

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

Volume 10 Number 3

www.GrandCanyonHistory.org

March 2006

The Grand Old Man of the Colorado

by Todd R. Berger

"I met his barber," author Brad Dimock said of Bert Loper, halfway through his talk about the legendary river runner to about 25 members of GCHS at Cline Library on February 18. The statement drew a big laugh, but for many in the crowd, the comment was telling: Dimock is a remarkably thorough researcher—and a funny speaker.

Dimock, at work on a book about Loper, traveled thousands of miles across the country to track down details about him, his life, and his family roots. His father's name was Jehial P. Loper of Bowling Green, Missouri, at the time of the younger Loper's birth. The senior Loper was married a mere two years to Bert's mother, America Loper, a union that ended in a particularly nasty divorce. Jehial hit the road and eventually wrote his sons by America, Bert and Andrew, out of his will. Bert probably never knew his father's name.

Dimock told us of young Bert's life. Bert lived with his mother for a few years, but she soon died of tuberculosis. He was taken in by his grandmother, but shockingly, she also died of TB. He then went to live with an uncle who beat him mercilessly. In a nutshell, Bert Loper's childhood was not fun.



Brad Dimock
discussing Bert Loper
[Photo by Todd Berger]

Loper eventually left the nastiness behind and found his way west, where he worked as a miner. In the 1890s, he bounced around between Cripple Creek, Colorado; La Cananea, Mexico; and Bisbee, Arizona, fitting in there somewhere a stint in the Army during the Spanish-American War.

By 1907, he was planning his first trip down the Colorado through the Grand Canyon with Charlie Russell and Ed Monett, but in the end,

...continued on page 3



Loper taking in Grand Canyon on his first trip through, 1939
[Photo courtesy of Loper Collection]

2007 Grand Canyon History Symposium January 25-28, 2007

The Grand Canyon Historical Society is organizing the 2007 Grand Canyon History Symposium, and we encourage all of you with an interest in Grand Canyon history to consider presenting at the event.

To stage the 2007 Symposium, GCHS is partnering with the Grand Canyon Association, the Grand Canyon Field Institute, the Arizona Humanities Council, Grand Canyon National Park Lodges, and Grand Canyon National Park. The Symposium Committee is planning for 200+ registrants and participants (nearly double the attendance at the 2002 symposium) at the Shrine of the Ages inside Grand Canyon National Park.

The Symposium Committee will be selecting presenters who have done specific research in a wide range of Grand Canyon history subjects, including: American Indian history, exploration of the canyon and plateau, mining and prospecting, the Colorado River, Grand Canyon Village, roads and trails, the National Park Service, and many other areas. All presentation topics will be given consideration provided there is a connection to the history of the Grand Canyon and/or the surrounding region.

Now is the time to reach back in your memory bank, file cabinet, family photo albums, and boxes of historical documents to develop ideas for your presentation. A *Call for Presentations* will be sent out after April 1, 2006, giving guidelines for abstracts of planned presentations. Presenters will also be given the opportunity to prepare a paper based on their presentation, which will be published by the Grand Canyon Association in a monograph of the symposium's proceedings.

A chance to talk about your passion for Grand Canyon history doesn't come around everyday (apparently, it's once every five years). Please consider sharing your research with an enthusiastic crowd that will hang on your every word. Send a note to the editor or an email to symposium@GrandCanyonHistory.org and ask to be included in the mailing of the Call for Presentations.

Or, if you want to attend this historic event as a spectator, mark your calendar and check for updates on the registration process in future newsletters and on our web page at www.GrandCanyonHistory.org.

Lee Albertson
Chair, Symposium Committee

2006 Outings

March 25 – *Spirit of the Canyon: a River Journey Through Time* by Charly Heavenrich, a professional boatman and author. Charly has rafted the Grand Canyon over 75 times since 1978, as a commercial and private boater. His mission is to share the Canyon Experience with the world. He does this on the river as a commercial guide, as a speaker sharing stories of ordinary people having extraordinary experiences, as an author (*Dancing on the Edge*), and as a photographer (*Grand Canyon: A Different View*; *Spirit of the Canyon: A River Journey Through Time*).

Time: 1:00 PM
Place: Screening Room A
NAU Cline Library, Flagstaff

Charly's presentation will include showing his newly released DVD slide show, *Spirit of the Canyon*, stories from his 28 years as a guide, and answering questions on the wide range of topics related to the Grand Canyon, including the new Colorado River Management Plan, Adaptive Management, operations of Glen Canyon dam, commercial and private trips, and more.

If you get to town early, some members will be gathering at Buster's Restaurant at 1800 South Milton Road around 11:30 AM.

April 8 – *Grand Canyon Hikers Symposium*. See complete article on page 2.

April 22 – *A 1914 Journey Across the Kaibab* by Frederick H. Swanson. In the summer of 1914, George C. Fraser, an amateur geologist from New Jersey, traveled by horseback along the length of the North Rim from Cape Royal to the Powell Plateau, crossing to the South Rim via the Bass Trail. Accompanied by his son and the guide Dave Rust, Fraser kept a detailed and often amusing journal of his travels, recently published by the University of Arizona Press as *Journeys in the Canyon Lands of Utah and Arizona, 1914-1916*.

Fred Swanson, a Salt Lake City author and editor, will present Fraser's observations of the Grand Canyon experience in the days before automobile tourism. He will also show photographs of the Plateau Province taken by Fraser and other travelers of the period.

Presentation will begin at 1:00 PM at the Flagstaff City Library Community Room, 300 W Aspen.

May 20 – *TWA/United Tragedy, 50 Years Ago* by Dan Driskill. On June 30, 1956, two airliners collided over and crashed into the Grand Canyon, killing 128 persons in what was then the world's worst commercial aviation disaster. This crash led to the FAA and the modern air traffic control system. Driskill will discuss this tragic mid-air collision, as well as post-crash recovery, investigation and clean-up efforts (which continue to this day) of the airplanes.

Driskill is a writer, attorney and former ambulance service owner who currently works as a flight paramedic in northern Arizona. He is currently writing a non-fiction book on this topic. If you have any personal information on this subject, please be sure to attend or write Dan Driskill at 11 West Oak Avenue, Flagstaff AZ 86001, or email him at medic_dan_2000@msn.com.

June 24 – *Annual Picnic at Shoshone Point*. Members from across the country converge at the Canyon's edge for a potluck of good food, friendly faces and lively conversation.

July 15 – *Annual Jacob Lake Campout*. Spend a day (and a night) in the North Kaibab Forest at the historic Jacob Lake Ranger Station with fellow Canyon adventurers.

August 19 – *Community Service Project*.

September 15-16-17 – *Havasupai History*. The GCHS will hike to Havasupai and learn the history of the People of the Blue Green Water.

To do this, we need an exact number of persons who plan to camp. There is a \$30 entry fee per person, and \$12 per night per person for the campsite. For an extra cost, arrangements also may be made to use the horse duffel service or reserve a hotel room. There is also the option of taking a helicopter for a day trip. Please notify Keith and Nancy Green by May 31, 2006, if you plan to attend this unique GCHS outing. Please state if you are planning to camp. Email: KNGreen4@msn.com or call: 928-638-0666 or Write: PO Box 1986, Grand Canyon AZ 86023

October 21 – *Annual Board Meeting* held at Flagstaff City Library Community Room, 300 W Aspen from 10:00 AM until 12:30 PM.

November 18 – *Seeking Summits Below the Rim: The Stories and History of Climbing in Grand Canyon*, by Mathieu Brown (2005 GCHS Scholarship recipient).

December – *No meeting*.

* * * * *

Jeanne Schick – Original Pioneer

On February 27, 2006, we lost Jeanne Schick, one of our original "Pioneers." Jeanne and Fred moved back to South Carolina earlier this month to be with their daughter. They are among our original members and we remember many of the field trips and outings that they helped to make so memorable. Jeanne was born and raised at Grand Canyon and will eventually be returned to rest with her parents, Ed and Ida Cummings in the Pioneers Cemetery. Prior to World War II Jeanne worked for Emory Kolb as projectionist and later on for Fred Harvey Company's transportation department. Then, during the war, she, Ethel Cole and Pinky Oesdean all enlisted in the Navy as Waves. After the War, she married Fred who had served in the Army Air Force before returning to the Canyon. They spent subsequent years in California working and raising Wayne and Barbara and then returned to Arizona when Fred finally retired. A private memorial service will be held at a later date. The family may be reached at: The Schick Family, c/o Barbara Frizzell, 6 Finbury Lane, Simpsonville, SC 29681 or Babs62656@aol.com.

Loper did not go on the trip. A few years later, Loper finally married at the age of 47; his bride, Rachel, was half his age, but they went on to have a long and loving marriage. During this time, "He kept a very boring diary," Dimock told us. Naturally, Dimock has read it.

Mining was never terribly lucrative for Loper, Dimock said, and in 1920 he found a new calling as a river surveyor, running the Colorado between the Virgin River (today under Lake Mead) and Yuma, Arizona. That same year, Loper and Rachel had a daughter, but, Dimock told us, "she only lived a day. They named her after his mother, America Loper."

Dimock tried to identify a source of income for Loper after he left mining, but apparently the only significant money coming in to the Loper household was from an Army pension from his service in the Spanish-American War. A mere \$60 a month at first, the pension rose to \$90 a month by the time of his death. The Lopers lived frugally, no doubt.

But Loper certainly lived life in a grand fashion. He ran the Black Canyon of the Gunnison with his friend Ellsworth Kolb, and he finally got his chance to run the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon at the age of 70. He had a fantastic time, and he and his co-river-runner Don Harris vowed to do it again in ten years, when Loper would be 80.

Throughout the 1940s, the 70-something Loper ran rivers all over the West with Don Harris. And in 1949, they planned another trip through the Grand Canyon, with Loper building a boat for the trip.

"Four doctors told him he shouldn't take this trip," Dimock told us. Loper ignored the medical advice and headed down the river. On the second day of the trip the group ran into rough water at 24.5-mile Rapid. Someone shouted, "Look to your oars, Bert!" As it turned out, those were the last words he ever heard. Loper went overboard and either drowned or had a heart attack, and his body vanished beneath the rapids.

In the 1970s, a hiker found skeletal remains that were likely Loper's. A group of elderly Spanish-American War veterans guilted Bert's relatives into having Bert brought to Utah for a "proper funeral" instead of leaving him on the river, laying them to rest beside Rachel, who had died only two months before the discovery of his remains.

"He wasn't the greatest writer, not the greatest boatman," Dimock said. "The one thing he had was the river. It is just so cool that he died in it."

Dimock hopes to have his book on the grand old man of the Colorado out next spring.



Loper, not at all opposed to motoring flat-water, test drives his 1949 boat, "Grand Canyon."

[Photo courtesy of Loper Collection]

GCHS members are invited to attend the first Grand Canyon Hikers Symposium, conducted by the Grand Canyon Hikers and Backpackers Association, in conjunction with the Grand Canyon Field Institute. Set to be held at the Shrine of the Ages on the South Rim, the event is free and open to the public and begins at 9:00 AM and ends at 5:00 PM.

The purpose of this symposium is to share hiking and backpacking exploits and explorations in the Grand Canyon, as defined by the geographical region from Lee's Ferry to the Grand Wash Cliffs, rim to rim. Each of the 15-minute presentations may include a hike or overnight backpack on the corridor trails and surrounding area, historical trails such as the North and South Bass, Tanner, Grand View, and any number of canyon routes.

As of January 2006, the presenters line-up looks like this:

- Dave Ganci: First Ascent of Zoroaster Temple, 1958
- Dave Mortenson: First Known Ascent of the Cranberry Canyon Route, 1968
- Scott Baxter: First Ascent of the Marble Tower, 1975
- Bob Packard: When Things Go Wrong, Kwagunt to Lava Canyon, 1981
- Allen Doty: Climbing Mount Sinyella, 1989
- Tyler Williams: Upper Shinumo Creek Slot Canyon, 2001
- Tom Martin: First Known Ascent of Clay Tanks Castle, 2002
- Mike Mahanay: Solo from Diamond Creek to Pearce Ferry, 2004
- Dr. Tom Myers and Elias Butler: Following Harvey to Woton's Throne, 2004
- Mike Anderson: Archeological Discoveries on the North Bass Trail, 2005
- Andy Bates: 60-Year Anniversary Climb of Vishnu Temple, 2005
- Gene Fowler: Rim-to-Rim in the Summertime, 2005
- Dana Kaleta and Judy Krause: A 30-Night Grand Canyon Trek, 2005
- Rim-Rim Maverick: Rim to Rim in 10 Hours 40 Minutes at 79 Years Young, 2005
- Doug Nering: Exploring the North Bass to Hakatai Trail, 2005
- Hank Schnieder: Day Hike to the Orphan Mine Diggings, 2005

* * * * *

A Note from a Member

It is always nice to hear from our members, no matter how brief or long. There was a note with Earl and Francis Lewis dues payment which said:

Frances Lewis, daughter of Millie Schmidtke and John Schmidtke. Millie worked 40 years for Fred Harvey as Harvey Girl Waitress in El Tovar Dining Room. Johnny was at transportation desk handling buses and mule trips in hotel.

Grand Canyon Historical Society

P.O. Box 10067

Prescott, Arizona 86304-0067

03-06

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PRESCOTT, AZ
PERMIT #43

Last Chance – Don't miss an issue!

Membership dues are payable on the 1st of January of each year. The month and year printed above your name on the address label of the newsletter indicates when your membership expires. If you see 2005, please mail your \$20 check today to:

Grand Canyon Historical Society
c/o Susan Billingsley
PO Box 345
Flagstaff AZ 86002

* * * * *

Pioneer Award

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2006 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: Mike Anderson, 2005; Gary Ladd, 2004; 2003; Gale Burak, Bill Suran, 2002; George Steck, 1999; George Billingsley, 1998; and Harvey Butchart, 1997.

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 before April 1, 2006, to:

George Billingsley
P.O. Box 345
Flagstaff AZ 86002

February Outing Attendance



[photo by Diane Cassidy]

The room filled up quickly for Brad Dimock's program on river runner Bert Loper.

Mike & Sue Ellen Coltrin – Tucson
Jim, Janece, Jon & Sarah Ohlman – Kayenta
Steve Owen – Chandler
Todd & Bonnie Berger – Grand Canyon
Dan & Diane Cassidy – Prescott
Ann Reynolds – Prescott
Gus & Sandra Scott – Prescott
Barbara Kuckuck – Williams
Ann Webber – Parks
Bill Bishop – Flagstaff
Hazel Clark & Tom Martin – Flagstaff
Bev Loomis – Flagstaff
Tom Myers – Flagstaff
Ellen Rosher – Flagstaff
Peggy Taylor – Flagstaff

Outings/Programs: If you have a suggestion for a future outing/program or a question about an upcoming event, contact the **2006 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.