AFALCONGUIDE®

Hiking

Grand Canyon Loops

Adventures in the Backcountry

George Steck

Nankoweap Creek/ Bright Angel Creek Loop

FALCON®
Guilford, Connecticut
An imprint of The Globe Pequot Press

7 Nankoweap Creek/ Bright Angel Creek Loop
Circumambulation of Walhalla Plateau

The recognition that even 7.5 minute maps do not tell all:
"Today looked so easy yesterday."

GARY LADD

Length
When I first did this loop it took twelve days, but several were short days so it conceivably could be done in less. The only difficulty with shortening the trip is the necessity to be at certain places in early evening to catch low water if you wish to maintain a River-level route. Another comment—to reduce the initial weight of our packs slightly, I placed a two-day food cache at Phantom Ranch before the trip began.

Water
Nankoweap Creek: There is a good spring below Kibbey Butte in Upper Nankoweap near the 4,800-foot contour. It is below the Tapeats in the Supergroup.

Kwagunt Creek: I have found water in Kwagunt Creek at the upper entrance to the narrows each of the four times I have been there.

Malgosa, Awatubi and 60 Mile Creeks: I have never found water where the Horsethief Trail crosses these drainages. Although I have not checked it myself, I have it on good authority that you can hike the Malgosa drainage from the Horsethief Trail to the River.

Carbon Creek: We found a small flow of alkaline water and some potholes near the upper end of the narrows in June 1989.

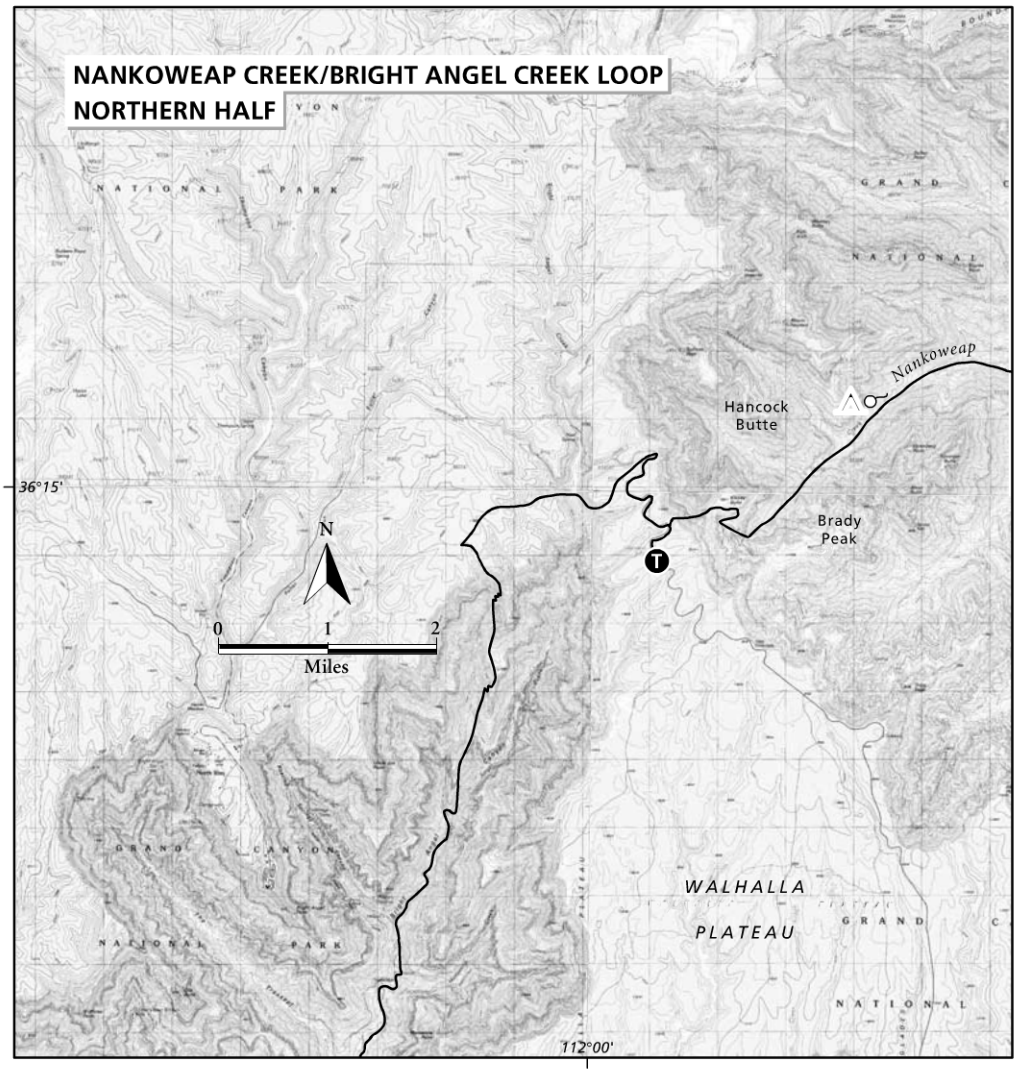
Lava Creek: In 1977 there was abundant water in Lava Creek from the spring near the 4,400-foot contour to its junction with Chuar Creek.

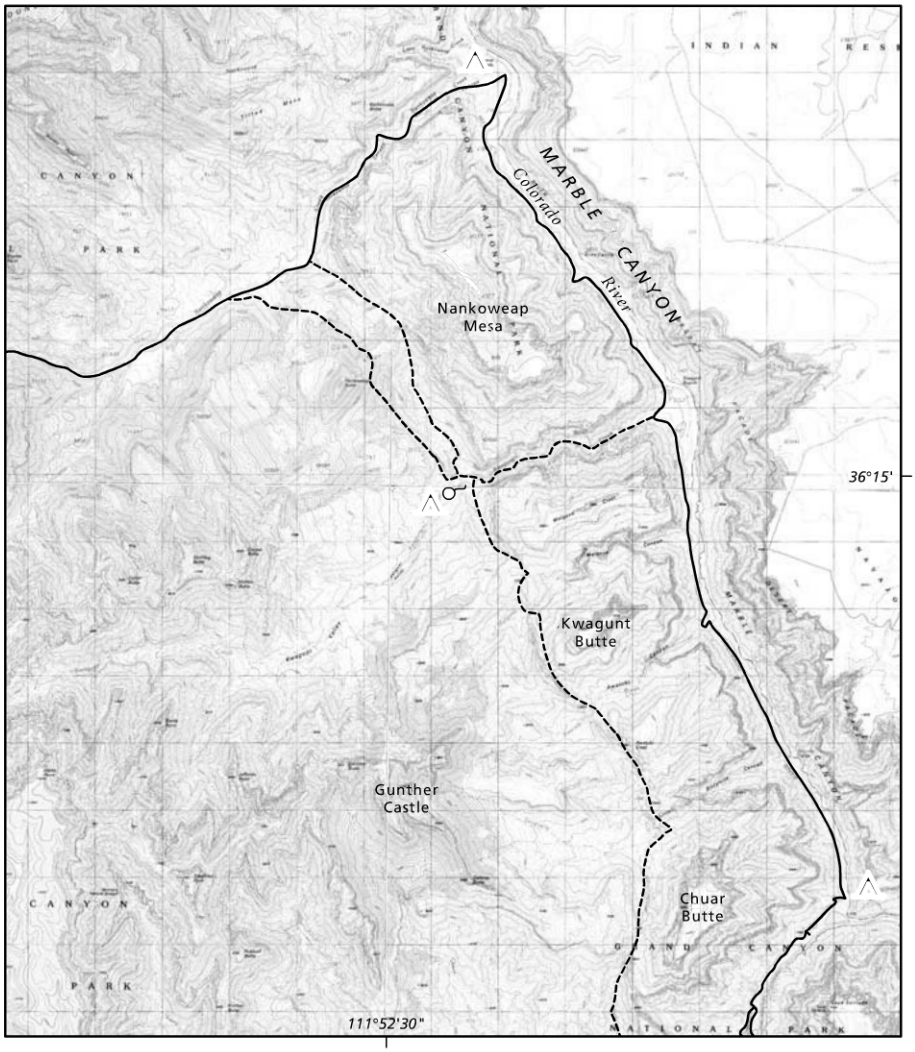
Chuar Creek: Intermittent surface water was found in the narrows in June 1989. It looked bad so we didn't drink any.

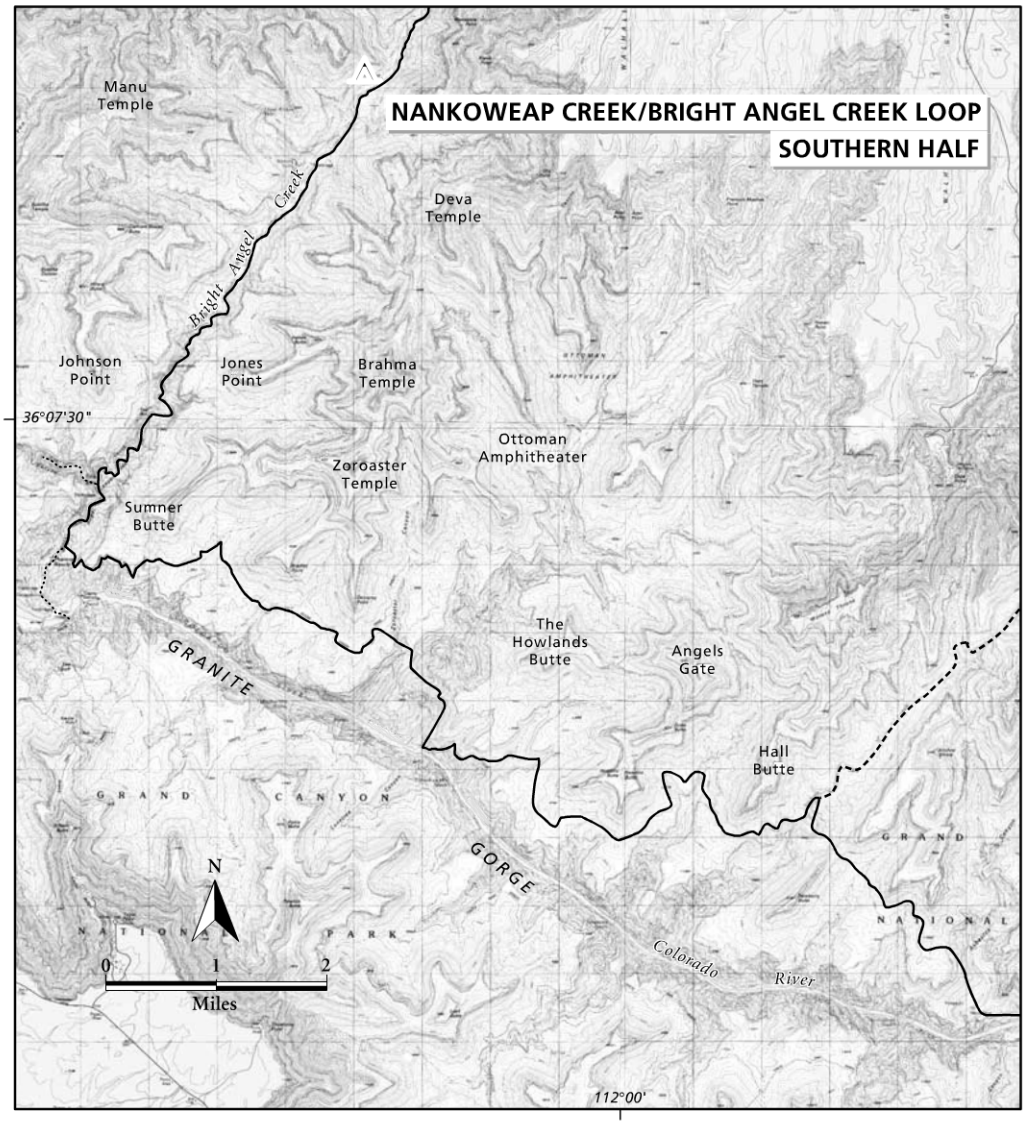
Unkar Creek: In 1977 there was flowing water amid a great deal of vegetation where side drainages come in about a mile northeast of the 5,072-foot elevation mark on the 7.5 minute Cape Royal quad map. A little smudge of green shows at a bend in the creek.

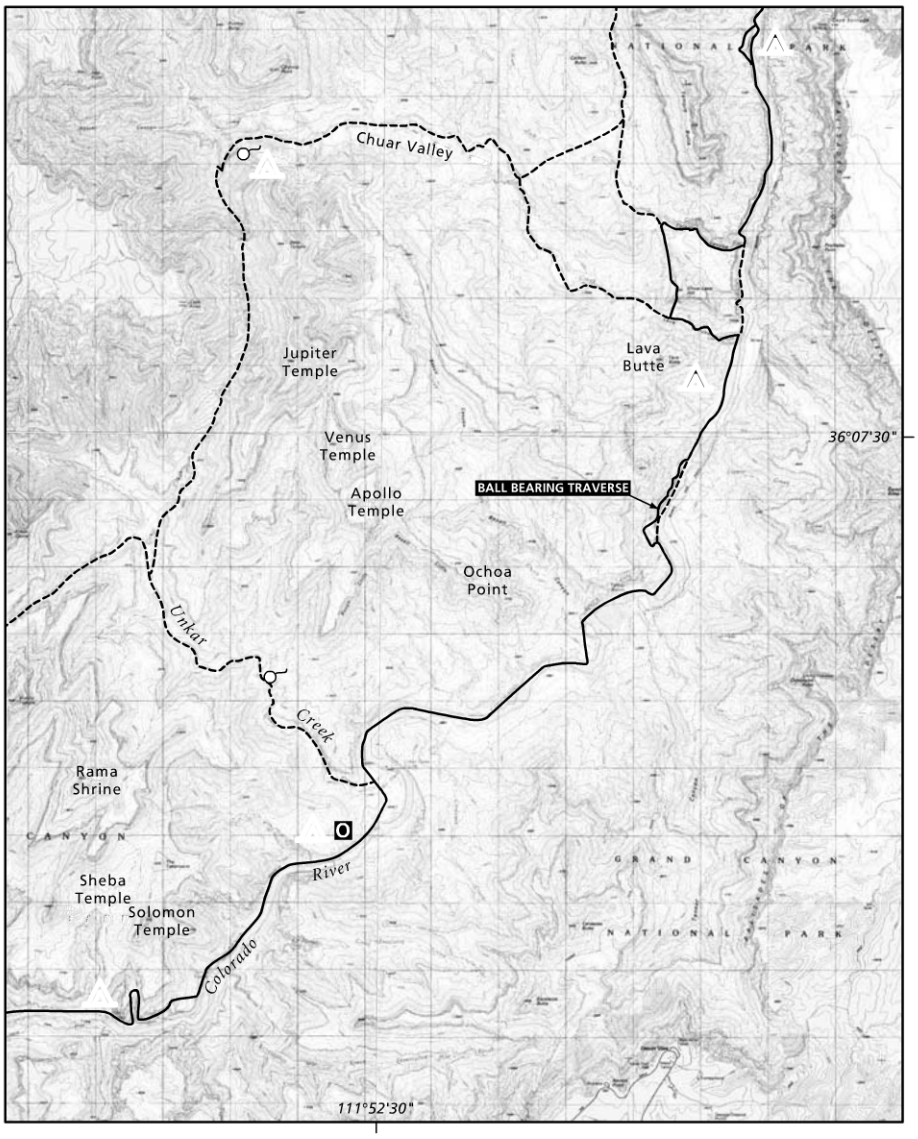
Asbestos Creek: There is sometimes water where the mine trail hits the creek drainage, but it is not reliable. I have never looked for the spring.

Vishnu Creek: I have always found water in the bed near the lower end of the quartzite narrows by the big overhang, although in June 1989 there was very little. There is sometimes water in the first drainage through which you


NANKOWEAP CREEK/BRIGHT ANGEL CREEK LOOP
NORTHERN HALF
NATIONAL PARK
GRAND
NATIONAL
Nankoweap
Hancock Butte
Brady Peak
36°15'
N
0
1
2
Miles
GRAND CANYON
NATIONAL PARK
WALHALLA
PLATEAU
GRAND
NATIONAL
112°00'


INDIAN
CANYON
PARK
MARBLE CANYON
Colorado River
Nankoweap Mesa
36°15'
Kwagunt Butte
Gunther Castle
Chuar Butte
GRAND CANYON
NATIONAL PARK
111°52'30"


NANKOWEAP CREEK/BRIGHT ANGEL CREEK LOOP
SOUTHERN HALF
Manu Temple
Deva Temple
Bright Angel Creek
Johnson Point
Jones Point
Brahma Temple
36°07'30"
Ottoman Amphitheater
Zoroaster Temple
Sumner Butte
The Howlands Butte
Angels Gate
GRANITE
Hall Butte
GRAND CANYON
GORGE
GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK
Colorado River
N
0
1
2
Miles
112°00'


Chuar Valley
Jupiter Temple
Lava Butte
Venus Temple
36°07'30"
BALL BEARING TRAVERSE
Apollo Temple
Ochoa Point
Unkar
Creek
Rama Shrine
CANYON
River
Sheba Temple
Solomon Temple
Colorado
GRAND CANYON
NATIONAL PARK
111°52'30"

can exit the narrows to the west, but don't count on it. Even in June 1989 there was an abundance of water about 0.5 mile beyond the upper end of the Tapeats narrows.

Old Bright Angel Trail: The last water on the way up and out on the Old Bright Angel Trail is a beautiful little stream with a photogenic cascade in the Muav Limestone below Uncle Jim Point.

Quad Maps
7.5-minute maps
- Bright Angel Point
- Cape Royal
- Cape Solitude
- Desert View
- Little Park Lake (extreme lower right corner only)
- Nankoweap Mesa
- Phantom Ranch
- Point Imperial
- Walhalla Plateau

In my opinion the most convenient form of map to use, if it covers your area of interest, is a cut up version of the Grand Canyon National Park map. It will be smaller, lighter, and less expensive than any collection of the others.

Roadhead
Park at Greenland Lake automobile turnout. When you get your permit, it is a good idea to tell a road patrol ranger that you will be leaving your car at the turnout. This may prevent its being towed away.

ROUTE TO ROADHEAD

The Greenland Lake turnout is in the park on the North Rim of Grand Canyon about 2.5 miles down the Cape Royal road from its intersection with the road to Point Imperial.

HIKING TIMES

Most of the times given below were collected during a period of extreme heat in June 1989, but others were collected at other times, under other conditions and, in two cases, by another person. These times are denoted, in parentheses, by either a date, the letters "est." for "estimated," or the letters "Robt" indicating they are Robert's times.

Use Areas	Location	Elapsed Times Between Locations (hours)
	Car	:15
	Rim takeoff	1:15
	Kibbey Saddle	2:30
	Fault ravine	:45
	Bottom of fault ravine	3:15

▲ AE9	Nankoweap Spring (4,800-foot contour)	3:15
▲ AE9	Good pool for swimming	1:15 (1986)
▲ AE9	Bottom of Tilted Mesa Trail	1:30 (1986)
▲ AE9	Mouth of Nankoweap Creek	4:15 (Robt)
▲ AF9	Mouth of Kwagunt Creek	1:00
▲ AF9	Mouth of Malgosa Canyon	1:15
▲ AF9	Mouth of Awatubi Canyon	1:30
▲ AF9	Mouth of 60 Mile Canyon	3:30
▲ AF9	Beach upstream Little Colorado River	3:15
▲ AF9	Mouth of major drainage at mile 62.6	:20
	Wading place (low water at evening)	:10
▲ AF9	Beach below wading place	1:30
	Opposite Hopi Salt Caves	2:00
▲ AF9	Mouth of Carbon Creek	2:15
	Exit from Carbon Creek narrows	1:15
▲ AF9	Mouth of Lava Canyon	2:30
	Tanner cliff bypass (low water at evening)	:30
	End Tanner cliff bypass	:15
▲ AG9	Beach	:15
	Alternate bypass descent ravine, mile 67.5	5:00
▲ AG9	Mouth of Unkar Creek	:30
▲ AG9	Camp with small cave	2:30
▲ AH9	Bottom of quartzite ramp	3:00
	Descent ravine	2:00
▲ AH9	Colorado River	:45
▲ AH9	Campsite below Hance Rapids	:30
	Bottom of trail up to Hance mines	:45
	Bed of Asbestos Canyon	3:45
	Newberry Saddle	1:00
▲ AH9	Bed of Vishnu Creek	:15
	Water and shelter	2:00
	Bed of next wash (SW Wotans Throne)	2:30
	Saddle below west arm of Hawkins Butte	:45
	Top of Tapeats Break	3:45
▲ AK9	Beach near mouth of Clear Creek	1:00
	Leave Clear Creek drainage	2:45
	Bed of Zoroaster Canyon	:30
	Clear Creek Trail	3:00
▲ Bright Angel Campground Phantom Ranch		4:45
▲ Cottonwood Campground Cottonwood Camp		:30
	Bottom of Old Bright Angel Trail	2:00
	Muav Cascade	3:15
	Top of Supai Formation	2:00
	Rim—Junction with Ken Patrick Trail	1:30
	Ken Patrick Trail—Junction with Highway Car	:30 (est.)

High-Water Bypass 1:
Tonto Route from Mile 62.6 Beach to Carbon Creek

Beach at mile 62.6	2:15 (Robt)
Exit from Carbon Creek narrows	

High-Water Bypass 2:
Difficult Dox Route from Mouth of Lava Canyon to River at Mile 67.5

Mouth of Lava Canyon	1:30
Ascent ravine lower end of island at mile 66.7	3:30
Descent ravine at mile 67.5	

ROUTE DETAILS

This loop was hard. Ordinarily, I try to avoid rating these loops, but I have to say this one was hard for several reasons. First, it was hot—Phantom Ranch got up to 115 degrees officially and more than 120 degrees unofficially; one day we measured 106 degrees in the shade. Second, the loop is long. Third, the flow of water in the River can be unpredictable. Under the current operating standards for the dam, the fluctuations in the water levels have evened out, but the water level can rise unexpectedly due to earlier power demands just when you need to wade a section of the River.

I had done all sections of this loop on other occasions, but I had never done it as a whole loop all at once until we made the trip described below. By "we" I mean Don Mattox and his stepson, Kyle Harwood, Gary Ladd, and myself. Our efforts began at the Greenland Lake turnout on June 14, 1989. I planned to leave my van at the turnout during the hike and so stated on my permit request. Nevertheless, the road patrol rangers almost towed it away as abandoned; so be sure to tell someone you intend to leave your car there. It is best to tell a road patrol ranger.

Rim Takeoff

After leaving our car, we had to go back down the road about 0.25 mile to a very sharp bend where the road turns to the west and timbers are set in the ground to keep cars from going off into the woods. We turned east into the woods here and contoured right and slightly up around a small knoll. This tiny upward portion of our descent precipitated the first of many criticisms of my leadership. "Hey, Steck, are you sure you know where you're going? We're supposed to be going down not up!" Mattox is always the most vocal of my critics and calls me by my last name when he is displeased. After we began our descent on the east side of the knoll, he was somewhat mollified and shut up.

We angled down and to the right and hit a deer trail. Actually, we found several deer trails, and people trails, too, so we often had a choice of routes. The Coconino has been broken down into many small cliffs by faulting and erosion. After one of these small cliffs, Gary contoured around while I went down—too far down—and had to fight my way back up through the brush to an awkward traverse to the saddle west of Kibbey Butte. It would have been much easier to have gone the way Gary did. We found much thorny

vegetation along this descent, especially near the top, and I found it useful to wear gloves. I sometimes felt like Tarzan as I swung down holding on to the branches.

Kibbey Butte Saddle
Our descent to the saddle took about an hour and a half. While the rest of us sought relief from an already warm day—it was 9:30—in the shade of a ponderosa pine, Kyle took off to climb the butte.

Our next goal was to get in the fault ravine that goes off the south side of the saddle. However, the Esplanade Member capping the Supai forms a cliff so we had to sneak in from the east side of the ravine.

Route off Saddle
Harvey Butchart's route to the fault ravine, as given in *Grand Canyon Treks,* is to find a deer trail off the north side of the saddle down to the top of the Redwall and then to contour around the butte on it to the ravine. Someone I know who followed his advice found it excruciatingly difficult—brushy and dangerously steep—so I resolved when I first conceived of this loop to find another way if I could.

During an on-the-ground reconnaissance trip to Nankoweap Creek with my son Mike over Memorial Day in 1986, I explored the base of the cliff to the west of the fault ravine and found nothing useful. Aerial reconnaissance the next month with son Stan showed some possibilities to the east. The next year Randy Simons and I, starting from below, exploited one of these and found a relatively easy way up. In the process we found a small flowing spring in a grove of ponderosa pines at the base of the last climb. Later, I wrote Dr. Butchart to tell him of this easier way into Nankoweap off the Kibbey Saddle and he replied that he already knew of it, as well as of the spring, but hadn't thought to mention it in any of his books. My brother and I completed my explorations for a convenient way from the rim into Nankoweap via the Kibbey Saddle when we found our way down from the saddle in 1987.

Route to Fault Ravine
The descent through the Supai cliffs on the south side of Kibbey Butte begins at the bottom of a ravine 0.14 mile south of the summit of Kibbey Butte. Counting the main ravine going directly off the saddle into the fault ravine as number one, I count the descent ravine as number four. Another way to find it is to go up the ridge toward the summit until you can see a solitary ponderosa off to the right and then follow a line from that pine to the summit of Brady Peak—which has the distinct look of a middle finger extending from a closed fist. I have placed ducks along this line as well as one in the ravine and one at the bottom of the ravine at the pour-off.

We went west from this pour-off 150 yards or so to a large white free-standing rock tower and on the way passed a big overhang that could sleep twenty in a pinch. This is nice to know about if you are caught on the butte in a storm. From the tower I looked east toward the bottom of the cliffs and could see the very large ponderosa that marks the location of the final chimney. It is at least 150 feet tall and sprouts from a small spring at its base.

About 10 feet east of the tower, we passed our packs down a short six-foot cliff and proceeded diagonally down and east about 15 yards to a 15-foot chimney with a 3-inch thick fir branch hanging down it. We lowered packs here, too, and I used the branch as I would a fixed rope in scrambling down. From the bottom of this chimney, we headed for the big ponderosa and went to the point between two bays. On earlier occasions I have gone down the right-hand 30-foot chimney—actually two 15-foot chimneys with a small ledge in between—but this time Gary found a much easier way off to the left 20 feet or so where the cliff face was much more broken down. We were able to get down with a pack pass only at the top.

Kibbey Spring

After climbing down this break, we headed for the big ponderosa to rest by the spring. Unfortunately, it was only a small seep this time, but we rested anyway. Gary managed to extract some water from the damp ground, but the rest of us didn't bother.

One way into the fault ravine from the spring is to contour west and I once found a faint deer trail to help me. This time we couldn't find any trail and instead followed several talus slopes that took us diagonally down. As you round the point between the southeast and southwest faces of Kibbey Butte, you can look up and see the white tower where the descent started. We could also look across the fault ravine and see we were close to the top of the lowest Supai cliff—the Watahomigi. We went down to it, and Kyle dropped his pack and went on a bit to see if our ledge continued around a corner into the fault ravine. It did, and we followed his lead. After a short descent to find some shade, we stopped for lunch and Gary startled us by saying, "Do you realize that we've been hiking over four hours now and are still less than a mile from the car?" "Yeah, but we must be almost halfway vertically to where we'll camp." I threw this in to try and show that the morning hadn't been a complete waste of time.

Snow Job in June

The rest of the descent to the Nankoweap drainage was just down, down, down over rocky rubble that was, happily, so well stabilized that the rocks rarely moved when you stepped down on them. On the way down I caught a glimpse of a large dirty white slab in the ravine opposite and filed it in my mind as a piece of Kaibab, Toroweap, or Coconino that had slipped from above. It did seem a bit big to have survived such a long fall without breaking up, but I was concentrating on my feet and paid it no more attention until Don called out, "Hey, George, do you see that snowbank over there?" And instantly, without even looking, I knew he was right. "Yeah, I saw it," I called back. "Just imagine that. Snow at the bottom of the Redwall in the Grand Canyon in the middle of June. That means ice-cold margaritas tonight."

Nankoweap Creek

The fault ravine took us steeply down to its intersection with the west arm of Nankoweap Creek. This is an easy Redwall descent—remarkably easy—and from the intersection it was only three more hours of boulder-hopping

until we reached the spring that feeds this arm of the creek. The spring is below the Tapeats in the Supergroup. You can tell roughly where it is—even, I think, from the base of the Redwall—by noting two large Tapeats blocks lying on the hillside on the north side of the drainage. The spring is near the closer of these blocks at about the 4,800-foot contour line.

When we reached the bottom of the fault ravine, Gary and Kyle climbed up to the snow bridge and had an icy shower in its dark interior. They estimated its size as 25 feet wide by 30 feet long by 8 feet thick in the middle—thicker at the edges. They gathered some snow for our water bottles and some for the margaritas. Kyle suggested the snow had survived because there had been a late storm and no warm spring rains to melt it away. He may be right, but it also helped that the snow was in a north-facing ravine and never saw the sun.

Nankoweap Spring

The last few hours to our camp by the spring passed without incident although it was now much warmer and we took frequent rests. There is a small bench of dark sand about 50 yards below the spring that we called home and a large sort-of-flat rock by the stream that we used as a dinner table. Kyle then showed his ignorance of the finer points of canyon camping. "Goddamn it, Kyle, what the hell do you think you're doing? Do you realize you're taking a bath in our drinking water! Now we'll have to go farther upstream for it." "Come off it, George," Kyle retorted—he specializes in retorts, though we could see he was embarrassed—"the tequila and Everclear will kill the bugs." Actually, we did use water from his pool because it was so convenient, but we teased him about his breach of etiquette by pretending to gag on it as we drank it.

I spent quite a bit of time by these pools watching the spiders when I was here with Randy Simons. Their webs spanned the open places between the rocks above the water. Each spider seemed to have its own web and defended it against trespassers with great ferocity. I am always surprised to see such fierceness in creatures so small that I could squash them between my fingers. Ardrey called it the territorial imperative and I have wondered how far down the scale of creatures it extends. Do flies defend a territory? Do they even have a territory?

Swimming Hole

We left camp at 5:45 the next morning. After spending half an hour at a "swimming pool" about half an hour above the Seiber Point drainage, we took off over the hill for Kwagunt Creek at 11:00. It was already hot, but not *hot hot*—yet. Our goal for the day was the mouth of Kwagunt Creek and we didn't make it. It became just too damned hot.

The only reason for going up and over to Kwagunt was because neither Don nor I had ever been down through the Kwagunt narrows. However, it was a error on my part not to acknowledge the heat and change plans. We should have gone down Nankoweap to the River and then down the River to Kwagunt. Don observed after the trip that I am not flexible enough—too

concerned with staying on schedule. He said, "Do you think the park service gives a damn whether we're a day late as long as we're alive?" "Of course not," I said, "and I really don't mind being off schedule—though I'll try fairly hard to get back on it if I can."

I must interrupt the '89 narrative at this point. Since I am describing this loop as going down Nankoweap Creek and then down the River, I must delay my description of our excursion up and over to Kwagunt until it is time for that part of the narrative concerning the Horsethief Alternate.

Down Nankoweap Creek to River

The hike from the Seiber Point drainage to the mouth of Nankoweap is uneventful—just a few hours of boulder-hopping. For future reference you might wish to note the bottom of the Tilted Mesa Trail as you go by. Also, if you're nervous about drinking the creek water, you will find a good spring about 100 yards downstream from that junction—on creek left against the bushes.

I don't know whether they save any time or not, but when I am in a creekbed I look for trails going up onto benches. Sometimes the going is easier up there than it is by the creek, and there are several such trails-on-a-bench along the way down Nankoweap Creek. The longest one comes about a mile from the River. I'm guessing, but I place it by the bend at about the 3,100-foot contour. The trail goes up steeply on creek right; I know I have missed it when I come to a nice pool with Muav slabs to sun myself on. This trail wanders along quite high above the creek for a while and then settles down on a low-lying bench that ends at the River.

Hitchhiking

My first attempt to hike from Nankoweap to Kwagunt was with Don Mattox, Don and Adair Peterson, and others in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Don M was leading, and his plan was to go down the Tilted Mesa Trail and out the Salt Trail with a River crossing somewhere in between. Everything had gone reasonably well until the Nankoweap-to-Kwagunt stretch, where the rocks and brush along the shore were a real "pain in the bud," as Robert would say in his Germanic, learned-by-ear English. Eventually it was so bad that Adair went down by the River and hitched us a ride with a private boat trip. They left us at the Little Colorado.

Nankoweap to Kwagunt via Deer Trail (1982)

That was my first effort to get from Nankoweap to Kwagunt. The second was in 1982, with my brother, Don, Adair Peterson, and Robert. As the broad flat area on the downstream side of the Nankoweap delta began to slope up and narrow down, we looked for a deer trail 50 to 100 feet up the hillside that Robert had found on an earlier trip. This trail goes up and down a lot, but it is still easier than the rocks and tammies along the shore. Even after a late start—we had camped by the mouth of the creek—and a long consultation with a boatman about Robert's deteriorating gastrointestinal condition, we were at Kwagunt in time for lunch. This ends the short description borrowed from 1982. I'll skip the 1989 Nankoweap-to-Kwagunt segment because it is presented under the Horsethief Alternative.

Kwagunt to Malgosa
I had remembered from the 1982 trip that the route from Kwagunt on down had also been facilitated by a deer trail and I found one. But memory was misleading and it didn't seem particularly easy in 1989. After too much up and down, I abandoned it in favor of the rocks along the shore. It took us an hour to get from Kwagunt to Malgosa. Not bad considering we had long since left the shade.

Don was still suffering from his bout with heat exhaustion the day before and was talking about hitching a ride down to the Little Colorado. I was hoping, though, that by being along the river with its ample supply of cooling water and by going more slowly he could make it without a ride. I was ahead of him chugging along on my own when an oar boat came by and moved in close. Someone started yelling at me. At first I thought there had been an accident and that the person on the boat was telling me to go back. Finally, though, I heard some words more distinctly: ". . . I'll meet you at the Little Colorado." It wasn't until then that I realized the person yelling at me was Don. It hadn't seemed like Don—the Don I knew didn't wear a life jacket.

Malgosa to Awatubi
Gary and Kyle caught up to me shortly after Don passed and I heard the story of what had happened. As the first boat came by, Gary recognized the name of the company painted on the side and realized he might know some of the boatmen—two were named Jeff. He called out, "Is Jeff or Jeff with you?" Sure enough, Jeff Behan soon came along and pulled in. Gary visited with him and explained Don's problem and asked if they could take him to the Little Colorado. Jeff didn't think so but gave Gary some tomatoes, avocados, grapefruit, and beer—one for Kyle, one for Don, and one for me, Gary declining. Then the boat went off and soon caught up with Don. Contrary to the impression left with Gary, Jeff took him aboard. All that remained was for Don to tell me he was on his way to the Little Colorado.

Awatubi to the Little Colorado
We reached Awatubi only a short time after Kyle and Gary caught up with me and Kyle pulled out the three beers the boatman had given him. Guess what happened to Don's? We had a leisurely lunch in some shade by a beach en-route to 60 Mile and half an hour later reached 60 Mile.

Robert Is Sick (1982)
The mouth of Awatubi was also the site of a difficult decision made during the '82 trip. I have already mentioned the gastrointestinal difficulties Robert was having when we left Nankoweap. Well, as the day progressed his condition worsened, and by the time we got to Awatubi around 3:00, he decided he had had enough discomfort for the day. I felt at the time that if Robert had been his usual self we could have gone from Nankoweap to the Little Colorado in one day. Robert's condition did not improve during the night—still a mix of vomiting and diarrhea—and the next day we had to decide what to do about him.

In midmorning we flagged down a dory—Liz Hyman in charge, and she was very helpful. Besides leaving several big cans of fruit juice, various soft drinks, a loaf of bread, and assorted other stuff, she helped us implement our plan.

Robert Is Abandoned (1982)

Before our trip began, Robert and I discussed the problem of what to do if one of us couldn't continue. We had separate permits and agreed if anything happened to one of us, the other would continue. This sounds callous, but here is how it worked in this case. We would send a note to Dave Buccello, the head ranger at Phantom Ranch, asking him to initiate a rescue for Robert in four days' time if no countermanding instructions were received in the meantime. This was fail-safe. Either Robert would get better or he wouldn't. If he got better, he could send a note that he didn't need a rescue; if he didn't get better, he would be rescued. He had enough food and liquid to get him through five days, and none of us thought he was so sick he might die in that time. So we sent Liz off with the note and after lunch set off ourselves for the Little Colorado.

Back to 1989

Finally, after three and a half more hours of boulders and sand and friendly Tapeats ledges—maybe half that time if the weather were cooler—Gary, Kyle, and I reached the Little Colorado and were greeted happily by Don who hadn't expected us so soon.

Not far above the Little Colorado, my visor was blown off by a strong gust of wind. It sailed way over my head and way out over the River—at least 50 feet up and 50 feet out. Then it fell toward the water, but just before it reached its watery grave another gust caught it and carried it high again. It swirled around a bit and was finally tossed on the rocks 20 feet from me. A boomerang could not have been more precisely thrown.

There was plenty of time for a bath before margarita time. I should add that these are not true margaritas. I create a substitute from a mixture of lemon and lemon-lime Kool-Aid plus sugar with some lemon-lime Crystal Light added to reduce the weight. The alcohol is a mixture of tequila and Everclear.

Margaritas

I still vividly remember my brother's reaction on the '82 trip to this margarita nonsense. He is a wine man and viewed my happy-hour preparations on the first day of our eighty-day hike from Lees Ferry to Grand Wash Cliffs with ill-concealed disdain. "Why didn't you bring some wine?" he asked. But he drank the margaritas. When he saw me making the same preparations the next night, he said, "What, margaritas again?" with only slightly less contempt than the night before. The third night his remark, delivered with a hint of anticipation, was, "Are we having margaritas again tonight?" The fourth night he capitulated with, "How soon are the margaritas?" After all these years of margaritas, they have become a sort of tradition. However, on the 1989 trip our alcohol bottle developed a crack and much of the booze was

lost. Kyle contributed some rum, but it was soon gone. For the rest of the trip we made do without the additive designed, according to my brother, to "dull the sharp edge of pain."

Mile 62.6 to Carbon Creek—First Try

The next day was horribly bright and clear just like its predecessors. This was unfortunate because we were going to climb up on top of the Tapeats and contour over to Carbon Creek. This meant we would be away from water for much of the day. This traverse would be new to me because in '82 we had enough sandbars to get past the cliffs we found here at water level. Unfortunately, the great flood of '83 had washed most of that sand away.

We climbed up to the Tonto level behind our camp—all was still in shade. After forty-five minutes we made a dip to River level to avoid contouring in and out of a small drainage, and an hour later did the same to avoid a larger one. A little after 8:00 we reached a major canyon. After we had all searched a bit for an easy way across it, Gary found a way off the nose to the beach at the mouth of the canyon. We went down and picked up some more water. It was 9:00 and already very hot. Gary soon found a way up the downstream cliff, but it was forty-five minutes before we were on the Tonto again—opposite the upper end of a large island.

After an hour and a half of contouring around, we were still only 0.5 River mile from the beach we had left more than two hours before. At this point Don decided he had had enough of the heat and announced he was going back to the beach and catch a boat to Phantom. The conversation went something like this.

Turning Back

Don: "Look, I'm by far the slowest one and I'm only holding you guys up so the only sensible thing is for me to go back to the beach and catch a boat. I'll leave you some of my water and you can all go on and be at Carbon in no time. Okay?"

He was very matter-of-fact and had worked out all the details—so he thought. It was true he had been going very slowly with frequent rests, and it was also true we had at least 2 river miles to go to get to the bed of Carbon, so what he said made at least partial sense. However, even though I've done it, I don't like to see a group split up.

George: "No, it's not okay." Don seemed surprised at my dissent. "You shouldn't go back by yourself. Someone will go with you."

This wasn't entirely a selfless remark. With Don gone I would be the slowest.

Kyle: "I could go back with Don, pick up some more water, and be back here in about an hour. How about that?"

George: "That's not a bad idea, but it would be an hour lost and the rocks are already too hot to touch. Gary and I could go on while you're gone but then, for a while at least, we would be split up into three groups."

Gary: "I'd sure like to go on, but not unless all three of us go."

Perhaps the three of us should have gone on. I could see a small hill about a mile away, though, in the shimmering heat, it looked much farther away

than that, and that hill was about half way to where we could enter Carbon. But Don was depressed and that depressed me as well. Suddenly, all I could think of was the cold River and being in the shade. I did not want to go on. I wanted very much to go back.

George: "I think we should all go back, get up extra early tomorrow, and try this again then. It's after 11:00 now. Tomorrow we could be at this same spot by 6:00. It'd be a lot cooler then. Let's pool our extra water and cache it here."

Don: "George, I don't want you going back just on my account. You're not doing that, are you? I am perfectly capable of getting to the beach by myself."

George: "I know you can, but if you went by yourself and anything happened to you I'd never forgive myself. Besides, I'm happy to go back and try again tomorrow. Think how cool it'll be then."

Kyle: "Well, if you two are going back, so am I."

Gary: "Okay, but I'm going on a bit to see what tomorrow will be like."

So we cached half a gallon of water and started back. It was hot, and the rocks still too hot to touch, but, strangely, it didn't seem as hot as when we were going the other way. In an hour and a half we were back on the beach again—in the shade. That day the official high at Phantom Ranch was 110 degrees.

Mile 62.2 to Carbon Creek—Second Try

I am interested in when low water occurs at various places along the River so, during lunch, I put a stick at the water's edge to see if it was rising or falling. It was falling. In fact, when I checked it an hour later it had fallen quite a bit. Then it occurred to me that maybe it would fall far enough for us to get by the next cliff along the River. In late afternoon I went across the delta to the cliff to see how deep the traverse would be. According to my walking stick, which I jabbed in the water, it would be about up to my hips. Gary came over to take a look, too. "We can do that," I said. "Piece of cake," Gary added. This obstacle seemed to be the last one, though I couldn't be sure. As far as I could remember from the 1982 trip, the way was clear to Lava Creek once we passed this cliff. But as I've said, there was a lot more sand then. We went back to give the others the good news.

We started the bypass at 6:00 and were all across by 6:15. I was ecstatic. No more shish-kebabed hikers on the morrow. We made camp on a small sandbar opposite the bottom of the big island. We were all very happy at what we had accomplished. Kyle made his one and only offer to help with dinner, and Don even complimented me on thinking of trying for a low-water route. I slept very well without the specter of a sun-broiled Tonto traverse to haunt me.

Bypass Arithmetic

I found out from the River Subdistrict at the park, after I got home, that the average flows from the dam on Friday the 16th, Saturday the 17th, and Sunday the 18th were 16,944, 14,111, and 9,120 cfs, respectively. The cliff is at about River mile 63, and, adding the 14 miles from Lees Ferry to the dam

and assuming an average flow of 4 mph, this put us approximately nineteen hours downstream from the dam. Since we made the traverse at 4:00 on the 17th, this meant we were seeing water that left the dam late Friday night or early Saturday morning.

I include this numerical discussion to help others who are doing this loop decide whether to try this watery bypass or not. One additional piece of information is needed, however, and that is, "How much deeper will the water be for each 10,000 cfs increase in flow?" I don't know the answer, but I guess between 1 and 2 feet depending on how wide the River is here and what its velocity is. If I'm correct, this means a 30,000 cfs average flow would probably make the bypass impossible.

Environmental Impact Study

This is a good place for another comment that may make all this arithmetic discussion moot. An Environmental Impact Study is being made at the time I am writing this to assess the effect of flow variation on beach erosion. It is possible this study will result in permanent changes to the discharge pattern from Glen Canyon Dam. For example, it is possible that flows will be kept more nearly constant with changes being made only gradually. An experimental change to this effect is already in place. As a result of this uncertainty, if you plan on making this loop, I suggest you contact the Bureau of Reclamation people at Glen Canyon Dam to see what they expect the flows to be at critical times during your trip. Real-time river flow data is available from water.usgs.gov/realtime.html. Information on the ongoing study can be found at vishnu.glg.nav.edu/gces/newintro.html.

On to Carbon

We were up and away from camp before 5:30 the next morning. That was especially early for us. In two and a half hours, when we were opposite the caves housing the Hopi Salt Mines, we had our first view of the South Rim. Gary says these caves have pictographs in them. We were just above Carbon Creek when some Hatch boats pulled out from there—we missed a second breakfast by just a hair. (The Hopi Salt Mines are now closed to all access.)

Being an effective leader requires credibility and my supply dwindled further when we were forced into a small climb and a 200 yard traverse just upstream from Carbon Creek—a trivial matter I had forgotten about. But leaders aren't supposed to forget such things. Fortunately, there are several ways off the nose to the Carbon delta.

Carbon to Lava

Once we got to the mouth of Carbon, we took a break. Don said he would slowly move on down to Lava Creek—our destination for yesterday—and the rest of us took a brief tour of the Carbon narrows. It didn't take long for the tour to pall and we started back. Kyle made the prophetic remark, "I hope we don't see this place again." But we did.

We started down to Lava ourselves and met Don coming back. He was unhappy. "It cliffs out down there, and damnit, Steck, you said it would only take forty-five minutes to get to Lava from here. Now it's going to take hours."

An example of the depressing effect of unmet expectations. I didn't see any point in telling Don that I had never said any such thing. What I had said was that it took us forty-five minutes when we went down to Lava in 1982. Oh well, this way we would see some new country.

River Route

There is a River route from Carbon to Lava but we didn't know it at the time. The following year I made a trip downriver in Gary's dory and we camped at Carbon. During the afternoon I climbed above the low cliffs and found a deer trail going downstream. I followed it far enough to see that it would bypass all cliffs. If the steeply sloping knife edge just upstream from Lava turns out to be too steep, just go behind it. (See the Cape Solitude quad map.)

The Moebius Bend

Instead of being along the River, our route to the mouth of Lava Creek would take us about a mile up Carbon, about a mile over to Lava Creek, and about a mile back down the creek to the River. This is a common hike for boat people and there was a well beaten track up Carbon wherever one was possible. At the start of a big horseshoe-shaped bend in Carbon, Kyle noticed a track heading up the talus, but it was in the sun and by going up the bed we could stay in the shade. And besides the sunny way was steep. After almost closing the circle at the upper end of the bend we had to climb over a fall. We all climbed up on the left, but Kyle and Gary were ahead and out of sight. Don and I followed the path up to a ridge and saw that it went steeply down the other side. We were dismayed to find we had to climb down so far to get back into the bed. We were just ready to start down when we heard Kyle's voice behind and below us. "What the hell are you guys doing up there?" I was just about to ask him what the hell he was doing down there when he added, "The trail's down here."

Then our situation gradually became clear. There is a story about caterpillars crawling around and around the rim of a teacup until they die. Well, Don and I had almost sacrificed ourselves as human caterpillars on the Carbon Creek teacup. The trail we were about to go down was the same one that Kyle had noticed earlier going up. So much climbing is required to follow the bed of the bend, that the boat hikers have beaten a shortcut over the saddle at the neck of the bend. It is only a few feet from the saddle back down to the bed. Don and I had been about to do the opposite—take the bed around the bend then climb to the saddle and go down to the bottom of the bend in order to follow the bed again to the saddle. . . and so on ad infinitum. I felt very stupid at my mistake. But now, as an alternative to stupidity, I prefer to think it was just the heat affecting my judgment. In any case, we were lucky that Kyle was there to save us from a horrible fate on the Moebius Bend at Carbon Creek.

Just beyond the Moebius Bend the canyon goes mainly east–west and there is a short stretch of flowing water and some potholes. We didn't taste it, but I guess it is probably salty. Kyle was very solicitous and cautioned me several times, "Watch out for that pothole." It wasn't until we had stopped for lunch a few feet farther on that I noticed he was taking his boots and socks

off to dry them. He had slipped into that pothole. Gary very carefully scratched the words Death Trek in the hard sand and took pictures of them "to use as a lead in for the slide show I'll be giving about this trip." I didn't feel exactly complimented. Then in the ensuing conversation he added, "Golly, you know, instead of being on this trip I could have stayed home and been audited by the IRS." I didn't feel complimented by that remark, either.

From Carbon to Lava

The exit from Carbon was very close to our lunch spot and fifteen minutes later we were heading over to Lava. The saddle between the two drainages is probably only 50 feet above the bed of Carbon and we very soon began our descent. Like the descent into Kwagunt, this one also reminded me of Hell. Pretty, but damned hot. And like Kwagunt, near the end when we thought we were home free there was a pour-off and we had to climb up and over a ridge to the left. I had seen this bypass trail from some distance away but thought it must be a game trail—it couldn't possibly apply to us. Wrong! We found no water in the bed of Lava when we reached it, but some soon emerged. It came and went and was gone by the time we reached the River. We took a rest in the shade of a gravel bank along the way and I took out my thermometer:

Ambient air temperature in shade 105 degrees F
Ambient air temperature in sun 111 degrees F
Temperature on a yellow rock 120 degrees F
Temperature on a dark rock 126 degrees F
Official Phantom Ranch high 115 degrees F.

Today was Sunday and the plan was to rest at the mouth of Lava until 4:00. Then we would head down to the cliff upstream of Tanner Canyon at River mile 67.2, about opposite Comanche Creek, to see if low Saturday water—transit time from the dam is about twenty hours—will allow us to get by at River level. In 1982 it didn't occur to us to even try and we made the traverse on the steep Dox ball bearings above the cliff. It seemed at least 45 degrees, and so hard you could not get the edge of your boot into it. It was also tedious and scary and I didn't want to repeat it.

Avoiding the Ball Bearings (1982)

Robert, who was a day behind us at this point, also made the ball-bearing traverse, but when he returned to the River, he went back up without his pack and found he could get by the cliff in the water. The water was only up to his waist, and high-water stains seemed to indicate the River level was seldom more than a foot higher. Since dam discharges are traditionally lowest for the week on Saturday and Sunday, we felt we had a good chance to get by at River level, too. Then we would be back on schedule.

Dave and Bec Kiel's Experience (1984)

As further evidence of how hard it is to make the traverse above the cliff, let me describe how the Kiels handled it. Dave and Bec Kiel set out in July 1984 to hike the length of the Colorado River from its source in the Rockies

to its terminus at the Gulf of California. This they did, though some of the lower part downstream of Grand Canyon was done by canoe. While they were still in the planning stages, they spent several days with me going over Robert's maps showing his route through Cataract Canyon and around Lake Powell. We also talked about this ball-bearing traverse and the possibility of a bypass at River level. I knew Robert had tried it, but I hadn't.

When they got to the start of the wading, it was too early in the afternoon and they thought the water was too deep and dangerous so they turned around and went back to tackle the ball-bearings. They tried that for a while and decided the River had to be easier and turned around for the second time. When they got back to the cliff, the water was much lower and they waded by without incident.

Lava to the Ball Bearing Bypass at Mile 67.2

We left Lava at 4:00 as planned and had only moderate difficulty in getting down to the cliff-out. The Grand Canyon Series strata tilt up and away from you so you are always following a rising ledge. But when you get too high, you have to climb down to the next rising ledge. Sometimes, when these ledges go around corners, they are skimpy and you find yourself with your feet on one thin ledge, your hands on another, and your pack hung out over the water. I was thus engaged when I heard a rattlesnake buzzing out of sight ahead of me. I moved very cautiously until I could see the snake posed no hazard. By the time the others arrived, the snake had gone.

Bypass at Mile 67.2

I arrived at the low-water traverse first, dumped my pack, and waded out along the cliff. There were plenty of rocks to walk on and in no time at all I was at the other end with the water never getting much above my knees. The others were already coming down as I was going back. The only problem was that my feet were aching numb. Still, I put my pack on and went back down. In half an hour we were all past the obstacle and at 7:30 we made camp on a nearby sandbar. Gary stayed behind to take some photos, Mattox went back to watch Gary, and Kyle went on downstream to see about tomorrow's route. All of a sudden it was getting dark and nobody was there to help put dinner together. To say I was grumpy would be an understatement.

The next day, Monday, Gary reported that at first light the River was even lower than the evening before and we could have sneaked by without getting our feet wet. Hooray for Sunday water.

Death by Erosion

By the time we left at 5:45 the water was rising but it was still lower than it had been at midnight. In fact, the low Sunday water helped all morning. There were many more ledges and sandbars to walk on. The ledges below Basalt Canyon were certainly easier at low water. It was still early when Gary found a beer floating in the water and gave it to us to share. About this time a fingersized rock fell from the sky and hit my boot. If it had been fist sized and had fallen a bit to one side, I would have been history. "Hey, whatever happened to Steck?" "Oh, him, he was killed by erosion."

Unkar Delta

We stopped at the upstream side of the great Unkar bend about 10:00 and were instantly covered with millions of tiny flies that were almost too small to see. They didn't bite but crawled out to the ends of the hairs on our bodies and moved around so the hair would move and tickle. As soon as I started hiking they flew off. Once as I was walking on some soft sand, I saw a lizard swim up to the surface through the sand and scurry off. What do they breathe under the sand? We had lunch at the Unkar delta by the rapids in case some boatman might make a mistake and flip, but no boats went by. Kyle said, "This is a no-good lunch spot—no shade and too much noise for conversation." I might add here that Kyle likes conversation. After lunch we went down a little way to the camp spot with the overhang at the very lower end of the delta. Lots of boats went by. A very restful afternoon.

Don must still have been bothered by something because he made a big deal about the clouds moving in. "A big storm coming. It could rain for days." But Gary observed, "I've never seen much of a storm come out of a sky like this." He wasn't worried and neither was I. Besides we had the overhang and the tarp. It did blow a bit, though, hard enough to blow the hot weather away and replace it with something slightly cooler. A cold front must have gone by.

Dinner was an experiment I hadn't tried for more than ten years. Now I know why. It consisted of crepes with brown sugar and freeze-dried cottage cheese. Not bad really, but more trouble than it was worth—especially considering the extra 8 ounces of frying pan.

Today was our sixth day—we were half way, and most of the uncertainty was behind us. Only four days to the flesh pots of Phantom Ranch, but there would be many climbs from River to Tonto and vice versa—1,200 feet. Tomorrow we would go downstream about 2 miles, take the rising Shinumo Quartzite ramp that emerges from the River, and follow it up and around to a steep ravine that would take us back to the River just above Hance Rapids.

Triple Breakfast Morning

We were late leaving camp—probably because it was still overcast and we overslept. Again, we had to take a series of rising ledges and then get down as best we could. Some of them were industrial strength ledges with downclimbs of 20 feet or more. In about an hour we came upon some Arizona River Runners (ARR) boats and were invited to help clean up the remains of breakfast. They didn't have to ask twice. Tomato juice, orange juice, eggs, and sausage. Then we hurried on and just happened to catch the Hatch boat party with their breakfast pants down. So we had three breakfasts that morning.

Shinumo Quartzite Ramp

With full tummies, we started up the quartzite ramp at 8:15. Mattox was still unhappy and mixed two indices for rating a trip when he said, "This trip is half as interesting and twice as hard as the Powell Plateau Loop." Another case of unmet expectations. He had expected this loop to be about as hard as the Powell Plateau one and packed accordingly—with more weight than he needed.

In ninety minutes we were at the promontory where Allen and I had turned around when we were exploring for this route many years ago. By this time the wind had picked up considerably and hiking was awkward. Sometimes heavy gusts forced me to hold onto the nearest big rock to keep my balance. Just down from the promontory and around the corner was the funnel-shaped descent ravine, and at 11:15 we started down. It was so steep and loose at the top that, for safety's sake, we went one at a time, or two close together.

Descent to Hance Rapids

Mattox went first. When he felt safe, Kyle and I started down. The far side of the ravine is a large steeply sloping slab set vertically, and I found it easier to go down with one hand on the slab for balance. There is a variety of small obstacles, but even the biggest one, which comes last, can be downclimbed easily enough if you lower your pack. In the flatter area before this climb we saw a fox saunter across in front of us. I wish I had noticed where it went.

Don was tired when we reached the River and there wasn't much shade—just some filtered sunlight under the tammies. It was almost 1:30 and very hot. Even cooling in the River helped for only a short time. Kyle was disgusted with the lack of shade and announced, "Hey, stay here if you want, but I'm going to find some shade." "Well, Kyle," I said, "I don't think you'll find any downstream that's any better than this." When he came back he was even more disgusted. "I hate it when you're right about important things when you're wrong about so many piddling things." In the meantime Gary had gone upstream and found big rocks that provided some shade—more as the afternoon progressed. We holed up there during the worst heat of the day.

To pass the time, Gary built a huge sand castle with a moat and a flat side toward the river on which he carved, in big letters, the single word BEER. He, of course, didn't drink beer, but I guess he thought the words CREAM SODA just didn't have the right impact. Around 4:30 we left this idyllic little corner of Hell. We went down past the dike and the big boulders along the north side of Hance Rapids to camp on a sandbar a little upstream from the spot where the trail leads up to the Hance mines.

Don Decides to Leave

Although we went only a relatively short distance—less than 0.5 mile—Don was totally wasted by the effort and by the heat. There was no longer any hope he could continue to Phantom with us, and the only sensible solution was for him to catch a boat ride down. If, after several days, no boats stopped and he was feeling no better then he would have to flash his signal mirror and hope for a rescue. Snagging a boat ride would be the least hassle, and Gary said there was a small inlet just downstream from our camp where boats pull in so passengers can explore the old asbestos mines. Don said he would wait there. He had food for several days and, of course, there was plenty of water. Feeling sure he would get a ride, the rest of us left our extra stuff with him so we could carry more water. Don's future being settled, we turned our attention to happy hour—sans booze—and dinner.

The River was falling when we arrived at camp around 5:00 in the evening, and it was still very low at 3:00 the next morning. By 5:00 A.M., however, it was high again.

Hance Rapids to Newberry Saddle

We left Don at 5:15—he later complained to the rangers that we had abandoned him—and had picked up water and started up the trail half an hour later. At 6:30 we were in the bed of Asbestos Canyon. On other occasions there has been water here, but this year was too dry and there was none. However, I did find some damp sand about five minutes up the bed. By 8:00 we were on the Tonto and could see Newberry Saddle very clearly—and close. (An interesting comparison—by 8:00 Mattox was already at Phantom Ranch.) All the wind yesterday must have meant a cold front came through. Even though there were only a few clouds, the air was relatively cool and the breeze wonderfully cool—sometimes even cold. It was an easy jaunt over to the saddle; we were there at 10:20.

Route Down from Newberry Saddle

When I was there last, with Robert, my brother, and the Petersons, I went left from the saddle while my brother and Robert went right. I forget where the Petersons went. But my way was not a good way, and I could look over to where Al and Robert were moving right along and wish I had gone their way. Now, seven years later, I was not going to make the same mistake again and looked for a way to start off to the right. A faint trail provided the key. It started us off in the right direction, and we contoured over and slightly down to a ridge that took us much farther down. Near the end of the ridge we dropped down to the right to a drainage that led eventually to the bed of Vishnu Creek. It was an easy descent.

Vishnu Creek

We were in Vishnu by 11:30 and the first order of business was to find water. We went up the creek into the Quartzite Narrows near a big overhang on stream right where there had always been ample flowing water before. This time there was only the tiniest trickle—two puddles barely big enough to dip a cup in. I could extract half a gallon from the larger puddle in ten minutes and in five more the puddle had filled back up. That meant a gallon every half hour. It would do, but more would be better, so we went upcanyon. Kyle explored the exit ravine, which sometimes has big bathtubs of water and Gary went way upcanyon to see if the spring at the base of the Tonto was operational. Both found some water. The bathtubs were empty but Kyle found a small pool of stagnant water up by a cottonwood. Gary found some shallow pools with flowing water "twenty-one minutes up" about 0.25 mile beyond where the canyon opens up.

In order to make tomorrow easier, we agreed to an early dinner after which we would load up with two gallons of water each and hike out to the point—in the cool of early evening—to camp. Accordingly, we snoozed away the afternoon. At 4:00 it was time for margaritas and then spaghetti. There was a bunch of that because we were only three eating for four, but Gary came to the rescue and ate everything in sight.

How to Destroy a Water Source

We might have been able to get all the necessary water from our puddle, but I had tried to "improve" its capacity by deepening it and, instead, destroyed it. I guess the bottom of the puddle had been sealed by fine silt; my digging disturbed the seal and allowed all the water to drain out the bottom. Also, I think the afternoon flow was about half that of the morning. In any case, we had to go up to Gary's water supply to get the required gallons.

Gurgling Water

Kyle and I hurried up ahead of Gary and found Gary's pools, but they didn't look as big as we expected. Kyle explored a little farther and actually found gurgling water. It was a deep pool, hidden in the reeds and rushes, with a small cascade at the inlet providing the gurgle. Our regular capacity was about five quarts apiece, but we augmented that by putting water in a gallon resealable bag and putting that in a pot to keep it from getting squashed. There were only two pots; however, Gary carried his gallon double bagged but otherwise unprotected. It worked fine.

We left the bed of Vishnu via the exit ravine at the 3,900-foot contour at 6:30 and made camp on a small knoll near the point at 8:00. Along the way I recited "The Raven," "The Cremation of Sam McGee," and "The Shooting of Dan McGrew." I don't know if the recitations helped the others pass their time, but I know it helped me pass mine. That hour and a half of evening hiking passed very quickly. As expected, the air was cool.

We had a very good opportunity for an early departure, but Kyle just wouldn't get up—"too cold," he said. No amount of coaxing, or shaming, or other forms of subtle coercion or humiliation seemed to work. Finally I remembered Kyle likes the direct approach and I proceeded to unzip his sleeping bag to extract the butterfly from its cocoon. That worked like magic—he was up in a flash. Too cold in the Grand Canyon in the middle of June! He's got to be kidding.

En Route to Clear Creek

It took us half an hour to get to the bed of the next drainage, but we went in an unnecessarily circuitous way. Instead of following the Tapeats rim, like we did, it is much quicker to follow the chocolate band of Bright Angel Shale. It leads directly to the rim of the descent ravine, which is 0.25 mile west-northwest of the southern tip of Hall Butte. The route out the other side is where the 3,800-foot contour crosses the bed—about 0. 5 mile southeast of Dune Butte. The Fault Map does not show any faults here, but there are geological features that look like faults to me. In any case, the Tapeats is fighting a losing battle with the quartzite where you climb out. There is no obvious way up here and each of the three of us chose a different route. The way I prefer is to climb up on a rock and step across—carefully—to the mainland. Gary went up a crack a little to the north. I forget where Kyle went.

Camera Lost
After crossing the drainage west of Vishnu Creek, all we had to do was contour around to the Tapeats descent into 83 Mile Canyon. Except for one thing. I had lost my camera. I wasn't even sure I had picked it up after leaving camp that morning. I was willing to abandon it, but Gary said he would hurry back to a place where we had rested while he had taken some pictures. So Kyle and I rested some more while Gary went back. Unfortunately, he couldn't find the camera, so we continued on to find the Tapeats descent spot.

And Found
In the fall of 1990, I heard from my son Stan that some friends of his had hiked in the Vishnu area, and one of them had found a camera. Stan either hadn't known or had forgotten about my loss so he paid no attention to his friends' find until I brought it up. He eventually checked and found the camera was mine. The finder had developed my pictures and had the camera checked. The camera and case were out in the elements for fifteen months and were none the worse for wear, but the summer heat hadn't helped my pictures. At least I got back the only distant shots of the snow bridge.

Tapeats Break
The Tapeats descent into 83 Mile, which Don Peterson and I found in 1980, is about 0.6 mile west-northwest of the summit of Hawkins Butte. The descent is opposite a small arroyo on the other side. A large talus slope—more accurately a slump—comes up to within 20 feet of the Tapeats rim; I recognized it by the three small ducks I had placed on the platform on top of the slump in 1980. There is also a large cairn about 100 yards away on the Tonto, but I don't know the significance of it. The first time I went down here, we lowered packs and climbed down with a belay. This time Gary found a place where he felt comfortable going down without a belay and we found we could pass our packs down more easily than we could lower them. Each of us scrambled down without even a handline. The rest of the descent along the side of the slump also required care and more pack passing.

We decided to take a lunch break in the shade at the base of the Tapeats. It was going to be the last shade for a while, and we made good use of it. I offered the others some of my dried cuttlefish—I buy it in 1-pound bags at an Oriental food market near my home—and they both took some, though Gary said, "This stuff looks like something you can pull out of a mattress." "Well, if you don't like it, give it back." "No, I'll keep it. I like eating mattress stuffing." Gary said something else, too, that I liked better. In describing the trip, he said, "There are more neat little routes on this hike than any other I've ever taken."

Route to River
We went down the tributary drainage to 83 Mile Canyon and then down it about 200 yards. From there we went up the other side to the base of the Tapeats and contoured around to the point southwest of the "3938"

elevation point. From the point we dropped down to the drainage to the west and went down it to the River.

Kyle was the first one in the bed and he ducked into the shade of a small rock to wait for the rest of us. The rock was so small that I paid more attention to where he could be hiding than to my footing and took a flawlessly executed head-over-heels tumble to the bed. I needed help in being extricated from my pack, but nothing seemed to be damaged. I proceeded with more caution after that. The descent to the River was typical—boulder-hopping and a scattering of pour-offs that called for minor route-finding and climbing skills.

Sharing the Beach at Clear Creek

We reached the River about three o'clock and made camp at the beach—now very small—just upstream from the schist ribs at the mouth of Clear Creek. Less than fifteen minutes later a private rowing party came by. Since they obviously wanted to camp there, we offered to share "our" beach with them. If they had been first, we would have been the supplicants. A good move even though we both had a right to be there. The beach is about one-third the size it was when I was there in 1982. More than that, all the vegetation that had provided shade was gone. The boaters were mainly from Los Alamos, and Gary knew the boatman who was rowing the dory—Merlin Wheeler was his name. He gave Kyle and me each a beer. Kyle had also baby-sat for friends of another couple in the party. Small world. They were very kind and invited us to dinner—cabbage rolls, Yugoslavian style, and fresh vegetable salad, with crepes for dessert. Excellent fare for three grungy backpackers. Another big plus for sharing a beach with boaters is the opportunity to use their Porta-Potti—no small blessing on this tiny beach.

The Horizontal Waterfall

The route from the mouth of Clear Creek to Phantom Ranch consists in going up and over to Zoroaster Canyon and then climbing out of Zoroaster and aiming for the Clear Creek Trail. But first we had to get over to Clear Creek. Fortunately, there is a trail that even continues up the creek once it gets there. We went up Clear Creek a little more than 0.5 mile to a point just above the "Horizontal Waterfall"—a spot where a vertical falls is taken by a rocky scoop and flung sideways. We bypassed this falls on the left and were at a big bay where we could see the ridge to which we had to climb. I found it convenient to climb the drainage that kept to the right. It is solid rock and is in the shade longer than other routes. When we got near the top, we found we had the choice of several ways to climb to the ridge.

Clear Creek Trail

We climbed to the ridge, went north, turned left at the base of the Tapeats, and contoured in to the bed of Zoroaster Canyon. There was plenty of shade through here, and we stopped and ate the oranges that some thoughtful woman had given us. In no time at all we had climbed down 15 feet or so to the bed of Zoroaster, crossed it, and climbed out to the Tonto on the other side. Then we finally came to the trail. With it under our feet we could really zip along—maybe even 2.5 mph. Once on the trail it was only three hours to Phantom.

Phantom Ranch

The first thing we wanted to do when we reached Phantom was find out what had happened to Don. But as we passed the Phantom Ranch dining room, I thought we should go in and see who was manning the lemonade stand. Good luck, it was a friend, and we were each treated to two glasses of that most excellent elixir. They claim it's the best lemonade in the Canyon. Then we went down to the ranger station to see about Don and to start in on my beer. It was locked so Gary went down to the Rock House to see if anyone was there. Kyle and I took the uppermost campsite and were cooling ourselves in the creek just above the bridge when Sjors, a NPS volunteer I know, came by and called out to me. Then the three of us went back to the ranger station and the beer cache. Sjors told us that Don had received a ride about ninety minutes after we "abandoned" him. He had reached Phantom about the same time we reached the Tonto. From there he hiked up to visit Bruce Aiken at Roaring Springs and then up the North Kaibab Trail to the rim. The only problem was that he had to carry all the extra stuff we had given him.

Party Time

Besides the beer and margaritas I had cached at Phantom in April, there was also a case of beer that I had arranged for Vern Bessey to buy for me, so there was plenty of stuff for a party. We also invited Sjors to dinner and gave him the one we didn't eat when we were guests of the boat party. Sjors had a problem. His funding of $5.00 a day as a volunteer had run out, so he had to provision himself. Shortly after that happened, Sjors was awarded a plaque by Secretary Lujan himself—for extraordinary achievement as a volunteer. What's that about the right hand and the left hand? Later, though, during a prolonged search for a missing hiker, Sjors was hired as a temporary ranger, which more than made up for his loss of funding.

It was quite dark by the time the festivities were over and Kyle and I went down to the campsite. I shone a light on the ground before putting my ground cloth down, and lo-and-behold there was a scorpion wandering across. I waited until it was in the bushes before putting my stuff out. All night, each time I turned over, I wondered whether or not I would get stung.

A Rest Afternoon at Aiken's

I don't know why it took us so long to get to Roaring Springs the next day, but it did. Six hours for 8.5 miles. We did spend forty-five minutes with Janice, the ranger at Cottonwood, socializing over a cold soda, but still it shouldn't have taken as long as it did. It might have been the fact we were carrying two sixpacks of beer. We were going to meet Bruce Aiken for lunch. Bruce is the NPS person at Roaring Springs and his job is to keep the pumps going that push water up to the North Rim. The South Rim also gets Roaring Springs water, but that water flows by gravity to Indian Garden and is pumped to the rim from there. Bruce has had this job for almost twenty years, and the house he uses is in a special spot. It is so pretty there—and cool, only 82 degrees. I had to put something on to keep warm in the wind. I guess that proves I had acclimated to the heat.

It was Saturday so Bruce didn't have to work and we just lolled around on his veranda and had iced tea and visited. We tried waiting for Janice before drinking the beer but it was a losing battle.

Greg Eats a Scorpion

Bruce has named his lizards and one named Greg surprised us by killing a scorpion. I didn't actually see him kill it, but I did see him eat it—and burp at the end after he had swallowed the stinger. We got to look at Bruce's new Redwall Cavern painting-in-progress—this one from the inside looking out—and cheerfully gave it our critical eye. I was able to see the finished product when a reproduction of it appeared in the October 1989 issue of *Southwest Art.* I like his style.

Janice finally arrived for a few rounds of beer and then Bruce created supper. The room vibrated with the sounds of Mozart, Beethoven, Vivaldi, and Brahms, among others. It was too bad that we would be up and out on the morrow. Back to civilization. Sadness.

Our plan was to take the Old Bright Angel Trail to the rim and then take the Ken Patrick Trail to the highway near Greenland Lake where we would walk to my van. The Old BA used to be shown on the 15-minute Bright Angel quad map but the 1962 edition eliminated it because someone didn't want people using it expecting it to be maintained. It is not shown on the Bright Angel Point 7.5-minute quad either. However, it is still shown on the 1962 Grand Canyon National Park map.

My Life on the Trail Crew

Knowing I wanted to use it for this loop routing, I spent parts of three years as a trail maintenance volunteer brushing out this abandoned trail. I pruned up to the top of the Redwall and down almost to the bottom of the Coconino. For some reason, I could never find anyone to help me twice. Even though the work was done several years ago, those parts are still in good shape. But the Supai and Hermit parts that I never got to are very overgrown. The Sierra Club also spent parts of several years brushing out the Ken Patrick Trail and cutting through all the downed logs. It is now in good shape, too.

Even though I worked hard and long at the job of clearing trail, I didn't always proceed according to the rules. When I visit the South Rim I usually visit my friends in the ranger operations building, and on one occasion I dropped in on Butch Wilson, who at that time was the Canyon district ranger. It wasn't all social because I wanted his okay for my last bit of trail clearing. Before he gave it he said, "You know, I've had a bad report on you." I couldn't believe he was serious and thought he was pulling my leg. So I went along with it. "Okay, what did I do this time?" "No, I'm serious," he said, "I've had to answer a nasty letter about you." And he went on to say that someone had written the superintendent a complaint letter to the effect that someone had cut the spines off an agave by the Old Bright Angel Trail and rendered it defenseless against the predators that wanted to eat it. It was true I had done that, but it surprised me greatly that anyone cared. I had considered that particular plant a danger to passing children because it was at an awkward, hard-to-avoid place on the trail; the spines would have

been at eye level. What I should have done, if I really thought it was a danger, was take out the whole plant.

Another part of my experience as trail crew led me to consider the agave as a real villain in the outback. I was working from the bottom up by myself and using the bunkhouse at the Roaring Springs Ranger Station as headquarters. One day I slipped, put my hand out, and slammed it onto an agave spine. Only a tiny spot of blood showed the entry but the fact that I could not begin to make a fist without great pain told me part of a spine was still in my hand. I was $800 poorer by the time that spine was removed. I have a Zorro-type z in my palm and I know two others who have similar marks for similar reasons. The surgeon who operated wasn't really convinced anything was there, and I still think I might have saved the $800 with an offer of double or nothing.

Old Bright Angel Trail

Someone has ducked the Old BA and it is easy to follow. The trail begins just east of the iron footbridge at the mouth of Manzanita Canyon across from the Roaring Springs Ranger's house and crosses the steep hillside with the springs. After about a mile we crossed the creek and took the trail up the west side. I once found a railroad watch in the mud by the creek crossing—I still use it. In the shale, the trail goes up and down twice. After following a skimpy trail along a steep sidehill, we were at the Muav cascade east of Uncle Jim Point. This is a good photo opportunity for the water does beautiful things. From here the trail ascends the Redwall in one long arc with only a few switchbacks. When it reaches the Supai drainage, the trail goes up it for maybe 0.5 mile, and we had to be alert to catch the spot where it leaves the drainage.

Ken Patrick Trail

We had lunch on top of a limestone pillar, but a fierce wind blew my pack over. We might have stayed there longer if it had been more pleasant. Instead, we went on and soon were on top at the junction of the Old BA and the Ken Patrick Trails. I found out later from a plaque at the head of the North Kaibab Trail that Ken Patrick was a ranger SLAIN IN THE LINE OF DUTY AT THE POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE AUG 5, 1973. ASSIGNED TO THE NORTH RIM FOR SEVERAL SEASONS, MR. PATRICK KNEW AND LOVED THIS ENVIRONMENT.

A sign at the Old BA/Ken Patrick junction reads: N KAIBAB 4 MI.—ROARING SPRINGS 7 MI.—PT IMPERIAL 6 MI. The trail spends too much time going west and even a little bit south but don't despair. Eventually, it will head in the right direction. In an hour we reached the meadow that goes up to the intersection of the highways to Point Imperial and Cape Royal. A sign there read: PT. IMPERIAL 4 MI [with an arrow to the left]—N KAIBAB TR 6 MI [with an arrow to the right]. As we approached the meadow, I noticed a building in the woods that I didn't remember having seen before. As I got closer I realized it was only a big limestone block with a dark blotch on one side in the shape of a door.

The trail climbed steeply on the east side of the meadow and in half an hour we encountered a confusing arrow pointing left. Since we went on a

bit and then doubled back beyond a big downed snag, I think the arrow meant "go off at right angles here and you will hit the trail after a bit." The trail spends far too much time going north; I'm sure that if we had known exactly where we were, we could have gone cross country and hit the highway much closer to Greenland Lake. Finally, ninety minutes after reaching the top of the Old BA, we reached the highway. There was a car parked in a turnout there, and we startled Duane and Beverly from New Jersey out of their nap. Nevertheless, they very kindly gave me a ride up the road to my VW bus. That saved me 1.5 miles of walking. In this fashion the loop was closed after twelve days of hiking—some of it rather strenuous.

ADDITIONAL USEFUL INFORMATION

Date	Average Flow from Dam (cfs)	Max. Temp. at Phantom Ranch	Campsite
Wed June 14	14,978	106	Upper Nankoweap
Thu June 15	14,978	113	Kwagunt Creek
Fri June 16	16,944	108	Little Colorado
Sat June 17	14,111	110	First Bypass
Sun June 18	9,120	115	Second Bypass
Mon June 19	15,487	113	Lower Unkar
Tue June 20	16,284	109	Hance Rapids
Wed June 21	15,094	106	Vishnu Point
Thu June 22	15,845	109	Clear Creek
Fri June 23	16,143	104	Phantom Ranch

Horsethief Trail Variant: Nankoweap Creek to Lava Creek

Length
I would allow two days for the trip from Nankoweap Creek to the mouth of Lava Creek via the Horsethief Trail.

Water
The only reliable water between Nankoweap Creek and the River at the mouth of Lava Creek is at Kwagunt Creek. I worry about Kwagunt, too, but it has been flowing the four times I have been there. Although I have not checked it myself, I have it on good authority that "Malgosa goes." If you are hurting for water when you cross Malgosa, I suggest going down it to the River. I would also expect water up the Lava Creek drainage in what the quad map labels CHUAR VALLEY.

HIKING TIMES (1977)

Use Areas	Location	Elapsed Times Between Locations (hours)
	Nankoweap Creek near 3,600′ contour	1:30 **
	Nankoweap/Kwagunt Saddle	1:30 **
AF9	Kwagunt Creek	1:30
	Kwagunt/Malgosa Saddle	2:15
	Malgosa/Awatubi Saddle	1:45
AF9	Saddle by Awatubi Crest	1:30
	Chuar Saddle	1:00
	Carbon Butte	1:00
	Junction East and West Forks Carbon Creek	:30 (est.)
	Top of Carbon Creek narrows	1:15 (est.)
AF9	Mouth of Lava Creek	

** In the heat of mid-June 1989 these two times were 3:30 and 3:00, respectively.

ROUTE DETAILS

I return to the 1989 narrative. The up and over from Nankoweap to Kwagunt involved climbing 1,000 feet and, although it wasn't yet very hot when we started over at 11:00, I didn't allow for how much hotter it was going to get. This decision to take the harder, hotter route would affect Mattox's physical—and hence mental—condition for the rest of the trip.

Rock Art

Having tanked up with a gallon of water each, we left the Nankoweap drainage at about the 3,600-foot contour and cut across to the drainage coming north from the west side of Nankoweap Butte. Then we went up the south side of the ravine just to the south of the knoll with an elevation of 4,241 feet and found some shade beneath an overhanging cliff. Among the big blocks that had fallen, we found one that had quite a few petroglyphs on it. The worked face was almost horizontal. With magnificent shade in abundance we had lunch.

It was noticeably warmer when we again ventured onto the sunlit hillside and climbed up to the flats south of knoll 4,241. Here we had a choice. We could either lose some hard-won altitude and go southeast up a draw just north of the contour designation 4,200, which in turn is north of Nankoweap Butte, or we could continue to climb and contour around and up to the saddle between the "4810T" and "5052T" elevation points. Gary had already chosen the former when I reached the ridge and, while I was making up my mind, Kyle chose the latter. Kyle hoards his altitude like Midas did his gold and was not about to lose any even though the contouring looked

tedious. Because going up the drainage below me looked easier than contouring around into it, I chose to follow Gary, and Mattox followed me. In the end I think Kyle was right.

Nankoweap/Kwagunt Saddle
Soon after we reached the drainage, it split, and we had another choice. The left-hand branch would likely have been better, as it climbed more evenly, but since Kyle was off to our right somewhere I thought it better to take the right-hand branch. The way up to the saddle was obvious enough, but Mattox was suffering from the heat and starting to show symptoms of heat exhaustion. Gary, who was still considerably in front, looked back and saw we were moving very slowly, so he dropped his pack and came back for Don's. By the time Gary had carried Don's pack to where his own was, Kyle was coming down from the saddle and carried Don's pack up the rest of the way. Bless them both. We were all on the saddle by 2:30. But there was still the long descent to Kwagunt Creek.

Downhill through Hell
The way down is to play "follow that drainage." A few bypasses were required that were aggravating. It was the hottest part of the day, and even though we were going downhill, it was slow going with extended rests when we encountered shade. A variety of drainages merge as you near the creek and they were all in dark rock that radiated heat with a fierce intensity. Because our water was running low and because of the chance that Kwagunt Creek might be dry, I listened with eager ears for the marvelous sound of running water but heard none. The rocks were too hot to touch, and the sand I was walking on was crusted white with various salts. I remember thinking Hell might well consist of hiking like this for eternity. Gary and Kyle were ahead; Don was behind. I had waited for him a few times but then went on ahead to be sure that someone went back for his pack. And just when I thought I was home free, I came to a 50-foot pour-off.

Encounter with an Unexpected Cliff
I have written about the psychological importance of expectations, and this encounter with an unexpected obstacle, when I was very tired and hammered down by the heat, was demoralizing. I sat down in the partial shade of my pack and sipped some water. During this rest I collected my wits enough to notice a small duck and a faint scuffed trail leading up the right-hand slope at the edge of the pour-off. It was probably only 10 feet but going up it was like the final assault on a fiery Everest.

From the top I could hear the welcome gurgle of water, and it was a walk-off down to the creek. Gary was there, already preparing to go after Don's pack, but there was no sign of Kyle. I figured he had hit the creek in a different spot and was already submerged.

After I rested a bit and saw Gary off on his errand of mercy, I went down to the creek to submerge myself. That was easier said than done; I had to do some Corps of Engineers–type streambed modification to be able to submerge even half of me. The water was warm, but it was cooler than the air and certainly felt good.

Heat Banishes Judgment
Kyle came by while I was thus submerged, and I loaned him my spot. I asked him where he had been; he explained that when he came to the final pour-off he had been even more wasted than I and was similarly shaken by the unexpected obstacle. He, unfortunately, had not seen the duck that would have guided him to the right, but instead went left to a crack at the edge of the pour-off and threw down his walking stick and dark glasses. Throwing down your walking stick before descending a cliff is natural, but throwing down your dark glasses is not. That simple act shows he was not totally rational—the heat had affected his judgment.

He climbed down the crack to about 10 feet from the bottom where he got stuck. Then he fell/jumped the rest of the way. Fortunately he landed on steep sandy talus. He retrieved his walking stick and dark glasses and continued down the drainage. He followed it to the creek and found a small spring in the process.

Too Many Salt Tablets
Don's experience was different. He had taken too many salt tablets and did not have enough water. His tortured stomach went into writhing spasms, which incapacitated him for a short while. He was ambulatory by the time Gary caught up to him.

Ants but No Mice
After Don arrived and had a chance to recuperate somewhat, we moved camp down to a sandy bench near Kyle's spring. The bench was hard and cracked. I was standing over one of these cracks while I set up the kitchen and soon had hundreds of tiny ants crawling over my legs—they were swarming out of one of the cracks. Fortunately, all the cracks weren't so occupied. From long habit we hung our food to keep it from the mice. The scraps we left out as decoys were untouched the next morning. Gary remarked, "Kwagunt is so poor it can't even afford a mouse."

Don Became Sensitized to Heat
I'm sure Don had been in the first stages of heat exhaustion that second afternoon—very tired and often faint and dizzy. But frequent, and sometimes extended, rests in the shade and having his pack carried partway for him got him to the creek. Although he had recovered to a degree by the next morning, his weakness would return whenever he became overheated. He later thought he had become sensitized to heat that second day by my error in taking us on that very taxing up and over.

Kwagunt Narrows
We were late the next morning and didn't leave camp until 6:00. The trip through the Kwagunt narrows was uneventful. I expected some obstacles but found none and we were on the Kwagunt delta by 7:30. Gary and Kyle went down to the River to get some water as preparation for our hike along the River to Malgosa. This I have already described.

Horsethief Trail

The only time I have followed the Horsethief Trail—along the Butte Fault—from Nankoweap Creek to Lava Creek was in 1977 and the following notes date from that time. We were on our way from Lees Ferry to Lava Falls, a journey that would take us forty-two days. Besides Don Mattox, who joined us at Nankoweap Creek, there were niece Sara, nephew Lee, sons Mike and Stan, young friends, Greg Edgeington and Dale Finn and myself. When I need to refer to the younger members of the group collectively in what follows, they will be called simply, "the kids."

Because of my bias in favor of camping by water, our plan was to camp at Kwagunt Creek if it were flowing. But the weather was overcast and we were there by 11:00 which is time for an early lunch but not for an early camp. We had left Lees Ferry thirteen days before and were travel hardened and, after a rest day, champing at the bit. Besides, Don Mattox had paid more attention to the map than I had and suggested continuing on after lunch toward tomorrow's goal—Lava Creek—so that, as he put it, "tomorrow will be not only easier but possible."

So we continued on after lunch, and all we had to do was go up and down. Up and down to Malgosa Creek. Up and down to Awatubi Creek. And finally up to the saddle alongside Awatubi Crest that we called the South Col. During the afternoon the sky cleared but the air was muggy and at one rest stop where I arrived late and found the last shade taken up by Lee's pack, I lost my temper. I don't remember what I actually said, but what I intended to convey was that as a general principle packs don't need shade, people do. What I said made Lee angry, but he moved his pack anyway and Stan suggested I take a salt tablet. I did and began to feel better. That incident took place almost fifteen years ago, but Mattox still reminds me of it whenever I put my pack in the shade.

As we came down into the Malgosa drainage from the Kwagunt/Malgosa Saddle, I stumbled upon a horseshoe and a large collection of rusty tin cans by what must have been an old cowboy (horse thief) camp. In a similar position on the next saddle, I found an old coffeepot. I believe the existence of these items supports the view that horse thieves used this part of the fault.

Our camp on the South Col was a beautiful place. The world fell away on two sides to create a splendid isolation. The wild geology of Awatubi Crest added spectacle, and when the moon came up, close to full, its soft light suffused all this with an otherworldly quality. Unfortunately a cold wind came up that would last all night. It coated everything with noise and misery.

This was the night of September 28, and we were still using our summer gear. Luckily for me, Greg loaned me his windbreaker. It was still cold the next morning, and our routing was now the opposite of what it had been the day before—it was now down and up. Down and up to the saddle west of Chuar Butte. Down and up to the ridge overlooking the greenery of Lava Creek. Since we were taking the High Road to Unkar Creek, we went southwest from the nearby junction of the East and West Forks of Carbon Creek and dropped into Lava Creek near the 3,360-foot contour.

If you are following the Horsethief Trail to the mouth of Lava Creek, you

will want to continue down Carbon Creek from the East Fork/West Fork junction to the beginning of the Carbon Creek narrows. Here you will find the boater trail going over to Lava and then down Lava Creek to the River.

High Road Variant: Lava Creek to Vishnu Creek

Length
2 days.

Water
Water is available at the camping spot near the C in LAVA CREEK. Next water is at the tangle of tributaries shown as a smudge of green about 0.5 mile north of the U in UNKAR on the Cape Royal map. First water in Vishnu is at the top of the quartzite.

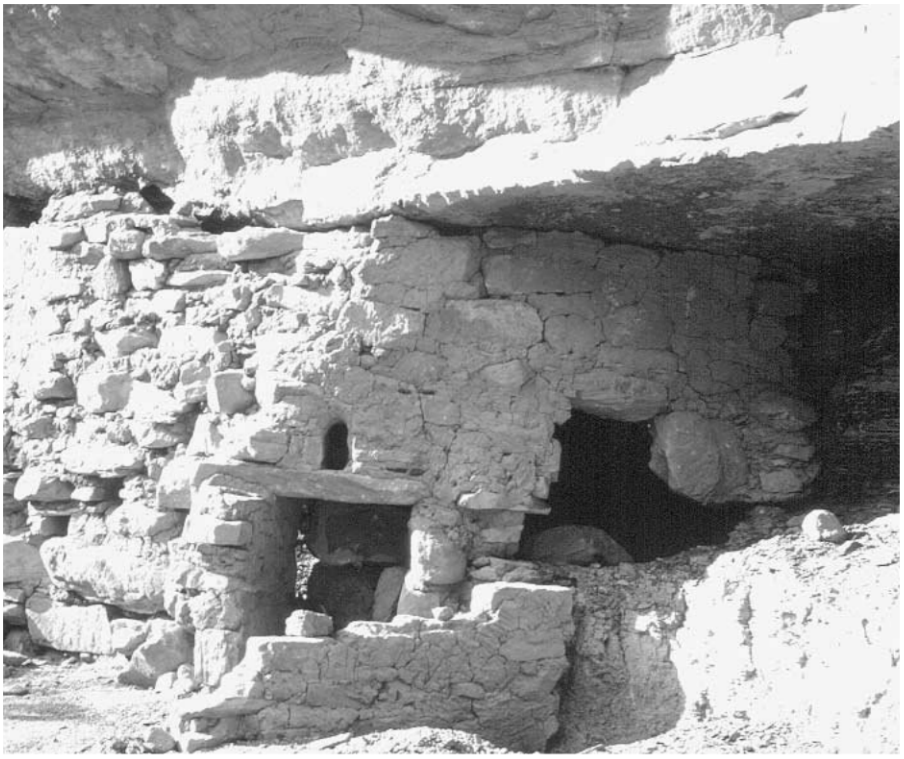
HIKING TIMES (1977)

Use Area	Location	Elapsed Times Between Locations (hours)
	Junction East and West Forks Carbon Creek	4:30
AF9	Camp by the 4,200-foot contour in Lava Creek	2:15
	Saddle west of Juno Temple	2:30
AG9	Unkar Creek at 4,000 feet elevation	2:30
	Saddle between Vishnu Temple and Freya Castle	2:00
AH9	Top of Tapeats in Vishnu Creek	

ROUTE DETAILS

There is a low ridge between the Carbon and Lava drainages, and route finding is not a problem. It took only ninety minutes across there and we had a long rest/lunch by the pleasantly gurgling water of Lava Creek. The trip up the drainage to the small waterfall at the spring and the Indian ruin beyond it was not so pleasant. It must have rained hard recently because we had a great deal of mud to contend with, and travel up the creek was quite slow. We made camp by the spring—near the 4,200-foot contour south of Chiavria Point. The next day we climbed through the Tapeats opposite the ruin and headed south up the drainage toward the saddle between Juno Temple and Cape Final. It was a long brushy climb to the saddle.

Unkar Creek
It was an easy drop into the Unkar drainage. Although we looked for water we could not find any. Eventually we sent the kids down to the River for water—possibly a 10-mile roundtrip—expecting them back the next morning. In fact, however, they found lots of water in the tangle of tributary canyons at about the 3,320-foot contour. They goofed off for a while and were back just after dark. We camped close to the place where two branches of the creek are close together for almost 0.5 mile. The springs are about 1.4 miles



An Indian ruin in upper Lava Creek near the place where one goes up and over to Unkar Creek on the high road to Vishnu Creek.

downstream of this junction. The next morning we headed north up our bit of Unkar and then turned abruptly to the southwest just north of the 4,400-foot contour designation toward the saddle between Vishnu Temple and Freya Castle. The route up was easier than the one to the Lava/Unkar Saddle. We had a beautiful view of the South Rim from the saddle, and I took a lot of pictures. Unfortunately, when I changed film I left the old roll on a rock.

The route into the Vishnu drainage is directly down the fault line through big Supai boulders and then limestone ones. Finally we reached a slot canyon and elected to contour around to the north on a bench to a talus slope that took us the rest of the way down. (See *Grand Canyon Treks,* page 58.)

When my brother and I went back a few years later looking for the lost film canister, I couldn't find it. What Al did do on that trip, however, was climb the Redwall slot just below the saddle on the Vishnu side. I again took the talus.

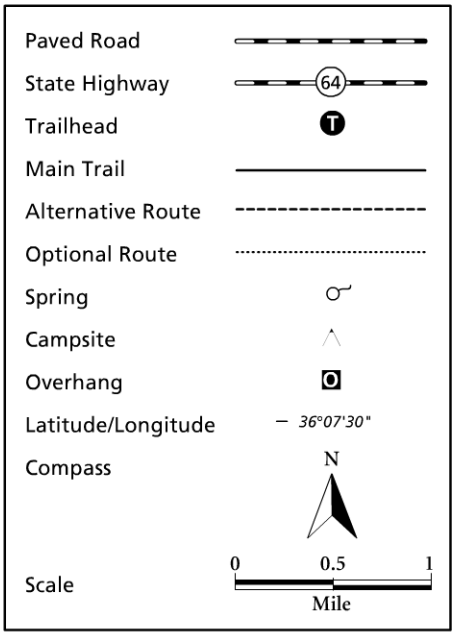
Vishnu Creek

Below the talus Vishnu opens wide, and we went down to the Shinumo Quartzite by a spring and took a siesta. The plan was to have an early dinner and then go out on the Tonto and camp somewhere on the point below Hall Butte.

A Way to Moderate Conflict

The High Road from Lava to Vishnu has now been sketched out and I consider this chapter officially closed. But before it is de facto closed, I want to elaborate a bit on how to increase the chances of success of a long trip. Books abound on how expeditions have been blown apart by internal conflict. I have been on two long trips now—one of forty-two days and one of eighty days—and although conflicts arose, they never got out of hand because of the moderating influence of an "outsider." On the eighty-day trip Al, Robert, and I had company on almost every segment of the trip. This meant new jokes, new foibles, new interactions. All these new people helped keep us on an even keel. On the forty-two day trip in 1977, Don Mattox and Mike were the outsiders. They joined us at Nankoweap on day thirteen and left us at Phantom on day twenty. Don was the "good cop" to my "bad cop" and could have fun with the kids.

Legend


Paved Road
State Highway
64
Trailhead
T
Main Trail
Alternative Route
Optional Route
Spring
Campsite
Overhang
Latitude/Longitude
36°07'30"
Compass
N
Scale
0
0.5
1
Mile

How to Use This Guide

PERMITS

A permit is required for all overnight use below the rim in Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP). You obtain one by either: (1) going to a Backcountry Information Center on either the North or South Rims, (2) sending a permit request to the Backcountry Information Center, P.O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023. Call (928) 638–7875 weekdays 1:00 to 5:00 P.M. (Mountain Standard Time) for information or for the Trip Planning Packet, or (3) faxing a permit request to (928) 638–2125. Permits cannot be obtained over the phone. There is a non-refundable fee of $10.00 per permit plus $5.00 per person per night camped below the rim and $5.00 per group per night camped above the rim. There is a one-year frequent hiker permit that costs $25 and waives the $10 per permit fee. Permits for exploring caves are also required.

Hikers on the east side of the River in Marble Canyon need two permits from the Navajo Parks and Recreation Department in addition to the one required by the park service. There are fees for these Navajo permits. A handout titled *Navajo Parks and Recreation Department 2001 Backcountry Use Information* lists them as:

Backcountry Use Fee —$5.00 per person
Camping Fee—$5.00 per person per night

The handout goes on to describe how to obtain backcountry use and camping permits:

You may wish to write or visit the following locations for obtaining Backcountry Use and Camping permits. The permits can be obtained throughout the year during office hours at three locations.

Cameron Visitor Center, P.O. Box 549, Cameron, AZ 86020. The visitor center is located at the junction of Highway 89 and Highway 64 in Cameron, AZ.

Tuba City Community Center, P.O. Box 216, Tuba City, AZ 86045.

Parks and Recreation Department, P.O. Box 308, Window Rock, AZ 86515.

The office hours at these three locations are from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Monday through Friday. The handout also includes the following paragraph:

Requests by mail/telephone: Upon receiving the Backcountry Use and Camping Permits, complete both permits and return all copies by mail with payment. The Department will process permits and return top copies of each permit. Mailout permits require three weeks to process so advance planning of your hiking trip is suggested.

Another quote from the handout is appropriate:

Consumption/possession of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs prohibited.

The Navajo regulations differ from the national park ones in that important respect. For more information about hiking here, visit www.navajo nationparks.org.

USE AREAS

Trails Illustrated Grand Canyon National Park Map is useful for preparing your request for a reservation. The backcountry is divided into eighty-seven use areas, and each use area is allowed only so many parties (one to six people) and/or groups (seven to eleven people) per night. On any day of any month, reservations can be made for the remainder of that month and for all of the next four months. A request for a reservation should give the number of people and list the designator of the use areas in which you wish to camp each night. Don't forget to request a reservation for nights spent at the roadhead at the beginning or end of a hike.

BACKPACKING RULES

Besides the rules you might expect, here are two you might not: (1) no cooking fires and no campfires; in other words, no fires, period; and (2) carry out your used toilet paper—it helps to have a plastic bag reserved for this purpose. The second rule prevents the visual pollution of partially buried toilet paper, and the two together should prevent a toilet paper fire like one at Deer Creek that burned several acres and destroyed several big cottonwoods.

MAPS

Everyone who comes to the Grand Canyon to hike should have the appropriate U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangle maps, or at least its older cousin, the GCNP map. It should be noted, however, that this large map, despite its seemingly all-encompassing title, includes only a little more than half the park. It should also be noted that this map is no longer printed.

USGS Maps

The USGS has either mapped, or is mapping, parts of the Grand Canyon to five different scales. These five scales are: The old 1:62500 maps, which are now out of print. 2) The 1:24000 maps. The entire Grand Canyon National Park is now mapped to a scale of 1:24000. These are the now familiar 7.5-minute maps; the USGS calls these maps its Primary Map Series.

In addition, the United States has been partially mapped to a scale of 1:50000. These maps cover the same area as the 15-minute maps and are in the same messy folded format as the 1:10000 maps. If the Grand Canyon were ever mapped to this scale, it would become the map of choice, having, as it does, a scale between those of the 7.5-minute and 15-minute maps. I generally preferred the 15-minute map over the 7.5-minute—it is smaller and you do not need as many. In my opinion, the fifteen-minute map rarely gives too little information, and the 7.5-minute map almost always gives too much. A set of 1:50000 Grand Canyon maps would perhaps overcome the deficiencies of both. The ones I have seen still have 80-foot contours, which is too bad—50-foot contours would be nice.

3) The 1:100000 maps. These are called the 100K maps or metric maps. They have a contour interval of 50 meters.

4) The 1:2500000 maps. Four of these maps will cover all of the Grand Canyon. A raised relief form of these maps is produced and sold by Hubbard Scientific, P.O. Box 2121, Fort Collins, CO 80522; (800) 446–8767, www.shnta.com.

5) The 1:48000 maps. Though these three maps contain information not on later ones, they are mainly of historical interest. Two are the famous East Half and West Half maps of GCNP prepared from surveys done in 1902 and 1923. The latest edition is that of 1927, though it was reprinted as late as 1961. The third map is the Grand Canyon National Monument map. All have a contour interval of 50 feet. All three maps are out of print. USGS maps are available from local outdoor shops, the Grand Canyon Association (see below), and directly from USGS Information Services, Box 25286, Denver, CO 80225; (800) 275–8747; www.mapping.usgs.gov.

Fault Map

Another useful map is The Geological Map of the Grand Canyon, also affectionately known as the "Fault Map." It is published by the Grand Canyon Association (P.O. Box 399, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023; 928–638–2841; www.grandcanyon.org) and shows what strata can be seen and where the faults are. Faults often provide hiking and/or climbing routes through cliff systems that would otherwise be impassable. Be careful using this map however. A handful of faults are in error, especially in the eastern canyon. Besides its notable virtues, the map is exquisitely beautiful.

Plastic Park Map

Also helpful is a map first sold in 1987 that is a modification of the big GCNP map. In effect, the park map has been cut in half and reduced in size slightly (the new scale is approximately 1:73530, but the contour interval remains 80 feet); each half is printed on opposite sides of a sheet of waterproof, tearproof plastic roughly 2 by 3 feet in size. Its title is Grand Canyon National Park. It is copyrighted by Trails Illustrated and published by National Geographic Maps (www.maps/nationalgeographic.com/trails; 800–962–1643). Besides being almost indestructible, it has the very useful feature of having the use areas outlined in gray. This is a better map for trip planning than the one that comes in the Trip Planning Packet.

Forest Map

I must mention one final map. This is the Kaibab National Forest map (North Kaibab Ranger District), which shows all the forest roads and their designations. It is a great help in getting to remote roadheads and is available at the Jacob Lake Store (ask the cashier), at the nearby Kaibab Visitor Center, and at the forest service ranger station in Fredonia, Arizona, and from USDA Forest Service, Visitor Information Center, 333 Broadway SE, Albuquerque, NM 87102, (505) 842–3292.

ROUTE DETAILS

Each route description in this book has an accompanying map that shows the route with a solid line, alternate routings with dashed lines, and optional

day hikes with dotted lines. Possible campsites are shown with small teepees; useful springs and sheltering overhangs are shown with an "S" and "O," respectively.

Why Have Maps?
I have received several complaints about the maps included in previous editions of this book. This leads me to consider the question: "why have maps at all?"

I think it is a good idea to have a map showing an entire hike. In the case of the ones I describe, it accentuates their loop nature, and if you can infer geology from contours, you can appreciate how the route handles the different formations. But these maps are only an adjunct to the words—a summary. It is not my intention for them to stand alone; basically, the role of a map is to get you close enough to where you are supposed to be that the route becomes obvious. If a conflict arises between what you see and what I write, then you must believe what you see. If a conflict arises between what I write and what the map shows, then you probably should believe what I write. In either case I would appreciate knowing you had a problem. You should always carry the USGS 7.5-minute quads for your hike, since these maps show far more detail than can be reproduced in a book. You will need this detail to find the routes described here.

LOOP DIFFICULTY

I have decided not to give an index of loop difficulty because all the loops are difficult in one way or another. Moreover, difficulties are sometimes in the eyes of the beholder and can depend on variables like weather or river flow. Besides, a hike is often easier the second time you take it than it was the first. I intend, though, to mention objective difficulties, such as long days away from water, when the occasion arises.

Expectations
Psychological difficulties attending Grand Canyon hiking are at least as important as physical ones. Here is one reason why this can be so. Have you ever said or heard said: "This hike was much harder than I expected," or, perhaps, "This hike was much hotter than I expected."

Your enjoyment of a hike can be strongly influenced by what you expect it to be. If reality roughly conforms to your expectations, you are a happy camper. If not, you're not. If the weather is very hot and you expected it to be very hot, you are better off psychologically than if the heat came as a complete surprise. The same reasoning applies to many adjectives.

If we agree that having a happy hike requires a match between expectation and reality, then it is reasonable to ask a guidebook to provide appropriate expectations for the hikes it describes. This is not easy to do. For example, if I say a particular hike is "hard," or even "very hard," I am not being very helpful because the expectation created is tied to your experience, not mine. Once I had occasion to ask some fourth-graders what they thought mathematicians did all day. One small voice piped up with, "Long division?" The

boy knew mathematicians did difficult things, and long division was the most difficult thing he could imagine. The same problem faces the reader of a guidebook. It is hard to imagine a hike substantially harder than the hardest one you have experienced.

HIKING TIMES

A table of hiking times between segments of a loop is given for each loop. I have chosen to give these times (which include rest stops but not lunch, and which are rounded to the nearest fifteen minutes) rather than distances because I consider them more informative. I feel it is more important to know how far away water is in time than how far away it is in miles. If I need them, I can estimate distances from a map. Another reason times are more important than distances is that there are some places in the Canyon where it may take me two and a half hours to go a mile, and there are others where I can zip along a burro trail and complete a mile in twenty minutes.

I was in my late fifties before I began collecting routes and hiking times and thought of writing a book such as this, and although I have slowed down in recent years, I still think the times I give are average for an experienced off-trail Grand Canyon hiker in good condition. Some can certainly go a good deal faster and some will want to go slower, but remember that a group travels only as fast as its slowest member. To calibrate yourself, I suggest a preliminary comparison of your times to mine and adjusting mine accordingly.

Allow Time for Route Finding

I have received a variety of comments about the hiking times given in previous editions of this book. About a third of the people said their times were usually within five to ten minutes of those given. The rest said their times were somewhat longer—sometimes considerably longer than mine. The discrepancy was usually the result of my having ignored the time required for route finding—or their having ignored the effect of a slow companion.

When I began noting hiking times, it was usually on routes I had traveled before, so I knew where I was going. As a result, I did not have to spend time trying to figure out which way to go. Such times have not been tallied and I am sorry for difficulties caused by the omission. But I see no way to correct it—and am not doing so in this edition—except to suggest that sometimes it may be appropriate to add 10 or 15 percent to the given hiking times to allow for route finding.

CAMPSITES

Some of the locations in the hiking times tables are good campsites. They are designated by the "teepee" symbol, ⛺.

Listing some campsites is not to disparage others. Most outback camping is "at large"—you may camp where you choose as long as you are more than 100 feet from water sources. If you find a good place, use it.

AFALCONGUIDE®

Portions of this book were published in *Grand Canyon Loop Hikes I* and *Grand Canyon Loop Hikes II*, both published by Chockstone Press in 1989 and 1993.

Cover photo: Bruce Grubbs
Maps: Tony Moore
All photos are by the author.
Special thanks to Bruce Grubbs for editorial assistance on this book.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Steck, George.
Hiking Grand Canyon loops / George Steck.— 1st ed.
p. cm. — (A FalconGuide)
ISBN 0-7627-1208-2
1. Hiking—Arizona—Grand Canyon—Guidebooks. 2. Grand Canyon (Ariz.)—Guidebooks. I. Title. II. Falcon guide.

GV199.42.A72 G7386 2002
917.91'320454—dc21 2001053198

Text pages printed on recycled paper
Manufactured in the United States of America
First Edition/First Printing