

My Grand Canyon, 2011 Adventure **By Donna Homberg**

Actually started in 1997 when I sent \$100 to the Grand Canyon National Park Service to be placed on a waiting list. In 2005 the park system changed its system so that we could pool years together to move up the wait time. With Judi Fordyce, Dave Van Natta and I pooling our years, we were able to come up with 23 years. A list of 340 dates was submitted. We have known about this trip since 2006. I enjoyed working with Judi in planning this trip. I understand that a lottery system will be used in the future. Dave Van Natta rescinded as trip leader and we're sorry he missed this great adventure. With no idea what a trip like this means, I began asking EVERY person about a canyon trip.

The Grand Canyon National Park Service awarded a launch permit for Aug 30, 2011 for a 16 day river trip. We started at Lee's Ferry and took out at Diamond Creek. This was a total of 226 miles. The water flow was a constant 15,000 CFS for our date. The air temperature average was 92.8°F and the water temperature average was 58°F. This private non-commercial trip had 16 participants, mostly Keelhaulers. 5 million people visit the Grand Canyon every year and of that only 25,000 ($\frac{1}{2}$ of 1%) will have the privilege of running the river. The majority will be those on a commercial trip. Only a few of those will be able to take the oars in their hands and row or paddle through the thundering rapids. We had four 18' oar rafts, 10 kayakers and 2 raft riders.

Since I have never seen the Grand Canyon, I didn't tire of looking up at the massive canyon walls. The rock layers change along the river. I enjoyed letting my imagination create settings I have read about in books or seen in movies. The canyon provided a peacefulness and serenity that we seldom have the opportunity to experience in our day to day lives.

I had expected big water on the canyon. I've spent the last year talking about it, watching U-tube videos of the bigger rapids. I made my own 'River Rapid' explanation and had it laminated for reference. I wasn't disappointed in the difficulty of the bigger rapids but I didn't expect the little ones to be such a challenge to me. It met all my expectations. To say I wasn't tense, nervous, anxious and stressed would not be true. I

jumped in Carl's raft in the beginning and tied my boat on the back. I paddled a few more times but the raft was fun, relaxing and exciting. Carl said he liked having me there so that was my favorite place. We had fun in the rapids and he became my hero as he successfully negotiated each rapid. He reads water well and yet we both knew a flip could happen at any moment. I wasn't worried a bit. The big rapids are difficult to negotiate but the raft managed to keep us upright and occasionally sideways and sometimes backwards. Steve Ingalls was our expert qualifying boat operator. This was his 10th Grand Canyon trip. He is calm, cool, and encouraged rafters and suggested our routes after scouting each one. In each picture I have, he has a broad smile. He loves the canyon.



Steve Ingalls - Our expert boat operator



Judi Fordyce & Steve Ingalls at Lava

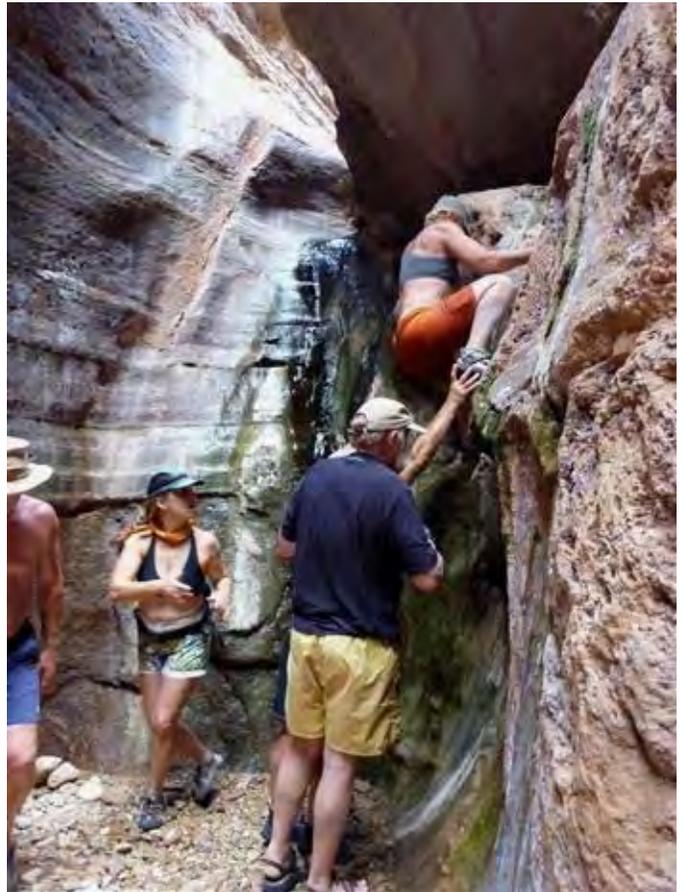
I've never heard thunder so loud as in the canyon and one day, in the distance, the sound of a rock slide into the river. The stars were bright and we enjoyed gazing

into the skies. Towards the last part of the trip, we experienced a full moon. The days also became shorter so that you were in darkness at 8PM. We always slept well. A windy sand storm threatened our dinner meal of lamb chops but we managed to eat (with sand).



Larry launching into Havasu Creek from ammo can

Larry Fordyce is a newer white water paddler, but he managed the chaos of the rapids well.



Our Climbing Expert, Wendy



Our Hike Coordinator, Wendy Atkinson

Wendy set the tone at the put-in with her gift of laughter. We all joined with her. She led our group forward onto unforgettable hikes. Dave Craig and Wendy commanded the party raft. Rescue was their priority and when necessary they provided beverage for dehydrated souls (beer of course)



Donna Homberg at House Rapid

Carl took up oars for the first time in his life. He paddles C-1 so it was a very brave thing.



Carl & Donna Homberg at Crystal



Karen Petit our rodeo woman



Mike Duvall at Lava

Mike is an expert boater and he demonstrated skills that put him in the lead on any river.

The waves and diagonals were big but the additional threat was the eddy lines. They were powerful and wanted to reach out and pull you in. Whirlpools bubble up unexpectedly about the time you think you've made it through the rapid. Sometimes you hear a growl from the belly of the river as they swirl around you increasing in circumference as they try to gobble up your boat with you in it.

We had a satellite phone in case of an emergency but didn't have to use it or the helicopter evacuation. I was the 'what if' person, anticipating a problem. I probably had 10# of unused items in the bottom of my Bill's bag that we didn't have to use.

We were on alert and Karen Petit became our rodeo boater as she made some remarkable moves to get away from its hold on her boat.



Dave Herron Rappelling into Silver Grotto

At least 2 hikes were added every day. Some involved rappelling and some steep climbs. Sometimes a beautiful waterfall was your goal. On some hikes, petroglyphs and pictographs were seen along the hike. These could date back to 600AD.



Bob Nicholson at Silver Grotto, nice ledge!



Bob Weible's head wound

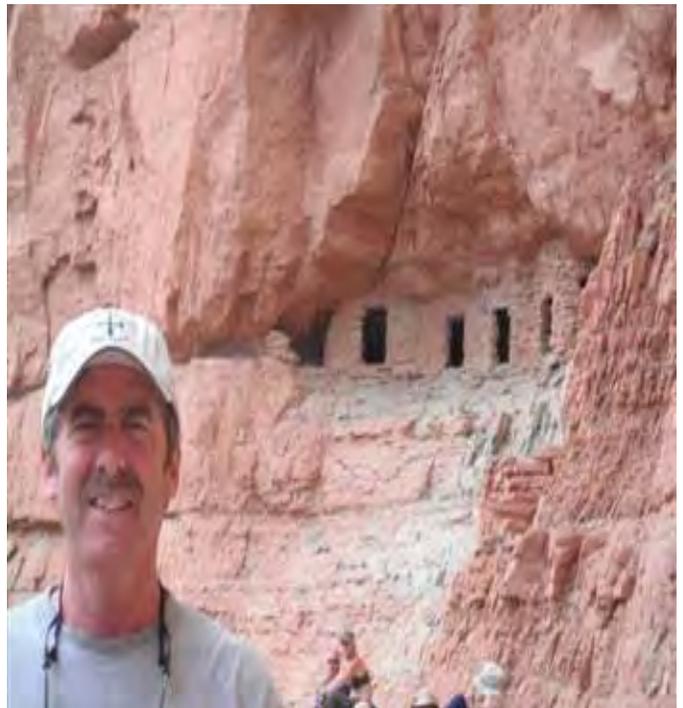
Everyone lined up to get this picture of Bob Weible's head wound before Wendy would clean and butterfly. He flipped at Hance Rapid and for a river without many rocks, he found a good one.



Cathy Needham & Elliott Drysdale in the Fiesta raft riding the big waves at House



Bill Miller "augured" down for the big water



Jim Hunt made the hike to the Granaries

Even though he used a walking stick for sciatica pain, he said he felt the best in his kayak as long as he didn't have to roll so he did what he came for, Paddle.



Karen Petit & Jim Hunt

I was in awe of the strong paddling skills demonstrated on the river. This is a picture of the best hike up into the most beautiful rock layers and waterfalls.

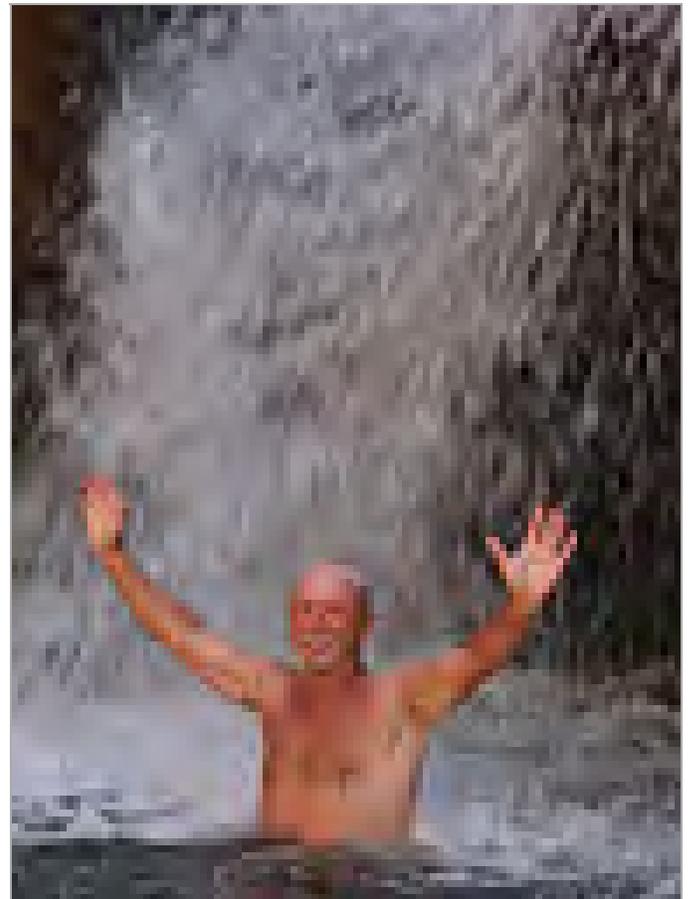


Wendy & Dave Craig at House Rapid



Our Team

Larry Fordyce, Judi Fordyce, Dave Herron, Jim Hunt, Steve Ingalls, Bob Nicholson, Elliott Drysdale, Mike Duvall, Donna Homberg, Carl Homberg, Karen Petit, Bill Miller, Bob Weible, Cathy Needham, Dave Craig, Wendy Atkinson.



Shinumo Creek- Bob Weible





Judi, painting 160 toe nails to celebrate life after Lava. Also our great organizer for this trip



Bob Weible saving Dave's hat

This is just a sample of the many pictures I had to choose from and I would like to share many more with you at our November Keelhaulers meeting where a slide show will be presented. We had so much fun on this trip and we all worked hard to make this a trip to remember. We'd like to show you where we located Elliott's cot, also his bruises, and a few others. We can explain why one slide shows the raft moving forward and the next slide shows it moving backwards. Go figure when the rapid is LAVA.