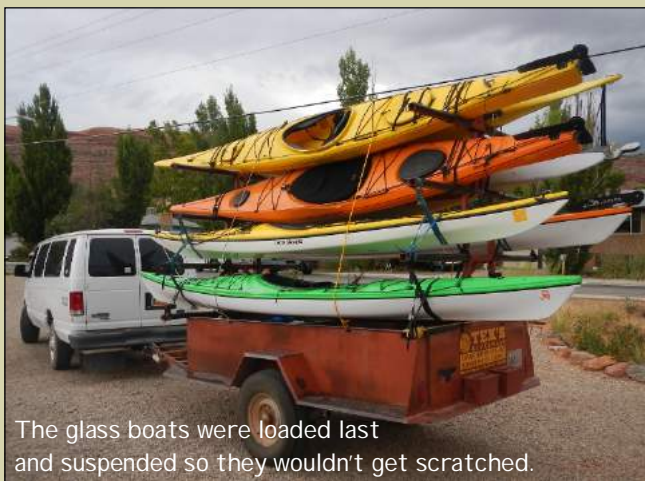




PADDLING THE GREEN RIVER, MINERAL BOTTOM TO SPANISH BOTTOM, 2016

By Marsha Dougherty and Sue Hughes

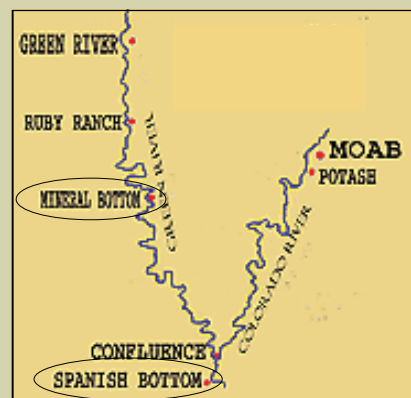
RMSKC members Sandy Carlsen and Harold Christopher, Marsha Dougherty, Sue Hughes, Brian Hunter, Jud Hurd and Trip Leader Tim Fletcher spent a week kayak camping on the Green River. Tim had canoed the Green many times and had done the Mineral Bottom to the Spanish Bottom section just a couple of weeks earlier; he was a wonderfully knowledgeable and easy-going guide.



The glass boats were loaded last and suspended so they wouldn't get scratched.

DAY ONE, 8-28-2016:

The group gathered at Tex's Riverways in Moab, paid the last of the shuttle charges, and watched as Devin expertly loaded their boats and gear onto a trailer.



They headed west and down a steep and winding third-world road to the put-in at Mineral Bottom.

As they were driving away Sue learned there had been a change in the line-up for Powell Houseboat IV, which was to start just a week after the Green River paddlers would get back. They searched for cell reception to let RMSKC organizers at home know it needed to be figured out before then, but they didn't get through. At the last minute they sent a text to Anna Troth, who forwarded it to Clark who handled the situation; the roster was all settled by the time they returned to phone service seven days later. Thanks, Anna and Clark!



The scene as people loaded their boats was chaotic and the put-in was steep but they were paddling downstream before lunchtime.

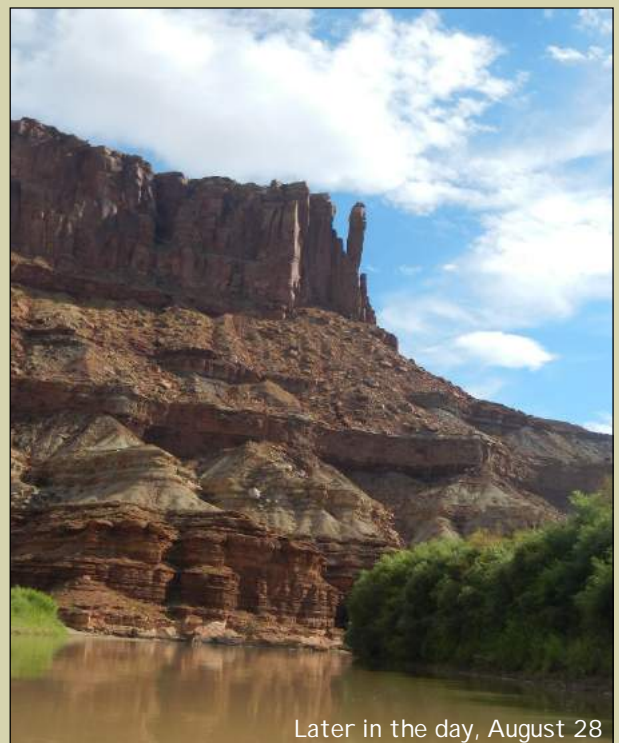


They had some trouble staying together the first day, but appointing a sweep and changing that person every hour or so kept them effortlessly within hailing distance of each other for the entire rest of the trip. That made Safety and Instruction Coordinator Brian Hunter very happy.

They paddled 10.8 miles to their camp on a large island at river mile 42.3 on river right just before Fort Bottom. It was slightly damp and buggy, but thankfully those were the only mosquitoes they encountered on the whole trip.



Midday, August 28



Later in the day, August 28



Marsha, Jud, Sandy and Harold at the watch tower overlooking Fort Bottom at Mile 48.5

DAY TWO, 8-29-2016: In the morning they ferried across the river and talked to two fellows in a canoe who were doing the same stretch. Some of the group hiked up to an ancient masonry tower on the top of a butte that looked down on the tight loop in the river. It had wonderful views in all directions. Then they all checked out the remains of a cabin closer to the water.



Brian in the window of the outlaw cabin at Fort Bottom



Before noon they were back on the river. They took off NNW but in no time had rounded the bend and were going ESE. There are very few straight sections on the Green.



Sandstone with wave ripples caught in it

View from the top of the hill

They paddled on, going from BLM land into Glen Canyon NRA and then into Canyonlands NP. After lunch, the Butte of the Cross, mentioned by John Wesley Powell in 1869, came into view.



Butte of the Cross is actually two buttes, one in front of the other

By early afternoon they'd reached Anderson Bottom at river mile 31. They got out and walked across a field to a curious place where someone had blasted (and cleared away the rubble) to make a room in the side of the cliff. The park service still stores old signs in a cave there from the years when they had an annual festival and campout called the Friendship Cruise.

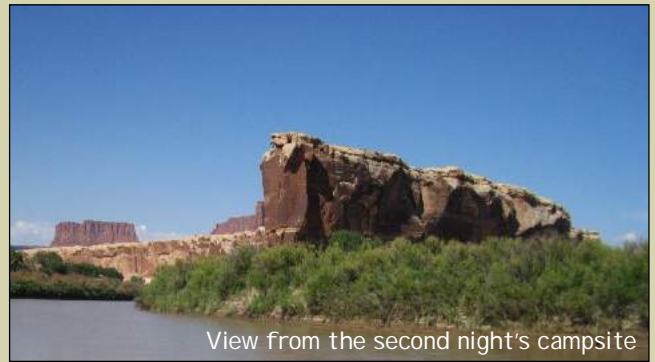


Later that afternoon they went through the first small riffle without a hitch, but it did make people realize how much of their gear wasn't tied in. [There are more photos from Day II on the next page.]

They made camp on a large sunny dry sandbar along Bonita Bend at river mile 31. Dry and sunny meant no bugs, but it was hot, so they all went swimming for the first time on the trip. They paddled 10.9 miles for the day.



Day 11: Jud on the first riffles they encountered



View from the second night's campsite



Early morning, Day 111

DAY THREE, 8-30-2016: The group had a busy morning. They saw two ruins on river left and one ruin after the wash on river right.

They took pictures of the Sphinx at mile 27 and visited with Marilyn, the only other paddler besides the fellows on the day before that they saw the entire week. Jud earned his Ruin-Spotting badge.



The Sphinx



They met Marilyn on the river. She had come all the way from Green River, Utah. She took out with them a couple of days later.

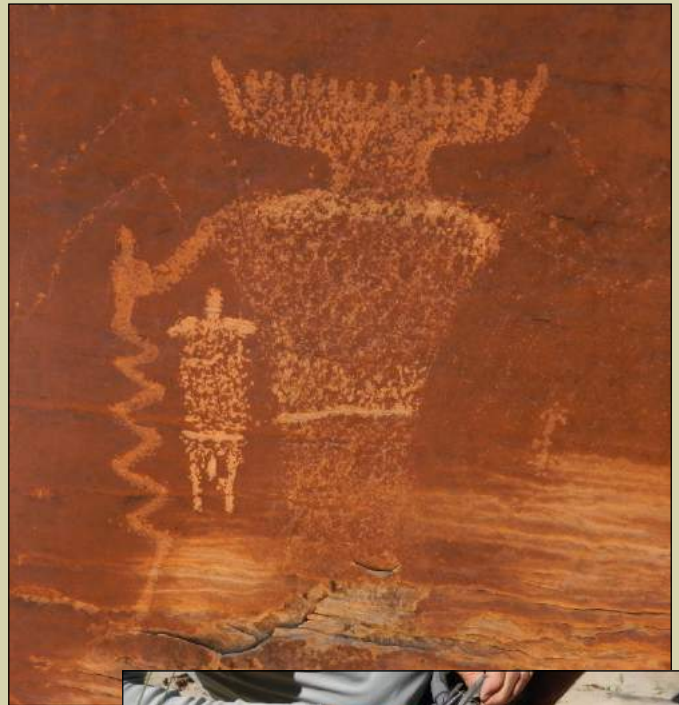


Marilyn's rubber boat



Sandy, Harold, Tim, Jud, Brian and Marsha looking for the car-shaped rock that had petroglyphs

In the afternoon, before Turks Head, they took a walk on river right to see some very good petroglyphs. The directions were vague and the hike was longer than they'd thought it would be, a mile and a half each way, but the stone art was well preserved and worth the trek. Tim got the prestigious Hike Motivator award.



Ha-ha: the car-shaped rock only looks like a car from the back side

On the way back Sue's sandal disintegrated. Brian saved her sole by sewing it back on with supplies from his well-stocked repair kit. [When she got home she learned that Chaco would re-sole them for lots less than a new pair.] Brian was named Best Prepared Camper.

They paddled to mile 21 and camped on river left at a pretty campsite about which there was some initial discussion. There was a breeze but it was still pretty hot. They set up the sun shades and everyone swam in the river and washed up. They paddled 10.8 miles for the day.



Brian sewing Sue's shoe

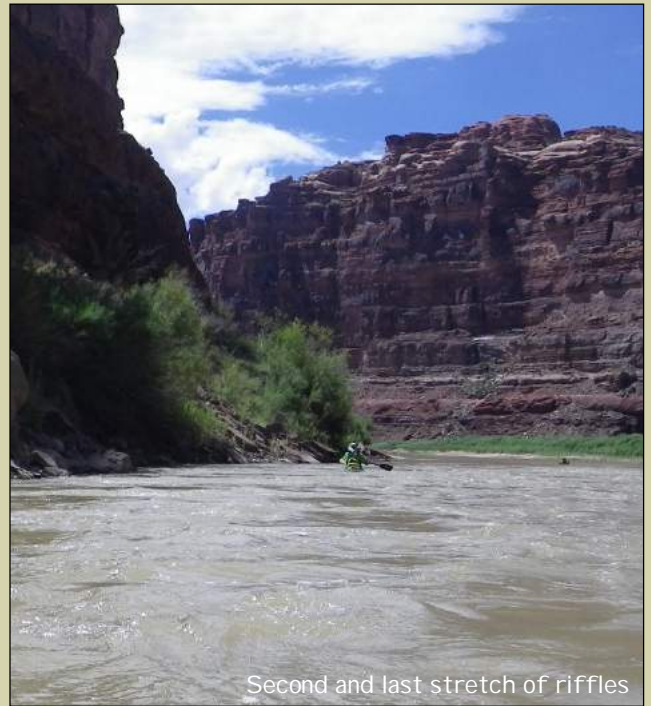


DAY FOUR, 8-31-2016: They paddled to Horse Canyon. The river was divided by a sandbar island and the entrance to the canyon was in a shallow curve on river right. Five of the group walked up to the first turn, Harold and Sandy went up to the next corner and then everyone came back and joined the others.

They scouted the left fork of the river thinking there might be rocks with the river being kind of low. They saw only one big rock to maneuver around. They ran through it one at a time but there were no unexpected rocks.



Walking into Jasper Canyon



Second and last stretch of riffles

They paddled to mile 12 and had lunch, and then on to Jasper Canyon at mile 9.5. The group landed in the mouth and walked a short way but the path was blocked so they paddled down 100 feet or so, landed again and walked up to the Anasazi house they were looking for.

They camped at mile 8 on a medium-sized sandbar island, swam, washed clothes and fixed dinner. It was a lovely evening and people sat out and looked at the stars. It had been a 14 mile day.



Sue, Jud, Sandy, Harold, Marsha and Tim in front of the ruin in Jasper Canyon





Water canyon

DAY FIVE, 9-1-2016: They broke camp and paddled to Water Canyon where they went on a very nice walk in a moist and shaded canyon with a pool and a small waterfall.

The waterfall could be climbed up to the next level if the water in the pool had been high enough to swim to the edge. But it was too low this time and they couldn't go any farther. The canyon was full of sharp red pieces of jasper, a vein of clay and strange rocks with dark interiors embedded in the sandstone. Once again, they wished they'd had a geologist along.



Jasper



Clay drying like pots



Mystery rocks

They paddled on to the confluence and into the Colorado River to the camp registry where Tim signed in for them. They paddled almost twelve miles that day.



View of the Doll House section of Canyonlands National Park from just past the confluence.



Trip leader Tim Fletcher signing the camp registry on the Colorado

They camped at Upper Spanish Bottom, Colorado River mile 213.5. It was a sweet spot with separate tent sites in the trees.

There was a terrific sunset but it blew like crazy and rained during the night. Brian saw a ringtail cat lurking in a tree.



Upper Spanish Bottom,
where most people camped back in the trees



Sue using Harold's
very handy collapsible
rubber bucket
to wash her boat.

DAY SIX, 9-2-2016: In the morning everyone washed their kayaks inside and out so they wouldn't get the jet boat dirty and packed their gear to be ready to load when Devin arrived to whiz them back up the Colorado to Moab.

When he appeared, right on time, the canoe guys and Marilyn were already on board. He complimented the RMSKC group on their clean boats and everything got stowed away in a flash.



Then he quickly and professionally directed how the people on the boat were going to handle the drama of the day: a fellow on the next sandbar north had broken his leg and needed to be evacuated.



Devin explaining the plan



It had been a long night

Devin cut loose one of the metal seat tops to use as a litter. Some of the people on the jet boat would be lifting the man onto it. Others would position coolers under it as support while the final move to the boat was formulated, and *everyone else*, he clarified strongly, could be most helpful by just watching quietly.

It went without a hitch, and they saw sights on the way back that they hadn't seen on the Green.



Rowdy rafts with naked lady blow-up dolls on the Colorado



When they got to the take-out they watched as Devin and his sidekick loaded the jet boat onto a semi, and then they rode back to Moab on Tex's school bus.

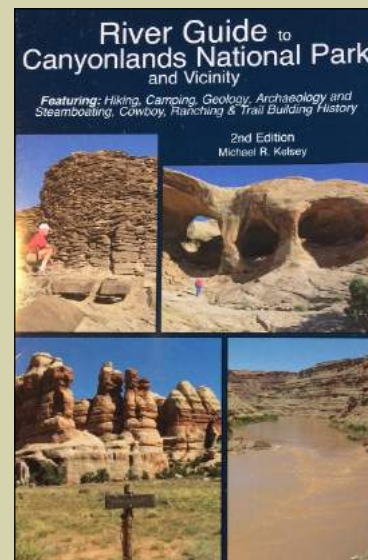
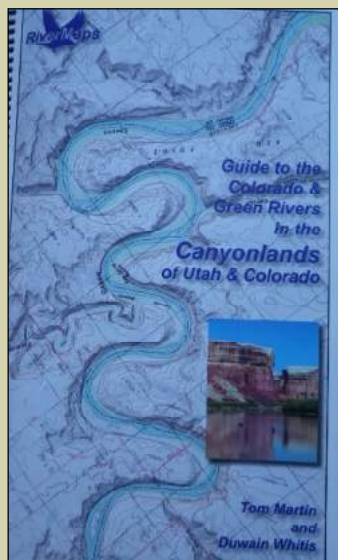
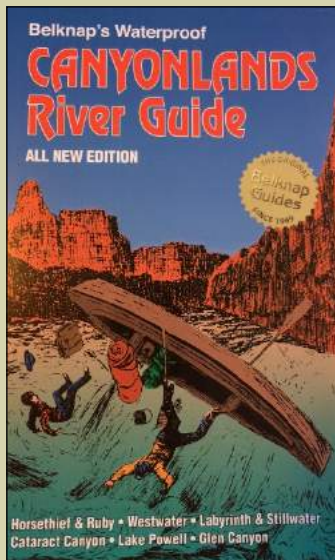
They put their kayaks on their cars and went to Milt's Stop & Eat, Moab's oldest restaurant, for chocolate malts. Brian and Sue passed out RMSKC business cards.

Sandy and Harold spent the night in town at Pack Creek Campground, which they recommend. Everyone else took off for home. They all agreed it had been a wonderful trip with an especially knowledgeable leader and a super group of people.

DETAILS:

The total cost for Tex's shuttle charges and the National Park Service permit fee was a very reasonable \$209 a person. Tex's is a first-class operation; everyone was highly competent, professional and personable.

Several group members had *Belknap's Canyonlands River Guide*, which is on waterproof paper and when protected in a Ziploc bag was not damaged by being carried under a spray skirt strap or bungee. Tim used Martin and Whitis's *Guide to the Colorado & Green Rivers in the Canyonlands of Utah & Colorado*, which had more detailed maps. Michael Kelsey wrote the book people use for Lake Powell. His *River Guide to Canyonlands National Park and Vicinity* provides the same sort of resource for this area's history and memorable stories.



Photos in this article were taken by Harold Christopher, Sue Hughes, Brian Hunter and Jud Hurd.



Panorama from the top of the watchtower bluff at Fort Bottom, Day 11