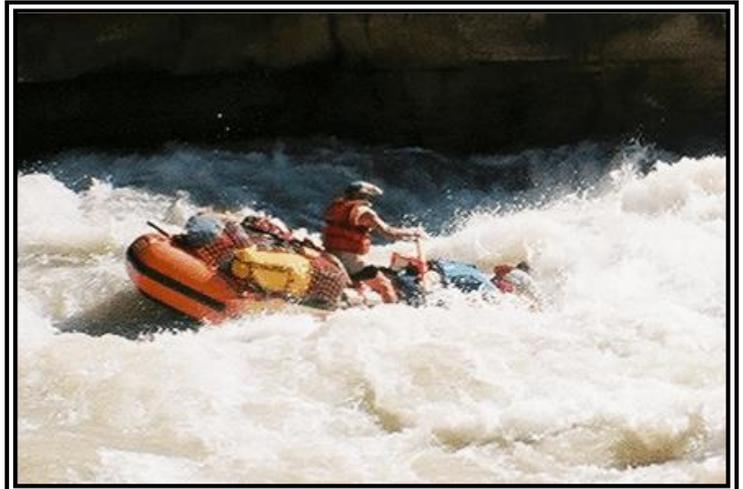


B. A. Hanten: His Fair and Respected Rogue Inflatables

By Herm Hoops 2010

A classic big orange boat with a black side rub strake, floating gracefully on the water, and driving through the biggest of waves were the signatures of a Rogue Raft.



Grand Canyon: Havasu (left) Upset Rapid (right)

Rogue Inflatables were designed by a commercial outfitter for whitewater use. Bernard Albert Hanten (or B.A. as he was called) and his good friend and long time river guide Jerry Briggs began designing, using and selling their boats in 1968, with the “Rogue” model. Both ends of the raft were raked up like fishing dories. In big and heavy water Rogue boats were very stable, owing to unusually large tubes and width for their time.(2)

“The reason we got into the business of making inflatable river boats was simple. We owned a fishing lodge on the Rogue River, and took” fishing trips in dories. “We decided to start outfitting inflatable boat trips because they carried a larger load...”(4)

By the mid-1960's the surplus boats were getting harder to find, and B.A. Hanten was not pleased with the rowing characteristics of the boats being produced. B.A. went to one of the West Virginia's Rubber Fabricators and gave them drawings of a boat with a rake on both ends, and made of rip stop nylon. The “first order was for twenty-five boats, 17' long with an 18" tube. The boats were light weight and rowed very well”. Jerry Briggs and a number of other outfitters liked the boats and bought the balance of the order. “Jerry Briggs and I decided to order more boats, and build aluminum frames for them. At that time commercial outfitters were our only customers.”(4)

The boats were made from orange material. "When Rubber Fabricators sold out to B.F. Goodrich, Goodrich accepted our order but would only furnish black material." Goodrich was hard to deal with "as our orders were small, and they were big. Their boats were poor quality in both material and workmanship," and B.A. contacted Mitsubishi in Japan. They introduced B.A. to the 'Toyo Rubber Company who could supply material and had a fabricating company.'"(4) And Hanten became one of the first raft designers to import foreign-built rafts.(12)

"About that time Jerry Briggs was building a lot of wooden dories, and did not think we wanted to go into Japanese built boats". So B.A. continued on with the inflatable boat business alone. "My first order with the Japanese material and fabrication was 1972, and was for the Rogue Model with 20" tubes and removable thwarts.(4)

In 1973 they started using Hypalon on the outside of tube material to protect from wear, abrasion and ultra violet rays. The coating was over a nylon fabric and neoprene on the inside of the tubes. Neoprene gave the boats excellent air retention. In 1975 the boats were redesigned adding a two ply section to the main tube. The tube material was two-ply, 56 ounces (thickness.055; 840 Denier nylon fabric), the bottom 50 ounce material (1260 Denier fabric with neoprene and Hypalon coating) was wrapped to provide 3 layers over the most vulnerable part of the boat, with a gusset applied to the inside of the floor and tube. The boats were warranted against defects of material and workmanship for one year.(1)

Initially a few boats, like those used by Wild Rivers Expeditions (1972) in Bluff, UT had some problems with fabric separation, probably due to intense sunlight and being stored outside.(5) But many "Commercial outfitters liked the boat, but the increasing private customer base did not like the heavy weight." Because Rogue started with outfitters they stayed with the heavy material, but made some smaller models to cater with the private market.(4)

Rogue boats were heavy, with most models hovering around 200 pounds designed specifically for whitewater river running. They had 2 lace in thwarts, and recessed metal military valves in a boot. All models were designed to be operated at 3 p.s.i. Two and four inch d-rings were attached to the boat with massive fabric. All boats were orange with black floors and reinforcements as described above. Rogue made the following models (the height of the rake varied with each model):

- Rogue Model: 17'8" x 7'10" beam and 20.5 inch tubes, weight 240 pounds
- Colorado Model: 18' x 8' beam and 22" tubes, weight 250 pounds
- Commercial Model: 20' x 8'6" beam and 25" tubes, weight 310 pounds
- Paddler Model: 18' x 8' beam and 22" tubes, weight 285 pounds.
- Selway Model: 15'9" x 7'4" beam and 20" tubes, weight 195 pounds
- Selway Paddler Model: 15'9" x 7'4" beam and 20" tubes, with three thwarts weight 195 pounds
- McKenzie Model: 14'9" x 6'9" beam and 18.75" tubes, weight 160 pounds
- Illinois Model: 11'6" x 5'8" beam and 16" tubes, weight 115 pounds
- Cataraft Tube: 17'8" and 22' diameter tube, weight 72 pounds(1)

In 1975 Rogue boats began manufacture in Japan to compete with the ever changing market and new competitors. In August 1980, because of high prices for materials and production of inflatable boats, Rogue discontinued their dealer sales program and began selling directly to consumers.

By May 1986, Rogue began producing self bailing models - most likely not because they believed in self bailing craft on rivers. They had been working on their self bailing concept for over a year, modifying their prototype design three times. Their original idea of producing the boats like their conventional models, without relocating the thwarts did not work out well. They found the break between air chambers under the thwarts made the boat harder to row and track. Their newsletter from that year illuminates their solid dedication to conventional boats: "For those boaters who are really running class 5 water, and genuinely do not have an opportunity to bail, they are very important, and by far the best type of equipment. For the other 95% of us, who are considering this type of boat, because they don't like to bail, or because it is the newest thing, I would suggest you weigh it carefully."(4,6) The company's brochure points out the difficulties of field patching inflatable floors, including draining out river water and silt, the additional expense of an inflatable floor, the difficulty in tracking, and requiring a different approach in running rapids. That year, in order to accommodate the new models, Rogue discontinued the Commercial, Paddler, and Catacraft Tube models. They also added a toll free phone number that was answered "whenever possible."(6)

The 1986 sales leaflet Rogue addresses the growing animosity between private and commercial boaters - one of the first such educational or moral thoughts in sales literature. Their solution to the "problem" was to ask boaters to unite and lobby agencies to raise capacity on permitted river segments. In conclusion the author wrote: "In this day and age, we simply cannot insist on the conditions that Jim Bridger had." (6)

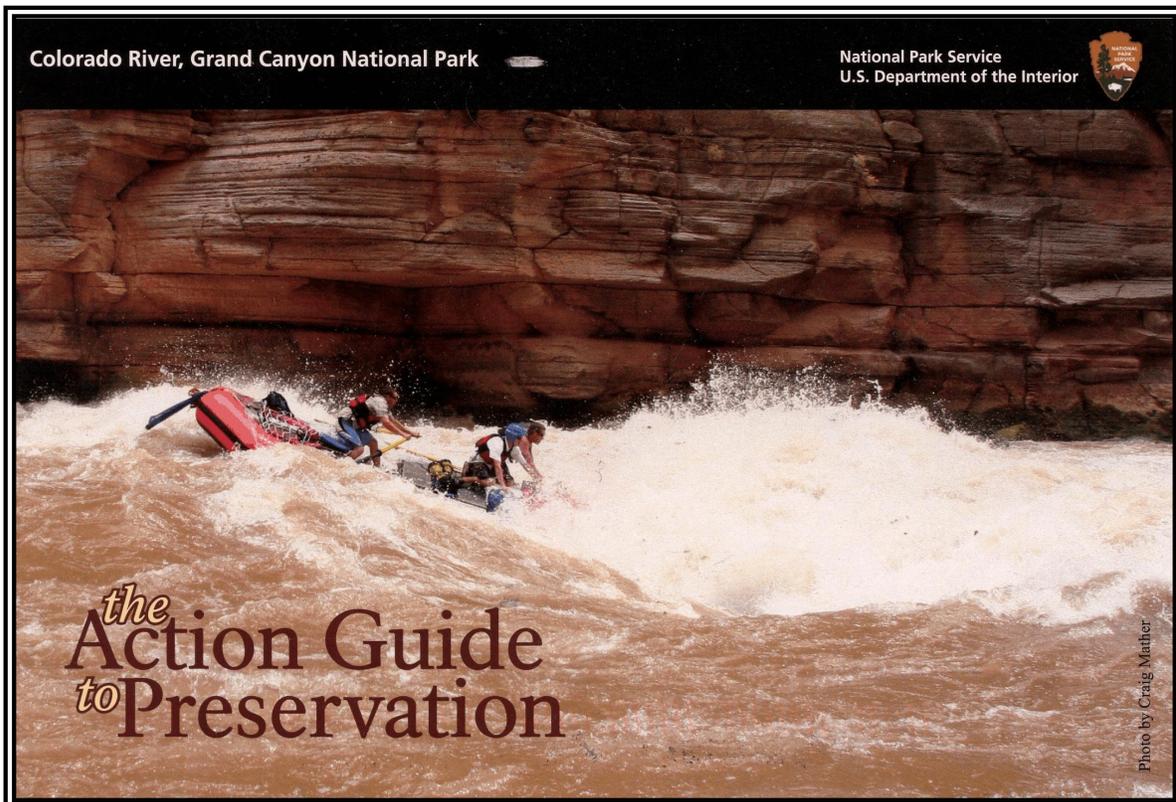
Rogue Inflatables carried a full line of equipment and repair material. They also produced dry bags from 22 ounce Vinyl coated nylon - extremely durable bags with shoulder straps and a four strap tie down. Jerry Briggs made cast brass oar locks, and was a supplier of oar locks to NRS.(4,7)

B.A. Hanten commercially outfitted for over forty years. They sold about 100 boats a year in the 1970's and over 150 a year in the 1980's. By the early 90's competition was intense from new manufacturers, "and for me the bloom was off the rose."(4) B.A. Hanten had a lot of other irons in the fire with the lodge and outfitting business, "so I decided to quit and liquidate Rogue Inflatables in 1991. Then I ran out of boats for my outfitting business and split a couple of 60 boat (Avon) orders with Jerry Briggs in the mid to late 90's that we used and sold as used boats. When I sold the outfitting business in 2006 I was still using the Rogue Model."(4)

Most outfitters on the Rogue and McKenzie Rivers used Rogues from the 1970's until the 1990's. A few northern California, Idaho, Montana, Arizona, Colorado and Utah outfitters used the Rogue Boats. Western Rivers Expeditions in Moab bought a fleet of twenty Rogue Colorado Models and used them from 1984 until around 1997. Brian Merrill of western Rivers "loved the Rogues because they lasted so long under heavy use and they tracked so well." (9) Rogue Inflatables caught the eye of Don Hatch who purchased several of them in the mid-1980's. They were used mostly in Dinosaur National Monument and Cataract Canyon. Those boats are still being used by an outfitter in Roosevelt, Utah. "In 1983 Mark Sleight began switching his fleet over to Rogues. We were all rowing Rogues in 1984. Probably the best conventional boat ever made." Sleight bought eleven more in 1985-86 and continued using them until the mid-late 90's "and most of them were still around and included in the deal when he sold to Elliot." (12) Adventure Bound also used a few Rogues, and Tom Klienschnitz thought very highly of them, especially in the big water in Cataract and Westwater. (10) Dick McCallum ran Rogue's and Swanson oars for many years in the Grand Canyon with Grand Canyon Youth Expeditions. As of 2007, Dick still had two of the Rogues, a Colorado 18' Model and a McKenzie 16' Model. Dick said, "They were great boats and still are! Yes they are heavy boats but a good design." (3)

"Our boats are still out there and I see them now and then. The biggest problem with our boats was they simply lasted too long. That was always a problem with sales as I heard a lot of: I think my boats will last another year or two, which turned out to be another 8-10 years! We had a good reputation in the quality of our boats and the fairness of our dealings." (4,3,5,9, 10,11)

And, that is the epitaph of those big, beautiful, orange boats: They were built solidly by a man who knew and loved Rivers. He designed his boats with knowledge, experience... and love. And he sold them honestly and fairly. B.A. Hanten passed away on May 10, 2008 (8) but every now and then he reappears, look for him the next time you see one of those beautiful orange boats gliding down a river.



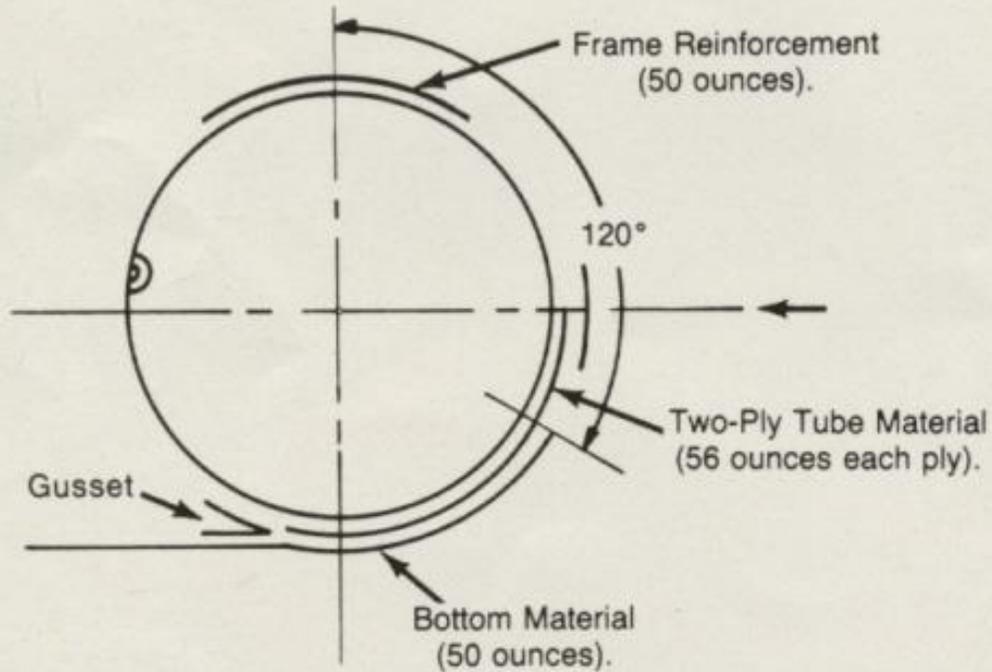
FOOTNOTES

- (1) Rogue Inflatables Price List & Catalog 1983, 1984, 1986; Herm Hoops Collection
- (2) Personal communication: Bonnie Wood to Herm Hoops 10/10/2007*
- (3) Personal communication: Richard "Dick" McCallum to Herm Hoops 11/05/2007
- (4) Personal communication: B.A. Hanten to Herm Hoops 1/2/2008
- (5) Personal communication: Kenny Ross, Wild Rivers Expeditions to Herm Hoops 1982**
- (6) Rogue Inflatable Newsletter January 1986
- (7) Personal communication: Bill Parks (NRS) to Herm Hoops 12/18/2010
- (8) Grants Pass Oregon's The Daily Courier; Bernard Albert Hanten Obituary; Wednesday May 14, 2008
- (9) Personal Communication: Brian Merrill, Western River Expeditions 11/01/06
- (10) Personal Communication: Tom Kleinschnitz, Adventure Bound River Expeditions 11/01/06
- (11) Personal communication: Robert Tubbs (Tubby), Ken Sleight River Expeditions 11/01/06
- (12) Oral interview with Dan Baxter, Herm Hoops 04/24/13

REFERENCES, SOURCES AND INFORMATION:

- B.A. Burned "just about all the Rogue Inflatable records in 2006"; personal communication to Herm Hoops.
- *(2) Bonnie Wood worked for BA Hanten at Morrison's Lodge at the time he was designing the Rogue Inflatables with his good friend Jerry Briggs.
- Jerry Briggs has a boat business in Grants Pass; "The boats are good heavy boats, they must be, they are still on the Rogue and look no worse for wear; of course taking care of them makes a huge difference and the guides for Rogue River Raft Trips have always known to take care of them."; communication to Herm Hoops
- Jerry Briggs: "*The Mail Tribune*" *Our Valley Edition*; February 26, 1987; by Mary Beth Allen
- Christopher A. Dent, Rogue River Program Manager, Rogue National Wild and Scenic River Medford District - Grants Pass Resource Area, 2164 N.E. Spalding Ave. Grants Pass, OR 97526
- ** (5) Kenny Ross of Wild Rivers Expeditions in Bluff, Utah really liked his 16' Rogue. In a taped interview he told me "It was an excellent river craft and he wished he had more of them, but they just didn't wear out." His Rogue sat out in the harsh uv sunlight of Cow Canyon for much of the year from around 1973 until I asked about it in 1980. I was amazed that, for as long as the boat sat out, the orange never faded. It was Kenny's praise for the Rogue that led to my purchase of one.
- Toyo Rubber came out with their own inflatable briefly that they exhibited in Chicago in the early 1980s.
- Personal communication Don Hatch to Herm Hoops around 1987; Don really liked the Rogues, especially how they handled in the big water of cataract canyon and how little damage they incurred from the rocks at low water in Lodore Canyon.
- 1982 Rogue inflatables Invoice and fabric sample; Herm Hoops collection
- 1 beautiful 18' orange rouge Colorado Model in mint condition 2011; Herm Hoops
- Morrisons Rogue River Lodge; Built by river guide and lumberman Lloyd Morrison in 1945; In June of 1964, B.A. and Elaine Hanten bought the lodge and moved in with their 3 children; Mike (5), Michelle (4) and Mark (2). Originally from South Dakota, B.A. & Elaine had happy memories of working at Yellowstone Park and were looking for a similar resort type atmosphere. Elaine did all the cooking, she was a home economics major in college and had always loved to cook and B.A. took to guiding. The first season in a new lifestyle proved to be hard work, but well worth it. (<http://oregonsrogueriver.com/lodges.html>)
- Michelle Hanten passed away March 14, 2007; *America Outdoors E-News*; April 3, 2007; Michelle Hanten, of Rogue River Raft Trips, passed away after battling breast cancer over a period of several years. A longstanding member of America Outdoors, Michelle was well-renowned for her historical knowledge of the river and its banks, and especially knowledgeable about all things fishing and whitewater rafting in this area. Michelle is survived by her father B.A. Hanten who was her original partner and mentor at Morrison's Lodge, and two brothers, Mark and Mike.
- Elaine Marie Hanten; Grants Pass Oregon's The Daily Courier; Obituary; July 25, 1996; In 1964, she and her husband B. A. Hanten moved to Grants Pass and purchased Morrison's Rogue River Lodge. She had her pilot's license and was a member of the Ninety-Nines, a women's pilots organization.

- Rogue Hull Serial Number RGE



Tube Material:
56 oz per square yard
Thickness .055
840 Denier nylon fabric, with neoprene and hypalon coating

Floor Material:
50 oz per square yard
Thickness .050
1260 Denier nylon, fabric with neoprene and hypalon coating