

G . C . P . S .

N E W S L E T T E R

News for Grand Canyon Pioneers Members

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This is the second of a three part article written by Grand Canyon Pioneer Gale Burak. It first appeared in the summer of 1982 in "The Guide", published by the Grand Canyon Natural History Association, and is reprinted here with their permission.

Part Two
Supai 1943

One warm May morning I sat with Beulah Hardin, the Supai Agent's wife, relaxing over a cup of tea as we gazed out beyond the sweeping shade of giant old cottonwoods to the green alfalfa fields beyond. Today was mail day. Shortly, Lorenzo Sinyella would bring his string of pack horses to load up the out-going mail sacks. Chickens cackled contentedly across the dusty road. Children dragged their bare feet, raising clouds of silt on their way to school. A sweet scent of orchard blooms and field flowers added to the peaceful pastoral scene, and I deliberated lazily whether it would be more fun to jump in the creek right now or wait until I had wandered down to Havasu Falls.

Suddenly excited childish trebles and the clipciop of hooves coming up the lane caught our attention. No tourists going out today; what's going on? Into view came a procession of one slow horse carrying a slouched figure, an agitated man leading the horse, and a dozen little dancing figures chanting: "San-dee, San-dee." Sonia and Gladys and I had ridden down to the Havasu Lead and Zinc Mine and met Mr. Sanderson a few days before. But what on earth was he doing up here at the village?

The doleful man hanging over the saddle horn was dejectedly silent until Lorenzo came along and added him to his string of horses. "San-dee" was not so silent; he had plenty to say! "That's my camp cook. He's sick and he's gotta go out and I don't know what I'm gonna do. There are nine miners down at camp and they won't work if there's not three square meals a day on the table, and I can't cook . . . Can you cook?" And he jabbed a finger in my direction.

"Well . . . sure . . . but . . ."

"You're hired! How soon can you pack up and get down there? It'll only be for a week or so, and then I'll have another cook. Can you

be there tonight? I'd sure appreciate it".

Not a chance of saying no. So in the cool of that same evening I wandered down past watercress-edged travertine reefs, past Navajo Falls giddy with the fragrance of newly-opened Datura lilies, across a shaky footbridge, past the little cemetery, and on down the steep trail past Havasu Falls to camp. All my belongings (of the moment) were in my backpack and I had a new world to conquer!

The "only a week or so" turned out to be three months. The hard-rock miners that Sandy had garnered from Chloride, Arizona, were most understanding of my novice cooking ability and reasonable in their demands. This was fortunate as my facilities were not so reasonable. The one-room wooden shack contained a tiny wood stove, a heavy old unit of soapstone set-tubs (who carried that down?) and numerous shelves, rickety cupboards and a long work counter . . . none of which were mouse-proof. A long dining table with benches and a cot

See BURAK next page

OLD TIMERS REUNION: The next "Old Timers" reunion is scheduled for September 28, 29 and 30. Michele Kettering of Squire Inn is organizing the get-together this year and we know, with her ideas and enthusiasm, it will be a great affair. She has asked Ethel Cole and Jeanne Schick to act as hostesses.

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for me completed the furnishings. Cabbages, carrots, onions and wild celery from beneath the spray of Havasu Falls were all put in the tubs to keep fresh. Anything more perishable had to be prepared and eaten within a few days of its arrival in camp and was stored briefly down by the stream in a screened box on legs with wet hemp sack- ing draped over the sides.

The only area not infested with mice was an adjoining semi-dugout built 50 years before by a prospector; it was guarded for me by a 5-foot gopher snake. Here I could put a case of eggs, sacks of potatoes, tubs of sugar and flour as well as the cases of canned goods we depended on between the pack trips. I grew quite fond of "Van Goph" and rewarded him occasionally with an egg when the mouse supply ran low.

The miners bunked in a World War I circular Army tent and Sandy had his own bedroom-office shack. For myself, I soon moved the cot outdoors and let the mice reign supreme. The cacophony of squeaks, scamperings, scuttles and

Cacophony of squeaks, scamperings, scuttles and gnawings...

gnawings I endured inside each night were replaced by gurgling creek music, cicadas whining their delight at summer heat, and a mockingbird who never seemed to sleep. His repertoire of songs and chuckings put me to sleep by starlight and woke me each dawn. After dinner and an evening walk up or down canyon, the miners and I would settle down around my cot to swap stories, sing old songs, and enjoy the sounds and smells of night. When the moon was coming up full we stayed up late . . . perhaps until 10 o'clock . . . to watch the shadows descend toward us, changing the

cliffs from red black to vivid gold, until finally it shown into camp and the dappled leaf shadows danced at our feet.

Since the miners worked down in a shaft where the 130 degree heat didn't penetrate, there was no need of a "crack of dawn" start for them. By 7 a.m. I'd fire up the old stove and put the coffee pot on. By 8 a.m. they would be on their way up the already hot trail and across the swinging "trapeze" bridge across the creek to the mine up in Carbonate Canyon. The ore was principally galena, 92% pure lead with a coating of rich hydrozincite; both of which were well worth the work and expense of mining, packing up to Hualapai Hilltop, and then trucking it 60 miles by rough road to Peach Springs, the nearest railhead. Those were war years and lead, unfortunately, was a highly strategic metal.

The mornings were mine to prepare the main meal served at noon. A light supper to fix meant that I was free all afternoon to soak in the creek and keep cool. Perhaps I had simmered beans all morning with sow-belly or salt pork. Or perhaps we'd had packers the day before so I could go out with a rich beef and vegetable stew. And when I was inspired to make pies or cookies, I was treated like a queen! Hot biscuits were a must, and even more important to the men were the onions that I must serve at every meal; fried, pickled, raw, french-fried in batter, sauteed . . . any way I could think of.

Shortly before noon, just when I'd be listening for a shout from the miners so dinner would be hot on the table, I'd often hear the sound of horses and creaking leather and looking out the doorway (there was no door!) I'd see dust rising. Automatically I'd set another few places at the table. Sure enough, moments later the round smiling faces of some of the Supai ore pack-

ers would be framed in the doorway . . . just in time for dinner. One of them confided to me once that I sure was a good cook and would I please stay at the camp for a long time.

After dinner, banter and a cigarette, the miners would help load the 75-pound ore sacks on the horses; one on each side. Then up the trail they'd go, the long rangy horses staggered along under their two sacks, each the size of a man's head. Back in the village they would be unpacked again at each man's home and he would go in, sleep until midnight when it was cool enough to pack up once more and start toward West Hilltop. Once there at perhaps 7 a.m., they would be met by Juan Sinyella, Lorenzo's brother, who drove the mine pickup to Peach Springs with the ore. When he returned, he carried a load of mine supplies and food that Sandy had ordered. Much of this was a stock of goods especially for the Supais to purchase. Had it not been for this service, he would never have been

The miners were hard-bitten old reprobates, used to a goodly quota of wine, women and song...

able to get them to pack!

Since the mine was below the village, a Government Reservation, no "spirits" of any sort could be brought into camp. Since the miners were hard-bitten old reprobates, used to a goodly quota of wine, women and song, it was always just a matter of time, usually three weeks, before signs of strain would show; short tempers, flare-ups, restlessness, or wistful tales of good times in the "big cities" of Prescott, Flagstaff or Needles. Nothing would do but Sandy must close the mine and we would all go out via horse and pickup truck for a weekend on the town. Monday morning would find us all headed back, the men subdued, broke,

happy with new stories to share and ready to get back to drill, blast and muck the ore again.

Occasionally one or the other would join me on the trail for a day. Once, we took the rim route above the Redwall from the village on the west side which gave us glorious views of all the major falls from Havasu to Beaver. It was hot, so hot that we ran out of water and had to resort to a tiny seep, sucking up clay silt with the slow drip rather than waiting for it to settle. With all the hundreds of canyon miles I've hiked since then, I've never had that happen again. We would look down 800 feet to the blue green sparkling creek, but it just intensified our thirst. Rather than go the last mile to the village in the sun, we risked descending a rotten old mossy ladder and a bush scree-sloped gully near camp. The creek never felt so good!

Another time, three of us descended the log-edged cave route in the travertine beside Mooney Falls and bushwhacked our way to the Colorado River. Norman Nevilles ran river trips only once a month or so in the early 1940's and was the only commercial runner. Few hikers attempted the lower canyon, so there was really very little indication of a trail. We had to cut and beat swathes through thick grapevines, prickly pear clumps, willow brush and deep grass (thank

goodness there are no rattlers in Supail) on the benches between numerous creek crossings. A big sandbar filled the downstream opening of the mouth of the creek, so we swam through the quiet inlet and watched the river slide past at the bar.

Every Friday was washday. Soon after breakfast, I'd hear a "Halloo" from up-trail and would set out a cup of coffee for Effie Hanna who'd breathlessly fill the doorway with beaming bulk soon after. She'd bustle about, making a big fire near the creek, setting a huge galvanized tub of water to heat, and gathering the linens from all the beds. The men paid her to do their overalls and the dirtier they were, the more she scrubbed and the livelier she got. We spread the sheets all over the bushes, barbed-wire fence of the horse corral, and the hitching posts. As one batch was washing, the preceding one was drying! I never could get Effie to go in the creek with me after dinner though. She'd stand on the shore, on one brown foot and then the other, twisting her hand giggling behind the other. We'd talk . . . women talk . . . and enjoy the companionship but she wouldn't come and sit by me in the water or swim in the deep blue reef-edged pools above camp.

A few years later, following much mismanagement in various ways, Sandy relinquished his mine proper-

ties and rights to the Government, who in turn, gave the lands, buildings and all equipment to the Supais. Nowadays there is no sign of the campsite, other than the spring of good drinking water. The mine tailings are seen from the trail beside Havasu Falls.

Miners since the mid-1800's have had high hopes and found rich ores, even high on the cliffs below Mooney Falls where vanadium was mined, but the inaccessibility and corresponding high costs in money and effort have ultimately ended them all.

And the waters of the Havasu run as beautiful, free and blue as though the prospectors had never been there at all.

(to be continued)

Gale Burak came to the canyon in May of 1942, and has been here off-and-on ever since (1982). She has worked since 1972 for the Park Service as a volunteer or as a seasonal ranger.

S U R A N F I N A L I Z E S M E T Z G E R C O L L E C T I O N

Bill Suran is working with Jeanne and Fred Schick on the Art Metzgar collection in preparation for submitting it to the Special Collections Library at N.A.U. "This is really a treat to be finalizing this collection into the GCPS collection," said Al Richmond; "You should really be proud of yourselves as this is one of the major accomplishments we have pulled off since becoming a group."

NEXT MEETING: HIKING & CAMPING!

Our Vice-president and Tour Director, Jeanne Schick, has suggested that we plan a hike for October 13th to Dripping Springs at the Canyon. We could camp Friday & Saturday at 10X, meet at Rowe Well at 10:00 AM Saturday, hike, lunch at Dripping Springs, then return. If anyone has any suggestions or questions, call Ron or Carol Werhan at 635-9380.

NOTES ON THE PETE BERRY HOMESTEAD

When we wrote to Art Metzger about the trip the Grand Canyon Pioneer's Society had at the Pete Berry place, he told this story:

When Mrs. Belknap bought the place from Pete Berry, she wanted to develop live water there, if possible. Art said he had always thought there would be some water there somewhere because of the snow country surrounding it and the overlay of Coconino sandstone. Mrs. Belknap tried to test it with a well-digging. Art told Jimmie Fambrough about it and Jimmie water-witched a well site there; Art got some CCC kids to dig the hole, it was about 30-40 feet deep. NO WATER.

Art knew that water-witching worked for Jimmie because on a

trip to Dripping Springs one time, he got him to try it! "It worked and fascinated Art because he had never heard of it before. Art said it never worked for him, but if Jimmie would stand behind him and place his hands on his wrists, it worked for him too.

An interesting thing happened when Art was at the Berry place, three Hopies came to plant corn. Jimmie and Art watched them do it; they dug a hole 18" wide and a foot in depth. They planted the grain around the base, then crumbled the soil by hand back into the hole until near the top. Art asked a Hopi how long it would be until sprouts reached the top. He said, "ten days". Jimmie and Art drove back to the Canyon and

Jim said, "if that stuff comes out before Christmas, it will surprise me". Just out of curiosity Art drove out there the evening of the 10th day. IT WAS UP!

More about the Berry place. The homestead was taken up by Pete's son, Ralph, who died in March of 1919. Art was with George Reed at his homestead, asleep when Pete called George with the news of his son's death. Pete moved to Ralph's homestead after his affairs at the Summit Hotel were settled. A nephew and son were at the Canyon later and made the sale of the homestead to the Belknaps.

Contributed by Fred and Jeanne Schick.

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