

Dear Pops and Mom,

June 30, 2010

When the last letter ended I was ready to leave Phoenix and head to the Grand Canyon. The drive from Phoenix to Marble Canyon Lodge took me through Flagstaff and up into the Arizona mountains. How beautiful! Maybe it was just the change from being in the hot-hot desert for so long. I wished I would have planned to spend less time



in Phoenix and stayed for a night in Flagstaff but I needed to press on to the Grand Canyon. Marble Canyon Lodge is a funny little hotel that is mainly stayed at by river rafters going down the Grand Canyon and a few hikers. I was the second in our group to arrive. There were 13 people going down the river: Mike Christener (friend/student of Dale and the guy who wrote that "Hey Dale" letter) had the permit so the people on the trip were all invited by him. Mike's 19 year old daughter Belle, Mike's ex-wife Michaelleen (Belle

wouldn't go without her mom), Vance Bristow (rafting friend of Dales from Evergreen, CO), Tim Horne (rafting friend of Dale), Janet and Jeff (Janet was a friend of Dales and her husband who I had not met), Greg Yeager (who told me he went rafting with Dale in the 80's), Greg Doubeck (friend of Yeager's), Gary Hall (student of Dale), and a couple other friends of Mikes: Dave Hoskins and Chip Neally.

The park service does not allow you to begin rigging your rafts until the day before your put-in date so that afternoon we were pretty much stuck just going down to the launch ramp to check out the rigging area and hanging out at Marble Canyon Lodge until the next morning. It was then I found out that it was not perfectly clear what boat I would be riding on. The owner of the big power boat (Greg Yeager) had just bought the boat and was uncomfortable carrying a passenger other than Tim (who was driving it) and his friend Greg. Oh great! One thing Dale taught me is to be careful who I ride with as it makes a huge difference in my safety! OK – deep breath – you can do this! The next day everyone got to the boat ramp early. Not knowing who



*Greg, Greg and Tim on the motor rig*



*Fighting the waterfall at Deer Creek Falls*

I was riding with made it a little difficult to help rig the rafts so I just offered assistance wherever I could. At noon the outfitting company showed up. We were renting 2 rafts from them and they were providing the food so there was quite a bit to unload and pack into the rafts. Chips boat had a pretty bad leak in one of the tubes so a major repair was enacted. Mike forgot to bring the boards that make up his floor. The outfitter came to the rescue and provided some spare floorboards they had on hand for rental rafts. All the rafts were pretty much rigged, I felt comfortable with the people I had not met before, but I was still very uneasy about not knowing who I was riding with. Tim said he would talk to Greg and plea my case for a ride on the motor rig.

That afternoon Leslie texted a message to my phone... she needed me to email her some ads we had done so she could get them printed and take them to her upcoming gift shows. Not good news as I had not been able to get the internet to work in this remote motel. So I went to the motel and (after trying to get it to work for a very frustrating hour) got the night clerk to unplug their office computer so I could plug in my lap top and email the files. AARRGGGGH last minute frustrations! The good news was that while I was on the computer Chip came by and asked me to check on a basketball score... we found out his team had won and that he had won a bunch of money so he bought dinner for everyone. This trip was shaping up to be with fun people!

The next morning I rode with the boys to the boat ramp at 6 am to get an early start on finishing rigging the rafts, then back to the motel for breakfast and to pack up my stuff. We all met with the rangers at 9 am for the required "Ranger Talk" warning us of the do's and don'ts. Mike assigned me to ride with Gary Hall so I strapped my bags onto his boat (except for one bag I got Vance to carry). Gary worked with Dale in the Altec program in Colorado ages ago and was an Outward Bound guide. He was rowing a rental boat that was huge, very heavy, and hard to maneuver. The good thing about a heavy boat is it is pretty hard to flip so I felt confident I would survive.

A typical day for me started by waking up at daylight (4:30 am) and puttering around with my stuff. Every day I repaired any cuts or scrapes and put lotion on dry areas. Being in the water so much can turn the smallest cut into an infection if you don't keep an eye on it. Then before everyone was up I took down my tent, deflated my thermarest (sleep pad), folded up my cot, got my day stuff ready, and packed my dry bags. I tried to be ready earlier than everyone else because my stuff went on their boats. I didn't want people to have to wait for my stuff before they could load their boats. Then I headed to the kitchen to see what the cook crew had for breakfast. It could have been anything



*The kitchen*

from bacon and eggs to cold cereal. The coffee was “cowboy coffee” which is coffee grounds boiled in water, then separated by pouring a cup of cold water on the top, and strained into your cup. After a short breakfast everyone started packing up their gear while the kitchen crew cleaned up the kitchen. Most days I took on the task of packing the kitchen box which was a great task for me... my daily jigsaw puzzle. There were far too many pots, pans, and misc gear in that little box!

Next I tried to do what I could to help load the rafts usually just handing people stuff and finally strapping on a couple bags of mine. A typical day on the water



*Typical morning loading the rafts*



*Lunch stop*

small there were not enough tent sites for everyone. That was no problem for me as I just set up my cot on a raft. There were some others who liked to sleep on their boats so it was kinda like dormitory life. If it were not for the lack of privacy I would rather sleep on the boat because there is no sand, it's cooler, and I like to listen to the river.

After a long hot day on the water I always tried to take a bath in the river or sun shower right when we got to camp. Sometimes it was not possible because the smaller camps have no privacy, or we would get to camp too late, or if it was my “cook night”. The group was divided into 4 cook duty groups. My cook night was with Tim and Mike and I couldn't

involved scouting and running rapids, a lunch stop, hikes up side canyons, and rowing. Scouting the rapids sometimes took as much as an hour by the time we tied up all the rafts, hiked up to where we could see it, and waited while the boys discussed their tactics. We tried to find camp by 5 pm every night so that the cook crew didn't have to cook in the dark. The camps are sometimes few and far between so it was often a difficult task. There are a lot of other groups (some private and some commercial) going down the river so we needed to communicate with each group we saw to make sure a camp would be available for us. Many of our camps were so



*Scouting Lava Falls rapid. The biggest one of all!*



*Clear Creek - one of my favorite places*

split on the first day so every night I covered my feet in thick lotion and put on white cotton sox. It helped immensely!

After spending a few days riding with Gary I rode with Vance for a flat water day. The guys that were on boats by themselves were reluctant to bring a passenger. It was too bad this was not determined prior to the trip as it seemed I was not wanted by most of them which came as a surprise to Mike. Vance had flipped twice in '06 and didn't want to be responsible for a passenger in the big rapids. Dave and Chip had really never had a passenger and were nervous enough just getting themselves down the river. Janet and Jeff already had Michaelen on their boat and Gary felt he

have had a more fun and conscientious two to share the duties with. Cooking includes setting up the tables and stoves, heating river water for dishes, and finding all of the ingredients that are scattered among all the boat coolers and boxes. The cooking part was pretty simple as the outfitting company did a really good job with simple menus and recipes. By the time the set up, cooking, serving, and dishes were done it was usually quite late. A little evening conversation about the rapids and sights of the day and the next day's plans usually ended in most people turning in around 9 pm. Because of constantly getting your feet wet, then dry, then wet, and you are always in sand your feet get very dry and heels split. Very painful! Of course my heels



*I rode with Janet and Jeff a couple days - very fun!*

was having a hard time maneuvering because of the added weight on his boat. Finally Mike convinced the motor rig owner Greg to let Mike's daughter Belle ride on the motor rig in the big rapids. Perfect! That left a spot for me on Mike's boat in the big rapids - no more worries about safety. The Park Service shortened the number of days you can spend to do the trip from 18 days to 16 so we really had to row smart and stay in the current to keep up the pace. I started rowing the rafts in the flat water and pretty soon they all wanted me on their boats as they were getting worn out and sore muscles. I love to row and lucky me to have had a great teacher. Sometimes the motor rig helped out and towed the last boat up to the front. Unfortunately



*The motor rig could be rowed but it took 2 people!*



*My typical campsite*

Early in the trip it was cold at night so I set up my tent just to stay warm. All I brought was a fleece blanket and a sheet so I was a little chilly. I did have warm clothes stowed in that bag on Vance's boat but it wasn't bad enough to get them out. After that it warmed up and was easier to only set up my cot. I used the tent floor as a ground cloth to keep my feet and stuff out of the sand. We had rain a couple times so the tent did come out again.

Diamond Creek is the end of the Park Service permitted portion of the river and it was here the group broke into



*Shinimu Creek - A nice and cool spot to stop*

two. Half the people had chosen to leave at this point while the rest of us opted to go 75 miles down river to the new takeout at Pearce Ferry. So the last 3 days of the trip was just me and 6 guys with the motor rig and 4 rafts. I had never done this portion of the Grand Canyon called the Lower Granite Gorge and the first half was beautiful with waterfalls, rock formations, and new rapids. The second half was buried under Lake Mead and the current was slower so we tied all 4 rafts to the motor rig and motored out. As you get closer to the end the scenery is not great as the banks on the sides of the river are very high with silt from the former high water mark of the lake. Campsites are very few here, it was extremely hot, and the river had turned red. Not a pretty ending to a beautiful trip.



*It was easy motoring with the boats tied together*



After getting everything de-rigged, deflated, packed, and loaded we all went to a small town in Arizona named Kingman for dinner and a motel. The next day I was on the road headed for Portland. Go Van! Yep the van is still hanging in there. Some of the screws that hold the custom wood trim on the inside backed out on that very bumpy road in Mexico so some of the wood fell off... and is falling off... but nothing I can't fix with a screwdriver.

In Portland I stay at my sister Sue's house. Sue and Jon are mostly empty nesters so I think they like having someone around the house. It is kind of hard to get used to having to tell someone where I am going to

*The silt from the high water is on the left*

be and when I will be home. I am particularly not used to having to be home at dinner time but it is fun and there is lots of room. The main reason I need to go to Portland is to check in with Schooner Creek, Leslie, and OCSA. All three of these companies pay me so I need to show my face, check in, and drum up more projects. I also need to buy parts for the boat and Portland is the place to do it with the discount I get through Schooner Creek and having no sales tax in Oregon.



*The take-out at Pearce Ferry*

For Mother's Day Paul and Denise sent me a plane ticket to Denver so 6 days after arriving in Portland I took off for Denver and I have been here almost a week. I have had such fun spending every day with that little 6 year old, Andrea. We have been to a renaissance fair, swimming pool, Chucky Cheeses type restaurant, park, ran errands, gone shopping, watched movies, did art projects, played cards, went on a mine tour, train ride, and set my tent up in the backyard. She just couldn't quite commit to spending the night in the tent but that was OK with me as I have had enough camping for a while.

*The sole came off my sandals so I sewed it back on*

My plans are to hang out here till I fly to Portland on the 6th and then leave Portland at the end of July for Mexico. Sue and Jon's son (and Morgan's little brother) Elliot is driving south with me and will help me get the stuff out of the boat, into the van, move the boat to La Paz, and move the van to La Paz. His schedule will require us to drive straight through from Oregon to Mexico. If we go through LA in the daylight I will give you a call and maybe stop by for visit.

Hope you are doing well...

Patsy