

# CANOEING MAGAZINE



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The total of this issue is devoted to the report of the First British Kayak Expedition to Colorado River and Grand Canyon. Both the story and photos are by Mike Clark.

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## COVER PHOTO

Hatch river raft beached in the shadow of Marble Canyon for a lunch stop at Redwall Cavern.

All photos in this issue by Mike Clark  
for CANOEING MAGAZINE.

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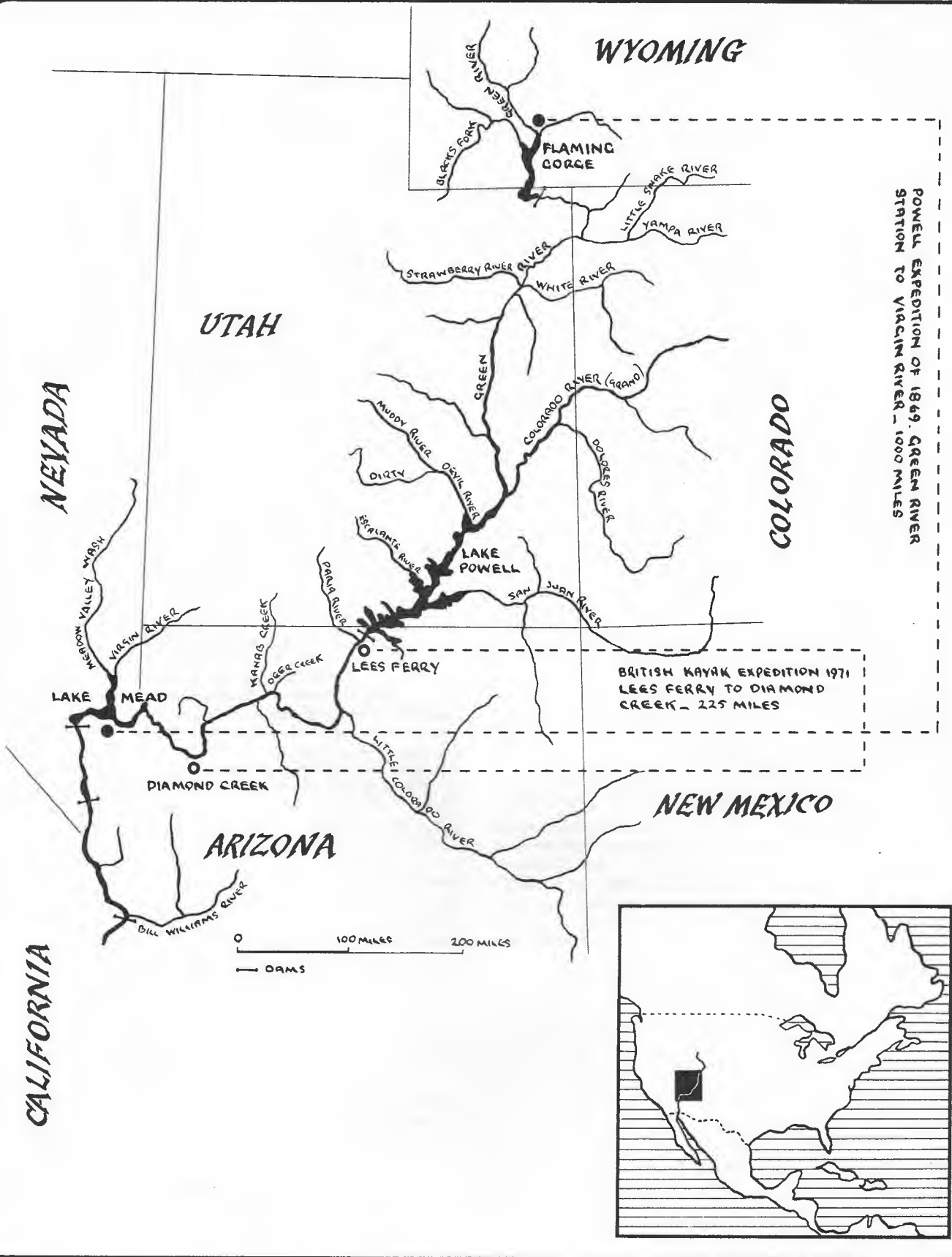
# Down The Colorado and in Grand Canyon

story and photos by Mike Clark  
of the First British Kayak Expedition to the  
Colorado River and Grand Canyon

*We are three-quarters of a mile in the depths of the earth, and the great river shrinks to insignificance as it dashes its angry waves against the walls and cliffs that rise to the world above; the waves are but puny ripples, and we but pigmies...*

John Wesley Powell.

The Colorado River, sculptress of the Grand Canyon which is truly one of the mightiest wonders of the world. Just over one hundred years ago Major John Wesley Powell set out from Green River Station, Wyoming, with a small waterbourne expedition to explore the last Great Unknown of the North American Continent. That journey was to take him in just three months over a thousand miles; the expedition's frail little craft challenging the might of the untamed Green, Grand and Colorado Rivers. Three months in the great American Canyonlands - a place where the biggest man shrinks into insignificance, and where the might of nature, like a giant sword, has slashed and counter slashed deep cuts in the crust of the earth, forming a labyrinth of canyons; where great cliffs, buttes, and temples of rock dwarf all; great cliffs of deep red, orange, yellow, grey, olive, and through to black; sparse, barren - a complete wilderness. A place where only few green trees around the river bank offer protection from the unrelenting sun that pushes the temperature up to 125°; yet a place where small side canyons and creeks shed streams of bright blue water into the silt-laden red Colorado; canyons where the beauty of nature is unsurpassed - a small paradise in a wilderness of rock. Below great rock walls the Colorado River runs wild, great thundering rapids, their waves exploding from the top and seeming to reach to the heavens for escape from the Canyon, a place to thrill and frighten the bravest of river runners....



# Preparations for an Expedition

In the August of 1970, Chris Hawkesworth of the Northern Wild Water Centre telephoned to ask if I would be interested in joining a British Kayak Expedition to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. Having seen the B.B.C. TV film, but knowing little else of this river, it only took a few minutes of thought before I phoned him back to say that I certainly would be interested. The Expedition was to be mounted in the summer of this year and during the winter of 1970 the two of us worked on details of cost, planning routes, and working out a programme of events.

The Expedition was to be at least 30 members strong, but one of the biggest problems was going to be the transportation of members kayaks to the United States. PanAm gave a quote of £800 for 25 kayaks one way only – this was just out of the question. Chris came up with an idea of a complete charter of an aircraft but, the problem here was to find some 90 other BCU members who wanted to go to the United States for three weeks holiday... With this aim we advertised in both 'Canoeing in Britain' and 'Canoeing Magazine', the cost of the charter being very reasonable at £68.00 return. The response was nowhere near the number, although it did bring in interested persons in joining the actual Expedition; and so we had to think again. In January Aer Lingus was approached and agreed to take the kayaks as passenger baggage, guaranteeing to get our craft to Denver. Thus we confirmed a party booking (minimum of 30 persons) for the second week in July, things were beginning to move.

By the end of January some 35 persons had asked to join the Expedition and of these a number had placed a deposit. It looked as if there would be no difficulty in getting the required number. All had to be of 2nd slalom division and above if they were to paddle the river, but there were also a number of passenger places on the support rafts for those who wanted to come for the ride.

Our first costing of the three week trip was around £180. per person but there was a substantial rise in internal U. S. airline fares, but by moving the whole trip forward by two weeks we managed to beat the increase... Next was the quotation from Hatch River Expeditions – supplier of the support rafts and U. S. outfitter for the ten days actually on the Colorado River. The price was almost double what was reckoned, also I was having difficulty in obtaining a reasonable price on the cars to be used for travelling in the States. Thus it was a worried pair of Expedition leaders who called a meeting in the Royal Leamington Spa Canoe Club on 19th May of all Expedition members to explain the situation and discuss final plans...

The Leamington meeting went better than expected, only three persons backing out on cost grounds and all seemed set for the Expedition to take off in eight weeks. Throughout this first part of the year I had been writing to major firms for sponsorship – no matter how small – and many of the individual paddlers had gained a degree of sponsorship for themselves. However, although I approached some 60 firms, the response was highly discouraging. Almost stereotype replies 'we regret' arrived one after the other. It seemed the Expedition would have to be largely financed out of each individuals own pocket. We did manage to get most of the kayaks at reduced rates and a few pieces of equipment were supplied free, but, with or without sponsorship the Expedition would go ahead.

Two weeks to departure and all those paddling were heading for Heathrow with their kayaks (all of slalom design and not down river as would be expected). These were all to be freighted out before us and await our arrival in Denver.

The Expedition was taking shape. We had 24 paddlers, including one C2 pair, one C1 and seven non-paddling members. The crew was made up from top paddlers of British Slalom, three paddlers from Ireland, one from South Africa, and one paddler from America (we were to meet up with him in Denver); the British paddlers included one from the Army and two from the Navy. Among the passengers was John Dudderidge, President of the British Canoe Union, a representative from almost every trade going, and even a honeymoon couple... We were rather a motley bunch, but I guessed it would make an Expedition after a few days in the wilderness.

Our programme of events was to travel to Denver, via Heathrow, Manchester or Leeds, to Dublin; then Shannon and on to Chicago, where there would be an overnight stay, flying on to Denver the following day. From Denver we planned to drive some 150 miles to Salida – a very famous town, being the host to the Arkansas River Race each year. Here we would stay for four days and do a little approach canoeing on the Arkansas. Then would come the long drive of 480 miles over the mountains and across the Desert to Lees Ferry – the starting point for Grand Canyon river runners – making a short stop off and de-tour to South Rim to overlook the spectacle of the Grand Canyon. The Expedition proper then took ten days to reach Diamond Creek, some 224 miles down river to pull out of the Canyon. Four days would then be left for the party to spend at South Rim campsite or wherever the group decided to go.

At last all the planning was over, all the packing done, we had an Expedition and it was time to fly out... Dublin Airport and at last the Expedition was together for the first time, 29 on the run (two Americans still to be met in Denver) and seven others who were flying out with us on the party rate. But a short stop over in Shannon then the engines roared, the plane vibrated, racing over the runway, a dramatic lift into the air and next stop was Chicago...

Some eight hours later we touched down in the United States - we had made the great American landfall. Stepping from the plane the humid heat of the city really hit us. Sweat seemed to run from every pore, I certainly hoped it would be a little less humid than this in the canyons. The temperature here was a mere 80° and further south we could expect it to be well over the hundred mark!

'Hey, Clarky, there's a bloke outside with a 35 foot canoe...' someone commented.

'Come on,' I retorted, 'you're having me on.' But indeed there was a 35 foot canoe outside in the carpark. It was my friend Ralph Freese of the Chicagoland Canoe Base. I had arranged with him to find suitable overnight sleeping for the group in one of the local canoe clubs. The 'canoe club' turned out to be the local club house of the Izaak Walton League - something similar to our Youth Hostels, but with very strong conservation ideals - and the welcome we received was just overwhelming. Not only was floor space laid on, but a very fine meal followed by film and slide show and breakfast in the morning. One particular canoeing film 'Kayak', was exceptional and I hope it will be available for showing at next years National Canoe Conference. The slide show was - guess what - on the Grand Canyon, and we were able to talk with someone who had made the run. A further slide show was on the Voyageurs and proved highly interesting. However, by this time, most were nodding off in sleep. It was late in the evening by local time and we had all lost some six hours in the time difference... While the others slept, I went off with Ralph to have a look over the Chicagoland Canoe Base, and 'Canoe Base' it certainly was - I have never seen so many canoes in one place at a time! Aluminium ones, wood-veneer, and glassfibre; there must have been over a hundred craft.

'Oh,' said Ralph, 'they all get to be hired out at weekends. There is some fine canoe touring waters around here! Certainly as we had come into land at the airport in the afternoon, it could be seen that much water existed around the city, apart from the great expanse of Lake Michigan.

It was a great pity we could not have made a longer stay with these hospitable people, but our flight was for early in the morning and we had to be off. Once again we were roaring off into the skies - this time American skies and heading south west across the Great Plains and on to the desert lands.

Through another time zone and we were at last touching down at Denver Airport. Here to meet us was Art Vitarelli, a Californian paddler who had canoed the Colorado three times before. It took some hour to collect all our gear together. With such a large party we of course had great fun trying to keep all together and working as one. Still we made it. From England I had booked five big American cars as transport, being the most comfortable and reasonably priced way of travelling. However Art came up with the idea of hiring a stake truck (a nice term for cattle-truck!) and this would work out cheaper than having five separate vehicles. The whole party agreed that we should go for this method but still retain one of the cars - they were to have been Empalas. Within a short time Chris and I had been off and collected the transport, while in the meantime Art found where the Expedition kayaks were stored. Another two hours and at last all was loaded. The Empala took six kayaks on the roof and seven persons inside. The truck - which was covered at this stage and changed to an open one the next day - was loaded with all the mountains of gear, some twelve kayaks and eighteen persons. Art's small pick-up truck took the remaining persons and eight kayaks. Thus we took off for Salida...

Our stay at Salida was in the Firbark Canoe Club, and here we were all made very welcome by the townsfolk. It seems that the town almost revolves around the canoe club and the Firbark Races. The building was of two storeys right on the river bank. Rooms were furnished by residents of the town and the whole group was able to stay here at no cost, three or four persons in each room. On the lower floor were workshops for repairs - it was regrettable that we had cause to use these in the following days... We had much sleep to catch up on and this first evening who cared what the river looked like...?

The following day we were off without kayaks to look over the river. We would at least run the Arkansas River Race Course, a distance of 26 miles from Salida to just above Royal Gorge. The river proved interesting, but not too difficult. It was just right for the majority of our canoeists to really enjoy. Cottonwood Rapid right down the bottom seemed to be the most difficult, a nice grade four.

*Welcome in Chicago by The Izaak Walton League.  
Denver - Art loads his truck with kayaks  
while other members fit the roof rack  
to the Empala.  
Photos left to right.*





*Approach canoeing on the Arkansas and Bill Hallows at play on Cottonwood Rapid: Our second open truck loaded and ready for the trip to Lees Ferry.*

The weather was very warm and most took the opportunity of getting in some sunning, the temperature in the Grand Canyon would be much greater than here and to take advantage of it required a good suntan before we hit the real heat !

The stay in Salida was taken up with one complete run of the river, on which we lost one kayak (almost written off) and damaged a number of others, a run by the more experienced of Browns Canyon, and a group spending an afternoon playing on Cottonwood. Expedition passengers took off around the town and made a morning swimming at the hot springs bath - a real super bath this with the water in the 80°s. The truck was taken back to Denver and another brought down and fitted with beams across the top of the open back to take all our craft. Thus the days passed and soon the morning of departure and the heading out across the mountains to drop down into the desert lands and Grand Canyon....

The distance from Salida to Lees Ferry was just about 500 miles and the truck could average around 50 miles an hour without accounting for stops. I personally would like to have made an overnight stop after leaving the mountains, but Chris decided we should push straight through taking the desert at night. A pity this in some ways, for we missed the desert sights and could only see great black shapes of buttes in the darkness. However in the cooler night air it was perhaps best for those travelling in the truck. (The Empala had air conditioning and one could drive through the hottest part of the day with almost freezing air blowing in the face!) The first part of the drive was through great mountain passes and it was surprising so far south to see a little snow over the top parts.

Across great wide plains, up through the mountains and at last over the peak... We began to drop into the desert lands and the temperature began to climb although it was nearing evening. The ride in the truck was pretty rough on those in the back and we had planned to change truck passengers with those in the Empala. However the change did not always take place at the agreed spots.... The miles slowly passed, the drive was certainly through spectacular country, and the roads proved to be very good.

Our evening meal stop was on the outskirts of Tuba City, between here and the Colorado there was virtually nothing in the way of civilisation. Art

in his truck had made an overnight stop way back on the road, but at a chicken bar the big Hertz truck was already parked as I pulled in. Three-quarters of an hour break, a change of passengers and we were once again on the road, on across the Painted Desert. The truck had left before us but in the Empala we were soon overtaking it, however there was no need to speed and I kept the speed around 65 - besides the faster we pushed it the more petrol we used. The radio blared pops on into the night, and every so often the air conditioning was put on for a cooling break. It was certainly great having this in the car but we used it only at intervals as it took 20% of the cars power and of course there was quite a load on the vehicle.

Long after mid-night, Allen Miller - one of the Empala co-drivers - pulled the car into the checkpoint car park at Cameron. We were now only an hour away from the Grand Canyon South Rim, and thus we waited for the truck to catch up. After a short period we were tailing the truck, and soon pulled off the road to make a stop until light.

The night was very warm, being around the 80° mark, the air still with little sound. The long drive was over and I lay across the front seat of the Empala, but the mounting excitement caused little sleep in the short hours..

The first rays of the sun crept up over the desert and the prostrate bodies around the two parked vehicles began to move. Around us stretched wild country, dry and almost barren. Of course we had no refreshments or food suitable for breakfast, the only place to eat was down the road an hour away at South Rim Lodge. Thus before the sun was fully above the horizon we were all once again on our way.

Within a few miles we entered Grand Canyon National Park - the Expedition was at last there. The truck raced ahead of the Empala - the only thoughts in the mind of the driver no doubt being that of breakfast. However we were now driving along the actual edge of the Grand Canyon and down the road there were side routes to take the motorist to spectacular viewing sports. No time for breakfast now, that could wait, here was the Grand Canyon we had come almost six thousand miles to see.....



Grand Canyon from South Rim. Five miles across and over a mile deep — the river cannot be seen in the upper photo but by using my telephoto and changing position the river can be seen in the lower left.



'What a world of grandeur is spread before us! Below is the canyon through which the Colorado runs. We can trace its route for miles, and at points catch glimpses of the river... Wherever we look there is but a wilderness of rocks, - deep gorges where the rivers are lost below cliffs and towers and pinnacles, and ten thousand strangely carved forms in every direction, and beyond them mountains blending with the clouds.'

Thus describe John Wesley Powell on his first sighting of the Grand Canyon over a hundred years before us. To-day the river may be a little tamer with two dams holding back the mighty waters and regulating the constant flash floods, but the scenery is un-changed. With the sun now high in the sky behind us, the last traces of mist evaporating in the growing heat, below us lay the Grand Canyon... It is difficult to describe ones feelings at the scene, indeed it is difficult to describe even the scene. What a truly spectacular place this is. From high on the rim we could gaze unbelievably across an eight mile labyrinth of canyons, towering buttes, temples of rock, and great arms spreading this way and that. There was every shade of colour. In places the cliffs rose in great purple walls, others were of deep red, or orange, yellow, olive and black. One can look at some of the many coloured postcards of this scene and say such a place is not possible but, even standing on the top of South Rim and looking at the scene for real - it still does not seem possible...! Eight miles across and over a mile deep, this rock splendor dwarfed all into insignificance. At places one could catch sight of the silver thread of the great Colorado River still eating away the rock, still carving the splendour that is Grand Canyon.

Certainly with such a place breakfast could wait and I pulled the car on to almost all of these viewing areas. We progressed slowly along the canyon rim, viewing the changing scene, taking in the changing colours. We said little for here was a place that needs no words. Truly Powell was right when he wrote 'What a world of grandeur is spread before us....'

At last we reached the El Tovar Hotel and were hungry for breakfast. Waffles and maple syrup, scrambled eggs and toast, plus endless cups of coffee - we had done much before breakfast and were really ready for food. Some hour later the groups of the Empala emerged much refreshed. The group in the truck were about ready to leave and between

us we decided that the two would no longer keep together on this last leg of some hundred miles to Lees Ferry (we had made a detour down the Canyon to see South Rim for the previous evening we had been only 60 miles from Lees Ferry at one point). Thus in the Empala I drove the small group some further way along South Rim and on our return we made a short stop at the remains of a Tusayan Village.

Our short stay at South Rim was soon over, but there was much more we could have seen at this place and if I get the chance of another trip to this area I would certainly plan for a stop at South Rim of at least two full days. We were on the road once again, heading back to Cameron, out across very hard desert lands and on to Lees Ferry.

The temperature rose into the nineties, the road stretched before us in a shimmering mirror pool. Along the road side the desert took strange formations as if some mechanical digger had been at work - but out here the only work is done by nature.

As of the previous day, 'slush' had been the order. This was a very refreshing drink that could be obtained at intervals from either filling stations or one of the small eating bars. Like the name implies, the drink was flavoured soft ice, and one sucked on the melted liquid with a straw. Chris had told me of this drink before leaving England, but we were unable to make one drink last until the next station came in sight.

At long last Navajo Bridge, we crossed the Colorado River and drove the few miles into Lees Ferry. We had made it.

However the travelling for four of us was still not over, for we had yet to get the two vehicles down to Peach Springs, the nearest civilisation to our take out point of Diamond Creek. Thus all the gear, canoes, kayaks, paddles, crash hats and life jackets were unloaded from the truck and car. The hot afternoon sun beat down on the sweating bodies of our group busy sorting out what equipment they needed for the ten day trip and packing all that was not needed and loading back into the truck. There was little time to survey the river. However both Chris and I did get a ducking from the boys before we left on the last part of the driving.

*Arrival at Lees Ferry and the unloading of our truck. With some 14 kayaks on top and 18 persons in the back journeys end was a welcome sight!*





*Unloading the Empala: The kayaks and all other gear dumped for the night: The rafts loaded and waiting for the car ferry party to return.*

Chris and Albert Woods took the truck, Allen and myself once again taking the Empala. This last drive of little less than 180 miles was certainly the hardest so far of the trip. We had driven 500-miles the day before, been up at the crack of dawn, driven another 200-miles, and now we started on almost another 200-miles... The sun slowly slipped below the horizon, leaving a superb sky, the desert painted in orange and turning deep red to at last become black as the cover of darkness fell. The headlights of the car blazed on into the night, we were headed for a small settlement just outside Peach Springs. Here was the Grand Canyon Cavern Motel and a small airstrip from which we would fly back to Lees Ferry in the morning.

Through Flagstaff and onto the Las Vegas road. Allen had been doing the driving and was soon completely shattered. It was getting to be just too much for us. We pulled into a filling station and decided to wait for the truck to catch up and take us over the last miles. Soon I was following the truck, Allen fast asleep and myself hoping the boys would not go too fast for, even after only a few minutes of driving I was beginning to see double. The last days certainly told on this drive, but at last the motel was reached and soon both of us were asleep in the car comfortably stretched out on both seats...

Just after eight in the morning the car and truck were parked and we all climbed into the oh so small Cherokee aircraft. The engine revved and we raced down the 'runway' - this was just a flat area of desert marked with stones and cleared of the short scrub that grew over the surrounding land. I don't quite recall my feelings here, but I can remember that the crashed aircraft on one side of the runway did not exactly inspire confidence.

Soon we were weaving high in the sky, the ground shrinking away beneath us. The people became as ants and the cars heading along Route 66 became as toys. Below us spread the desert and away to the left the Grand Canyon behind a row of hills. It was interesting to see the contours of such a place. All the rivers from many miles further north had only showed as dry beds, but now way up in the sky it was possible to see all the river beds winding below us. We could see the many drain off patterns from the low hills, and detect where lakes had been

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during the wet season. But I doubt if here a lake would last little more than hours after a flash flood.

Up, up, up, into the clear blue sky the small aircraft toiled.

'We have to fly a little south-east to counteract drift,' our pilot told us, 'but we should pass over Marble Canyon in a little while.'

After some twenty minutes we were over South Rim and could see the airstrip below us but the aircraft was too far south to actually look down into Grand Canyon. However some minutes later the aircraft bucked and dropped as we crossed the actual rim of the Canyon and looked right down into Marble Canyon.

Slashed and counter slashed deep cuts in the crust of the earth... Now those slashes could clearly be seen and right in the bottom the thin line of the Colorado River. White water appeared.

'That's Soap Creek,' cried Chris...

Soap Creek or not, it looked nothing from this height. Waves fifteen and twenty feet high - no, surely he was having us on! However the spectacle was superb and in the early morning sun great shadows showed up all the side canyons and creeks.

All too soon we were losing height, the engine was throttled back and we were lining for the rough airstrip of Lees Ferry. A slight bounce, the engine cut and a drift up to the small building of the post office. We were once again back at Lees Ferry. Art had brought up one of the Htach trucks and, after dropping our last postcards in the box - 'Dear Mum, we start into the unknown...' we were driving the few miles to the launch site.

Lees Ferry seemed a hive of activity. Great rubber pontoons, fitted with outboards, tugged at ropes on the shallow beach. Persons in great wide brimmed hats dashed backwards and forwards, a couple of other raft expeditions were preparing to leave shortly after us. Our three support rafts seemed fully loaded and the group were only waiting for us four to return. Twenty-three or twenty-four kayaks and canoes hustled impatiently on the water...

'Come on, Chris...'



## Down the Colorado River

The three support rafts were great 33 foot pontoons (left over from the last war) of thick multiply rubber. The words 'Hatch River Expeditions' announced the company in black letters along the silver sides. Over the back was slung a 20hp outboard engines, 20hp is the maximum allowed in the Grand Canyon and is little more than powered steering in the great rapids. However on the flat we did nip along at a steady pace. Between the three rafts we had five boatmen: 'Big Jim' - Jim Hall, a Texan from Houston who was the chief boatman and river guide; Terry Collier, boatman from Vernal; Dave Leseberg, boatman from Boulder City; and support boatman Bob Keeling from Canada, and 'Little Jim' - Jim Thrasher from Costa Mesa.

I had stowed film on all three of the rafts - just in case... and thus I felt I would join what ever took my fancy at any one time. It did not really matter which as all three were to run the rapids before any of the canoeists were to come down - or rather that was the idea.

Thus shortly before mid-day on the 6th July, the First British Kayak Expedition to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River left Lees Ferry to paddle some 224-miles of the roughest water anywhere. All the travelling was over, the weather was a little over-cast but very hot, all had great hats with wide brims pulled well down over the head, we looked a very peculiar bunch....

'Okey, let's go!' shouted Big Jim. The impatient canoeists raced off down stream, and three outboards burst into life. Well, here we go... From now on it was just the towering cliffs of Marble and Grand Canyon, the thundering river, and us.

The water was clear and running fast, gurgling over stones and around rocks. Surely this was not the Colorado, for all I had read indicated that the river was heavily laden with silt and was of deep brown in colour. (The name Colorado derives from the Spanish word meaning red.) Maybe as we pro-

*The start of our trip down The Colorado: Flat water for the first miles and a crafty free tow from the rafts: Spider-like Navajo Bridge, the last sign of civilisation for ten days.*

gressed the colour would change. The river was wide and each side great cliffs rose hundreds of feet, the colours ranging from deep reds to yellows. The rock here at Lees Ferry was of limestone formation but all down the 224-miles we were to run, the rocks grew harder and the period older as we descended into the depths of the inner gorge. Certainly for the geologist this place is of astounding interest, and almost an instant view of two billion years of our earth's history.

Within a few miles our floater passed under the spider-like Navajo Bridge, the last sign of civilisation for ten days. Small figures of tourists leaned over the parapet and waved to us, our members waved back - we were all in a good mood but for the paddlers this was a distraction from the mounting apprehension within... For months we had read as much as possible about the Colorado. At Leamington we had talked of big rapids, but just how big was 'big rapids' - we were soon to find out.

We are in Marble Canyon - named by Powell on his first trip after the marble-like appearance of the rock. It was in fact almost pure limestone with the action of the water giving a polished finish to the walls - just like marble. After some 60-miles we would enter Grand Canyon, marked by the bright blue water of the Little Colorado River entering from the left, but first the group had to run the wild water of Badger Creek, Soap Creek, House Rock, Tanner and Twenty-five Mile Rapids.

The miles from Lees Ferry pass, the water ran faster, little ripples appeared to be replaced by bigger ripples and, just 7-miles down we came to our first rapid of the run. Not even a rapid by Colorado standards, but the river seemed to plunge into the earth, a low road of wild water descended on the ear and far down river the white caps of wave could be seen. So here was our first real rapid, no great rapid according to the river guide but water of like to compare with any competition course in Europe. Our canoeists slowed down and let the rafts run first then, led by Art, they shot the racing water in kayaks packed to the decks with buoyancy. For some it was sheer joy, for others the beginning of the end of their capability limit... Pauline Squires, who ten days later became the first woman single kayaker ever to run the Colorado, for her

the water was big but by no means impossible. It was just a slow at the tongue, then head down, the familiar look of grim determination, and she pushed her kayak through the roughest water, turning away from the shallows and searching for the biggest water...

So this was Badger Creek Rapids. It seemed easy and our Expedition did not show any respect for the water. It seemed that Chris had been shooting the bull, certainly it was quite good water but nowhere near the fifteen and twenty mountains of water we had been led to expect - but then this was but a grade five rapid (on the Canyon scale) and the Colorado had over 200-miles still to show who was the master.

The sun was now high in the sky, burning through the low cloud and making an uncomfortable heat. A few miles after Badger and the rafts beached on a small sand bar - it was time for lunch.

Lunch in the Canyon was always a great selection of tinned meats, corned beef (and including SPAM!!), along with bread, tinned fruit, biscuits, peanuts, sweets, and gallons of soft drink. The break was usually for little more than three-quarters of an hour and we were once again off ever down stream.

The afternoon of that first day was marked by Soap Creek Rapid.

Soap Creek, just 11-miles down and a grade seven on the Canyon scale. The roar of racing water could be heard way up stream and here we all stopped to beach and have a look before running... Waves twelve foot and higher, this was the Colorado we expected.

'Mike,' whispered Pauline, 'it's bigger water than I have ever seen before...' From now on each rapid was to increase in size as we descended into the harder rock of the Canyon.

At our evening in Chicago the paddlers were told to beware the raft passengers standing on the rocks at the river edge - they were only standing there to see action and at such a place big water could be expected. The lead raft ran the rapid, over the first wave, spray breaking over the bow, the stern bucking up in the air as the bow descended into the tough.

Below the rapid the raft pulled back upstream into an eddy and beached to allow passengers to race over the rocks to find the best vantage points to watch the canoeists make their run. From the bank the kayakists were dwarfed by both cliffs and water. It seemed that each craft had to paddle uphill to pull over the peaks of the mighty waves. For seconds the waves would roll back on themselves forming what the white water paddler calls a 'stopper'. These were real stoppers - going through such waves the kayaks were almost stopped dead and for many such an experience was to be avoided. Kayaks would break through the top of the waves, then there was a mad dash down into the tough, followed by a beat up the next wave and over the top. At times the kayakists would disappear altogether, or just a blade or crash helmet could be seen as they took on the big water. Suddenly the wave would burst and the paddler race out looking for the next hazard. Thus for a few seconds the waves would be great stoppers, then giant exploding waves, water bursting from their tops as if pushed up into the air by some unseen hand. This was rapid river running at its very best and certainly for the kayakists it was water almost to the very limits of paddling ability...

At Soap Creek, and every other major rapid on the Colorado, all the paddlers beached before running and had a good look at what they had to tackle. After running Soap, Fred Doodey (the sort of paddler who takes on anything river can offer), began to gain a little respect for the Colorado. For Pauline the smile was gone - here was water to take her to the limits of her ability... and still this was only the beginning of what the Colorado had in store for her and the whole Expedition!

The roar of Soap Creek died behind us, only the sound of dripping paddles and the splutter of the outboards broke the silence as we journeyed on. Each was in a world of his own thoughts, the only way out of the Canyon was downstream, and downstream greater and more fearful rapids awaited our arrival. For the paddlers the strain was not just physical - in the Colorado River they were taking on the might of nature at her very best, and, to overcome such water, personal fear had first to be conquered. Any man who could not show fear at such water could only be a fool... In this first great rapid the art of the Eskimo Roll was used by a number, but what if the paddler failed to roll? In such a position panic may well replace fear - as was to be seen later on Unkar Rapid....

*Badger Creek - the first rapid taken by the rafts and canoeist: For Allen Miller the first of very many capsizes!*



With a hot wind blowing up the Canyon and the sun seemingly far too high in the sky, the kayaks and canoes gently beached on a sand bar in the wake of the rafts. Just 20-miles down the Colorado and we had reached our camping site for the night.

'Duffle-line!' the cry of the boatman echoed the walls and all hands set to unload the rafts. The cry was to become etched in the mind as part of the trip.

Our first campsite was a pleasant sand beach reaching up the side of the left canyon wall, with a small side canyon just below. In the morning maybe there would be time to explore a little here.

All down the Colorado there were numerous side canyons, some with bright small streams dancing over the stones, forming miniature waterfalls, rushing over pink, red, and yellow stones or rocks; canyons that in such a place seem so small as to warrant complete dismissal. Yet here in these side canyons the wonders of nature could readily be seen if the river runner so inclined to look. The splendour of Grand Canyon is so great that places of beauty are lost to the majority of those who pass this way. Slow down you river runner, suppress from your mind the great spectacle that constantly demands your attention, take time out and look to the small beauties of nature that are to be found here. . . you will be amply rewarded.

The boatman get busy with the evening meal, all the Expedition members searched out a suitable place to sleep the night. Some had long polythene bags inside which their sleeping bags were placed, others had small cots, or airbeds, even tents, but the latter was certainly not needed on our trip down Grand Canyon. The nights were all dry and the temperature never fell below 85°. Your author had a Good Companions tent and insisted on a pitch of this each evening (save one when space did not permit) and I became very competent at pitching in soft sand! Not having airbed or ground sheet, the tent offered best protection from any small creatures that may have taken interest in sleeping bodies. . . However only one night did we have trouble from local inhabitants. This, we think, was a ground squirrel which proceeded to nibble a finger of Little Jim - the support boatman from California.

Within half an hour the cry 'soup and salad' went up and all the members grabbed eating irons for the start of the evening meal. Eating in the Canyon was first class and I think we all put on weight even though we were sweating and working hard a great deal during the day. The meals ranged from superb steaks - steaks so big that this was the only thing one could get on the plate - to pork, and beef. The meals started with hot soup and salad, then the main course, meat with maze and a variety of vegetables. For sweet there was a choice of tinned fruit, plus coffee (boiled over three times!) and of course the inevitable gallons of soft drink. For some the drinks were supplemented with tins of beer that we brought in bulk ourselves (some 40 cases of the stuff, and it all disappeared in the ten days!). However the soft drink was very popular at all times and three or four gallons would be downed in a very short time.

The evening closed in quickly and in the cooling heat of the day the group discussed the days run, and, more important, what the morrow would bring. This first evening a small group sat around the camp fire until quite late, with Albert Woods keeping our big Texan and all in fits of laughter with his jokes - mind, the loudest laughter seemed to come from Albert himself! The tension of the first day was beginning to wear off. . . Darkness was almost full by nine and the majority of Expedition members were thinking of bed. Most Canyon evenings were to be like this, the campsite completely silent by nine - thirty - but there on many days we were all up very early in the morning.

Our first morning of waking in the Canyon. The early morning sun was reflected from the far wall but no-one was too keen to rise early, the last few days of travelling had taken a toll and now there was a chance to catch up on sleep. The morning was bright and clear, it looked as if we were in for some hot paddling. Gone was the overcast skies and even just after 0700 the temperature was well up in the eighties.

Bodies began to stir, a thin column of blue smoke from our campfire rose to the rim as Little Jim coaxed the ashes into life. Soon coffee was on the boil and the group was busy with morning toilets on the river bank. Keith Kaye, our paddler from South Africa, is determined to grow a beard and after two days has already quite a shadow. Soon breakfast was ready - fried eggs, bacon, and a pile of pan cakes, coffee and soft drink. After the first two days in the Canyon Big Jim had a bit of a shock when he went through the supplies list and found that the Expedition was eating about four or five eggs each at breakfast. At such a rate we would have been out of eggs before reaching the half way mark! On following mornings the number of eggs were cut down. The pancakes were just great; sometimes these were plain, sometimes of blueberry, but always with spoonfuls of maple syrup, we were certainly eating real American style.

Soon the cry of 'Duffle-line!' went up and we were all busy re-packing the gear on the rafts, looking to the kayaks and preparing to once again get on the water. This first morning the river had left our rafts high and dry on the sand bank and all had to put to and push them down to the water. The dam at Glen Canyon always closed down during the evening, making a drop of some ten feet in water level, but by just before mid-day the water was always well up again. Later, according to Big Jim, we had had really good water for the whole of the trip. The rafts once again tugged at their ropes, the paddlers drifted impatiently around waiting for the off, but first the campsite had to be checked for any left litter. All down the Canyon we were very careful to clear every small piece of litter, even down to match sticks. The only evidence of our having been at a site was the ashes of our campfire. The Grand Canyon is a great beautiful wilderness and it must remain that way for the generations after us to see. Leave no litter you river runner - you packed it in, you pack it out. . . .



2

1. Marble Canyon from the air. The river cannot be seen but it is there way down in the bottom.

2. Roger taking Soap Creek Rapid. This was the first of the big rapids with waves some 15-foot high.

3. Redwall Cavern — a massive under cut in the wall of Marble Canyon. Just note the two canoeists on the water to left of the figure.

4. The Colorado from high on the Canyon side. Our campsite and rafts can just be seen in the bottom left corner.





1. Nowhere will you find bigger canoeing water than in Grand Canyon. Here Fred takes on a massive rapid, the top of the wave going right off the picture!

2. A fine study of Pauline taking the 'chicken shoot' of Lava Falls.

3. Topless dolly girls at Deer Creek — time for a chat and cool beer or coke. This group of free-thinking Americans were in Grand Canyon for some weeks and really taking in the beauty of the place.



*Lower photos: 33-foot of raft bucking out of the water: Big water on Granite: Art, leader on many of the rapids: Ann Linder with candy — she was one of the few to bring such goodies: Mike Goodwin on 75-mile Rapid: 'Fly Navy' down Granite Falls.*





*Above: Map reading and appraisal of the coming rapids: Camp breakfast - eggs and pancakes prepared by 'Big Jim': Lava Falls and a broken paddle for John Goodwin in the front of the C2.*



1. Crystal Rapid — one massive stopper and a hole some 15-foot deep! No wonder the kayaker here is keeping well clear...

2. Down the tail of a rapid, one of the three rafts that gave us support. These river monsters can take up to 7-tons of gear.

2



# Descent into Grand Canyon

'Okey, let's go!' Once again the raft engines burst into life and our little group, dwarfed by the every increasing height of the canyon walls, pushed off down the river.

Throughout the morning our Expedition ran a large number of small rapids. Tanner Rapid being the biggest at a grade 5-6, while during the afternoon there was only President Harding and Nankowep Rapids. However this did not disappoint us too much as there was much to see on this day. The great red walls of the Marble Canyon rose around us, the clear water of the Colorado reflected the blue of the sky, small green trees bordered the river bank and sand bars made superb beaches if one had had time to stay for a while. The Colorado wound this way and that, but the direction was always roughly south. After mid-day we rounded one turn and were presented with a most superb scene that really took the breath away...

In front of us on the lefthand bank of the river, a great cavern was hacked out of the canyon wall. Just 30 miles down the Colorado from Lees Ferry and we had reached Redwall Cavern. It is said that such a place as this, if it were converted into a concert hall, could seat some 50,000 persons. The cavern has been eaten into the left wall on a right turn by the action of the water over countless centuries. Before the dams of Flaming Gorge and Glen Canyon were constructed, the water regularly flooded to the ceiling of this great place, but now it is but a haven for wind blown sand... Just what must the river have looked like in Powell's day with its water completely free and untamed?

At Redwall we stopped for lunch and Chris gave a little lecture to our canoeists about staying with the rafts - much of the morning the boys had been way in front and part of the Expedition was to make a film of the canoeing. There were to be more lectures on this during the coming days.

Our lunch break was soon over and we were once again on our way. In little more than another two miles the river took another sharp bend, this time to the left, and, high on the right wall sparkling water poured down the cliff face over green moss covered rocks and disappeared into beautiful foliage covered area. This was Veseys Paradise (named after G. W. Vasey, a botanist who accompanied Powell on the 1868 expedition). Around this small area grow a profusion of plants nurtured by the small clear water spring seeping through the limestone rocks above. We did not have time to explore and it was with regret that we had to pass this place without making a landing.

Another few miles down the mighty Colorado and the rafts draw into the bank, our paddlers beach along side and we made a stop for a pilgrimage to examine the remains of a river runners boat. High on the side of the Canyon under Royal Arches, is the smashed woodwork of Bert Loppers boat, a river runner who was presumed drowned after a heart attack while running Tanner Wash Rapids in 1949. Our group inspected this grim reminder of the power of the river we were running, little was said, each was in the world of his own thoughts... The sun burns down from high in the sky over short scrub, the passengers to the rafts, the paddlers to their kayaks and canoes.

We headed off down stream and the canoeists hung around the rafts like bees to honey. The water was very flat and at such places our boys would come along side the rafts and catch hold for a 'free' ride. We must have looked strange river running crafts at times, the great silver rafts ploughing down stream with eight or nine brightly coloured kayaks hanging on the sides - plus the two or three kayaks not in use lashed across the bows. The kayakers hung close and at odd times there would go up a cry followed by shrill laughter as the build up of water pressure on the forward side of a kayak would suddenly turn the craft over, the surprised kayaker spluttering to the surface with an Eskimo roll. Down through the Canyon this happened countless times and on one occasion Allen Miller capsized on the raft side to surface a few moments later out of his kayak. The craft was nowhere to be seen and it was a few minutes before we realised it must have been forced under the actual raft. Allen took a dive and certainly there it was right under the centre of the raft! Big Jim turned the raft this way and that, even reversing it, but still the kayak would not move from its submerged position. All the kayakers had a great deal of buoyancy in them - far more than in normal use - and this was forcing the kayak up against the underside of the raft, and it was only by running the raft onto a sand bar that at last the kayak was freed...

After another few miles of paddling or hanging on, the great rock of President Harding Rapids came into view. Here a huge rock stood in the centre of the river with water racing either side through the restricted passage. The rapid was easy to run and none found it too difficult. However Fred Doodey did manage to gain a brush with the rock and was almost pulled into the stopper on the lower side. There was much laughing afterwards but the situation could have been dangerous in the respect of boat damage. Passing this rapid one could not help notice the pile of drift-wood high on the top of the great rock - what must the water have looked like when it placed that wood fifty foot above?

The latter part of the afternoon was spent in running a number of splendid little rapids, but we also experienced our first taste of the Canyon heat wind. From this day on each afternoon was marked by the extremely hot wind blowing up the Canyon, even in the shade of the great walls the hot wind burnt into our faces - there was no escape from it.

At last Nankoweap Rapids came into sound. By Canyon standards these are not even graded but proved to be very exciting. We pulled into a great bay below these to camp for the night. Running the rafts ashore, we were surprised to find the site already occupied by a number of dory crews and, although we camped way up the beach from them, they decided the place was getting too crowded and took off down stream. The following days we ran into this group again.

Our campsite was along the shore of the bay and behind sand dunes, the group spreading out well. I pitched at the top of the shore, well above any high water that may come during the night. The Colorado is notorious for the varying water level. Not only does one get the constant rise and fall from the dams, but with the surrounding area being of rock any rainfall immediately affects the level. When camping or selecting a place to sleep, care must be taken not to use dry river beds or drain off channels. A storm in the night - which are not infrequent in this area - can turn such places into racing torrents within a matter of minutes.

The area was some half mile long and about a quarter mile deep before the cliffs rose above. High up the wall was a series of small workings hacked into the cliff face. These were apparently used by Indians for storing grain in past years. A few of the group decided to go up after the evening meal to have a close look, but it was already getting dark, I decided to make the climb in the morning.

The night was again peaceful - save for the momentary flashes of a thunderstorm way up in the canyons - and all slept well after a superb meal. The Canyon meals cannot be too highly recommended. Maybe it was the clear air or the open fire cooking, but after a day in the Canyon I can assure you that food never tasted better than in those cool evenings.

Bodies lay in a variety of repose as I threaded my way through the campsite in the early morning light. Little Jim was also about and soon had the fire going, again the smoke wisping up through the clear still air. I climbed for about half an hour and at last gained the first of the small store houses. Holes had been cut into the rock, or may be they were natural caves, and then the fronts had been stoned up save for a small opening. It was not possible to go inside - they were just too small. After the long climb I sat and gazed over the campsite far

below, the river spreading before it. However something was very different... Just what was it? I studied the scene. The river reflected the clear sky just as it had done the day before, the surface mirror-white. But yes, now the shadow areas were no longer reflecting the darkness of the cliffs, the surface was deep red. Certainly she was now a 'dirty devil', this was the Colorado Powell had seen, deep red silt-laden water swirling down the Canyon. During the night there must have been a flash flood from one of the side canyons pouring tons of desert silt into the river. For the rest of our time in the Canyon the river was to be like this, although as the days passed the silt became less dense.

The highlight rapid of the day was not to be reached until late afternoon with quiet water to paddle all the morning. Thus many of the canoeists were out in front of the rafts - much to my own annoyance, for what was the point of coming 6000 miles to photograph canoeists if all I saw was their backs! The small rapids we were running produced fine water for shots that were not possible in any other river, being taken from the rafts (on the massive rapids the photographs were all taken from the bank, the bucking rafts being impossible to shoot from, apart from the fact that the main thoughts in the minds of passengers was simply that of hanging on!). Soon most of the paddlers were out of sight and far ahead of us, also later we learnt that even these were not together - a very dangerous thing to do, just what would have happened if one of these small groups had gotten into trouble with help being miles behind?

Towards mid-day we reached the Little Colorado, a river entering on the left bank and marking the end of Marble Canyon and the start of Grand Canyon. The scene was truly beautiful.

The Little Colorado runs bright blue water and at the mouth the bright blue joined with the deep red of the Colorado itself. The colour snoots I took here are just unbelievable! The water was warm and inviting, Big Jim said we were to stop for lunch here and we all took to the water... For the girls in our party it was a chance to wash some of the sand from their hair. Sue Strickland and Jill Bailey producing shampoo in an instant. The water was

*Allen Donnelly in C1 taking big water: Lunch break in Grand Canyon, cold meats, bread, fruit and plenty of soft drink...*





*Afternoon of the first day and already we meet really big water: Our first campsite on a great sand bar: Morning push off of the rafts caught by the 'Udall Factor'.*

certainly inviting - but don't drink it, the blue is caused by a rather heavy concentration of minerals, one of them being epsom salt..!

Our stop here was for a couple of hours - we could have stayed all day along with the dory party with whom we had had a brief meeting the evening before. But it was time to move and also to find a number of our paddlers who had shot past this place and were now no doubt anxiously waiting on the bank somewhere wondering where we had all gotten to. I did not have any pity for them, the idea of an expedition was to stay together, not run the river as individuals, and they had been told not to race ahead into the day before.

For most of the smaller rapids the kayakists ran one after the other in close formation, paddlers breaking off to help any other who came to trouble, while in the really big water runs were made singularly. We had recommended the 'buddy system' and this worked to some extent. For the passengers on the rafts, we had formed into small groups and anyone going on one other than his 'own' raft was regarded as something of a trespasser... I had taken to Big Jim's raft and for much of the time occupied the rear cockpit, talking with our guide over the noise of the engine. (That was, when it was going! We had constant trouble with all the engines for the first half of the trip and one evening a complete engine had to be stripped down. Jim was more than a little worried to find the engines were cutting out down the big rapids. The idea on the rafts was to use the water as much as possible, turning the bow or stern into the stoppers to slow the run. This was just not possible with a dead engine and the raft was then at the mercy of the river. Of course there were spare engines, but it was found that these also had faults!)

Late in the afternoon all the party were together as we warily approached Unkar Rapid - the biggest of the day and bigger water than any of us had ever seen before. Unkar was a great boiling rapid on a right bend of the river and over half a mile in length. Tremendous stoppers bounced off the sheer left hand wall, great holes appeared in the river - some fifteen foot deep - waves exploded high into the air and a constant fine mist of spray hung over the river. To run this sort of water took all a paddlers

ability... We stopped and had a look from the bank but the flat beach on the right did not give a good view of what was in store and it was a worried Expedition that set back on the water.

The ride in the stern of the raft was a thrill one would remember for a lifetime. Heading into the tongue of the rapid it was possible to look right down into the raging water from a high vantage point. Below great waves bounced into the air, daring us to venture forth, the roar drowned speech, one's heart pounded away, white knuckles grip tightly to the safety ropes. Down the smooth tongue into the first of the great waves, the bow bucked high into the air, dropped back into the trough and flipped the stern high into the air - it was like riding a giant aquatic switch-back. Cold spray covers the raft, the base of the cliffs looks dangerously close, the girls on the front scream... The raft turned sideways over a great rolling wave, surely we would capsize... The bow is caught by a stopper, the stern is swung downstream and the bow pulls away from the tortured water. More waves, more spray, bucking high in the air, up, up, up, smash-down into the trough, racing past the sheer walls to at last gain the quiet water... What a rapid, what a thrill. Run the Colorado my friend for a trip that you will never forget.

Even before the rafts can gain the still water, our kayakists are running the rapid. Cameras are ready but we are too far away for filming. One by one the kayaks bounce through the great water and draw along side the rafts. One, two, three, soon most are safely through... and then... TROUBLE!

Our C2 crew of Jon Goodwin and Albert Woods took a capsize on one of the massive waves and then failed to roll upright. The pair took to the water hanging on to their canoe with grim determination, hoping to ride into the slack water. The kayaks race off to give help but for Jon and Albert it was a very rough ride with the canoe finally be-smashed sideways across a rock. Within a short while the pair were pulled ashore, Albert very white and badly shaken by the rough ride but they have gotten away with one mistake on the Colorado, a badly cut finger and an experience they will not soon forget...

The pair managed to paddle the canoe down to campsite but the damage was quite severe. The back deck was ripped from the hull for some three feet, the rear cockpit smashed, and the hull split sectionally.



*The remains of Bert Lopers' boat — a warning for all Canyon runners: Rafts beached for the night and work for Jill to bail out: Sleeping bodies in the early morning of the third day.*

Another few miles and the rafts are once again bucking through wild water. This time it is Seventy-five Mile Rapid. Big Jim guides the raft through and slides it onto the beach below. This is our campsite for the night. One by one the canoeists slide in beside us and some even make the portage back up stream to run '75' again, but for the C2 pair there is gloom. The canoe barely made the 'chicken-shoot' and it is going to take some clever work to get it back on the water in good condition.

The C2 was left to dry out in the evening sun and after the evening meal Ernie Lawrence set to with Jon to make the repairs. A fine job was completed late in the evening and the canoe was on the water for the next morning and made the complete run of 224 miles.

The campsite at '75' was on a great sand bar strewn with rocks and it was here that we first encountered the 'locals'. This was a very interesting little fellow, a scorpion about four or five inches long and translucent green in colour. One of the boatmen caught him and let him go among the rocks well away from our site.

Once again the early evening saw most of the Expedition making ready for a good night's sleep. The smell of woodsmoke stung the cool evening air as I wrote late into the darkness. The morning would bring yet another hot day in Grand Canyon and even bigger rapids than we had seen to date. Not only this, but there were five of them to be tackled...

After a great breakfast — with of course a huge stack of pancakes drowned in maple syrup — the camp site was soon cleared, the rafts loaded, and we were again descending further into the depths of Grand Canyon. The day was to be one of the most active and spectacular of the trip with five great rapids to run and numerous minor ones.

The first of these came within a short distance of our start — it was Hance Rapid. Here the river was quite wide and the rapid spread before us with a number of ways down. There was the usual stop to have a look and then each choose his own route to make the run. Spectacular water, but no up-sets here...

The roar of Hance had hardly died behind us before another roar of racing water sounded in front of us. This time it was Sockdolager Rapid. At our

evening in Chicago we had been told of this rapid. Take care at Sockdolager, this is one of the rapids you have to run blind! Run Colorado rapids blind? They must be joking! But indeed it was not possible to get a real good look at the water and the best offered was a look down the rapid from the top on the left bank. One can well imagine what must have been the feelings of our paddlers as they shoot over the fall line of Sockdolager, the spray hanging above the river and little else to give an idea of what in front. However, although a grade 6, Sockdolager proved to be an easy run for most of our group. But of course by now our paddlers had been really sorted out and on average we had 16 to 18 paddlers on the water each day — this out of 24 possibles.

Within the next few miles there were more small rapids followed by the grade 7 of Grapevine Rapid. Once again the raft bucked high into the air, spray flying over the bow — another great thrill for the passengers — while for the paddlers an even bigger thrill, demanding all one's nerve to even start down the tongue, knowing that from this point there was no turning back, and only then realising just how big the water was. Great exploding waves, massive stoppers with holes that could even eat the rafts, while at the bottom there was the brutal swirls and whirlpools to be contended with. On the Rhone in France I have seen whirlpools that seem to appear at almost any point on that river's great bends. There is little harm in these and they only turn the kayak around. However on the Colorado these whirlpools were something else and certainly to be avoided. Even on the last day — just a few miles from Diamond Creek — Fred Doodey experienced going in to such a whirlpool, and took all his power to fight against the water, this at a point well clear of any major rapids...

The thrills of Grapevine faded behind the sterns of the kayaks, the sun bore down on us and now more than ever the big wide brimmed hats were essential for raft passengers. Since the first days in Salida the whole Expedition had been taking Sylvan tablets as protection against sun-burn. But even with these one cannot fool around with such strong sun as in Grand Canyon. With temperatures around the 120° mark and strenuous paddling on top, there was bound to be a tremendous salt and fluid

lose, making ideal conditions for severe cramp.

Before leaving England I had spoken with 'Doc Watkin' about this problem and he provided some some hundred small bottles of 'DW 4'. This was an excellent medication, being made up in a cup of water and taken before 10.am each morning. The effect was to keep the body in mineral balance during the real heat of the day and I would strongly recommend the taking of this to anyone canoeing long trips in such heat conditions. We had enough supply of 'DW 4' for all but the last day run, and it was only on the last day that anyone complained of cramp! Certainly there could be no better recommendation than this for the medication.

Some 87-miles gone and we pulled into Bright Angel Creek for lunch. For many Grand Canyon River Trips this is the termination. It is possible to walk out of the Canyon from here - but really your trip in Grand Canyon is only just starting and still the best is to come.

Bright Angel Creek, a clear, cool river, bubbling over smooth rocks. What better than to make a small dam with the stones and sit or lay with the water running over you, small fish nibbling at your body to see if its worth a meal. For the real energetic there is the walk up creek to Phantom Ranch - just a mile away and the chance to buy a real cool beer or seven-up. This is the only place in the Canyon that is touched by civilisation. Also here is a post box and off go postcards home - for those who thought to hold on to stamps at Lees Ferry - with 'Four days in the Canyon, things going well...!

Lunch is packed away, alas it is time to leave the cool pools and once again take to the water of the Colorado. Now we descend into real hard rock and the rapids can be expected to be even bigger, more spectacular, and even more difficult than the ones so far experienced.

Three miles down from Phantom and we came onto one of the most unique rapids of the Colorado - Horn Creek Rapid. Here, in the middle of the river right at the top of the raging water, and unseen rock produces a great 'horn' of brown water, twisting it up into the air in an ever changing whirl formation - it was easy to see how the rapid came to be named. The water below was frightful. Great stoppers and boils; racing water tortured down a funnel of hard rock.

*Pauline and Allen on silt-laden water of the third day: Ann getting a cool-off by a ducking in the river: Fred - among the best of river runners*

However, with cool calculation our kayakists and three canoeists ran the rapid, Chris Skellern even showing his contempt for the water by letting go his paddle with one hand to wave to the camera! Somewhere down in Grand Canyon there must be a rapid that this man Skellern will respect...

We stopped long at Horn, looking over the rapid then making the run; and it was now getting to late afternoon as we continued the next few miles to Granite Falls. This was a long rapid on a left curve of the river, the right wall almost sheer, with great stoppers rolling off. A grade 8 and real big Canyon water. Big Jim headed our raft down through the best of the water, those sheer walls seemed to come frighteningly close. Well before the end of the rapid, the rapid, the raft was at full power, battling to make a ferry glide across the river to gain a landing on the sand bar of the left bank. Here our proposed camp-site for the night. The raft gently slide ashore and and we waited for the other two rafts to come through. Our second raft bucked over the water but, with the third, there was trouble. The engine swamped and on such a rapid the situation became desperate. Great swearing from Big Jim as he tried to encourage the boatman to bring the engine back to life, but alas the great pontoon just slide down sideways and the second raft, making way upstream towards our lead raft, seeing the situation, headed across the main stream to the rescue. With the engine at full power, the second raft managed to push the lame duck into the eddy on the right bank. However, although the third raft was now in a safe position, there remained the problem that if the engine could not be started, how could it gain the right bank with the full force of the rapid to be crossed...

One by one our paddlers braved the wild water and pulled in beside our lead raft, it was their turn to watch some fun for a change! After some discusion and futile efforts to get the engine re-started, it was decided between the two that the second raft should try for a pushed ferry glide across to the campsite. However in such water as at the bottom of Granite, it proved to be impossible and even before gaining the real force of the water, the two were swept downstream - Granite was not to be the campsite for that night...

More swearings from Big Jim and we ourselves took off downstream, almost running aground at the head of a great rocky island. For once on the rafts the situation for a time became pretty desperate. And now we had a problem of what campsite to use. We



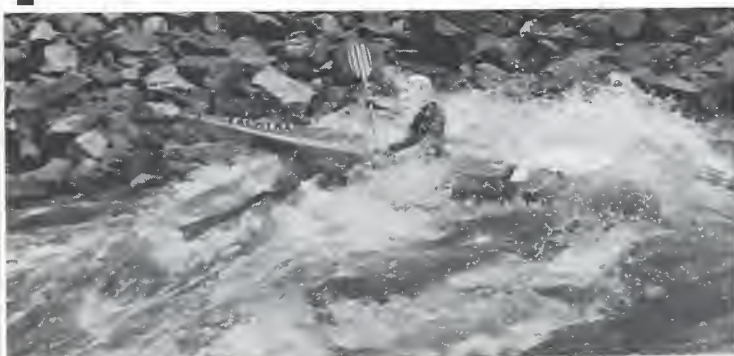


1. John and Albert over the top of the biggest wave on Hermit Rapid.

2. One of the Irish paddlers in kayak taking on Hermit.

3. Successful run of Hermit for a dory, but a second craft was not so lucky when it was turned completely over...

2



3





75-mile Rapid, real desperate water.  
Evening repairs to the C2.

were in hard rock and there were few ideal places to make overnight camp for such a large party as this Expedition. Also, a few miles ahead lay the biggest water any of the canoeists are ever likely to see – this was Hermit Rapid. After a few minutes we came on the other two rafts, both the engines running now. The paddlers were tired from the hectic day and the prospect of having to run yet another great rapid was not too welcome. Thus it was decided that the run of Hermit should not be made this day, and we were forced to use a rather difficult and cramped site at the head of the fall on the left bank.

The rafts pulled in at the head of the rapid, the unloading was done and I took off to look at Hermit. What a rapid! There were five waves, the first at least twenty-five feet high, and the others all of some twenty feet. With the sun lowering in the sky, the rapid – from the photographic view – was at its best to run. A pity we had done so much during this day – still the paddlers must come first.

Now on to the campsite, there was work to be done in finding a place to sleep the night. The bank was steep but of sand, and many took to digging a ledge for sleeping space – it worked well, and somehow we all managed to cram into the small site area. The cans of beer were dropped into the river for cooling: a drink for later in the evening. With darkness and the lowering temperature (still around the 85° mark!) all retired for sleep, a sleep filled with the sound of the thundering Hermit Rapid – such memories would last long after our return from Grand Canyon...

I was up early the next morning, our fifth day in the Canyon, hoping for a quick breakfast and time for a short walk up the side canyon by Hermit before we started down the river again. However there was to be no rush, Big Jim decided that Crystal Rapid, some four miles down, would be too dangerous to run in anything but the highest water, and this would not be until after mid-day. We would stay here for some while.

After a good breakfast, I took off with cameras to explore the side canyon. The place was really beautiful; a clear stream played over coloured rocks and formed numerous small waterfalls. Reeds and bright green trees lined the banks; the place was cool, quiet away from the rapid, and almost beyond description. All these small side canyons offer a real wonderland

to the explorer and time out here is well rewarded. Each has its own identity, and a visit to one maybe completely different in nature from another but a few miles back upstream. As you descend down the river the rocks change in type, likewise the side canyons. However it was soon time to return to camp – far too soon for my liking – and time to prepare for the days run.

The start was to be with the most spectacular series of wave formation on the Colorado. A straight 'safe' rapid with five giant exploding waves to thrill all – this was Hermit and true Canyon water. The river certainly had come well up from its early morning level, and much later Big Jim remarked that all down the Colorado we had had the best of water.

Before leaving Hermit we were joined once again by the dory party and witnessed a very sensational flip by one of the boats taking the third wave. At the time a host of our paddlers were on the water below and there was a mad rush to pull out the passengers from the racing water. The following ride on the raft was like taking five hump-back bridges at top speed. Just fantastic...!

With each day on the Colorado the rapids get progressively more difficult. We were now five days down and just a few miles away was the great Crystal Falls Rapid, a rapid that I consider should be credited with being equal to Lava (yet to run) of the top grading. In Powell's day Crystal was but a ripple and a very easy run. However in 1966 a flash flood in Crystal Canyon on the right bank, reamed out the bottom of the canyon and sent thousands of tons of rock into the Colorado. With the river partially damed, the great rapid was born, and within two years had claimed a life. To-day the rapid is still in its youth and will no doubt in future years become the most feared rapid on the Colorado and almost impossible to run.

The sight of Crystal Falls Rapid really takes the breath away. Both Fred and Chris looked at it and decided immediately that the lower half was just too dangerous to run. The start is with great standing waves, the whole being on a right bend of the river. Some hundred yards down is the biggest stopper I have ever seen – rolling off the left wall and producing a hole below all of fifteen foot deep! From here there is more rolling waves and then, as if to show spite, the lower part of the falls is covered with great boulders, white wild water hissing and thundering right across the river with depth of some

fifty yards – and remember this river is very wide, below Crystal being some eighty yards from bank to bank. Without seeing such a rapid, even the wild water paddler could not imagine the feeling of our group as we stared at the water and wondered how best to tackle such a hazard. There seemed to be no clear route through the lower part, thus our top boys decided for the 'chicken-shoot' to the right and very close to the river bank.

It is really impossible to imagine the water of Crystal. Needless to say there were few who went near that stopper. Mike Goodwin did make a shoot of it, taking the monster just over the right side, likewise Chris and Fred. 'Fly Navy' (Graham Castle), skirted well clear of it, but our other Navy boy, Roger Crane, made another great shoot. Many of the paddlers were content to tackle the big waves at the top, then come right across river to slip down the right bank avoiding all the really rough water. Pauline, the C2 with Jon and Albert, C1 with Allan Donnelly, John Liddell, Mike Jones, Peter Rogers, and Norman Rowe, all took this route. But for others the water was just too much and for them it was a portage, but at such water as Crystal there was no disgrace in this.

While at Crystal the dory came through again and we all lined the bank to watch them go through. As our own rafts had done, there were no passengers aboard, just the boatman. One, two, three came through beautifully, even finding a route through the lower part of the falls. But with the fourth there was a real spectacular performance when he hit the stopper, was thrown out of the boat, re-appeared a few feet away, and took a great lunge back into the boat to take it through the lower part. A tremendous cheer went up from our group, at such quick thinking.

Once again we were off down river, and now the rapids had such names as Tuna, Sapphire, Ruby, Serpentine, and Bass. However, after Crystal these were but play things and our group took time out to enjoy the water without having to keep down the gnawing fear. The day closed with a run of Waltenburg Rapid, a grade 5-6 on the Canyon scale.

For our campsite this evening we had to make do with a small area of sand and rock high on the right bank of the river. The gorge was really closing in and there were no fine sand bars to give spacious sleeping quarters. However the space was sufficient.

On this evening Big Jim had to completely strip one of the engines and it was dark before the job was completed. Our evening was spent talking, grouped around the site. Sue and Jill were down on one of the rafts with the boatmen. . . Later in the evening Big Jim almost blew his top when one of the rafts disappeared downstream with a boatman and Jill on board. It returned, only to float off again during the night. The following morning Big Jim was in a great mood, two of our rafts with engine trouble, and the third somewhere down stream. . . we knew not where. To top this, while loading, one of the griddles went overboard into twenty foot of water and could not be retrieved. It was fortunate that our days run was easy with only two major rapids, and these only of a minor grading, although maybe Deubendorff could hardly be classed as minor!

Deubendorff was a great mass of boiling water right across the river, quite long and with a great rock mound at the head. The main current fell to the right of this, most of our paddlers making a successful shoot from this side. However Allen Miller decided to run the left came out smiling all over. . .

The river ran still in a wide gorge, but the side cliffs in many places were almost sheer to the water and anyone taking a ducking had great swims at such places. Gone now were the handy sand bars that provided space to empty out capsized kayaks.

Afternoon of the sixth day, and we were now some 130-miles down from Lees Ferry. The great black rocks of Granite Gorge (Grand Canyon), rose hundreds of feet above us. From the river we only saw the immediate gorge, the cliffs often rising to two or three thousand feet. However, views of the real top of the Grand Canyon were few, the height now was almost 8000-feet, while the distance across from rim to rim was five or eight miles.

We passed Tapeats Creek on the right. Here Thunder River enters the Colorado and I would have liked to have made a trip up to the top here, for the river just pours from the rock face like a great tap. One day I will return and visit such places. Another three miles and we make ready for the evening stop. The campsite is to be Deer Creek Falls.

*'Big Jim' taking a shower at Deer Creek Falls:  
Dory taking on the big water of Hermit Rapid:  
One raft on Crystal Falls*



Turning a bend in the river we see the top of Deer Creek Rapids, the falls on the right masked by a great rock but also see strange river craft drawn in on the right bank. Many of our paddlers are ahead and already making investigations.

We have come on a group of free thinking young Americans, taking in the sun as nature intended. The group have home built rafts and are making a trip of some weeks in the Grand Canyon, exploring many of the side canyons. Their wooden rafts are fitted only with oars, but best of all they had cans of beer stored in the centre section of each raft. Soon we were all chatting together and drinking cool beer or seven-up.

'We also have two canoeists with us, but they are somewhere up in Deer Creek. Maybe they will return to-night.' said one of the group members.

It turned out that these two canoeists were photographers and had made the film 'kayak' that we saw in Chicago. Later in the evening we would talk with them. Also we discussed where we were all to camp. The American group took to the water and camped down below the falls, while we took to the left bank above for our site. After the evening meal most of our Expedition trekked down stream for a real camp-fire get-together, and talk went on until quite early in the morning for some...

With the morning light we had to say goodbye to our new found friends, but before starting on down river we visited the Deer Creek Falls for a refreshing shower. The falls shed from the rocks some hundred feet above and the walk beneath provided a much needed clean up.

Our morning of this day, the seventh, was uneventful with only a series of small rapids to be run. However, had we encountered such 'small rapids' before starting out from Lees Ferry, there would have been council at each. The last days had really pulled up the paddling standard of the whole group, and all tackled the water with supreme confidence. Even our South African paddler, Keith Kaye was gaining good experience, while Allan Miller was cutting down the number of daily duckings! At times Eric Totty took to the water, but often the group was travelling at too greater speed.

The one big rapid of the day was Up-Set, tackled during the early afternoon. Here was a great stopper almost right across the river. However, many of our paddlers were tired from the party of the previous evening and most took to the 'chicken-shoot', slipping down the right hand side of the raging water, and even Fred plugged for this! Two or three of the Expedition did run the big stuff - Allan Donnelly making a spectacular shoot in the C1, while 'Fly Navy' made an even better one by hitting the stopper right on top, the water catching him and turning the kayak end over end for three full circles - Graham still in the cockpit - until it spit him out to continue the rest of the fall. Big Jim beside me on the bank could just not believe what he had seen! (A pity the camera I was using at the time was loaded with colour...)

Towards the mid-afternoon we hit Havasu Creek on the left of the river. Here the stop was to be for two hours, allowing us time to swim in the clear blue

warm water of the small stream. I took off with cameras and made my usual trip up the canyon to do exploring. For me this afternoon hike was one of the great highlights of my personal Canyon trip. The place I saw was truly beautiful far beyond words and completely overwhelmed me. Nowhere have I seen such a paradise. I cannot even begin to find words to describe it - you will just have to make the trip up Havasu for yourself.

By the time I returned from this wonderland excursion, only one raft - Big Jim - was waiting, the others taken to the water and continued down river. As evening closed in we pulled ashore at the National Canyon and set camp for the night. My evening thoughts were of the beauty I had seen in Havasu and now an even stronger determination that I would one day return again to Grand Canyon, but for many of the paddlers there was a certain tension. To-morrow we would hit Lava Falls - the top grade rapid on the Colorado. In many ways I think our boys were beaten by this rapid before we were anywhere near it, indeed before we even entered Grand Canyon. In and before Chicago we had heard so much about this terrifying rapid that all were convinced - even without seeing it - that it was impossible to run in kayak or canoe.

Before lunch on the eighth day we hit Lava Falls. The roar reached far up-stream. Our paddlers slowed and pulled towards the left bank, landing well above the mighty fall - there was no need to tell them the major rapid was just ahead.

The river was quite wide, the cliffs not so overwhelming as at past rapids, however for some reason I personally found the air very humid, or at least sweat just poured off me, the one and only time in Grand Canyon - but the water... We looked at it for some half hour, timing breaking waves, timing stoppers, and considering whether a run of the right side was worth the risk involved. Two paddlers took off to the far bank for a closer look.

Lava Falls, a drop of almost forty feet in a hundred yards. The start of the rapid was clear with a long smooth tongue; then there were three great waves, at one minute exploding from the top, the next forming tremendous stoppers that it would have been fatal to have been caught in; after this were two big rolling waves - almost up to the standard of Hermit - but the greatest hazard of all was in the exist. A massive rock, some fifty feet high, extending out into the river some third of the way across from the right bank, the water sweeping up its side, rolling back on itself and swirling out into the middle of the river. The right hand shoot took the canoeist right in line for this, and there was no chance of drawing across - it was all or nothing on the right side. The first three waves were possible at times, providing the paddlers caught them in an exploding state and not as stoppers, but this exit...

One by one of paddlers went back to their kayak or canoes and slipped down the 'chicken-shoot' - a run of the left side. However, even here the water was pretty exciting, Jon Goodwin in the front of the C2 breaking his paddle at the top but continuing down using the blade with little more than six-inch of shaft. After sometime 'Fly Navy' came back from the oppo-

site bank to shot the left - Mike Goodwin still contemplated the real shoot.

The great Hatch rafts bounced down the falls, stoppers almost seeming to eat them. All the craft were now below the falls, the paddlers returned along the bank to watch for the decision of Mike Goodwin. Much against the wishes of our leader, Mike got afloat and headed for the smooth tongue of the right shoot. With bated breath we all stood and watched. . .

One wave, two waves, three waves - he was through the first, taking them just right - now over the first of the great rolling waves, down into the trough, up, up the side to the peak of the next. The Kayak seemed to pause on the top and then, CAPSIZE. . . The kayak disappeared into the tremendous white fury rolling up on the protruding rock. For what seemed an eternity there was nothing but white to be seen. Suddenly from the waves below the rock, the kayak reappeared, a fine roll up and Mike was clear. Thus Lava remained unbeaten - no kayaker has ever taken the right side without capsize. For Mike it was a great effort, but one he was not commended for and maybe the less said here the better.

The last of the great rapids of the Colorado was behind us, the group was now in a light-hearted mood and it showed among all. The early stop at our nights campsite resulted in water play on a great river bay, even our boatmen having a go at kayak paddling. Again for me, as at all the campsites I was off to the surrounds, looking among the rocks and hoping to find a rattlesnake. In the whole trip only two had been seen. The first was in late evening on the first days - not possible to get a photograph here - and the second was by a wood-search party, myself not being among them. I was disappointed in not seeing this Canyon creature. However, there were others to make up for it. In the lower part of the Canyon we came on many Humming-birds. These beautiful little fellows seemed to be attracted by the colour of our kayaks and would often hover a few feet away from the spare craft strapped on the front of the rafts, one even made a brief landing on Paulines' yellow spraydeck. Black ravens were in number as were the ground squirrels, while at the last campsite we spotted a number of wild mule deer.

Another forty miles in the next two days brought us to Diamond Creek, our take out point. We had made two 'firsts' in the Grand Canyon. With Pauline Squires we had the 'first' women single kayaker ever to paddle all the water from Lees Ferry to Dia-

mond Creek, taking every fall. While with Jon Goodwin and Albert Woods we had the 'first' Canadian Double Canoe ever in the Canyon, again taking every rapid and fall. In nine days we had run 225.75 miles of the Colorado River, descended some 1900-feet, in one of the mightiest wonders of the world - Grand Canyon.

For the Expedition members there was relieved that it was at last over, but in the coming days there would be a longing among some to be back in the Canyon, back with the thundering water, the heat, the tension before running the real big ones, back with the overwhelming splendor, back with the fine food, back in GRAND CANYON. . . We had completed a trip of a lifetime and the memory of Canyon days would last long after the tan had disappeared from our bodies. . . .

**FOOTNOTE:** Readers maybe interested to know that a second kayak expedition to Grand Canyon is already being planned - this by your editor. The Canyon is a beautiful place and deserves more than just ten days. The trip planned will be for 15 persons from Europe - kayakers or canoeists - to take place during early 1973 for a period of 20 days in Grand Canyon. Cost will be around £300 and interested persons should contact Mike Clark, Canoeing Magazine, 25 Featherbed Lane, Croydon, CRO 9AE.

*Lava Falls - raft passengers line the bank to watch the fun: Dave taking a raft through. Ernie about to take a ducking from the raft side: The last miles for the C2 crew: Diamond Creek and congratulations all round: Rafts being pulled from the water.*



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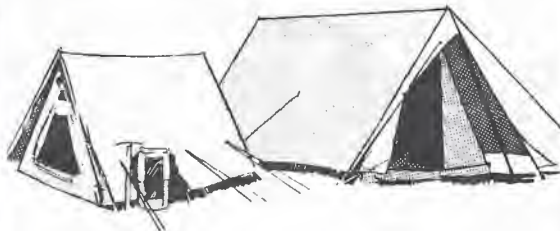
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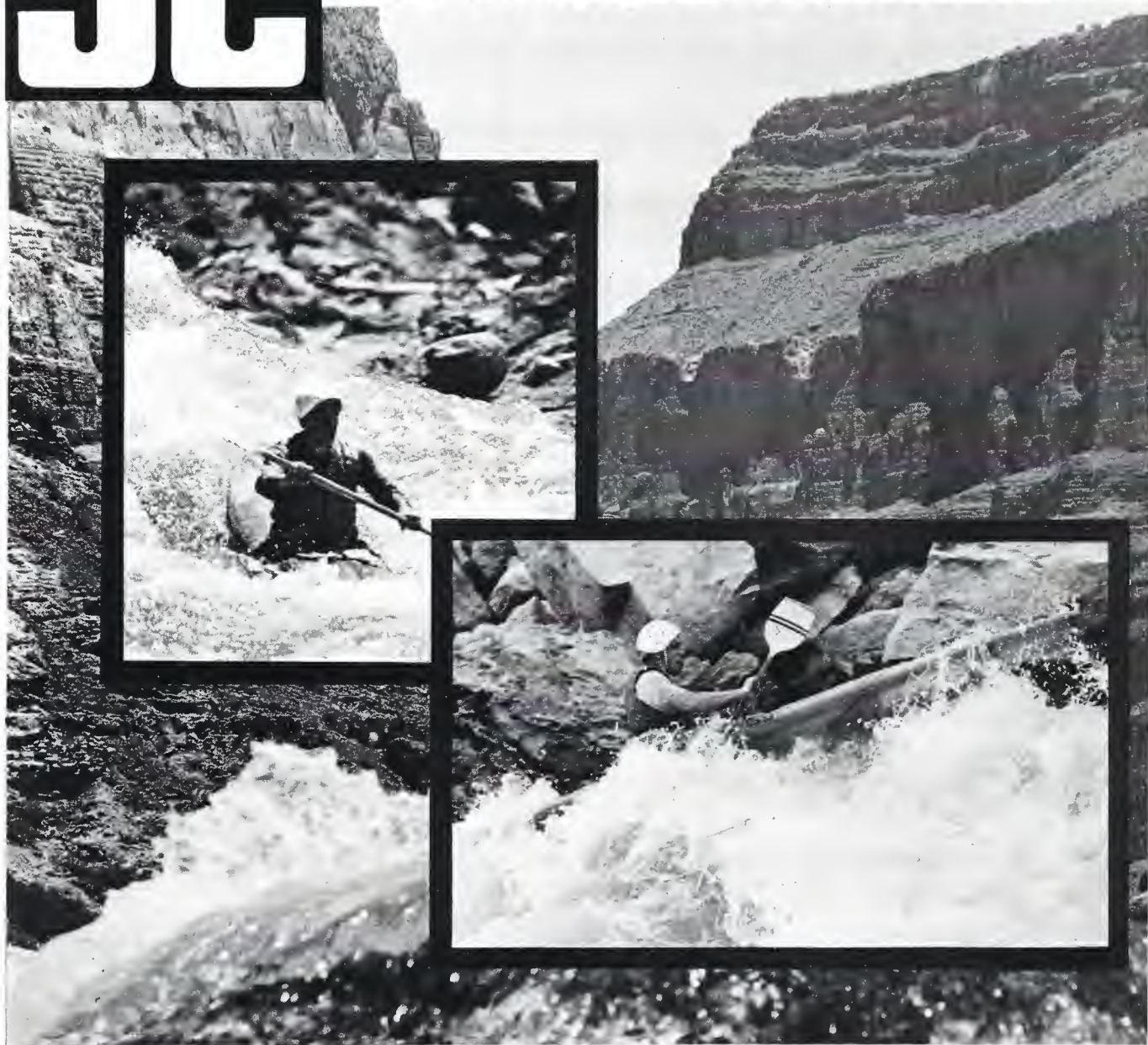
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