

GRAND CANYON EXPLORER

Grand Canyon Pioneers Society - Monthly Bulletin

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October 2001

Mike Harrison

Mike Harrison is celebrating his 104th birthday on December 13 and is our oldest member. The members of the Grand Canyon Pioneer Society have presented him with a copy of Grand Ambition by Lisa Michaels. It is most appropriate since Mike was at the Canyon at the time of Glen and Bessie Hyde.

Mike received many awards during his lifetime, been involved in many historic events and spent the past 78 years collecting tens of thousands of books on the West. At a ceremony in the Faculty Club of University of California, Berkeley, the Friends of the Bancroft Library gave Mike the Hubert Howe Bancroft Award for his contribution to history and its preservation. The book that launched his collection is Hinton's Handbook of Arizona. Three quarters of a century later, his collection has grown to over 20,000 volumes. All books deal with the history and development of the United States west of the Mississippi, and the arts and crafts of western American Indians. Some date back to the 1850s.

Mike says he is only concerned with the West, not the East because he fell in love with the West after seeing the Grand Canyon when he accepted a job there in 1922 with the Park Service. At that time there were only three people on the staff: a Superintendent, a ranger and a clerk. Mike became the clerk which amounted to a jack of all trades: he lectured, was involved in search and rescue, and did anything that came along. Later he was involved in the search for two rangers, Fred Johnson and Glen Sturdevant, who drowned in the River; the search for Glen and Bessie Hyde who were lost in the River on their honeymoon; and in the capture of a notorious bank robber, Kimes, who was hiding under the rim at the village.

Mike was a friend of such Canyon pioneers as Bill Bass, Cap Hance, Bert Lauzon, Louis Shellbach, Eddie McKee and many others.

He became associated with University of California at Davis and later bequeathed his library to the University and his library in home in Fair Oaks, California.

When Mike decided he wanted a bookplate and suggested to Russell Hastings what he wanted, Russell made the wood block after the design he suggested to him. It is a Hopi bird symbol and is one of Mike's Navajo names - Little Mexican. The other Navajo name was given to him by the Navajos who came to the Canyon or lived there working for Fred Harvey on the railroad - it was the slurring on the Spanish word - Hsoldado - Solajo Yazie, "little soldier" because they only saw him in uniform. Mike preferred the first name because Nokai, the Navajo tone in the old days, meant "wandered" - the name applied to the early Spanish in the southwest.

When asked if he has a favorite book, he said "Do a mother and father has a favorite

child? I have a lot of favorite books."

[Submitted by Fred and Jeanne Schick]

GCPS Outings for 2001

October 20: October 21: Annual Board Meeting for board members and nominees. The Board will have space reserved for them in separate area for board meeting:

Time: 10:30 AM
Place: Perkins Family Restaurant
1900 S. Milton Road, Flagstaff

After lunch and a report from the Board, there will be a talk about Sunk Without A Sound: The Tragic Colorado River Honeymoon of Glen and Bessie Hyde by author Brad Dimock:

Time: Lunch at 12:00 Noon
Presentation at 1:30 PM
Place: Perkins Family Restaurant

November 17: Backpacking remote areas of Grand Canyon - a slide program by Carol Castleman.

Carol has lead Sierra Club trips around the world -- including many, many Grand Canyon backpacks to remote areas as well as about two dozens rafting trips. Program will be at the Church of the Red Rocks off 179 in Sedona.

Directions: "Church of the Red Rocks" Sign on Highway 179 -- From I-17 it is 13.1 miles on 179; left on Bow String Drive. -- From 89A it is 1.3 miles on 179; right on Bow String Drive.

December : No Meeting

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Here's another meaning of Red Butte's Supai name for you.

In the late 1970s when Victor Watahomagi (there's a good old Supai name for you) and I were the rangers at Indian Gardens, we often spent our long evenings sitting outside the ranger station on the bench facing the campground discussing. everything under the sun.

Since I had worked at the mining camp below Supai Village in the 40s and knew the area as well as many of the residents, items relevant to Havasupai was a favorite subject-- including names, pronunciations and their translations.

He'd patiently spell them out phonetically and pronounce them by syllable so I could write down the place names we talked about; and I just happen to have saved a copy of many of them! Here are some of the major places he named for me:

Willaha (an old ranch site):
Willa - Grass, Ha- Water

Wikatàta (S. Rim):
Rough Rim or Edge

Wiglèeva (Supai towers):
Prince & Princess

Topocòba (Hilltop & Trail):
Summit Spring

Huethawali (Mount below Bass):
White Mt, also called Observation Mt

Hùegathawiza (Red Butte):
Mountain of the Clenched Fist

Hakataia (Grand Canyon & River):
Great Roaring Sound

Havasùpai (Tribe):
Haha (water), Vasu (blue), Pai (people)

("Hue" is a blown sound, such as "wh" in "where.")

Victor still works for the Park Service Maintenance Department, by the way; an old friend of many memories for me! Linda Knutson, whose letter was printed in the September Bulletin, that stimulated this letter, is an old friend from my Phantom days of the 70s, who still lives within sight of Red Butte. Another Linda, Linda Hoodenpyle, was the Fire Warden on Red Butte for several years, with only a canine companion. I wonder where her path has led her since then.

And thinking of Red Butte: Its Supai name becomes very evident when driving north from Valle to the Canyon. The south-facing cliffs seem to form the fingers of a hairy (pine) wristed first!

Gale Burak
PO Box 605
N. Woodstock, NH 03262

Dear Editor,

Read with interest the items about Gunnar Widforss.

We have one of his paintings. When he visited the Canyon in the late 20s, my Dad had him

do a painting of the Canyon from the spot where my folks used to sit and watch the sunset. It was probably near where the cemetery is now located. He wrote a letter to my dad after finishing the painting, and it is now attached to the back of the painting. Haven't looked at it in several years, so I don't remember what he said.

Roy Burris Jr.
Rio Verde, AZ

September Outing and September 11

You may have noticed that the front page of this Bulletin does not contain the results of the September Outing at The Rock Art Ranch near Winslow. At the time of printing The Bulletin, no report was submitted to the editor. Either the event was too far out of the way, or too many of us were still grieving for those lost on September 11.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the survivors and those lost, their families, and the emergency and rescue personnel, and with the United States military.

New Members

Jim Suran - Birmingham, AL
Davina Suran - Birmingham, AL
Dr. Michael C. Mays - Birmingham, AL

Outings Contacts Information

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The Bulletin welcomes comments, stories, or Reflections and Remembrances.

Please send them to

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or e-mail them to GCPioneers@yahoo.com

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