

# THE GRAND CANYON River Runner

Number Twelve

preserving public access to the Colorado River

Spring, 2011



## “Some facts with no explanation” : the strange tale of the Stanton Expedition

by Roy Webb

By July 12, 1889, the Brown-Stanton Expedition had been on the river since the middle of May. Franklin Brown, a “man of capital” from Denver, wanted to build a water-level railroad that would run from Green River, Utah, all the way down the Colorado River, through the Grand Canyon, to southern California, to bring Colorado coal to the growing cities on the west coast. As chief engineer, he had hired Robert Brewster Stanton, a well-respected engineer who already had experience in building similar railways. But the survey for the Denver, Colorado Canyon, and Pacific Railroad, begun with such high hopes, had not gone well. Boats, supplies, and equipment had been lost in Cataract Canyon, and the party had faced starvation. They re-grouped at Lees Ferry, below Glen Canyon, where Brown announced that they were going to make a quick dash through the Grand Canyon to take photographs of the proposed route that he could then take back east to show investors. Stanton felt this was a bad idea but knew he had no choice but to go along.

The first miles of Marble Canyon were smooth, but at mile 8 they had to portage Badger Rapid, camping not far below. That night Brown seemed nervous and agitated; he talked long into the night to Stanton, of his family traveling in Europe, of his dreams for the railroad, and finally had Stanton come and make his bed next to his. The next morning as they readied the boats, Brown said in an offhand way that the previous night had been the first time he was troubled by dreams of the river and the rapids. Shaking it off, they pushed out into the river.

(CONT. ON PG. 2)

### *In this Issue*

“SOME FACTS WITH NO EXPLANATION” .....	1
“BOAT NOTES” .....	4
“AN OLDER CANYON?” .....	6
POSTCARDS .....	9
“SURVIVING THE CANYON” .....	10
“ERIC” .....	12
“MY MOST MEMORABLE DAY” .....	13
POETRY .....	14
FROM THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE .....	15
GCCRRA DIRECTORS .....	16
T-SHIRT ORDER INFORMATION .....	16

### **YOUR COMMENTS NEEDED ON OVERFLIGHTS**

***After many years of study and discussion, including input by involved stakeholders, the National Park Service has released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement addressing overflights and consequences to natural quiet in Grand Canyon. Now it is your turn to make your voice heard. The comment period ends on June 20, 2011. Please see page 15 to read about this important issue.***

(CONT. FROM PG. 1)

In the lead boat with Brown was Harry McDonald. They came to Soap Creek Rapid, a few miles below Badger, and portaged it successfully. Soon after they got back on the river, however, Brown's boat was lifted by a swell in the turbulent current and capsized. McDonald was thrown toward shore, Brown toward the river. Harry was able to swim to safety; he turned around to look for Brown and saw him wave, but by the time McDonald reached shore there was no sign of Brown. He ran upriver, pointing to the swirl and yelling, "President Brown is in there!" They began a search, but it soon became obvious that Brown's cost-cutting decision not to provide life jackets had proven to be a fatal mistake; with a cork life jacket, Brown would no doubt have been saved. All they recovered was his notebook.<sup>2</sup>

The party was stunned, and there were mutterings against continuing the survey. Stanton, however, insisted that they continue, in Brown's memory if nothing else. After Peter Hansborough, a long-time employee and friend of Stanton, carved a forlorn epitaph in a ledge of Coconino sandstone just above the river, the shaken party re-embarked. At camp a few days later, Stanton was exhausted and sound asleep on a ledge when Hansborough came to him at 4AM and said that he couldn't sleep because of a pain in his toe. Stanton was "vexed to be thus awakened" and sent him away, but immediately regretted his sharp words and called Hansborough back to sit with him. All that day, Hansborough was "troubled and worried," and at their camp on Sunday, July 14<sup>th</sup>, Hansborough followed Stanton around the camp just below what would later be named 25-mile Rapid, "talking of his past life, of death, of Heaven and his trust in a future state." Stanton tried to cheer him up, to no avail. Also along on the expedition were two African-American men, long-time Stanton family servants, Henry Richards and George Gibson. They camped some distance away from the others, and unbeknownst to Stanton, Richards spent all day Sunday talking with his friend Gibson the same way, about life and death, and the two men read together from the Bible.

The next morning, Monday, July 15<sup>th</sup>, Stanton and Franklin Nims, the trip's photographer, left the boats, to walk along the bank and take photographs, while the others were to meet them at a sand bar about a half-mile downstream. Stanton himself pushed off the boat carrying Hansborough and Richards, noting that

they had some trouble deciding on what course to take to the sandbar. The shore party was watching the boat move off downriver before beginning their work, when suddenly it was swept up against the left wall, and despite the crew's efforts, turned over. Hansborough and Richards were both swept round and round in the eddies, and before the other boats could get to them, both sank from sight. Frantic, Stanton ran back to his boat and called for the others to try and rescue them, but it was too late; both were drowned.<sup>3</sup>

"Two more faithful and good men gone! Astonished and crushed by their loss, our force too small to portage our boats, and our outfit and boats unfit for such work, I decided to abandon the trip...From then on, our only object was to find a side canyon leading out to the north, through which to make our retreat."<sup>4</sup> They found such a canyon just above Vasey's Paradise. That night, as they stashed the supplies and equipment too heavy to carry out in a nearby cave, a thunderous storm crashed and rolled around them, the rain causing parts of the walls to slide down into the canyon. It was a fitting denouement for their voyage down what had become, as Stanton noted, "Death's Canyon."

Just as they started to climb out, they saw Brown's body floating by, but were unable to retrieve it. Spurred by that grisly sight, they scrambled up South Canyon, and made their way to Lees Ferry. Stanton had already determined "to return and complete our journey to the Gulf," which he was able to do a few months later, this time equipped with life jackets and better boats. But it was not to be without mishap; on January 1, 1890, Nims, the photographer, fell from a ledge trying to get a better shot and was badly injured. The men hauled him up Ryder Canyon, at Mile 17, and he was taken by wagon to Lees Ferry and finally back to his



FRANKLIN BROWN INSCRIPTION @ MARI CARLOS

home in Colorado Springs. Stanton taught himself to use the camera and completed the river survey with no further problems. But by the time he finished, oil had been discovered in southern California, so there was no need of coal from Colorado and the whole plan collapsed.

The Brown-Stanton expedition left traces in Marble Canyon that can still be seen. First is the Brown



PETER HANSBOROUGH GRAVE @ MARI CARLOS

inscription, carved by Peter Hansborough on the left side of the river at the mouth of Salt Water Wash, about Mile 12. On a Coconino ledge about 15 feet above the water, it reads: "F.M. Brown drowned opposite this



PETER HANSBOROUGH INSCRIPTION @ MARI CARLOS

point July 12, 1889. D.C.C.P.R.R." The small rapid is now called Brown's Riffle. About ten miles downriver, at what's now called Lone Cedar Camp at 23½ mile, Harry McDonald carved his initials in a juniper tree, which can still be seen. 25-Mile rapid, just below where the unfortunate Hansborough and Richards drowned is also known by their names. Just above Vasey's Paradise is Stanton's Cave, where the party stashed

their equipment after the three fatalities in 1889.5 On the second leg of the expedition in 1890, Stanton found Peter Hansborough's body just below President Harding Rapid at Mile 44. They recognized him, now reduced to a skeleton, by his boots, and buried him at the base of the cliff above the big eddy there, carving his name in the rocks above the grave. After a brief service, they "left him with a shaft of pure marble for his headstone, seven hundred feet high with his name cut upon the base, and in honor of his memory we named a magnificent point opposite—Point Hansborough."<sup>5</sup>

Stanton had been captivated by the Colorado River, and went on to other schemes that kept him near it for the rest of his life. In 1898, he started the Hoskaninni Mining Company to extract gold from Glen Canyon, which was a spectacular, costly failure, and spent his last years writing a 2100 page manuscript history of the river that was never published. But perhaps the best thing that came out of the Brown-Stanton expedition was the very fact of its failure; to the relief of modern river runners, there is no railroad along the bottom of the Grand Canyon!

(Endnotes)

1 The title, and all quotes, come from *Down the Colorado*, by Robert Brewster Stanton (Norman, Oklahoma : University of Oklahoma Press, 1965). This book and other works about Stanton were extracted from his huge unpublished manuscript "The River and the Canyon, from the standpoint of an engineer." Stanton died in New York in 1922.

2 Brown's water-stained notebook is now in the papers of Otis R. "Dock" Marston, in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

3 Richards has the dubious distinction of being probably the only African-American to drown in the Grand Canyon.

4 In January 1890, three of Stanton's men crawled back into the cave and left a note pinned to the wall with a stick. In 1942, Norman Nevills and Otis Marston went about 700 feet into the cave, and found the note, which is now in the papers of Norman Nevills, in the Marriott Library Special Collections, University of Utah.

5 Italics in original. Much farther downriver, just above Bass Camp at Mile 109, is a large open area that's informally called "Stanton's Switchyard," where he reportedly planned to put a yard for locomotives used in the ill-fated railroad.

Roy Webb is the multimedia archivist in Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah. He is the author of several books on Grand Canyon and the Colorado Plateau, including *Riverman*, *The Story of Bus Hatch*; *If We Had A Boat: Green River Explorers, Adventurers and Runners*; *Call of the Colorado: High, Wide and Handsome: The River Journals of Norman D. Nevills*.

# Boat Notes

from Mari Carlos, President, GCRRA

My head is full of boats these days, which is really pretty odd if you know me.

A few years ago I participated in a private Grand Canyon river trip and one of my key observations from that experience was that private boaters are obsessed with boats. When they get tired of talking about their own they talk about someone else's boat. It was nearly impossible to steer the conversation in other directions, and repeatedly I found myself on the outside of these single-minded discourses as my private boater friends rambled on and on about tubes, oars, coolers, straps, motors, frames, oar locks, knots, weight distribution, carrying capacity and just about everything else that was of the boat, on the boat, or even just reasonably near the boat. To them, it is very much about the boat(s).

We commercial boaters, on the other hand, are almost universally unconcerned about our boats. We sign up for a Grand Canyon trip with little thought given to what is going to carry us on our long journey downstream. Few among us know the difference between an Avon and a SOTAR, or an S-rig and a J-rig. As one of our board members so famously stated in a newspaper editorial, "It's not about the boat". This could almost be our secondary motto here at GCRRA because it really is all about the Canyon to us. Most of us can reliably recall whether our boats had motors, oars or paddles, but that is usually the sum total of what we know (or care) about the boats.

All of which is just to say that I never considered myself a likely candidate to develop a boat obsession. Don't worry, I'm not yet certifiable as a boat nut, but I am creeping ever closer to that strange new territory. Thanks to the river historians associated with Grand Canyon's fascinating past, and to some hardcore boat dudes, I can now talk about Galloway boats and cataract boats and not sound really silly. I can briefly hold up my end of the conversation when it turns to the relative merits of 14 foot rafts vs. 16 foot rafts vs. 18 foot rafts. I know what a snout boat looks like and actually have an opinion about cataracts. Where is this leading me?

As you already know from our most recent past issues, GCRRA is part of the effort to promote the River Heritage Museum at the South Rim of Grand Canyon ([www.gcrivermuseum.org](http://www.gcrivermuseum.org)). This keeps me thinking about boats much of the time, but strictly from a conservation and public display point of view. That changed for me at the end of March, at the annual Guides Training Seminar sponsored by

Grand Canyon River Guides. It changed in a dramatic flash when I suddenly stopped thinking of the boats as historical relics and instead started visualizing the men who rowed them, built them, patched them and left them to us.

Brad Dimock came to the GTS with Edith. She is not a new flame, she is a replica. Edith was built for Ellsworth and Emery Kolb for their famous 1911 run down the Green and Colorado rivers, exactly as the title of their book tells it, "from Wyoming to Mexico". The real Edith now slumbers in a warehouse at the South Rim, awaiting the day that she will join the other historic boats in the proposed museum. But Brad's Edith was there at the GTS, golden and gorgeous for all to see. How did Brad come to possess such a beauty? The answer was my dramatic flash, my Ah-Ha moment. He got her the old fashioned way. Brad built Edith himself.

I pondered this new dimension to my association with boats all the way back to California, thinking long and hard about the long dead men who had left their mark in Grand Canyon, and left their boats in many cases. When the explorer spirit took hold of these men, with few exceptions their first act was to build a boat. Find the wood, prepare the wood, bend, cut, and shape the wood. Nathaniel Galloway, Norman Nevills, Bert Loper, and Buzz Holmstrom all built their own boats.

Oddly, Emery and Ellsworth did not build their boats, instead purchasing them from the Racine Boat Company of Racine, Wisconsin. I say it is odd because the Kolbs were wood craftsmen of some skill, having built their home and studio on the South Rim beginning over 100 years ago. After consulting with Julius Stone, who had completed his successful run through Grand Canyon two years earlier, the brothers must have felt that the boat building was best left to professionals. Edith and Defiance are classified as Galloway boats, very similar in design to the boats that Nathaniel Galloway had built for Stone.

Brad visited Edith at the South Rim warehouse housing many of the boats in the museum collection. He photographed her from every angle and made precise measurements. Then he built her. But if you think she is just a glorified bookshelf, you'd be very wrong. By the time you read this it is likely that Edith will have run Cataract Canyon with Brad at the oars. He will know firsthand what it took to manage the real Edith, and no doubt will come home with some good river stories about running her namesake in rapids. Might there be a Grand in her future?

Seeing Edith (2) at the Guides Training Seminar made



BRAD DIMOCK IN HIS "EDITH"

me think again on the exploits of the Kolbs. In September of this year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of their launch from Green River, Wyoming. They were only the 26th and 27th people through Grand Canyon by Dock Marston's reckoning, but because they were such masterful entrepreneurs they kept their Grand Canyon journey alive for thousands of Canyon visitors with a motion picture of the trip, and the book about the journey written by Ellsworth. Although Ellsworth left the Canyon in the 1920's, Emery stayed and showed their film daily in the studio at the South Rim for over 60 years. He also sold and autographed countless copies of the book, which visitors to the studio were eager to purchase.

I have always been drawn to the Kolbs and consider them among the best pioneering photographers of their time. The Kolbs photographed the mule trips into the Canyon at the beginning of each day's journey, when the lead wrangler would stop the mule train at a specified point

on the trail below a window cut in the studio wall just so that a Kolb could aim the camera and snap a shot of mules and riders on their way down into the Canyon. Then one of the Kolbs – I can never remember which one – would run down the trail to Indian Garden (where there was spring water), develop the glass plates and return to the rim with finished prints in time to meet the returning mule riders. It was a demanding profession, but they excelled at it.

The Grand Canyon Association has recently reprinted Ellsworth Kolb's *Through the Grand Canyon from Wyoming to Mexico*. If you have never read this entertaining account of the Kolb's trip, I highly recommend it. Anyone who has been through Grand Canyon by boat will greatly appreciate what the Kolbs accomplished, especially in this, their centennial year. If you are interested, you can purchase the book directly from GCA's website at [www.grandcanyon.org](http://www.grandcanyon.org). Happy reading, and I'll see you downstream.

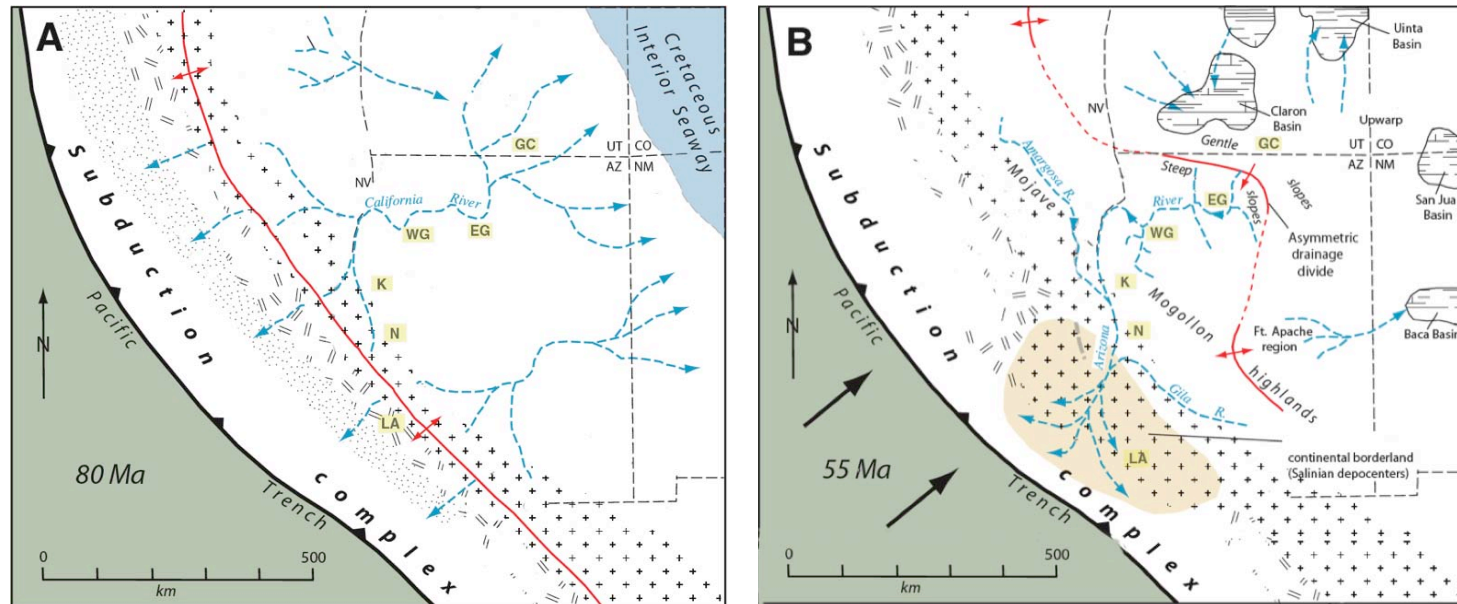
JOIN  
GCRRA

Have you experienced a fantastic commercially outfitted trip down the Colorado River? Are you planning to have one in the future? Do you think that the opportunity to see Grand Canyon from river level should be available to everyone, even if they do not have the skill or strength to row their own boat? Did you know that the Park Service can change its management plan, including adjusting the number of visitors and kinds of trips permitted, from time to time? If you care about these issues, GCRRA speaks for you, with the Park Service and in the courts, helping preserve your opportunities to participate in a commercially outfitted river trip. Have your voice heard! Join us today! MEMBERSHIP REPLY ENVELOPE INCLUDED WITH THIS ISSUE. Visit our website : [gcriverrunners.org](http://gcriverrunners.org) to learn even more!

Membership includes half-yearly issues of the beautiful Grand Canyon River Runner newsletter. GCRRA is a 501(c)3 organization that has donated a portion of membership dues to Grand Canyon related causes, over \$11,000 as of November, 2009.

# An Older Grand Canyon? Is it Possible?

by Wayne Ranney



You would think that as famous and well regarded as the Grand Canyon is, that the geologists who study it would know the intimate details of its formation. But in thinking that, you'd be dead wrong. In fact, the range of dates that are accepted for when the canyon may have formed keeps getting bigger and more divergent as time goes on. A simple and much regarded answer to the question, "How old is the Grand Canyon" is generally given as six million years. But recent studies suggest that this may no longer provide a satisfactory response to what is the canyon's second most heard question (the first being, "When is sunset"). How can this possibly be?

For starters, resurgence in scientific research in how the canyon formed is now underway and today's geologists have a multitude of new and sophisticated tools they use to glean ever more information from the canyon's seemingly stubborn rocks. These techniques were unavailable in the 20th century and provide many promising avenues of research. In May 2010 I participated in an informal workshop on the origin of the Colorado River in Flagstaff, AZ. Sixty geologists were in attendance and most of them gave reports on their latest findings. Some of the findings are truly mind-boggling and I highlight only two of the more tantalizing results.

## An Older Grand Canyon

During the last decade, cautious whispers about the canyon possibly being as old as the dinosaurs were heard, but few people were prepared for what one Cal-Tech scientist believes. Using a clever laboratory technique called apatite fission-track dating (which can reveal how deeply certain rocks were buried at various times in the past), Brian Wernicke has shown that western Grand Canyon was cut to very near its present depth as early as 70 Ma (millions of years ago). Additionally, he found that the area of eastern Grand Canyon (where most people see the canyon) was the site of a canyon with similar proportions to modern

Grand Canyon but cut in higher-level rocks that are now stripped to the north in the Echo and Vermilion cliffs. Wernicke calls the river that carved this canyon the "California River" (since it originated in that direction) and it flowed to the northeast towards the retreating Cretaceous Seaway. By 55 Ma, a part of this river had evolved such that it reversed its course and flowed southwest with its headwaters positioned very near the Lees Ferry area. He calls this the "Arizona River", which by 16 Ma had carved the eastern Grand Canyon to within a few hundred meters of its present depth. Only after 6 Ma did the Colorado River in Utah spill over the divide near Lees Ferry and occupy an already formed Grand Canyon.

Wernicke's idea builds on a few previous but perhaps little-regarded other theories and have the potential to turn the more widely accepted age of six million years on its heels. The number "six million" has been with us for about five decades now and may be ingrained in the DNA of many Grand Canyon geologists. But the findings of Wernicke, as well as a few other studies that came to the same conclusion, may cause more than a few sleepless nights for younger-leaning canyonologists. The strength of Wernicke's findings relate to how he skillfully addresses just about every possible argument that supports a canyon no older than six million years.

The thorniest of these is the "Muddy Creek problem", which relates to deposits at the mouth of Grand Canyon (below the Grand Wash Cliffs) that indicate that the river was not flowing here before six million years ago. Wernicke accepts an idea previously proposed that Hualapai Lake (Muddy Creek Fm.) might once have backed up into an early Grand Canyon, thus precluding any Colorado River deposits from being delivered to the Muddy Creek basin. As far as I can tell, and if you pardon the pun, Wernicke leaves no stone unturned in showing us the reasonableness of an old Grand Canyon. Watch for this idea to be roundly attacked in the coming year. And if it is not slayed by then, we will have a whole new idea regarding the age of the canyon.

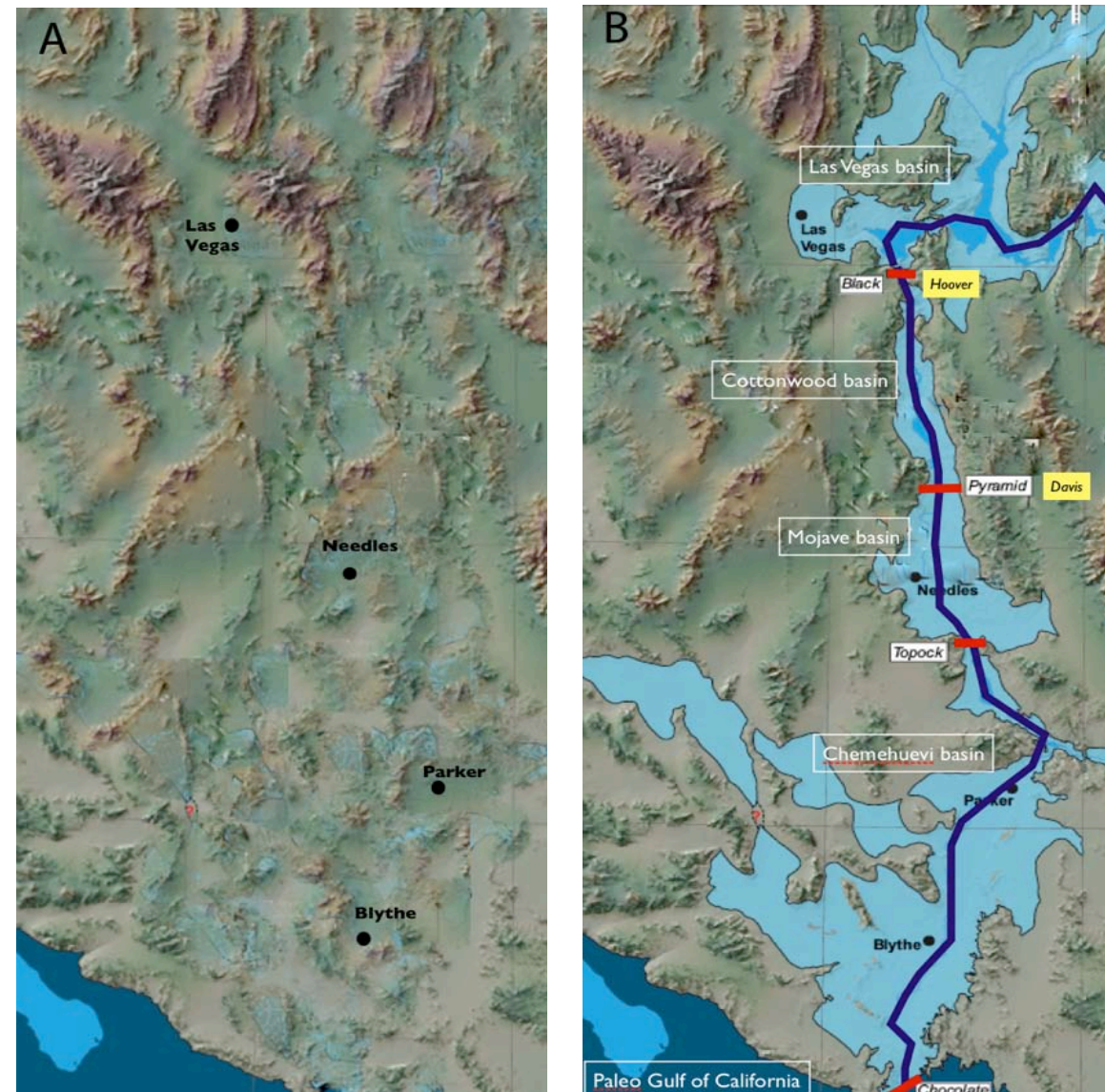
## A Younger Colorado River

In a glaring and ironic contrast to Wernicke's old Grand Canyon, researchers Kyle House, Phil Pearthree and Michael Perkins have shown (quite convincingly I might add) that the lower Colorado River is young. The study involves deposits exposed along the river corridor from near Las Vegas, Nevada to below Blythe, California. Many surprising results were found, as these rocks had not previously received this level of detailed scrutiny. The deposits are located in multiple sub-basins that were once separated by bedrock divides at the time of their deposition. Each basin contains (from bottom to top) a locally derived alluvial fan sequence, overlain by coarse conglomerate derived from the bedrock divide that is present upstream of each basin. These are covered by freshwater lake sediments that are, in turn capped with unmistakable Colorado River gravel. The interpretation is that the previously closed and disconnected basins were sequentially inundated with the rapid arrival of river water that was eventually ponded behind each bedrock divide. As the lakes sequentially filled, they spilled over and began filling the next basin. The basins thus connected include (from north to south) the Las Vegas basin (where lower Lake Mead is today), Cottonwood Valley (modern Lake Mojave), the Mojave Valley (Needles area), and the Chemehuevi Valley (modern Lake Havasu and areas father south).

The lake deposits involved are called the Bouse Formation, which has been the subject of much controversy regarding its origin. Some previous workers thought that the deposit was from an early Gulf of California, when it extended much farther north than today. They explained the divergent elevations seen in the deposit as being the result of later faulting. But more modern studies have shown that there is a lack of faults between the various basins and it can now be shown that it originated in freshwater lake environments that existed at slightly different elevations within each sub-basin. A clearer picture of the evolution of the lower Colorado River is emerging.

As each basin lay disconnected to the next, they accumulated an alluvial fan sequence derived only from the mountains that rimmed each basin. Quite rapidly, water arrived from upstream and began filling the Las Vegas basin, trapped on its south side by a bedrock divide. Eventually this basin filled and spilled, eroding into the bedrock divide and releasing water into the Cottonwood basin. This basin in turn was trapped on its southern side by another bedrock divide and the basin filled and spilled into the Mojave Valley, which did the same into the Chemehuevi Valley. One of the most surprising results of this study is that it shows that the creation of large modern dams has occurred on top of some bedrock paleo-dams of the past!

How odd it seems that the Grand Canyon might be old according to Brian Wernicke but the lower river appears young according to Kyle House and others. That is the part of the mystery and intrigue of the Grand Canyon. It seems the more geologists probe into its puzzling past they uncover more surprising possibilities for how and when it could have formed. Stay tuned!



## Additional Reading

Wernicke, Brian, 2011; The California River and its role in carving Grand Canyon; GSA Bulletin, published online 26 January, 2011 as doi: 10.1130/B30274.1.

House, Kyle; Pearthree, Phil, and Perkins, Michael, 2008; Stratigraphic evidence for the role of lake spillover in the inception of the lower Colorado River in southern Nevada and western Arizona; GSA Special Paper 439, pp.335-353.

Wayne Ranney is the author of *Carving Grand Canyon and Ancient Landscapes of the Colorado Plateau*. He is a trail guide with the Museum of Northern Arizona and the Grand Canyon Field Institute. He has taken over 40 river trips through the Grand Canyon. Visit his website at [www.wayneranney.com](http://www.wayneranney.com).



"REFLECTION TUCK-UP CANYON" © CHARLES TAYLOR




"CANYON WALLS" © CHARLES TAYLOR




"MOON SUNRISE" © CHARLES TAYLOR

# Postcards


  
 In 2007, for my 80th birthday, I treated myself to my best ever birthday gift the trip with a great group on that fun and fabulous river. It was the trip of a lifetime and the most fun ever. Such scenery! Such memories! Great guides Travis, T.J., and Oni, with her guitar. Great meals. I am sending along my favorite picture out of the 200 that I shot, this one at Redwall Cavern. Also a poem about my thoughts as I lay awake on the last night right beside the river. So special!

**Maudie Solomon**  
**Brownsville, TN**


  
 A river trip is always a unique experience. I do not know of any other place where I forget where I came from and where I am going and just live fully in the moment. Somehow the other life slips away with all its cares and responsibilities and the rhythm of rising, packing, floating, camping becomes all there is. There is a living moving screen under you and a huge natural screen unfolding around you the whole time. All you have to do is watch its beauty pass before you.

**Nancy Thompson**  
**July, 2004**

PHOTO © MARI CARLOS

# SURVIVING THE CANYON

On the Trail to Water by Bob Wyatt

Just over a year ago, I made my first “below the rim” Grand Canyon journey on a motorized raft through the magnificent canyons along the Colorado River. As is so often the case, I became intoxicated by the canyon’s exceptional and unique natural beauty. Since then, I’ve ridden through the canyon on a non-motorized raft and hiked the so called “corridor” trails of South Kaibab, North Kaibab and Bright Angel four times. Each experience intensified my desire to go “off corridor” and hike the more difficult, remote trails.



After a good deal of research, I picked what I believed to be the easiest of a not so easy lot, the Hermit Trail, planning to overnight at Hermit and Granite Rapids. My execution did not live up to the planning. Even before I began, I violated two time honored “Grand Canyon Laws of Nature:” 1) It’s not enough to carry more than enough water for your planned hike; you must ensure you have more than enough water for your unplanned hike, and 2) Never hike alone.

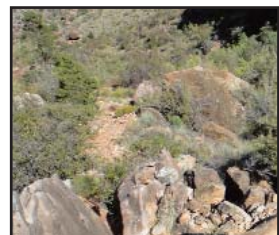
Notwithstanding my bold disregard for these rules of the trail, it was with anticipation, excitement and no little apprehension that I departed the trailhead at o-dark-thirty

under bright moonlight to avoid the mid-day heat. And while the start of the trail is fairly difficult, the natural light of the moon was sufficient to avoid use of artificial light. But even before the sun came up, I made my first serious mistake and missed the turnoff to Hermit trail. As a result, I ending up on the more challenging Boucher Trail. In doing so, I missed two, count them *two*, trail signs indicating the correct route.



Although I sensed I was on the wrong path, it was not until a few miles later that I knew for sure. Noting that the trail ahead was headed due west and level instead of northeast and down the Cathedral Stairs, I pulled out my trusty map and verified my error. Not realizing that the trail’s difficulty was about to increase considerably, I decided to continue on to either Boucher Creek or, at worst Hermit Creek. Foremost on my mind was my dwindling source of water. At this point I knew that the real trail I was on had become the trail to water.

Within a mile, I reached the sharp drop down Travertine Canyon and soon realized my decision was, at best, questionable. As I slowly descended even as the heat of the day stretched on, I hoarded my



water as much as possible. Drinking my last drop at 4pm, I reflected, not for the first time, on the gravity of my situation.



As sun began to set, I decided I needed rest more than liquids and set up camp for the night. About 2am the next morning, I awoke and decided to continue hiking in the cool of the moonlit night. Shortly thereafter, I found the trail hard to follow and decided to wait until daylight. In the brighter early morning light, I found and followed the trail for a couple of



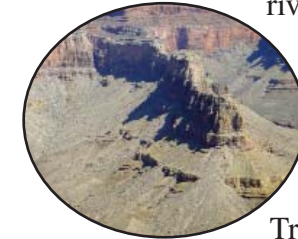
hours; whereupon, I realized that I had missed the turnoff to Boucher Creek. Looking down I saw four rafts at what I determined to be Schist Camp on river mile 96 of the Colorado River. Seeing the boaters at camp reminded me of my own rafting experience, and I could hear the trip leader saying, “Be sure to drink lots of water and hydrate.” Ah, words to live by.

Realizing I was on the West Tonto Trail heading east past the turn off to Boucher Creed, I had to decide whether to continue to Hermit Creek or return to see if I could find the cairns marking the missed trail. Having passed them unno-



ticed the first time, probably while hiking in the dark, and uncertain whether the creek was indeed running, I decided to continue the approximately 5 miles to Hermit Creek.

It was at this point that the going got tough. It took about 7 hours to travel the next 5 miles along West Tonto trail. Walking 10 minutes and resting/ sleeping 20 in the occasional shade of boulders, I



arrived at a point shortly before the point where the West Tonto Trail crosses Travertine Canyon. I decided it best, in my current state, to drop my pack and continue on carrying only empty water bottles. Finding a shaded area under a ledge, I laid out my sleeping pad and slept for about an hour. I then decided to continue on to water and either return the next day for my pack or sacrifice it to the canyon gods.

As I forged ahead, I often lost then reestablished the trail, but was able to slowly make my way to the much needed and hoped-for water. As I crossed a wash about a ½ mile from the creek, I lost the trail for good. I was able to wonder generally in the correct direction for another ¼ mile when I found myself looking a couple of hundred feet straight down at Hermit Creek. It was now about 3pm, and I was not mentally or physically able to traverse the remaining ¼ mile to water even if I could find the trail.

I lost consciousness and awoke some time later to see a man standing near the creek and was able to get his attention. He and a fellow hiker, both EMTs, came to my rescue. They had passed my pack and

me, without seeing me, before arriving at camp. Later another EMT leading a group of students arrived. Attempts to contact national park rescue operations were unsuccessful; so, after attending to my needs, it was decided that my two rescuers would hike out early the next morning. They would inform park rangers of my situation while the third EMT remained with me until assistance arrived.

Early the next morning the two departed as planned. Mid-morning a park ranger, having hiked pretty much the same path as I, arrived. She too had seen my pack as well as trails of blood that I had left from minor cuts caused by plant thorns. She assured me that she would notify the park service of the position of my pack, and it would probably be available at some future date at the park lost and found. Clearly, at this point the pack was the least of my worries but it was comforting to know that it may not be lost forever.

The ranger established contact with the park emergency services, and I was presented with my next decision. Should I attempt to hike out up Hermit Trail with the ranger. or was I requesting evacuation? There is no doubt that I wanted to complete what I had started and gloriously hike out to the hordes of admirers who were surely lining the streets - OK, maybe I was still delirious. After consideration, I said to the ranger, “I have made two bad decisions on this trip, and I am not going to make a third.” Whereupon, I requested evacuation. (I recognize many readers respond to my assertion that I made two mistakes with, “Only two??!! - are you kidding me? Have you even read what you wrote?”) After a short helicopter ride, I was

taken by ambulance to the park clinic where I underwent extensive care. After over five hours of intravenous liquids and three blood tests, I was released for the night to return the next morning for a follow-up exam. The clinic director verified my decision to be evacuated was a sound one and told me, “If you had tried to hike out you would, most likely, have had kidney failure.”

Returning the next morning to the clinic, I was cleared with an admonishment to be sure to have a follow-up exam upon returning home. Upon leaving the clinic, an ambulance driver drove up and said, “Your pack is at our emergency entrance.” And there it was, courtesy of a kind and unknown park ranger with the blessings of the canyon gods.

In all seriousness, at age 70 having undergone two years service in Vietnam, a motorcycle accident and a serious liver “malfunction,” this is the closest I have come to death. It was the extraordinary assistance provided by fellow hikers, incredibly professional and caring rescue and medical park personnel and a national park system which does the Grand Canyon proud that resulted in no less than the saving my life. I am fully aware of that fact and cannot thank them enough.



Whenever you enter any National Park, to remember that the ranger greeting you is representative of a park system and rangers that serve you, your Nation and themselves with honor, dignity and highest order of professionalism.

In 2008 I was an unpaid swamper on a 14-day oar trip. As we prepared to shove off from Lees Ferry, I stood on the riverbank waiting for the paying passengers to board. I took the last available seat in the back of the last boat next to Eric, the most unhappy looking teenager I had seen in years (and since my real job was as a high school principal, I had seen a lot of unhappy teenagers).

I tried, without much success, to get Eric to lighten up. He did, however, open up. He was quick to tell me that he did not want to be on this trip, which was his parents' "stupid idea," and he explained, in detail, why he did not want to have anything to do with his Mom and Dad. When we stopped for lunch Eric made it painfully obvious to everyone that he meant everything he had told me about his parents. I was having bad visions of our first night in camp when his parents were going to insist that he sleep with them.

One of the other two passengers in the boat that Eric and I shared was another teenager, who was traveling with his grandfather, and as we reboarded after lunch I suggested that the two boys sit together up front. Eric continued to try and be miserable, but his new companion (who after four short hours on the river had discovered that this trip was more than worth missing the first week of football practice) made that effort impossible. When we handed the boys two water cannons and suggested that we should attack one of the other boats, Mom and Dad's boat to be exact, Eric finally smiled!

When we got to camp and started to set up, Eric did his best to be miserable again, but when he realized that his Dad was showing off pictures of Eric's water gun attack, Eric relaxed. It was a quite night, and the staff breathed a collective sigh of relief.

For the next few days Eric continued to try and be miserable, but it became harder with each river mile and every hike. On day seven, after jumping Elves' Chasm, Eric casually told me, "My Dad's cool!" And, two days later after a scorching hike to Thunder River, it was Eric helping his exhausted Dad cross Tapeats Creek as they limped back to camp. By the time we got to Pumpkin Spring, Eric was also holding his Mom's hand as the family did a "gravity check" off the ledges.

The night we got off the river, everyone met in Flagstaff for dinner. By this time Eric was eager to eat with his parents and have them put an arm around his shoulder. But he was still a little unhappy -- the trip was over.

I have made my share of trips down the Colorado and I cannot think of a trip without at least one story like this. Seeing what this adventure does for families is one of the great rewards of working on the river. Teddy Roosevelt was right in more ways than he knew when he said of the Grand Canyon, "Keep this great wonder of nature as it is now.... You cannot improve it.... What you can do is keep it for your children, your children's children, and for all who come after you, as one of the great sights which every American, if he can travel at all, should see." Amen to that!



PHOTO © MARK YEARICK

## MY MOST MEMORABLE DAY ON THE COLORADO RIVER

by Donna Ashbaugh

Having rafted the Colorado many years, my husband and I found that memories of our trips blend together, except for Easter week 1996.

Two weeks prior to the '96 trip, the rafting company called with the surprising information that the Department of Interior planned to release water from the Glen Canyon Dam the very week we were scheduled for our annual journey. There were going to be a few days of experimental spring flooding to re-establish the river environment.

"What? Flooding?" I asked with a dry mouth and churning stomach. For someone who is afraid of water, my reaction wasn't surprising. I didn't go on these trips because of whitewater; I accepted that as a necessary evil to experience the splendid beauty and peace of the canyon.

"I guess we could cancel," I said.

"No way," my husband replied. "We're paid in full, packed and ready to go. We can't cancel."

When we arrived at Marble Canyon's airport March 31st, we found we were the only commercial trip leaving that day. Except for scientists and Park Service personnel, we were going to be alone on the river. A sobering thought. There was another surprise; joining us would be a television host and camera man from KSL in Salt Lake City, along with a newspaper reporter and photographer. This might be turning out to be a big deal.

According to the head boatman, the river was running at 45,000 cubic feet per second. The highest I had ever run was 20,000 cubic feet per second. I couldn't imagine 45,000. Of course the 1983 flood, which we missed by only a few months, peaked at about 90,000, but that was beyond my comprehension.

Mild spring weather smiled upon us. But as always, the water was bitter cold, probably around 48 degrees. We rushed through Badger Rapids and neared Ten Mile Rock, which was almost submerged under water. A passenger even stepped out onto it. It was then I wondered what kind of rides Hance, Hermit, Crystal and Lava were going to be. I breathed easier after making up my mind that I could walk around those rapids. I forgot that high water might cover any terrain by which I could do that. Rumors spread among the passengers. Even the boatmen hadn't much of an idea of what we would be facing.

The third day, "White Knuckle Day," soon became my most memorable because of three events.

Early that day when we arrived at the Little Colorado, the quiet astounded us. The calm, magical, turquoise water wasn't anything like we had seen before. It was as if ancient Native Americans were whispering to us and allowing us to enter their enchanted land. Our boats moved up the Little Colorado (we'd never done that before) and made it about a half mile up the silent water. You should have heard the "ooohs" and "ahhhs." The Little Colorado usually runs dirty and full of silt in the spring, reminding me of weak chocolate. This time the ethereal, ice-blue water was a vision I'll never forget.

After the Little Colorado, we needed to hurry downriver so we would encounter the largest rapids during the middle of the day when the sun was high in the sky. We made it through Horn Creek and Hermit, whose huge waves always scared me, then to Crystal Rapids where the second

memorable event occurred.

Crystal looked even rougher than I remembered. The guides stopped to scout the rapids like the old days and cautioned everyone to pay attention and hold on tight. The first boat headed out and approached the tongue of the rapids. But it went too far to the right I thought. A wave crested over the right side of the raft. One of our friends, no stranger to rafting, began to slip over the side. His brother, who was also a veteran rafter, grabbed him before he could enter the water. However, the knight in shining armor dislocated his shoulder. Ironically, several years earlier, their father (also on our '96 trip) was helicoptered out at Phantom after dislocating his elbow on Hance Rapids.

As for me, I was quite grateful I was on the second boat. Our guide had no trouble negotiating his planned run and we hardly got wet.

The boatmen secured the rafts and pulled out the radio to contact the Park Emergency Service. The television cameraman turned on his camera and light and the reporter took notes. Our pained passenger suffered ten more miles of rapids (Sapphire, Turquoise and Ruby to name a few) until we reached Bass Camp to wait for the helicopter. When it arrived, the emergency crew made the patient as comfortable as possible and took off. We couldn't believe that out of all our trips the only people who had to be airlifted out on two separate occasions were a father and son with similar injuries occurring only about twenty miles apart. It did make interesting footage for the television show.

The third event had nothing to do with rapids, tributaries or injuries and occurred at night at Stone Creek.

"Donna, want to see the comet?" Our injured, missing passenger's father offered me a pair of binoculars and pointed to the darkened sky full of diamond-like sparkles. The moon hadn't yet appeared.

I had read about the Hale-Bopp Comet but had no expectation of ever seeing it. Hale-Bopp first appeared in 1995 and became visible by telescope and binoculars in March 1996 in the northern hemisphere. It wouldn't reappear for hundreds of years.

At first I couldn't find it as I looked through the high-powered binoculars, but my mentor pointed out geographic points on the rim of the silhouetted canyon wall. "I see it," I shouted. What a thrill, my first and last comet, looking like it was standing still—a bright ball with a bridal-like veil trailing behind it. I had seen shooting stars many times but never a comet.

After that day, it didn't take long for me to conquer my fear of high water and realize the worst was over. As a result I was able to notice benefits of high water: Although many campsites were under water, we were able to have our pick of new and enhanced campsites. Because high water levels caused the river to run fast, we made excellent time and pulled into camp earlier most days, which allowed us to relax and hike before dinner. In addition, we were able to spend much more time hiking to the falls at Saddle Canyon, traversing the majesty of Matkatamiba and playing around in Havasu's beautiful waters.

Yes, we've had many memorable days on our river trips, but that day on the 1996 trip is still at the top of our list.

## Goodbye Canyon

By Mark Yearick

Your guide  
Still moist  
With Colorado River water  
Explained the wonders of your history  
And the mystery  
Of the Great Unconformity  
Where the Tapeats  
Meets the Vishnu Schist  
Lost a billion years in the mist.  
In the midst of all that enormity  
I miss your flow  
And the Muav Limestone

## The Last Night

By Maudie Solomon, 2007

I hear the noise upriver  
Where the dreaded "Lava" roars.  
I'm watching  
As the big big moon  
Moves swiftly  
From one high rim  
To hide behind the rim beyond,  
On the other side of the gurgling water.  
I reach my hand up high  
To pick a star from The Little Dipper.  
The stars seem closer here  
In this dark and dear place.  
And here, God speaks to me.  
In this vast silence,  
In this deep darkness,  
I thank Him for showing me  
His awesome creation.

## Will

by Jeffrey Morgan, 2003

When I die grant one last wish  
Return me to the birds and fish  
Please let me run the river just once more  
Let me rest upon the canyon floor

To all the runners who showed the way  
It is a great depth of respect that I pay  
Among them I will proudly lay  
To spend my final earthen day.



PHOTO © MAUDIE SOLOMON

## From the National Park Service

Through the Draft EIS, the NPS is proposing a plan for managing helicopter and airplane tour flights over Grand Canyon National Park. These flights currently carry more than 400,000 visitors above the canyon each year. Like all other uses in the park, air-tours play an important role in visitor enjoyment. But without better, more thoughtful management, air-tour flights can interfere with the enjoyment of visitors on the ground. Air-tour flights also affect the soundscape and other park resources of Grand Canyon's 1,902 square miles.

Four alternatives are evaluated in the Draft EIS including a no-action alternative and three action alternatives, including the NPS Preferred Alternative. All alternatives apply to aircraft operating in Grand Canyon's Special Flight Rules Area, and would continue to exempt operations in support of the Hualapai Tribe from annual allocations and daily caps.

Key provisions of the NPS Preferred Alternative include:

- Increasing restoration of natural quiet in the park from 53% to 67%, by reducing aircraft noise in the park.
- Allowing for 65,000 air-tour and air-tour related operations annually (8,000 more air-tour flights above what was reported by air tour operators).
- Provides long and short loop air-tour routes, with a seasonal shift in short routes at six month intervals.
- Moves most non air-tour operations outside of the park.
- Moves routes away from many sensitive cultural, natural and visitor use areas.
- Sets a daily cap of 364 flights classified as air tours (50 air-tour flights more than what was reported for a peak day in 2005 – the base year for analysis in the Draft EIS).
- Increases flight altitudes near North Rim viewpoints.
- Reduces routes in Marble Canyon.
- Requires full conversion to quiet technology, also known as QT aircraft, within 10 years.
- Provides at least one hour of quiet time before sunset and after sunrise every day.
- Makes no changes to the four existing general aviation flight corridors.
- Raises flight free zone ceilings to 17,999 feet.

"We are now asking for the public's input on this important Draft EIS", stated Jane Lyder, Acting Superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park. She added, "Results of this planning process will guide future management of air-tour flights in the vicinity of Grand Canyon National Park. We appreciate the public's interest in this and other issues facing the park, as public involvement is integral in achieving the best plan."

The Draft EIS can be found online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca> by clicking on the project name, and then scrolling to "Open for Public Comments."

Written comments can be submitted online at the same Web address (the preferred method), mailed to Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, Attention: Office of Planning and Compliance, P.O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023, or provided at one of the public meetings. Comments will be accepted through June 20, 2011.

PHOTO © MARI CARLOS





preserving public access to the colorado river

[www.gcriverrunners.org](http://www.gcriverrunners.org)

P.O. Box 1833, Flagstaff, AZ 86002

Prst Std  
US Postage Paid  
Permit #110  
Medford, OR

## GCRRA DIRECTORS

*Mari Carlos*

*President*

*Los Angeles, CA*

*Pam Whitney*

*Vice President, Treasurer*

*Flagstaff, AZ*

*Kristen Ross*

*Phoenix, AZ*

*B. Dwight Sherwood*

*Founding President*

*Phoenix, AZ*

*Tim Bell*

*Lynden, WA*

*Catharine Cooper*

*Publications/Web*

*Laguna Beach, CA*

*Linda Kahan*

*Olympia, WA*

*Robert McConnell*

*Washington, D.C.*

*Jan Taylor*

*Secretary*

*Arcadia, CA*



PHOTO © MARI CARLOS

Grand Canyon River Runners Association  
is a 501(c)3 organization

## CALLING ALL RIVER RUNNERS!

YOUR LITERARY AND

ARTISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS CAN BE SHOWCASED  
IN THE NEXT GCRRA NEWSLETTER

Send us your journal entries, poetry, postcards from the canyon, humorous stories, photos, and original art work for publication in the next newsletter or on the GCRRA website. Electronic submissions are preferred.

EMAIL materials to : [gcriverrunners@gmail.com](mailto:gcriverrunners@gmail.com)

Technology challenged? Mail your contributions to P.O. Box 1833, Flagstaff, AZ 86002. If you need more information your question will be routed to the Editor.

Submission deadline for the SPRING Issue is  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2011

## GCRRA T-SHIRTS



Sizes - S, M, L, XL, & XXL  
Color - Natural

Only \$20 (XXL = \$22)  
INCLUDES SHIPPING & HANDLING

SEND CHECK AND ORDER INFORMATION TO:  
GRAND CANYON  
RIVER RUNNERS ASSOCIATION  
PO BOX 1833, FLAGSTAFF, AZ 86002

ORDER NOW TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT  
AND SHARED CONNECTION TO  
THE GRAND CANYON RIVER COMMUNITY.