

NOTES ON THE PARACHUTISTS IN 1944

Harvey Butchart

Our article in the July Newsletter by Roy Burris regarding the parachutist in the Canyon brought back memories to me. The story of the three men who parachuted from the bomber in the middle of the night over Grand Canyon has interested me for many years I have collected material from newspaper clippings, and letters from Otis (Doc) Marston, famous river historian, and P.T. Reilly on the event. I also got the full story from one of the men who succeeded in finding a route down to the stranded parachutists. The combined story goes like this: The pilot of the bomber noticed the motors of his plane were malfunctioning, presumably because of the lack of gas. Thinking the plane doomed he ordered the crew to bale out, unaware he was over Grand Canyon. He successfully landed the aircraft safely later.

The three men who jumped landed on the Tonto level south of Point Sublime and just west of the lower gorge of Tuna Creek. On the map this appears about 18 miles northwest of Grand Canyon Vil-

lage. Here the inner gorge is about 1000 feet deep. One of the men landed just over the edge of the sheer drop, but a tree caught his parachute and saved him. He hung in the harness until daylight, fearing the tree might give way letting him fall to his death. The other men landed on the plateau. The next morning, though one suffered a broken bone in his foot making it difficult to walk, they rescued their cohort from his precarious position. As Roy stated in his article they spread their parachutes on the ground to notify rescuers of their location making it easy to find from the air and enabling food supplies, water, two-way radios and bedding to be dropped while the authorities determined a way of making the rescue.

The incident created considerable interest from the public and suggestions on how to get to the men came from everywhere. Someone suggested shooting a line across the Colorado River, one recommended walking the Tonto from Bright Angel Creek to Point Sublime, a six day round trip for the best of hikers. The idea seemed good but was dropped after a token start. For several days a crew of nominal rescue personnel camped on Point Sublime to study the situation, but none were anxious to become a hero and start down so they abandoned the idea.

The military and the National Park people competed with each other for the right to direct the rescue and neither could come up with a ready solution for getting from the rim to the Tonto at this point. Meanwhile the stranded men received typed instructions by air drop

telling them not to separate and advised them to try and help themselves, and if they moved from the original campsite to be sure and take the parachutes with them and spread them out again.

By chance Alan McRae, one of the best known amateur hikers of the Canyon at this time, was on a back-packing trip with his bride. They were spending their honeymoon going off the North Rim down Bright Angel Canyon and over to Clear Creek when a fellow hiker stopped to use a wayside telephone at Ribbon Falls and a ranger asked if he knew how to get in touch with



McRae. McRae aborted his plans and agreed to attempt to get to the airmen. R.E. Lawes, a ranger with considerable hiking experience, joined McRae and they studied aerial photographs and determined a descent from Grama point offered the best possibility.

They succeeded in dropping through the formations until they reached the Redwall. First they hiked to the east side of the arm of Grama Point where the aerial views had noted the talus coming high on the cliff face. Here they encountered a sheer drop of one-hundred-fifty feet. Looking across to a break in the wall they could see a fresh green patch at the top. By following the rim around to the west they located a good spring and camped for the night. In the morning they espied a safe way to descend through a ravine to the bed of Tuna Creek where they reached the airmen

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and led them to safety ten days after the bailout. There are a few other items concerning the incident that might be of interest. Using Marston's location of the first campsite, I got off the rim west of Point Sublime and found the Redwall route to be hard enough to be interesting. I found the campsite identified by some trash left there, army canteens and pistols for firing signal flares. On my second trip to this site, I found McRae's route down to the river. With Jim Ohlman we went from Grama Point and found the Redwall route to be even more interesting than the one to the west arm of Tuna. We spotted some twenty-eight year old rope hanging on the rocks where McRae and Lawes had left it. Actually rope is unnecessary on this route. I visited Alan McRae in his home in Pennsylvania when he was seventy-five and had the privilege of looking at his scrapbook containing news clippings of the incident. I also learned that Lawes died of food poisoning less than a year after the rescue. Further two of the airmen died in the South Pacific and one was killed in an automobile wreck here in the United States.

While on the subject of airplanes has anyone information or stories about the TWA crash in Grand Canyon?



The Pioneers line up for a rare group shot at the Indian ruin on the Richards' ranch. From left to right on the front row: Matt Werhan, Adrian Richards, Don Lyngholm. Back row: Al Richmond, Steve Verkamp, Chris Verkamp, Carol Furey-Werhan, Nancy Gibson, Marie Maiorana and part of Mike Gibson.

AUGUST 15 OUTING

In response to an invitation to view Indian ruins and petroglyphs, on Saturday, August 15th, members **Harvey Butchart, Steve and Chris Verkamp, Nancy and Mike Gibson, Carol and Ron Werhan, Matt Werhan, Al Richmond, Marie Maiorana, Sibyl and Bill Suran and Bernice and David Nelson**, plus visitor **Don Lyngholm** and hosts **Patti, Bob, Devon and Adrian Richards** headed out Leupp Road. After gliding along peacefully on pavement we were rudely jolted out of our complacency when we turned onto a dusty, bouncy dirt road through a field of wild grasses and flowers and into a juniper forest. It took many a turning to reach the property line where we piled out, and after sloshing sunblock on exposed areas and donning

hats, set out for our walk in 92-degree heat.

The term "walk" is too tame a description for what we did. We alternately strolled, hiked, climbed, slid and floundered over lava rocks and ankle-deep cinders, studying potsherds and walls of unknown origin until we reached the canyon and eased over the edge to rest in the shade while looking at the petroglyphs. From there we made our way upcanyon admiring and studying wild plants, some of the group collecting seed pods to transfer to home gardens and all of us standing in awe of the native walnut trees covered with nearly ripe nuts, growing in the most unlikely locations.

As the going got tougher a few of us Senior Citizens were forced to fall by the

wayside and take a shortcut to the cars while most of the original nineteen adventurers continued toward the ruins. According to reports and pictures taken by the younger detachment the effort was worthwhile. At least they returned with wide grins on their faces and sunburn on their necks. We gratefully collapsed in the shade of juniper trees and a canopy thoughtfully provided by our hosts where we exchanged stories while consuming our most welcome lunches, deliciously topped off with a huge apple and cranberry pie baked by Carol for her husband Ron's birthday.

We want to thank Patti and Bob Richards and their sons, Devon and Adrian for their guidance through land where the unwary could easily become disoriented, and for inviting us to see it.

LE BARRON PIT HOUSE

by Carol Furey-Werhan

As members of the GCPS trekked through sand and black cinders under the direction of hosts **Bob and Patty Richards**, almost everyone had their own theory about the activities of the Sinagua Indians who occupied the area in the twelfth century.

"Looks like a terrace here."

"Why are there no pot shards?"

"I think it was the work of hippies not Indians."

"You don't find any beer cans though."

"Oooh look a walnut tree."

"Now this is side-oats gramma."

"This is wolfberry. It is often found around ancient sites."

"Thanks for the drink of water. What did they do for water?"

"Wheew it sure is hot today! Now I know why they built it on the south side. Must have been nice and warm in the winter" Minds drifted back in time and wonderment when we approached the pit house site. Beautiful unmor-

tared stone walls of ancient craftsmen who carefully placed each stone rivaled the work of modern day masons. Later they collected limestone from specially selected locations along San Francisco Wash to plaster the ceilings. Some thought the finger marks of the Sinagua who spread the precious material on the roof above his head were still evident.

The panoramic view the early inhabitants had from their home would still be envied by many today. Their home was cool in the hot sun, and as we rested we too enjoyed the hospitality of the old ones.

The Le Barron Pit House site was excavated in 1920. Consisting of the pit house and a five room cliff dwelling to the east, it is thought to have been occupied by about three families of the Sinagua Indians between AD 1125 and 1200. This is the same time period that Walnut Canyon and the Eldon Pueblo were occupied.

The pit may have been a kiva. At any rate it is the only below-ground dwelling known in Arizona that still has most of its roof intact. The main beam, of ponderosa pine, is thought to have come from the bottom of San Francisco Wash.

Analysis of the roof mud indicates that it was collected from small limestone overhangs along San Francisco Wash. Because of the lack of large quantities of higher quality limestone, only the roof was plastered. The limestone probably added brightness to the dwellings as well. The soil in the bottom of the wash or area above the cliff was not used as mortar because there is too much sand and cinders in it to bind well.

In the past few years there has been some vandalism to this structure that probably was intact for some 700 years earlier. History lost.



Hubert Lauzon submitted this bit of history. The photograph did not reproduce too well but it gives some idea of what these people looked like. The occasion was a meeting of the first general election board of the new State of Arizona. November 5, 1912. From Left to right are W.W. Bass, Robert Fix, Niles Cameron, William Lockridge and Charles Sanders. Hubert also supplied us with the story of the Canyon's first school house. We will have the details on that in the November Newsletter.

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We've had a busy spring and summer with many well attended outings. All of our trips didn't turn out as intended as the wind and heat didn't cooperate with us on a couple of occasions. However, we managed to prevail and have an interesting time just the same.

October, and our annual meeting will be here in no time at all. With the annual meeting

will come new leadership for the Pioneers. I wish I could take credit for all the things the GCPS accomplished during the last year, but it just isn't so. During the past year we've added to the special collection at the NAU Cline Library, thanks to **Bill Suran** and **the Schicks**; we've instituted a scholarship at NAU, thanks to **Al Richmond** and **Val Avery**;

we've achieved "non-profit" status with the IRS, thanks to **Al Richmond**; our newsletter is now being published on a more regular basis, thanks to **Bill Suran** and **Marie Maiorana**. In all, I guess I've done pretty well, thanks to all of you who have shown an interest in our organization.

THE SECRETARY'S REPORT

Our IRS nonprofit standing is now complete. No one has ever accused the IRS of being speedy except in the collection of taxes. Although we are happy to finally receive our nonprofit status, we will not challenge their claim to lethargy.

There are a couple of changes to the membership list we sent out in the last newsletter. **Gene and Marvyl Wendt** can now be reached at PO Box 353, Vail, AZ 85641. Please add and welcome **Lynn Ailes**, PO Box 957, Grand Canyon AZ 86023. Welcome back to **Joe &**

Sue Tyler. They came through the area on a pilgrimage to their old alma mater (NAU) and the part of the country they hold near and dear. Any time they manage to make it out this way they get in a visit with **Dr. Agnes Allen** to go over the good old times. Good to have you back again. Their address is 444 W. Middle Tpke, 70-U, Manchester, CT 06040.

It is that time of the year again. Seems like it was just yesterday. . . . Enclosed is the nomination form for board members. Please go over it and if you have a good person in

mind--fill in their name (if they agree to serve) and mail it in. You can nominate yourself if you desire to serve. As our responsibilities increase as to scholarships and such, we need good board members to administer them.

New members are always welcome. The field trips are always fun with all of the different people who show up. Everyone has something to contribute in the way of camaraderie and enjoyment. Come along and bring a friend.

Congratulations to Bernice (formerly Winsor) and David Nelson on their marriage. We wish them many happy years together, and we welcome Dave into the club.

WHO ARE THE OFFICERS OF G.C.P.S. ?

Some of our members have inquired as to who the officers of the Grand Canyon Pioneer Society are so we will introduce them.

Ron Werhan currently serves as **President** of The Grand Canyon Pioneers Society. Ron moved to Flagstaff in 1957, where he got to know and love northern Arizona and Grand Canyon. He has lived here for eighteen years. He is a professional engineer, president of Werhan, Folkers & Monihan, Engineers and Surveyors. Ron has spent many days hiking the canyon and whitewater rafting. On one such river trip he met Carol. His hobbies include: whitewater rafting, the history of exploration world-wide, especially Arizona and the southwest, Military history, photography and classical music. He used to fly a lot, but can't afford that anymore. He collects books, records, coins, old bottles, and rusty cans.



Jeanne Schick is the current **Vice President**. Jeanne is a native canyoneer, born and raised at the Canyon. Emery Kolb gave Jeanne her first job. She later became the secretary to Earl Shirley, Fred Harvey's transportation manager. Before and after going to College she was the secretary to the National Park Superintendent. In 1944 Jeanne joined the WAVES and after World War II married Fred Schick. The couple spent thirty-seven years in California before they moved back to Arizona. They now reside in Sedona.



Fred Schick is our money man. He currently serves as **Treasurer** of the society. Fred migrated from Ohio to Grand Canyon in the early forties and worked at Harvey's Service Station. He served five years with Uncle Sam in the Air Force during WW II. After the war he attended USC in California. He worked for Lockheed until he retired and moved to Sedona.



Al Richmond acts as **Secretary** of the organization. After he retired as an Air Force Chief Master Sergeant in 1981 with twenty-seven years of service he obtained a Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Natural History and Quaternary Studies at NAU. He is the author of two books on the Grand Canyon Railway and has edited one on western railroads. Al presently divides his time fulfilling positions as NAU's liaison to government agencies dealing with research projects and serving as historian/museum director for the Grand Canyon Railroad in Williams.



OUTLAWS

No doubt everyone heard about the excitement around Grand Canyon this past Fourth of July. Danny Ray Horning - an escaped convict from the Arizona State Prison had a good time avoiding the law there for a couple of days. He is safe back in prison now. This is not the only time criminals have evaded the law at Grand Canyon.

Can anyone give the details of other occurrences of outlaws in the canyon? It would be interesting to know.

A number of members have asked about the mysterious '33' in the July Newsletter. It is not some secret code that we are trying to get across to the enemy, whoever the enemy might be, so there is no reason to get your Orphan Anne decoding ring to solve the riddle.

When we transmitted the letter from the Macintosh computer to the IBM computer by using the telephone, some of the characters don't come out the way they should. Marie tries to catch the little demons but missed four in the latest attempt. If you see them in the future blame it on modern technology.

THE MYSTERIOUS 33

(Actually you can blame me too; if I hadn't been in such a hurry, I would have proof-read all of the articles.... Marie) (Wow, this gives me such a feeling of POWER; do you realize I can add words AFTER Bill gets through editing ??!heh ...heh..heh...) (...don't 'cha just love computers?!?)

(Actually, the "33s" became "73s" in this issue, now there's a mystery!; did I miss any??)

(...ok, Bill, I'm getting back to work now!)

\$250.00 Nieman-Marcus Cookie

by Sibyl Suran

Sibyl reports that she does not know who wrote this story but thought you might enjoy it. If it is true or not also remains a question. One thing she will vouch for (and so will some of the GCPS members) is that the cookies are good and well worth trying.

My daughter and I had finished a salad at the Neiman-Marcus Cafe in Dallas and decided to have a small dessert. Because our family is such "Cookie Monsters" we decided to try the Neiman-Marcus Cookie. It was so good I asked them to give me the recipe. The reply was "I'm afraid not." "Well", I replied, "can I buy the recipe?" With a cute smile, she agreed. I asked how much and she responded, "Two-fifty". I said with approval, "Just add it to my tab."

Thirty days later I received my statement from Neiman-Marcus and it was for \$285.00. I looked again and I had spent only \$9.95 for the two salads and

about \$20 for a scarf. As I glanced at the bottom of the statement I saw "Cookie Recipe - \$250." Boy, was I upset! I called the accounting office and told them the waitress had said it was "Two-fifty" and I did not realize she meant \$250 for a cookie recipe. I asked them to take back the recipe and reduce my bill but they said they were sorry but all the recipes were this expensive so not just anybody could duplicate them and the bill would stand.

I tried to figure how I could get even or get my money back, then I thought OK, you folks have got my \$250 and I'm going to have \$250 worth of fun. I told her I was going to see that every cookie lover would have the recipe from Neiman-Marcus for nothing. She replied "I wish you wouldn't do that". I said, "I'm sorry but this is the only way I feel I can get even and I will." So here it is. Please pass it on to someone else. . . I paid for it and now you can have it for free!

2 cups butter
2 cups sugar
2 cups brown sugar
4 eggs
2 tsp vanilla
4 cups flour
5 cups blended oatmeal*
1 tsp salt
2 tsp baking powder
2 tsp soda
24 oz. chocolate chips
1 - 8 oz. Hershey bar, grated
3 cups chopped nuts

Cream butter and both sugars, add eggs and vanilla. Mix flour, oatmeal, salt, baking powder and soda. Combine, add chocolate chips, Hershey bar, and nuts. Roll into balls and place two inches apart on cookie sheet. Bake 10 minutes at 375 degrees.. Makes 112 cookies. May be halved.

*To blend oatmeal, place in blender until fine powder.

Have fun. This is not a joke but a true story.

This GCPS Newsletter was edited by Bill Suran,

compiled by Marie Maiorana, using Ventura publishing software.

All comments, submissions and suggestions are welcomed at the address below.

Membership, including bi-monthly newsletters, is \$10 individual and \$15 family annually.

Grand Canyon Pioneers Society
P. O. Box 14
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023



Bill & Sibyl Suran
386 Owl Pl
Flagstaff

AZ 86001