





*On the midstream boulders in Bedrock rapids was the wreckage of a Reclamation Bureau boat which broke away at Lee's ferry some months before and was deposited here by high water. Kent Frost, taking one of the Nevills boats through these rapids was caught in an eddy and spun round and round.*

# Grand Canyon Voyage . . .

After two leisurely days at the Phantom ranch in the bottom of Grand Canyon, the Nevills expedition of 1947 shoved off to face the churning cascades in the Middle and Lower Granite gorges for the second lap of their journey down Danger River. This is the third chapter of a story written for *Desert Magazine* by a reporter who rode the deck through many of the Colorado's ill-famed rapids.

By RANDALL HENDERSON

WHILE we loafed in the shade and splashed in the pool at Phantom ranch awaiting the hour when we would pack our kits in the little 16-foot boats and head into the turbulent water that lay ahead, there were some changes in the personnel of our party.

Marjory and Francis Farquhar, Rosalind Johnson, Pauline Saylor and Elma Milotte were scheduled to leave the expedition here and return by mule to the Grand Canyon rim above. They had been fine companions and there was genuine regret when we bade them farewell.

Taking their places in the boats were Joseph Desloge, mining man and indus-

trialist of St. Louis and members of his family—Joe Jr., 22, the daughters, Anne 20 and Zoe 18, and Marie Saalfrank, governess for the family since the mother's death many years ago.

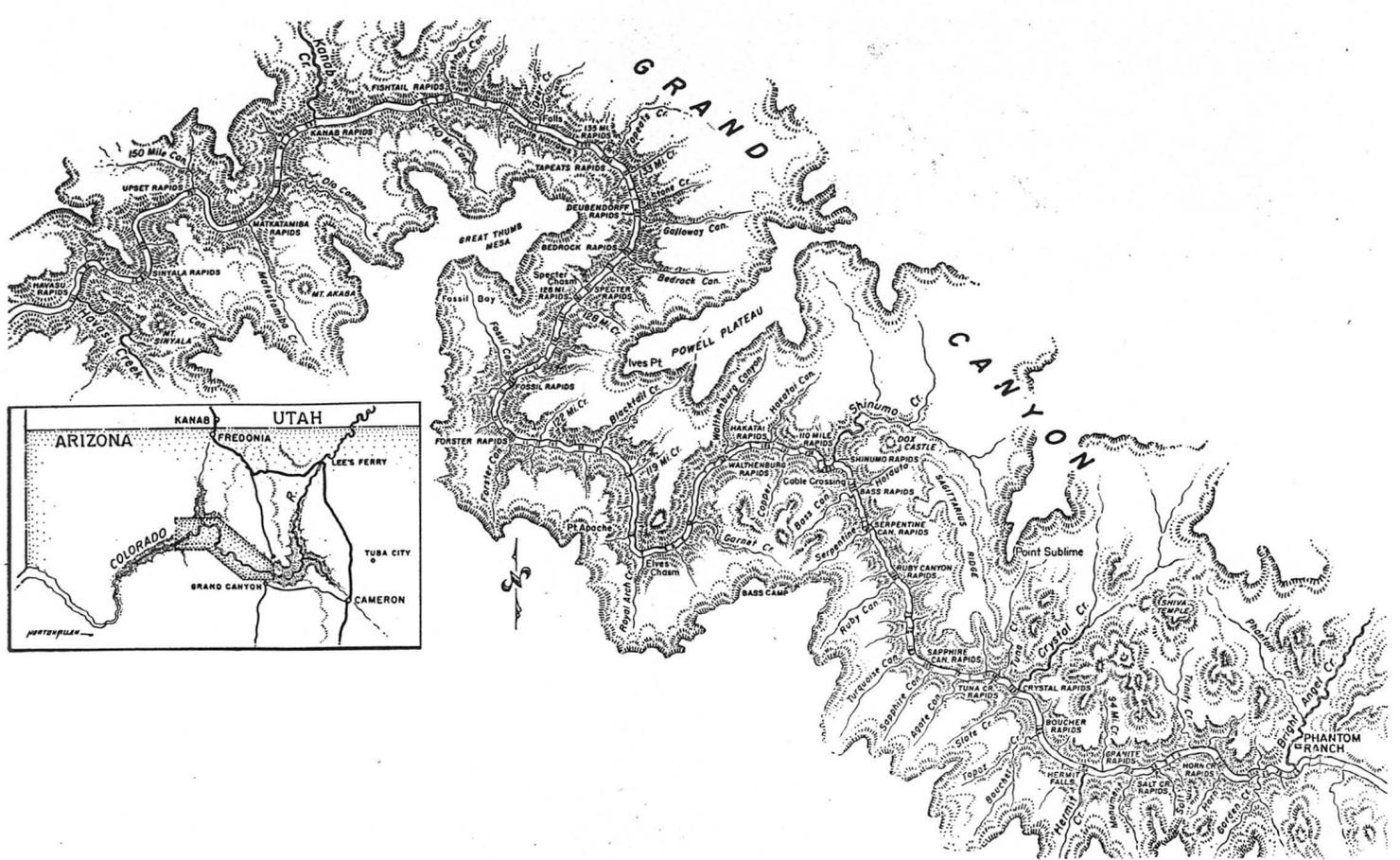
The Desloges arrived dusty and perspiring but showing no signs of weariness after the 11-mile hike down the trail from the South rim, and were soon frolicking in the pool. Their midwestern home is on the banks of the Missouri river and they are all excellent swimmers. They ran the San Juan river with Norman Nevills in 1946, and quickly adapted themselves to the routine of Colorado river navigation.

We shoved off at 9:00 a. m. July 21 for

the second stage of our river journey. Below Bright Angel there was a series of seven riffles, then Horn creek, one of the minor rapids. Norman looked it over carefully and then ran through with Zoe Desloge as passenger. The other pilots took their boats through empty while the passengers lined the rocky shore and took pictures.

We ran Salt creek rapids without stopping and then came to Granite Falls, one of the Colorado's big name rapids. It had some wicked looking boulders in midstream, and Norman and his boatmen studied it two hours—and then ran through with hardly a splash of water.

Norman used his "stealing" technique on this one. He rode the smooth tongue of water in the center of the channel down to the point where it suddenly became a churning series of 10-foot waves, and then with a few powerful strokes on the oars slipped out into the less turbulent water on the side. It is not always possible to do this, for great submerged boulders on the



sidelines sometimes make it necessary to ride the big waves down the center of the channel. But the two-hour session of the brain-trust was not wasted. They spotted each rock and hole and eddy, and then one boatman stood on a ledge above and gave hand signals as each of the others went through. In a boat surrounded by high waves the oarsmen seldom can see far ahead, but this signal system which was used on many of the rapids kept them out of trouble.

Norman always took the *Wen* through first. There was a double reason for this. The less experienced boatmen, watching from a vantage point, gained the benefit of Norman's experience in the treacherous stream. And then, the skipper wanted to be anchored below the dangerous water, ready to put out into the stream and capture the boat or rescue the swimming oarsmen if any of them got into trouble and capsized or were thrown from their boats.

The rest of us made our way over the rocks to the landing point Norman had designated below the falls. Some great granite boulders were perched precariously on the ledges above. We wondered if it would be 10 or 100 or 1000 years before the erosive forces of Nature would send them booming down into the stream. Sooner or later it will happen, and perhaps create new problems for future river navigators.

Imprisoned within the walls of that great canyon day after day one gets a more vivid concept of the tremendous span of time involved in the creation of this earth.

When one considers the hundreds and perhaps thousands of years required for sand and water to cut even a small groove in one of those granite boulders, the time required to chisel out a gorge such as this becomes immeasurable, even to the most active imagination.

We were through Granite Falls at two o'clock, and then floated leisurely downstream a mile to the mouth of Hermit creek where a clear stream of water comes in from the South Rim. We ate lunch on a shaded sandbar at the base of the vertical left wall.

Below us was Hermit Falls, with the channel on both sides of the tongue obstructed with boulders, and 12-foot waves lashing themselves into a fury in the mill-race between.

"I don't like the looks of this one," Norman remarked after studying it awhile. And when Norman doesn't like 'em they really are bad, for the skipper from Mexican Hat gets the same satisfaction in taking a boat through a bad rapid that a rodeo champion finds in climbing on a horse that has never been ridden. Away from his rivers and rapids Norman gives the impression of being a dare-devil sort of fellow. But there is no recklessness in his boating technique. He doesn't worry about himself. He'll tackle anything with water enough to float a boat. But he is jealous of his long record of never having lost a passenger or boat—and when he comes face to face with those great rollers pounding over the rocks, he becomes Ol' Man Conserva-tive.

The boats would have to be lined around Hermit, he decided. This was no place to be stranded with a smashed boat and short rations.

Ropes were fastened to the bow and stern of the *Mexican Hat* and the little craft was pushed and pulled and lifted over and around the rocks along the shore. It wasn't a portage job, where the boats are lifted bodily from the water and carried around. But the only available route, without letting the *Mexican Hat* get into the surging main current, involved so much lifting it was almost as strenuous as a portage.

Obviously, it would require many hours of hard work to pass Hermit Falls by such a route, and when Joe Desloge started needing the skipper about the waste of effort, Norman weakened and decided to run the rest of the boats through. He even carried Joe as a passenger on the *Wen*. Garth took the *Sandra* through, and Norman ran the *Joan* so Otis Marston could get pictures of the most vicious rapids we had encountered so far on the expedition.

We camped on the sandbar beside the rapids that night, the roar being so loud we had to shout to carry on conversation. The women slept on the bar above the campfire, the men below.

Launching the boats in the rough water along the shore next morning was a tedious job, but we got away at 8:00 o'clock and ran a series of minor rapids in quick succession. The first was Bouchere where Norman stood up in the boat to look it over as we approached, and then shouted



*Norman Nevills in the rough water at Hermit Falls rapids.*

"Let's go!" and we ran through without stopping. Then came Crystal rapids, Tuna, Sapphire, Turquoise, Ruby, Serpentine and Bass. We got a ducking in Serpentine, and more or less splashing in all of them. Al's camera was soaked when he tried to take pictures going through the rough water.

Just below Bass rapids we moored the boats and climbed to the anchor point up on the cliff where the old Bass cable is still suspended above the river. This cable crossing was built many years ago by W. W. Bass, explorer and guide, who had visions of establishing a guest camp in the canyon. He built a trail to the river and his cable car was big enough to carry a horse across to the north side. Bass died at Wickensburg, Arizona, January 18, 1933, before his dream was fulfilled. His ashes were scattered in Grand Canyon.

At 11:40 we pulled in to one of the prettiest campsites along the entire journey, at the mouth of Shinumo creek which brings a fine stream of water down from the North Rim. Less than 100 yards up the creek was a 12-foot waterfall, with fish in the pool below it. I climbed around the waterfall and in a little niche in the sidewall found a bouillon cube can containing

a message signed by Miles, Carl and T. H. Cureton of Williams, Arizona. Dated June 27, 1938, it stated they had packed down through Powell Pass and caught many channel catfish in the stream. Otis Marston caught several catfish at the mouth of the creek. Today I saw more of the beautifully carved basalt along the edge of the stream.

Kent's frying pan tom-tom woke us at six the next morning. We were off at 7:35 and ran Shinumo rapids, which were merely a heavy riffle, then 110-Mile rapids and Hakatai, which we glided through without stopping. Then we came to Walthenberg, another of the major cataracts.

Norman looked it over from a point of rock, and decided to run it with all passengers. The boats took it easily, and after a series of riffles we came to Elves Chasm. Here a clear stream flowed from a side canyon on the left, and although it was only 10:15 we liked the place so well we decided to have an early lunch there.

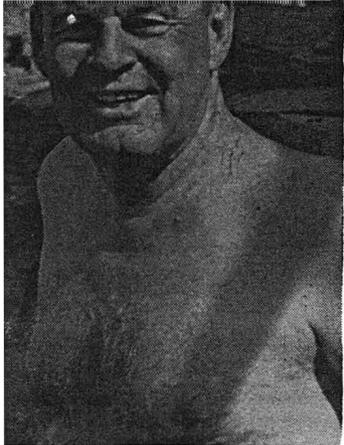
Elves Chasm is the name given a huge grotto in the sidewall back 50 yards from the river. The front of the cavern is concealed by a jumble of boulders and a thicket of mesquite and catsclaw trees. Many river parties have found shelter in this cave, as evidenced by the names

scratched on the wall. N. Galloway registered here in 1897, Norman Oliver on June 8, 1908, Frank E. Dodge September 5, 1923, and Clyde Eddy in 1927.

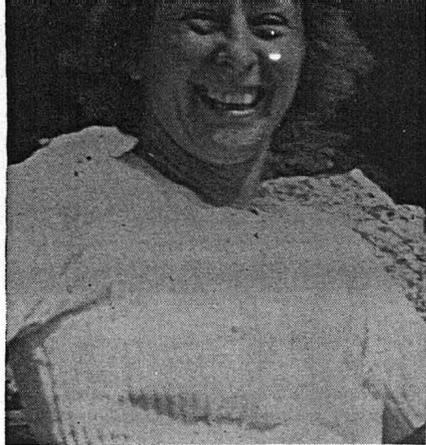
Norman prefers not to mark up the walls of Grand Canyon with inscriptions, and has placed a little book here—a register where members of his expeditions always record their passing.

We left Elves Chasm at 11:30 and ran nine riffles in rapid succession, then came to 120-mile rapid, a long S-course that gave us no trouble. Al Milotte wanted to take pictures of the boats from behind, so young Joe Desloge took his place in the *Wen* and Norman did a hitch as passenger while Joe took us through Forster rapids, a long rough one which Joe piloted like a veteran. Norman was back in the pilot's seat when we came to Fossil rapids, and a little later in 128-Mile rapids the *Wen* got caught in an eddy and slammed against the sidewall a couple of times. But no damage was done. Those 5-ply boats are very sturdy.

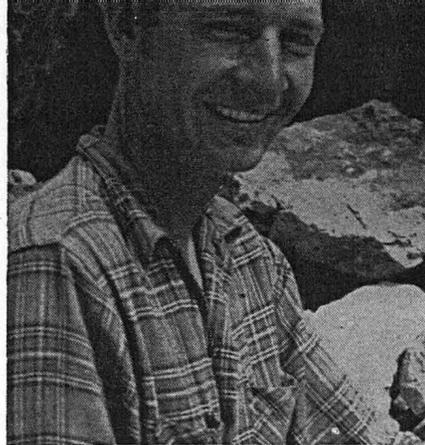
Specter rapids which we reached at 2:15 proved to be a long millrace with no bad rocks. At 2:35 we arrived at Bedrock rapids, and it had a nasty look. Some great blocks of granite had tumbled into mid-



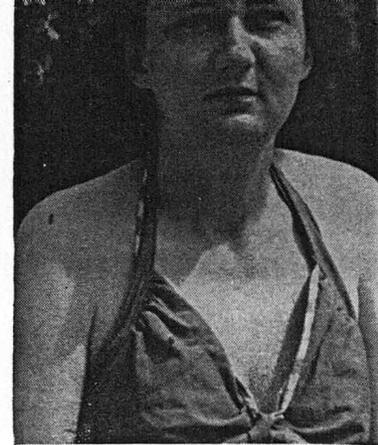
Francis Farquhar



Marjory Farquhar



Kent Frost



Pauline Saylor

stream half way down, and on one of these was the wreckage of a Reclamation Bureau boat which had broken away from a surveying party at Lee's ferry, and been deposited here by high water.

The passengers would walk, Norman decided. Actually, I think the detour over the cliffs around this rapid was more hazardous than the trip through. While the boats were gliding along on the swift current around those midstream boulders, we walking folks were hanging on to the ledges with our fingernails and hoping our toes wouldn't slip.

On this trip I decided that the hardest working man on earth is a field photographer. Al was taking pictures for Hollywood, and Doc Marston was accumulating both stills and kodachrome movies for lecture work, and other commercial outlets. Those two cameramen, neither of them very large, packed their heavy camera equipment and tripods over ledges that would be rough going for a mountain goat. They not only had from 20 to 50 pounds extra weight, but both hands were full, and with these loads they scrambled over wet rocks and up sidewalls where the footing was treacherous even for an unencumbered person. Watching them at work, my thoughts went back to the gritty Kolb brothers in 1911, when with even more cumbersome equipment they ran their boats through, much of the time alone, in

midwinter when during the early morning hours these same rocks were covered with ice. And despite all these handicaps they came out with a marvelous photographic record of the canyon from Green river to the Gulf of California. Those boys had guts—and their pictures, still being shown daily during the tourist season, constitute one of the most interesting and informative attractions in the Grand Canyon national park.

At 4:10 we came to the ill-reputed Deubendorff rapids, named in honor of S. S. Deubendorff of the Julius Stone party which reached here November 8, 1909. His boat capsized, but he swam out below with blood streaming from a gash in his head. Clyde Eddy's party lost a boat here while lining around the bad water.

Norman decided the boats could make it through. He gave instructions that the other boatmen should wait until he was through and had returned to the landing above the rapids.

He shoved off on the smooth water above the fall and rowed across to the head of the tongue which was on the far side of the channel. In a wild torrent such as this the actual time going through the roughest water amounts to a minute or two at most. For a few moments the boatman is at the mercy of the waves. Then it is over.

Norman plunged through the highest breakers. At one moment we could see the

white boat on the crest of a wave, and the next instant he was out of sight. But he always came up again. He went straight down the middle of the stream, with Margaret as passenger, then pulled out to a landing in a back eddy. A half hour later he joined us.

"That is the most fun I have had in years," he exclaimed. "I want to go through again." So he took the *Mexican Hat* down with Kent and Joe Jr. as passengers.

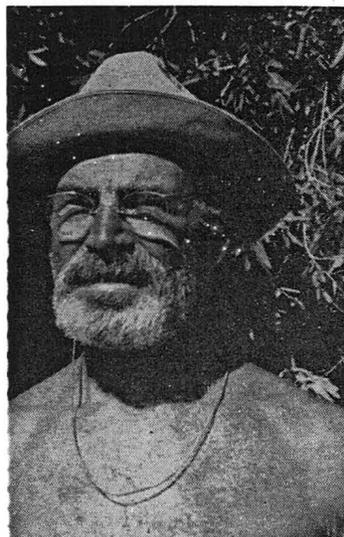
It was nearly dark, so we camped below the rapids, leaving the other two boats to be brought down in the morning.

We were up at six and Joe Desloge and I went through as passengers with Norman in the *Joan* while Garth ran the *Sandra* carrying Anne and Zoe.

While the boats were coming through Joe Jr. plunged into the stream at the lower end of the rapids and swam to the opposite shore and back, taking some of the heavy waves on the way back. The jaunt across the stream proved so easy he asked the skipper for permission to come down the full length of the rapids in a life jacket. Norman and the elder Desloge both gave their consent—and Joe made it through with no difficulty. Kent rowed out in midstream to pick him up below the rapids.

A word about the life preservers: The boatmen wore kapok jackets which were

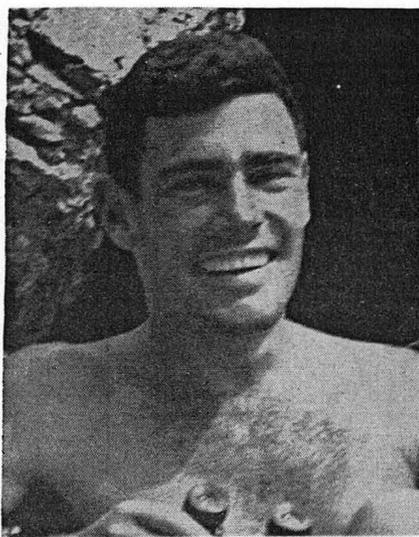
Otis Marston



Margaret Marston

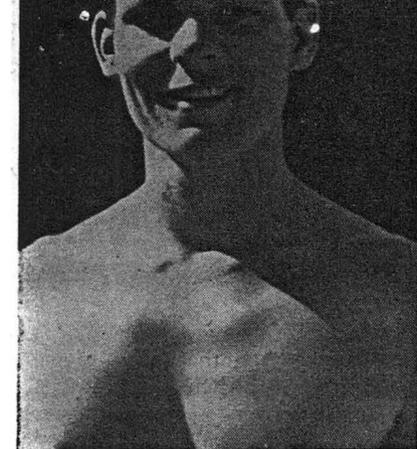


Garth Marston



Rosalind T. Johnson

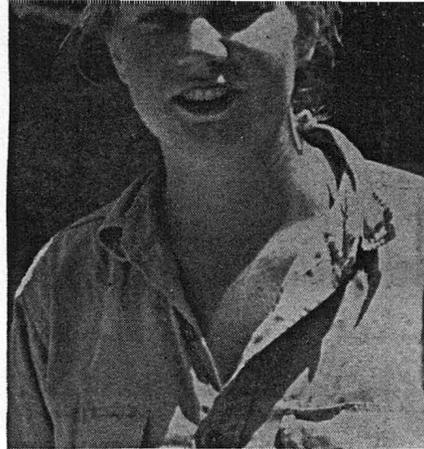




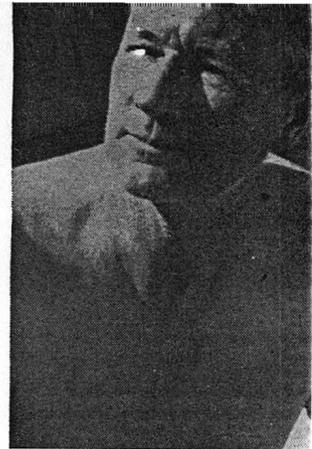
Joe Desloge Jr.



Anne Desloge



Zoe Desloge



Joseph Desloge

ready for instant use, requiring no inflation. The passengers, when running the heavy rapids, wore the navy type of life-belt with two parallel air-cells, which are quickly blown up and then clasped around the waist.

Joe liked the ride through the big tumblers so well he went back and did it again. And then the idea became epidemic. After some bantering back and forth, four members of the party went to the head of the rapids and came through by the swimming route—which was right down the central channel where the waves were highest. In the foursome, Garth Marston came down on an air mattress, Zoe Desloge in a life jacket, and young Joe and Otis Marston swam it without preservers. Joe is a giant in the water, and Otis formerly was a swimming coach. It is not a stunt for a weak swimmer.

"It is all in the breathing," explained Otis Marston. "Any strong swimmer who knows how and when to breathe will come through without trouble at this stage of the water when there is no danger of collision with rocks." But woe to the swimmer who tries to fill his lungs at the wrong time—for in such turbulent water one cannot always be on the surface.

We were off at 9:55 for a short day's run. We wanted to camp that night at Tapeats creek where a fine stream of water comes in from the North Rim. Going

through 133-Mile rapids I wanted to get some action pictures while riding the rough water. But the waves were bigger



*The Skipper*

than I had anticipated. One of them drove the camera against my face so hard it flattened my nose. After that I hung onto the ropes.

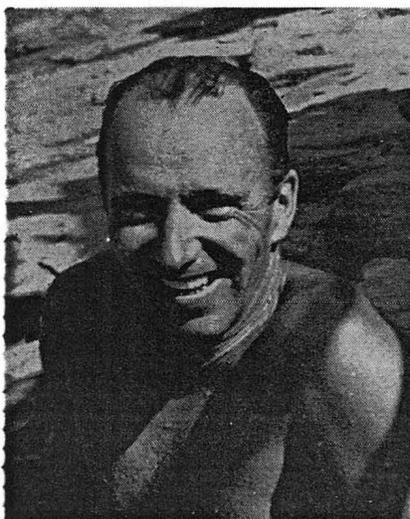
It was 111 degrees on the little sandbar at the mouth of Tapeats creek. But a 60-degree mountain stream tumbled over the boulders, and that really was a bit of luxury. Al and I erected pup tents for shade, but a sandstorm blew in and wrecked them, so we sought what shelter we could find under the willows and arrowweeds along the creek.

Otis Marston unpacked his rod and creel as soon as we beached and disappeared up Tapeats creek. He returned at dusk with 20 rainbow trout—and Kent did them full justice in the cooking. Doc went out again at daybreak next morning and brought in another creel of trout which we packed in the boats for dinner that evening.

We were entering the Lower Sonoran zone of vegetation—the plants and shrubs of my own desert in Southern California. Along the creek I found several species of cacti, including bisnaga, and some prickly pear with a fine crop of purple-ripe fruit. Plant life is sparse in Grand Canyon. The predominating tree is catsclaw. A fringe of them grows at the high water contour on both sides all the way down the canyon, wherever they can find a foothold. At one of the coves where a side canyon comes in I saw a giant specimen with an 18-inch trunk and a span of 28 feet.

At the mouth of each tributary there generally is a sandbar and on these grow

Al Milotte



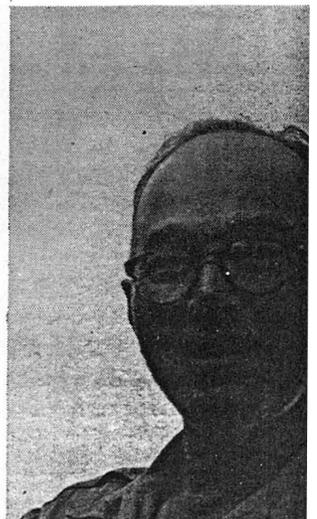
Elma Milotte

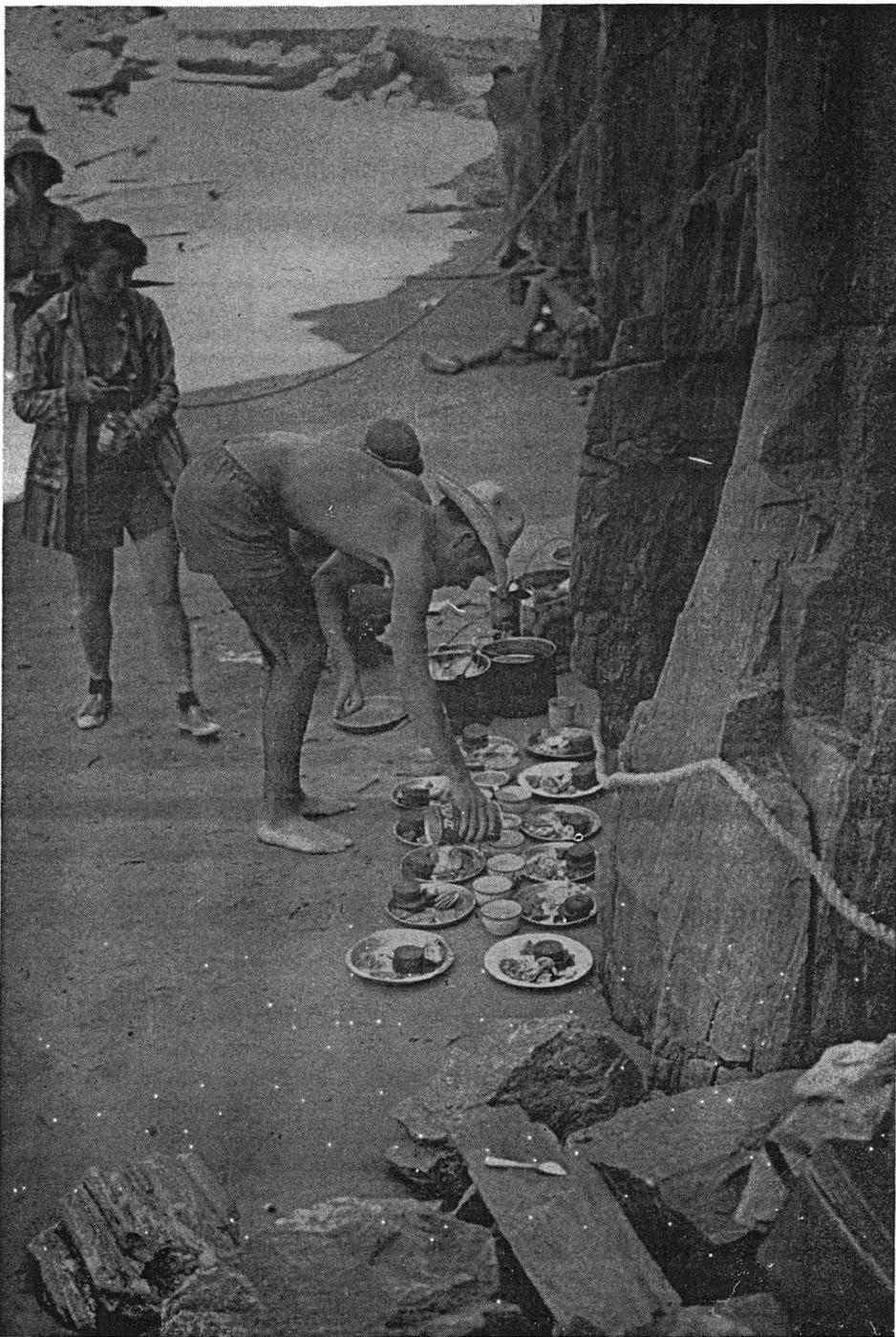


Marie Saalfrank



Randall Henderson





*Lunch on a sandbar—peanut butter, canned ham, jam, pickles, crackers and shoestring potatoes.*

dense thickets of willow, arrowweed and tamarisk. These shrubs are never large, for the high floods which come down the gorge periodically sweep them away. But a new growth starts the next season and with an ample supply of water they grow rapidly.

We left Tapeats at 8:10 July 25 with the temperature at 86 degrees. Tapeats rapids gave us no trouble and at 8:30 we passed through Granite Narrows where the walls close in and the stream races through a portal not over 75 feet wide.

At 8:50 we stopped at Deer Creek falls where a slender stream of water shoots out of a crevice 120 feet up on the sidewall

and drops sheer to a little cove along the river. The falling water spreads out into a pounding deluge at the bottom—and here Norman invited the crew and passengers to take an endurance test that has become traditional on Grand Canyon expeditions. The winner of the contest is the one who can take the longest beating under the terrible force of that ice-cold shower.

The two Joes and Garth and Doc entered the waterfall and remained over three minutes. Doc was first out, but do not hold that against him for Doc was under a terrific handicap. His head is as bald as a basalt boulder. The senior Desloge was the winner.

Deer Creek rapids, just below the falls merely was an oversized riffle when we ran through it. We had now emerged from Middle Granite gorge and were in sandstones and limestones again. High up in a recess in the Tonto platform we saw prehistoric Indian granaries under an overhanging ledge.

We took Fishtail rapids without stopping and then landed at Kanab creek above the rapids which bear that name for lunch. An old trail led up this creek to the North Rim and it was here that the second Powell expedition ended September 7, 1872. It is not an impressive canyon at the mouth, and the little stream of water was warm. We ate lunch under some tamarisk trees, and shoved off.

Kanab rapids were easy, and we ran Matkatamiba rapids without stopping. Just above Matkatamiba there was a pretty oasis on the sidewall, fed by a spring above. It was covered with maidenhair ferns—a miniature Vasey's Paradise.

We floated along on smooth water for a mile and then came to Upset rapids at the mouth of 150-Mile canyon. The side canyons and rapids identified in terms of mileage are measured from Lee's ferry, and are the designations given by the U. S. Geological survey in 1923. Where no other place name was available the mileage at that point becomes a place name. It is possible these mileage designations will give way to descriptive names as future Grand Canyon navigators have misadventures along the way. We often reminded Norman that none of the rapids bears the name "Nevills."

"If you'll turn over a boat in one of these cascades, we'll petition the Geographic place name board to name it in your honor," Al Milotte told him. Norman's reply was that he preferred to maintain his record of never having capsized in Grand Canyon.

Upset rapids looked mean, and the boatmen studied it carefully from a ledge above. "It looks tough," Norman finally announced, "but the climb around it looks even tougher." So we ran through with all passengers on board. Garth and Kent both shipped some water, but in the *Wen* we wrangled our way through with hardly a splash. The rapids got their name in 1923 when one of the survey boats turned over in the big waves.

At 3:15 we ran Sinyala rapids without trouble, and at four o'clock reached the mouth of Havasu creek—the place of the blue-green water. A wavering finger of turquoise water comes out of the side canyon and is immediately swallowed up by the muddy eddies of the Colorado. Here we found one of the loveliest camping spots along the entire river voyage.

*(The fourth and last chapter in Randall Henderson's story of the voyage through Grand Canyon will appear in the February issue of Desert.)*