

LAKE POWELL HOUSEBOAT TRIP

OCTOBER 12 - 16, 2009

By Sue Hughes

Dreaming about a trip to Lake Powell started in late spring, and over the next months leader Dan Bell worked for hours to research possibilities, recruit participants, communicate decisions and help finalize The Plan: we would leave from Bullfrog Marina in Utah, rent a houseboat for water storage, ease of cooking, and indoor plumbing, and go the second week of

October when rates were lower. Dan's planning was wonderful and his emails were a joy to receive: each a careful summary of the decisions and details, leavened with his wry humor.

Our group (Dan Bell, Frank Bering, Gary Cage, Anne Fiore, Gary Greeno, Brian Hunter, Sue Hughes, Jud Hurd, Lou Ann and Dave Hustvedt, Annette Mascia, and Anna Troth) started the morning in snow but everyone's drive was uneventful. Many of us car-pooled or caravanned, a companionable way to make the long trip to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area south of Hanksville, Utah.



Snow on Anne and Gary in Lyons...



...and snow on many others at the Morrison exit where they met

In the morning we got our boats inspected for mussels and stowed them on the top deck, gear was thrown in everywhere and off we motored to our first camp in Moki Canyon. Captain Dave Hustvedt made piloting the boat seem lots easier than deciphering the directions at the entrance kiosk.

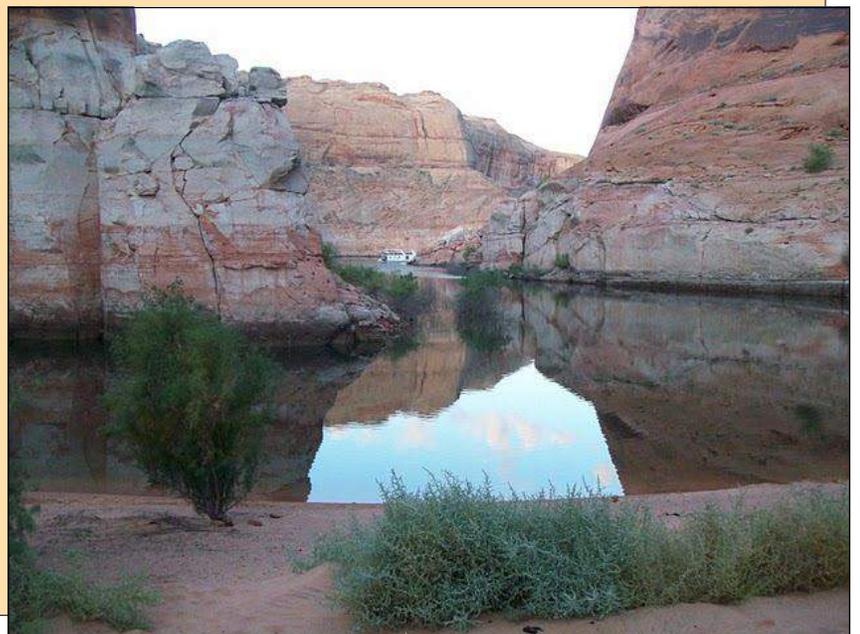
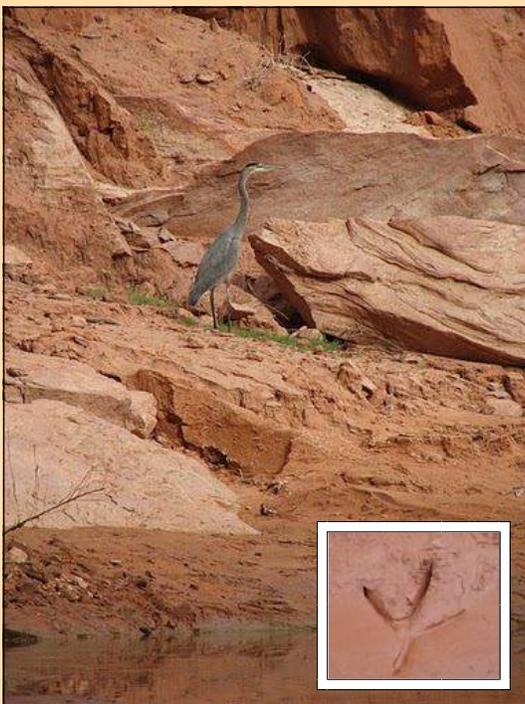


How does this machine work? How much are kayakers supposed to pay?

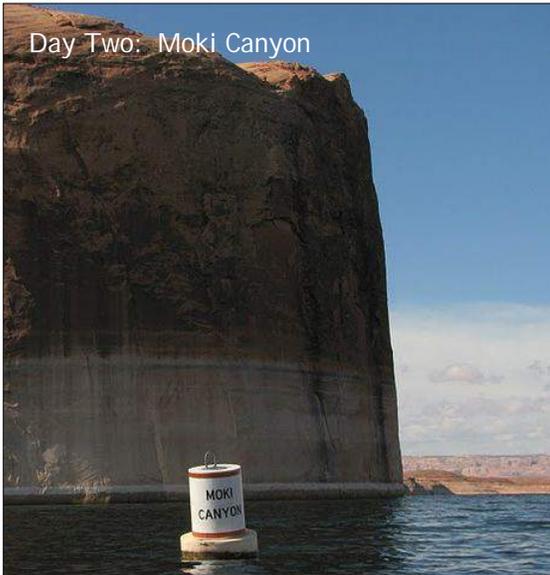




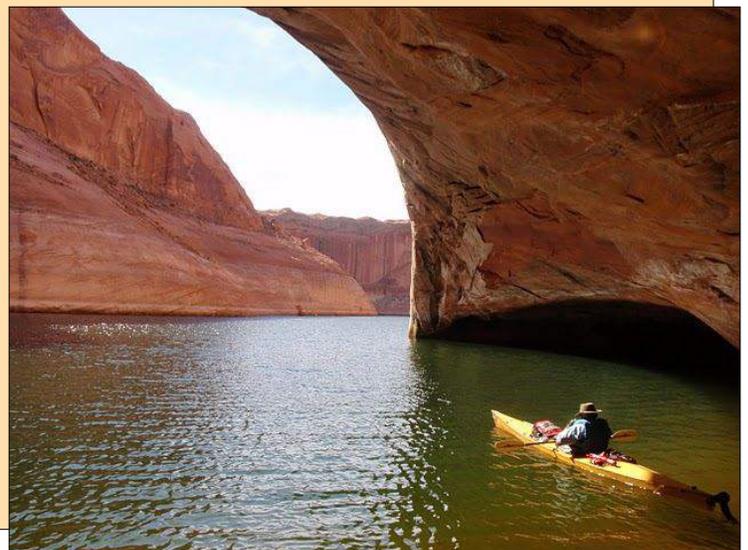
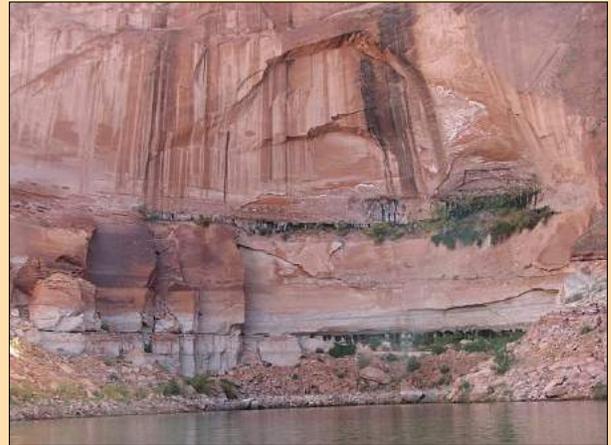
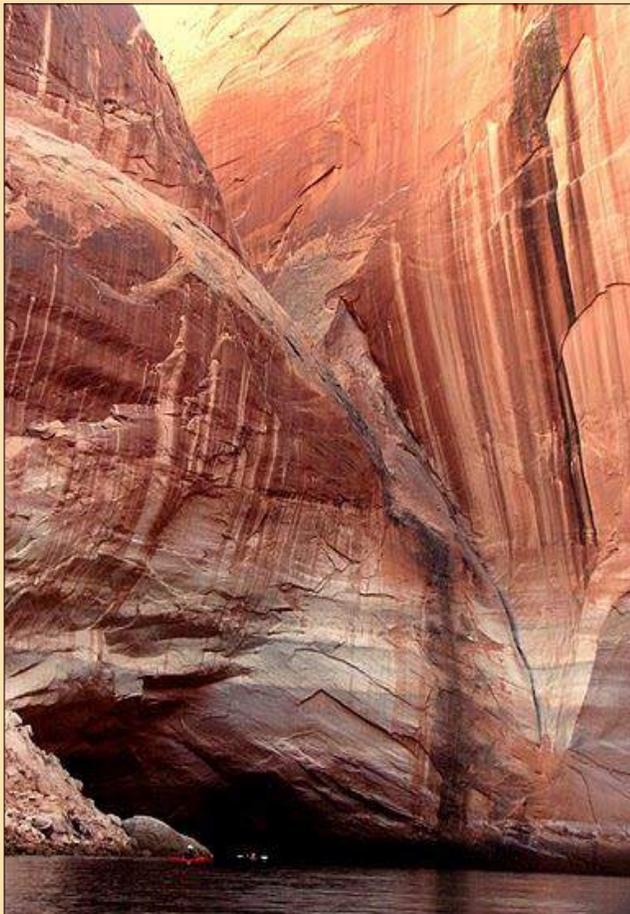
We unloaded the kayaks and people set up their tents, some on shore and others on the top deck. Then small groups paddled off to explore the end of this arm of the canyon. It didn't go far, but being on the water was a nice teaser for the next day when we had time to explore Moki all the way to the entrance.



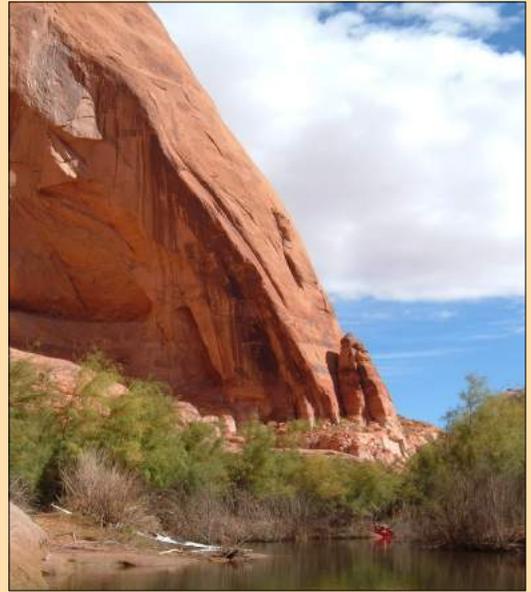
Day Two: Moki Canyon



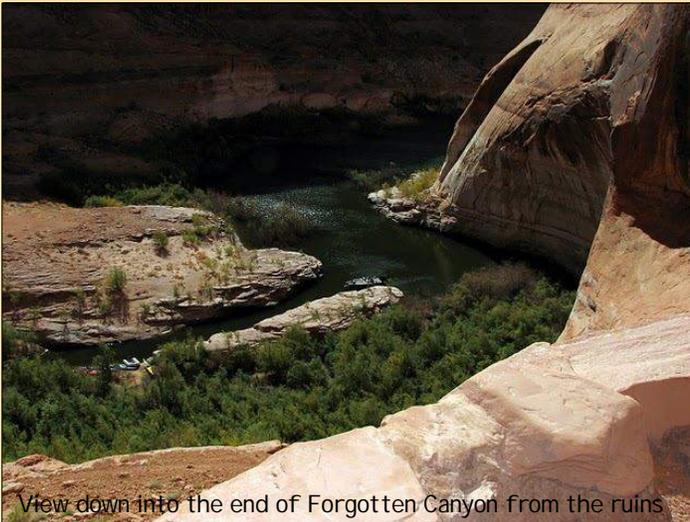
All of us loved paddling for miles and looking at the rocks. You'd think you would get sick of red rocks but each canyon and side canyon seemed different. Sometimes the walls came straight down hundreds of feet into the water, other places there were hanging gardens of plants growing in cracks fed by seepage from above, or even a sloping shoreline with sandy beaches. Some cliffs were weathered, others cracked off like sharp pieces of peanut brittle; some were solid colored but many had a white ring indicating higher water levels or stripes of "desert varnish," dark stains from minerals on the surface.



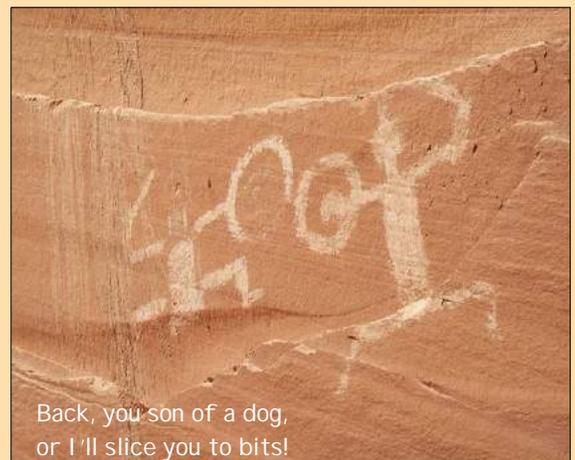
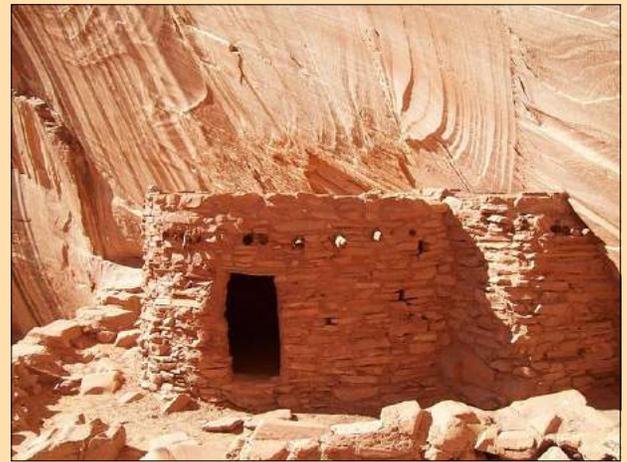
Day Three: Forgotten Canyon



After two nights in Moki Canyon we moved a couple hours farther up-lake to Forgotten Canyon, arriving in time to paddle back to the trail to Defiance House, an ancient Ancestral Puebloan ruin. Was it a dwelling for a small group or an outpost for protection? The impressive rock-art warriors on the wall beside it would make any attackers think twice.

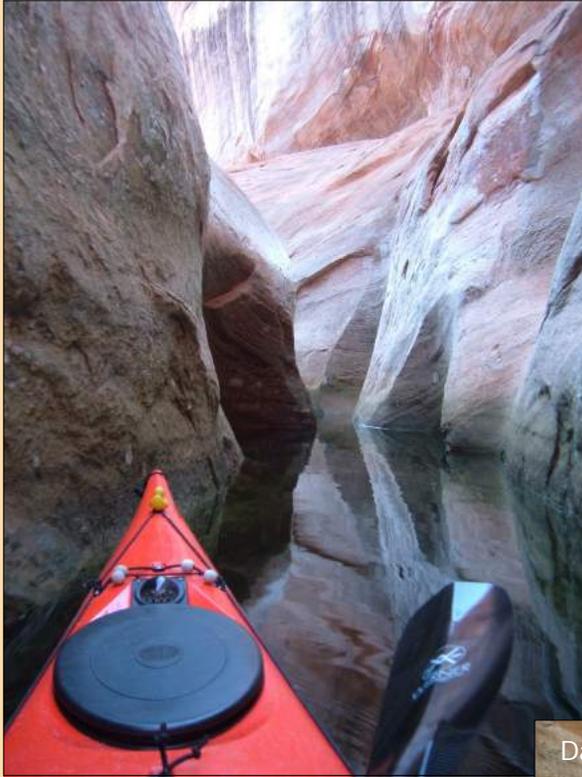


View down into the end of Forgotten Canyon from the ruins



Back, you son of a dog,
or I'll slice you to bits!

After visiting the ruins some people went out toward the main lake; they found an arm that turned into a long slot canyon only wide enough for a single boat.



Annette remembers, "Paddling silently through magnificent eons-old canyons, weaving past massive rock formations, and exploring every slot, nook, cranny and cave I came upon made for a truly surreal experience. As I rounded each turn with anticipation, my eyes were treated to one extraordinary view after another; I felt dwarfed and insignificant by the splendor surrounding me and was in a constant state of awe. This must be where 'awesome' began!"

Anne Fiore wrote, "Every day was great but the most memorable was the last day. First, we paddled across the lake and up the Smith Fork Canyon. The water was like glass! It really was quite a paddle up to the end where our part of the group had lunch. There was an actual stream flowing into the lake at that point, a nice surprise. After lunch, some of us hiked upstream and were rewarded with a very cool grotto."

Day Four: Smith Fork Canyon and Knowles Canyon



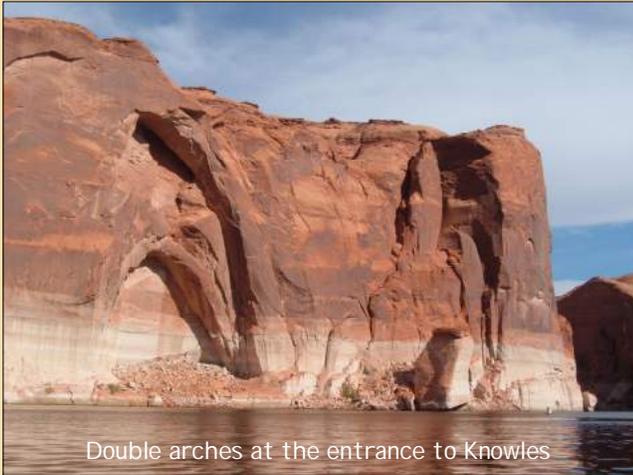
Smith Fork Canyon

On their return, these paddlers checked out the slot canyon that people found the day before.

Annette, Brian, Frank and I had wanted to explore Knowles Canyon so we left the others in Smith Fork before they got to their lunch stop and paddled back across and a bit farther up-lake.

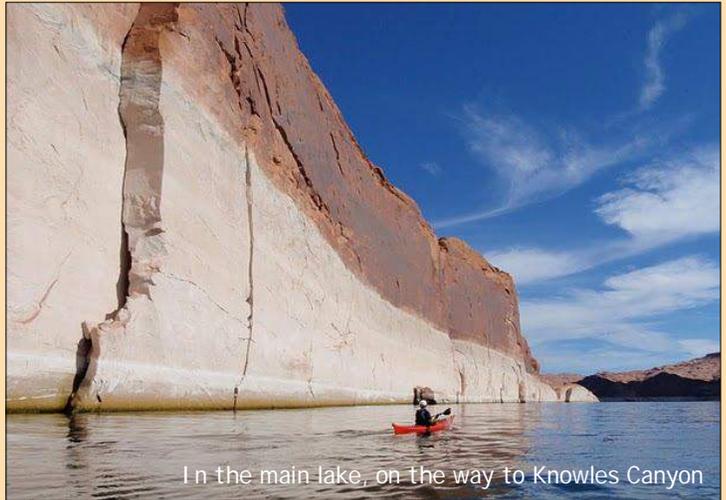


Knowles was wonderful and we were sure we'd found the canyon with the most diversity, that *ours* was the jewel of the trip, until we listened to their descriptions that night at dinner. The final verdict? We'll all just have to come back to make sure we really saw the best there was.

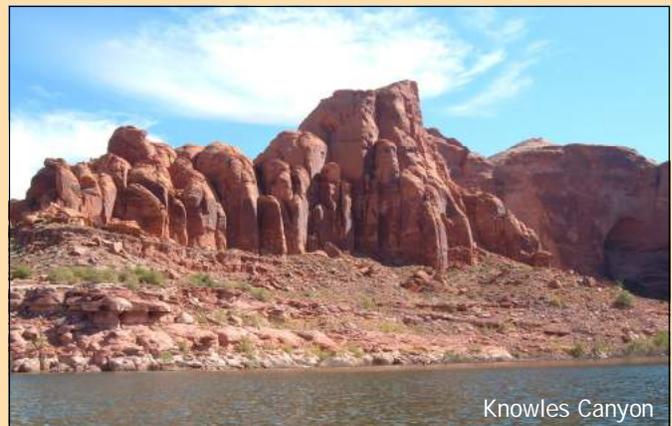


Double arches at the entrance to Knowles

The next morning we were up at dawn to load and head home. The earliest risers were thrilled to see one of the most lovely sights of the whole trip; Gary Greeno took this photo:



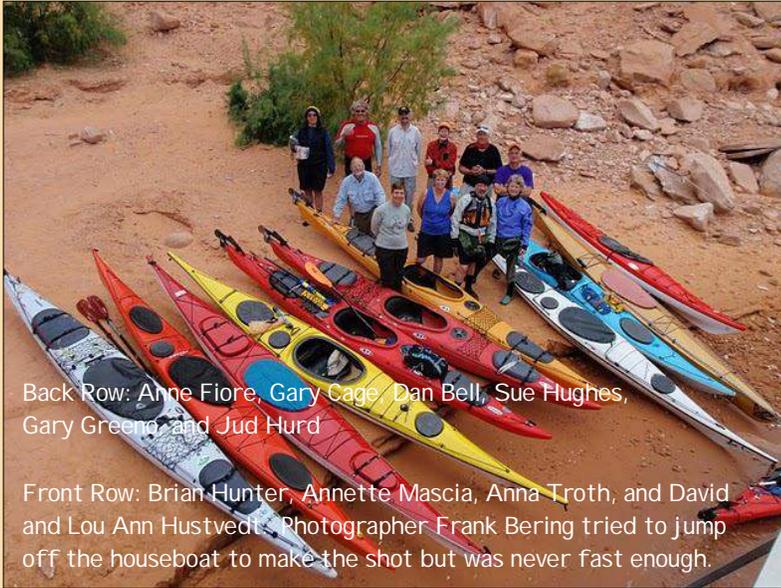
In the main lake, on the way to Knowles Canyon



Knowles Canyon



Photos supplied by: Dan Bell,
Frank Bering, Gary Greeno,
Jud Hurd, Brian Hunter,
Annette Mascia and Anna Troth



Back Row: Anne Fiore, Gary Cage, Dan Bell, Sue Hughes, Gary Greeno, and Jud Hurd

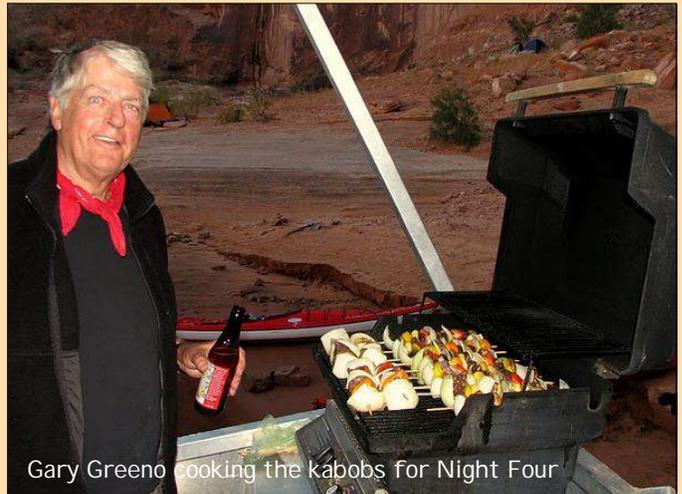
Front Row: Brian Hunter, Annette Mascia, Anna Troth, and David and Lou Ann Hustvedt. Photographer Frank Bering tried to jump off the houseboat to make the shot but was never fast enough.

Frank Bering: "Our group was the best. Dan's leadership had just the right balance of safety vs. freedom, and Captain Dave was amazingly skilled at seamanship and engineering. I loved our trip."

Brian Hunter: "People looked after each other when paddling; Annette stayed with me to show me the really narrow slot canyon while the others went back to camp. Everyone helped do dishes. Gary Greeno scouted ahead for camp sites in his rubber power boat."

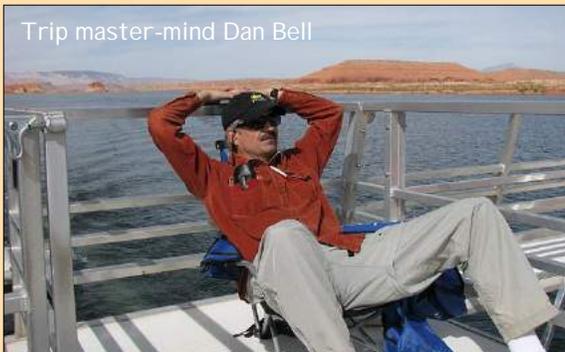
Jud Hurd: "The food was great. As a matter of fact it was a little too great. I was expecting to maybe drop a couple of pounds which usually happens on multi-day trips. However, given the cooking accommodations on the boat and all the delicious food people brought, I actually gained a couple of pounds. Those are the main memories I take away from this trip. I encourage everybody to make this trip. You won't regret it."

Gary Greeno: "What great impressions at Lake Powell: Venus chasing the moon before morning. A woman who built her two-story house all by herself and lived without water and electricity while doing it. A man who offered to help weld my trailer, kind and finely equipped for kayaking, sending our whereabouts every night to loved ones back home. An artist who played the Indian flute flinging haunting melodies that pulled the echoes of ancient spirits from the red cliffs. A quiet man and a quiet woman with the souls of an explorers and adventurers. A teacher with a quick wit and a drive for excellence and a taste for good wine. A warm Christian man with a heart of a servant. Our captain, a picture of calm. The visitor from Woodland Park who strapped a solar panel on the back of his kayak so he could power his CPAP machine at night to maintain his health and his relationship with his wife.

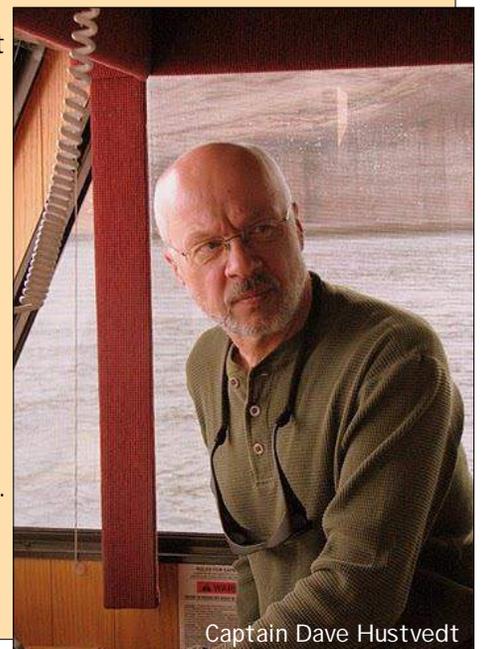


Gary Greeno cooking the kabobs for Night Four

A man who started as a ski bum and ended up owning three restaurants. Everyone willing to help and share. Chicken Gumbo and exotic dessert, kabobs on the barbie. Competency abounded. What fun!"



Trip master-mind Dan Bell



Captain Dave Hustvedt

AUTHOR'S NOTE: When Dan Bell first talked to us about Lake Powell he said it was strange that every time he'd ever gone he was terribly disappointed with his pictures when he got home, but when he looked at them later they seemed to have improved and it was obvious why he would want to go again.

I had the same experience with the hundreds of photos people sent me for this article. When I first saw them I thought they didn't do the area justice at all, but now they bring it back clearly and I'm planning my return trip just like Dan.



Does he snore or did we?

I intended to have a list of specific credits for these pictures but I don't. I am so sorry; the only consolation is that they are all wonderful. Thanks, photographers!

Our instructors remind us that there are lots of skills that can be learned and practiced in an indoor pool, so don't wait until summer to get your boat in the water.

Here is a "Newcomer to Pool Practice" article we ran last year if you're wondering about the basics.

OPEN POOL PRACTICE IS A BLAST; HERE'S WHAT ELSE I LEARNED:

- Yes, the doors and hall-ways are wide enough to get a 16' boat into the building without any trouble.
- Both the pool room and the water were warm, but I was glad to have on my farmer jane because it protected my legs when I was practicing re-entries.
- I also wore the long-sleeved poly-pro shirt that I usually wear kayaking and that worked very well. Everyone had paddle clothes on, not just swimming suits. People wore their PFDs, too.
- I had to learn how to get into my boat from the side of the pool. I did it a lot of times, from both sides, and feel more confident now about entering and exiting from a dock.
- Since last fall I seemed to have slipped a bit on boat handling. It even took a minute or two to re-think how to get it on and off the car. I tried a couple brace turns that I whiffed so badly that I fell in. How embarrassing, but how nice I didn't do it in cold water on an outing.
- Whoops, I stowed my paddle in the fore-most bungee...and the end near me pivoted out away from the boat so far I couldn't reach it. It had never happened before and that's another lesson I'm glad I learned in warm water with people who could paddle over and hand it back to me.
- Good Hint: I should have brought a big plastic bag for my wet-suit, PFD and spray skirt; when I rinsed the chlorinated water off of them they got lots wetter than they usually do and they made a mess in the car.
- Hope to see you there! If you have questions email: suehughes@yahoo.com