

Grand Canyon Historical Society, Inc.

To develop and promote appreciation, understanding and education of the earlier history of the inhabitants and important events of the Grand Canyon and surrounding area.

The Bulletin

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March 2005

Michael Harrison now 107

On December 13, 2004, Michael Harrison turned 107 years young. For those of you who may not know him, we are reprinting here (with permission) an article and photo originally published in The Newsletter of the Western History Association:

Michael Harrison Receives First Hubert Howe Bancroft Award

The WHA Newsletter – Spring 1998

Michael Harrison, honorary president of the Western History Association, received the first Hubert Howe Bancroft Award from the Friends of the Bancroft Library last April. The award honors Harrison for his extensive collection and preservation of Western art, books and artifacts. Harrison's collection contains over 20,000 volumes and hundreds of publications that document the history of the trans-Mississippi West from the 19th century to the present.

Harrison began his collection 75 years ago, while a park ranger at the Grand Canyon. He enhanced it during his fifteen-year tenure as a civil servant with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and his thirteen-year employment with the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation.

Harrison and his wife, the late Margaret Baker Harrison, acquired so many volumes that they had to reinforce the first floor of their house to support the weight. Ultimately they built a new home to accommodate their collection. Despite the size of his collection, Harrison uses no computers to catalogue it. His 600,000-plus card file fills a large room, and is one of the most comprehensive cross-reference systems in the library world. Duplicates of his index cards are sent to the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, for microfilming.



Mike Harrison and friends near the Grand Canyon, 1928

[Photo from WHA Newsletter, Summer 1997]

2005 Outings

March 26 - Tour of Lonely Dell at Lee's Ferry. This historic ranch, near the mouth of the Paria River, was home to the families who operated Lees Ferry. The main ranch buildings are about 700 feet up the dirt road from the parking area. The complete tour of the orchard, log cabins, stone ranch house, and pioneer cemetery is about a 1-mile round trip. There are picnic tables and shade trees at the ranch. Take drinking water with you.

Time: 1:00 PM

Place: Meet in the parking lot at the Lees Ferry launch ramp. We will take a short tour of the ferry-crossing site and its historic buildings then move over to Lonely Dell.

There are several places for lunch in the Marble Canyon area. Pick your favorite. Mike likes Vermilion Cliffs Lees Ferry Lodge and will be there at about 11:30.

Scheduled for the same weekend as the Grand Canyon River Guides' Spring Guides Training Seminar at Marble Canyon for those GCHS members who wish to participate in some of the GCRG programs. (See www.gcr.org/gts.htm for GCRG information.) [Mike Coltrin, event coordinator]

April 16 - History of El Tovar/Verkamps/Hopi House in celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the El Tovar, Verkamp's Store, and Hopi House [Keith Green, event coordinator]. Its time to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the El Tovar Hotel, Hopi House, and Verkamps Curio. Although Xanterra and the Park Service have their own events planned for Wednesday, April 13, we will celebrate it on Saturday, April 16.

Henry Karpinski, resident historian on El Tovar, will show us some historic pictures and give us a tour of the El Tovar Hotel. Next, a break – some of us will walk down to the Arizona Room for a view of the Canyon. And perhaps have a bit to eat there or at your favorite Canyon eatery...but don't be late for the afternoon program. Phyllis Kachinhongva,* who grew-up at the Hopi House, will tell us her stories and show us her favorite places at Hopi House. Finally, we will walk a short distance along the rim to the Verkamp Store and meet Steve Verkamp, who will take us into Verkamp Store and tell us some of its history, including special memories of growing up there at the Canyon's rim.

* Phyllis Kachinhongva is profiled in the 2004 edition of *Grand Canyon Women – Lives Shaped by Landscape* by Betty Leavengood.

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May 14 - Carving Grand Canyon by Wayne Ranney. Geologist, author, Professor of Geology at Yavapai College in Sedona and Research Associate at the Museum of Northern Arizona, Wayne Ranney will describe in words and pictures the story of what we know and don't know about how rivers carve canyons and why it happened in northern Arizona. To be held at the Flagstaff Public Library. [Dan Cassidy, event coordinator]

June 11 - Annual Shoshone Point Picnic. Members from across the country converge at the Canyon's edge for a potluck of good food, friendly faces and lively conversation. [Linda Anderson, event coordinator]

July 16 - Annual North Rim Campout. Spend a day (and a night) in the North Kaibab Forest with fellow Canyon adventurers. [John Azar, event coordinator]

August 20 - Community Service Project at the Grand Canyon NPS Library. We will assist Librarian Susan Eubank with barcoding the entire book collection, which entails one group that will be physically putting barcodes on books and another group that will be entering those barcodes into the computer. We might also put labels on the books, if necessary. [Nancy Green, event coordinator]

September 17 - To be determined. [Nancy Green, event coordinator]

October 15 - Annual Board Meeting [Mike Coltrin, event coordinator]

November 19 - To be determined. [Keith Green, event coordinator]

December - No meeting

* * * * *

February Outing Attendees

Those who attended Mike Coltrin's *Walk In The Park* presentation were:

Ralph Baierlein
Nancy & Keith Green
Jim Hastengen
Larry Lindsay
Beverly Loomis
Phil Mlsna
Jim, Janece, Robert, Jon & Sarah Ohlman
Robert & Mary Simpson
Margaret VanCleve

Thank You to our Members

Along with the renewal of membership, several members have contributed additional dollars as gifts or as contributions to the scholarship fund and/or the promotion fund:

Robert & Beverly Bechtel – Tucson AZ
Dan & Diane Cassidy – Prescott AZ
Ethel Cole – Cottonwood AZ
Betty Hamilton – Flagstaff AZ
Cynthia Bragg – Jefferson ME
Paul Callaway – Fredonia AZ
Michael Harrison – Fair Oaks CA
Amy Horn – Grand Canyon AZ
Robert Lauzon – Flagstaff AZ
Mike Mahanay – Seattle WA
Gene & Marvel Wendt – Vail AZ

We appreciate your generosity. Thank you.

* * * * *

Welcome New Members

Jean Luttrell – Boulder City NV
Fred Schaffner – Prescott AZ

* * * * *

Letters to the Editor

Search & Rescue: A note from Gene Wendt (Vail AZ) points out that the reference to "Rock House Canyon" in the Search & Rescue article in the December 2004 issue of *The Bulletin* probably should be "House Rock Canyon" because Rock House Canyon is in Gila/Coconino counties.

Ford Tri-Motor: An email from Steve Owen (Chandler AZ) about the Ford Tri-Motor article in the Jan/Feb/Mar issue of *The Ol'Pioneer* mentions that the Ford Tri-motor N414H was on display in the hangar at Valle, at the Planes of Fame facility, when he was there on January 2 (after spending New Year's at the South Rim). This was the first time he had seen it indoors, in pristine condition. The aircraft (or a twin) was displayed outdoors some years ago, before the new facility at Valle airport was completed. A November 1977 *Arizona Highways* featured a Grand Canyon Scenic Airways Fort Tri-Motor over the Canyon on its cover, and an article as well. This aircraft had the special serial number N76GC in honor of the Bicentennial celebration the previous year – so it may or may not be the same one as *The Ol'Pioneer* described. Steve also saw this tri-motor fly over Prescott on the afternoon of October 2 – a remarkable sight...and sound!

A Walk In The Park with Mike Coltrin

Although it was a cold and snowy day, 16 GCHS members and guests were treated to a warm hike in the canyon, courtesy of Vice President Mike Coltrin's excellent presentation of "A Walk in the Park." GCHS President Keith Green welcomed the intrepid winter travelers and introduced Mike as a National Park Service Volunteer extraordinaire.

In October of 2003, Mike hooked up with part of the National Park Service's Blitz to do an 11-day hike from the South Kaibab to Phantom Ranch, Clear Creek to Kwagunt Creek to Lipan Point from October 6-17. Joining him on this daunting adventure were Chuck Sypher, Bob Ribokas and Dave Baker.

Mike says that this was one of the top 3 or 4 hikes of a lifetime for him. He originally wanted to hike Nankoweap Trail off the North Rim. But after talking with Bill Vandegriff, the ranger in charge of the river unit of the Blitz, Mike realized that this hike could have a river trip component. Mike also used hiking routes of George Steck and Harvey Butchart, and a couple of suggestions by Jim Ohlman and, of course, Major Powell.

Day 1 was down to Phantom Ranch via the South Kaibab Trail, except Mike had to go check out the Miner's Trail, just below Skeleton Point. That first night was pretty rough staying at the Phantom Ranger station having steaks and sleeping in beds.

Day 2 was an all-day hike to Clear Creek. As a side note, these 4 hikers each had a digital camera, so after the hike, 800 pictures were pooled. After some serious editing, 130 shots were used for this presentation. One was a nice shot of the Bench on the way to Clear Creek. That was a long day with those heavy packs. Of course, Dave's pack was made lighter by losing his famous spoon there. This spoon had accompanied him on many hikes, and was bent just right so it wouldn't slip into a pot. Some great photos of Wotan's Throne and Angel's Gate were shown.

Day 3 found them walking along the eastern arm of Clear Creek to Wotan's Arm to Vishnu Creek. The climb and descent here were difficult and treacherous. They needed a hand line in one spot, made all the more difficult with those heavy packs. But, a pleasant night was spent at Vishnu Creek.

Day 4 involved a climb to the saddle, across the Tonto to a steep descent into Asbestos Canyon, with Newberry Peak a prominent feature; also shown was Vishnu Temple. That night's camp was in the Asbestos Creek bed. They were able to check out Hance's mines, which still had shovels and a powder box.

Day 5 hiking went from Asbestos Canyon to Rattlesnake Camp, passing Hance's camp along the way. There were still bed frames and a camp stove there. They hiked up from the Tonto to the Tabernacle where, true to form, there was a strong wind blowing. From there they took the river runner's trail down to the river. The river was muddy; luckily they had plenty of time for the water to settle out in jugs and buckets.



Chuck Sypher below the Tabernacle

[Photo by Mike Coltrin]

Day 6 was Rattlesnake Camp to Basalt Canyon. This involved another hand line down. They crossed the Unkar Delta, which is famous for the number of Indian artifacts and ruins. There also was a miner's camp at Basalt Beach with lots of relics, including a stove. And, there were signs of beaver – trees which had been gnawed and tracks in the river mud.

Day 7 was Basalt Canyon to Chuar Valley. This climb covered steep areas with loose rocks. It seemed worth it, though, with the view overlooking the Lava/Chuar Valley, along with the Indian ruins and pottery shards.

Day 8 went from Chuar Valley to Sixty-Mile Canyon across Carbon Creek. There were miners' relics at the spring, including part of a cast-iron wheel that remains from a coffee grinder that was mounted on a cottonwood tree stump (used with the bootlegging still that was at the spring). Shoots grew from the stump and trunks have grown around the wheel. This was a place to learn about different kinds of shade – soft or hard. Hard shade is when you get into something big and solid, like the shade thrown from a cliff face or big rock. Soft shade is more dappled, like the shade from a tree.

Day 9 was Sixty-Mile Canyon to Kwagunt Creek. "Mikey's Shortcut" turned out to be twice as long, with twice as much elevation change!

Day 10 was Kwagunt Creek to Kwagunt Rapids at the Colorado River. Mike went straight on down to be sure that the river trip was going to stop for them as planned. This is where the story of Dave's spoon was retold. Later, Kurt Speers returned to the Clear Creek area and actually found the spoon, so it did eventually get returned to Dave. It's a small canyon – sometimes!!

Day 11 was a float down river to the Tanner Trail. What had taken 4 days of hiking was about 4 hours on the river. The team then hiked up the Tanner to Lipan Point. Not quite a loop hike, but beginning and ending on the South Rim not too many miles apart. The hike was 80 or so miles in length.

Thanks, Mike – for the report of a great hike that many of us wouldn't have the strength or courage to endure!

[Article by Nancy Green]

Do you remember John Riffey?

Dear GCHS Members,

Do you remember John Riffey, Tuweep Ranger from 1942 to 1980?

I am researching the life of John Riffey for the purpose of writing a book. I would like to hear from those of you who knew him. Any memories would be appreciated, but I'm especially interested in learning why Riffey was not moved to another park during the 1940s and '50s when it was the Park Service's policy to transfer rangers.

Also what was the special something (the magic or charisma) about Riffey that caused everyone to love and remember him?

Sincerely,
Jean Luttrell
1200 Nelson Ct.
Boulder City NV 89005
MJCLuttrell@earthlink.net

Pioneer Award

**Nominations are now being accepted for the 2005
Grand Canyon Historical Society Pioneer Award.**

The Society wants to honor an individual who has made a significant contribution to the understanding of and knowledge about the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River in such areas as geology, creation, river running, backcountry hiking, photography, history, administration, etc.; that is, any area that advances knowledge of the Grand Canyon.

Previous recipients of the
Pioneer Award:

- 2004 – Gary Ladd
- 2003 – George Billingsley
- 2002 – William "Bill" Suran
- 1999 – George Steck
- 1998 – Gale Burak
- 1997 – Harvey Butchart

To make a nomination, simply submit the individual's name and their accomplishments and/or contributions that have advanced our knowledge of the Grand Canyon to:

Todd Berger
P.O. Box 148
Grand Canyon AZ 86023
boddttodd@grand-canyon.az.us

Nominations must be received before April 1.

Outings/Programs: If you have a suggestion for a future outing/program or a question about an upcoming event, contact the **2005 Outings Coordinator:** Mike Coltrin, 2041 West Brichta Drive, Tucson AZ 85745; phone: 520-624-1831; email: Coltrin1@cox.net.

The Bulletin welcomes comments, stories, or reflections and remembrances. Please send them to Diane Cassidy at 2112 Demerse Avenue, Prescott, AZ 86301; email: Pioneers@GrandCanyonHistory.org.

Grand Canyon Historical Society

P.O. Box 10067

Prescott, Arizona 86304-0067

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