

MAY 50 CENTS • THE MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG ADULTS

REDBOOK

HOW PARENTS DISRUPT OUR LIVES

**REDBOOK
SALUTES
ADVENTURE
ON THE
COLORADO**

(Page 66)

**EXCLUSIVE:
SOPHIA LOREN AND HER HUSBAND
TALK ABOUT THEIR BABY**

**SPECIAL SECTION:
NEW HAIR STYLES, COLORS AND CARE**

**"WHEN SHALL WE LOVE"
A ROMANTIC NEW NOVEL**

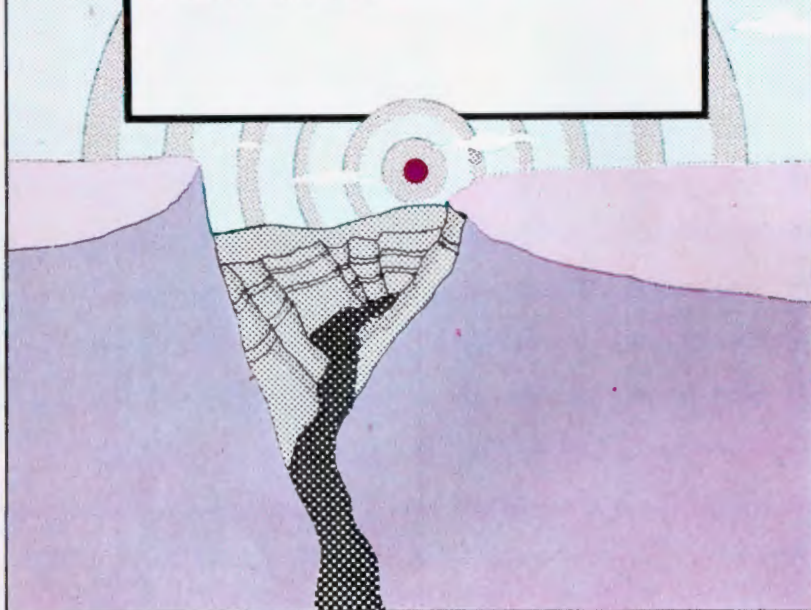
BETTER HOMES FOR LESS MONEY

**CAN THE
"CATHOLIC REVOLUTION" SUCCEED?**

**SENSATIONAL BATHING SUITS,
PRETTY COVER-UPS**

ADVENTURE ON THE COLORADO RIVER

BY BETTY HUGHES



When Bill turned to me with that adventurous look in his eyes, I wondered what was coming. When we were first married, my idea of wilderness travel was stopping at a motel without a pool or cocktail lounge. But over the years I've let Bill lure me into a horseback trip in northern Idaho, a skin-diving expedition for a Spanish galleon off Cozumel in Mexico and a jungle trip in Yucatán. This time it was going to be a trip down the Colorado River on a rubber raft, duplicating one of America's great river explorations—that of Major John Wesley Powell, who led the first expedition down the river and through the Grand Canyon 100 years ago. Since then fewer than 8,000 people have gone down the Colorado, making this trip one of the last great adventures still available to young families. Twelve companies are now permitted to run nine-to-ten-day trips through about 300 miles of the canyon from April to mid-September. (Shorter trips may also be arranged.)

Last June our group of 28 people—more than half of them women—included businessmen, teachers, a family with a 13-year-old son and three pretty teen-aged girls whose bikinis were a pleasing distraction for our young boatmen. Like most of these trips, ours began at Glen Canyon Dam, in northern Arizona. Our rafts were four Army surplus bridge pontoons lashed together with a wooden frame. We rode on top of our gear, which was packed in water-

proof bags and lashed under a tarpaulin along with supplies for the entire trip. Two college-age boatmen were assigned to each raft. They handled all the chores and guided the rafts through the rapids. Virtually untippable, definitely unsinkable, the 33-by-15-foot, quarter-inch-thick rubber rafts ran the toughest rapids like inflated caterpillars, bouncing off rocks with ease.

During our nine-day journey we traveled 305 miles down the Colorado to Lake Mead, on the Arizona-Nevada border. Within the first few miles and several sizable rapids, my fears of the trip dissipated as fast as my pre-trip hairdo. The river bed dropped more than 2,400 feet in those nine days, sometimes running massive rapids that seemed close to swamping us, sometimes floating down narrow canyons whose walls towered half a mile above. The river's speed varied from two to 20 miles an hour in the rapids.

Though it was essentially a river trip, we stopped often to explore many of the superb side canyons, waterfalls or Indian ruins. And we always pulled ashore for lunch, with time for a snooze or a swim in some quiet pool or backwater eddy. We traveled about 35 miles along the river each day before camping on some sandy shore for the night. At first Bill and I sought seclusion away from the rafts, but after toting our heavy bags through the sand for a few nights, we followed the example of the seasoned campers and

bedded down close to the rafts. While the boatmen pitched camp and prepared dinner, we had plenty of time to get acquainted with the other people in our party. About half of them were experienced campers who were always ready to help novices with advice or the loan of camping gear. Most of the time we were asleep by nine, with only the bright desert stars for a canopy. Though we had sleeping bags, we usually slept on top of them, with only a large towel as a cover.

Our days started at 6:30 A.M., sparked by the smell of fresh-brewed coffee. After a solid breakfast, the boatmen washed dishes and we made the mandatory camp cleanup. We were back on the river by nine. Even at that hour it was quite hot. The desert sun bakes the canyon rocks to a saunalike heat, and the temperature often hits 100 degrees or more in midsummer. But all we had to do was slip into the cool Colorado to appreciate the heat, for melting mountain snows held the river temperature to below 60 degrees.

Dress was comfortably informal—shorts or dungarees, topped with a light shirt or blouse, and a broad-brimmed hat to shield our eyes from the sun. Sun lotion was an absolute must. Even though my mirror reflected a sunburned nose, I didn't care. The boatmen thought I was great because I helped make sandwiches at lunchtime.

After a few days on the river and a good number of big rapids to our credit, we acquired a healthy respect for the Colorado of today, and could only look with awe upon what Powell had accomplished years before the Hoover and Glen Canyon dams were built. At that time the river volume was as high as 160,000 cubic feet a minute, about the volume of the American Niagara Falls on a high-water day. Now the river averages about 12 feet in depth and its flow is about 7,000 to 10,000 cubic feet a minute. The volume varies with the season and sometimes by the hour, depending on how much water is let through the Glen Canyon Dam to produce power.

These fluctuations in volume gave our boatmen some hard times. Twice they anchored the big rafts along the river's edge at night, only to find them high and dry in the morning because the river was down. The boatmen's groans at having to inch the rafts back into the river, combined with some muttered vituperations directed at the dam people, caused one wag among us to rename an old tune "The Song of the Vulgar Boatmen."

Continued on page 68

But the same boatmen were more poetic in negotiating the 300 rapids along the river. Each rapid has a distinct temperament, as well as a unique name, and must be traversed with the precision timing of stock-car racing. Everyone on the raft had his favorite rapids. Ours were Soekdolager, Grapevine, Kwagunt, Nankoweap and Upset Falls; the latter two were the hardest to run.

Each rapid has been charted and rated on a scale from one to ten, the highest number indicating the most difficult. The rating depends on the length of the run, size of "holes" and "standing waves," size and number of rocks and—the big variable—the volume and depth of the water. The holes and standing waves scared us most. They combined to form a wicked one-two punch that has capsized many wooden boats and small rafts. A "hole" stops just short of being a waterfall, and is formed when the river cascades over a lip of rock, then drops as much as 20 feet or more in a convulsive rush. The "standing wave" is created by the sudden thrust of water hitting the bottom and may rise as high as 25 feet or more. It's very much like crashing surf, only the waves remain constant.

Other potential dangers are the house-size rocks, many of them hidden under the water's surface, that could have smashed our in-board-mounted, 20-horsepower out-board motors, and the violent cross waves that could have knocked the raft off course. Because of these threats, life jackets were mandatory while we were on the river. If someone fell overboard, as does happen occasionally, his life jacket would simply float him downstream to a back eddy, soaked but safe.

While running the big rapids on the bronco-bucking raft, it was all we could do to hang on to the spider-web lashings holding down the gear. There was a lot of yelling—to relieve tension the first few times, from exhilaration thereafter.

But for all the excitement and exhilaration running the rapids provided, it was the shore stops and hiking excursions we looked forward to more and more as the trip progressed. The most irresistible places were the many side canyons feeding into the Colorado, with their waterfalls, gentle streams and warm pools for swimming. Because of the light filtering into these canyons and reflecting off the multicolored walls, the effect was not unlike relaxing inside an enormous, natural kaleidoscope.

We stopped for a swim in the Little Colorado River, a bright-red

Continued on page 72

stream when Powell named it, now an azure color from its mineral salts. The Little Colorado was about 20 degrees warmer than its big brother, so we donned masks and went after some of the two-foot-long catfish lurking around the rocks.

Still another delightful stop was the limestone spring known as Vasey's Paradise. It gushed forth from an otherwise barren wall, and its path to the river was festooned with fresh water cress. We picked some to go with our lunch of Bologna sandwiches and Kool-Aid. Talk about gracious living!

Once there was time for an afternoon nap on the silky sand of Red-rock Cavern, a cathedral-like room carved out of stone by the river and large enough to sleep a regiment. Its perfect echo fascinated Bill. We found a more energetic diversion near Nankowep Rapids, where the Colorado makes a grand sweep to enter the Grand Canyon National Park. The hardy among us made an hour's climb to explore some Indian ruins high up on the canyon wall. Bill made the trek to take some photographs and relearned Lesson One of photography: Take some film as well as a camera.

Some of our most relaxing moments on the river were spent when the motors were cut and we just drifted along in blissful silence, luxuriating in the dizzying array of colors and formations about us. After some coaching by the boatmen and amateur geologists, we were able to identify some of the 12 major rock strata in the canyon formations. Our imaginations soon led to a child's game of finding the Indian head, the chicken, the flying saucer, in the rock shapes.

The scenery changed with every bend of the river, and we went through phases when we were either bored or thrilled by it. In deep Marble Gorge (a misnomer, as there is no marble in the canyon, only a hard limestone Powell mistook for marble) the walls reach upward 3,000 feet above the river. Later, when we entered the wider Granite Gorge, whose walls are terraced in huge tiers, it was possible for a short space to see both the northern and southern rims of the canyon. Deep in Granite Gorge, we passed two-billion-year-old Vishnu Schist, the oldest rock that can be seen by man. At this point we were 5,700 feet below the canyon rim. It had taken the Colorado somewhere between seven and 20 million years to grind down to this level, depending on which geologist you favor.

We had only to dip a cup overboard and scoop up some water to

find the river was still at work. Though the sand got thicker each day, the water was drinkable all the way to Lake Mead, provided you let it settle for a while. The Colorado still carries an average of 80,000 tons of silt downstream daily, enough to fill 16,000 five-ton trucks. Before the Glen Canyon Dam was built, the volume was as high as 27 million tons a day. We found that difficult to believe, until we approached Lake Mead and saw the massive mud flats and sand bars. The U.S. Geological Survey Maps showed that some Lake Mead coves and bays, once 300 feet of clear water, are now completely filled with silt.

Sand bars were visible at every bend in the river and at the end of each rapid. Tamarisk shrubs, a soft, fernlike tree of the Middle East, and cottonwood trees provided what little shade there was from the sun. Toward the end of the journey we saw more cactus, yucca and mesquite. Though we were always on the lookout for wildlife, the best we managed were some Rocky Mountain sheep high on the rocks, a few deer and a number of wild burros. The burros, descendants of those abandoned by miners long ago, provided a cacophonous concert for several of our night camps.

Swooping blue herons and darting rock sparrows were our companions during the day, while flocks of bats often swirled high above at twilight. We were never nagged by mosquitoes or flies. Scorpions, yes. Flies never.

The boatmen had warned us at the beginning of the trip that most casualties occurred on land rather than on the river—scrapes from falls and bites from insects. It wasn't until we found a five-inch-long scorpion that the lesson hit home. An entomologist in our party assured us they were not lethal. He also introduced us to a unique Grand Canyon bug, the velvet ant, a large black insect with 15 or 20 white hairs down its back.

Powell's expedition, which started May 24, 1869, was plagued by almost ceaseless toil and hardship during the 98-day trip through the Grand Canyon. The four wood, round-bottomed boats were ill-suited for running rapids. Actually they ran only a few of the rapids; instead they either laboriously carried the boats around them or eased them over the angry waters by means of ropes maneuvered from shore. Through Grapevine Rapids alone (so named by Powell for the hundreds of boulders strewn down its length), it took Powell's men three days to carry the boats to safe wa-

ter. In contrast, our big rubber rafts shot by in less than three minutes.

For provisions the Powell party had salt pork, beans, moldy flour and little else. We dined on steak, pork chops, meat loaf, spaghetti and meat sauce, to click off just a few entrees. And soup, fresh salad, dessert and coffee or tea were always available. The boatmen doubled as cooks, and often surprised us with such treats as fresh strawberry shortcake, brownies or fresh-baked biscuits for breakfast.

Like many good cooks, the boatmen were touchy. Bill once humorously suggested his overcooked pancake be used as a patch for the raft. That night he found it in his sleeping bag. Next morning the same pancake appeared in a boatman's hat and still later came to rest as the innersole of Bill's tennis shoe. Such shenanigans marked the close-knit feeling that developed among our group as the trip drew near its end. Life was easy and relaxed. We had halfway expected the close association on the rafts to create some ill feelings. But such was never the case.

We made several lasting friendships on the Colorado, one particularly with the Grand Canyon itself. We've seen both the northern and southern rims from above on numerous occasions, and hiked and mule-trained it down the Bright Angel Trail to Phantom Ranch at the bottom. But after the raft trip we were rewarded with a highly personal view of what the canyon is really like in its sweeping entirety.

And we've the added distinction of making a trip only a few others have made, participating in a river drama that, save for modern equipment and good food, comes close to duplicating the original expedition of Major Powell 100 years ago. As such it's probably one of the best, and last, of the family adventure trips remaining in America today.

THE END

A nine-day trip such as this, operated by the American River Touring Association, costs about \$325 per person. Under the family plan, children under 12 get a 50 per cent reduction, while children between the ages of 13 and 17 get a 25 per cent reduction. (Parents are advised not to bring children under ten.) For more information write: American River Touring Association, 1016 Jackson St., Oakland, California 94607. For information on the other Colorado River guides, write: Chief Ranger, Grand Canyon National Park, Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023.