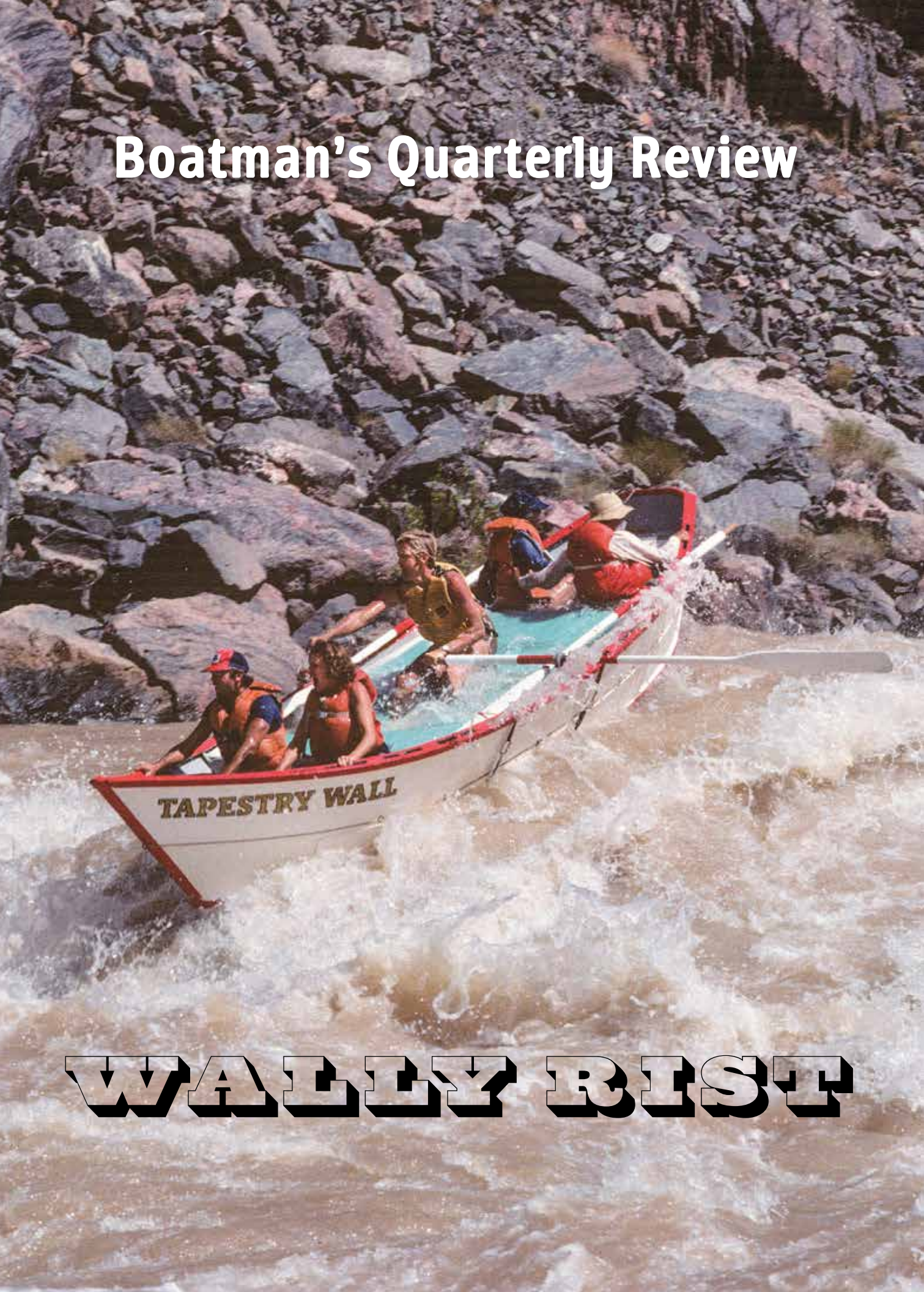


Boatman's Quarterly Review



WALLY RIST

boatman's quarterly review

Published 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 2000 words and, if possible, emailed to GCRG. Include postpaid return envelope if you want your submission returned.

Deadlines for submissions are the 1st of February, May, August and November. Thanks!

Our office location: 515 West Birch, Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Office Hours: noon-6:00, Monday through Friday

Phone	928.773.1075
Fax	928.773.8523
E-mail	info@gcrg.org
Website	gcrg.org

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Cover: Wally Rist running Hermit. Photo: John Blaustein



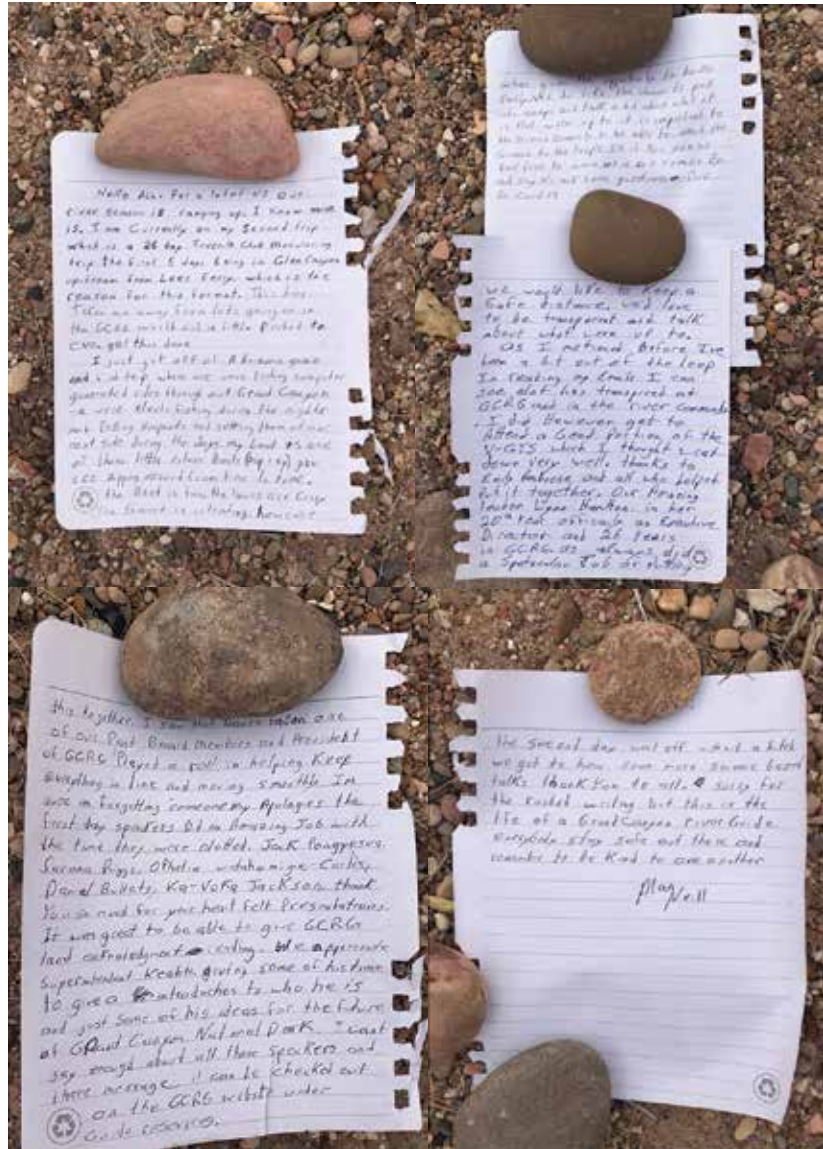
"So what do you do on a GTS River Trip?" Geoff Carpenter leads some fun.
Photo: Sophie Danison

Prez Blurb

Hello all. For a lot of us, our river season is ramping up. I know mine is. I am currently on my second trip which is a 26-day Juvenile Chub monitoring trip, the first five days being in Glen Canyon upstream from Lees Ferry, which is the reason for this format (see pictures). This has taken me away from lots going on in the GCRG world and a little pushed to even get this done.

I just got off of an Arizona Game and Fish trip where we were fishing computer generated sites throughout Grand Canyon. We were electrofishing during the nights and pulling hoopnets and setting them at our next site during the days. My boat is one of these little silver boats (Osprey) you see zipping around from time to time. The boat is fun, the hours are crazy, the science is interesting, however when given the opportunity to do so safely, we do like the chance to pull into camps and talk a bit about what it is that we're up to. It is important to the science community to attach the science to the people, so if you see us, feel free to wave us in or come on by and say hi, ask some questions. Due to COVID-19, we would like to keep a safe distance. We'd love to be transparent and talk about what we're up to.

As I mentioned before, I've been a bit out of the loop in reading my emails. I can see a lot has transpired at GCRG and in the river community. I did, however, get to attend a good portion of the V-GTS which I thought went down very well, thanks to Emily Ambrose and all who helped put it together. Our amazing leader, Lynn Hamilton, in her 20th year officially as Executive Director, and 26 years in GCRG, as always did a spectacular job of putting this together. I saw that Laura Fallon, one of our past board members and president of GCRG played a role in helping



When you're on the river and can't send your Prez Burb as a Word file...

keep everything in line and moving smoothly. I'm sure I'm forgetting someone. My apologies. The first day speakers did an amazing job with the time they were allotted. Jack Pongyesva, Sarana Riggs, Ophelia Watahomigie-Corliss, Daniel Bullets, Ka-Voka Jackson—thank you so much for your heartfelt presentations. It was great to give GCRG's land acknowledgment a reading. We appreciate Superintendent Keable giving some of his time to give an introduction to who he is and just some of his ideas for the future of Grand Canyon National Park. I can't say enough about all these speakers and their message. I can be checked out on the GCRG website under Guide resources.

say enough about all these speakers and their messages. It can be checked out on the GCRG website, under Guide Resources.

The second day went off without a hitch. We got to hear some more science-based talks. Thank you to all. Sorry for the rushed writing, but this is the life of a Grand Canyon river guide. Everybody stay safe out there and be kind to one another.

Alan Neill

Dear Eddy...

Just a short note of appreciation for the three women who have kept GCRG and the BQR progressing and strong: Lynn Hamilton, Katherine Spillman, and Mary Williams!

The original instigators and leaders of these important feats have been lauded before, and rightly so. The continuation of those original efforts by these three women has been long and steadfast.

Lynn's strength and vision during the COVID years, and for twenty-plus years before that, has kept GCRG as the forward moving, fight the fight, do the good organization that has accomplished so much. Katherine and Mary have kept the BQR the amazing piece of history that would cause the likes of Barry Goldwater, and all of us, to stop

doing everything else once he got the new issue in the mail until at least a full perusal was complete. The last several issues have truly been works of art, beauty, craft, and trade!

Can't say enough, or sing enough praises, but others more articulate and capable should have a go at it perhaps?

Greg Woodall

Mea Culpa. Referencing my obituary in the fall 2020 BQR, I have an apology to make. In my passionate farewell for my friend Suzanne Jordan, I got lost in telling tall tales (surprise!) and inadvertently disrespected some of the pioneering women who worked

long ago for Sobek. For those who know me this was contradictory to my general awe for female river guides. I used to snigger at the old f*!@ers who couldn't tell a story without totally losing track of, well, just about everything else. Welcome to my new world. No excuses however for neglecting these women and their exploits, hard work, skill, dedication and fearless contribution to our tribe and river legacy. My unreserved apologies ladies. I can only hope my river pards can find it in their hearts to be generous and kind, whilst considering me a complete meathead.

Sincerely,
Jeffe Aronson

BACK OF THE BOAT — THE WHALE FOUNDATION NEWS BULLETIN

Hello Everyone! I hope you're well and having a good season. For me, life isn't back to "normal," but it's closer than it has been for a while. That feels good.

Today I want to give you a heads up on a Whale Foundation service you may not have heard of: financial planning. At the moment we have relationships with two knowledgeable financial planners who are game to meet with Grand Canyon river guides to help them understand and make good choices about their money. They're willing to do this for no charge.

Now, I'm not imagining that anybody got into river guiding as a get-rich-quick scheme. It's about

building a great life rather than making a living. But I do know that everything else is easier to manage—mental health, physical health, family and relationships—if your financial foundation is solid.

We'd like to help you learn to build that foundation. If you're interested in using the Whale Foundation services, email us at whalefoundation@outlook.com and we'll put you in touch with our folks.

If you're in your twenties—or any age, but the magic is most powerful if you start early—do an online search and some reading about "compound interest." Start investing a little money now, however much you can manage, and it's pretty likely that

someday your older self will thank your younger self for the favor.

Something to think about.

As always, the Whale Foundation is here to help restore, promote, and celebrate the wellness of the Grand Canyon river guiding community. Feel free to check out www.whalefoundation.org to see what we've got to offer, or reach out any time at the email above. Always good to hear from you.

Take care out there!

Sam Jansen

V-GTS Success!

When, Grand Canyon River Guides succeeded in presenting an all-virtual Guides Training Seminar (V-GTS) over the last weekend of March! What a fantastic learning opportunity it was, and we are SO grateful that many of you could join us. If you missed anything, don't worry—we have recorded the V-GTS presentations and the videos will be posted on the GTS/V-GTS Library page of our website (look under Guide Resources). Let the learning continue!

As you can imagine, venturing into all-virtual territory for an educational event of this nature is a daunting endeavor. We sorely missed being able to hold the joyous in-person event at Hatchland this year, but on the up-side, the virtual format allowed many folks to participate

who would not have had the chance otherwise. Executing a smoothly-run and well-organized V-GTS program would not have been possible without the phenomenal planning and facilitation skills of Emily Ambrose of Engage Coaching and Consulting. We are forever grateful to Emily and

her V-GTS assistant, Laura Fallon, for all their support and expertise that contributed directly to the success of the V-GTS.

GCRG extends our sincere appreciation to the Superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park, Ed Keable, for kicking off the V-GTS with his keynote address to our river community. It was such a wonderful opportunity to hear from Ed directly and get to know him better. The Superintendent's priorities for managing Grand Canyon National Park are very much aligned with our theme for this V-GTS, "Towards a Brighter Future," as we strive for a more inclusive, safe, and respectful future for all. We look forward to working closely together with Ed in the days, months, and years ahead!

We are also profoundly grateful for all our outstanding speakers who made the V-GTS weekend so incredibly special as we listened and learned from indigenous partners, shared the latest information on Grand Canyon science, and provided tools for a safer, more respectful workplace. To all of our GTS speakers—what an honor—your expertise, knowledge and passion shined through, and that knowledge is flowing out to others on the Colorado River this season. You have made a lasting difference! And to those of you who attended the V-GTS talks and workshops—thank you for your love of learning. There

is ALWAYS something more to learn, and we hope you feel better informed and fired up with new knowledge to share!

Lastly, a huge THANK YOU to our GTS Funders, Partners and Supporters:

- Intertribal Centennial Conversations Group
- Grand Canyon National Park
- Grand Canyon Fund & the Grand Canyon River Outfitters
- Grand Canyon Conservancy
- The Whale Foundation
- Engage Coaching and Consulting/ Emily Ambrose, and assistant, Laura Fallon
- Point Positive
- A-DASH Collaborative
- All fabulous V-GTS speakers!
- The GCRG Officers and Board of Directors, and all volunteers

Together, we made it happen!
Wahoo! Cheers to the V-GTS!

Lynn Hamilton

GCRG ANNOUNCES FIRST RECIPIENT OF INDIGENOUS WFR SCHOLARSHIP OTHER IMPORTANT NEWS

In the last BQR, we told you about our newly created Indigenous Wilderness First Responder Scholarship, made possible by a generous seed grant from the John P. Torgenson Donor Advised Fund at SEI Giving Fund, in memory of Karen Reyes. We are incredibly proud to announce that the first recipient of this scholarship was Jaren Roberson, a Hopi-Navajo youth and Grand Canyon Youth alum, whose potential and enthusiasm shined through in GCY's mentorship program. With his full WFR certification from Flagstaff Field Institute under his belt, Jaren is off and running (or should we say, boating), having participated in Arizona Raft Adventures' on-river training trip this spring, followed up with a full season of guiding ahead in both Grand Canyon and Oregon. Congratulations, Jaren! We wish you well in your guiding career. Thank you for being a passionate steward of Grand Canyon and the Colorado River!

As you know, GCRG's hope is that this Indigenous WFR Scholarship can help ease the path for the original stewards of Grand Canyon by facilitating and encouraging much needed diversity, equity, and inclusion in Grand Canyon's outdoor industry workforce. If you know of someone who identifies as a member of one of the eleven traditionally associated tribes and is seeking a full eighty-hour WFR course as a springboard to working in the outdoor industry (river guide, hiking guide, science work), please steer them our way! The scholarship application can be found on our website, gcrg.org. Look for "Scholarship" under Guide Resources. In other related news, GCRG and Grand Canyon Youth are collaborating on a new Gear Stipend Program. As with the WFR Scholarship, the Gear Stipend Program will be open to individuals who identify as a member of one of the eleven traditionally associated tribes of Grand Canyon. If you, or someone you know meets this criteria and could use some assistance in purchasing essential tools or gear to get started as a river guide or hiking guide, there is a Gear Stipend Questionnaire you can fill out on GCRG's website (also under Guide Resources). As an additional resource, through our partnership with Grand Canyon Youth, if you are starting out as a rowing guide, there are loner strap kits and gear available as well. Let us know how we can help!

And how can you help? If you would like to make a donation to support the new Gear Stipend Program as described above, that would be much appreciated! If you mail in a check, please make it out to GCRG and include a note, or write "Gear Stipend Program" in the memo portion of your check. If you make a general donation through our website, just let us know by adding special instructions during the donation process (you will see that option on the same page where you put your credit card info), or shoot us an email at info@gcrg.org and let us know. Thank you very much for your support!

GTS

**What Is Sacred?
Before we even
pass under Navajo
Bridge, Ed Kabotie
is on the sticks,
hinting at a
tale of ancestral
migration, from
mainland to
island to island
to island to land,
and cracking a joke
along the lines of
"What, you people
think you're the
only ones who can
row boats?"**

And so it begins. An education. A "field trip" of sorts, through a place many of us have spent cumulative months and years of our lives, and others among us are jaw-dropped around each bend in celebration of their first journey. I arrived on this trip hoping to get better at "interpreting" this place, especially history of indigenous people, although Ed gets a little squeamish at the word "interpret." He understands the importance of sharing facts and making it known to clients that the canyon is sacred beyond what any of us can imagine. But when it comes to stopping at sites like the one below Soap he says, "these are not your stories to tell." He asks that we don't take guests there.

Ed explains that the First One has His home in The Canyon. He is a representation of both death, and of life, entrance into the world. The

River Trip 2021

Great Spirit passed the responsibility of care-taking the Earth on to the people, and Ed tells me he feels a sense of failure. "We messed up. We messed up bad in this world," he says. Some will say we're on the verge of complete destruction, and others, like Ed, will say we've already crossed the line.

It can be easy for some of us to steer flat water chats towards lighter subjects, to dip in and out of these hard conversations, but for Ed, the threats to his homeland are front and center. Uranium mining, potential dams and trams, and energy taken from this river to light up Disneyland, weigh on him in ways unavoidable. Not to mention the real-time issues facing reservations. As guides I think most of us feel a responsibility to "protect the resource," to care for the canyon and the ever so vague "environment." But the more time I spend with Ed the more I ponder the inequity of people in this region, and how little I'm doing to help.

It's April in the canyon. Not much is blooming, but we don't think it's too early, just drought. Barely a trickle coming out of Vasey's.

We eat pork for nearly every meal or so it seems. The bacon breakfasts, BLT's, ham sandwiches, and chops are balanced out by a plethora of perfect avocados and lots of veggies in the rotation.

We're a motley crew but I think that's the point. Tour West is running the trip, our seasoned leader Jake Skeen at the...helm? Cob? Chilling in the motor well? He's driving the big boat. Jake hails from Cody, Wyoming. He guides rivers in the summer, guides hunting in the fall, and spends winters skiing with his two little boys. He talks fondly about his wife, a park Ecologist and Botanist whom he met in the canyon.

Chris and (the other) Jake are his assistants. They've been best friends since high school, have worked more jobs together than they can count on one hand, live a few miles apart and vacation together with their families. A true bromance for the ages.

Max is 18 but you probably wouldn't guess it when he plays guitar and sings John Prine's "Souvenirs." Every once in a while he mentions having just graduated...from high school. He seems to like being

the youngest, the most absorbent sponge, if you will.

Jack is completely hilarious. He works for the Grand Canyon Trust. It's his first time running the river. He's half Hopi and we talk about the unique opportunity he feels to be a "bridge" in our communities, although that's no simple task. He had me almost rolling in the sand when we watched a huge rockfall across from Little Nankoweap and he referenced the "skidmark" where the rocks scraped on their way down. It shouldn't have been that funny. But... it was.

Mark plays guitar too and talks about his love for central and south American culture, and volunteering along the US/Mexico border. Mark hates being called any variation of "buddy" which, makes me want to call him that more.

Alex is quiet and kind. We have some good laughs as partners in a heated game of mini-bocce.

LP, Laurie, answers all of our questions about the COR's and quizzes us on Clorox PPM and other reg's from



the FDA and NPS and other acronyms. Honestly I can't wait for her to check my dishwasher and drinking water and cooler temps just so we can hang out.

Jan has done everything from archaeology to communications, partner relations, and more at the park and has an incredibly vast wealth of knowledge about all things Grand Canyon. She now works in the office of the superintendent and has made it part of her mission to repair relations with indigenous tribes of the canyon. She has been an incredible force for change and I'm inspired.

Bryan knows birds. He talks about hummingbirds and condors and most importantly, Peregrine Falcons. The kings of the canyon. All while he is giving us the falcon talk at Nankoweap—migrations and fights with ravens and how fast they can fly (240 miles per hour!). There are two Peregrines circling overhead and no one but Max notices. As soon as Bryan wraps the talk, Max speaks up but the birds are long gone. We all laugh.

Melissa is a geology professor and field instructor, and her rock talk consists of "get high, drop acid," something about travertine, and I forget the rest.

Just kidding. And she means go for a hike with some big elevation and drop hydrochloric acid, obviously. The youngest rocks in Grand Canyon are the travertines actively forming at places like the Little Colorado and Elves Chasm.

As we float along each day, the incessant questions pour out of me, hundreds of teeny tiny tidbits I've wondered about, mile by mile. Why is the Coconino slanty on river right at water level right at the beginning? Well, sand was deposited on the leeward side of a dune and then beveled off during erosion. What's the difference between the Kaibab and the Toroweap, they're both limestone? Kaibab is a shallow marine offshore system and Toroweap was more coastal. Calcium carbonate is often dead plankton. Hermit shale is a floodplain. Chert nodules are where



chert, which is microcrystalline quartz, which is silica (well, silicon dioxide)... replaces calcium carbonate in the limestone. Most of the *~cool~* rocks I pick up in side canyons are just...chert.

Occasionally we talk about other non-rock things. Ed talks about experiencing a bit of a wake up call last year as the Black Lives Matter movement gained momentum and believes there is power in solidarity and unity. We can fight racism together.

Stories from our indigenous friends about their ancestral homelands, and stopping together at various "footprints," as Ed calls them instead of "archaeological sites," make the human history feel extra vivid and recent. He notes that "ancestral sites" is a more respectful way to reference these spots.

Ed and Jack and Trent make a stop at the Little Colorado just the three of them, and shortly after, they stop again above the Hopi Salt Mines. They skip the actual salt mines out of respect.

What is sacred? What is sacred if not the Little Colorado, the believed emergence of human life into this world? What is sacred if not free-flowing clean water, period? What is sacred if not salt, the necessary ingredient to replace what is lost in tears and sweat?

Most of my interactions with salt down here are tired jokes and grunts from veteran boatmen or mitigating

hyponatremia. Although perhaps revered in a different way, the holy reverence these men show for place and water and salt and their ancestors is incredible to witness.

We float on, down into the Supergroup. Over time my imagination can more clearly animate geological processes ranging back a billion years, first the mountains and

continental collisions and then extensional faults and oceans and deserts and more oceans and rivers and deserts and then the formation of the canyon—a river eating away layer by layer in combination with uplift, a hot knife through rising butter, sometimes slow and steady other times crashing and violent... over millennia. What even is time.

Six of our friends hike out at Phantom and I miss them, the way you miss people when you wonder if you'll ever cross paths again.

Carp is a Herpetologist. He likes a good time and talking about reptiles. No matter what conversation you're having, Carp will chime in and make it more interesting.

He tells us about the whiptails, *Aspidoscelis uniparens*, who are a female-only species, and they do this thing called Parthenogenesis which is a form of reproduction without fertilization, and there's an element of courtship that resembles other mating rituals, so-called "pseudocopulation."

We're camped at Fossil. Feeling the difference between Tapeats on my cracking feet and the ouch ouch no no Muav. Turns out trying to catch herps is harder than you may think! Watching desert spiny's and chuckwalla wiggle out the noose. Can't catch 'em all. When we do catch them Carp spills the details on *Sceloporus magister*, *Sauromalus ater*, Endotherms and Ectotherms and lots of other Latin I couldn't write down fast enough.

Ed plays flute in Blacktail. Bennett sings tribal songs.

Ed is an artist and musician, “a musician that wishes he was an artist” as he likes to say. He’s the son of Michael Kabotie, an “artist that wished he was a musician,” and the grandson of Fred Kabotie, who famously painted the mural in Desert View Watchtower in 1932. Ed and his band the “Yoties create an “edutainment” experience for their audiences, a mix of music and education and advocacy for their home and people.

Bennett is Hualapai. He tells us about getting on a bus to Encinitas, California at eight years old, part of the Mormon Placement Program. He lived with his adoptive dad through high school, surfing with friends and then going on to college at Mira Costa Community College. Around age twenty-two he moved back to Arizona, roamed around Flagstaff and Moenkopi and eventually settled in Peach Springs. He’s married with six kids. He’s been down the river over a dozen times and passes along stories shared with him from elders on other inter-tribal trips. He talks about his



a real snake in the grass. Maybe the river is healing for him and maybe it’s not. I try to tell him we’re here for him. Jake offers to bring him as a swamper and I can’t wait for Trent to pass me this summer or next driving a motor boat.

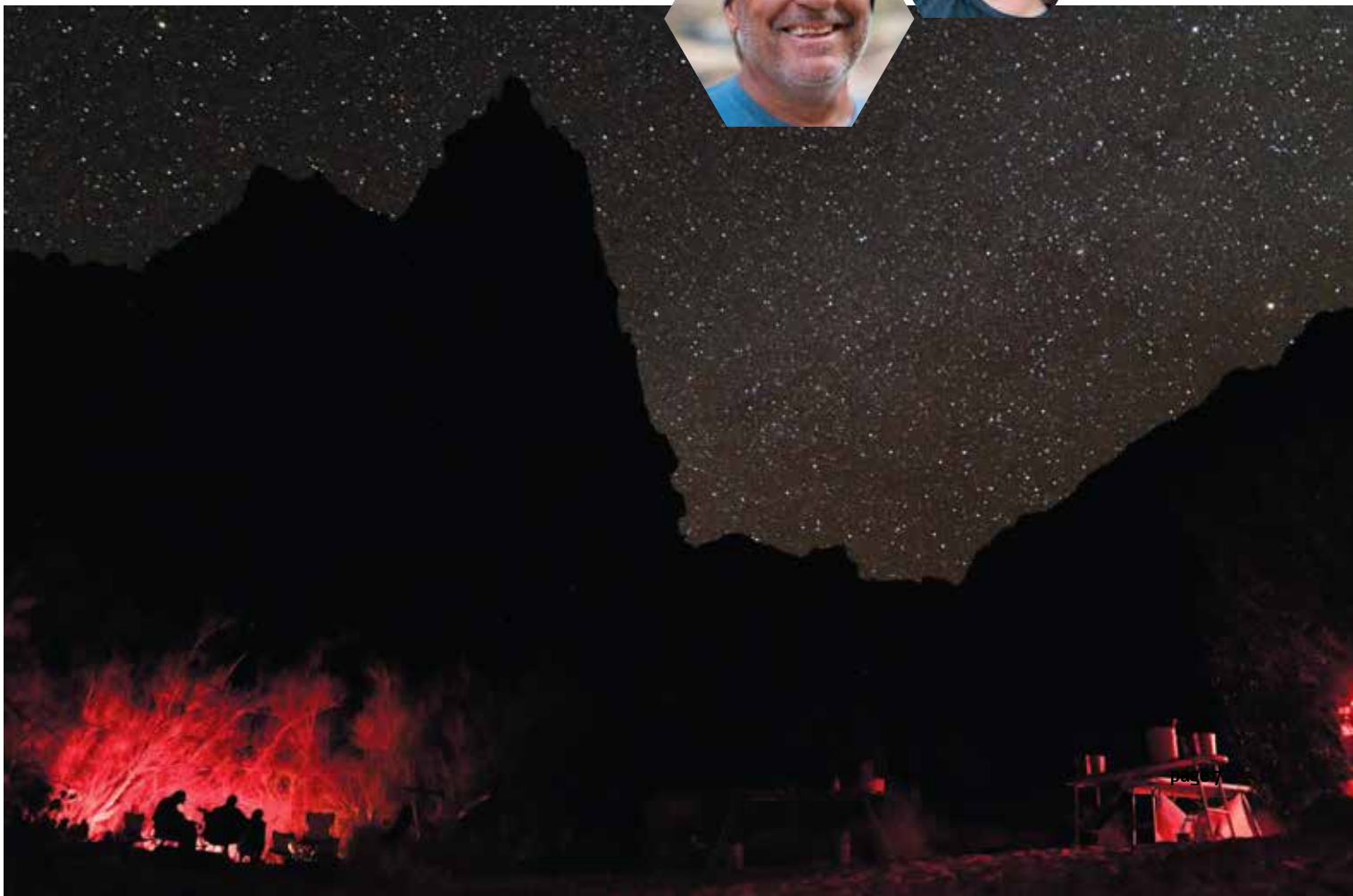
Zeke likes cribbage and aged Irish whiskey and the very special and unique rig job he’s created for his Canyon brand raft named *Jim Bridger*. He reads cowboy poetry and will not budge on the topic of self bailers versus bucket boats, and it should be obvious by now that Jim prefers the dry lines. Zeke plays campfire songs, passes on little nuggets of rowing wisdom, and knows a lot about sand. He’s in charge of the Adopt-a-Beach program that tracks sandbars at a selection of camps as they change over time.



Zeke says there are three different types of

family, who is directly from Mohawk canyon, he sings and prays, and on this particularly unique trip—leads us ceremoniously through talking about life and death and grief.

Trent works for Hualapai River Runners. He lost his eleven-year-old daughter tragically around Christmas time. I just want to hug him all the time but try not to be weird about it. He’s really funny, always making jokes out of nowhere,



river guides, just like the three kinds of rocks. Ignorant (perhaps some of us started this way, and others have remained), Sentimental, and Mental-morphic. Which he explains as having started as one of the former and over time with lots of heat and pressure deep in the womb of the earth you are transformed to a different mental state and temperament. I wonder if I'm Tapeats or Coconino.

Anna likes Metallica and Thin Lizzy and a bunch of other bands I've never heard of. Her laugh is contagious, as is her habit of accidental swearing.

Eli is from the midwest and proud, don't cha know. He ends most sentences with "bud."



Ross is genuine, a lifer, a river guy by summer and ski guide by winter, and straps my too-heavy, too-many bags on his raft each morning. He reads us "The Boatman's Prayer" by Vaughn Short.

Doug is head of concessions for the park and we joke with him about camping at Deer Creek because every single other site was full with privates between Stone and Deer. He proceeds to tell us a story about the time he was working as a ranger in Yellowstone and actually wrote himself a ticket when his dog got loose the second time in a row. The story has been used in at least one university ethics class.

I'm waiting for coffee call and first light to paint the walls again and thinking about the ways this

canyon has showed me growth and change. Maybe I'm mental-morphic after all.

I watch Tabitha row the silver bullet through the Muav gorge. It's genuinely beautiful to watch. She's strong and humble and calm, a master of her craft at just over thirty. She's not shy talking about what it was like being a female boatman in Cataract, or "boatmun" as she comically calls it, because "boat-woman" sounds weird. She tells me about the time she got to row a dory from below Hance all the way down because the other "boatmun" got injured and she styled the hell out of it. She enjoys the rich history of ladies in Grand Canyon, as it's not like that everywhere. She tells a joke about tampons I want to remember, and another one about a pump and a box. It might take me a lifetime to run Hance the way she did, so smooth she could have painted her nails in the duck pond, and I'm OK with that.





Floating along with Ed we get to talking more about the believed fourth world we live in. He can't really tell me complete stories but he talks about the gifts given upon entrance—a planting stick, water, some blue corn seeds. He talks about living simply—hauling water and growing food and well, suffering. "Suffering is the doorway to virtue and growth," he says, and I can't help but agree.

Ed can't tell the snake story, as stories are reserved for certain times of year. But he tells me about his grandfather's mural, that tells the story of Tiyo, the first Colorado river runner of Hopi legend, who beat John Wesley Powell by an estimated 1500 years.

We stop at Vulcan's Anvil to make an offering with Bennett's blessing. I don't really know how to pray, or who to or what to say with my pinch of tobacco, so I offer a simple prom-

ise to the river. I promise respect and gratitude. I promise to hold the line for my brothers and sisters out here as best I can.

Among the eighteen in our group, this canyon has taken four loved ones in the last six years—a fellow guide, a mentee, a friend, a brother, a daughter, a wife, a neighbor, an uncle, and many more outside these cathedral walls—the list continues. This place, I learn day by day, is just as associated with death as it is life. And grief is ongoing much the way the river is.

I can't tell you about the shakes of the gourd during songs of prayer in Blacktail or the smell of smoking sage and cedar. Words fall flat and maybe I've already said too much. I can't tell you how Ed and Trent and Bennett and Jack feel in this holy place.

I can't tell you how each one of us wound up on a beach together but I sit here with a tightness in my chest, a lump in my throat, a stream of tears

welling up behind my eyes.

Bennett's voice reverberates and waves of energy seem to flow through us all. The canyon is birth, and also death. The beginning and also the end.

At the end of it, I remember equally the profound moments we shared and the jokes about Bennett's very glossy teenage hair, laughter echoing off canyon walls well into the night.

What is Sacred if not community? Vulnerability. Water, Salt, and Joy.

Sophie Danison

Photos: Sophie Danison

Might Endangered Colorado Pikeminnow be Reintroduced to Grand Canyon?

Consistent with the goal of restoring Grand Canyon's native fish fauna to the extent possible, an exciting experimental reintroduction is under discussion. Prior to the fragmentation of the Colorado River Basin by dams, Colorado Pikeminnow held the role of apex predator within the relatively species-poor but highly endemic native fish fauna. Pikeminnow were prized as food fish by Native Americans and settlers. Historically growing six feet long and weighing eighty pounds or more, capable of spawning migrations of hundreds of miles cued by snowmelt-charged spring runoff floods, Pikeminnow ranged from the Colorado River Delta in Mexico to as far north as Green River, Wyoming, in the warmwater reaches of tributaries including the Green, Yampa, White, Colorado, San Juan, and Gila Rivers. The construction of dams incrementally fragmented the Pikeminnow's range, resulting in their slow extirpation (localized extinction) within disconnected river sections blocked by dams. Once Laguna Dam near Yuma, Arizona was completed in 1905, Pikeminnow attempting to run upstream stacked up in enormous numbers in the tailrace, and were harvested in such quantity that a cannery was briefly operated, hastening their decline in that section. The Colorado River in Grand Canyon became another disconnected section in two stages over nearly thirty years: downstream when Hoover Dam began impounding water in 1935 and upstream at Glen Canyon Dam in 1963. We can only speculate on how many resident Pikeminnow remained in Grand Canyon after both dams were in place, and whether they were able

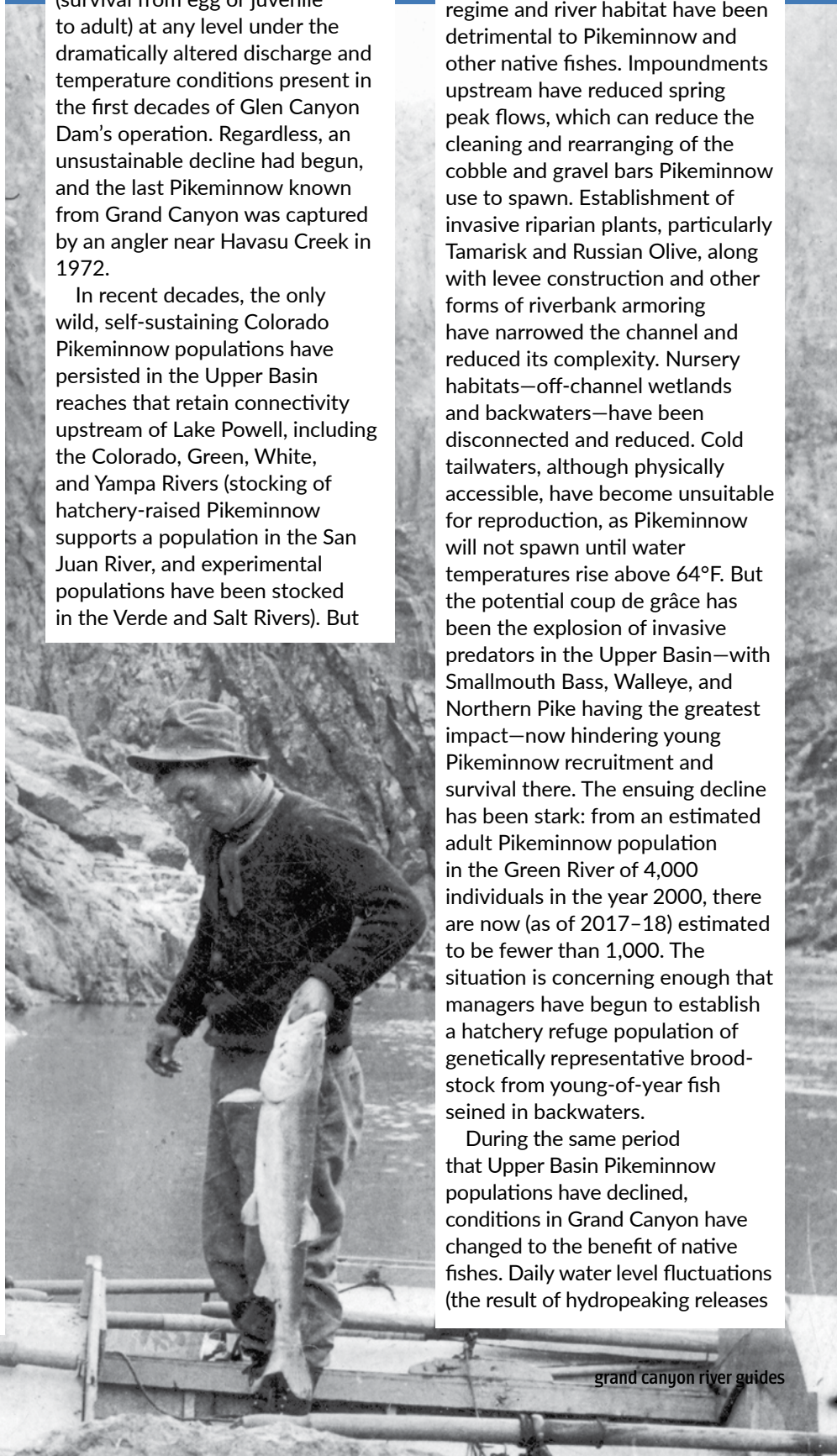
to spawn and achieve recruitment (survival from egg or juvenile to adult) at any level under the dramatically altered discharge and temperature conditions present in the first decades of Glen Canyon Dam's operation. Regardless, an unsustainable decline had begun, and the last Pikeminnow known from Grand Canyon was captured by an angler near Havasu Creek in 1972.

In recent decades, the only wild, self-sustaining Colorado Pikeminnow populations have persisted in the Upper Basin reaches that retain connectivity upstream of Lake Powell, including the Colorado, Green, White, and Yampa Rivers (stocking of hatchery-raised Pikeminnow supports a population in the San Juan River, and experimental populations have been stocked in the Verde and Salt Rivers). But

a growing list of stressors are threatening these last Pikeminnow strongholds. Changes to the flow regime and river habitat have been detrimental to Pikeminnow and other native fishes. Impoundments upstream have reduced spring peak flows, which can reduce the cleaning and rearranging of the cobble and gravel bars Pikeminnow use to spawn. Establishment of invasive riparian plants, particularly Tamarisk and Russian Olive, along with levee construction and other forms of riverbank armoring have narrowed the channel and reduced its complexity. Nursery habitats—off-channel wetlands and backwaters—have been disconnected and reduced. Cold tailwaters, although physically accessible, have become unsuitable for reproduction, as Pikeminnow will not spawn until water temperatures rise above 64°F. But the potential coup de grâce has been the explosion of invasive predators in the Upper Basin—with Smallmouth Bass, Walleye, and Northern Pike having the greatest impact—now hindering young Pikeminnow recruitment and survival there. The ensuing decline has been stark: from an estimated adult Pikeminnow population in the Green River of 4,000 individuals in the year 2000, there are now (as of 2017–18) estimated to be fewer than 1,000. The situation is concerning enough that managers have begun to establish a hatchery refuge population of genetically representative broodstock from young-of-year fish seined in backwaters.

During the same period that Upper Basin Pikeminnow populations have declined, conditions in Grand Canyon have changed to the benefit of native fishes. Daily water level fluctuations (the result of hydropeaking releases

Emery Kolb holding a 25 lb Colorado River Salmon (Pikeminnow). Sept 1911. Kolb Bros photo.





from Glen Canyon Dam) have, since 1991, been constrained to a narrower range; lower Lake Powell levels are resulting in warmer water releases from the dam; and lower Lake Mead levels have re-exposed over sixty miles of river habitat, now silty and warm like the Colorado River of old. With Glen Canyon Dam above and (possibly) Pearce Ferry Rapid below curtailing the influx of high-risk invasive fish species that predominate elsewhere in basin, the western Grand Canyon fish fauna has in recent years become dominated by native species, representing more than 95percent of captures.

In this context of an increasing need for redundant Pikeminnow populations to recover the species and potentially improved conditions for Pikeminnow in Grand Canyon, a Colorado Pikeminnow Reintroduction Feasibility Study began in late 2018. The study draws on the expertise of a Science Panel of university and federal scientists, and is advised by a steering committee representing the Hualapai Tribe, Navajo Tribe, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Nevada Department of Wildlife, National Park Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The culmination of this work is a forthcoming report from the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center, *Assessment of recovery viability for Colorado Pikeminnow (Ptychocheilus lucius) in the Colorado River in Grand Canyon*. Having carefully examined conditions in the context of Pikeminnow life-history requirements, the panel was optimistic that in western Grand Canyon water temperatures are warm enough and sufficient habitat exists for growth, feeding, and migrations from home ranges to spawning bars. Potentially limiting factors involve habitats specific to spawning and survival of newly hatched young. For example, loose, clean spawning gravels may be in shorter supply in Grand Canyon than in the Upper Basin, and stable backwater nursery habitats are few. Nevertheless, the thriving populations of Humpback Chub and Flannelmouth Sucker in western Grand Canyon may offer hope for Pikeminnow as well. Stakeholder discussions and compliance processes loom. But with any luck, after an absence of more than fifty years, we may once again enjoy the thrill of encountering a Colorado Pikeminnow in Grand Canyon.

Robert Schelly, Emily Omana Smith, Rebecca Koller, and Brian Healy | Native Fish Ecology and Conservation Program, Grand Canyon National Park

Rowing Big Boats

In reference to the image on the back of the last issue of the BQR, Volume 34-1.

Yes in response to the "rowing big boats" photo. These were taken by my father Grant Reeder, 1965, 1966, and 1967. All military surplus, no one made inflatable rafts for river running. World War II bridge pontoons, the two-oars station were 33-foot pontoons while the single oars station 28-foot pontoons. The military did have 16-foot ten-man assault rafts. The general consensus at that time was a smaller boat was more dangerous, as opposed to rowing a boat you could actually maneuver.

Lets thank Ron Smith for inventing the "S-rig" so we didn't have to keep rowing those things.

Stuart Reeder



Front oar Grant Reeder; rear oar Dennis Prescott.





Pack them on there!



This is the "small" 28-foot boat with one oar.

SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL, THE COLORADO RIVER HAS BEEN THE BEATING HEART OF GRAND CANYON, THE VEIN OF LIFE, SACRED TO ALL INDIGENOUS TRIBES FOR WHOM GRAND CANYON REMAINS A CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL HOMELAND.



As the traditional guardians and protectors of Grand Canyon, the Havasupai remain in their place of origin; the only tribe to still dwell deep within Grand Canyon, known as *'Ha Głaya Jigemíma* (Gorge of the Great River). The Havasupai people call the Colorado River itself *'Ha Fay g'Aam* (Great River Flowing By);

For the Hopi people, the sacred Little Colorado River known as *Palavayu* and the surrounding cultural landscape is where life begins and souls return;

To the Hualapai Tribe, the middle of the Colorado River is honored as *Ha'yidada*, The Backbone, and is intimately tied to the cultural identity of the "People of the Tall Pines;"



Photo: Shyanne Yazzie

To the Navajo Nation (Diné) the Colorado River is known as *Tooh, Tó Nts'ósíkooh*, and also honored as *Bits'íís Ninéézi*, The River of Neverending Life. The powerful Colorado River is woven into Navajo oral traditions and ceremonies as a life force and a protector of their people;

Within the traditional Southern Paiute homelands, the Colorado River (*Pia-Paxa'a*) is one of their most powerful water sources, and the Grand Canyon itself is called *Piapaxa 'Uipi*, Big River Canyon.

The Yavapai-Apache Nation is the modern amalgamation through the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934, of two historically distinct People; the Yuman Speaking NW Yavape' (People of the Sun) and the Athapaskan speaking Dilzhe'e Apache, known to other Western Apache groups as the HUNTERS. The Yavape' call the River *Ha Khwata* (Red Water) and the Apache term is *Tu'L che'e*, The Red River.

In the interconnected Zuni universe, the sacred Colorado River is called *K'yawan' A:honanne*. The Zuni place of origin, *Chimik'yana'kya dey'a* or beautiful Ribbon Falls, flows into the Colorado River;

As an organization dedicated to protecting Grand Canyon and the Colorado River experience, Grand Canyon River Guides acknowledges, honors, and deeply respects the sovereignty of the homelands belonging to the eleven affiliated tribes of Grand Canyon: The Havasupai people, the Hopi and Hualapai tribes, Navajo Nation, Southern Paiute bands (Kaibab, Las Vegas, Moapa, Paiute Indians of Utah and the San Juan Southern Paiute tribe), as well as the Yavapai-Apache Nation and the Pueblo of Zuni.

Furthermore, GCRG acknowledges:

These eleven tribes are the traditional stewards of this rich cultural landscape that transcends the boundaries of Grand Canyon National Park and the paradigms of Western understanding.

Tribal ancestors and the places where they dwelled are not vestiges of the past. These spirits are still present within these Indigenous homelands. Consequently, our actions and activities in Grand Canyon, both positive and negative, may affect the past, present, and future of Indigenous peoples.

These interconnected tribal homelands encompass not only ancestral sites, sacred places, and traditional cultural properties, but also resources such as water, rocks, minerals, animals, fish, and plants. Together, they have a symbiotic, holistic relationship with the Indigenous peoples of Grand Canyon, embodying cultural and religious significance that is interwoven with their unique lifeways, ceremonies, and tribal histories.

Celebrating and sharing Indigenous voices, traditional ecological knowledge, and the true history of the Indigenous caretakers of Grand Canyon is grounded in respect, and builds an inclusive narrative.

As river guides and the river running public, we must commit to listening, learning and understanding from the tribes themselves, not only their deep histories and enduring connections with this sacred landscape of Grand Canyon, but also their contemporary challenges and future needs.

We must work together to address systemic racism and dismantle equity barriers.

Respect must be the foundation for moving forward towards a more positive, just, and inclusive future for all, and for the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River.

Grand Canyon River Guides

Nesting Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) in the Colorado River Corridor below Glen Canyon Dam: A request for help!

We have a new and regular member of the nesting bird population in Grand Canyon, the Canada goose! When Bryan Brown, Steve Carothers and R.R. Roy Johnson published the *Birds of Grand Canyon* in 1987, this is what they had to say about the Canada goose: “This is a rare winter visitor along the river, and a rare spring and fall transient throughout the region. **These geese leave the region and move northward in the spring to their breeding grounds, the closest of which is the marshland of Utah’s Great Salt Lake.**” Well, that was then. Today, a resident population of Canada geese are becoming increasingly more common in the southwest, especially around urban

lakes and pond, parks, golf courses, agricultural fields and wet lowlands adjacent to airports. In fact, they are becoming notoriously problematic in some of these areas where their high numbers lead to human health concerns and they have become collision hazards at some airports.

In Grand Canyon we have one very old nesting record from the 1950 or 1960s when Martin Litton saw a goose with goslings in the Deer Creek area. Then, several decades after that, beginning in about 2001, there are only four records of geese with goslings: two immediately below the dam once in 2001 and again in 2013, one somewhere below Phantom Ranch in 2012, and one in Marble Canyon in 2016. Only five nesting records since folks began

keeping track of birds at Grand Canyon National Park for the last ninety-plus years. Things changed in 2018 and since that time we have documented at least nine to ten successful Canada goose nesting events in three areas along the river: one below Glen Canyon Dam to Lees Ferry, four from about River Mile 50 to the Nankoweap area, and, at least four or five from River Mile 243 to Pearce Ferry. Only five records in the first ninety years, then double that since 2018. What is going on? Beginning in 2018, and continuing every year to the spring of 2021, one to four pair have raised goslings where the river is exposing old Lake Mead sediments in far western Grand Canyon. We became aware of this new regular nester in Grand



Canada geese with seven goslings at River Mile 271.5 in western Grand Canyon. The red circle on the gander’s leg shows a butt-end band. These goslings are eight to fifteen days old and were first seen on April 14, 2018. Look closely and you will see all seven goslings.

Canyon on a “Diamond Down” trip in mid-April 2018, when one of us blurted out, “Holy shit Tanner, check it out—geese with goslings?” There they were, a beautiful pair of adults, escorting seven, week-old, citron colored, fuzzy goslings on river right a couple of miles upstream of Columbine Falls. Also in 2018 a pair settled in on the eastern end of the canyon where they decided to nest in the Nankoweap area. We also have a reported sighting of geese with goslings in Glen Canyon in 2018 at the boat ramp at Lees Ferry (thanks Dave Trimble). Then in 2019, in a three-and-a-half-mile reach between just above 50-Mile and at Nankoweap, two pair each presented more goslings. On the lower end we had three to four pair from 243-Mile to Columbine Falls (mile 274). In 2020, we simply could not get spring/early summer river access with the pandemic raging; however, we did manage to poach a quick upstream trip in June 2020 from Pearce Ferry to Separation Rapid to search for these birds. And, sure enough, we did find a pair with six or seven goslings at the mouth of Surprise Canyon. We also got on a July ARR trip (Thanks TJ and Bill Gloeckler) and found two pair, one with goslings and a pair without young in that stretch in the Nankoweap area. We have no

information on geese in 2019–2020 below the dam to Lees Ferry. They might have been there—anybody remember? So, what the heck is going on? Why now are Canada geese colonizing the Colorado River in Grand Canyon? Will they go away as suddenly as they arrived? Where do they go at the end of the nesting season? Is this another example of climate change, or, is it a bit more complicated than that? All questions we want to answer!

A couple of fun things to know about Canada geese is:

- 1) they generally come back to the area where they hatched year-after-year;
- 2) when the adults begin nesting they lose their flight feathers (eclipse plumage) and they don’t get those flight feathers back until their goslings have fully developed and can fly (sixty to seventy days post-hatching);
- 3) the adults and young leave the nesting area once everybody can fly;
- 4) the adults and young usually stay together fall and winter and return together to the nesting area in spring; and,
- 5) the young birds usually don’t breed until their third or fourth year.

So, it was no particular surprise in 2019 to find the 2018 pair at it again with another seven goslings on the river near Columbine Falls. We guessed it was at least the same male of the pair as it had a butt-end band on its right leg when first seen in 2018 and there the bird with the band was again in 2019. The chances it was the same pair is pretty good and we would sure love to know where that bird was originally banded.

Now, in 2021, we are begging for help. River runners please when you see geese, especially geese with goslings, get a photo and write down the date and the location by river mile and contact one of us with the information. We are determined to chase this mystery and eventually read those butt-end bands to find out where the geese came from in the first place and, more importantly, see if we can figure out the big questions, “why now?” and “why are they seemingly concentrated in just a few areas of the canyon?” and “are they here to stay?”

Steve Carothers & Tanner Carothers
 swcarothers@outlook.com
 tscaroth@gmail.com

SPRING DISTURBANCE FLOW



Note sand bar at lower end of the eddy. You can also see some Paria River murk. Photos were taken from the rim of Hot Na Na beach and House Rock rapids from the Marble Rim during the low flow (at weeks end before they bumped it up).

Greg Woodall

On the River With Seldom Seen: A 1,000 CFS Adventure

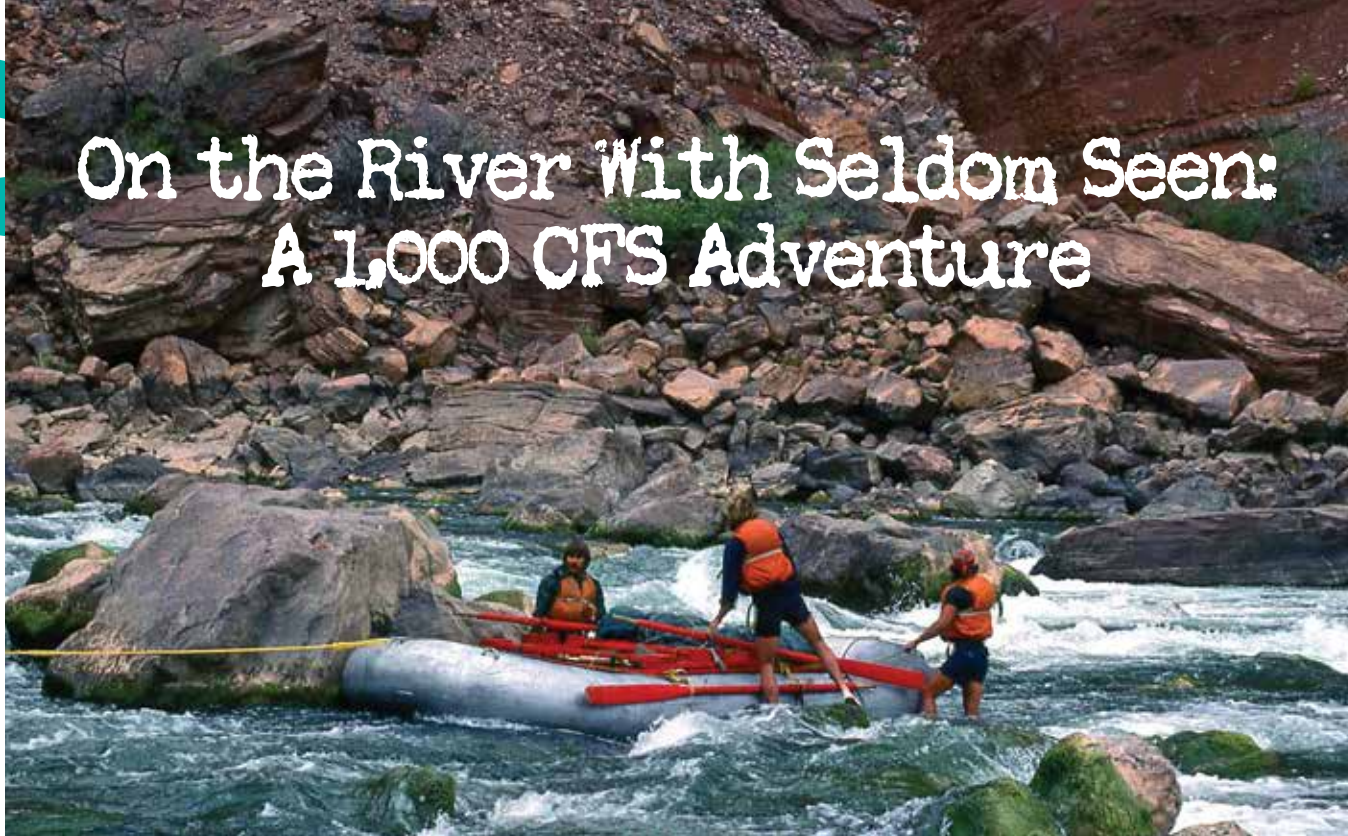


Photo credit: Vaughn Short.

I first got to know Ken Sleight on a Grand Canyon river trip in 1972. Ken's clients, folks from the Sierra Club, wanted an oar-powered adventure but he needed additional boats and boatmen. Ken asked Dee Holladay of Holiday River Expeditions, a long-time friend and expert oarsman, to help out running triple rigs through the Canyon. A triple-rig consisted of three 18-foot inflatable rafts lashed together and run sideways following the current, with a sweep oar on the lead boat pointed downstream and another sweep located on the rear boat pointed upstream. If adequately rigged and manned, it was a great boat for large rapids. If not, it wasn't. On this trip Ken and Dan Lehman ran one rig, Dee and I the other. Dee knew I would jump at the chance go as the underpaid rear oarsman on my first Grand Canyon river trip. Neither of us suspected I would end up working for Seldom Seen Sleight for the rest of the decade.

Most of the time Ken enjoyed working alone, piloting his one of a kind motorized triple-rig through the Green and Colorado River canyons with amazing finesse. To this day,

threading *that* boat through the roaring rapids of Grand and Cataract canyons remains to many a mystery, the work of a magician...probably a mad magician. When fortune forced Ken to branch out and hire, in the words of Edward Abbey,¹ "the worst element, the most disgusting and disreputable crew of the whole river-running clan," as unfortunate but necessary appendages of any rowing outfit, I suspect some of Ken's joy for rivers temporarily evaporated like spilt beer on a hot, rocky beach. No cause for alarm, however. Ken long ago mastered the art of finding another cold can of beer.

Undaunted and enigmatic as usual, Ken enjoyed, or at least tolerated most of his unruly, loyal if ungrateful crew: Stu Reeder, Amil Quayle, Dan Lehman, Bob Whitney, Frogg Stewart, Denny Haskew, Brad Dimock, Bob Shelton, my brother Mark, me, and others worked at times for Seldom Seem. Our rewards were many, if occasionally unrecognized. Ken remains a passionate apostle of wilderness. His humor and mischievous gentleness belies unrelenting and unapologetic conviction in wildness—our Odysseus

in Levis and western boots. I found myself mesmerized by campfire tales of the Yukon, Grand Canyon, the Canyons of the Escalante River and, of course, the Holy Grail, Glen Canyon. For eight glorious yet sometimes painful years I found myself entwined in the making of such stories.

In 1977, the Bureau of Reclamation, the bastards, decided to turn off the upstream Glen Canyon Dam's spigots and left only a trickle for river runners to slither upon. We guessed the flow around 1,000 cubic feet per second, about a tenth of what could be considered decent. No big motor-rigs and no triple-rigs for sure. Most outfitters prudently decided not to launch on such meager water, but not us. No way. Amil Quayle, poet and longtime, highly respected river guide would often boast, "Nobody ever accused a boatman of being intelligent!" Eminently qualified, we were determined to prove him right.

In *Raging River, Lonely Trail*, Vaughn Short poetically describes through—well, poetry—his "Seldom Seen and His Macho Crew" version of the adventure. Water low enough



"With all this water there's gotta be a river down there somewhere." Not sure who's driving. Photo credit: Vaughn Short.



Bob Whitney (Tim's brother) standing in the boat. Boatmen standing on the rock—left to right are Ken, Mark O'Neill (standing tall on top), Kim Crumbo, Bob Shelton (white visor), and Stu Reeder. Photo credit: Vaughn Short.

to reveal river's bottom throughout the voyage and very long days demanding constant rowing from early light until dusk defined the trip. Each day's essential tasks required too much time allowing little time for leisurely hikes. Familiar rapids presenting unfamiliar challenges demanded frequent daylight devouring scouting stops.

We made it to Hance Rapid, a shallow, rocky mess not quite a third of the way through the Canyon with two-thirds of the entire trip's allotted time behind us as other major rapids lurked below. Critically low on beer, we hastily devised a plan for this rapid. One at a time, a boat would be guided through Hance's tapestry of shallow rivulets by a boatman at the oars and two passenger-guides jumping in then out of the boat to stumble through the knee-deep, boulder-strewn water. It was relatively easy for the rest of us to wade out and point to critical, "don't screw-up here" sections along the selected route. Sometimes we frantically dove head-first into the boat to avoid getting run over by the careening craft or swept away by swift current. If I recall correctly, no one died.

Ken's boat, a 20-foot Leyland, bigger, longer and wider than the rest, did as well as the rest except for the last chute between two huge

boulders near the rapid's end. With Ken at the oars and the boat lodged firmly in this narrow, thundering cradle, four or five of us prepared to heave the boat through. On shore the passengers probably thought us totally screwed and graciously appeared appropriately concerned. Our wild-eyed, Seldom Seen Ahab shouted for us to sit down in the boat, which we reluctantly did. Casting a mischievous eye toward shore then back to his crew, he opened his small, private cooler and passed the beer around. The rapid's roar blending with hissing beers joyfully celebrating release from their metal prisons rang out a melody worthy of the gods, by God. Ken's

wisdom flowed in raspy, harmonious rhythm to embellish the symphony—"It's a great life if you don't weaken!"

It certainly was. We chugged the beverage, grinned at the folks on shore, and heaved and clawed the damn boat through. Adventure? It sure seemed so at the time.

The rest of the trip? You'll have to read Vaughn's poem.²

Kim Crumbo

Footnote:

- 1) Ed Abbey, *Down the River*, 1982, E.P. Dutton, Inc., "River Rats," pages 175-187.
- 2) Vaughn Short, *Raging River, Lonely Trail*, 1978, Two Horses Press: Tucson, AZ. (original publication).



Photo credit: Vaughn Short.

SELDOM SEEN AND HIS MACHO CREW

They say the river can't be run,
The water's down—It can't be done.
But if anyone can shoot it through,
It's old Seldom Seen and his macho crew.
So load on the Coors, lash it down!
Might as well be happy if we're going to drown!
Roll up the bow line! Push out the boat!
With all this beer, it may not float.

But the boats stay up! We're on our way!
Will we see House Rock by the end of day?
At Badger Rapids the boatmen curse,
The rocks stick up and it couldn't be worse.
So they walk the bank, and they rant and swear.
They shake their heads and they tear their hair.
Then they jump in their boats and bounce on through.
But one hangs up! Now what'll we do?

We push and shove and heave on rope.
The water pours in—there's not much hope.
We pull and tug 'til the boat's unstuck
With a little work and a lot of luck!
Next we come to old Soap Creek,
The boats they bounce, and the oar locks squeak.
The boys row hard and make the run,
But the sun hangs low, the day most done.

There were Kim and Mark—the Crumbo two,
A couple of Bobs and a guy called Stu,
Making up that macho crew.
And a kid named "Coke" was swamping.

On we push to old House Rock,
Everyone climbs out and it's quite a shock.
The boatmen say "We need time to think.
Let's stop here for a night to drink."
Early in the morning, to the boatmen's despair
The water's still low, and the rapid's still there.
So they ponder and study and fret and stew,
Then climb in their boats and row right through!

The days, they pass and the going's slow,
The wind is up and the water's low.
We stop at the Little Colorado to take a swim,
Our time's half gone and it's looking grim.
At Carbon Creek we feed the pet raven Sam,
While we curse the Bureau and we curse the dam.
Swamper throws a mudball at that old black crow,
Stuart says, "Now we're jinxed for down below."

Shove off next morning with mileage to make,
But the Bureau is stingy-won't give us a break.

We're way behind schedule, but little is said,
Until someone yells, "There's a rapid ahead!"
Mark goes first, rowing right on track,
Then he turns around and he shouts back,
"To the right of the standing wave, then take it straight!"
But the skipper goes aground and the problem's great.

There were Kim and Mark—the Crumbo two,
A couple of Bobs and a guy called Stu
Making up that macho crew.
And a kid named "Coke" was swamping.

The boatmen row back and the going's tough,
The rocks are big and the water's rough.
They all pitch in and they tie on rope.
The boat swings free—once more there's hope.
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!

Eight days gone and the girls get prettier,
The beer tastes better and the men are wittier.
But time is running out and the food is low,
I'm beginning to think it's time to go.
Old Seldom climbs out and so do I.
Left before sun-up without sayin' good-bye,
Climbed the walls of that canyon grand,
Left the people sleeping there on the sand.

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,
Top of a rock where the water rushed by,
And sitting there, I greatly fear,
They slowly perished for want of beer.

There were Kim and Mark—the Crumbo two,
A couple of Bobs and a guy named Stu,
Making up that macho team,
That rowed the boats for Seldom Seen.

Vaughn Short

This poem is reprinted with permission from Glen Canyon Conservancy. *Raging River Lonely Trail* is published by and available from Glen Canyon Conservancy, an official nonprofit partner of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument. www.CanyonConservancy.org.

Vaughn Short, 1978, *Raging River Lonely Trail*, GCC second edition, p. 63.
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Announcing the 2021 River Runners Hall-of-Fame Inductees

In the last BQR issue, Roy Webb, my fellow committee member at the JW Powell Museum's River Runners Hall-of-Fame announced the new addition of our amazing Director, Candice Cravins. This time I have the honor to make the announcement of our 2021 inductees. They are: Dave Rust, Harry Aleson, and Les Jones.

Typically, we pick two to three inductees each year from a small pool of nominees. Last year, in 2020, we didn't nominate anyone because of the disruptions caused by the pandemic. We are excited to share that this year's induction ceremony will be held in person and fully outdoors on Saturday, October 2, 2021. The induction ceremony will include presentations, panel discussions, and an auction of exceptional river gear. Attendance is open to the public, and more information may be found on the Museum's website at www.johnwesleypowell.com during the coming months. We hope that many of you will join us for this upcoming virtual celebration!

Our 2021 inductees were chosen individually, while at the same time we used a common thread of each one being an "introducer". To us this means that each one stands alone, while at the same time all were committed to showing the Colorado River system and the surrounding canyon country to others. For instance, Dave Rust oversaw the building of the North Kaibab Trail, the tramway across the river, and he also established and operated Rust's Camp (now called Phantom Ranch) in the bottom of Grand Canyon. In 1923 he became one of



Dave Rust at the oars of his folding canvas canoe on the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, along with the Kolb brothers (Ellsworth and Emery, in the bow) and two other companions, about 1908-1909.

Photo credit: NAU.PH.568.966, Kolb Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Cline Library, Northern Arizona University.



Harry Aleson. Photo courtesy: Renny Russell



Les Jones. Photo: Dugald Bremner

the first commercial river guides, by taking paying guests through Glen Canyon in canvas foldable canoes. Aleson introduced Georgie White to the river. In 1944 Aleson and White donned life preservers and swam on 65,000 second feet of melted snow from Diamond Creek to Quartermaster Canyon. Two years later, they hiked a small inflatable raft nearly eighty miles across the plateau, inflated it, and then rowed from the mouth of Parashant Canyon to the Grand Wash Cliffs. Les Jones developed detailed and intricate scroll maps showing different river sections of the Green and Colorado, and other rivers as well. A civil engineer by training, Jones's perseverance to the craft of cartography left a lasting legacy for anyone who needed some river running guidance, and a blueprint on how to do it safely.

For those intrigued by pioneering river-runners and their individual as well as collective impacts to the Colorado River system, the 2021 Hall-of-Fame induction ceremony and celebration is for you! Save the date for Saturday, October 2, 2021. More information will be broadcasted regarding the event in the months and weeks ahead. Until then for questions, please feel free to email Candice Cravins at jwpdirector@gmail.com.

Latimer Smith

Member, River Runners Hall-of-Fame Selection Committee

Mile 76.5

Until you've faced it, it's hard to know what it's like. If you're a private whitewater rafter, it's likely something you've never done before and may never do again. And if you do it again, it will never be the same. It's always and forever unique, strange, challenging... and sometimes, disastrous. It's mile 76.5 on an almost 300-mile whitewater river trip through the Grand Canyon.

What makes this mile so significant? Lees Ferry, not far below the abomination that is Glen Canyon Dam, is where all boats that raft the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon start, and therefore counts as Mile Zero. Hance Rapid, at the 76.5 mile mark, is the first really big rapid you encounter. It's your first real Grand Canyon whitewater test, and it's a doozy. This means that it looms large in your thoughts all the way down to it. You wonder if you

will have what it takes when you get there.

At Mile 179 lies Lava Falls, the biggest rapid on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. The classic saying is "*You are always above Lava.*" Meaning, you anticipate it your entire trip, and as soon as you survive it, you think about running it on your next trip. Hance has always been similar to me. After about half-a-dozen trips my nemesis rapids have only been Hance and Granite. Not Lava Falls. That seems strange, but for me it's true.

Hance Rapid is a wide, boulder-strewn obstacle course. In lower flows you can only enter on the right, which really limits your options, but in higher levels a run on the left becomes available. Now, sadly, it's almost never high enough to run left.

These days, entering the rapid is usually always done on the right, although you have choices about

where on the right to enter. Some go far right, while others hug the left of the channel to avoid the rock that usually forms a small hole just left of center. At some water levels going over it is just fine. However, it can slow you down, which is not good when you are headed to a series of holes and large waves which you will need down-river momentum to survive.

From there on, it's a complete mess of holes, pour-over rocks, and large breaking waves. Unlike nearly all Grand Canyon rapids, there is no clear line. Unless you're very experienced and skilled, you just deal with whatever presents itself. If you're rowing a wooden dory, as commercial guides with the commercial rafting company OARS (Outdoor American River Specialists) and some private trips do, it's a real nail-biter with all the rocks you could crash into or fall over.



Winter backpacking in the Grand Canyon.

that was going on under the very surface of the water. I had no idea what I was about to face and looking back, I was so thankful that I didn't.



The interesting thing was that running it in a whitewater raft was far from my first acquaintance with Hance Rapid. My first time there wasn't from a boat, but from shore. Before I was a river guide, I was a dedicated Grand Canyon backpacker. By the time I became a river guide, I had hiked almost all of the trails in the Grand Canyon, which made my

first river trip in the Grand Canyon all that sweeter.

While backpacking, I had camped at Hance Rapid more than once. My last backpacking trip in the Canyon was on Christmas vacation when I hiked down to Hance Rapid, and then on to Tanner Rapid.

I was young enough (twenty years-old) that I could ignore weight considerations to some degree, so I had a three-person tent, two sleeping pads, in-step crampons for the ice and snow I had to hike through, and an odd assortment of food items with absolutely no freeze-dried crap. I had cheese, a dense sliced bread, chocolate, nuts, a can of frozen orange juice and an avocado, (which never ripened in the cold and I had to pack it back out just to throw it away at home, ouch!). I was a quirky hiker. The weight of my pack seemed rather immaterial to my younger and much less sensible self. I could simply do what I wanted to do, without thinking a lot about weight.

My first experience with Hance was in 1978, when flows were generally high. But I was a rookie and I was naïve enough to take advice from our private trip leader, who had also never been down before. He had a bright idea of doing a “momentum run” on the right. His hair-brained plot was to start on the far right, with a strong ferry angle to the left, so you could row hard and build up momentum to slide behind the rock on the left of the tongue just after passing it. At that time, all the really bad holes were on the right, so you really wanted to be in the middle. Never on the right.

The essential problem was the timing. I should have known from the beginning that it was a completely idiotic plan. But I had learned to run rivers only three months before, on the much, much smaller Stanislaus River in California. What did I know? I was soon to find out.

Simply put, I was taken in by my own ignorance and inexperience, while believing in someone else,

despite their own ignorance and inexperience. We were both grasping at truth, with absolutely no reason to think we had it in our hands. And we didn't.

Let me be absolutely clear. There is no such thing as a “momentum run.” If you want to duck in behind a rock, you want to just barely miss it and then nip in, not try to calculate all of the variables that go into rowing across a span of thirty-feet while accelerating down a slope. Any idiot could see that. Except, as it turned out, me.

Like a lamb to the slaughter, I took on the challenge and was the first boat out, with no passengers in my boat, luckily. With more arrogance than confidence, I rowed hard to the right shore and started the slow drift to the head of the rapid. As the seconds ticked by, I tried to overcome my fear and time my hard pull to the left with as much precision as I could muster.

The mud-laden water made it difficult to see the rocks, or anything



Hance Rapid in winter.

aptly named, Horseshoe Mesa. It sits almost exactly halfway down into the canyon, which means you can stand on the edge of the mesa suspended halfway between the rim and river. There are few places quite like it.

There is also at least one cave just below the mesa rim that I've visited more than once, before it was locked up by the Park Service to preserve it from, well, people like me, although I always treated it with care. Once a hiking companion and I crept in far enough that we decided to switch off our flashlights and experience total darkness, which is more of a rare experience than you may think. In the modern world we rarely experience it. We spent a few minutes with our eyes wide open without being able to see any light at all, not even our hands in front of our face. When we were ready to head back out, we turned our lights back on, but my companion set off in the opposite direction I was going. Thankfully, I won that argument, and before long we exited the cave, but I never forgot how easy it could be to get disoriented in the pitch black.

Hance Rapid is named after John Hance, a real character, who came to the Grand Canyon around 1883. He tried to mine gold, silver, and asbestos, but his real income came from guiding and providing lodging to early tourists who came to see if the tall tales told by John Wesley Powell were true. They were, but Hance's tales were another matter. He became a legendary fixture, who would spin yarns about how he had dug the canyon himself. For example, he once said "I've got to tell stories to these people for their money; and if I don't tell it to them, who will? I can make these tenderfeet believe that a frog eats boiled eggs, and I'm going to do it; and I'm going to make 'em believe he carries it a mile to find a rock to crack it on."

When President Roosevelt visited the Grand Canyon in 1903, John

Hance served as his guide, as he did for many visitors at the time. He was the first Postmaster for the Grand Canyon and opened the first post office on the South Rim. He died on January 8, 1919, at the purported age of 84, only a month before the Canyon became a national park. Although he has been called "Captain," there is no evidence that he ever actually was, despite likely serving for the Confederacy during the Civil War.

The Grand Canyon has attracted a number of interesting characters of European descent over the years, but it's important to acknowledge that Native Americans have inhabited the Canyon for a very, very long time, such as Havasupai, Pueblo, Paiute, Navajo, and Zuni to name some. There are Native American sacred sites as well as ancestral and current homelands (Havasupai) within the Grand Canyon. No doubt they visited Hance Rapid frequently over the centuries.



The challenges the Colorado River offers sneak up on you. The first days of any river Grand Canyon trip are fairly mild. Marble Gorge, which is the first part of the trip, is a gentle introduction. It's tremendously beautiful with gentle floats between 800-foot limestone cliffs, and the canyon beyond extending above that. It's by far my favorite section of the river.

This sets up a contrast—what you are currently experiencing is relatively easy and calm, with just enough difficulty to lull you into thinking you have met and vanquished the challenges the Canyon has to throw at you. You may think that having sailed through the "Roaring Twenties" (a set of rapids in the twenty to thirty mile mark, rated around five on the one to ten Grand Canyon Scale of difficulty), that you have the Canyon *nailed*. If you think that, you are very, very mistaken. Your first real trial is at Mile 76.5.

It's a great thing that you get five or six days, when rowing a 14- to 18-foot boat, to get accustomed to the big water of the Colorado River. But you should take advantage of this time. It's your opportunity to up your game, to build your strength, sharpen your perceptions, and hone your Grand Canyon water reading skills, to safely navigate all that is to come. And there is much to come beyond Mile 76.5.

Even though you likely won't experience the same high flows (25-40,000 CFS) of the '70s and '80s, the typical 15,000 CFS of modern days is still a large flow, and something worthy of respect and skill. You can still hit a wave badly and flip your boat. You still need to take things seriously. Just as I should have in 1978, when I was too ignorant to know what the hell I was doing.



On my very first run of Hance Rapid in 1978 I never did find out how everyone else ran the rapid. My guess is they did something completely different. Subsequently, I always did every time I ran the rapid.

As I slipped down the tongue of the rapid, I did my best to pull hard to the left at exactly the right time, but, to no surprise, timing the run was way too difficult. I ended up trashing all the way down the right side, which meant crashing through a series of holes. My saving grace was that I was in an 18-foot ancient floppy rubber raft called a Havasu. The boat completely doubled up on itself in the first hole and took on so much water that it was unflippable for the rest of the rapid. We had become one with the river. But I still had the rest of the holes to crash through. All I remember is a series of rough falls into whitewater maelstrom, and then lumbering slowly out to somehow continue downriver. I don't recall how.

When I came out at the bottom of the rapid, I had to row with everything I had to get to the side

of the river, into a calm recirculation called an eddy. After I was able to stop, I slid off my rowing seat into what had literally become a swimming pool. The floor of my boat had sunk so low from the water that had poured in that I couldn't find the bottom. I got my five-gallon plastic bucket and spent the next half-an-hour or more bailing the water out of my boat, several gallons at a time. It remains the worst run of a rapid I've ever had in my life.

Subsequent encounters with Hance were thankfully better, but still challenging. There was the time I went far left and popped an oar that I had to reseat on its clip in the middle of the rapid, with both of my parents in the boat. But it could have been worse. Not many people knew just how worse, but I sure did. Let's just say that to this day, I greatly respect mile 76.5. And you should too.

Edward Out

t i m e

W

hat is it about the Grand Canyon? I asked one of my guides, Justin, as we sat on a beach with our feet in the water while other guests threw a Frisbee around. One would think that the answer would be obvious—with the beauty, the grandeur, the various rock formations, the rapids, the hiking discoveries, and the incredible night sky! Yet I was looking for something more but, at the **time** could not put a finger on it. Now looking back, I feel I can now answer my own question.

First a little background. I have made twenty-plus trips thru the Grand and Cataract Canyons with Western River Expeditions. I loved every aspect of each experience. The day before launch I would stop by the warehouse, greeting the guides loading up for my trip and meeting the exhausted ones coming in from their just-finished river trip. They must rest up before heading back out again four days hence. I would go down to Lees Ferry the day before launch to offer my limited help. Later I would have dinner with them and then that evening have my last hot shower for several days. The next morning I watched as the wide-eyed guests came off the plane wondering what was ahead for them. They could not imagine. I figure I have spent at least 150 nights in the Canyon. All but one under the stars. Each of my family have made several trips with me as well. Even my wife (who said “never”) twice. We had nine of us on our 50th Anniversary “Cruise” with Kelly, Evan, Parker and Jason. I love the Grand Canyon. I think about it and the friends I have made there every day. My only regret is that I never had the opportunity to hike in.

However, my cancer now requires chemotherapy and there is a

realization that my life is reaching a point where for me **time** has become my focus. I have been able to look back at the entirety of my Canyon experiences and realize that each one of them, at that moment, was “what it was about.” But this recent trip impressed on me that for me now, the Grand Canyon is about **time**. My **time** may be limited yet the Canyon itself is all about **time**. It has nothing but **time**. It exists because of **time**. The **timeline** of the earth is laid bare in its depths.

The Grand Canyon has a wonderful ambivalence about it. As magnificent as it is, it does not bother whether you are there. Nor does it concern itself with your safety or well-being. One enters the Canyon on its terms. It shouts, “Here I am, now you are on your own.” We could look at life the same way. Life says, “Here I am. “What are you going to do with me?” We get an allotted **time** frame to live in and it is up to us to decide how we will live it.

I am glad I was able to use some of my allotment of **time** in the Grand Canyon with wonderful friends and family. As Ratty in *The Wind in the Willows* said to Mole, “Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.”

Cliff Bombard



Cliff and his wife of 56 years, Pat, taken at Travertine.

I Remember

I have been down the Colorado River thru the Grand Canyon with Western River Expeditions many times over the last fifteen years. And with four other trips through Cataract, I have secured a lot of memories. Not in order but as I think of them...

- I remember my ride down to Lees ferry and my first glimpse of the River and my first impression, “that doesn’t look so bad.”
- I remember the rock fall in the middle of the night while we camped with Lucky at Research.
- I remember walking up to the back wall at Elves Canyon to see the old river runner’s writings on the wall.
- I remember Kelly playing a haunting flute as we walked our way out of Blacktail.
- I remember Amy playing the violin at the back wall of Blacktail (on a trip with Andy).
- I remember lunch at Stone Creek during a whipping sand-blowing wind.
- I remember Lucky getting me soaked in House Rock, always sat right after that.
- I remember the hike up to Nautiloid and seeing them come alive as Lucky poured water on them.

I remember Steve Wiley taking me up to the "mail room" at Deer Creek.
I remember my visits to Redwall Cavern after a spectacular close-up at Vasey's Paradise.
I remember the rope climb in Saddle.
I remember the "Ginnie Mac."

remember

I remember signing the Disclaimer Form that basically said "If you die it is your fault."
I remember the "Stairmaster" up to Nankoweap.
I remember the narrows between Tapeats and Deer Creeks.
I remember the slosh thru the water to get up to end of North Canyon.
I remember Kelly and her acrobatic twirling of fire. My grandson calls her "the fire lady."
I remember the decaying boat of "The Old Man of the River," Bert Loper, near mile 30.
I remember the memorial carved into the wall for the Frank Brown tragedy, at Mile 12.
I remember getting my butt bounced around as Skinner led us down the "Gauntlet" at the LCR.
I remember standing under the waterfall at Stone Creek with a group picture of ten family members who were on that trip with me for our 50th Anniversary cruise.
I remember taking a nudie bath at Research while everyone else was up at the LCR.
I remember the shiny up to "MatKat" with Evan.
I remember jumping off the ledge at Elves Chasm.

I remember my first look at Lava Falls as we scouted it. I remember every one of the hits in that bottom hole.
I remember the 120 degrees at Furnace Flats. I remember my daughter's flip flops melting as we walked around the Anasazi ruins at Unkar Delta.
I remember the hikes up to incredible Havasu and the hike beyond up to Beaver Falls with Skinner.
I remember the call "FIRE LINE" and hearing "YOU ARE BACK ON VACATION" and the morning call of "HOT COFFEE" and "LAST CALL ON THE GROOVER" and "OH CRAP" and later "LETS GET LOADED."
I remember the conch calls for dinners of fabulous food, the bananas flambé, Rainbow Trout, New York Strip steaks, Mexican buffets, spaghetti, some form of pork in every breakfast, and how good a cold Doctor Pepper tastes at supper.
I remember Ten Mile Rock, The Royal Arches, Stanton's Cave, the Anasazi foot bridge, the Bridge of Sighs, Kissing Couple rock, Boulder Narrows, Rancid Tuna, and Nixon Rocks.
I remember my granddaughter sliding down the fast current and blue waters of the LCR—16 times
I remember the climb up to Travertine Falls and having pictures taken with my wife as the water splashed around us. That picture is on our Kitchen counter.
I remember the petroglyphs just above Tanner Rapid.
I remember turning the water at Pumpkin Spring black as I walked in it. And we know what that is supposed to mean.
I remember "skirts up, pants down."
I remember the jump off and the float down to the boats at Pumpkin as well.
I remember the first time I saw the Milky Way at night. And trying to sleep when there was a full moon.
I remember how it felt to wake in the middle of the night after

falling asleep under a thin sheet and then crawling into a warm sleeping bag. Never used a tent.
I remember waving at the people up at Desert View Watchtower.
I remember hiking up and coming across a small stream while visiting Rocky Mountain National Park. I then followed it down as it grew. I knew that these and other springs are the headwaters of the Colorado River and I wondered if any of this would be on the river someday while I am as well.
I remember pouring buckets of cold river water over my head in June to cool down.
I remember the short walk up to Three Springs with my family and seeing the pictographs.
I remember being bitten by a Harvester Ant at Tanner Camp. It wasn't pleasant!
I remember someone yelling that the boat was gone. And it was.
I remember that night spent on "boat beach" being given MRE's by the Park Service but then the canteen coming to our rescue with the best tasting beef stew I ever had, and some great pancakes and coffee in the morning.
I remember Kelly's detailed description of what Sipapu meant to the Ancestral Puebloans at the LCR.
I remember the "rescue boat" with JP and Steve G. coming for us and later finding our J-Rig on the beach above Granite. It had been found caught in an eddy and beached by the Park Service.
I remember that the Park Rangers insisted on going back to the J-Rig to get my heart medication and how as a result I was the only one that night with my own bag.
I remember Powell's piano and Christmas Tree Cave.
I remember the other "Stairmaster from hell" up to the "Patio" at Deer Creek.
I remember SUCK RUBBER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
And "make sure you have a good rapid seat."

- I remember dressed up guides with shrimp cocktail.
- I remember hearing of John D. Lee and the Mountain Meadows Massacre.
- I remember condors soaring above Navajo Bridge.
- I remember Newtie making dinner in ankle deep water as the "tide" rose.
- I remember one trip with 12 New York State Troopers. I'm still in contact with some of them. I took a picture of them all at Stone Creek as they all turned around and gave us full moons.
- I remember someone's snoring echoing off the back wall of Poncho's Kitchen. I slept in a rainstorm under the overhang there. No tent.
- I remember Vulcan's Anvil.
- I remember the hike up to Ribbon Falls.
- I remember my wife telling me to take that river trip I've been talking about and "get it out of your system." How'd that work out?
- I remember the incredible colors of the Bright Angel shale.
- I remember the views from the "Groover" as being some of the best.
- I remember walking into the Marble Canyon Dam Cave dug by the "Grand Canyon Diamond Beaked Feathered Chisel" bird.
- I remember the cable across the river at Bridge Canyon so that the "Grand Canyon Slither Back Snake" could cross over to its natural habitat. Or was the cable there to keep the canyon walls from pulling apart?
- I remember "Know The Canyon's History, Study Rocks Made By Time Very Slowly".
- I remember the Guides talking about John W. Powell, Georgie White, Norm Nevills, Bert Loper, Elzada Clover, Lois Jotter, Buzz Holmstrom, Claude Birdseye, John Hance, Louis Boucher, The Kolbs, Glen and Bessie Hyde, etc. (Over and over and over).
- I remember the "Great Unconformity" and putting my hand on the missing millions of years of geologic history in Blacktail.
- I remember the Beamer Cabin at the LCR.
- I remember getting a "Zoroaster."
- I remember walking in the water up Tapeats Creek.
- I remember the "Roaring Twenties," The Gem's, Conquistador and Stephen Aisles.
- I remember "Shorty's Pie Plate" at Upset.
- I remember being "ABC."
- I remember a take out at South Cove on the lake. And later at Pearce Ferry.
- I remember the story of "Willies' Necktie."
- I remember the "Ross Wheeler" boat.
- I remember hiking up to the airline crash debris above Research. Which, by the way, is my favorite camp.
- I remember the dynamite storage cave and the bat guano project.
- I remember incredible Havasu.
- I remember the safety talks, the camp talks, and the "don't forget the 'ticket'" warning.
- I remember big horn sheep, mule deer, osprey, egrets, my very close up experience with a Canyon rattler, red ants, the clean-up ravens, lizards, lizards and more lizards.
- I especially remember the trill of the Canyon Wren.
- I remember datura, century plants, cryptobiotic soil, Mormon tea, the ocotillo plant on the hike up to Havasu, barrel cactus, prickly pear, salt cedar, and the creosote bush.
- I remember "FIRE LINE" and "hold on for a little bump" and "pit stop?"
- I remember MP not letting us go up to Travertine because of the threat of a flash flood.
- I remember the "Belle Zabor" poem read by Wiley.
- I remember being on one of the last trips thru the Pearce Ferry Rapid. Really rough.
- I remember the helicopter ride out from Whitmore.
- I remember salty snacks and especially the chocolate after Havasu.
- I remember the cool grass and gentle breezes at the Bar 10 and the "warm" water shower.
- I remember being told by Garth that "If you lie you die" and then spending a wonderful time with him at the Bar 10 just talking.
- I remember the guide changing out a motor after a rough ride thru Dubendorff. (Must have been Wiley)
- I remember the last day of my 9-day trips (or my 6 plus 3 three-day trips) and the jet boat ride down to South Beach and then later Peach Springs and sleeping on the bus ride back to Las Vegas. I also remember the cell phones ringing for the first time in a while.
- I remember seeing a Western Rig with a collapsed left front tube and figured a long night ahead for that guide.
- I remember one scout at Lava watching three S-Rigs go thru with everyone on the last boat stark naked. (True story)
- I remember a hike with Lucky up to the lookout near Unkar. Second favorite hike after MatKat.
- I remember my favorite rapid, Bedrock, because of the difficulty navigating it. Did Skinner really go left?
- I remember the camps at Silver Grotto, Research, Football, Poncho's Kitchen, Fern Glen, Surprise, the Hotel, Tanner, The Ledges, Parashant, Bass, Nevills left, Spencer...
- I remember going out a day early and visiting the warehouse and seeing the incredible process of getting everything into the trailer.
- I remember the professionalism of the Guides. Their confidence, their patience, their love of the Grand Canyon and their job there.
- I remember them becoming my friends as I have been fortunate to come back year after year and one year making it twice.

I remember getting a monogrammed Western River Guide shirt as a gift and a “motor head” cap from Parker. Both I treasure. I can’t explain why I love the Colorado River thru the Grand Canyon so much but surely these people had a lot to do with it. Guides and friends I’ve made—Steve Wiley (4), Lucky (3), Jason Tea, Evan Tea (3 in a row), Parker (2), Ronnie and Jeff, Lindsay, J.D., Jace, Corie, Justin, Latimer, Trent, Andy Shmutz, Ben (2), Mackay, Mikkel, Mark Pierce (3), Marty, Grace, Johnathan, Kelly (2), Johnny Phelan (2) Steve G (2), Wren, Shadrach, Jeff and Tex (Cataract), Sandy, Brian, Shad, JR, Keifer, and now Kelsy.

I remember a recent trip that thru the courtesy of Western River I went as “extra crew.” I tried to carry my own weight, but I learned why there are not too many 75-year-old river guides.

I remember thinking what a great God we have who gave us something like the Grand Canyon to marvel and enjoy. I’ll never forget that incredible experiences I’ve had in the “Ditch” and the remarkable friends I’ve made. Scriptures say that if we don’t praise the Lord the “rocks themselves will sing out His glory.” Going thru the Canyon I can imagine the praises that must be going up to Him every minute of the day. So “God bless us everyone.”

I’m sure there are some things I don’t remember—Yet.

Cliff Bombard



WALLY RIST

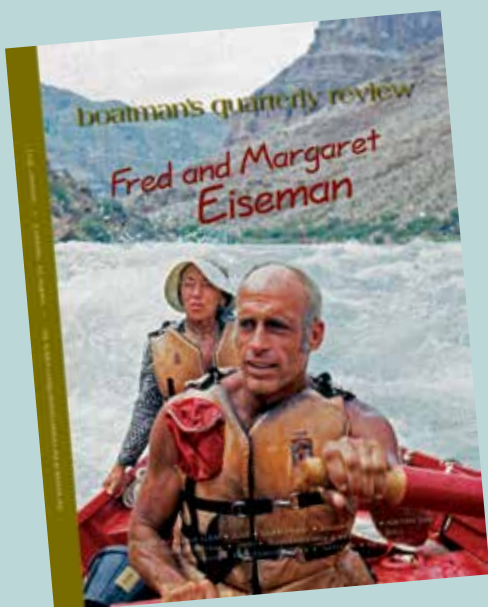
I grew up in St. Louis—big sports fan and enthusiast the whole time. When I was a junior in high school a science teacher of mine by the name of Fred Eiseman took me and another fellow by the name of Doug Reiner on a tour of the Southwest, where we camped every day. Among other things, we took a four-week trip through Glen Canyon. That would have been in 1958. We spent the rest of the summer hiking in and around the Grand Canyon, including the Salt Trail, the Lava Trail, Havasupai, the Bright Angel Trail, so forth and so on. That summer convinced me that St. Louis was not the place I wanted to spend the rest of my life, and of course that the Grand Canyon was very important. Interestingly enough, I didn't realize the impact of my Glen Canyon trip until many years later. I mean, it was all so brand-new to me, it was *all* spectacular. So one spectacular being better than another was hard to differentiate.

So I finished high school and college, having made a couple more trips out west with Fred Eiseman and his wife Maggie. When I finished Washington University in 1963, Fred had made arrangements for me to teach math in Phoenix at the same school that *he* was teaching at, Phoenix Country Day School, which was literally right down the hill from Barry Goldwater's house. In 1964—whatever year Goldwater ran—he voted at our school. I watched him stand in line for hours to vote. In 1968, Fred made arrangements for me and Doug Reiner to row a Grand Canyon trip with Gay Staveley for Mexican Hat Expeditions. Neither Doug nor I had any experience rowing. Doug had rowed crew at Wisconsin, but I hadn't so much as touched a pair of oars. I said, "Sure, I'm pretty athletic, I can do most anything!" And we started down the river. It didn't take me long to figure out, "Hey, maybe this is something I really

can't do." But I learned. Rowing the Cataract boat was quite an experience. It turned out to be quite different than dories later on, but I'm really glad I got the experience. One of the major things I remember were just the *huge* expanses of beaches, before the tammies had started to grow up. The camping was just ideal. We cooked on the beach, you went up in the rocks to go to the bathroom, and I think we saw four trips the whole time we were there. A lot of the details, I was so worried about getting myself through the canyon without killing me or anybody else, that I really didn't observe as much as I would have liked, but that's the way it worked out. Gay [Staveley] was on that trip, Fred Eiseman, Maggie, a guy named Rinse Chambers, Jack Oaks, Doug Reiner. That's about the best I can do for remembering. I think most all those people are dead, except Doug and me [*and Gaylord!*]. Of course it stands out in my memory. I didn't know how to row a boat to save my life, and one of the passengers sat behind me and would tell me which oar to pull on, and we got through, no flips—got through the whole trip, great trip, no damage. I was very enthused and excited and ready to go again!

In 1969, Gay ran a Powell Centennial trip, and fortunately or unfortunately, he left me out, I wasn't invited. But that was kind of okay with me, because that was the summer I finished up my master's degree at Arizona State, so it worked out well for me. But Doug and Fred and those guys went on that trip. Of course I heard about it, and saw pictures of it and everything, *forever*, and that turned out to be quite a good trip. That was '69. In 1970 I was still teaching at the school along with Fred. He was teaching science, and I was teaching math. Our classrooms happened to be right next to each other. He came in one morning early and said, "Hey, there's a guy named Martin Litton who is going to run a trip this year and needs somebody to row for him. I told him I couldn't do it, but that you might be interested." I said, "Sure, I'd love to do it!" Well lo and behold, a couple of nights later I got a call from Martin Litton, whom I'd never heard of, and talked to him, and I agreed to row a trip for him in 1970.

By now I was an experienced boatman because I had one trip, which in 1970 there weren't a whole lot of us. And so I showed up at Cliff Dwellers as directed, and there was Martin in the parking lot, covered with Marine Tex. He was working on, I believe it was the *Diablo Canyon*, which was the boat he was rowing. They had just gotten off a trip, and he was making the repairs, the boat was up on a trailer. He came over and we introduced ourselves to each other. He reached out, shook my hand with all the Marine Tex on it—just very warm and pleasant—and we've been great friends ever since.



You can read more about Fred and Maggie Eiseman in the BQR Vol 24:2 here: <https://gcrq.org/bqr.php>

At that time, [John] Blaustein had never rowed before. Jeff Clayton was on that trip, I believe. I don't remember all the people...A guy named Charlie Stern; another guy... Oh, I can't remember. But I started out rowing a raft, the baggage boat. Then the infamous story of Blaustein cracking up the sub, or *Flavell*, in Unkar; and since I was experienced, Martin put [*Blaustein in the raft and*] me in *Flavell*, or "the sub," which we always called it, from right below Unkar where we did whatever repairs we could on it. The boat was in really bad shape: the front end tilted one way, and the back end tilted the other, and it had a big crack all the way across the middle, right through the boatman's footwell. The only thing that held the boat together were the built-in dry boxes that kept it from falling apart.

Well, we somehow got to Phantom without incident that same day, and we camped at Phantom, which was traditional at the time. We'd take the passengers up to Phantom Ranch and they'd get a shower and have a nice dinner at the ranch there, and then we'd all camp on the beach. But in the meantime, we had to work on the sub. Martin ripped off a piece of ¾-inch plywood from the USGS building, and we screwed it onto the bottom of the sub and fixed it with Marine Tex and glue and everything else you could think of. The interesting thing was that the screws were too long, and they poked right through the bottom of the boat into the boatman's foot well. Well, that ended rowing barefoot in any way, shape, or form, but you could row pretty well and get a good grip on the floor—no foot brace at that time—with your feet [*i.e., shoes*] firmly planted on the screws that were sticking up through the bottom of the floor. It was really interesting, because as I say, the boat listed one way in the front, and another way in the back, and looking over it, and then turning back and looking at something else, was unsettling. But it was in pretty good shape, it didn't leak too badly. We bailed a lot. The hatches, which were not built-in like they were in the dory, they were actual boxes that had been built and then strapped in, bolted in somehow, kind of like the way they do the rafts now. So we limped on down the river. And again, the impressive thing to me was the beaches, how wide open stuff was, how easy it was to find a place to camp. We saw a few more trips than we did the year before. We didn't have many other major incidents that I can recall. A lot of pictures. A lot of good tales around the fire—which were all built on the beach, and cooked on directly. A lot of stories by Martin, most of which I'm sure you've heard in various forms that have evolved over the years.

Martin was really a very interesting guy. It didn't take me long to figure out he had a special interest in the Grand Canyon and conservation. He wasn't running this trip, or any other trip, for any other purpose than to show people the canyon, in the hopes they would go home and be the voice of conservation and prevent what happened in Glen Canyon from happening in Grand Canyon ever again. It

was also one of his reasons why we always rowed from Diamond Creek all the way out to Pearce Ferry or South Cove, just around the corner from Pearce Ferry.

We would row that distance, not because it was fun and cool, but just because it did show people the effects of the dam, the silt banks, the dead water, the driftwood—you know the drill. But that was my very first trip with Martin, and of course it was hard to be anything but addicted at that point. I was still teaching school, so I had my summers available. Most of the trips started in May, so I'd have to miss the first one, and could run most of the other ones, two or three trips, in the summer. Martin was a very impressive guy, very human. He had his problems with the river, just like all the rest of us did. Primarily, among other things, he was busy talking instead of paying attention a lot of the time. You know, you've been on trips with him.

Steiger: Yes I have! I know exactly what you mean.

* * *

Wally Rist was one of Martin Litton's original boatmen and later served as president of the Grand Canyon Private Boater's Association for ten years or so, including a pivotal stretch that led to our current management plan.

Wally (rowing the "Tapestry Wall"), was the TL on the trip they did with Edward Abbey, which resulted in the journal that accompanied John Blaustein's photographic masterpiece "The Hidden Canyon: A River Journey." Wally and Abbey remained friends and stayed in touch ever after. Here's Ed Abbey on Wally setting the trip up for Lava Falls:

"Commander Wally's briefing. Tapestry Wally. You'd think we were in a U-boat about to enter a combat zone. Walter Rist—there is something Teutonic about that chap. The straight blond hair. The Nordic nostrils. The sardonic grin. That iron cross, like an amulet, pinned to his life jacket. Yeah, I see through your crude ruse. Nobody has to do it, eh? Not even looking at me he says that. Pretending to talk to everybody but me. Clever, very clever. But you've tipped your hand Rist. I can read you like the writing on the wall, Wally."

This interview took place over two Zoom call sessions in June of 2020. Wally was in his home in Olathe, Kansas.

—Lew Steiger

* * *

So that was 1970, and that spring I actually got my master's degree. Then in '71 I had a chance again to row for Martin. At that time we were only running one trip at a time on the river, so Martin was on all of them with us. I don't remember a whole lot about that year, except I met extraordinarily interesting people from all over the world. They were an interesting breed, because camping to them

was not difficult. Some of them had never camped before, but they were outdoor people, they were adventuresome. To do a trip like that took a special person just to even be *interested* in doing it. It was by far not a recreational, “let’s float down the river, take lots of pictures, and drink beer at night.” In fact, there was very little beer-drinking, because we didn’t have room for it.

Any other questions about that first trip?

Steiger: Well, I have in my mind that in pretty short order there were a couple of crews, and that it seemed like it fell to Regan [Dale] to lead one crew, and you to lead the other. So I would presume from that... that Martin thought a lot of you. Is that about right? Because you guys were two crew leaders...so let’s just go with how did *that* evolve?

Rist: Well, the interesting thing was, in 1970 and ’71—my memory may be a little foggy on this—we didn’t have...I mean, Martin just really wasn’t a commercial trip operation. It was more like a private trip, except we provided the services and the boats, and the people did a lot of work, they helped cook, pitched in, all that kind of stuff. I think it was the winter of ’71 or ’70, I met Martin in Palm Springs. Jeff Clayton was there, Linda Torgan was there, Francois Leydet was there, a couple of other people. I don’t know where Martin got this house in Palm Springs, but it was over New Year’s, and we sat around talking about the river, of course. The consensus was that if Martin

wanted to continue to do this, that whether he liked it or not he was going to have to get a commercial permit and get some user days before all this was given away and he would be left out. I would like to think we had a huge impact on Martin’s thinking, however I’m not sure *who* has an impact on Martin’s thinking. But anyway, he did start to put together brochures, talked to the park about user days, and started to shift into what we could call a commercial

operation. His purpose, of course, was still the idea of getting people down the river, so that they could see what happens, besides enjoy the beauty of the canyon and so forth—but to be a messenger for the preservation of the canyon and not letting “the place that no one knew” evolve again.

So in about ’72 is when we started running separate trips, the very first one that year I believe Martin led, and all of us, the boatmen at that time, were on it. Then after that trip we split up, and it was kind of like fifth grade, picking teams. Regan picked a team, and I picked a team. It was kind of like, “Well, it’s your pick. You get...” and worked it out that way. And we were both pretty comfortable with it. Curtis Chang was sort of co-leading the first two trips with me. Our philosophy was a little different than Regan’s, in that Regan took all the guys that had *some* experience, and we decided we would just take the guys with less experience, and train them, teach them how to do things. Well, of course we’d only had three trips ourselves, so we were really great teachers for that. But that worked out well, we enjoyed that.

The very first trip that I led and Curtis was on it, the most memorable event was getting to Crystal. We got there, and we flipped three or four boats in Crystal. I ran first and got through, and ended up *way* downstream on the right, but at least I had pulled in and tied up. I had walked back up there. I’m sitting up on a big rock

at the bottom, waiting for the other boats to come through. I remember somebody saying, “Hey, Curtis said there’s no way you could flip if you did...” blah, blah, blah. I look up, and there’s a boat flipping in the upper hole, and there’s a boat flipping in the bottom hole simultaneously, with another one upside down, downstream. Curtis *did* make it, and *he* was upright. So Curtis went chasing after boats and left me with 25 people and one dory, trying to figure out what we were going



Photo: Rudi Petschek

to do. That was...not pretty typical, but it sort of tells the whole story of the early days of Grand Canyon Dories. We didn't have this great idea what we were doing. We kind of knew the river, where we wanted to camp, how to get there, how to get from place to place, what the big rapids were, but everything was a new experience for us—and so it was for the passengers. We instilled a lot of excitement, because they got the spirit of adventure and first time and learning experience just as we did. I was always grateful I got that opportunity.

We had all kinds of disasters, boats breaking up. Crystal, as you know, back in the early-seventies was a heck of a lot worse than it is now. There was a horrendous hole at the top of Crystal, and another horrendous hole at the bottom of Crystal. One year—it might have been '71—an early year, we got to Crystal and we were looking at it. A guy named Steve Gantner, who had some experience and worked for Grand Canyon Expeditions some—ran motor rigs and stuff—said, “Hey, I've always thought you could go right down the middle of the river, right through that hole and come out the other side.” So we said, “Oh-kay.” So he got in what was then the *Hetch Hetchy*, it had been painted white—I guess it was brand new. That was the other thing, Martin giving us brand-new boats that had never been on the water, to guys that hadn't been on the water much either. Anyway Gantner said he'd go run it first. All of us are sitting down there by the rapid, looking at it. Steve Gantner comes around the corner, all by himself in this boat, no other boat with him, and he's kind of standing up, pushing, looking a little bit, looking at the oars. We're going, “Boy, Gantner's going to try it! God, Gantner's got balls, he's going to do it!” The next thing you know, Steve goes right smack dab into the middle of that hole. There was a little spine on the far side of it. He rode that spine up through there and got shot out of there like a banana! He stands up, raises his hands, pumps a fist, and goes on down, runs the rest of the rapid, pulls in at the bottom, all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

So the rest of us went and did the same thing. We all ran right down the middle, right through that hole, all got run right up on that spine, shot out. Some of us were a little discombobulated, but most of us just straight through. We thought, “Wow, that's great! Beats the hell out of trying to pull to the right, hitting rocks, not making it and hitting the hole sideways, and floating upside down below. So that was really a great experience. I was rowing the old *Bright Angel*, which was a double-ender wooden boat, the boat that Henry Outten, I believe, had made—a sister boat to the sub. One of them we called “the fat Henry,” and the other one we called “the skinny Henry.” But that was quite an experience.

Every time we got to Crystal in those years, we'd look at that and say, “Are we sure we want to do that again?” Sometimes we did, sometimes we didn't. There was never any thought of running left. It was either right through the hole, or pulling to the right and avoiding that hole and the

one at the bottom. I flipped in Crystal a couple of times over the years. None of the experiences were very good, for either me or my boat—one time smashing into Big Red at the bottom, which I believe was a little further upstream than it is now—people wondering if I was going to be smashed between the boat and the rock.

Another interesting note, on that '70 trip, again, I was rowing the sub. We got to Lava, and I had never run it, because with Gay [*Staveley*] we had lined it, and in the sub I kind of got—not lost, but I didn't know exactly where I was going—and eventually we went through what we later figured out was the slot. So that might have been the first successful run of the slot, however it would be hard to lay claim to that when it was pretty much by accident. (chuckles)

Steiger: That was a nice run while it lasted.

Rist: Yeah, it was. Every time we would get to Crystal, of course the water was different. It did fluctuate—not as regularly or predictably as it has recently. Some years we'd have 25,000-30,000 cubic feet there, and others much less. A lot of the trips were very much geared to hitting certain rapids under certain water conditions. We generally figured the higher the water, the less chance we had of hitting rocks. Eventually we figured out the lower water also wasn't as powerful and gave us a little bit more time to make moves that we were gradually learning how to do.

Every rapid was really quite interesting for us. At first we expected Martin to show us how to do it, and sometimes he did, sometimes he didn't. Then after a while, when we were leading our own trips, we'd take a look and go, “There's no Martin. We'd better figure out what to do here.” We weren't communicating with Regan's trips, and they weren't communicating with us. At the end of the summer we'd sit around the warehouse, the few of us still hanging around, and compare notes, and maybe we'd learn something. But his crew learned something doing it one way; my crew learned it another way. One of the things we learned was to run left at Upset. I look at it now and I go, “Why would you go anywhere *but* left at Upset?!” And yet the first couple of years it was always the Martin Litton way, of trying to pull *around* it. I remember the first time I did it, which I think was about the first time that anybody did it intentionally, Dane Mensik—I don't know if you remember Dane...

Steiger: I never met him, but I heard Kenton talk about him a lot.

Rist: Yeah. Dane Mensik and I were standing up there looking at it. It was hard to see on the far left side of that hole. It just *looked* like the water was going through. But we also saw that big lateral at the top and said, “If you hit *that* wrong, that lateral is going to kick you right out in the middle, and you're going to end up in the hole.” So the whole key to us—and Dane and I talked it over... I said, “Okay, I'll go try it.” I went and ran it on the left, pointed my bow into that big lateral and kind of pushed not *through* it so much as pushed to keep it from kicking me right, and



then just got shot down the left. Blaustein has some excellent pictures of that, with Martin standing on the shore, watching it. Then after that, every time if there was any possibility at all—a couple times in really low water, I was leery of going that way. But most of the time after that I'd go left every time. Now I guess that's what they do almost all the time, isn't it?

Our crew [looked at] Lava. We saw a very slim spine of water going through what appeared to be the right edge of the ledge hole. I said, "I think I've been there before. I'll try it." It was very hard to see, very hard to line up with, and the last stroke you took, you said, "Oh my God, I hope to hell I'm in the right place!" After a while it got to be known as the Dory Slot. It was ideal for a dory because it wasn't as wide as the bottom of a boat, but that spine of water went right through there, and if you hit it right, that hard-hulled dory just shot through there fine and kicked you a little bit left, you took a couple of strokes and you were done! Regan's crew heard it from us, showing them where it was from time to time, and they ended up running it a lot. So that's how the so-call Dory Slot got its name. I was looking at some pictures of it the other day, that a friend sent, and it's still there.

Steiger: Yeah.

Rist: It's still there, still extremely hard to find. We used to talk about lining

Top to bottom:

Upset—running left for the first time
Granite

Lava

Photos: Rudi Petschek

up on the bubble line, but the bubble line people refer to today is not the one we were talking about *then*. The bubble line people talk about today is the waves and bubbles coming off the big rock up there, from where you look it over. The thing we were talking about was out a little further, and it was just an occasional swell. It would pop up from the bottom of the river, you could see the sand and stuff come up, and if you put your boat right on that, theoretically it funneled you right into the slot.

But those were exciting times. Most of the time we made most of the passengers walk. Most of them were *more* than happy to do it. Got a lot of good pictures that way.

Steiger: Yeah. I'll spare you all the details—but I remember there was a time where you had to be right on those burbles, and they lined you up good for the slot. But then it changed. Prospect Canyon blew out, and suddenly right *on* the burbles wasn't quite right—you needed to be between the edge of the smooth water there and just a little bit left of those burbles. Did you ever run it...? I did this old-timer trip, Kenton was on it, and Martin was on it. They made me ride with Martin, and we did that run. (Rist laughs) Well, we did, and I have a great video of it. Man, that was a beautiful run. I had a friend of mine shooting a video camera and Kenton goes through there, doesn't get a drop of water in the boat.

Top to bottom:

Lava, Lava, Lava

Photos: John Blaustein

boatman's quarterly review





Boat repair at Bass—Martin Litton building a fire in a frying pan to dry out the wet wood. Photo: John Blaustein

Rist: I'm not sure Martin ever knew where it was, or believed in it!

Steiger: Well, we did it, and I was riding with him. I'm in the back of the boat, just scared to death. I mean, I laugh when I look at myself on video, but we hit it. Martin fell out of his seat that run—I had to kind of put him back in his seat a little—but same thing, he was following Kenton, and we squirted right through there. That was like '94. I think that was about the last time I ever did that run, because it seemed like we figured out Prospect Canyon [flooding] had opened up the left, and when it was good slot water, then there was also good left water, so no need to go through it. But that was a beautiful run.

Rist: By the time I stopped rowing commercial, Prospect Canyon had *not* flashed. The private trips I've taken since then, and looked at it, most of the time I've figured out how to get there in higher water and go down the left.

It's hard to see from over there, and it's also very easy for inexperienced people to get lost over there and find themselves way out in the middle, when they should be much closer to the shore. Interesting place.

Of course there's Martin airplane stories too. I was in an airplane with Martin—he always had some excuse for

dropping messages or lifejackets or food or something to one of these trips. And we were flying down the canyon, very low to the water, and just as we got to Lava, Regan's trip was getting ready to run it. I swear we were so low that we got water on the windshield, and just about...Rich Turner claims that we were so low he could have stuck an oar up and knocked us out of the air. But that was Martin! And it was always a fun ride, one way or the other. Of course what did we know, we thought it was safe!

Steiger: (laughs) But what I hear you saying is that you invented that slot run. Would you say that's about right?

Rist: Well, I don't know if I invented it. Certainly our crew did. I was maybe the first one that ran it *on purpose*. But that was only because leading the trips I always thought I'd like to run the rapid, get it over with, and be down at the bottom, looking back upstream, watching everybody else. I didn't want to have to chase boats from behind. Plus, how much time could you spend *looking* at this damned thing?! So my philosophy after a while was we're here now, let's look at it, then run it. Then there was the infamous day at Lava where both Regan's trips and my trips had had successful runs in Lava all summer, hadn't flipped a boat there all season. We get to Lava—there's a coffee can

on the rock. It's got a message from Kenton who'd been with Regan. It said "The string of pearls is broken." So we assumed that meant somebody had flipped. Well, you know, I mean, that's part of life on the river. I remember O.C. [O'Connor Dale] was on that trip, Rich Turner, me, Dane, Tony Williams. We got there and, alright, it was pretty high water for that period of time, probably 25,000, maybe even 30,000. We saw 30,000 cubic feet per second a lot in those early years. And so we got there, I ran first. I flipped, right in the slot—hit it just right, where I wanted to—you know, the old Lava. I was right where I wanted to be! And I flipped, and then Dane was behind me, and he flipped in the wave off the Cheese Grater. Two other guys flipped in different places. We had four boats flip, each one of them was in a different place. And oh! So you kind of wonder, maybe that wasn't our day. Rich and O.C. were left up on the rock, waiting to go. They're trying to decide, "Well, what the hell do we do now?!" So they kind of hemmed and hawed. Said, "Oh, what the hell," and Rich Turner went first, and he got through fine, and so did O.C. Both of them claim the water maybe had changed a little bit. Who knows? It's just the river gods decided we'd had enough safe passage.

I do remember the first trip in '70, at Bass Camp, we had the sub upside down, with frying pans, coals in the bottom of it to dry it out, and Martin with Marine Tex and steel wool. He took a piece of steel wool, soaked it in Marine Tex, stuffed it in this hole—which had been super-heated by this stuff, frying pan full of coals. [He] reached over to grab this board, was going to slam it down on there. By the time he had slammed it down on it, it had set up already. So there was this big mound of Marine Tex and steel wool right in the middle of the bottom of the boat, sticking up. We spent the next couple of hours sanding and planing that down before Martin could put the...That was the same day we took all the bread out, put it on the rocks to dry it out. Again, I know Blaustein's got a picture of *that* someplace, drying out all the bread, because it had all gotten wet. I mean, food was a real interesting thing, because we didn't carry any ice. I was firmly opposed to using tables. I was kind of a Martin Litton sidekick type person. I wanted to use—whatever rocks were there, we could make do with, find a place. So as the beaches eventually got overgrown more, it made it harder and harder because finding a beach with sand to park the boats, rocks to build the kitchen on, good places to sleep, was a real major concern.

Regan, in the meantime, was taking a table all the time, and making fun of me.

Steiger: Yeah, some things never change!

Rist: Mari [Carlos] wanted me to make sure I told you one particular story. It was still a trip with Martin, so it would have been in the very early-seventies. We got to Lava Canyon and stopped for lunch. I decided I wanted to go down...I walked down, kind of along the trail, down toward the rapid itself, and off to my left, between me



Photo: Wally Rist

and the river is this bird fluttering in the air. I thought it strange, so I watched it some, and the bird was attacking a rattlesnake. Every once in a while the bird would flutter up, and the rattlesnake would be attached to it. Then they'd fall down and fight some more. The bird would flutter up, the rattlesnake with him, sometimes not. I went over there, had my camera, I took pictures of this. Somewhere I've got pictures of this. And this battle went on for some time. Rich Turner joined me and took some pictures of it as well. His pictures are in about the same place as mine, somewhere in the collection—God knows where. But as it happened, the rattlesnake seemed to have won. Well, it did win, and it started to swallow the bird. As it was swallowing the bird and trying to get it through its system, the beak of the bird protruded. It didn't break the skin, but protruded out through the neck, so you could see the bird was caught in the canal of the rattlesnake. This rattlesnake went to a tammy, crawled through it backwards, and pulled himself off of the bird, came around from the other side, got the bird, and ate it. You know, those of us who think maybe animals don't have any intellect, maybe ought to take a look at that sequence and think again. But I mean, there's thousands of experiences like that.

Steiger: What kind of bird was it?

Rist: I have no idea. All I know is a rattlesnake and a bird. Over the years, there were all kinds of neat things like that. One of the things I miss today—and of course I'm not on the river anymore today—is the beaches, and how they've been overgrown, and why. And the ones that haven't been overgrown are washed away. The one at Tapeats, and below Tapeats, for example, used to be just gorgeous: a lot

of sand, nice place to park the boats. I used to love hiking to Thunder River. That was just a great hike, took a lot of people up there—wonderful, wonderful people.

Speaking of wonderful people, you know, those of us who have been there don't need a reminder how spectacular the canyon is. But one year we took *National Geographic* down the river. The photographer and some of the writers went on a Regan trip. Some of the executives went on another trip with me later that same summer. We're floating along, and I think it was Gil Grosvener's wife turned to me as we were drifting down the canyon. She said, "Wally, I have been to the South Pole and to the North Pole, I've been to New Zealand, I've been to" such and such "Desert. I've been all over the world, and believe me, there is *nothing* like this anywhere in the world." I thought, "Wow, that's pretty impressive." You know, we all get a little wrapped up in our own little world, and thinking that our Grand Canyon is the biggest and bestest and neatest space in the world, but to have this confirmed from an outside, knowledgeable source—that's one of the special aspects of the Grand Canyon. It is a special place. Unfortunately I think it still needs a lot of attention and our protection, more and more.

* * *

Steiger: I'd love to hear about [*the first speed run, in 1980*]. Kenton always told me that whole thing was your idea.

Rist: Well, yeah, sort of. I mean, it's like anything else, you sit around on the beach at night and just talk. Most of it, of course, is river oriented because that's where you are. We had our little Belknap guide book to talk about the Rigg brothers who rowed it in two-and-a-half days. I just, being the mathematician I was—I'm not necessarily a mathematician, but I was trained in mathematics—I kept thinking about how could you do that? Could that be repeated? We'd talk about it, and we kind of matched it up with Kenton's stories of hiking the length of the canyon, which were really fascinating, and I'm sorry that Kenton never got a book out, or a good log, or anything else about it. But as we would sit on the beach [*we'd ask him*], "Kenton, when you came through here, where were you?" He'd explain the route to us, and it would get into the river, and if you were on the river, could you run this section at night, and so forth and so on. Over the years Rich Turner and I shared a house together in Phoenix for a long time. We'd sit around and talk at night about how could you do that, how could you run the canyon in less than two-and-a-half days? Eventually we figured out that if it were going to be done, it needed to be in June—longer days—full moon, on about 30,000 cfs, because we knew you couldn't row *that* much faster than the water. You pretty much had to take the speed of the water plus a couple miles an hour, and figure out where you needed to be. You needed to leave late in the afternoon so you didn't outrun that day's high water. You had to time it so that you would be not

in the lousy sections...Lousy sections?! There *are* no lousy sections of the canyon! But there were certain areas that you definitely wanted to be in the daylight for. You didn't want to run Lava at night, didn't want to run Crystal at night. We weren't even sure you could *run* at night. That was half of the challenge. We'd talk about this year after year, day after day, how you'd need to do it. Kenton would sit in on the conversation a lot...Dane Mensik, Rich Turner, me, and anybody else that happened to be sitting around.

Well, I had retired from commercial river running and was in the real estate business, living in San Francisco at the time. I got a call from Kenton. He says, "Hey, Wally, it's perfect! We've got a full moon in June, we've got some time off between trips, the river's running high," so forth and so on. "Let's go do it!" "Do what, Kenton?" "You know, your trip! Run the canyon in two days!" "Well, I can get a couple days off from work." "Okay, let's do it!" And so Rudi [*Petschek*] was available, so it was Kenton, Rudi, and me. We got a permit from the park, stipulating we were going to test emergency evacuations at high water—something to that effect. Martin went and got the permit for us. We showed up at Lees Ferry with our little permit and all the necessary equipment to check out—which at that time wasn't—this was, I guess, 1980—wasn't anywhere *near* like it is now. We didn't have a fire pan, we didn't have...We did have a groover as far as we called it in those days—the unit—and we had a little bit of food, mostly dehydrated or dried food. I don't even remember what we ate. And we got the permit. I'm checking out with Tom Workman. Remember Tom?

Steiger: Oh yeah.

Rist: Tom says, "Okay, Wally, that's great. When do you plan to go by Phantom?" I said, "Pretty much first thing in the morning." He goes, "No, seriously, when are you going to go by Phantom?" And we said, "Well, I don't know, that's pretty..." We're trying to explain what we're going to do. Tom says, "Well, when do you think you'll get to Diamond Creek?" And I told him. He said, "Well, then take out at Pearce Ferry this time two days from now?" "Yeah, that's about right." He says, "Okay, good luck!" And we shoved off. The intent, at least on my part, and I'm pretty sure Kenton and Rudi would agree with me, was never to, quote, "set a record." We were just curious as to whether we could do what we'd all planned. We didn't know whether you could run at night, but we knew if you were going to, you needed a full moon, which we had. We had a couple of flashlights for looking around the boat at night. Of course there wasn't much to look for, we didn't have much gear. We had no real plan about, "You row this, and he'll row that." Hell, we just took off down the river. We rowed. Rudi has a good log of this, and I'm sure you've seen it. If not, get in touch with him, because he's got a good log of it.

We took off about 4:00, 4:30, something like that, from Lees Ferry. The water was high, so we were on the tail end of it, and we rowed steadily. You'd get tired and go, "Hey,

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Mon. June 30 1980
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4 ¹⁵ PM	Lees Ferry	Diamond - Sep. 9 ^{3/4}
5 ¹⁵	Badger	Zig Zag - Havasu 9 ⁺
6 ²⁰	House rock	Sep - 1/4 marker 6 ⁻
8 ³⁰	Redwall	Phantom - Waltersburg 9
9 ¹⁵	36 mile	Lee's Ferry - Mohawk 7 ^{1/8}
10	Buckfarm	Lee's Ferry - Pumpkin 7 ^{1/3}
11	Saddle	Lee's Ferry - Sep 6 ^{1/4}
12	Monksnap	Lee's Ferry - Pierce 5 ^{7/8}
3 ³⁰ to 4 ¹⁵ AM	Cardenas	
5 ¹⁵	Sockdolager	
6 ²⁵	Phantom	
7 ⁰⁰	Gemite	
7 ¹⁵	Hermit	
8 ¹⁵	Ruby	
9 ¹⁵	Waltersburg	
11	Zig Zag	} fast
2 ³⁰ PM	Havasu	
3 ⁴⁵	National	4 ³⁰ Grand Wash
5 ¹⁵	Lava	4 ¹⁵ Pierce ferry
8 ¹⁵	205	
9 ¹⁵ - 3 ¹⁵ AM	Pumpkin	
5 ⁰⁰	Diamond	
6 ¹⁵	Separation	
10 ²⁵	Quartermaster	
11 ⁴⁵	Baticaves - breeze turns to wind	

A page from Rudi Petschek's speed run log.
 Photo: Rudi Petschek

it. If you camped there maybe, but nothing quite like this. And of course it made running Tanner relatively easy.

We got to Unkar a little before daylight. It was just starting to get light. So we pulled into an eddy above on the left, made a pot of coffee. We kept thinking that we ought to sleep pretty well, but we didn't. One guy rowing and two guys pretending to try to sleep. We were all so excited. There was so much magic about it, you didn't want to miss anything. So we got to Unkar, made this pot of coffee, waited a little bit for it to get light, and took off. We got all the way down through there, passed Phantom, waved at Phantom as we went by. No cheering crowd, by the way. Nobody on the bridge, looking down to see if we were there. We did talk about, as we were doing this, particularly the lower section, "God I hope this doesn't create some kind of wave of stupid people that want to see if they can do this faster." We were concerned. That was a concern of ours. We weren't doing this to establish a goal for people to do it—we were just doing it to see if we could do it. We got down to Tapeats, and between Tapeats and Deer Creek, a huge thunderstorm, clouds, thunder, lightning, the whole works. Again, beautiful. Nobody wanted to take a nap, even if you could. You didn't want to miss stuff like this. I've seen thunderstorms and such, but it was really an interesting experience, and of course it slowed us down. In Rudi's log we kept track of roughly where we needed to be, and what kind of progress we were

somebody else row for a while," or we'd get just to certain rapids and say, "Hey, I'd like to row that one," or "Why don't you row that one?" I mean, there was no bickering or planning or anything else...we just did it. We wanted to get through the Twenties before it got dark, which we did. And then we started on down.

Tanner was the first major so-called rapid that we came to in the dark. What an experience! That I will never forget. It was so incredibly beautiful. The moon, shining on Tanner Rapid, looked like diamonds and crystals—a river of diamonds and crystals all twinkling. You could see extremely well. We had no problem seeing. But it was so incredibly beautiful—a scene that I had never seen, and have never seen since. Not many people would have, because you'd have to have been right on the water to see

making, and we were relatively on course. We didn't kill ourselves. When it was your turn to row, you rowed, and you rowed hard. As soon as you got through a rapid, you turned and rowed downstream. Some of the rapids, you just rowed right down the middle, right through them all the way. Upset was not particularly a problem. Crystal, Kenton wanted to row that—he did. He went right, and no big problem. We kept on going, and we got to Lava. I think Kenton rowed Lava again. But this time I think we went down the left. Kenton and Rudi had just gotten off the river, so they had seen all this water, and the river at roughly this level, so they...We didn't stop and look at anything, we didn't need to. I hadn't rowed in a couple of years, but it was relatively easy to do.

So we got below Lava and kept going. It was daylight still.

We were thinking, “God, we went from Unkar to below Lava in one day?! They’ll put a ban on us for going too far!” Which I wish they would, today, to eliminate the speed trips. I don’t like the speed trips. Somewhat hypocritical for me, and it’s not to preserve my place in history—I just don’t see the Grand Canyon as a place where you try to do that. As I say, it makes somewhat of a hypocrite out of me, but if that’s the worst thing I’m ever accused of in life...

So we got down to roughly Pumpkin Springs. It got dark, was cloudy, we were just exhausted, and it was *raining*. So we pulled in at Pumpkin Springs. There was an ARTA trip camped there. We just pulled in. They were relatively unimpressed as to what we were doing or had done. We slept for a couple hours, and I think I woke up first and said, “Hey, we’re not out of this yet, we can still do this in two days. Let’s go!” We woke up before it was light and were on the river. We ate on the boat. If you needed to take a crap, you put the unit at the back end of the boat, and the rest of us looked the other way, and you took a crap on the unit and we kept going.

We got down there a little further, got past the 230’s and all, and our time looked like we could make it under two days. Rudi and Kenton must have been jacked up on something, because both of those guys really got into rowing. I was tired, I rowed a lot, and I remember we all rowed a lot on the lake. The next thing you know, we’re pulling through the Grand Wash cliffs in a little under two days. We had been able to do what we had planned.

Now of course the thought was, well, if we hadn’t slept, if we hadn’t [*done this or that*], we could do it faster, and maybe someday, but right now...It was an exhausting, exhausting experience, but one...The night rowing Tanner was just incredible. So it was a great experience.

Kenton, over the years, talked about doing it...He kind of got more into the record talk, about trying to do it again. That’s how he and Rudi, in the really high water [in 1983], went and did it. [72,000 cfs in ’83; about 37,000 cfs in ’80] They did it, of course as you know the story

from *The Emerald Mile*, they didn’t have a permit and so forth and so on. And they did it in less time. It’s kind of like sports records: it’s not so much who holds the record, a lot of times it’s who showed that it was possible. I remember Lou Brock, with the St. Louis Cardinals, stealing so many bases. Everybody said, “Nobody could ever steal *that* many bases,” and yet, he did. After that, it became relatively commonplace, because somebody had shown they could do it—sort of like Powell and going down the river. “No, you can’t go down the river.” Once Powell had

done it, people would say to themselves, “Well, it *can* be done, so why not me?” That’s kind of the way I feel about records and the speed run. I wish the park would put...You know, for commercials, you can only go so many miles a day. I wish they would do the same for privates, so you couldn’t run that trip anymore. In order to do it, you’d have to violate the park’s rules about how many miles a day you could travel. It’s not the place for it. The last trip [*that tried*] a couple days ago [*in 2020*]...I mean, I looked at it when they were starting out, I said, “Boy, if they do this, it’s going to be incredible, because they have no idea how much the water plays an impact on how fast they can get through there. I don’t care *how* hard you can row, you have a lot of trouble rowing more than about a mile-and-a-half

or two miles an hour faster than the water. You can have a crew, training, and everything else. Then they had, I don’t know how many (six of them?) rowing. Their comment at the end was they were exhausted. Well of course they were exhausted, they were in *much* lower water than we were. The whole concept of how long it would take to do it is really far more of a function of the river level than the ability of the guys pulling the oars.

Our goal was, can we do it? Could you run at night? Now they’ve got lights, all this kind of stuff. Kenton wanted to build a special boat that had two rowing stations, much narrower, built for speed, and so forth. Hell, we just got in the *Emerald Mile* as is, stuck in some oars, threw in some



Photo: Rudi Petschek

lifejackets and took off. And that's kind of what I'll take to my grave. Besides a lot of talk and bullshit, there wasn't a whole lot of planning to it—we just did it! I guess if you trained for it, and thought about it, and maybe in some of the new dories, three guys and no gear, you probably *could* do it faster. But the question is, what the hell for?

So was it my idea? I appreciated Kenton always saying it was. I think what Kenton really meant was that I did a lot of the talking and bullshitting about it. And of course I did the math—not that the math was so hard, anybody could have done that. But in leading trips in the canyon, particularly in those days, one of the things that you learned to do was to watch the highs and lows. I mean, you always wanted to know where the water was going to be high, and where it was going to be low, and where the camps were going to be under those conditions, and how to run Bedrock under those conditions, etc. So as a trip leader I kept track of that all the time, and it was relatively easy. I still get a kick out of it now when you see stuff on the Internet about people taking private trips. Well, there's some sort of log on the tides and how you know blah, blah, blah, blah-blah...Just take the previous day and figure it's going to be about the same, only it's going to be downstream a couple more hours, because it's going to take the river about 3½ to 4 miles an hour to get there. There's no magic science. So in that sense—Kenton saying it was my idea, I'll take credit for it if he wants to give it to me. I wish Kenton were still around to talk to. What a hell of an interesting guy!

Steiger: Oh man!

Rist: I really do regret that he did not get some kind of log on his hike. And I really regret that Peter McBride didn't have the experience of talking with Kenton. But that's kind of what the purpose of these interviews is, to put some of this stuff down.

Steiger: I had a little e-mail exchange with Rudi after our first session, and I was kind of egging him on to sit down for one of these, and Rudi said, "I'm a little jealous of Wally because he only has to remember one of them! (laughter)

* * *

Rist: You can blame Mari [Carlos] for me and the GCPBA [Grand Canyon Private Boater's Association]. I met Mari on the beach in 2004 below Deubendorff, right there at Stone Creek. She heard some way or whatever that I had rowed for Martin, and boy, that set her off, and she and I talked for a *long* time there. And she got me at least *more* interested in GCPBA than I had been. Of course in 2004 it was pretty new. That's a whole 'nother experience, a very

valuable one, and I hope a contributory experience to the whole river situation. I wouldn't mind talking a little bit about the evolution and how things are changing or likely to change in the future. I doubt that I will...I mean, I'd *like* to get another river trip in sometime. It's physically uncomfortable for me, I have rheumatoid arthritis. It would be difficult for me just to get on and off a boat. Could I row a boat? Yeah, I think I could still row a boat without any problem. But one of the things that I find today—and I guess we all do as we get older—in my river-running days and trip leader days, I was the one that I looked to, to help other people and be *their* crutch and helper. Now, if I were to look at it, if I were to go down there, I'm the one that would need the crutch and the spot and the help. And I find that a little difficult for



Photo: John Blaustein

me to take.

Steiger: Yeah, I'm right there with you.

Rist: How old are you?

Steiger: I just turned 64. Saturday I've got to go pack my next trip. I'm doing it with Regan and Duffy [Dale] and Duffy's wife, KJ.

Rist: Speaking of Duffy—he doesn't know this—I mean, he probably knows it, but he sort of doesn't remember it—I was on a trip with him before he was *born*. (Steiger laughs) Ote cooked for me, one of the last trips of the summer, and she was pregnant with Duffy on that trip. Everybody was predicting that since we were both so strong-willed and had our own ways about doing things, there would be



Wally with Jeff Clayton—touching up the lettering on the *Bright Angel*. Photo: John Blaustein



In the warehouse, painting the *Mille Crag Bend*. Photo: Rudi Petschek

blood-letting. And to probably more her credit than mine, it didn't work that way at all—we got along fine. We ran a great trip, people had a good time, and I really enjoyed the experience with her.

* * *

Rist: There is one correction that needs to be added [on our second session]. When we first split up the trips so there were two different trips on the river at the same time, Kenton and Regan weren't even with Grand Canyon Dories. The first split-up was Curtis and me leading one trip; and Jeff Clayton leading the other. I think I had mentioned before that Regan was doing it, and that is incorrect. Regan and Kenton were kind of like stray dogs—they worked for Grand Canyon Expeditions, and they wandered in one day from the warehouse where we were sharing a property there in Kanab. They wandered in and they never left.

Steiger: (laughs) I've heard a couple different versions of that story.

Rist: That would have been in, let's see...The way I remember it is where our warehouse was at whatever given time. Our first warehouse was the parking lot at Cliff Dwellers. This is Grand Canyon Dories. The second was a two-car garage in Fredonia. The third was an extra building that Ron Smith had there at Grand Canyon Expeditions. And I think we were only there a year. And then the fourth was when we moved into the warehouse in Hurricane, and then from there, Flagstaff [when OARS bought the company].

* * *

Okay, you wanted to talk a little bit about the evolution of... Well I wanted to talk about the evolution of things in the Grand Canyon. Obviously I don't want to go back to Powell and all that sort of stuff, but just during my own history. Equipment, for one, is very interesting. We started out, you didn't go to the local boat supply and buy oarlocks and oar stops and stuff like that. We had enough trouble getting oars! And then we handmade the oar stops with wraps of webbing and fiberglass, and wrapped the oarlocks made by a welder someplace, with rope. Now you look at how *that* and the equipment line along there has changed, hell, you can buy oars, oar grips, oar stops, the oarlocks. I guess it was Northwest River Supply. Northwest River Supply was a godsend when we finally figured out *they* existed. In the early days, whenever we went anyplace, you'd go through a hardware store, walk up and down the aisles just looking at stuff, going, "I wonder how I could use that on a river trip." The only things that were staples were ammo cans and black rubber bags, which I think are probably still around. The ammo cans, of course. They're still the best for carrying cameras and stuff. But the black rubber bags, World War II surplus—I'm not sure I've seen too many of those. In 2008, my son took a private trip and took some of mine, and everybody marveled at his black rubber bags—and other equipment too: you know, tents. The first few years that we would go on the river, we just...If we had *anything* to cover up with, it was a sheet of plastic you threw over you if it was raining. The boats, the plywood dories were, of course, somewhat sensitive to rocks. And we carried equipment, hand tools, to fix them. The original idea was to get them fixed pretty well on the river, and get them back to the warehouse to work on them a little bit later, and clean them up a little bit and paint them. Nowadays, and even at the end of my career, let's just put some duct tape on it,

maybe smear some paint on it so nobody could see what it looked like, and get it back to Hurricane or Flagstaff and fix it up right there. Now, of course, you have boats that are basically indestructible, with fiberglass, etc. I have never rowed those new boats. I've seen them in the warehouse in Flagstaff numerous times. They're real beauts. I don't think they handle any differently, but they sure made going down the river easier, didn't have to take as many tools with you. The other thing was "Z" lines. If you had a problem, you just rigged up a rope and looped it around a tree. Flip lines were a great evolution. Kenton probably started that. And now the ones they have on the dories are just clip, clip, they're all set. We had all kinds of fancy knots, carabiners, and all that kind of stuff. So not only was there an evolution of equipment, but there was also an evolution of what we learned and what we knew. We didn't have foot braces in our wells for a long time. That was probably, even Jeff Clayton or Kenton that came up with that idea. Maybe even a guy named Charlie Stern. Self-draining foot wells—boy, was that a new one! A lot of controversy when we first started thinking about that. People were, "What?! You're going to drill a hole through the bottom of your boat?! That doesn't make any sense!" But all those things make it easier—or a little less difficult.

There's another...For years we never carried any ice. We planned meals when it would withstand the temperatures and the long times down there. And it was quite an adventure. We ate a lot of canned turkeys, hams, Spam. Spam was always a favorite of mine. Everybody else thought I was nuts. My favorite, which I'm sure you can find in history somewhere, is stuffed cabbage. Everybody else hated it, but I thought it was great—particularly if we had it for dinner, and you could put it on scrambled eggs the next morning. But that's an example of the evolution of what has happened down there. We've made it more convenient for people to go. I don't know if you call it a better trip, but it's certainly a different trip with ice, fresh food all the time. I mean, a big deal was to pick some watercress at Tapeats and make a salad out of it. People just thought that was fantastic, which it was. That was a lot better than cabbage and whatever they ate for salad for the last ten days. And now they take steaks for many, many nights; a big cooler full of food; everybody's got to have a food-handler's license. We would have all gone to jail for the way we handled the food! A passenger would walk in the kitchen and say, "Hey, can I help?" "Yeah, here's the knife. Chop up some celery." Now I understand you've got to keep the passengers out of the kitchen.

The other thing is safety. The requirement for carrying a signal mirror. I doubt very many people would have any idea how to use a signal mirror now. But now pretty much you have to have a phone, and if you have some trouble you call in, and within hours you've got a rescue helicopter. In our situation years ago, if somebody *really* needed to be evacuated, first of all you made a hard decision as to whether it was necessary or not; and second of all, then

you had to get the signal mirror out, hope you could signal a passing aircraft, and hope that they understood what it meant, and hope they could get a message to the Park Service. I remember I had a man with a broken leg once. It broke at Nankoweap, and we got him out right away, the next morning. We were just fortunate. But now, that's different. I wonder how many people would go on the river as passengers or adventurers today if they knew they couldn't be rescued?

Steiger: Not too many, I don't think.

Rist: Which really brings me to my ultimate point, which is all these kind of tie together—over the years we have made more and more rules and regulations to make it more convenient or more possible to take more and more people down the river. In fact, in [Jeff Ingram's] book, *Hijacking the River*, there's a quote of mine at a Phoenix meeting in probably '72, '73. No, it would have been a little later than that. They were discussing CRMP [*Colorado River Management Plan*] and all that—just along those lines. My concern was that we would be getting *too many* people down there, and not destroying the canyon, because we've learned how to handle the impact, but because you couldn't handle [*maintain?*] the situation of being alone and down there by yourself. We have more and more of that now. I'm always worrying about that, and I continue to worry about it. I think the 2006 CRMP was a *marvelous* piece of work, and it took the dedication of a lot of people on both sides, commercial and private, to come up with that. I mean, they didn't really come up with it—the park actually came up with it—but the input came from the conferences with the private and commercial people. Their reality was a situation of recognizing that it was a traffic problem, and managing the traffic at more than a total number of people down there. In the past, whenever there was a pissing contest, the park usually resolved it by making the pie bigger, and then giving each outfitter or each interest a little bit bigger piece of the pie, and everybody was happy. I was scared to death that was going to happen with the 2006 CRMP. Actually, it did not. I think that was the marvelous manipulation, marvelous how they figured it out. But the park did handle that extremely well, and I *do* think that the 2006 CRMP is a really fabulous document. While quite lengthy, it does address pretty much all the situations that we really need to address. I'm a little concerned under this recovery plan that we're talking about now, the park may abandon some of the principles in there, like the number of people on the river on a given day, the total number of trips on a given day. And then just to accommodate the people whose trips were cancelled—which I don't have a big problem with—but I'm afraid the others will step forward and say, "Well, hey, it worked in late 2020. Why can't we just make that a permanent situation in 2022?" And I don't think that needs to be done. I'm sure you, being an old-timer, look at it the same way: Boy, we were really lucky to be down there at such a wonderful time when the beaches were clear, etc. Well, every generation has felt that way, but if you look at

it now, it's really a traffic management problem; it's how many people can you get down here comfortably. You've got chairs, you've got tables, you've got radios, you've got electric lights. You've got costume night. You've got all these things, which I guess people are definitely entitled to do what they want to do. But it really distracts—for me, it distracts from one of the most unique opportunities in the world, to be really in the bottom of the Grand Canyon with some sense of solitude.

Steiger: If you look at your whole Grand Canyon experience—could you say what was the best part of it for you?

Rist: Well, yeah. There's two really good aspects. I'm a teacher by nature, I like to teach people, and I really enjoy taking passengers down the river—you know, for years, commercial passengers as a dory boatman, and now as a private boater taking people down that have never been before. Obviously, one of the highlights for me was in 2004 I took my son who was sixteen, and my daughter who was seventeen, down the river on a private trip. There's just no way to describe how wonderful *that* was. They went again with me in 2008. So I've been very fortunate. You know, knowing people like Martin, getting to be intimately involved in the Grand Canyon, has been very rewarding. But really, educating, taking people down the river, has been a real trip.

Steiger: Was it starting a family that pulled you away from doing it on a regular basis?

Rist: Pretty much, pretty much.

Twyla Rist: Your age!

Rist: My wife pipes up in the background [*about*] my age. Well, I mean, I hate to tell you, but you're a lot older than I was when I gave it up, running commercially. But yeah, it was a concept of moving on to something else. I'd been a schoolteacher for a long time. I'd been a river runner for a long time. And now it was time to move on to something else, which turned out to be the real estate business.

Steiger: I've been looking at myself for a couple three years, going, "Man, I'm getting pretty long in the tooth to be doing this." But I look around me, and there's all these guys that are still doing it too that were already there when I started rowing dories! I'm still running trips with Regan Dale, Tim Cooper, Moki Johnson, all these...

Rist: Those are all newcomers!

Steiger: (laughs) Okay, I'm gonna tell them you said that!

Rist: Those are all newcomers. The other one I did not like rowing with was Andre Potochnik. The reason I didn't like rowing with Andre is because I had to spell his name at the checkout with the ranger. It took me a long time to figure out how to spell Potochnik.

Steiger: You'd appreciate him these days.

Rist: Well, he was a trainee, Moki was a trainee, Cooper was a trainee. Let's see, who's the boat-builder? Flagstaff. Oh! I can't think of his name. He wasn't a trainee, but he came after I did, and now he's an old guy—about the same time you did, I think.

Steiger: Oh...Brad Dimock!

Rist: Yeah, Brad Dimock. I look at a lot of these guys, I ran into him a year ago. He looks just the same—a little heavier. The trips were always fun, but my biggest problem was it got to be a lot of work.

Steiger: Yeah.

Rist: Even private trips these days are a lot of work—in fact, they're probably more work than commercials are.

Steiger: Oh yeah, because at least on a commercial trip, you've got others who know what to do and how to do it.

Rist: The only thing that I'd do differently is I'd cover up more, wear more sunscreen.

Steiger: Yup, me too. Would you have any words of wisdom for a young guide that was just starting out and reading this in the BQR?

Rist: Well, not really, because I don't think I understand the current situation well enough. Like any young person, I certainly would tell them you've got a lot of time to try things, and do things, and make mistakes, and follow up on them, and so forth and so on, so running the river would be a great, great experience. But as you get older, I think there comes a point at which you really ought to think, as Martin...See, Martin never thought this was a permanent job for anybody. He was always convinced that we ought to all go out and get *real* jobs. That's kind of the way I look at it now. "Go get a real job!" Have you thought about it?

Steiger: Who? Me?!

Rist: Yeah.

Steiger: It's a little late for that now, Wally.

Rist: Well, I could talk about the river and the canyon forever. The problem is I start to forget, I start to repeat myself—which I probably already have. The other thing is things that used to be just crystal clear are now kind of vague. Forty years, 45 years, long time ago.

Steiger: Yeah, went quick, though, didn't it?

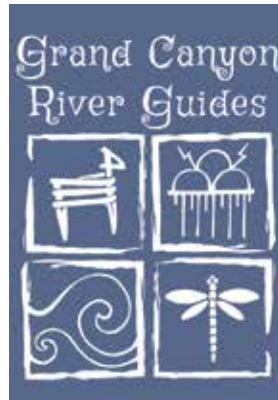
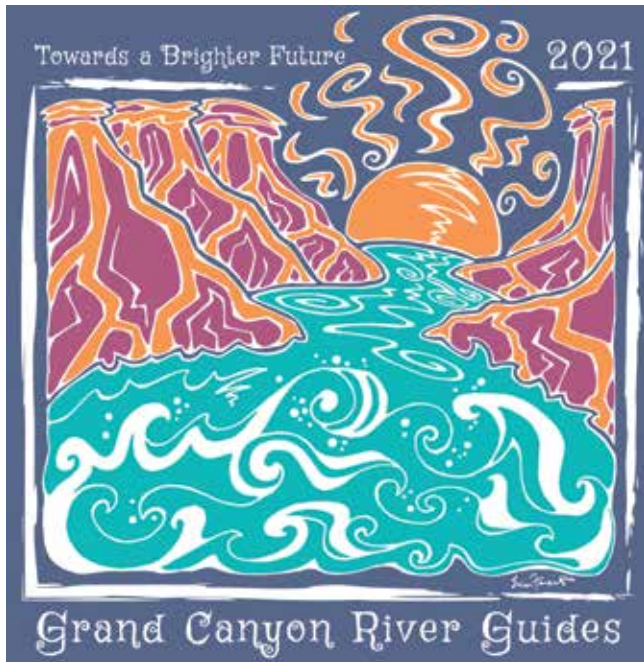
Rist: Yes, it did. It did go very quickly. I look back, in 1958, floating down Glen Canyon with Fred Eiseman, Maggie, and Doug Reiner and I, I remember a very lazy day. Everybody was asleep. Maggie and I were awake, and she turned to me...Because I lived in St. Louis, sixteen years old at the time. She said, "Do you think you'll ever get out to this part of the country again?" I remember the question, and I remember the response. "Well, you know, it seems kind of neat, but I don't know."

Also one of my favorite experiences, the first time I hiked into Grand Canyon—and I'm sure everybody tells you this—we were hiking—and again, it was with the Eisemans and Doug. We were hiking from the rim to Phantom, and we went on the Bright Angel Trail. That was before the water pipe bridge was in, and that last section along the south bank there that was just sand and everything else, I remember saying to myself, "If I ever get out of here, I will *never* come back to this canyon."

Steiger: Yeah!

Rist: Things change, things change.

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Erica Faerio, Artist | I have been a guide for Arizona River Runners since 1997 and I currently serve on the board for GCRG. My paintings (and the occasional t-shirt design!) are inspired by the magic and beauty I see in Grand Canyon and surrounding Colorado Plateau. I have come to realize that the cycles and seasons of the natural world can serve as a reflection for our own day to day living and relationships. I believe that nature can teach us how to more gracefully navigate the rapids of our own experience. After all, we are nature too! This is one of the many messages I attempt to convey through my art. I believe that art is a powerful tool that can be used for teaching, learning and for advocacy. Art can open our hearts and minds to different perspectives, ideas and emotions and help us to see that we and all living things are connected on a very fundamental level.

“Towards a Brighter Future” is the 2021 GTS and t-shirt design theme. This past 14 months has brought challenges of oh so many shapes and sizes that we have probably felt (or are still feeling) overwhelmed by. Whether we are grieving, dealing with relationship issues, or health or financial challenges, may we all have the insight to see that the storm will pass. The sun is always there, shining bright inside of us and it is only ever temporarily obscured by the clouds. Hang in there, everyone! Hopefully with a newly elected administration, schools back in session, vaccinations well on their way and a full river season ahead, life will resume a feeling of normalcy. Speaking for myself, it is during these difficult times that my gratitude only deepens for our loving and supportive Grand Canyon community. How very fortunate we are to have each other and the moments, days, weeks and years in Grand Canyon. So, chin up, take care of yourselves, think “rain!,” have safe runs and know that something good is coming. www.ericafareio.com

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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.



Wally Rist, continued...

Nap time at Redwall Cavern —

Left to right: Mike Davis, Kenly Weills, Dane Mensik, Wally Rist, Duane "Sharky" Cornell.

Photo: John Blaustein