

The Confluence

The Journal of Colorado Plateau River Guides

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The Confluence

...wants to be the quarterly journal of Colorado Plateau River Guides. CPRG is a 501(c)(3) river and guide advocacy organization.

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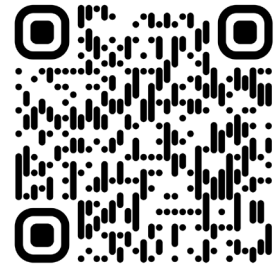
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Front Cover: Herm Hoops working as a Park Ranger at Cape Hatteras in 1975.

Back Cover: A Hatch S-Rig/Raft flotilla parked near Lathrop Canyon at low water.

The Prez Sez...

I hope this message finds everybody safe and healthy. It has been an interesting season. The spring opening was largely squashed by the pandemic that swept through the planet. The pandemic caused closures to river sections and in turn impacted many guides and outfitters livelihoods. It seems there has been an array of different outcomes for most people. Once river sections opened up, some went full bore into the season, others took a dampened approach and some never opened. We hope everyone, no matter their decisions, stays safe and comes back next year. Here at CPRG, we decided to not follow up with any events due to the obvious risks of meeting in large groups. We did however want to make sure that the Confluence continues to be published. Issue 30 is largely based around a character some of you may know, and if you don't, we hope this is a good introduction. Herm Hoops, has been a relentless supporter of all things river related. He continues to push local, state, and national leaders to think critically and act boldly in consideration of rivers on the Colorado plateau. His recognition and defense of the intrinsic value of these ecosystems and experiences should not go unappreciated in his life's work. He has been a long time supporter of CPRG. He served on the board as a representative for Dinosaur and Vernal area, and continues to pay his dues (even though we don't take them anymore).

Since I assumed the role as the chair of CPRG he has pushed and critiqued me, but always from a place of wanting to see CPRG succeed. I have enjoyed over the last year and half, the chance to get to know him better, through our emailing, and sharing of news about the river, and other stories. While reading his oral history, I found an interesting connection through sharing a foundational river. My family's "river running" roots can be traced back to the Connecticut river and its tributaries, where Herms river story begins. The oral history in Issue 30 was done by Robert Tubbs, and again, we thank him for his support and dedication to that project. It is a monumental task to arrange, record, transcribe, compress, and edit these conversations. We intend to continue to bring you more in the future. We are always open to suggestions and encourage our readers to email us with stories, events, book reviews, and any other plateau related stuff you would like to see included in future editions of the Confluence. Stay involved!

Colin Evans

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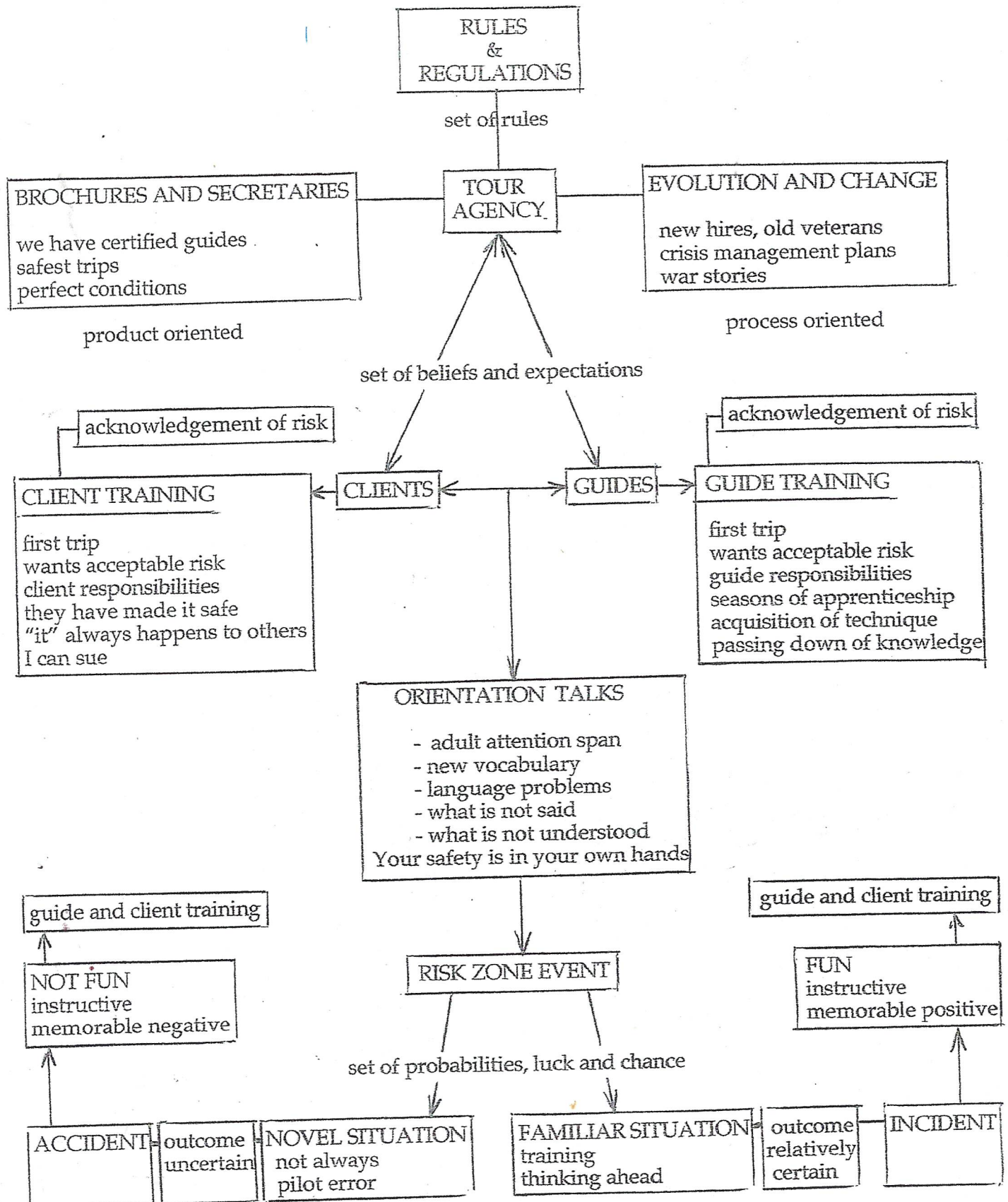
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Noise Pollution in the U.S.



RULES, EXPECTATIONS and RISK by Bego

"I love flow charts," said Winslow. This flowchart was made before computers. No pixels, no chalk. In the late 80s when "River Rescue" classes were becoming a necessary part of the greater scene, I drew this out to in an attempt to show the incoming folks what all the pieces were and how they fit together. This is version 56.9B as I had many people help build this chart. I'm not sure I would change anything even today. Would you??



HERM HOOPS

This Oral History is composed from an interview with Herm Hoops by Robert Tubbs at Herm's home in Jensen, UT on January 17, 2019. It was a cold and snowy day, but that didn't dampen Herm's zest for life and the river. He grew up in Vermont and began making sojourns out west to float rivers while at the University of Vermont. He eventually found his way into the National Park Service where his assignments included Washington DC, Montana, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, the Denver Regional Office, and finally Dinosaur National Monument; all the time continuing to do river trips whenever and wherever he could.



In 1996 he decided to leave the NPS and took an early retirement. That is when his second career as all around boating guru took off. He was a regular at River Runner's Transport in Vernal for nearly 20 years and devoted more time to oneway boatworks, his inflatable repair business. Eventually he left River Runners and joined Holiday River Expeditions primarily as a driver. In 2017 he was diagnosed with cancer and has been fighting the good fight while still repairing a few boats and driving when he is able. He knows his time is short but he presses on with river conservation and management issues at an amazing pace.

Herm is a packrat of the digital age. He has collected and cataloged numerous early river trips and personal river trip accounts, historical photos, river management documents, and historical info of the non-commercial and commercial river industry development. His crowning achievement has to be the compilation of detailed histories of nearly every company that ever produced an inflatable boat - most of it in digital format. These histories of inflatable boat manufacturers are now housed at the University of Utah's J. Willard Library Utah River Running Archives. He developed a strong ethos for giving back to the places and sport he loves and he has accomplished this in spades. (The complete interview is available on the CPRG website)

Tubby: What's one of your best river stories?

Herm: Actually I wound up getting trapped in the ice down in Labyrinth-Stillwater around the bicentennial year, so it was either '75 or '76. It had to be like November and the only thing that saved me is the White Rim Trail. I got up to the trail and was able to walk back to Mineral Bottom.

Tubby: How far down river were you?

Herm: Oh, maybe twelve miles. I was in no hurry. I had a friend who was going to pick my truck up and I noticed at night there was this weird sound in the river. It started out really low. I thought it was wind blowing through trees or something. SHHHHHHHHHH...

Tubby: Slush.

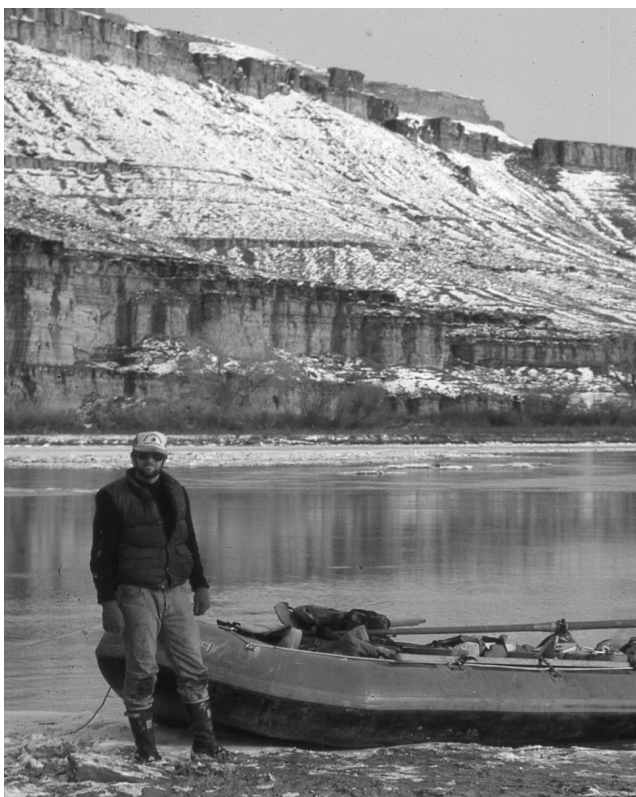
Herm: Yeah. (laughter) But then the big one was in the spring of 1988. There was a maintenance guy working in Dinosaur, Andy. Andy wanted to go down Deso [Desolation and Gray Canyons]. The way I used to do this before the internet is I'd call up a friend, such as Scott Chew or somebody here in Jensen that I knew, and ask them if the ice has gone out... most of the time I'd call somebody from the monument. Then I'd call up Ray's down in Green River and say, "Hey is there any ice coming down the river?" If they said no, I'd look what the temperature's been like the last few days. I'd go, "Okay the ice is out. We can go." Then I'd race to Sand Wash from wherever the hell I was; Gateway in New York, Denver, or wherever. For this trip I had to chain up to get into San Wash. Usually I launched at Ouray and that's a really pretty section of the river that's overlooked. We had a hard time getting in there. My ex-wife and kids drove us in, and there were little bit of chunks of ice coming down the river but I didn't pay any attention to it. Andy and I get in the boat and we're firing up, pounding down cookies and fudge and coffee and stuff, and goddamn we get down around Nine Mile - Mini Maude and there's like a little ice shield across the river. So we tried to push... I had a motor... a little two horse motor and I was going to push through it.

That didn't work so we de-rigged and carried around. I think there's a photo in there of us carrying the oars or something around - only about fifty yards. We're going down the river and, "Wow, that was like crazy man, let's get stoned." (laughter) And we get down to Sumner's Amphitheater and I'm looking and it's like, "Oh, my god! There's like a lot of ice there!" (more laughter). Like an idiot I tried to ram... I mean, I don't know what was going through my head with that little two-horse powered motor, and we get stuck in the middle of the river. I've got jeans on or something like that and we're just not dressed for that. I mean, we had stuff in the dry bag but now it's like we got a problem we've got to solve here. We were pounding the ice with the oar handles and pushing off the bottom with them. I'd get out and pull and I'd break through the ice, and I learned something in that. I took my shoes off to try to keep my shoes dry. So I'm standing on what I thought was a sandy bottom and all of the sudden the bottom starts going... tilting. The sand would slide off. So I figured out, I ain't a geologist, what would cause all those sand bars at Sumner's because the channel was pretty straight; it's not braided or anything. The ice jams up and the silt, as it slows down behind the dam, drops out in any underwater ice. And when that ice starts moving and tilting, it drops its load of sand just like a dump truck. Anyhow we get the boat over to river left and we run down for a look; as far as we can see is ice. And now it's building up really big. It's piled up on top of itself. We're like, "Oh my god. We're on the wrong side of the river!" (laughter). So we struggled and got back to the other side, pulled the boat up on the shore, drug it upstream about 100 yards, put it back in the water, motored back up, oh maybe a half or quarter of a mile. It was time to walk so we started going through everything. Everything had to be voted on and approved by both of us. There could be no... so we made piles of definitely going (like our dry bags), maybe, and definitely not. We went through this process. We'd launched very early in the morning. I had no idea; maybe my wife didn't even make it out. The snow was so deep going in. We voted on things and he voted no on cigarettes.

But when he wasn't looking, I put two packs of cigarettes in my pocket. But the son of a bitch, I voted no on his camera because I was leaving my camera there and he took his camera. So we get loaded up. We got our dry bags on. We're using wet booties, you know, with the liners in them because we knew we were going... the goal was to climb up to Nine Mile, get to the Wrinkles Road, and go over to Nine Mile, to the road there, and hopefully they kept that open during the winter. You know, run into somebody. Well, by god, we got up about the level of the landing strip[a 700' elevation gain] and the snow was almost waist deep. We just couldn't do it anymore. So we're looking around and I see a pile of stones. Looked like a TV antenna sticking out of it. And a bunch of years ago I'd seen that, so I knew that that was near the airport. So now we drop back down. We cross over... as we're going there I'm like, "Yeah, I think I saw that a bunch of years ago." Who's to say there weren't like two of them or fifty of them or... (laughter). I didn't remember exactly what it looked like and we get over there and sure enough it was the airport, but now it's dark and we got to try and find our way down the airport trail in the dark in waist deep snow. Right where the sign now says, "Entering the Portal of Desolation Canyon," we made camp. We scrounged up a bunch of grease wood, and my wife had precooked a bunch of stir fry that had pineapple in it and rice so we ate that cold. My first-aid kit had like 24 oxycodone in it. I figured if I get a blister, I'd take lots of codone until I...

Tubby: ...'til it doesn't even matter. (laughter)

Herm: We didn't have sleeping bags. We pulled the dry bags up over our legs and we had space blankets because we were figuring this would be a long haul. I remember, just after we'd gotten our piles separated out, this is what we're taking; this is what we're not taking. We voted on it. There was a huge boom like the ice was going out. I remember Andy turning towards the river and he goes, "Don't change your mind now Herm. Not a good thing to change your mind now. We've made our minds up. Let's stick to the plan."



So I'm laying there like shivering and finally I couldn't hold it anymore and I said to Andy, "Andy, you awake?"

"Yeah."

I said, "You cold?"

He said, "Yeah."

I said, "If we're going to die of hypothermia, we may as well die on the hoof."

So we get up. Well, we'd taken an oxycodone before we went to bed and we had set our socks and gloves and stuff up around the fire to dry them out, but neither one of us remembered to put them away and they were frozen like steel. (laughter) So we had to get those warm. And finally we hit the road and it was like snowing on us. But it was that river snow from the fog I think. I had noticed when we drove in that there was a Ute sheepherder at that second set of corrals on the way out.

But I also noticed that he did not have much wood there which meant he probably wasn't going to be around very much longer. So our goal was to try and get to there. Sure enough we popped out and could see where we needed to go but you can't go straight across because of...Swoosh, Swoosh, Swoosh.

Tubby: Yeah, it's up and down across the drainages.

Herm: Yeah, so we're going along the road and finally this Ute sheepherder sees us. He looks at us like this is an everyday thing. It's like, these two men look like they're Martians. (laughter) "Yeah, I've seen that before!"

I know a few words of Ute, my mom's on the reservation, so I have inside on some things. I was like, "mikwush, mikwush." He starts babbling to me in Ute and I'm like, "No, no, no. You don't understand. I don't understand everything, man." So we finally get him to understand - he can speak English. "We need a ride. My friend's not feeling good. We'll pay you."

He's like, "I can't do that. I have to take my sheep... but go talk to my Mexican. Maybe he'll do that for you."

So the camp was not very far away, maybe two hundred yards. We're walking over there and I said to Andy, "You speak Spanish, don't you Andy?"

He goes, "Yeah."

I said, "I think you better handle this one and just be aware, this Mexican, he's driving us to Myton or it is going to be homicide and grand theft auto. (laughter) So the Mexican didn't want anything to do with us. So I let up a cigarette and all of the sudden his eyes went up like this. And he's like, "Man, can I have one of your cigarettes?"

And I'm like, "Yeah, sure, you wanna drive us to Myton? I have another pack I'll give you..." I don't know why I took like fifty dollars on that trip. I never take that much money on the river. So the deal was we would give him twenty dollars down, fund him with cigarettes, and when he got us to Myton, we would give him the pack and thirty dollars; I'd also send his Ute Indian another fifty dollars. So that's a pretty good day's work, you know, in '88. God, and we get to the first oil well and he stops the truck. We're like, "What are you doing?"

He's like, "I can't go. I have no gas."

I'm like, "Don't tell me that, man." Now, nobody comes out here without gas especially anybody with half a brain. So he got pissed with me because I gave him two cigarettes and ten dollars. I mean he only took us like maybe ten miles. And there we were. It's still pretty early in the day though. I mean, it's like maybe one o'clock in the afternoon. And here comes this oil worker. He's got a flat tire so we help him change his tire. It's his last spare. And he says, "As soon as I get done checking this well, I'll drive you to Myton." So he drove us to Myton right up to the restaurant. Went to the pay phone, put money in and called my ex-wife up, and she and Andy's wife were just walking out of the house to go down... they were going to go down to Arches to spend the day and the next day they'd pick us up in Green River. She said, "Where are you guys?"

I said, "We're over in Myton."

"Myton? How did you get to Myton?"

I say, "It's a really long story. You don't want to hear it now."

So Andy had like, I don't know, maybe ten dollars left over and I had some money left over from the phone call and the Ute.



We bought two milkshakes and two hamburgers and fries and I bet we each used two bottles of ketchup. (laughter) So that's the story of the great... and so that spread throughout the Uinta Basin. I mean, I would see Tom Kleinschnitz, Lynn and Marty down in Westwater weekend after weekend, especially when I was in Denver... so people started saying, "If Hoops tells you a story, you better not bet against him because he has a picture of himself naked under the Lunar Landing Module. Don't bet him on it!" (laughter)

Tubby: So what time of year was that? Was that in March?

Herm: Yeah that was early March. I've been down there every month but December and January. Now that I live here, I mean...

Tubby: Let's go back to growing up. Where did you grow up? How'd you get on the first river trip - all that kind of stuff?

Herm: I was born in New York State, but I grew up in Vermont. We had farms in both states. We milked between 40 and 60 registered Ayrshire cattle and we had Morgan horses. I had a rowboat on the pond. I just liked to go down there and row around in the rowboat. Then my mom taught me how to canoe. And I did a lot of canoeing back there.

Tubby: Was this just day stuff or did you do some overnighthing?

Herm: No, well, on occasion we'd do... like on the Connecticut River one overnight, but back then there were a lot of old wooden dams left from the log drives. So I mean there was a lot of portaging involved. A lot of that's changed now. I wasn't really hooked on it. It was just something to do.

Tubby: How's a wooden dam work for... are they pooling and dropping?

Herm: Yeah, they're holding the water back, and then they had logs in the river and they'd take dynamite and blow those dams. They leak like shit; I mean there's water running right through them, but they hold a considerable amount of water back.

Tubby: Okay, so it creates a pool that they can collect their logs in and then when they're done, they just blow it?

Herm: They blow it and it runs down to the next dam and they blow that and...

Tubby: Huh. I had no idea.

Herm: My great grandfather and my real grandfather that's what they did. They worked in the woods during the winter time and also drove logs down the Beaver Kill, East Branch, and Delaware Rivers to Philadelphia. Afterward they'd usually return with no money, maybe a little bit of fabric, game, or something for my great grandmother.

Tubby: Your first trip?

Herm: So in 1965, I was sitting in the fraternity house. I'm at the University of Vermont. I saw this thing on the Grand Canyon. You know, back in the 60's you could do anything. I mean there were very little camping fees. You want to rock climb, you went to REI. I think my REI number is like 5,300 or something in that area. So I thought, "Yeah, I could do that." I went down to the local hardware store and I bought one of those yellow canvas life rafts. Spring of '66, I drove out and put it in on the Snake River through Grand Teton and also down through Lunch Counter. I started coming out every spring and doing trips we didn't need permits for. I did the Main Salmon in the little yellow raft eating beans and sitting on a navy bag...

Tubby: ...just by yourself.

Herm: My wife usually went along with me. We'd hitchhike back to the car which could take a week or more sometimes. I was teaching in northern Vermont. I didn't really have the summers off because I was teaching vocational agriculture and forestry. I started getting hooked on it, you know. One day I stopped in at Sid's Sports in Salt Lake and Sid had a Udisco raft on sale. That was probably around 1971 or so.

Tubby: You were on one of these trips from Vermont.

Herm: Yeah, I would come out from Vermont every spring and do two or three weeks out here and run every river I could find. I was mostly up in Idaho, Oregon and Montana because there were trees there; it felt like home.

Tubby: So you did the Middle Fork...

Herm: Yeah and the Main Salmon...

Tubby: Snake?

Herm: Selway, Snake through Hell's Canyon and, like I said, the other part below Jackson, WY with Lunch Counter on the Snake... I can't even remember the name of the town... American Falls to Minidoka NWR... kind of a spot that... no real rapids in it but a nice little canyon. Interstate 86 crosses it; the Coeur d'Alene River and the Spokane River through Spokane. But yeah, I did a lot of those rivers and a couple in Colorado... err no... in California.

Tubby: Did you do any in Montana like the Smith, or...

Herm: ...I didn't do the Smith... uh I did the Yankee Jim Canyon on the Yellowstone. Oh, the one by the dam... um, the Madison.

Tubby: These were all in your little uh...

Herm: Many of them started out that way - many in the Udisco. It was an eleven footer. After I'd bought it from Sid in Salt Lake, I headed up to Idaho to run um... up by Couer d'Alene, the Couer d'Alene and St Joe Rivers. I didn't like the life jackets I had, so I stopped in and bought PFD's from Bill Parks at Northwest River Supply. I was one of his first customers at NRS. I bought two Mae West life jackets. It was kind of one of those things when I started out it was for the "Yahoo, I'm a big shot. Look at me!" I could go back and sit around at the local store in Cornwall, Vermont and tell stories.

Tubby: About your big adventures out west.

Herm: Yeah, yep, yep.

Tubby: Any harrowing moments out there... by yourself?

Herm: I'll show you some pictures... In Orleans, Vermont, the Willoughby River goes through there and it falls about 55 or 60 feet in maybe an eighth of a mile.

Tubby: That's good gradient.

Herm: I started running that and I was lucky enough or foolish enough to make it the first couple of times. Then one year my friend Scott Warthin... I ended up doing a lot of trips with him and his son Daniel. The ice was going out and we went over the first drop, and we had to make a ninety degree turn. We were using paddles and the boat had filled up above the falls. We hadn't even gone a mile and the boat was full of water. We had all these... I'm dressed in hunting pants and hunting shirt, you know, and that kind of thing. He had a wet suit on. I had never heard of such a thing. We stood in the icy river and tipped the boat to get the water out above the falls because we'd lost our bailing bucket. This was one of the first lessons that Herm Hoops had... I said, "You know, Scott..." There were about a hundred people down at the falls - word spreads real fast. "You know, Scott, we don't have to do this today." I mean I'm like... I could barely stand up.

Scott goes, "What else is there to do on a Saturday afternoon?" (laughter)

So, away we went. When we went over the first fall, I got launched out of the back of the boat and went head first into a whirlpool. There were people on the bank timing me. I was under water well over three minutes fighting a big ole chunk of ice about half of the size of that table.

Then I went down a shoot and another fall and by then I was surely hypothermic and I floated by Scott. I was like, "Scott help me." And he jumped back in, pulled me to shore, and the snow was like (gestures) that deep. So now I gotta work my way up to the bank and I collapse on the road. Doc Bonvoular and Doc Gage came down and they put me in the hospital for overnight cause I was on the edge of it. That was my first real taste of hypothermia.

Tubby: So this was in...

Herm: Vermont.

Tubby: ...the Udeathco, your Udisco boat?

Herm: The first couple of times were in the yellow boat, but then it was in the Udisco. Yeah. I've got videos of it. I can't show them to you because I haven't hooked my video player up yet. Yeah, I did that, but again it was all... let me say, it was all about bragging.

This series was taken in 1968 at Willoughby Falls in Vermont.





Herm: Because I was involved with Save the James Bay, the Connecticut River, and things back east... environmental things... you know, you come out west and you look around and say, "What can the threat be - a few cows? What the hell? It's not a big deal, maybe a couple of oil wells here and there except in Gillette or Sinclair Wyoming."

So one time, I think it was 1972, I decided... they were working on the interstate... to come from Denver over here on US Hwy 40. About 7 o'clock that night I was looking for a free place to camp. I headed in on that road that goes to Echo Park. I get in there and I looked down. I was driving an International Scout, four wheel drive, four cylinder engine, and pulling a farm trailer. We go down there and I met the most incredible ranger ever. Normally I try to stay away from them. His name was Frank Buono and we're friends to this day. We've got involved in litigation that went all the way up to the Supreme Court. {google Mojave Memorial Cross, Salazar v. Buono}

Tubby: Wow!

Herm: So I pulled out into the cheat grass by a picnic table, lit up a joint and here comes this ranger walking towards me. I put the joint behind my back and Frank goes, "Um, I see you're smoking a controlled substance."

I was like, "Yeah."

He says, "Well, now I'm going to tell you that it's illegal in federal lands and it's pretty much not a good place in Colorado or in Utah to be doing that like you are. Don't worry, just be cool about it. But the real reason I came over to talk to you was, you drove out on the cheat grass and now there's a track out there and other people are going to follow that track."

I said, "Oh, I'll drive out."

He says, "No, you're here now. When we get up

in the morning we'll get some rakes and stuff. You and your wife can help me and we'll pull a log across where you drove off the road."

I thought to myself, "I've never met a ranger like this." So I stayed; I actually missed my launch date on the Middle Fork because I stayed and talked to him and began to learn about Echo Park Dam, David Brower, Howard Zahniser, and a lot of those people. I was like, "Oh, wow. I'd have never known about Split Mountain, Glen Canyon, Marble Canyon, on and on and on."

When I left there, we drove through Vernal and Naples. Naples especially was like a little Vermont town, big old cottonwoods along the two lane road, little sheep farms and stuff like that. It just reminded me of Vermont, and combined with our drive down into Echo Park, the sun was setting, and I'd never seen anything like that. That glow. That light off the rocks bouncing around. When I went home, I told my dad that I was going to quit my teaching job and I was going to be a ranger at Dinosaur National Monument. That's how stupid I was about the reality of life.

So, I kept coming out. Learning more, learning more. I did my first job with the Park Service as a garbage picker on the Mall in D.C. I was a political appointee. Every chance I got, like when we went to the museums... when I worked down in the Guadalupe Mountains... I mean, we didn't have a lot of stuff but I'd take my raft with me. Well in 1972, you have to understand, I mean, I may be off a year here and there. It does fade into a blur. I used to keep journals but they were all on Word Star.

Tubby: I remember Word Star.

Herm: Transferred them over... and it's like all these codes and... I said to hell with it. From there we drove out here and did the Yampa.

Tubby: Did you need a permit?

Herm: Yeah.

Tubby: You just filled it out or...

Herm: ...Yeah, yeah. I had written the park and said I had met Frank the year before... I wrote the park and got this letter back and it's like, "I don't mean to cast dispersions on our Echo Park Ranger who's from the east, but it's a difficult, tricky river to run, dah-du-dah-du-dah-dah". Again, Mr. Buffoon head, you know. So I got this thing in my mind that I could write a book about river running. Still arrogant, you know. Lodore was running about 18 thousand during the peak of the dam - the overrides back then. As I entered Upper Disaster Falls, the downstream oar hit a rock and came off the pipe. At that water level there's a hell of a hole on the right side of Disaster Falls and I got sucked into it. (laughter) Sideways! And over we went! That was my second experience. I had brought everything I could find with me, all kinds of stuff: letters, maps, Red Cross information, REI stuff and I might have worked on this book when I wasn't on the river. So I get down to... I roped every rapid. Put a rope on my boat, pushed it out, went down and pushed it out, even Greasy Pliers. That's how freaked I was. So another lesson; it was a lesson but a lesson in a different kind of way. As I was roping/lining down Greasy Pliers income these three beautiful Avon boats. They looked like a finished carpenter had put them together. I mean they were spar varnished and little compartments, and all kinds of stuff, and I'm roping my boat down the shore and this guy comes up about this far away and started taking pictures of my face - of the guy who was going to be bragging about his summer running rivers. I had quit my job and I came out here to run every river I could find.

Tubby: Your wife was with you?

Herm: Yeah, to this point. And here's this guy taking pictures of me. Whiles we got talking... his name was Bill McGinnis and he was writing a book for his master's thesis out in California. To jump ahead, that winter I had built a cabin in Vermont and was living in it... it was off the grid, propane lights and refrigerator, a big old number 10 station heater, pot bellied stove... And I would send letters out to people and I get this letter, this was during the oil embargo, whatever year that was. I get this letter from Bill McGinnis who wants me to go down and run the New, Cheat, and Gauley Rivers. Each one was a different letter. We're talking about a week or two apart. I mean, Jesus Christ, it took me all day just to fill the gas tank up on my wife's car, running around five dollars here and five dollars there at gas stations. And you want me to go down to West Virginia and they're going to pay me fifty bucks. Oh, and I don't have to worry about English or grammar cause he'll edit it. Cool! I still got the letters and I'd been sending letters out to Hatch...

Tubby: ...So, he wanted you to go do these trips...

Herm: ...So he could put it in his book.

Tubby: ...Put them in his book and have a write up on all the...

Herm: Yeah, yeah. I'd sent a letter out to Hatch and got a nice letter in reply about different rapids and size of boat they recommend, and stupid stuff... I look back now and I'm embarrassed they answered the questions. Well, I was embarrassed because I got a letter from a fellow named B.A. Hanten [Bernard Albert Hanten] out in... .

Tubby: ...from Rogue Inflatables.

Herm: ...Rogue Inflatables. His letter said, "I read the information you sent me and it is garbage. I have to ask you... are you doing this for your own ego or to protect rivers?" Then he kind of went on from there. Oh, I was angry. I wanted to find B. A. Hanten and choke him.

William McGinnis
1811 Tulare St.
Richmond, CA 94805

2/4/74

Mr. Herman Hoops
Box 218
Barton, VT 05822

Dear Herman,

I can't find your new address--so I'm sending this letter to your old address in the hope that it will be forwarded quickly to you.

I've researched and prepared a list of Eastern rivers I'd like you to run. From guidebooks I've gathered considerable information about each run, including put-in, take-out, best time to run, etc. As soon as you send me your present address I'll rush you xerox copies of all this info.

To help with your expenses I'll pay you \$50.00 for each river report I use in the book--the thing is that I'm extremely poor now--so I won't be able to pay you until I make some money on the book, OK?

(Your river reports won't have to be polished--I'll rewrite them if you want.)

May I hear from you soon?

Yours,

Bill

Bill

Tubby: Leave it to B. A. to be blunt!

Herm: Yeah, yeah.

Tubby: That's what the B. stands for!

Herm: Yeah, yeah. You know, I got to know him later on, in a different realm, but I was angry at him. But as time went on and I kept getting these letters from McGinnis, White Water Rafting; it struck me he was right. I really needed to learn something about these rivers. I'd been doing this since '66. This was '72, '73, somewhere in there. Like, I mean it was still kind of hard to find maps. The Powell Society books were helpful but you had to know about them.

Tubby: Right.

Herm: What's his name was making the scroll maps, Bucket-head, Bucket-head Jones, but again it was not like they were advertised in magazines. The Bureau of Recreation put out some nice little maps and oddly enough Desolation Canyon had some nice little maps.

Tubby: That the Bureau had done.

Herm: No, no. I've got them downstairs. The BLM had done - little histories of McPherson Ranch and the river. Things like that.

Now from some experiences of getting my come-uppance by the river, I knew this was not me against the river; it needed to be the river and me together. And I learned that pride is not really a great thing to have in some realms of river running? (laughter) I learned that if I enjoyed doing this, I owe something back. So I started reading everything. I started collecting first edition books.

Tubby: Tell me more about the cabin you built and how that came about.

Herm documents everything. To tell this story he referred to a manuscript he'd written thus there is striking detail here.

Herm: In the fall of 1971, disillusioned with people and teaching I gave away or burned all of my belongings except my river and camp gear. I moved into a tent on the woodland of Arland and Janice Butler in West Glover, Vermont about a mile from their house by road and a quarter of a mile into a bowl surrounded by maples and fir, the woodland. There like Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha I searched for meaning, and place. Fall was delightful, with a night campfire and simple living. In the tent was a Sealy Posturepedic mattress, Eddie Bauer down sleeping bag with a fleece liner, pillow, Coleman stove and lantern, cheap ice chest to keep things from freezing solid, limited pots, and pans as well as some possibles. I walked/snowshoed to the Butler house every morning to dress, drive school bus and teach. Every night I went back to Butler's house, changed cloths and walked back to the tent, sometimes in snowshoes. By November my tent was covered with snow. That year was one of the coldest and deepest snowfalls on record, but I was happy. I had few possessions, owed no one, and depended on no one... although by March I was looking forward to spring. My life was about to change.



On April 26, 1972 I dove into the deep end of a swimming pool in Stowe, Vermont and my head struck bottom. I could not move, and I nearly drowned. After some friends pulled me from the pool I eventually made my way, with some help, to the hospital in Morrisville. I had broken C2-4, although the nerves had not been completely severed I was paralyzed. I had gone from total and complete independence to total and complete dependence in an instant. After two months of stabilization I was moved to the University Hospital in Burlington. In an interesting twist of fate, my old college roommate and fellow collegian athlete Rick Houle was one of the Neurosurgeon interns! After another month the operation to restore my neck & nerves succeeded. By September I was back teaching, with a stern medical warning: no sleeping on the ground and no dangerous activities. I quit my job in May and headed west to run rivers for seven months.

By March 1973 I returned to my folks farm in Cornwall, VT and on my 20 acres built a log cabin completely by hand (except for the chainsaw and tractor!).

In December 1973, in the snow I began cutting 25,000 cu/ft of white pine (*Pinus strobes*) and about 100 Tamarack (*Larix laricina*, also known as eastern larch). Larch loses its yellowing needles each fall the wood is durable and reddish in color. We took the pine to Charlie Munger's sawmill by Lake Champlain, and traded him 10% of the lumber for sawing it up. We had 24" floorboards, and door jams 4" x 20" wide - some 20 feet long. In the interim I moved an old cut-stone foundation a half mile to the site. That didn't work out well as the basement was wet and muddy from excessive rain that spring. So I traded another half of the pine to a contractor to pour a cement foundation and put in a septic system. In the meantime Frank Bouno (the Echo Park Ranger) and I worked on his cabin in Leister, Vermont and debarking and using an adze to initially flatten two sides of logs. The old-time local neighbors found it interesting and brought us picnic lunches and gave us some great advice. By May I took off for the west and rafting.



Fall of 1974 found us putting in the floor, log walls, homemade windows, roof, a #16 Train Station potbellied stove and an Ashley stove. By December we were chinking with cement, sand and lime - which made one's hands swell up and burned any cuts. The cold caused the chinking to fall out, and depressed I considered burning the whole place down. We changed our approach, with both stoves and a kerosene heater blazing we started at the top of the structure. The cement began to cure in place, and the building began to hold heat as we went lower.

The cabin had a toilet and sinks, water was gathered by a homemade roof gutter that emptied into milk cans. The cans were brought into the house, thawed and poured into the toilet tank or heated on the pot belly stove. We cooked on a combination wood/propane stove. The cabin had no electricity, but used gas lights and kerosene lanterns, candles, etc. for light. My wife and I tried to live independently with a large garden, livestock, saw timber, pulp and a few Christmas trees. We made enough to cover taxes and basic living... but nothing else, and we both wound up taking jobs.

Tubby: What was that article you had?

Herm: It was in the National Model Railroader's Association - NMRA magazine from 1964. And they did an article on Stanton.

Tubby: Okay, 'cause he was wanting to build a railroad...

Herm: ...wanting to build a railroad and I spent a lot of time studying Powell. I mean I got a lot of his first edition books over there and Joseph C. Ives' up river journals. So I spent a lot of time early on studying that stuff. To my way of thinking Robert Brewster Stanton had one successful thing, and he was only partially involved in that, and that was building the Georgetown Loop Bridge over there in Georgetown, Colorado. Pretty much everything else he did fell apart, or people got killed, or you know.

Tubby: What an interesting life that guy had though.

Herm: Oh, yeah, well those times. I mean you can say "when men were men and had beards to prove it" but, by god, think about what Powell and those guys did... climbing up to take barometer readings and getting pitch from pines trees and continuing on with the survey with... you know. People deride Powell about people leaving the trip... I ask them, "Have you ever been on a thirty day Grand Canyon trip? Have you ever been out there for thirty days at a time?"

"Uh, no."

Tubby: They'll be like noooooo...

Herm: You'll see personalities come into play. I did a lot of solo boating because I only had one asshole to deal with. Sometimes I couldn't deal with him!

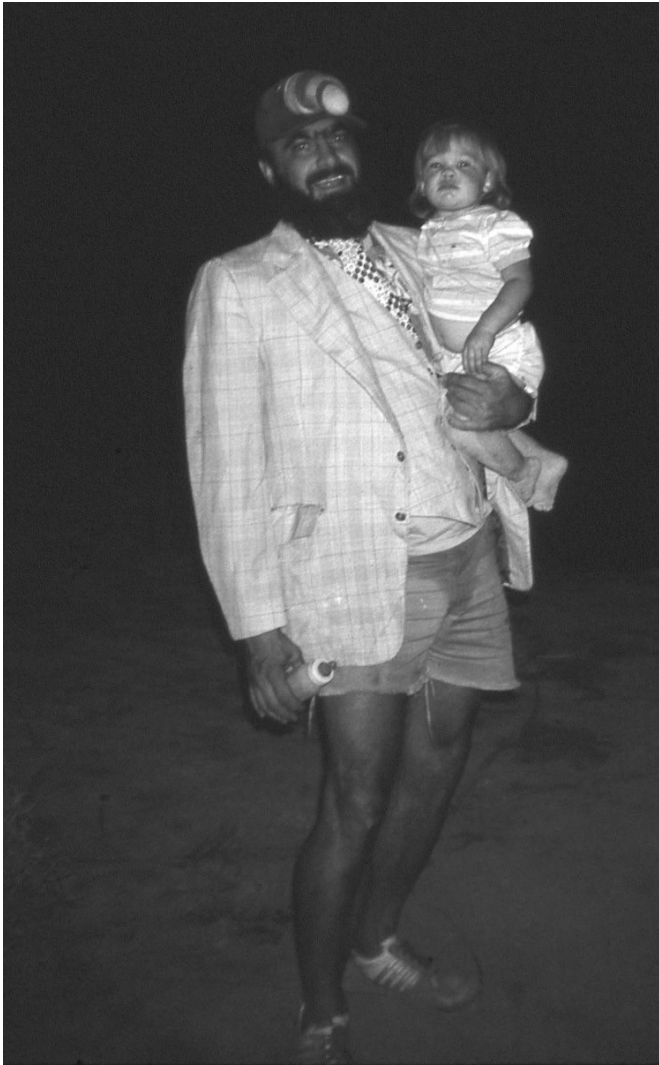
Tubby: Do you have children?

Herm: Yeah I have two. I have a daughter, Gillian Echo, who still lives in Vermont. My son - Hatteras... Val and I pulled into Phantom Ranch at nine a.m. mountain standard time on September 9-2011. I thought the attacks were a joke. But it affected my son so much he joined the army. He's in Special Forces and he's overseas.

Tubby: How did you hear about it at Phantom Ranch? Were people on the beach talking about it?

Herm: Actually there was a boatman who'd gone up to mail postcards and stuff. He heard about it up there. It was just on the news.

Tubby: Did you take your children down the river quite a bit when they were young?



Herm: Yeah. I used to do what was called a birthday trip. First of all, my first trip would be the donut and bacon trip where my primary food would be jelly donuts, pre-fried bacon, Dinty Moore Beef Stew, Chef Boyardee Meatballs and Spaghetti, Ravioli, or something like that. They were both born close together in March and April so a lot of times I'd do a couple Westwater trips with them, but they would plan their birthday trip. Sometimes I'd take them both. Sometimes I'd take them individually. They both have pretty good attitudes.

Tubby: How old were they when you started their birthday trips?

Herm: Hatt's first trip down Desolation was late July – so he was three months old. The way I know this is I was on a Grand Canyon trip and there was a river ranger there, Dave Desrosiers - ex BLM Deso ranger. He looked vaguely familiar to me. There was kind of a serious discussion going on about something; I don't know. I wasn't involved. This river ranger goes, "And who are you?"

And I said, "I'm Denny Huffman from Dinosaur National Monument."

He was thinking about it. "You're Herm Hoops. You took your kid down Desolation... actually it was five months... You took your kid down Desolation when he was five months old. I was the river ranger there. I remember your voice." (laughter)

So that was his first trip and Gill was born. Let's see... January, February, March, April, May, June, July... So Gill was five months old too on her first trip. But every year... like I said sometimes we'd do it - the three of us and sometimes Hatt and I'd do a trip. I'd come home and Gill and I would do a trip. But they got to plan the food, man. If they wanted to have S'mores for four days straight, that's what we had, man, S'mores for four days straight. (laughter)

Tubby: You're a good dad!

Herm: It kind of got to the point where I'd take them over and put them in at Split Mountain when I was monitoring campfires and stuff. My wife Valerie would pick them up at Placer Point. I got two Sea Eagle inflatable kayaks from ARTA when they were over here at Felliniville. You remember that - when they were across the river?

Tubby: Yes it is across the river and out in the bushes. .

Herm: A shithole of a place man.



Tubby: Felliniville? Where's that name come from?

Herm: I have no idea. I don't know. That's what the locals call it. When Outward Bound got out of the sportyak business, Austin Streetman over there gave me two sportyaks. So the kids could have their choice. They kind of liked the inflatable kayaks. So they'd go run that over and over again probably four or five times while I'm auditing a campfire. Val would pick them up and drive them back to the boat ramp and pick them up again. Then it kind of got like we would do a dam trip or the White River or something like that. Then Hatt and I did a White River trip down to Green River. He was so very young then. When he was about twelve, I hadn't been down the White River for a long time but I decided we were going to do the White River.

The Ute tribe had built a really nice take-out down at Ouray. Now I was unaware of what had been going down between the tribe and locals. So without any map, I was just running it from memory. As you approach the Green River confluence you can almost see the Green River from the Ute Ouray boat ramp. We launched out of Bonanza, Utah instead of Rangely, Colorado. First night we camped on this island. Well, it started raining. The water is coming higher and higher and higher. So we wound up getting in the boat – the Selway. It's worse the next day. All of the sudden out of the mist here comes this bridge and it's like way high. I'm thinking, "The Ouray Bridge is low." I'm like, "Where in the hell are we? If this is the Ouray Bridge and we go under it, we're on our way to Sand Wash with zero days supply of food. There's a little bit extra but..." We got up and walked up and down the road, tried to look over there, mud all over our feet. Turns out that was the Mountain Fuel Bridge which had been built between my last time down there and this trip. It was an interesting decision to make. When we got down to the take out the tribe was giving my wife a ticket for... "Why is your husband on the river? What is he doing on the river? Is he fishing? Does he have a fishing license?"

She's like, "No they're just running the river." They couldn't understand that people would just come out and run the river. You must be hunting or fishing or something. So she got a ticket for using the boat ramp without a tribal permit. Back then that was a hundred and some bucks. It's probably a thousand now. But yeah, the White River and then it kind of got to the point where I would put them in... the BLM built that other take out there and I'd put them in at Bonanza and pick them up down at... I can't remember what the name of the take out is but they'd go overnight. Launch at Ouray - pick them up the next day down at Sand Wash. By then they were ten or twelve or so.

Tubby: They'd just go on their own?

Herm: Yeah. My son has done really well. He brought his family over from Germany. We did the San Juan. You know it's really hard when you don't row... if you've rowed a lot; it is like getting back on a bicycle. Takes you a little bit to clean the cobwebs out, but if your boat's balanced and everything is set up right, it comes back pretty quick. But I've noticed that when you don't row a lot, an intermittent boater... say somebody who would go down with me every few years they can be almost dyslexic when they get back in the boat again.

Tubby: They have to relearn.

Herm: Yeah.

Tubby: Do you have any trips planned now?

Herm: Uh, my doctor invited me to go on two trips. There's the adolescent side of me that says, "Yeah, I'm going to try a trip just to see how it works out." And there's the other side of it that says, "You're crazy man. The party's over. You're at your own wake."

I came back after Deso thinking, "I have to get an oar protector for my oar." My stuff is still all painted up down in the garage. Ready to go! Then I go down there and sit and... so I don't... honestly, I don't know. My suspicion is that I won't be going on anymore river trips. It's no... when you hurt and people have to wait on you and you can't contribute... It's not that I... I can still run rapids but so what? It feels like going to somebody's house, eating all their candy, and then have them wipe your ass for you.

Tubby: It's not the same.

Herm: It's not the same. You have to earn it in some way or other. So my goal now is, if I can, is to finish this history project off. I don't know. I'm burned out from fighting the fat heads. It doesn't do any good now anyhow. But, I tell people 'cause I still go over to Holiday... Last year was the first year of my life that I was unemployed other than preparing a few boats. I tell people, "When you get off this river trip, the fact that you can go on this river is an absolute miracle thanks to the people who had the foresight to protect it for you."

Tubby: Tell me about your relationship with Kenny Ross.

Herm: Even then, when I first met Kenny Ross I had no idea who the hell he was. All I know was we got along. He was another one like B. A. - he could be very blunt. Somebody said down there, "Oh I bet he was such a kind and gentle soul," and I was thinking to myself, "Well, he was to me, but I'd seen him not be so kind and gentle to people. (laughter) He would tell you right where the bear went through the buckwheat."

I got to be really close to Kenny in a different kind of way than father/son, employee/employer. I would always look forward to after my trips on the San Juan to go on up to his trailer there. It actually started out like this... I didn't know him at all. He ran a shuttle for me for forty dollars to Clay Hills. I'd never been down the lower part before and he said, "Stop by after the trip. Tell me how your trip was, where you camped and stuff." So I did.

I went in and I said, "Oh we camped at the Pontiac Canyon." (It's that first bend there where somebody pushed a Pontiac car over the thing.) I said, "And then we camped at John's Canyon. It had been a really long day."

"Oh, you probably didn't camp at John's Canyon. You probably camped at False John's Canyon."

I said, "Well, I was watching the guide book pretty close. I'm pretty sure it was John's Canyon."

And he said, "Well, did you see the banded chert around the lip of the canyon?"

I said, "No."

He said, "Well, you know, Herm, a good naturalist ought to notice those things."

So I came back that fall and ran the San Juan and son of a gun, yep, there's a banded chert there. So I go back to Kenny's all proud and he says to me, "Now, did you see the crinoids in the rock there?"

I was like, "No. I didn't see the crinoids."

He says, "Herm, a good naturalist ought to notice those kinds of things."

So this would go on and on and on - John's Canyon was probably a four year adventure. He never told me what... he led me to a place, but let me discover it on my own and it reaffirmed to me... I've helped a lot of people with river guides but I don't like to because, to me, a river guide takes away a person's right to discovery of things, of places, and of one's self. The first time you discover on your own a ruin or a pot the mental battle you go through, you want that. "If I don't take it the government will put it in a store room or somebody else will take it. It will get broken." To do the right thing really adds to your appreciation of that item. When you put everything in a guidebook, it takes away people's right to discover. How can you tell, your first time down a river, if there's been a flash flood. You look at the bank and see if the banks been freshly scoured or... those kinds of things are things you learn that the guidebook can tell you, but until you have experienced them... very meaningless, kind of trite.

So I used to stop in at Kenny's and I knew... it didn't take very long to know that he liked Pabst Blue Ribbon beer and Paul Mall unfiltered cigarettes. So I would buy a couple packs of Pall Malls and a couple six packs of beer and he always had tequila. He had a table there right by the window, and a lot of times he'd be frying chicken or making something on the stove. I was in there one time and we were talking about something; I don't know what it was. All the sudden I realized, man, our heads are getting lower and lower. I looked and I had smoked the whole pack of Pall Malls. I looked up and there was like a cloud of smoke that was in the whole trailer like the thing was on fire or something. I looked over at the stove where he was cooking the chicken and the smoke was just pouring out of that pan. I was like, "Hey, Kenny, I think you might need to go over there and turn that stove off. The chicken's probably pretty well done now." (laughter)

He goes, "Oh, oh, oh, oh." He hobbles over there and he says, "Well, I guess I've burned the chicken."

And I said, "You know what, Kenny? A good cook ought to be aware of those things!" (laughter)

He was kind of grumpy about it. He looked at me and he had a little smile like, "Okay, you got me."

So that was the kind of relationship I had with him. You just don't find that any more. You don't find, like him or not... You don't find the Dee Holladays, the Don Hatches, or the Bob Jones anymore. The beginning and the end; we're sort of the last classes of that period of time where people were real.

I'm sure I got more lies I can tell you, but I can't think them up right now.

Tubby: Well, I think we recorded a few for posterity today.



The Endless River

by Herm Hoops (April 22-28, 2015)

“If you go down round the bend in the river
You’re gonna find a few changes
Been going down there
‘Cause the people who live
Round the bend in the river
Have forgotten their dreams
and they’ve cut off their hair.”

Last Lonely Eagle - John Dawson, New Riders of the Purple Sage

Endless. A River is endless. Spawned in mist and snowmelt of the high mountains, its millions of tiny trickles move downward, trickle upon trickle, through duff and humus and mazes of tangled roots, escaping at times to flow over moss and lichen-grown ledges. Each trickle combining with its neighbors gathering strength into juvenility then falling, foaming and carving into adolescence. As the trickles grow into streams and then more powerful flows, they congregate their energy and begin to make their mark upon the land. Eventually they gather many flowages and little creeks, emerging at last as a river on its way to the sea.

Rivers are endless in their quest to transport mountains, carrying their birthplace in ever and ever smaller pieces to the sea. And there, in the sense of evaporation, they return as moisture to the mountains to renew the cycle. It is like how adrenaline connects our heart with our brain.

We are born of water and our places of provenance, our nurturing in our earliest of existence, are fused in our history - past and present to rivers. We need water to sustain us, to grow our food, to foster commerce, to renew our lives. And so we take water from the endless river, blocking its pathway and reducing its flow and influence upon the land. And for a time it may appear that a river is no longer endless.

But unlike humans and their settlements a river has time, eternal time and eventually the trickles, and their combined powers will reclaim its rightful stature. A river runs day and night, in summer and winter and eventually it will defy our impediments. Being on a wilderness river alone one perceives, from time-to-time, how at some future time we will be held accountable to the decisions we make today. A river is endless, humankind is not.



Val leaving across the Ouray Bridge

Long before sunrise, in that time of morning when coolness lays upon the land, I kiss and wave goodbye to Valerie and drift under the highway bridge at Ouray. Above, on the bridge girders, live colonies of cliff swallows. They make their homes in packed mud clusters that are protected from above and they eat great quantities of insects -mosquitoes. But below each nest, on the steel beams are the white tracings of their acid droppings already corroding the paint and metal. It is a time of overwhelming silence. The sun peeks behind silent, naked cottonwoods, Jackson Pollock-like in an abstract panoply of intense red framed in the darker drip paintings of the trees. Like the Abstract Expressionist Pollock's paintings, the scene seems anxiously aware of human irrationality and vulnerability. The Planet appears to be expressing its concerns in an abstract form that chronicles the ardor and exigencies of our modern life.



The background has changed from gray to light blue, light blue to powder blue, powder blue to cyan, cyan to pink, pink to blood red, blood red to crimson, crimson to scarlet, scarlet to magenta, magenta to pink - and then it is light. Somewhere between crimson and scarlet the morning birds have stirred and begun to call. Marking their territories, seeking a mate... or just making music. I sweep silently past an old heron rookery high in a cottonwood grove. Some of the trees have been undercut by the river flow and lie gasping in the water. High above, massive nests used year after year, sport the heads and necks of blue herons, egrets, night herons and bitterns sizing up this interloper passing under them.



Not long after, somewhere between pink and light a new interloper appears. It is the whine of tires speeding on a distant road and the growl of truck motors. They are headed to rape the land for us. We, in the finest example of Nazi innocence will claim at some later date: "we didn't know, we had no idea." The whines and growls are headed to tap the gas and oil reserves along the Upper Green and the White Rivers, and the bucolic Book Cliffs. Named by river explorer John Wesley Powell's crew in 1869 as Major Powell's Book Shelves because as the party emerged from Desolation Canyon the cliffs of Cretaceous sandstone that cap many of the south-facing buttes and massive blocks of stone reminded them of a giant a shelf of books.

It is a remote, mysterious and surprising place, the largest uninhabited space in the Continental United States. Stretching nearly 200 miles from east to west, the Book Cliffs begins where the Colorado River descends south through De Beque Canyon near Palisade, Colorado to Price Canyon near Helper, Utah. It begins just south of highway U.S.40 in the north and stretches to Interstate 70 in the south.

Here aspen groves sway in the wind and beaver ponds feed the streams. Mountain lions stalk their prey - majestic trophy elk and mule deer. Coyotes lurk, except for their pack-howls, camouflaged through their wit. Wild horses, a last living vestige of the West, lope away from trespassers. The about-to-be endangered sage grouse dance, drumming and strutting, among the sagebrush in spring and pronghorn stand statue-like studying the land. The only sounds, save the whispering winds are the night-cry of a rabbit captured by a coyote, the scream of a wary-eyed eagle perched in a high nest and the other sounds of a complete and complex ecosystem. As the day wanes, and darkness falls upon this land the sky is festooned by an unimaginable display of specks of light - far away stars and galaxies.

A few remote ranches, a throwback to what the west was before barbed wire exist in frozen solitude. Hidden are remnants of the Fremont People - their markings upon the rocks, scattered lithic materials and vestiges of their habitations. Here and there signs of the more recent Ute, cowboy and sheep herder markings on the rocks and trees, the decayed vestiges of homes that people abandoned and a failed railway.

And in this amazing picture are the rocks: goblins and outcrops of sandstone and shales. But there are also rocks containing treasures that humans prize: coal, gilsonite, oil, and gas. Huge reserves of oil and gas are locked in the shales and tar sands and we have begun to extract them through fracking and surface strip mining. That is where the whining tires and growling motors are going, they are heading out to our modern-day versions of the Nazi concentration camps, and we sit silently approving them.

The question is not whether we need gas and oil. The question is whether we need that little bit of oil and gas instead of a few small beautiful, quiet places to refresh our souls, because in the grand scheme of things, in the big picture, the places of solitude contain less than a tiny drop in a very large bucket. The people, the residents and their politicians are slobbering like jabba the hutt over these treasures locked in stone under the swaying aspens, beneath the footprints of catamounts and pronghorn. They see their fat wallets getting fatter and fatter with each drill hole and the expanding road network to access them.

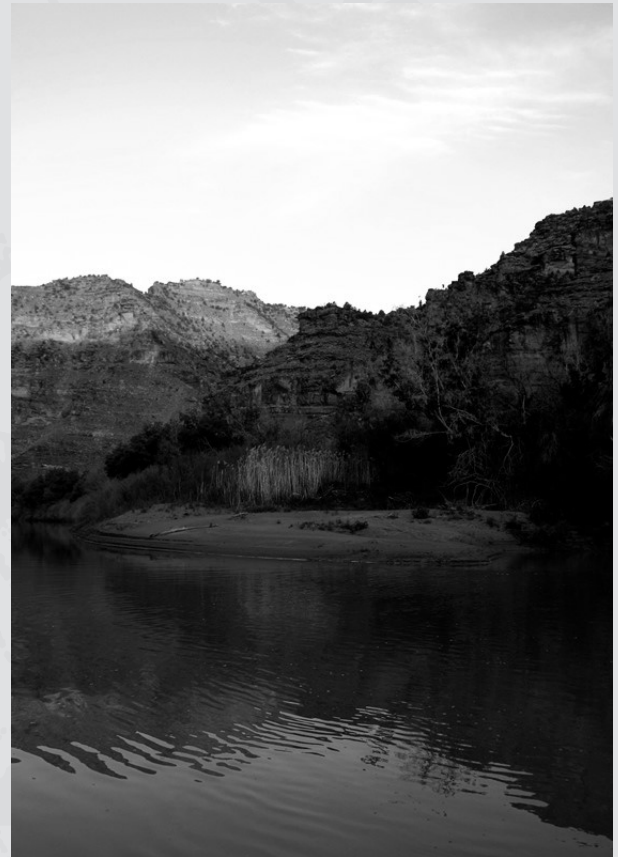


In one breath they exclaim the value to their children and grandchildren, and in the exhale they work to destroy it. The oxymoronic inference is that we are taking the resource and its value now for the unborn of the future. Somehow, we think we have the vision to know what those unborn of the future would want, and we are going to use it for them. Our "leaders" state that we are too big to bust. They apparently believe that our town is bigger than Chevron, or Saudi Arabia, or the stockholders of Haliburton and Schlumberger. Yet they fail to understand that once it is gone, after the people leave our town there will be nothing left. Wallace Stegner wrote: "can you show me a single example of a time when a company didn't leave after taking all it wants, a single time when a company took care of a town it had left?" All mining eventually extracts the deposit, leaving failed businesses, vacant homes and angry people - blaming someone else for the decisions they made. It is a classic slash, burn and move on mentality, that most of us learned in grade school about the early colonists when the land seemed limitless. "We had no idea, we didn't know" will be our cry. But for now, it's Katie bar the door, let's gorge ourselves upon the land and its treasures.

Far down river the incessant loud putt putt of an oil pump-jack engine, sounding like an old 2-cylinder John Deere tractor, broke my chain of thought. It is past noon, puff-ball clouds sweep toward me across the sky to the south. Gentle winds pant upriver. I snack on cooked bacon, donuts and hot coffee. Slowly, almost imperceptively, the walls begin to climb from the river. Cloud shadows sweep the landscape, and a dull kaleidoscope of bluff, tawny, tan highlighted by the bright greens of budding spring. Contrast fades and the Sun begins to arc to the west. High on a down river cliff an oil tank competes with a peregrine nest below it. Absent is the symbol sound of the canyons - the canyon wren. I wonder if it is my aging ears and accompanying ringing, or if something is truly happening to their community. The records I've kept for almost 50 years seem to indicate the latter.

The canyons without wren-call are akin to Vermont without red barns and church steeples.

Now the canyon walls have climbed on both river sides, and the western ones are clasped in shadow. I've traveled thirty-one miles and the Sand Wash ranger station is just a few miles downriver. A nice, virgin sandy beach beckons from the left and I drifted over to it. Even though a cloud bank is approaching from the south, sunglow paints the canyon walls in a reverse replay of this morning's dawning.



I climbed a small dune and was surprised to see that during high water I would be on an island. Beautiful camps beckon from the old river channel, but it is too far for me to walk. My hips, when I stand or walk, feel like there are knives in them. I decide to camp at the top of the dune between several small cottonwood saplings. When I climbed ashore I noticed a track in the wet sand that I had initially identified as made by a coyote. As I descended to get my gear I inspected them more closely.

They had no toe nail imprints and they were distinctly mountain lion prints. After eating a quick meal and replenishing my thermos with hot coffee I took my meager gear up and sat watching sunset. In the distance a coyote howled, trailing off to a yip, yip, yip. The call was quickly returned by several other higher on a ridge. I fell asleep.

The din of the new day snuck up slowly first fading the horizon's stars and then glowing white. The morning bird calls mingled with the sound of water dripping from my oars back into the endless river as I row.

That day I rowed on down to below Peter's Point. I had never camped there before, and when a two-person sand beach with a hidden cove presented itself I landed. The sand was festooned with beaver tracks and sign, on the nearby land young trees showed signs of intense beaver activity. Above, just beyond the canyon rim I knew that there was a gigantic oil field, from the air looking like an endless pox upon the land and it is creeping towards the canyon rim. I thought back to my trips down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. One of my favorite camps was Lava Canyon. From there you could look up thousands of feet and many miles away and see the lights of Desert Tower on the eastern canyon rim. The first time I saw the lights, I thought: The beauty is that they are up there and I'm down here!

The clouds had gathered and there was no kaleidoscope of setting sun coloring the canyon. The setting was serene, quiet, gentle. That night I was awoken and more than a little disturbed by a strange snorting in the river a few feet away, followed by something slapping the water. At first I dismissed it, but the snorting continued and I swept the river with my flashlight. Suddenly just a few feet away two glowing eyes appeared out of the river surface. The animal snorted, dove down and slapped the water with its tail - a beaver. In all of my time on the river I had never heard that snorting. Apparently my camp and sleeping location had disrupted Mr. Castor's route to his dining room.

I turned off the headlamp, and soon just a couple of feet away the snorting replayed, I said aloud: so here Mr. Castor, I'm not moving so get over it and fast for a night!

The clouds stayed and I rose late the next morning. It was a few miles to Lighthouse Rock and I drifted off in thought. One of the beauties of being on the river alone is that you can drift without much effort. Without interruption or the need to communicate with others, whether in the whispering or shouting of the wind, or the glowing sun on canyon walls or in the coldness of a driving rain the skeletons in one's closet become a focus. It is an opportunity to connect with the past and peer into the future.



As I pondered life, drifting toward Lighthouse Rock, the value of Wilderness crept up on me. At first I was reviewing my times on the river. One time in a high side canyon of the San Juan River I placed my hands, barely on the surface of a clear azure pool of water.

As I wondered about the person, who long ago had built the hidden storage granaries there I noticed the reflection of my face the mirror-like in the water. It struck me, that the Anasazi had no mirrors, and thus had no idea what they looked like, but here a person had a clear vision of the face they could not otherwise see. I wondered if they had seen their faces like me, and what they thought. I thought of a time dancing with Val in the moonlight there to no sound other than trickling water, the night breeze rattling the willows and our breathing.

Ever so slowly Wilderness and how we justify it presented itself to me. Too often we try and justify Wilderness in economic terms, using statistics that show how many people will come and how much money they will spend. That is not a winning scenario, but if we took the value of the resources contained in the land and added that economic generator to those resource values there would be an impressive economy. And the value of that economy would grow as resources became scarcer. Because "Wilderness" is only protected by a law, that law can be modified should the need ever arise and we could, if necessary, use those resources. It has happened before: During World War I sheep were allowed to graze in Yosemite National Park. During World War II timber was harvested in Great Smokey Mountains National Park.

The problem is that the opponents of Wilderness will not be swayed by facts and figures. Those people would never understand Edith Wharton's writing: "This is a day when life and the world seem to be standing still - only time and the river flowing past the mesas." Those people would never understand, let alone appreciate Mark Twain, August Frug'e, or Loren Isley.

Something basic has happened to the American people. When I grew up, we aspired to intelligence, we did not belittle it.

Today people's display of ignorance is a reminder that functional illiteracy is a serious problem in our United States, perhaps more of a threat than AIDS, Al-Quieda, or economic decline.

Our quest for dominance is a charade. Greatness is not measured by who we conquer or how much we use - it will be measured by the treasures we leave for others. People's inability to grasp such clear and simple distinctions is a symptom of functional illiteracy, a common malady among high-school graduates from the arid wastelands of Fox News. Those people will never take the time to consider the true results of their actions. They take successes as a given right and they blame failures on someone or something else: the weather, bad luck, other people or their lack of faith.

Seventy years ago Americans rose up in mass to stop the plans to build a dam in Dinosaur National Monument at Echo Park. It wasn't just "environmentalists" but common everyday people who cherished the legacy of their national heritage. Today we have become so fractured that we confuse waving the American flag with patriotism. Somehow we need to reconnect with the land, with core values and with the things truly make life meaningful.

We need lions in Congress, people who understand the values of art, or poetry, or music... or wild places. We need people who can grasp that their lives depend upon healthy and complete ecosystems that create a stable planet.

My train of thought was interrupted by a swishing sound downriver and around the corner that was growing louder. Steer Ridge Rapid, no special threat to me from the hundred or so trips I've made down there. Yet in 1956 Renny Russell's brother Terry - both authors of the best-selling Sierra Club book *On the Loose* - lost his life here as have several Boy Scouts and others. So, especially being alone, the coming of rapids makes me nervous.

It is sort of like pinning a corsage on your first prom date, and every prom date afterwards. It always raises the question "why do I do this?" Twenty seconds later, at the bottom of the rapid one simply can't wait to run it again.

A couple of nights later the thick, dark bottom clouds gathered. The wind changed and lightning flashed. That night a driving rain pelted me and I determined to row out the last 37 miles. Here, farther south, the trees had budded out and the lacy iridescent leaves glowed - even in the dim light and rain. Waterfalls appeared, sometimes blowing upward like a swishing horse's tail swatting flies. And the river, ever flowing, endlessly grinding, transporting, recycling continued on despite the conditions.

For days my endless river bore me on. I had spent the past few months pouring over maps and reports, assembling photographs and testimonials, attempting to show the economic values of preserving some rivers in Uintah County. A group of us testified at meetings, wrote letters, met with county commissioners and congressional aids and state representatives. We failed. We received nothing for our efforts.

In trying to enlist some support from commercial outfitters and private river runners I received comments like; "I like the oil development; they improved the road to Desolation Canyon" or "I have a diesel and I like cheap fuel." Many people have never experienced the White River or as it is called Upper Desolation Canyon. People lack the vision to see the threat of intrusions of oil rigs on the anticline close to the Green River through Dinosaur National Monument. If people lack vision, if they have not experienced a place they will not love it. If they don't love it they will not rise up and demand that it is protected from threats or intrusion.

But the nature of river runners has changed in the past few years. Today's people want to get dramatic Go-Pro photographs to impress others on Facebook posts.

They are busy making money, feathering their own nests, glued to Fox News. They will post 'risque' photographs but fear jeopardizing their careers or businesses by becoming involved - by speaking out. We no longer have visionaries. The generation of visionaries like Martin Litton, Dee Holladay, Don and Ted Hatch, of David Brower and Howard Zahniser are gone. Who will take their place?



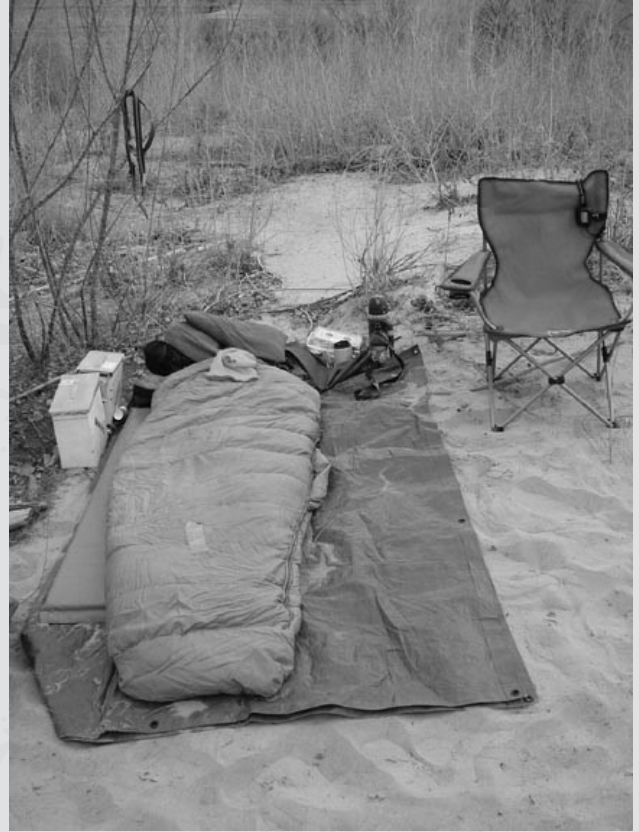
Recently Pink Floyd recently released what may well be their last album: Endless River. My endless river bore me on. I had hoped it would take me away from the albatross of Congressman Bishop's Utah Land Initiative. It did not. The endless river only intensified our failure. Someday people will look back on what we did, or did not do. Some of them will wonder what we were thinking, others will whine: "we had no idea, we didn't know." But even in our ignorance I know The River, endless as it is will conquer all. It will wipe out our misguided fantasies.

Things have changed out there on the river, and things have changed in our country and in our minds.

"If you go down where the lights push the night-time back far enough so you can't feel the fear remember the boy who you left on the mountain who's sitting alone with the stars and his tears."

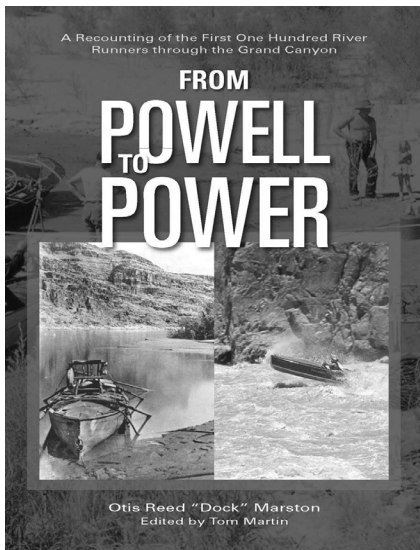
{Last Lonely Eagle - John Dawson,
New Riders of the Purple Sage}

Epilog: The first known use in print of Katy bar the door with the meaning of 'trouble is in store' is in James Whitcomb Riley's 1894 poem: When Lide Married Him. when Lide married him - w'y, she had to jes dee-fy The whole poppilation! - But she never bat' an eye! Her parents begged, and threatened - she must give him up - that he Wuz jes "a common drunkard!" - And he wuz, apparently. Swore they'd chase him off the place Ef he ever showed his face Long after she'd eloped with him and married him fer shore! When Lide married him, it wuz "Katy, bar the door!"



As it turned out I was nearing the end of my trips down Desolation Canyon, indeed in a few short years I was no longer to dance the quicksilver ballet with the rivers I love.





From Powell to Power by Tom Martin

Reviewed by Herm Hoops

From Powell to Power: Is Tom Martin's interpretation of Otis Reed Dock Marston's notes regarding the early River Runners through the Grand Canyon. Marston's collection of river materials at the Huntington Library is valued by many river running people.

On April 14, 2015 a reviewer, who has rowed dories for forty years in the Grand Canyon, reviewed Martins' book. The reviewer has enjoyed scores of books over many years about the magical, powerful, history-filled Canyon he loves. Aficionados of the history of river running in the Grand Canyon have long heard about Doc Marston's voluminous historical manuscripts and drooled at the prospect of having access to them. His review:

"Doc was never able to consolidate into book form, the encyclopedic information he gathered. Doc was also known, as are many Grand Canyon boaters, for being headstrong and opinionated - someone who could embellish, or butt heads, with the best of us. In this book, the author Tom Martin has finally published Doc's data, and if one is able to plough through it there are indeed some interesting tidbits."

"Sadly, I ended up feeling like this was a class assignment from the past, when unnecessarily repetitive numbers, dates and names made history dreadfully boring. Over the years I have found teachers and writers who could tell a tale that emphasized the fascinating, educational, and immensely interesting swirl of history and how it relates to humanity and the wonder of life. Unfortunately, Tom's book reads like a brick, and after several nights where even the fascinating stories of the lost honeymoon couple and the Old Man Of The River Bert Loper got muddled, I had to give it up. Hopefully now that the information is easily accessible, someone may be able to synthesize all the data, and untangle the threads of our past into something more engaging."

Another reviewer wrote: "I confess, I couldn't read the book cover to cover, and the details of a particular rapid often made me skip to the next paragraph,". That Martin's From Powell to Power is the quintessential definition of pedantic textbook writing is obvious. It is the sort of book one buys to put on your bookshelf to impress others, or to occasionally use as a reference.

What Tom Martin never mentions in his preface or anywhere is that history is always biased from the get-go. Tom is an hagiographer and apologist for Marston, a real historian would concede that there is no "TRUTH." Marston had his truth, Nevills had his truth, you and I have our truths. There are as many truths as there are people. And it is widely known by other river historians that Tom's mind is always made up first and he only "remembers" the information that plays into his narrow views and his ultimate goals. For example Martin's recounting of Marston's notes of the Powell Expedition exemplifies his bias against Powell, Stegner and Darrah and the glorious achievements made by the Powell Expeditions.

My recommendation is to save \$30 and buy river history books from widely recognized writers and historians.

