

The Story Behind The Story ~ Inflatable River Boat History

{2015}

In 2000 I began an article about the Swanson Boat oar Company of Albion, Pennsylvania. At one time the Swanson's supplied most of the oars for Western River Running, and yet folks know little about the company. I followed that with one about the History of Inflatable Boats and How They Saved Rivers.

In the process it occurred to me that many people are recording "historic" river runners and their achievements, yet no one is preserving the history of the equipment we use on rivers. So I began assembling the documents I have saved to record the achievements of B. A. Hanten and his Rogue Inflatables. As I began communicating with B.A. he told me that after his wife died, he burned all of his records, but his memory was clear and he answered many of my questions. In June of 2010 I wrote B. A. a letter with a few questions. Shortly, I received notice that B.A. had passed away on May 10, 2010. Had I not documented some of the information, much of the history of Rogue Inflatables would have been lost. Since then I have been able to interview people with vast knowledge before they too passed: Bob Schnurr (Rubber Fabricators), Dee Holladay of Holiday Expeditions (Leyland & Maravia), Dick Barker of Jackson, WY, Jack Curry of UT and Mike Walton of Salt Lake's Walton Marine.

In 2006 I began an article on Rubber Fabricators of West Virginia. There is a connection between Rubber Fabricators, B.F. Goodrich, Rubber Crafters and Demaree Inflatable Boats, and I expanded the scope of the project to include them. After several trips to West Virginia, and endless revisions of drafts my expenses mounted. One night while discussing the financial aspects of the project with my wife Val, she said: "Didn't you tell me that people like Don and Ted Hatch, Ron Smith, Kenny Ross and Jon Dragon helped you and never charged you for their help?" So we determined that the modest proceeds from my boat repair company would be applied to the project and we would make the project free electronically, or at the cost of printing to anyone who wanted it. **The original documents, and Histories will be sent to the University of Utah, J. Willard Marriott Library, Utah River Running Archives under the Herm Hoops Collection. The University of Utah has graciously provided financial support for the project.**

To date I have spent over:

- 15,000 miles with trips to West Virginia & Maryland, Jackson Hole, WY; Cary, NC: Arcata, Kernville and Angels Camp, CA: Boise, Meridian and Moscow, ID and other visits for interviews.
- \$11,000 on non travel expenses: phone, printer ink, paper, photo paper, binders, acid free sleeves, postage, donations to historical societies and organizations who have helped me, etc. and another \$3,900 on travel (I sleep in my car like a coyote!).
- 2,800 hours (non-travel hours) interviewing (including oral interviews and transcribing them), writing, researching, and documenting details.
- Additional printing at Staples comes to around \$8,500, from which I will recover \$7,500.
- A lot of time thinking, and realizing how much I have learned from the work and people I've met.

This is where I have spent much of the money you pay me to repair your boats. I hope it means something and that you enjoy it!

Herm Hoops

oneway boatworks

Utah Resident Will Visit Grantsville To Research Rubber Industry History

Herm Hoops, a resident of Utah, will be in Grantsville from May 16-19 to do continuing research into the history of the rubber industry, particularly into Rubber Fabricators, and Pete Zannoni, Ran Fleming and Bob Schnurr.

He is looking for human interest stories and photos that go along with the manufacturing of inflatable life rafts and life preservers.

He will also be researching the involvement of other companies, such as B.F. Goodrich, Wirt Inflatable Specialists, Demaree Inflatable Boats, and others.

Former employees and asso-

ciates of Rubber Fabricators, who would like to be a part of this interview, are asked to call Helen Morris, 354-7957; Anita West, 354-7844; or the Calhoun Chronicle, 354-6917, so that an appointment can be scheduled.

Any picture or artifact that you believe would be of interest can be scanned or photographed and returned.

This is a part of the history of Calhoun County that otherwise could be lost.

The publication will be available at the Chronicle office and Family History Center, as well as at University of Utah, Marriott Library's Special River Collections, and other places.