'clock go down and see how all the boats are. And there was no boats. I walked, probably struggled 'cause it was at night, downstream to see if the boats were further down, and thinking maybe the boatmen were trying to scare me, "The boats are gone!" you know. I didn't see any boats down there, and pretty soon I realized that I had no boat—my triple-rig. So I thought about what to do about it. And decided well I'll hook on a ride with some of the big pontoon people, and I went upstream to talk to them and I said to Dan, "Go downstream and see if you can find anybody down there to help us out." He went downstream and I went upstream and I found another trip there up above me. Hopped on their big pontoons, that's where their boatman were sleeping. Asked the head guy, I can't quite remember his name.

I told them my woes and they offered to take me down when they came down in the morning. They only had a small group, relatively small. I thought they were going to have to take me all the way to Phantom Ranch and then I was going to fly all my folks out. But, surprise, a few bends down the way there was my triple-rig off into an eddy. Somebody that was camped down below us had lashed the rope to the bank. There my boat was. And I had worked on the motor the night before, getting it ready and it was still propped up like that. I lowered it down in the river and pulled the chord—"Zzzzz"—it went right on. And once I knew that that was functional, well I loaded all my people and the gear back onto my triple-rig.



Ken's triple-rig in Glen Canyon, early 1960s. Ken was among the first to use the triple-rig set-up on river trips. Ken in back on the motor and cowboy-hatted Vaughn Short, kneeling on the front tube. Vaughn Short Collection, courtesy of Carolyn Short.

So that was at Unkar. My boats evidently ran Unkar rapid *really* well, all by themselves. Nobody there, yeah yeah. And, the motor was still up, propped up, like I left it the night before. The tools were still there, too. My boat had a nice run through Unkar Rapid.

I took my whole group all the way through Grand after that. And Dan was a boatman on that trip, a boatman on the triple-rig. Once in a while on the triple-rig we put the oars on the outer boats and just enjoyed the trip without the motor. Most of the time on the triple-rig I had a motor goin', unless, it was a quiet section of the river and then I'd turn off the motor and just float down. But, the funny thing is, all down the river, passin other outfits on that one trip, they'd always yell out, "You got your boat back! You got your boat back!" Everybody knew going down the river, everybody knew I'd lost my boats for a little while. So that was that story. I told that story at the Fine Arts Museum in Salt Lake one time. It was a good story.

SAVINO: It is a good story.

SLEIGHT: I've forgot a lot of it.

SAVINO: I feel like you've remembered quite a bit of it. I don't know how many times I've woken up at night on the river and I'm disoriented and I think my boats have come untied and I'm floating downriver.

SLEIGHT: That's the problem of sleeping on a boat. You feel it at night, you think you're floating downriver. Just like you stated. I put my hand down in the water, I can feel it. There's that sensation—the boat got away. It's just like once in a while on Labyrinth and Stillwater, well, I would let the boat just float, calm water. If it hits

the bank, so be it, it turns around and goes on down.

SAVINO: Are you saying you'd sleep on the boat in Labyrinth and let it keep going downstream?

SLEIGHT: Well I'd also do that in Glen Canyon. Just sleep on the boat for a little bit and then wake up. Every once in a while I'd do the same on inner tubes. The crew would have already taken the whole group downstream and I would get on the river on an inner tube with plywood on top of it, sleeping away, just sleeping away... My kids were on the triple-rig waiting for me downstream; I'd catch them.

Flipped once. The tube hit the wall,—“cchh!”—and I went into the river. So did the beefsteak that I was gonna have on the way down (chuckles). But, I caught the inner tube set-up I had and pushed it over to the riverbank so I could get back on. Went on down. I'd lost my paddle, but I did ok with just my arms. Got down to my group on time; I was a busy kid in those days.

SAVINO: Would you do that if you'd have been on another trip, or if you just couldn't start on the day the trip was launching?

SLEIGHT: Well I just had so much to do—see, I was working, farming also, at Willow Bend. And I had the cows up there, too. Instead of going on the river in the morning, I'd start out at night, so I'd give myself an extra day at home. And the boatmen, often my kids, could take care of the group on the river during that time. I didn't need to be down in that section, but I always wanted to be at the boat as it went through Cataract. But on Labyrinth and Stillwater, I didn't need to be on them. Depended on the trip.



Ken's Yukon trip pushing off the shore from Whitehorse, Yukon territory, July 1965.
Photo by Becky Noonan, Ken Sleight Collection.

* * *

Ken's river trip supplies were often all packed into the bed of his Ford pick-up truck and driven to the put-in. While the majority of his expeditions kept him in the Canyon Country, he also packed up and drove north to the Yukon at times. Bringing his children—Jeff, Mark, Kerry, and Steve—with him on one occasion. The Usumacinta and Big Bend brought him South.

* * *

SAVINO: So when you went to the Yukon, you would drive up from Utah, is that right, with all your gear?

SLEIGHT: Yeah, all my boats and so forth, load 'em on the truck, and food and everything. *Some* food I bought up there—anything fresh—'cause I couldn't take lettuces and things like that for very long... I just loaded everything in the truck, just like I did here.

SAVINO: Were you doing trips up there during the summer months?

SLEIGHT: Yes, in June, July, and August. But certain times there were a lot more, *many* more mosquitoes. If you wait until a little later, then all you get is the bugs. They're not bad, in my mind. They tickle your nose and all, but they don't bite. But those mosquitoes... It was very important when you decided to go up. You schedule 'em when the mosquitoes are not out and biting. We had rocky islands to camp on, and the closer you got to the vegetation, the more mosquitoes there were. So most of our camping was on the tips of the islands.

We saw a lot of bears, and moose. They were good; I loved them. I went over to the river bank with a group on the boat, to check this one moose out close up, to get pictures. When we got close to him, the damned thing started coming over towards us, and put up his leg to jump into the boat! I let up on the motor and we drifted downstream away from that moose. But they are so beautiful. People wanted to get pictures, so I accommodated them.

SAVINO: When you were doing trips up there, was it just a single boat, or did you run your triple-rig?

SLEIGHT: Triple-rig, yeah.



Ken and his mule. "Beautiful mule," says Ken.
Vaughn Short Collection, courtesy of Carolyn Short.

SAVINO: So you were the only guide? Or did you have another boatman helping you out?

SLEIGHT: I was the only one.

SAVINO: Wow. And how long were the trips up there?

SLEIGHT: Seven to ten days, I think.

SAVINO: Was it pretty remote? Would you see any other people up there?

SLEIGHT: Very few. We'd stop at the Indian settlements along the way and buy some salmon, which we ate quite often. That was kind of a godsend, because it was a hell of a lot better than the canned meat that I carried. It was very good, meeting with the Indian people. They were taking the salmon and drying it for their dogs. That was what they fed the dogs, and so they fed us that too! But they were willing to sell the salmon at a very inexpensive price. I think I got a big salmon for something like five bucks.

SAVINO: So when you'd do those trips in the Yukon, where did the river trips start and where did they end?

SLEIGHT: They started at Whitehorse. Except for one trip, and that was Teslin, the Teslin River—that didn't start at Whitehorse, but I staged all of my stuff at Whitehorse still. I made friends with newspaper folk, and a history guy...I really liked the history of each river I ever went down. Wherever I lived I wanted to know its history. That's an

important part of myself.

SAVINO: How did you first hear about, or decide, you were going to go and run a trip up there?

SLEIGHT: I always wanted to. After you read Service and London; I always wanted to go up to see all that. So when I was runnin' rivers down here, Harry Aleson said he was going up to the Mackenzie. I was still runnin' trips when he was gettin' ready to go, but I decided, "Well, I'll finish what I have to do here, and I'll *then* go up." He didn't go to the Yukon, he went to other rivers. He had a tremendous amount of film on various animals, the reindeer and all that stuff. So we went up separately, but not at the same time. I went up after.

Harry had to make a journey to Brigham City once to meet Edna Fridley. He drove his Dodge station wagon up. That's when I discovered Bert Loper's whiskey was under the seat in it. Whether he took *that* up to the northland or not, I don't know. (Aleson, who was on Bert Loper's final trip in Grand Canyon, took Loper's bottle of whiskey after they'd pulled his boat, *Grand Canyon*, up above the high water line). We stopped in, he and I, to see Edna (Edna first started taking river trips with Harry Aleson and later took trips with Ken. From 1962 until 1979 she took over forty river and pack trips with Ken, the most trips of any of Ken's customers). She lived up there in a trailer, she and her



Ken and his friend, Harry Aleson. Photo by Russell Grover, Ken Sleight Collection.

husband. I got interested, a lot, just talkin' about that country, the Yukon, with Harry. We thought maybe we could go up together one trip. We never did. Then Ed Abbey got very interested. He wanted to go down the whole Yukon River all the way to the Bering Straits. But you know, that would take a couple of months, the way I went, rowing. It'd take quite a while. But we were just about to do it, another writer friend he had from back East, he wanted to go too. And we could have got others. So I thought I'd start promotin' it. That's what you'd do, you had to get people to join the trip and pay the way. That's the way I got down in Mexico and Peru.

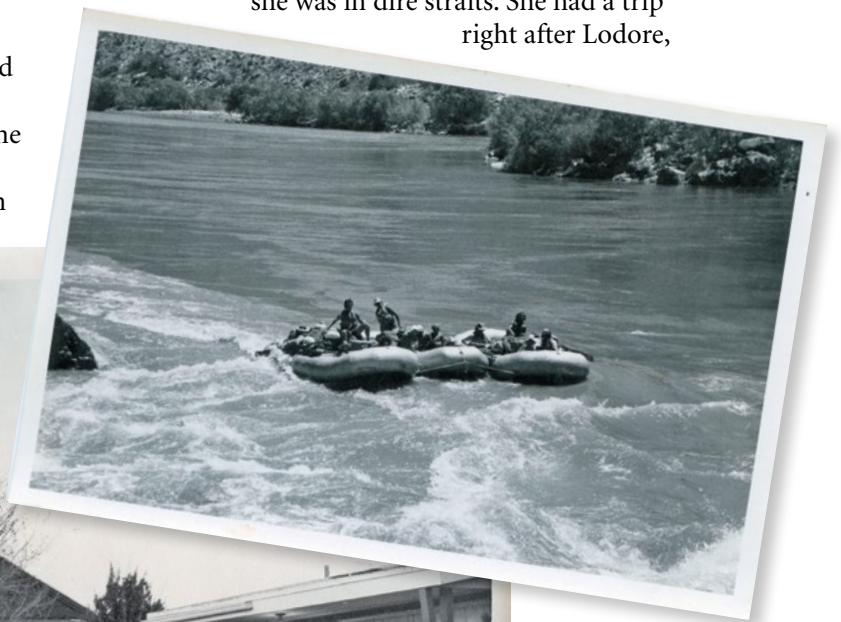
SAVINO: It sounds like that would have been a lot of work. I bet your business degree came in really handy with having to figure out how to finance these trips.

SLEIGHT: It helped quite a bit. My problem was I didn't promote my trips for *big* trips. I wanted to go *all the time*, but that cut into the profit. See, if I had to take more trips, I'd have to hire more boatmen and supply more equipment. And I did that for a while, especially Grand Canyon. Very few trips I just let some boatmen take 'em. I did—there's Kim Crumbo and others, but I always wanted to be on my own trips. In

fact, I believe that's one of the very reasons that I kept getting return guests. Always, we all made friends with each other. So I didn't have to advertise—very little—but I still got enough people for a boat ride for my triple-rig. On larger trips, I'd often have another boat, like Moki's or Dan Lehman's. They would take their big pontoons down with me. So I'd often have another boat to accompany my triple-rig—especially through the canyons with rapids. You never feel quite secure with just *your* boat in a big, full stretch of rapids.

SAVINO: Did you take your triple-rig on every stretch of river you ran?

SLEIGHT: Yeah. All the rivers of the Colorado I took it, even down through Lodore. Once, Georgie White took her triple-rig down through Lodore and tore one boat open—one of *her* boats, no longer useable. I was up there at the same time but I didn't know that she was in dire straits. She had a trip right after Lodore,



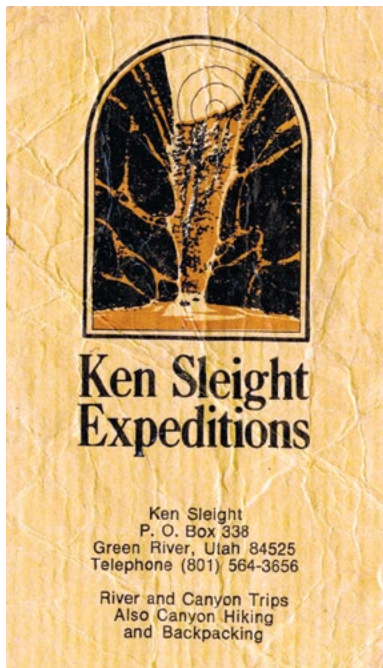
Triple-Rig entering Lava Falls, Ken on the motor. Photo by Carolyn Short.



Packing out a trip in the early days at Ken's front yard in Bountiful, Uath. Photo by Nancy Schmitz, Ken Sleight Collection.

planning to continue down through Desolation with her same boats, some new guests coming on. She asked me, somewhere around Echo Park, if she could use one of *my* boats. I told her if she needed help, if she couldn't get her own boat from her warehouse in Richfield, to call me. I got home from my trip and the next day here comes a call from Georgie, "Could you bring a boat over to replace my other one?" She had a rough time gettin' another boat, I guess. I said, "Only one condition: I go down Desolation with you, and I gotta be out at a certain time. Can you do it?" "Oh yeah, yeah that'd be great." So I brought my boat from Bountiful and met her at Ouray. I had some free time and thought it'd be nice; went down the river with her in *my* boat. She hooked it on just like a triple-rig, you know, with two of hers. Her problem was, she didn't tell me accurately when her trip ended. And down there I had to say, "Hey, Georgie, you said you were gonna get out this certain time, but now I gotta get out to run a trip myself from Green River." That's why I had to get out at a certain time. Well what she did was cut her own trip short. Some of her guests didn't like that, but it was one of the only solutions she had, I guess. I told her, "I have my boat and I have to get out and get it ready to go." She was good about it.

Why I wanted to go down the rivers myself was so I could experience the river and the side canyons, like Glen Canyon. I couldn't go down the river if I just sent my guests with other boatmen. The reason I even started river runnin' was so that *I* could go. I could have got more boats, more boatmen, even if I was there, but...I did a little of that, but I didn't like to take more than a dozen people, at the most. And a triple-rig was just ideal for a dozen people—three into twelve, that's four—four to a boat, on the triple-rig. So if you take more than that, bunch 'em up, I'd have to get more boats, I'd have to get more boatmen. I did on occasion, when I'd get a group of twenty, thirty, well, I'd get Moki Mac or Dan Lehman to help me. The trips when I had a smaller group, then I can really examine where I want to go, places I've never been on the river trip. If you have, say, a dozen people, they all want to go to places that have been noted, "I want to go see Music Temple, I want to go see this, I want to see Rainbow Bridge and another thing." That takes up



your whole trip. So I made a pledge, a plan, direct to myself: every trip I go down Glen Canyon I'm going to go into a new side canyon and hike up it with my group. Hopefully all would follow, and mostly they did. Sometimes it was a great hike, others pretty strenuous. Most of the canyons I enjoyed were the ones where a stream came down. Oh, all canyons are beautiful, you know. But that's why I was able to see so many of the canyons, my own method of operation.

And those people—my customers, my guests—we all got to know each other. I set up a trip; I'd always call it an exploratory trip. I'd tell 'em, "I've never been to that river or canyon, but we're gonna go up. Let's go up the Kaiparowits; I've never been there.

You might not even make it back, but c'mon anyway." That's the way I did on the river trips in Mexico and many others. "I've never been there, but come anyway."

SAVINO: Was it stressful taking people and being the guide in places you hadn't been to before?

SLEIGHT: Not too much, no. I was a good guide. I was really good. I had very little problems. Once in a while somebody fell down or something, like when Edna Fridley broke her arm on the steps of a ruin on the Usumacinta in Mexico. I was gonna get an airplane to come in along the river where they could get her. She said, "I'm not goin' out." So she stayed there with me for a couple weeks till the trip was over, her arm in a sling. Made a cast out of cardboard.

I did that with Edna's help, how she felt: "How's that feel, Edna? How's *that* feel, Edna?" "Feels a little better. Feels a little better now." I said, "Well, it looks good here. Nothing's protruding, nothing's swelling right now. Look at that." Then with the stuff I had in the first aid kit, I got it bound up with elastic, you know. I looked at it every day to see if it was still in place, hadn't moved out of the way—it didn't. She did suffer from constant pain, but she had pain pills. But still, she refused to go out. Okay, when the trip ended we gave her a ride to the airport...Remember, this is in lower Mexico, down Yucatan area. From there she flew to Florida, and as soon as she got there, she had her arm x-rayed. You know, the bone was right on, just a little hair thing off. The doctor said, "I can't help you much. It's gonna hurt you more if I have to re-break it to adjust it just a little bit." So I was very happy when she told me that.

* * *

AN ACTIVIST

When Ken started running river trips through Glen Canyon in 1955, the dam was already approved and construction plans underway. He discovered the river and its side canyons, knowing they soon would be covered by a rising reservoir. In 1963 the dam was completed and the waters began to rise. Ken kept his river permits and continued to lead trips in the Glen Canyon area. When the waters began to enter Rainbow Bridge National Monument and get closer to Rainbow Bridge, itself, Ken said enough and fought to protect the natural bridge, a place of spiritual significance for Native Americans.

* * *

SLEIGHT: I can tell you the story, how it all began. The waters were comin' up, and the waters were encroaching into Rainbow Bridge National Monument—not the bridge itself at that time, but the national monument. When the waters came into the national monument, it became a concern to many of us because the law said there shall be no reservoir within any national parks or monuments. Rainbow Bridge was a national monument, but here the water was going up into it.

SAVINO: When you say “us,” who were the other people concerned?

SLEIGHT: David Brower and others. And we said, “Well, that can't be, because it's against the law. You can't throw water in a national park whenever you want.” But they did it. So we brought suit and we took the suit to the district court, which finally ended up in Salt Lake City before Judge Willis Ritter.

We took the case to him, and after a number of months, he ruled with us—get the water out of the monument. There was a lot of other things going on at that same time, how to protect Rainbow Bridge itself. But our going to Judge Ritter, once he ruled, he says, “Release the water; get the water out.” That was a beautiful time, to see all the water going out of Rainbow Bridge National Monument, downstream, through Grand Canyon and elsewhere. That was so good to me! In my mind, that was one of the greatest points in my environmental career, or life even—that we won, we won.

We had a number of great lawyers that gave much of their time pro bono to our cause, in this we thought we would prevail. Then, the government appealed Ritter's decision to the Circuit Court in Denver, and after a time they overruled his decision. That was a problem. And so they let the water continue going up into Rainbow Bridge National Monument... But I would like to revisit that one more time, legally. I still think you could take it to Congress and change the thing.

They took measurements during that period, put technical tools into Rainbow Bridge itself—“zzzt!”—and put it in, to detect the movement of the bridge. They found that the bridge did move naturally back and forth. But I asked, how much is natural? That's the problem. While that was going on, there was a number of other rock falls, falling down off the cliffs, which is indicative of the water under it. Could that not happen to Rainbow Bridge itself? I had a great fear, in all of this, that Rainbow Bridge would tumble down totally destroyed from the water rising. And so we presented those things to the government. We lost, we lost. I believe it could still be contested. The appeals court said, “No, it's too far along, too much money put into it.”



Ken speaks at a Glen Canyon Institute Event at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, November, 2018. Courtesy of Glen Canyon Institute.



Rainbow Bridge.
Courtesy of Ken Sleight.

Ken's son, Jeff, signing the Rainbow Bridge Register, circa 1962. Vaughn Short Collection, courtesy of Carolyn Short.

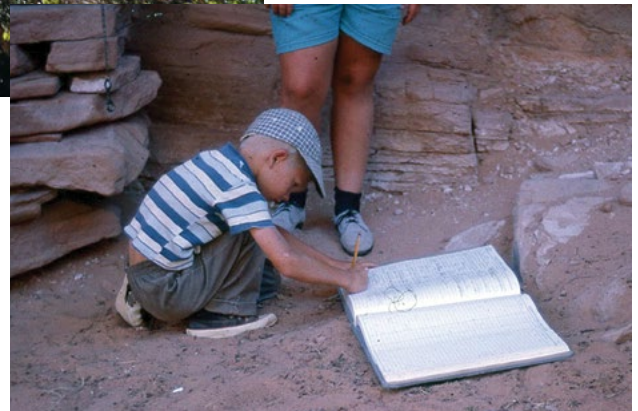
SAVINO: Money into the dam and the reservoir?
SLEIGHT: Both. We couldn't get rid of the dam or even reduce the level of the reservoir without great expense. All because we didn't show greater pressure against the dam earlier, they allowed the reservoir to raise into Rainbow Bridge National Monument. They were wrong. Oh, they were so wrong. Even today, all you have to do is read the law. Any grade school kid could understand: that there shall be no water in any national park or monument, or it shall not *impair* any national park—impair, that's the word.

SAVINO: Was it pretty soon after the dam was completed in '63 that water started going into Rainbow Bridge?

SLEIGHT: After '63 water started coming up—came up and up. I can't remember the exact time it entered Rainbow Bridge National Monument, but after it did I became very concerned. David Brower became very concerned likewise. Quite a number of folks in Friends of the Earth agreed we should do something about it, so we brought suit against the government. I was selected and volunteered to enter the suit so we could obtain standing to sue. "Standing to sue:" meaning you have some very positive thing that's being hurt. And I was being hurt because I was taking trips into Rainbow Bridge, and I couldn't take my guests up into Rainbow Bridge as I once was doing.

SAVINO: And without you, they wouldn't have been able to file the suit?

SLEIGHT: They needed me as a standing to sue, and they got it, they got it. Otherwise we'd never even have got to first base, if we couldn't show that there was damage to certain people. Now, other people also had cause, because it deprived them of their enjoyment of



the monument, but they weren't commercial. Because I was commercial, even if I only took a few trips, I still had standing. Judge Ritter was a great judge. He knew that. So he ruled with us and told 'em to get the water out. But I still believe the decision of the appeal court directive needs to be questioned. The appeals court was actually doing the legislating; that shouldn't be.

SAVINO: When I asked who you were filing suit with, and you said David Brower, I was wondering if...

SLEIGHT: Well, let me go back. David Brower at that time had left the Sierra Club and started Friends of the Earth, who brought the suit. It wasn't the Sierra Club...the Sierra Club promoted the preservation of Dinosaur National Park, but after that, they, including Brower, pulled their forces out, wouldn't protect the Glen Canyon area, *until*, until Brower was shown that boy, he made a mistake not to continue to fight against the very thing that created Glen Canyon Dam.

SAVINO: Was fighting for Rainbow Bridge for you and Brower...a response to what you had lost of Glen Canyon and what you could still protect there?

SLEIGHT: Of course our efforts to get rid of the reservoir were most important to us, but we needed also to protect Rainbow Bridge while doing that. We

needed to keep the water down. It wouldn't solve the whole problem, but it would keep the water from comin' up over a hell of a lot more territory than it needed to.

SAVINO: Ken, it seems like you both really, really care for these places, but you also do the research. You always had a lot of knowledge to back up your fight.

SLEIGHT: In fact, if you're ever going to protest any project or anything, you need to know completely, as much as you can, every avenue in order to speak to it. It's very hard to only say, "I oppose it," because I've done that many times—don't get me wrong. I go to the hearings here and there, "Preserve it because it's beautiful." Okay, that's one person's feelings. We can all do that and I highly recommend for everyone to do that. However, I felt I had to attach some type of legal or regulatory thing to it, to state my case. I've tried to do that. Oh boy, have I! I researched as much as I could and I went to numerous meetings, expressing myself. What one does, we're not going to win all environmental issues, but even knowing that, we're able to swing it around so the decision may not be as serious as it was going to be. Over and over I've seen that, by speaking out you can often improve the regulations that they're settin' up. And that's all I can say in regard to what you just asked. You do have to be prepared.

SAVINO: Do you think the fact that you were on the river as the water was coming up in Glen Canyon is a big part of why you felt compelled to continue to protect and take care of it?

SLEIGHT: I have to say you're right. The reservoir coming up *did* affect me. When it got up to near the mouth of Escalante Canyon, I said to myself, "I've gotta do something. I've gotta move my family to the town of Escalante." Then from there I can take lots of horseback trips and everything, or even boating trips from the mouth of the Escalante. So therefore I could continue my wilderness sojourns. I really believed that I needed to do that. So we moved down there to be closer to Escalante Canyon, a part of Glen Canyon, as I saw it. And I was right! I made trips up into the Kaiparowits Plateau and Waterpocket Fold, and a lot of other side canyons of Escalante. It's what I thought, that's the least I could do. But I was not prepared, as far as the reservoir, how much damage it would do to all the little side canyons that I wanted to go up. That was a big problem, but there was still a hell of a lot of country 'round about that I could still take my people, I could still continue my business of taking people where I wanted to take 'em—until the Federal Agencies said, "You have to get more permits."

SAVINO: One thing I wanted to ask you about, which

you mentioned to me when we were working on the Glen Canyon Exhibit, was how you'd introduce hikes to your passengers.

SLEIGHT: They knew they were gonna go to Rainbow Bridge, but a place like Clear Creek in Escalante—I hiked 'em a long way, and we camped at the mouth of Clear Creek, and I said, "Okay, now we're going to go up this canyon, check it out." Probably half of the group, said they're too tired to go. I went up, and half of 'em are followin' me, and we hiked up Clear Creek, and then we came into a beautiful amphitheater called Cathedral in the Desert. I didn't tell 'em about Cathedral in the Desert at first, because I didn't even know it myself! "But we're gonna go up there, we're gonna go explore what we can see."

That was one of my first trips into what's called Cathedral in the Desert. As I said, half my people on that trip didn't see it that day. But when they all came back and they talked about it, the rest of my guests wanted to go, too. I did take time the next day to guide them up, because I didn't feel like they should be deprived of seeing that beautiful place, just because they were tired. But a lot of nice places that I knew were goin' to excite people, I didn't tell people until



Ken on the oars.

Photo by Bill Adams, Ken Sleight Collection.



Ken in Cathedral in the Desert, Glen Canyon, circa 1960.
Ken Sleight Collection.

they were there, until they could see it themselves. Yes, that's true. Over and over again I didn't tell 'em what's around the next bend.

SAVINO: How come?

SLEIGHT: Because it's so exciting to see it on your own. It's so beautiful to discover something on our own... Some guides will hand you pictures of what it's gonna be—"Okay, you're gonna go see Rainbow Bridge." You know, on the hike to Rainbow Bridge, I'd never say, I'd never tell 'em *exactly* when they're gonna see Rainbow Bridge. They *knew* they were going up, but I'd never tell 'em, "Around the next bend you're gonna see Rainbow Bridge." That statement is a no-no in *my* mind. So in regards to Rainbow, or all the beautiful places, you don't tell people when they're going to come right *on* it. You don't tell 'em, "Okay, around this next bend you're gonna see the

most beautiful place you ever saw." They'll be prepared for it, but there is a self-discovery thing here that's so beautiful, in my mind. Self-discovery—I get carried away on this.

SAVINO: Keep goin'! I like it! I think it's important.

SLEIGHT: All the guides need to know this—let them self-discover as much as they possibly can. You can't everything, but it is so important, *so* important... Same principle when you stop and camp at night. You unload and everybody goes and does their own thing and so forth. Then you tell them, "There's a nice canyon there. Go discover it." Then when the Park Service comes in and says, "Well, what do you do at night on the beaches? Do you have badminton, volleyball?" all that kind of stuff. They're down here to see those beautiful things, not to go volleyball. They can do that at home! When they're hiking out, there's self-discovery. Then they come back and tell me what they saw, around the campfire; it's beautiful.

That's what I was so pissed off about when the Park Service said, "Okay, what do you do in your spare time?" What *is* spare time?! There's no spare time! I get in after dark sometimes on my trips—near dark I get there. Spend the day going to these little canyons and that canyon and so forth, exploring. That's what the guests come for! They didn't come to eat, but we fed 'em (laughs) sure we fed 'em, out of cans and all that. I tried to get this through to the Park Service, but they wouldn't listen to me completely. Those

regulatory things...make all outfitters, all outfitters, much the same... People come to me today even, "Do you know which outfitter I ought to go choose?" And I say, "Oh, they're all much the same now. But there are differences in them if you happen onto a certain boatman or certain guide, they excel." I tell them all the time, depending on the person, "It'd really be good if you could get this guide or that guide." Because I feel I know a number of guides who ascribe to what I'm sayin'... I don't say, "You're gonna go because you're gonna be fed a great meal," I say, "Go because he or she is going to take you up the canyon, or they will explore with you." See, while I was doin' all the cooking and all that, I'd tell 'em, "Keep outta my kitchen area. Go and explore! I'll have it all ready in about an hour and a half. Okay, okay, yeah, an hour maybe." So they go. A couple times I had to go and find those people I sent up

a certain canyon. One time I sent guests up the canyon, but they didn't come back in time for dinner (laughs).

SAVINO: Were they just still walkin', or did they get stuck?

SLEIGHT: They were walkin'. I walked up to find 'em because it was just about dark time. They were one of the few I had a problem with. Most people would come back. But my philosophy is still the same, "Go up that canyon. You'll see things." You can even just go see weeds and flowers and all that—not badminton! Come on, assholes!... You think Bert Loper ever took people and said, "Okay, let's have badminton"? (laughs).

* * *

Ken Sleight was schooled by the old ways. Through his love of history and research, Ken became an archivist of river running and the Colorado Plateau. In May of last year, Ken, myself, and Martha Ham (founder of SPLORE) opened an exhibit on Glen Canyon, as Ken and his wife, Jane, put it—"to remember what was lost." The exhibit tells the story of what it would have been like to take a river trip down Glen Canyon with Ken in 1959—the side canyon explorations, archaeology, a stop at Bert Loper's cabin, the story of Dave Rust and his first two canvas boats (which Ken facilitated being donated to the Park Service years ago), Moki Mac strumming his ukulele, Vaughn Short reciting poems by the campfire, Rainbow Bridge, and Ken—his brown boots and beige shorts, tarp as a kitchen table, pancakes cooked over the fire. Those river days were still pioneer days, the old ways.

In late October, river guide Latimer Smith, joined me to talk with Ken and Jane at Pack Creek Ranch. We spent all day talking —only taking breaks when Ken needed to feed the chickens and Bob Quist stopped by to split some cottonwood.

* * *

LATIMER SMITH: What about one more question, one last one?... It's a combination of two questions. I'll put them together, from Ryann and me both.

SLEIGHT: Okay.

SMITH: You've been inspiring to so many people. You've been a mentor to so many people across generations and ages. At age 89 you've seen and experienced so much history. You were born during the Depression, you experienced war, the civil rights movement, the environmental movements, river running in its infancy, commercial river running, and you've experienced wild places and wilderness in ways few people can imagine. You're still sticking up for the good stuff. What inspires you to keep at it, to stay

informed, and what matters right now most?

SLEIGHT: All I know, if you see something or experience something so dear to you, I don't know how in the world you could just keep it to yourself. I think experiencing something that's so great, as, for instance, Glen Canyon, very special thing, spiritual—something that comes to you spiritually, stays with you quite some time... Beauty inspires the stuff inside of ya', in your brain and all that. Why, today, I see so many people don't place importance on the term "beauty"—if you feel it's a beauty, isn't that worth preserving, for sole sake?

And everybody else brings not beauty anymore—what they do is "How much money we can make off of it? What can it develop?" and all that—instead of the term beauty.

But yet, beauty is the highest thing. You don't go out and destroy beauty! People don't like to even talk about beauty sometimes when they go to these hearings, because many people don't accept the term "beauty" as a reason for protection... All the people I took down the rivers, they went mostly because of its beauty... That's why I was down here... That's why I was river running, because of the beauty of not only the scenery, but the feeling inside of myself, the beauty of it all... If you see beauty, try to protect it.

SMITH: That's perfect, Ken. You've answered the question very well.

SLEIGHT: I don't know about that, but it is a spiritual thing—beauty all over... Yeah, and Glen Canyon was it. Of course Grand Canyon. All of our canyons are beautiful!... And they're worth fighting for, *all of them.*



Ryann Savino and Ken at Pack Creek Ranch, November 2018.
Photo by Andy Hutchinson.

NOTE: Special thanks to Latimer Smith for his contributions and dedication to this project. Gratitude as well for Mikenna Clokey, Martha Ham, Jane Sleight, and of course, to Ken—for continuously sharing your stories with me and for the life you've lived and are living.

Ken Sleight: A Boatman's Perspective

THAT DAY AT PACK CREEK RANCH, my biggest first impression of Ken was of his granite grin. As if forged by sun and sand it has a permanence not unlike the canyon itself. As a young river runner I had hung on the stories my Uncle Stuart would recount of running trips with Ken and Edward Abbey. I was anxious to hear more straight from the boatman's mouth. Reading *The Monkey Wrench Gang* in high school was foundational to me, Abbey and his friends became heroes of mine. True to the character Seldom Seen, Sleight explains to me that he bought from Stuart—his first house. “What do you call it when you marry a woman, and she wants all your money?” he asks me. “Alimony! I needed to pay alimony.” That house in Green River, Utah served as Ken's home base and operations for his outfit.

One of the first things Ken ever asked me whether I had known my Great Uncle Ray. I never knew him, but Stuart did, and recalled Ken asking him the same question over beers one afternoon in Green River. Ken told him that Uncle Ray had been his mormon seminary teacher as a kid in Paris, Idaho. Stuart, eyeing Ken's beer said, “Must not have been a very good teacher.” Ken replied, “He tried to convert me!”

While leaving the ranch, Ken asked me if I wanted to take a chicken. Wide eyed, I gulped and stuttered asking what I was going to do with a chicken. He laughed, and said, “you eat it! After you chop off its head, of course.” With leaden feet I looked down and kicked the dirt. The idea of cutting off the head of a living animal terrified me. “If you want, you can take four!” said Sleight, chuckling at my discomfort. I agreed to take just one. Never before had an introduction challenged me in that way. The only way to embrace a hero of mine, was to honor the man by chopping off the chicken's head and eating the bird. With blood and feathers on my fingers, the grisly cooked muscle of the rooster in my teeth taught me why most people prefer to eat hens.

The next time I met Ken at Pack Creek Ranch was with a gathering of river runners. Stuart was there with the Quist brothers, among many others. Within a group of former outfitters I asked Stuart a controversial question, “who was your favorite outfitter to work for?” To chuckles and heckles, Stuart replied, “some outfitters fired me three times, then would re-hire me,” he said. “Ken never fired me.” Stuart says he loved working for Sleight the most because he was an outfitter who was immersed in the river experience. His trips were more about

sharing the essence of place, sharing the work and the wonder of traveling through the canyons. Instead of catering to every whine and whim of needy customers in order to make the owner a comfortable profit, working for Sleight was working side by side with outfitter, passenger, boatman—all invested in sharing a distinctive experience. Even after Ken started offering pack trips, Ken's wife, Jane, offered this about Ken's relationship with his clients, “He was so much better to the animals than to (his) guests.” Ken's response; “The people loved it! We had different clientele back then.” With a devout base of return customers, often times his guests would show up to the put-in before Ken would. “They always knew I would show up,” said Ken. They would help him un-roll the boats and rig, de-rig at the end of the trip. Sometimes after loading the truck at the end of the trip, his folks would scale the gear pile in the back of the truck, catching a ride down the highway back to their vehicles.

It was at Lees Ferry where Ken was rigging boats when the ranger came walking down. “Big tall guy,” says Ken, “had a clipboard in his hand, he was coming to check me out.” This was the first time Ken met Ed Abbey in person. They had been corresponding through letters, and once Ed realized it was Ken, he set his clipboard down and helped him rig the boats, helped all day long. They talked “into the wee hours of the morning, about getting rid of the dam. He had some crazy ideas!” said Ken. This was where the ideas first sprouted for *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Ken never acknowledged himself as the character “Seldom Seen Smith.” He never denied it either. “I was similar in a lot of ways, I don't dispute that,” says Ken, “but Abbey was a fictionalist.” Ken ran several trips with Ed—but one stood out—in Cataract. They were in the Big Drops, heading towards big rocks when Ken got launched out of the boat. Ed jumped on the oars, but one was completely broken. Ken's hanging onto the boat when Ed leans over and asks, “do you have another oar? This one seems to have a slight imperfection..”

By now, the low water Grand Canyon trips in 1977 have become infamous, memorialized through Vaughn Short's poem, *Seldom Seen and His Macho Crew*. Most outfitters had cancelled trips that season, but Ken refused to do that—so his crew, including Stu, made it happen. Stuart says the trip was booked as an eight-day motor trip, from Lees Ferry to Diamond Creek. Because they were running on basically what was leaking from the dam above, there wasn't enough

water to get a big motor-rig down through a channel with more rocks than water. Ken's alternative was to take small rowboats that could maneuver through the boulder chutes, lashing them together to push with a small outboard motor through the flat stretches. They arrived at Phantom Ranch way behind schedule. Ken delivered this grand speech, says Stu, about how the dam shouldn't be there, and how they should be running the river running-free. But since the dam was there, two options existed. The people could hike out and leave the trip on time, or they could say "damn the dam!" and keep going downstream. They camped there, on the boat beach at Phantom Ranch. Motivated by Sleight's words, the people on the trip called from the cantina pay phones to make arrangements to continue their downstream journey. He even offered the guests the second half of the trip, free of charge—at another time. When Sleight sold a trip, he aimed to provide the experience agreed upon. With this mentality, Sleight shouldered his pack and hiked out. He had a Cataract Canyon trip scheduled to launch in two days, and he intended to keep his schedule. Vaughn Short hiked out too, since he had work to do—so this is where his poem ends:

What happened to the people down below?
I can't say and I may never know.
They might have pushed right on through,
in the able hands of that macho crew,
or might be they stranded way up high,
on top of a rock where the water rushed by,
and sitting there, I greatly fear,
they slowly perished for want of beer.

The crew did push through, but not without a resupply. Brad Dimock hiked down to replace Ken, and when they all reconvened at the boat beach, they found one boat had seams splitting, made with bad glue. They pumped it up before each rapid until Lava, where it was deemed un-runnable for passengers. Ken's crew ghost-ran that boat—and it had the best run of all! To run a trip with Sleight Expeditions was always an adventure, an one-of-a-kind experience for both passengers and guides alike.

One of the ways I connect with Ken is in his love for Glen Canyon and his desire to see it restored. I see my grandpa's pictures of my dad and Stuart running around the Cathedral in the Desert. At Rainbow Bridge, my grandpa captured in a handstand on top. I've always dreamed of experiencing that place the way that they did, to follow that same current. I've often wondered why my grandpa didn't fight to prevent the dam, from Glen Canyon becoming buried. Bob Quist and I talked about this at Pack Creek, and he said that before Vietnam the American public were more trusting of the government, less likely to oppose. Vietnam changed everything—people began to realize decisions made aren't always in the best interest for future generations. As I recall Ken's permanent grin; I think that perhaps it started within the canyons he has lived his life, the beauty he has experienced—or maybe it is the memories of sharing the joy and awe of these places with so many people. I see the essence of his smile as motivation for the next generation, to fight the destruction of these wild places from continuing and something like Glen Canyon from ever happening again.

Ben Reeder



A boatman's gathering. (Left to right) Martha Ham, Stuart Reeder, Ken Sleight, Clair Quist, and Ben Reeder at Pack Creek Ranch, November 2016. Photo by Ryann Savino.

New GCRG Wear

Get your new GCRG t-shirt, sun hoodie or both! T-shirts are 100% cotton and sun hoodies are made from a lightweight Tri-blend. Both are printed with white ink on an indigo blue shirt. This year's shirt design was designed by Stephanie Jackson. Stephanie Jackson has been a Grand Canyon Youth guide for twelve years. She works for Flagstaff Junior Academy in the off season as a 7TH and 8TH grade Science teacher. "The Legacy" is a linoleum block and

inspired by an attempt to create a sense of united solitude that we all may feel in the canyon. A river trip, classically experienced by a group of people with each of their own individual moments; we hope to protect the canyon as our legacy for future generations to experience. Steph Jackson has prints and other art available to purchase if you're interested. Email: stephjo502@gmail.com.

GRAND CANYON

BACK OF SHIRT



"The Legacy"

RIVER GUIDES
2019

LEFT CHEST



GCRG 2019

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boatman's quarterly review

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THANKS TO ALL YOU poets, photographers, writers, artists, and to all of you who send us stuff. Don't ever stop. Special thanks to the Catena Foundation, the Adopt-a-Boatman sponsors, "Circle of Friends" contributors, and innumerable GCRG members for their generous and much appreciated support of this publication.



September 1996, GCES campsite study for Lisa Kearsley, 6-month post flood trip, I think 2nd Chance camp below Havasu. The herd wouldn't go through until I finally got out of the way.

—Richard Quartaroli