

G . C . P . S .

N E W S L E T T E R

News for Grand Canyon Pioneers Members

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MAY '90

This is Part One in a series of articles written by Gale Burak. They first appeared in 1982, in THE GUIDE, the publication of the Grand Canyon Natural History Association, and they are reprinted here with their kind permission.

"Nine o'clock on the dot and all set to go!"

Art Metzger, postmaster at the Grand Canyon that April of 1943, grinned as he tossed the last mail pouch into the back of Foster Marshall's pickup, then added, "Climb aboard, girls. Make yourselves comfortable on the mail sacks and HANG ON TIGHT!"

So we bounced and stewed and hung on tight over 35 miles of ruts and bedrock and fish-tail curves until Topocoba Hilltop hove into view. There, beside a corrugated metal shed and a narrow turn-around, stood Lorenzo Sinyella who shared the mail contract with Foster. With his string of dozing pack horses waited two extra saddled horses for the gals I'd shared the mail sacks with. They had to wait for all the mail, groceries and supplies to be shifted from mechanical to hooped horse-power, so I hoisted my back pack and "rimmed off" down the fourteen miles to Supai Village.

Steep, narrow switchbacks through the Kaibab Limestone and the Coconino Sandstone led direct-

ly into the rock-and-gravel bed of Cataract Canyon. This canyon, in turn, promptly dropped in easy grades between red and eroded walls of the Hermit Shale, deeper and deeper eerily sculptured and layered until the more precipitous Supai Shales closed in around me, shutting off even the occasional views of the distant rimrock. Finally, seemingly after having trudged for miles through dusty, hot, sun-drenched sand, I rounded a corner to see --- Heaven? Light blue pools of water edged in willows and reeds twinkled up at me and overflowed in a green-edged path down the canyon. Havasu Creek: spectacular from its very birth!

After a few more meandering turns, the red-wall canyon widened out into the vivid verdancy of alfalfa fields, corn patches and spreading cottonwoods with serpentine blue creek wandering in their midst. This was Supai, complete with a straw-hatted horseman and

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L A S T M E E T I N G

Last month we had a wonderful turn out at the home of Fred and Jeanne Schick in Sedona. Fred and Jeanne presented a display of photographs and memorabilia from various sources. We sure enjoyed the opportunity to see some very unusual mementos. I'm sure that we all wanted to take more time to browse through the letters and pictures.

Fred and Jeanne also prepared a very nice buffet that was enhanced by several pot-luck dishes. Thank you Fred and Jeanne for being such wonderful hosts.

During a short business meeting we voted to award Marie Maiorana \$150 for her contribution in creating the new GCPS logo.

Treasurer Fred reported that we have over \$2600 in the treasury, most of which is profit from the sale of the Cookbook. Al Richmond suggested that we place \$2000 into an interest bearing account and establish a policy for using the funds. Several suggestions were made, including the possibility of helping with the cataloging and preservation of the "Schick" collection.

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three giggling gamins on the trail ahead. The horseman nodded to me, so I asked, "Can you tell me, please, where the Government Agency building is?"

White teeth stretched across his brown face, "Sure, you can't miss it ma'am. You're on the main road. Just keep goin'. It's at the first flagpole on the right." So on I went, dusty boots dragging a bit, past a well-worn rodeo grounds with a chute; past a few low sod-roofed cabins; past tantalizing loops of the creek -- now deep and quiet, now surging over watercress-edged reefs; and finally past the ethereally soaring spires of the Wigleeva. There in the heart of the valley lay the "Main Drag." Tall old cottonwoods shaded the quarter mile straight lane, churned up by generations of Supai horses ridden and raced by generations of Supai men aged from two to ninety-two.

A "hospital", used principally for guests as the locals were reluctant to stay overnight in it, ...

Along this road were the U.S. Government establishments. The school teacher, Mr. Cole, had a small home on the left. A "hospital", used principally for guests as the locals were reluctant to stay overnight in it, had nurse's quarters and was set back across a wide green lawn on the right. Just beyond was the largest building in Supai: the Agency. Lonnie and Beulah Hardin, ex-schoolteachers from Oklahoma, shared the Agent's work which included being postmaster, manager of a small store and mediator of

all problems not under the Tribal Council's concern.

A wide porch with thick vines on one side of it ran around the rambling frame house. With Beulah's permission, I immediately appropriated that side for my quarters and got the best of the bargain! For free, I had the coolest "room" of all! A third side of the house has one important window near the front: official Supai Post Office window, and the most popular spot in town.

Just after I had taken a relaxing dip in the creek and been treated to a cool lemonade by Beulah, Sonia and Gladys arrived with the pack strings, hot and dusty. The horses were followed down Main Street by whooping and hollering hordes of little boys galloping bareback as fast as they could go. With a flourish of rearing hooves and heads they circled behind the strings, chattering excitedly as the dust rose in clouds around the whole yard. Who knew what good things mamma might have ordered this week! There was sure to be a case of evaporated milk, a sack of flour, coffee and fresh white bread. But she might have included some lollipops or storecookies, too!

As the packs came off the sweaty backs and were carried inside the Post-Office-Store, the excitement grew. The mammas, their Mother-Hubbard dresses sweeping the ground, gathered around. The smaller children, the sedate older men and the paps (on horseback, of course) all came struggling up or down the lane until it seemed that the whole village waited for the sorting to be done. Finally, Beulah leaned out of the Post Office window and began to call out names: "Manakaja..., Mascagome..., Hamadreck..., Paya..., Burro...,

Ugualla..., Jones." Depending upon how many cartons were for each, one or several men would go into the store section to carry out the load and disappear down the road with a carton clutched on the saddle pommel. The old-time Pony Express and Stage Stops could have been no Bigger Event than the mail days each Tuesday and Friday in Supai.

Monday and Thursday of each week was "ordering day". The telephone line between the Supai Agency and Babbitt's store in Grand Canyon Village was kept

Patient ladies with their babies and shopping lists sat out under the cottonwoods.

busy all day long. Patient ladies with their babies and shopping lists sat out under the cottonwoods gossiping, giggling and waiting their turn at the phone. And up at the store, orders were made up and crammed firmly into cartons; groceries; hardware, seeds, dry goods, all labeled and mailed to each family with an accompanying bill which included postage and handling. Imagine having oranges, butter, bread and staples mailed to yourself via a weekly phone order.

Once the hubbub died down and supper odors mixed with woodsmoke drifted across the val-

The sun sets early behind the red cliffs at Supai,

ley, we could all relax over Beulah's cornbread and beans. We three gals looked at each other with a smile. "We're really here!" The sun sets early behind the red

cliffs at Supai, and soon afterward the cool mists of Havasu Creek spread soothingly from wall to wall, holding the sweet scents and sleepy sounds of evening. As we ambled down past the schoolhouse on a star-lit path, we felt the pressures and tensions of city living drop completely away.

For the next week I angled out in every direction from the Agency and village; up old trails to the wide

Esplanade bench; down canyons past the exquisite travertine-fanned waterfalls with their morning glory colored pools beneath; up side canyons with occasional fern-filled seeps and petroglyphs. Seldom did I meet a soul, but evidence of the people was always at hand; a set of hoof prints in the silt; a lonely grave marked with a wooden cross upon which was burned "Cups of Coffee" and his

broken rifle and bones of his dog at its base. Perhaps a quick view of the village 300 feet below showing the checkerboard of fields, and the distant sound of laughter wafted up on a breeze.

Sonia and Gladys rode. When Lorenzo was not on his mail run,

Our lunch followed a brisk swim in the cold waters below the falls...

they hired him as their guide and took many of the same trails I explored, thereby learning much more than

I about the trails horses trod. One leisurely day just before they were to leave Supai for home, I joined them as their guest. Lorenzo, his pretty wife Harriet, and we three gals took a picnic lunch down below Havasu Falls for a quiet visit to the small mining camp along the creek. Our lunch followed a brisk swim in the cold waters below the falls. All afternoon we lazed and talked, French-

braiding each other's hair (Harriet's raven blue-black braids were twice the size of our Nordic blonde braids) while Lorenzo dozed or joined in our chatter.

Next morning early, he led the pack train with one of my two new friends off up the trail. Gladys, as she had mounted her steed, had looked wistfully down at us. "Lucky you," she said. "I'm a slave of the working world while you two can stay in Shangri-la. But I'll be back.. I'll be back." As it turned out, I stayed in Supai four more months.

to be continued

O L D T I M E R S R E U N I O N

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

N E X T M E E T I N G A T G R A N D C A N Y O N

The next meeting of the Grand Canyon Pioneers Society will be at the home of Jack and Bobbie Davis, 23 Tepeats Circle, Grand Canyon. They will host a back-yard picnic starting at 1:00 P.M. Sunday June 3rd. Bobbie said to bring your appetites, and please R.S.V.P. before May 26th so she can make plans. Phone ~~688-2832~~

Either Ron & Carol at 635-9380 or Al Richmond at 779-0640 (both have answering machines if not at home)

G.C.P.S.

News for Members of Grand Canyon Pioneers Society

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