

## Wildfire at the Grand Canyon

On the 21st of February a large turnout of Pioneers met at the Gurley Street Grill in Prescott to hear Grand Canyon National Park interpretive



ranger Ron Brown speak on the topic of wildfire at the Grand Canyon. Ron is also a fire information officer at the Canyon. Highlights of his presentation follow.

The forest has always burned. Typically the early forest was open and consisted of only 12 to 20 trees per acre. Once every few years a natural lightning-caused fire occurred with a low intensity and flames of about two feet high. The fire burned the forest grass and cleared out the underbrush. Most of the trees survived since the bark of a Ponderosa pine tree is somewhat fire resistant. Fire in an open forest recycles nutrients, keeps the landscape healthy and resilient, and minimizes crowding and fuel loads.

Today's forests are overcrowded and commonly have as many as 1,200 trees per acre. They typically have "dog hair thickets"--a mixture of small and large trees and undergrowth, some of which are not resistant to fire. These thickets allow a fire to climb into the crown of the trees, where they burn with an incredible intensity and spread rapidly. Today's forests are a result of several factors, including periods of higher-than-average rainfall and a previous policy of fire suppression.

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## 2004 Outings

**March 27: Grand Canyon Climber – The Story of Robert Benson.** Robert is the hero of GC climbers. Known for walking from Horse Canyon (Green River, Utah) to Lee's Ferry to join up with George Steck and his group who were on their way to Grand Wash Cliffs, Robert continued the trek along the River from Lake Mead to Moab (with a broken pelvis). Gary Ladd and George Steck will tell their stories of Robert Benson.

Time: 11:00 AM

Place: Old Marble Canyon Inn  
across Highway 89A from Marble  
Canyon Lodge (look for the statue of the  
female river runner)

If you get there early, let's meet for breakfast at Marble Canyon Lodge at 9:30 AM and, after the talk, we could meet for lunch at one of the local eateries.

*(John Azar, March Outing Leader)*

**April 16-18: Tour of Phantom Ranch.** The tour of Phantom Ranch begins at 7:30 PM. on April 16. Henry Karpinski, a local historian, has been all over the Kaibab Suspension Bridge. He will narrate a PowerPoint presentation that evening at the little amphitheater between the ranch and the Phantom Ranger Station. The next morning, after your breakfast, Mike Anderson, Pam Cox (Phantom interpretive ranger), and Keith Green will lead an in-depth tour of the history and reality of the entirety of Phantom Ranch. On the evening of April 17 at 7:30 PM, Mike Anderson will narrate a PowerPoint presentation about his research on the trails. This also will be at the amphitheater. The next day, we hike out.

Those who made the deadline for reservations through Keith will be staying in the Trail Crew Bunkhouse the nights of April 16 and 17. The cost will be \$5 per night -- Keith will be sending payment instructions to those who have made reservations.

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## Letter to GCHS

Greetings one and all,

Enclosed is my application and check for membership in the Grand Canyon Pioneers Society. I was so surprised and happy to find you while surfing the net! Your website is very good. Thank goodness you exist.

Yes, I am the second son of Louis and Ethyl Schellbach. I was born in Phoenix and grew up at the Canyon from 1941-1956. I am now retired, and planning a visit to the Canyon and Flagstaff in mid April. The nostalgia flowed from your website, and the articles in your newsletter broth back a lot of wonderful memories:

Like all the wonderful social events at the Community Building. Sam Fenner's band and his zither! The annual Christmas pageant there. The Wed. and Sat. movies, the dances, bingo, and on and on.

Doug Ramsey getting stuck trying to shiny down the main water supply pipe from Indian Gardens. All the mischief we kids got into trying to entertain ourselves and keeping the rangers (and particularly the Night Watchman "Smitty") in an endless struggle to tame us.

Rose Collom who would come to stay with us from Payson so she could tend to the Park's Herbarium for my Father. Big Jake, the gentle bus driver, and his canaries. The "Lame Coyote" and the day he chased me. The daily gatherings at the soda fountain at Babbitts. Night sledding on the "Dr's Hill." "Tent City." The CCC Camp and the fun all those guys got into.

The farmers from Kanab and Fredonia selling their fresh fruit door to door each season. Skiing at Grapevine Hill. The Boy Scouts helping direct traffic

at 3 AM on Easter Sunday. The Mobil Gas Economy Run stop at the Park. The whistle at the power plant reminding everyone of the time--particularly the kids. The day my brother, Don, buzzed the Village in a B-25 bomber on a training flight from Texas.

My Mother, The Canyon Song Bird, who sang at weddings, funerals and special events and was accompanied on the piano by Eloise Turner. She was also the reporter for the Canyon News column in the Daily Sun.

The summer parade of Seasonal Rangers and Naturalists who came back every summer because they loved us and we loved them. Ansel Adams having dinner at our house and watching slide shows afterwards in the living room where he and my Father would critique each other's photos.

The day the Rose Bowl train pulled in and opened the freight car doors so all the villagers could see the floats bound for Pasadena. The two times Lowell Thomas brought his Cinerama film crew to the Canyon to film that segment for the movie "Seven Wonders of the World" which I appeared in. The day I got Edgar Burgan's autograph in the lobby of the El Tovar. "Charlie" was upstairs taking a nap with Candice.

And on, and on the memories seem to flow. I sincerely hope the Society and others can some how get oral/video histories from as many of us as possible, before memories like these are lost forever.

My very best regards,  
Preston W. Schellbach  
723 W. William St.  
Decatur, IL 62522  
TheKiva@webtv.net

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### **Roosevelt in Electrical Storm.**

From the *New York Times*, July 17, 1913.

Grand Canyon, Ariz., July 16.—A terrific electrical storm, the worst experienced in this region in several years, raged about Col. Theodore Roosevelt and his party yesterday as they crossed the Colorado River in Bright Angel Cañon, on the way to the Bad Lands

hunting grounds. The crossing was made in the cage suspended from a cable 800 feet [*sic!*] above the river. Lightning played about the cage. The Colonel and his sons, Archie and Quentin, were drenched, but suffered no other mishap.

## GC Wildfire...continued from page 1

Grand Canyon National Park encompasses 1.2 million acres; 750,000 acres of that has the potential to burn. When fires are reported, Grand Canyon Fire personnel gather information to determine the appropriate management response: Wildland Fire Use (let it burn) or Suppression (put the fire out).

When conditions are just right and the fire starts in the right place, sometimes it is best to let nature take its own course. The Powell Fire on Powell Plateau on the North Rim in June 2003 has been called "the perfect fire." This low-intensity ground fire that burned approximately 3,800 acres was started by lightning. The fire burned downhill and then burned itself out.

Sometimes lightning caused fires aren't always enough to keep an open healthy forest. Fire can be reintroduced into the landscape in the form of prescribed burn. However, these burns are not without their hazards. The Outlet Fire (near the North Rim entrance road) started as a prescribed burn on May 10, 2000. Unexpected 80 MPH winds carried embers through the air igniting a new fire that grew to 7,000 acres within 24 hours. By the end of May, 14,000 acres had burned.

Forest thinning can be an effective way to prevent wildfires, however, the heavy equipment used in the process can permanently compact the forest soil thus causing the rainfall to run off instead of soaking into the ground.

The most effective fire management technique is to mimic the natural processes. For more information on wildland fire management check out:

<http://www.nps.gov/grca/mgmt>

*[Article submitted by Tom Carmony]*

## Pioneer Award

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2004 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:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2003 - George Billingsley</li><li>• 2002 - William "Bill" Suran</li><li>• 1999 - George Steck</li><li>• 1998 - Gale Burak</li><li>• 1997 - Harvey Butchart</li></ul>



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

[boddtodd@grand-canyon.az.us](mailto:boddtodd@grand-canyon.az.us)

Nominations must be received before April 1.

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## 2004 Outings ...continued from page 1

**May 15:** *Tour of Kolb Studio* by Grand Canyon Interpretive Ranger Stewart Fritts (our narrator and maybe more).

**June 19:** Annual Picnic at Shoshone Point, South Rim Grand Canyon

**July 17:** Annual Campout at Jacob Lake, North Rim Grand Canyon

**August 21:** Annual Community Project (such as the Grand Canyon Cemetery clean-up) (*tentative*)

**September 18:** *Harvey: The Adventures, Tragedies and Legacy of Grand Canyon's Greatest Hiker* by Elias Butler and Tom Myers. Held in conjunction with the 3rd Annual Prescott Book Festival.

**October 16:** Annual Board Meeting

**November 20:** Search and Rescues Director Ken Phillips (*tentative*)

**December:** No meeting

## 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:

Todd Berger - Grand Canyon AZ  
Teda Flynn - St. George UT  
Amy Horn - Grand Canyon AZ  
James Lauzon - Flagstaff AZ  
Bob Ribokas - South Weymouth ME  
Gini Van Arsdell - Flagstaff AZ  
Susan Verkamp - El Prado NM

We appreciate your generosity. Thank you.

## This May Be Your Last Issue...

If you have not mailed in your check for membership in the Grand Canyon Historical Society, this may be your last issue of *The Bulletin* (and *The Ol' Pioneer*).

Membership dues are \$20 for both individual or family (or \$25 if outside the U.S.A.). Membership expires December 31, and renewals are due in January each year.

Please mail your renewal to: Grand Canyon Historical Society  
P.O. Box 884  
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023-0884

Contributions to the Scholarship Fund may be made along with the remittance of your dues. We also welcome are your "letters to the editor" with your comments or suggestions.

We look forward to hearing from all of you.

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**Outings/Programs:** If you have a suggestion for a future outing/program or a question about an upcoming event, contact the **2004 Outings Coordinator:** Keith Green, PO Box 1986, Grand Canyon AZ 86023-1986; phone 928-638-0666; email: Keith\_Green@nps.gov.

*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](mailto:Pioneers@GrandCanyonHistory.org).

Grand Canyon Historical Society

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