FREEFALL

ARIZONA'S HAVASU CANYON IS A HIKER'S PARADISE FAMED FOR ITS JAW-DROPPING WATERFALLS. BUT NOW THERE'S TROUBLE IN PARADISE—SERIOUS TROUBLE. OUR INVESTIGATION BEGINS WITH THE DISTURBING DISAPPEARANCE OF A SOLO FEMALE BACKPACKER, AND CULMINATES WITH SHOCKING EVIDENCE OF A LARGER, DARKER CRISIS—A TRIBAL CULTURE TEETERING ON THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE. → BY ANNETTE McGIVNEY → PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERU KUWAYAMA

PARADISE LOST

The trail begins at the edge of the Earth, where the sagebrush flats of the Coconino Plateau meet a 3,000-foot-deep expanse of rock and space. Just past the last hairpin turn on Indian Road 18, the Grand Canyon explodes into view. This is where the path to the community of Supai begins. This is where Tomomi Hanamure began her 34th birthday.

The 8-mile path dives through colorful layers of geologic time: ivory Kaibab Limestone, green Toroweap Formation, white Coconino Sandstone, the blood-red scree of Hermit Shale. Then the trail reaches the sandy, cobblestoned bottom of Havasu Canyon. Just above the village, an aquamarine creek emerges, for which the Havasupai tribe ("people of the blue-green water") is named. The stream gurgles through town, then picks up velocity. In 4 miles, the waters cascade over four huge waterfalls, plunging into fern-decked, turquoise pools. Nearly every travel and outdoor magazine, including this one, has waxed rhapsodic about this Shangri-La. More than a few have called Havasu Falls the best swimming hole in the world. And more than 20,000 vacationers a year follow the path to Supai to visit this famed backcountry paradise.

An independent, adventurous woman who lived near Tokyo in Kanagawa Prefecture, Hanamure enjoyed traveling alone to outdoor destinations worldwide. She had special feelings for the Grand Canyon, having spent several recent birthdays hiking to Phantom Ranch, a lodge on the canyon floor. No doubt, Supai seemed an enticing alternative. Like Phantom, the village is surrounded by a lush riparian area and dramatic buttes, and no roads lead there. And like the famous ranch 70 miles upriver, Supai has the creature comforts of a lodge, restaurant, and store, as well as a community at trail's end. All of which could provide a sense of security to a woman traveling solo.

But there's an immense difference between Hanamure's two birthday destinations. Phantom Ranch is in Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP), and is backed by the concessions and federal funding that comes with being one of North America's crown jewels. Supai, meanwhile, is in the heart of a poverty-stricken, crime-ridden sovereign Indian nation in which public health and safety conditions are downright dangerous. This destitution is so politically incorrect to acknowledge, it rarely surfaces in travel literature. Hanamure probably did not recognize the difference until it was too late.

Early on May 8, 2006, Hanamure parked her rental car at the Supai trailhead. Perhaps she noticed how this parking lot—with its burned-out cars, rotting toilets, and mounds of litter—contrasted with the national park's manicured trailhead lots. Hanamure locked most of her belongings in the car and loaded a backpack with essentials for the hike to the village and a stay at the lodge. Then she began descending steep switchbacks on the well-maintained trail.

Walking down Supai's main street, past horse corrals and plywood shacks and packs of stray dogs, she arrived midday and stopped at the café for a drink. Tourists milled around the store, café, and the field where the helicopter lands. Stone-faced Havasupai men sat on benches, watching the traffic.

Eventually, Hanamure checked into her room, where she loaded her daypack for the 2-mile hike to Havasu Falls. She walked out the iron gate of the lodge grounds, past the Havasupai Bible Church and a Falls Trail sign that was tagged with graffiti. As she continued, homesteads gave way to green thickets of oak and willow that obscured Havasu Creek's turquoise waters, which crash down toward the falls at nearly 30,000 gallons a minute.

It was a beautiful place to be hiking, and getting more scenic with each step. After such a long journey, she probably felt excited and relieved to be so close to the world-famous destination she'd planned to experience as a birthday gift to herself. But Hanamure never made it to Havasu Falls. She disappeared that afternoon, never to be seen alive again.

WHEN DOES THIS TRAGEDY BEGIN? Perhaps in 1908, when Theodore Roosevelt designated 832,000 acres of land in the Arizona Territory as Grand Canyon National Monument (it became a national park in 1919). That designation essentially evicted the Havasupai tribe from its vast homeland.

For at least 700 years, the Havasupai lived in small bands roaming an area that encompassed nearly the entire Grand Canyon drainage. In summer, they farmed deep in the canyon near creeks and springs. Come winter, they migrated to hunting grounds on the open plateau along the South Rim. Although the Havasupai reservation had been established in 1880, the tribe wasn't confined there until its members were perceived as trespassing in the national park. Havasupai who lived within the boundaries of the park at traditional summer homesites like Indian Garden and Santa Maria Springs were instructed to move to the reservation. The Forest Service also evicted the Havasupai from their plateau hunting camps.

By 1920, the Havasupai world had shrunk to a 518-acre prison inside Havasu Canyon. This tributary of the Grand Canyon held spiritual significance for the tribe, but it had never been a primary dwelling site. The Havasupai attempted to farm year-round, but gradually the fields were supplanted by homes. Totally isolated and without access to winter hunting grounds, the tribe nearly starved to extinction several times between 1920 and 1970. Meanwhile, the waterfalls that were technically part of the reservation were off-limits to the Havasupai for most of the 20th century. (Claims under a 19th-century law allowed miners to live in cabins between Havasu and Mooney Falls, a sacred area where the tribe had cremated and buried its dead.) In 1957, the National Park Service bought out the mining claims, fenced off 62 acres, and established a campground between the falls.

By the 1960s, Supai had shrunk to about 150 residents. A 1971 GCNP Master Plan didn't acknowledge the existence of the reservation, says Stephen Hirst, author of *I Am the Grand Canyon: The Story of the Havasupai People.* Federal officials thought the tribe would die out within a decade or two and that the reservation would become part of the park. The tribe's struggle to survive, without access to traditional means of sustenance or to infrastructure like electricity and plumbing, fomented a deep resentment toward the federal government (especially the NPS) and white people (especially tourists camping on burial sites).

Although the Havasupai have remained anonymous to most Americans, the tribe figures prominently in the traditional Native American world. "The Havasupai are the guardians of the Grand Canyon, which is the origin place for many Southwest native cultures," says Hirst, who lived in Supai on and off for 40 years. The tribe's geographic isolation has also helped give it the highest rate of language fluency of any Native American group in the United States.

To the Havasupai, the Grand Canyon isn't just a beautiful place; it's a reference point that defines their view of the world. "In addition to the four cardinal directions, the Havasupai have two ways of orienting themselves: in the canyon, and away from the canyon," says Hirst. In Havasupai culture, there are two realities: Down There or Up There.

The situation for the Havasupai improved in 1975, when Gerald Ford signed a law returning 185,000 acres of national forest on the Kaibab Plateau to the tribe. The measure also returned the falls area, with stipulations that the tribe manage the campground and leave it open to the public. Native American advocates for the law argued that revenue generated by camping and entrance fees would save the Havasupai from extinction. Soon after the law passed and the tribe agreed to build its own tourism enterprise, federal grants funded the construction of public utilities in Supai.

For three decades, the tribe has dutifully, though not exactly enthusiastically, managed a $2.5 million tourism business on which the 500-member community has come to depend. The tribe also receives several million dollars a year of Arizona Indian gaming revenue disbursed to reservations that don't operate casinos. Federal funds pay for tribal health care, education, and law enforcement, but tourism pays for the infrastructure and upkeep of the community buildings, lodge, and campground. Unlike other tribes, which typically contract with outside corporations to run their commercial enterprises, the Havasupai insist on operating their own businesses. This gives Supai a down-home, uncommercialized flavor that you won't find at Grand Canyon Village. But there's also a sense that you're on the frontier fringe.

THE FIRST SIGN of trouble came the morning of May 9, when a lodge employee entered Hanamure's room to clean and saw her belongings and undisturbed bed. The Coconino

JAPANESE ADVENTURER TOMOMI HANAMURE HIKED DOWN INTO SUPAI ON MAY 8, 2006, HER 34TH BIRTHDAY. SHE NEVER HIKED OUT.

County sheriff was contacted later that day. A search began May 10 for what was presumed to be a lost or injured hiker.

More than 40 law enforcement officers and search-and-rescue volunteers descended on Supai and began combing the area around the falls and campground. Meanwhile, an Arizona Department of Public Safety helicopter circled overhead. Given the 100°F daytime highs and harsh canyon terrain, finding her quickly was imperative.

Searchers interviewed tourists along the Falls Trail and in the campground. They went below the campground to check out places Hanamure might have explored on a dayhike. Supai was at the peak of its busy season, with hundreds of campers and the lodge fully booked. But no one reported seeing Hanamure at the falls or campground. Her rental car offered no clues. The only information extracted from the village was that Hanamure had been observed walking with a tall man who appeared to be Asian, and visiting the café with a red-haired, heavily tattooed man with an Irish accent.

On the fourth day of the operation, a tribal member swimming near Fifty Foot Falls spotted a female body submerged in the blue-green water, and reported the location to authorities. Officials couldn't legally identify the body until an autopsy was performed. But law enforcement at the scene knew it was Hanamure, and knew she had been murdered. The corpse was riddled with stab wounds.

Officers pronounced the woman dead at the scene at 2:45 p.m. on May 13, 2006. The SAR crew was flown down to help with the extraction, and an FBI dive team came in to scour the pool for evidence. Investigators tied yellow crime-scene tape around bushes along the trail and the creek at Fifty Foot Falls, a known gathering spot for village youth.

Officers placed Hanamure's remains in a body bag and carried it to the village, where the Arizona DPS helicopter waited. Search members flying out that day remember a film crew for the Travel Channel headed down the same switchbacks that Hanamure had descended five days earlier. The crew was there to film a program called *Grand Canyon: Nature's Great Escape*.

Since state regulations prohibit the transport of corpses inside DPS choppers, Hanamure was strapped on a litter that was suspended from a cable. With her shrouded body dangling below, the helicopter climbed 3,000 feet through the orange, red, green, and ivory geologic strata.

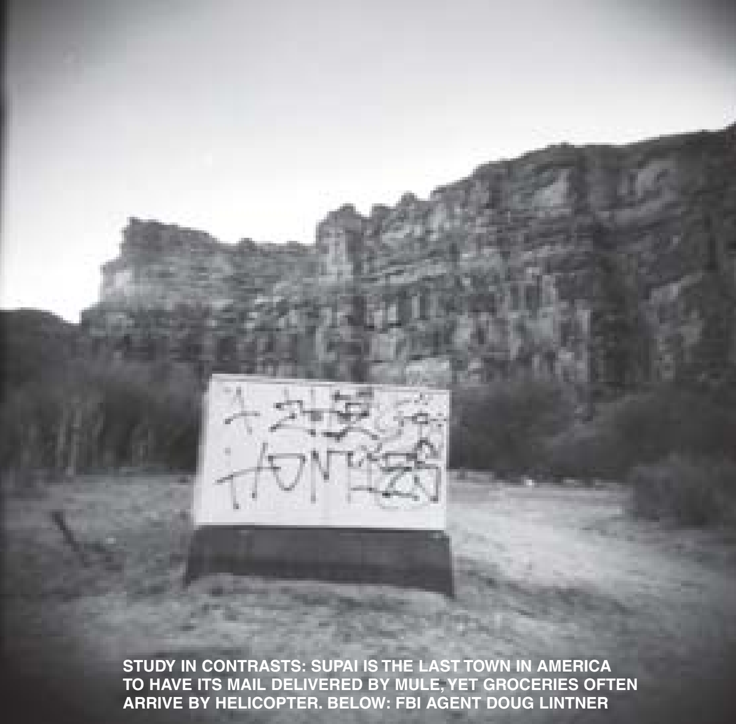
Coconino County Medical Examiner Lawrence Czarnecki performed an autopsy on May 15. One of the marks he used to make a positive ID was a small tattoo of a Japanese symbol on her left foot. Japanese media would later quote Hanamure's friends recalling her wish to be identified by this mark if something happened to her. The symbol, which comes from a character in her last name, means "flower."

In a copy of the coroner's report obtained by BACKPACKER, Czarnecki noted that Hanamure was a little over 5 feet tall and a "very physically fit, muscular" 130 pounds. She had another tattoo of a heart on her lower abdomen, and a green belly-button ring. Her hair was black and cut short. She wore a blue short-sleeved shirt, green shorts, and brown hiking boots.

The report cited 29 stab wounds. The evidence taken included Hanamure's fingerprints, fingernail clippings that might contain the killer's DNA, her blood-splattered clothing, and a rape kit. Although the autopsy did not reveal physical trauma that might suggest sexual assault, rape was not ruled out. All lab results have been sealed under court order.

The autopsy paints a grisly account of Hanamure's last moments. Of the 29 stab wounds, 22 were to the head and neck, a number of them severe enough to be fatal. A single blade that was about 3 inches long and 1 inch wide had sliced the carotid artery on the left side of her neck and punctured her lung. Her skull was chipped from blunt force.

Pathology experts who evaluated the report for this story were struck by the apparent manic nature of the homicide.



STUDY IN CONTRASTS: SUPAI IS THE LAST TOWN IN AMERICA TO HAVE ITS MAIL DELIVERED BY MULE, YET GROCERIES OFTEN ARRIVE BY HELICOPTER. BELOW: FBI AGENT DOUG LINTNER

"This person was in a frenzy," says physician Tom Myers, coauthor of *Over the Edge*, which chronicles all known deaths in the Grand Canyon. "The killer must have been so psychotic or incoherent he couldn't appreciate that he was still stabbing her even though she was unresponsive, basically dead."

The coroner noted that the stab wounds came from many different angles. "He was moving. She was moving. It was an all-out fight for her life," concludes Myers. "This is the most brutal killing in the Grand Canyon in modern times."

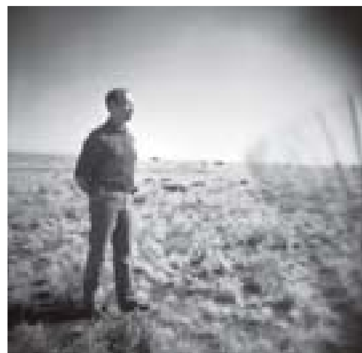
When the media reported the gruesome autopsy details last summer, people from Flagstaff to Tokyo were outraged. A crazy, cold-blooded killer was at large. Japanese reporters became obsessed with the homicide and accused the U.S. government of not doing enough to solve the crime. Japanese TV crews camped at the county sheriff's office and the Supai trailhead. *The Arizona Republic* reported that state tourism officials were worried about public-relations implications—not surprising, since some 100,000 Japanese tourists visit the Grand Canyon every year. A July 24 *Republic* article noted that Japanese TV segments about Hanamure almost always showed pictures of the national park, with no mention of the crime happening on a reservation.

Law enforcement officials urged the tribal council to close the trail to Supai to the public until a killer was caught. Instead, the council banned all media from the reservation. This infuriated the Japanese press and fueled speculation that U.S. officials were not doing right by Hanamure. That summer, American journalists scarcely covered the murder.

All the while, FBI special agent Doug Lintner was making Supai his second home. Bureau of Indian Affairs cops handle day-to-day law enforcement duties on the reservation, but the FBI manages violent crimes like murder and rape.

After searchers located Hanamure's body, Lintner took over the case. The counterintelligence specialist had spent most of his 19-year FBI career investigating mob crimes in New York City. He says that on his 40th birthday, he decided he'd had enough and asked to be transferred "anywhere." Other than a recent visit to Iraq to investigate mass graves, Lintner has been in the FBI's Indian Country division ever since. He likes the wide-open Southwest landscape, but sometimes the violence on the reservation gets to him. Linter has a habit of speaking in spare, blunt sound bites. He claims a mob hit is generally much cleaner than a Navajo knife fight. "When there are fights in other cultures, the guy goes down and the fight is over," says Lintner. "But in Native American cultures, there are a high number of beating deaths. When a Native American goes down, that is when things pick up a notch."

Wearing a polo shirt with the FBI logo and carrying a Glock .40 and handcuffs on his belt, Lintner became a familiar presence in Supai. He visited dozens of homes to pursue leads. He visited many of them more than once, because people kept changing their stories. It was a tense situation. The whole village was keeping track of which doors he knocked on. So he began doing interviews at night—no easy task in a town without streetlights or paved streets. "We were walking around without flashlights so no one would see us. I almost broke my ankle stepping in gopher holes," he recalls.



BIA officers saw violence in Supai pick up during the investigation. "There was retaliation against tribal members who talked to law enforcement," says Henry Kaulaity, the officer in charge. "Some were verbally harassed, but others were beat up. Around that time, older tribal members were beat up on the trail for no reason." In private, people worried about a deeper chaos that seemed to be tearing at the already frayed fabric of the community.

As Lintner knocked on doors, the tribe was forming its own ideas about the murder. Gossip swirled about the investigation. There were various theories, but most people agreed that things would end up as they had for 100 years: The Havasupai would get screwed.

SOME SAID the murder was caused by a "dark spirit" haunting the village. Spiritual leaders held prayer and sweat lodge ceremonies to get the spirit, along with Hanamure's, to leave. There was talk that the murder was an NPS plot to destroy the tribe. And then there was the Irish guy, Neal. Many people were sure this outsider was the killer. He was a disturbed white man who likely worshipped Satan, they said. He had evil tattoos and was looking for drugs.

Neal had been living in Supai for about a month before the murder, sleeping in bushes along the creek or crashing at the homes of young tribal members who liked to party. He would

strike up a conversation with anyone in town, talking about how he worshipped goddesses and how Native Americans must fight to get their land back. And he had been seen in the café on May 8 talking to Hanamure. Villagers say Neal invited himself to a sweat lodge ceremony the next night and wore out his welcome after making sexual advances on a Havasupai woman. So some men at the sweat decided to kick and beat Neal in the head. Following a tip, Kaulaity found Neal naked by the creek, howling at the moon with blood dripping from his bushy red hair. Suffering from severe head injuries, Neal was evacuated by helicopter on May 10.

Locals wanted to believe that the murderer was a white man from Up There. Maybe he was someone Hanamure had befriended in town or the crazy Irish guy. But Lintner was finding evidence that pointed in another direction.

After word of the murder hit newspapers, Lintner started getting calls from women who'd been assaulted in Supai but hadn't reported the attacks. "These all happened within a few months before or after the murder," said Lintner. "They wanted me to know, because they thought it might help us find the killer." Most cases involved young male tribal members making sexually threatening comments to women on the trail or in the campground. In two cases, a woman hiking alone had been grabbed from behind by a man who tried to pull her off the trail, but she had fought him off.

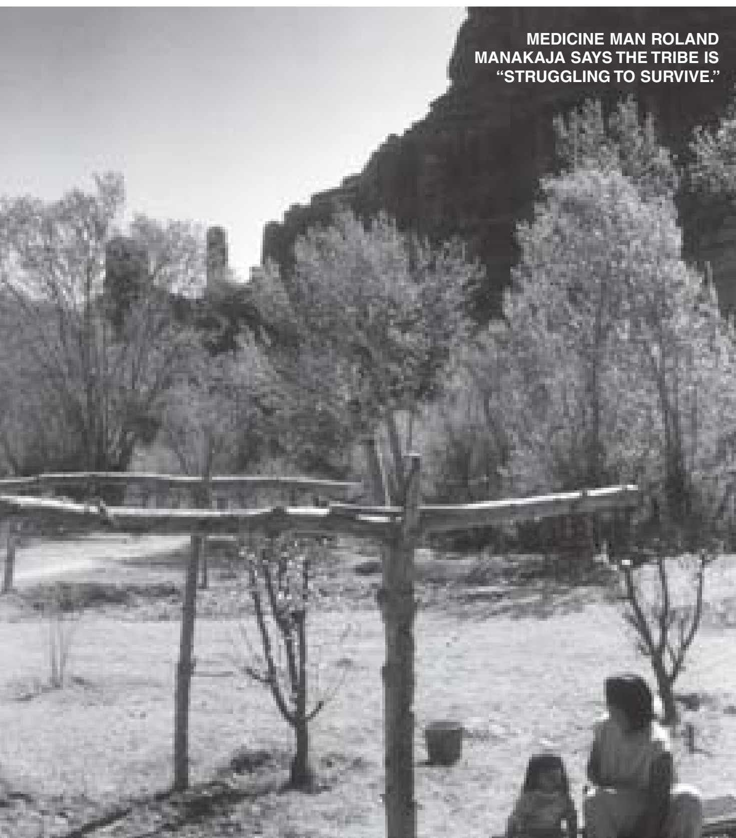
"If I was down there and I'd see a woman hiking alone, I kept thinking I should tell her to turn around," said Lintner. "Women shouldn't hike alone in Supai. It's too dangerous."

Ultimately, investigators pursued more than 100 leads. But what began as a broad search became a focused investigation. The initial lead about a tall Asian man was "explained," Lintner says, declining clarification. The Irish guy, Neal, who was an early person of interest, was interviewed and dismissed. As the months wore on, the evidence pointed to one suspect. It was not someone from Up There.

ON DECEMBER 5, nearly seven months after Tomomi Hanamure died, a Havasupai named Randy Redtail Wescogame was charged with her murder. Wearing an orange jumpsuit, arms in handcuffs, he stood expressionless before U.S. District Judge Mark Aspey in Flagstaff as the five-count indictment was read. It also charged Wescogame with kidnapping and robbery, alleging he stole Hanamure's "cash, credit cards, camera, cell phone and other things of value."

Several days later, at a detention hearing, the prosecution presented information about the 18-year-old's troubled past. Although he had grown up in Supai and was living there when the murder occurred, he'd spent most of the past six years in juvenile-detention and drug-rehab programs. He had a history of assaults on staff and residents of these facilities. The prosecution also reported he was addicted to "alcohol, marijuana, methamphetamine and other inhalants." Wescogame had been in federal custody since late May, when he was arrested for an assault on a local in Supai. Prosecutors said the apparent motive in the murder was robbery.

So this kid stabbed Hanamure 29 times to steal her



MEDICINE MAN ROLAND MANAKAJA SAYS THE TRIBE IS “STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE.”

phone? Reporters had questions. “There is never is a rational justification, whatever the motive,” said U.S. Attorney Paul Charlton at a press briefing after the indictment was announced. Charlton thanked the tribe for cooperating during the investigation, noting that this murder was the first recorded homicide of a non-tribal member in Supai. “This is a safe place and a good place to travel,” he said, calling the murder “an aberration.”

Charlton and law enforcement officials shut down further questions by declining to elaborate on details that tied Wescogame to the crime, saying it would interfere with the accused’s right to a fair trial. Since that indictment, the judge has sealed Wescogame’s criminal history and all information about the murder investigation considered pertinent to the case.

The only public response from the Havasupai came in a written statement from Tribal Chairman Thomas Siyuja, Sr. He wrote that Hanamure’s death remained “a great shock to members of the Havasupai tribe.” The tribe “continues to pray for her family and friends,” he added. After the indictment was announced, the council declared a period of mourning through December 17.

Just like that, the arc of this tragic story appeared to end. A killer had been caught. The tribe quietly imposed a media blackout until the period of mourning ended. Attorneys and investigators stopped talking. The Japanese reporters went away. What else was there to say?

A lot more, I suspected. The cut-and-dried press announcement about Wescogame after a long investigation into a horrific murder left more questions than answers. I had good reason to suspect deeper problems in Supai than federal and tribal officials were letting on. I wanted to know more about Hanamure, Wescogame, and the Havasupai people. And so I went Down There, looking for answers.

PANDEMONIUM

I slogged into Supai on January 9 with my 10-year-old son, Austin. Thus began a 3-month quest in which I made four trips to the remote village. On the first journey, I stashed a notebook in my pocket, but otherwise traveled like a tourist. We hiked the 8-mile trail to Supai and stayed at the lodge, just like Hanamure had done. (This trip occurred before anyone had warned me not to hike alone on the reservation.)

Although it had been 15 years since I’d been in Supai, the image I still had in mind was the Shangri-La famously painted in the 1960s by Edward Abbey in *Desert Solitaire*. “The Havasupai are a charming, cheerful, completely relaxed and easygoing bunch, all one hundred or so of them,” he wrote.

I knew things had changed, but I wasn’t prepared to enter a blown-out rural ghetto. Graffiti tags were everywhere, and almost every window was broken or boarded up. Debris was strewn on fences, in front yards, and along the path: iPod headphones, empty Pampers cartons, U.S. Mail crates, old saddles, horse tack, abandoned furniture, and lots of plastic Gatorade bottles. Ravens as big as turkeys picked through garbage. The pungent smell of sewage came from an open ditch. As we neared the center of town, villagers passed us without eye contact or saying hello. I knew this was normal; it’s just a cultural difference. What wasn’t normal were the decidedly unfriendly glares from young men, some of whom came out of their homes or backyards to check us out.

It was a Tuesday afternoon, a time when school was in

BILLY WESCOGAME, IN HIS SUPAI HOME

RANDY WESCOGAME, AFTER A DECEMBER 15, 2006 HEARING

session in Arizona; the leering teenagers were most likely high-school dropouts. Because Supai has no high school, kids are sent to government-funded boarding schools in places like Oregon and California. According to BIA police in Supai, most drop out by the 11th grade and return to the village, bringing the drug and gang culture they picked up with them. Sometimes they help with their families' packing business, transporting cargo up and down the canyon, but I was told these dropouts mainly just hang around town, drinking whiskey and smoking marijuana and meth.

"Drug use related to violent crime is an issue all over, but the effects of narcotics in a small community like Supai are magnified," says BIA assistant special agent Jason Thompson, who oversees law enforcement in the agency's Arizona district. "Three kids on meth is an outbreak down there."

The village delinquents have a reputation for preying on tourists to fund their next hit. "We have four to five people in the tribe right now who are opportunists looking to steal," BIA officer Kendrick Rocha told me on that January visit.

Larry Richard wishes he'd been warned about these bandits before he hiked into Supai last October for a three-night camping trip. The Springfield, Virginia native had seen images on the Travel Channel and been inspired to visit.

His first night in the campground, Richard says, two young Native American men shined a flashlight in his face through the tent door. They turned the flashlight on and off as Richard lay there motionless. "I was really afraid. My heart was just racing," he recalls. "I've been working in the bowels of DC for 20 years and been exposed to all types of bad guys, but I've never felt fear like I did down there. I felt completely trapped." Then the men ripped through Richard's belongings in camp. They grabbed his food bag and sat on a picnic table 10 yards from his tent and ate their fill. Richard watched them move on to other campsites and do the same thing. He hiked out the next day in disgust—too afraid to stay, and fearful of reporting the incident to tribal police.

Unlike law enforcement rangers in a national park, who patrol campgrounds and protect visitors, Supai police must prioritize keeping order in the village. "The tourists need to understand that this is private place where the tribe allows people to come in," said officer Kaulaity. "We are not here for the tourists but for the locals." Protecting the locals from one another has become tougher lately, due to a surge in assaults and cutbacks in BIA funding. When Hanamure was murdered last May, the Supai police force was down to three cops. Kaulaity says there were supposed to be six. At times, he or Rocha would work 30 hours without a break.

According to FBI officials, Supai is experiencing a spike in violent crime. Between May 2006 and January 2007, the agency opened 10 new assault investigations. That represents more cases than in the previous four years combined.

On my first trip, staying at the Supai Lodge with Austin, I heard distant screaming throughout the night. The shrieks were mixed with rounds of barking dogs and what I thought were fireworks. The next night, Austin was playing on the lodge lawn with a boy named Righteous and a 10-year-old girl—both grandchildren of lodge employees. The kids' teenage aunts were nearby, in a shack the size of an outhouse, hunched over a fire. A popping sound echoed off the canyon walls. "Sounds like fireworks," I said to the girl.

"Oh no, it's guns," she said. "You shouldn't have heard that."

While FBI and BIA officials are concerned about the rising incidence of assault and drug use in Supai, the reservation isn't unique for its high rate of violent crime. Department of Justice statistics indicate that violent crime among American Indians is twice the U.S. average. Lintner has seen the impact on Navajo and Apache reservations, noting that meth is usually involved in homicides on Navajo land. He says crime spikes on other reservations are typically attributed to an increase of men between the ages of 15 and 25, and to a surge in meth use.

But Havasupai differs from other poor, crime-ridden reservations, because there's a secondary population of potential victims strolling through daily: tourists. And even as Lintner locks up the latest batch of delinquents, a new crop is coming of age. U.S. Census data shows 36 percent of the Havasupai population is between the ages of 15 and 25.

AS I BECAME A SEASONED Supai visitor, I learned to appreciate the atmosphere that can make this place sometimes scary and always surreal. Once, when I was hiking to Havasu Falls with Austin, a middle-aged Havasupai man joined us near the edge of town and struck up a conversation. He asked where we were from, why my husband wasn't with me, where we were hiking. After about five minutes, he turned back.

I thought of Hanamure as we hiked, and wondered where along this trail she had met her attacker. Then to my left, along the creek, I noticed tattered yellow crime-scene tape hanging from the bushes. It was along a narrow spur, about 20 feet off the main trail. We hadn't reached Navajo Falls, but I could hear the roar of the water.

Investigators believe Hanamure's attacker either lured her or dragged her off the main trail. They say that even though Supai was full of people in May, the dense vegetation along the creek would have made the struggle hard to see from the main path. The roar of the water and shrieking swimmers at the falls would have muffled Hanamure's screams.

After standing at the foot of Havasu Falls and feeling the icy spray, Austin and I lunched on a ledge above the cascade. I noticed a tribal member dressed in black running along a narrow cliff on the far side of the creek. Then the man who had chatted us up earlier popped out of the brush behind

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARIZONA DAILY SUN

us. Now he was wearing big yellow gloves. "Have you seen anyone go by?" he asked. "I'm looking for this guy, a tribal member." He took a long look at my open daypack as he removed his gloves. I told him about the man in black as I grabbed my pack and gathered Austin by the hand.

As we hiked back, we came upon another Havasupai man, this one lying in the sand along the path; he was motionless, mouth open. A group of tribal kids walked by him without pause, the way New Yorkers step over homeless people sleeping on steam grates. I didn't stop either, figuring he was drunk. Meanwhile, 15 feet away, a family was assembling a trampoline that had just arrived on the helicopter.

IN HIS BOOK *Collapse*, scientist and author Jared Diamond describes a phenomenon called "creeping normalcy." He hypothesizes that as a nation or culture becomes more dysfunctional, successive generations have a harder time realizing anything is wrong because they're used to the unhealthy environment and have no institutional memory of what used to be. So people fool themselves into believing everything is fine despite obvious signs society is falling apart.

There's no doubt normalcy is creeping in Supai. Geographic isolation and technological inundation have created a skewed reality that's obliterating the tribe's culture. In Supai, it is normal to get 200 TV channels in a place with no roads; it is normal to transport cases of Mountain Dew and frozen dinners from Sam's Club via helicopter; it is normal not to work because there are no jobs; it is normal for a third of your community to be your cousins; it is normal to be stoned and drunk all day; it is normal for outside social workers and educators to arrive, give up, and move away within a year; it is normal to go to jail; and it is normal to grow weary of and even hate tourists from Up There.

Perhaps because it is easier to ignore problems than to address them head-on, no members of the Havasupai Tribal Council would talk to me for this story. No doubt, my investigation was seen as just another kick in the teeth from the dominant culture, knocking the Havasupai when they are already down. The tribe maintained a party line after the murder: keep quiet about problems while the tribal government solves issues in its unhurried, traditional manner.

The first person to break rank was Billy Wescogame, Randy's father. "I want the world to know what is going on here, and I want to speak out against the bootleggers and drug dealers who are destroying our tribe," Wescogame told me last February. We sat on plastic milk crates in front of his small, weatherbeaten house. His eyes darted up and down the street to see who might be watching. He said that when the Tribal Council decided to "throw out the media" after the murder, it was against the will of the people, who wanted to be open about their attempts to deal with the crisis and their sorrow about Hanamure's death.

"I am not speaking up because of Randy—whatever he did is on him," said Wescogame, who states he is "about 50" years old and father to 11 children that he "knows of for sure." Wescogame said he was coming forward to protect his other children from the village juvenile delinquents. "They're trying to beat up my daughter and my other kids. They go to parties and come home all bloody. One boy recently chopped up another boy with a machete." Wescogame blames the violence on alcohol (which is illegal on the reservation), police who don't enforce the law, parents who don't discipline their children, and an entrenched bootlegging business.

Wescogame comes from one of the Havasupai families that just a century ago had the entire Grand Canyon to themselves. He said his great-grandfather was Billy Burro, the last Havasupai holdout in the national park, who farmed Indian Garden until he was physically evicted by park rangers in 1934. Wescogame is also the village tattoo artist; his body is covered with his handiwork, including swastikas on his forearms and the letters "l.o.v.e." on his fingers. He likes to sit out front and carve pieces of cottonwood while listening to reggae. He whittled a cross and put it at Hanamure's murder site last May, before he knew his own son may have been involved.

"You tourists, you white people, you don't have any rights down here," says Billy Wescogame.

"You tourists, you white people, you don't have any rights down here. Your civil rights are gone when you cross that white cattle guard," he said. "We are self-governed, a sovereign nation, and most of your laws don't apply here."

But just to clarify that he wasn't singling out tourists, Wescogame said Supai was like a "concentration camp" for tribal members. He said people live in fear of the thugs and drug dealers. "Nobody has rights down here."

Eventually, Roland Manakaja, a medicine man who others describe as the spiritual voice of the tribe, decided to talk to me. He's the great-grandson of Chief Manakaja, the last man to serve as chief before the tribe converted to a council form of government in 1934 in compliance with federal regulations. Roland is not a member of the Tribal Council, but he is highly respected throughout the community and seems almost like a de facto chief.

I was discreetly escorted by a tribal member to Manakaja's homestead at the edge of town. He is a big man, full of sage-like loopiness. He sat in a small school chair in his yard, his long hair in a ponytail, gazing out at the rock formations at the top of the canyon—"the deities" that talk to him.

"We are struggling to survive here, fighting against a lot of things brought in from the white man's culture—uranium mining, alcohol, meth," he said. "These things are impacting our youth and throwing our world, the whole world, out of balance." Manakaja is concerned about a proposed uranium mine at Red Butte, which is on Forest Service land and a Havasupai sacred site, a place they visit for spiritual renewal. "Out there, in the white world, you have all these problems,

too. But they are magnified down here," he said.

Looking up at the buttes where the sun was sinking, Manakaja spoke with a soft, steady cadence like a lullaby. His train of thought was serpentine and frequently digressed into tribal lore. When he talked about the destruction of the Grand Canyon or how bad he feels about Hanamure's murder or how much he loves smoking marijuana, he started to cry. "I wish the murder never happened," he said, breaking into sobs. "For this to happen on our land, to someone who came to our home to enjoy this beautiful place, and it turned out another way. We are all still so shocked. But I try to look at the positive, at the lesson we can learn from this."

Manakaja said the murder was a "wake-up call" that showed how far the tribe has strayed from its cultural traditions and family-support systems. "The kids involved in this violence and drugs, they don't have family love, they are from divorced families, and they are having a cultural identity crisis. They are scared and angry."

By Supai standards, Randy Wescogame had a normal childhood. His parents divorced when he was five, then spent years in tribal court fighting over custody of Randy and his two siblings. When Randy was six, his father, who was the village policeman at the time, was imprisoned for 2½ years for sexual assault. Randy started acting up in school; by 3rd grade, he was being sent home for attacking teachers and students. Billy would sometimes discipline Randy, beating him or washing his mouth out with soap. Randy's mother had a restraining order placed on Billy to prevent him from seeing his son, because she believed he was abusive. By 6th grade, Randy was drinking whiskey and smoking pot and getting sent to tribal court for stealing. From age 13 until he was charged with murder last December, he was in and out of juvenile detention for assault, robbery, and substance abuse.

"Randy was a known thief, no doubt about it. He would always steal from the tourists, from anybody and everybody, to get money to buy drugs and booze," Billy Wescogame said one afternoon on his front stoop. "But he is not a murderer, he is not a bad kid. He just got involved in that meth."

"Randy and me, we get along good, like father and son," Wescogame added. "When he was down here last, before the murder, we had a good talk. I told him, 'You need to get out of here or something bad is going to happen to you. It is guaranteed. Go back to school, go be anywhere but here. Get away from these bad influences, from these bad people.'"

Wescogame's voice cracked as he looked away. "He didn't listen to me. I kept telling him: 'Randy, don't be this way, don't do this.' I am very hurt that he didn't listen to me."

WERE RANDY WESCOGAME'S actions an aberration, as the U.S. attorney had said last December? Or was this child of Supai a typical product of an unraveling society? I'd met his family and visited his home, but there was really only one way to answer this question: by meeting Randy face-to-face. Plus, I had promised Billy that I'd check up on his son, with whom he'd had no contact since that talk before the murder.

I'd been told Wescogame was sequestered at some undisclosed prison facility in Arizona. No lawyers or other officials would offer more than that. So I started cold-calling federal facilities in Arizona, and eventually learned he was being held at the Central Arizona Detention Center in Florence, halfway across the state from Supai. Another week of calling the front desk yielded Wescogame's designated visiting hours.

On February 26, I drove down to Florence. There, a cluster of windowless buildings sit amid the seething creosote flats of southern Arizona. I passed through dark corridors and vaultlike metal doors until I reached a noisy room. Against the far wall was a row of 15 windows where prisoners and their visitors sit on opposite sides of glass and talk through telephones. Wescogame stood behind one of the windows, glaring at me. About six feet tall and 200 pounds, he was a hulking presence. When guards told him he had a visitor, a white woman was not who he had expected.

> "Randy was a known thief, no doubt about it," said his father. "But he is not a murderer."

I picked up the phone, and he fumbled to lift his receiver in his cuffs. We sat. I told him I was writing a story on Supai and wanted to discuss crime on the reservation and how he felt about growing up there. He blinked, sizing me up. He wasn't sure about this. I told him I'd talked to his father.

"My dad beat me sometimes when I was bad, but I don't hold nothing against him," he said. "I miss him. I've been thinking a lot about what he told me." Wescogame looked at me, perhaps contemplating whether to continue. His eyes were so dark they were almost blank. His thick, black hair stuck out in an overgrown crew cut. His cheeks were full and purple from acne scars. Compared to the mug shot in the newspaper, he had a baby face. He was just a kid.

I asked him what it was like to grow up in Supai. "It was very violent," he said. "And there was nothing to do. I didn't want to be down there, but it was like a vacuum always sucking me back." He had been talking to his brother Ambrose, who was getting into trouble lately. "I tell him to stay in school. I don't want him to turn out like me."

Wescogame said that when he turned 18, he wanted to live on his own, but his mother kept pushing him to live with her. "In the white world, parents kick their kids out at 18, but not in Supai. My mom doesn't understand the way I am. She just wanted to keep me there, to protect me or something." He told me he likes reggae and wishes he'd grown up in Phoenix, where there's more to do.

Wescogame also wanted me to know he's not necessarily a nice guy. "I am just like my dad. I get mad." Wescogame said when he was in grade school, kids were violent toward him so he fought to protect himself and his brother. "I would

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go off, take care of it." He still has a temper, he said. "If I got mad enough I might just come through this glass." He stared at me with his blank, black eyes, like he wanted me to be scared.

I asked Wescogame how he felt about outsiders coming through Supai. "I don't want to talk about the tourists," he said, "except that they go down there to this beautiful place searching for something. And they are seeing things they are not supposed to see."

I'd later talk to Jolene Watahomigie, a tribal member who taught Wescogame in grade school and has known him his entire life. She said he was harassed by other students when his dad went to prison. "Randy started acting out," she said. "He is mentally unstable. When he came back to Supai last year, he was trying to shake up people by acting tough and scaring them." Watahomigie believes someone else murdered Hanamure, and Wescogame took the blame to get attention. "I don't think he did it," she said. These and other theories persist, despite prosecutors' statements that they have physical evidence linking Wescogame to the crime.

It turned out that my visit with Wescogame fell on his 19th birthday. I asked him what it's like to be in an adult prison instead of a juvenile facility. "I don't mind it," he said. "I don't care. The only thing I miss is not being able to speak my language." He seemed hopeless, resigned to the fact that his life would never change for the better. He looked behind me, watching a Coke machine getting restocked. It occurred to me that Wescogame might prefer the prison in Florence to the one in Supai.

There was a lull in our conversation; the receiver started to fall away from his mouth. Then he looked over at the guard to make sure no one was listening, and decided to tell me something. "I do have options. If I am going to spend the rest of my life in prison, I might end it. I would go my own way, to the other place."

LIMBO

I RETURN TO SUPAI for my fourth and final visit in March, when the days are longer and warmer, and cottonwood blossoms fly like snowflakes in the wind. Maybe it's just because it's spring, but the tribe seems in a better mood. They're gearing up for tourist season, the time when the cash flows.

Mike Giovanetti, the resident handyman, is trying to spruce up the village after a winter of vandalism. He has painted the outside of the tourist office and built a decorative fence barrier. He has also installed doors with metal burglar bars on the café and store. "I'll replace some of these windows if I can get the right size glass down here," he says.

The Tribal Council still won't talk to me, but other Havasupai say they feel encouraged. A new council took over in January; four old-guard members on the seven-seat council were replaced by people elected on a platform of change. They've approved a measure authorizing the BIA to hire Supai police who are not Native American, and hired a tribal member as a security guard to patrol at night. Police officer Kaulaity also tells me he's just gotten word that the BIA has approved the hire of two new police officers in Supai.

These incremental security improvements are a step in the right direction,

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but nowhere near what's needed to solve the problems plaguing the Havasupai and the tourist mecca they oversee. As I researched Hanamure's murder, authorities repeatedly told me that "it could have been anybody"—that she was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. This is true. But what they did not say and I came to find through my interviews, was that given obvious signs of increasing levels of violent crime and drug use, Hanamure's murder could have been predicted. And it might have been prevented if precautionary measures had been taken to curb the rising lawlessness. At best, statements made by the Tribal Council chairman and the U.S. attorney after Randy Wescogame was indicted were misleading, because they created the perception that Supai's crime problem could be solved by locking up one very troubled teen. Regardless of whether Wescogame murdered Hanamure—that remains to be decided in court—the underlying climate of violence is still alive and well.

The BIA plans to add law-enforcement presence on the trail and in the campground this summer, but visitors should, at present, take responsibility for their own safety. Women shouldn't hike or camp alone. And all campers should be streetwise about the potential for petty theft.

Given the tribe's distrust of the government, sending more federal agents to Supai may only deepen resentment. And cultural differences have generally negated the effectiveness of federally sponsored programs to reform village lawbreakers. "They just tell you how to be and then they spit you out," Randy Wescogame said of his experience with juvenile detention. "Changing the way you act has to come from inside, not from these white counselors and teachers. I don't listen to them."

The exposure to satellite TV and other value systems at boarding schools is sending young Havasupai men and women into "culture shock," according to Charlotte Goodluck, a Navajo sociologist at Northern Arizona University. "They're walking in two worlds, and they have to find a balance." But she says many young Native men in particular are unable to find the balance, and get angry. "Where do they fit in a white authoritarian culture? They don't feel they have a role in modern society, so they get into drugs and gangs."

In the end, Hanamure's murder has exposed more than a few troubled youth. It's revealed a culture that's losing its struggle to handle the pressures of a modern world.

"This is not about saving a white man's playground," says Giovanetti, a straight-talker who has spent much of the last eight years in Supai. "The issue is saving this community, this culture. When I see someone doing something mean to someone else down here, I get in their face. But the tribe, their way is not to be aggressive and enforce the laws. They have this attitude that things will work themselves out as they have for the last 500 years. They need help. What we have here is a whole civilization going down the tubes."

Roland Manakaja says he's started initiatives to help the tribe answer the "wake-up call" brought by Hanamure's murder. He's trying to take more tribal children up on their plateau lands "to reconnect with the environment," and he is lobbying to have a high school built near the reservation so teens can

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stay close to home. He plans to plant 500 fruit trees to restore historic orchards. And he's encouraging the Havasupai to have zero tolerance for bootleggers and drug dealers. "We know the changes for our tribe have to come from within, not from external forces," he says. "There are things we are trying to fix right now."

"The Havasupai are an endangered species on the verge of extinction," he adds. "Our culture needs to be protected so we can teach others. It is the history of America at stake here."

As for Randy Wescogame, his trial probably won't begin until 2008. He'll remain in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service; if he is convicted on all charges, he will spend the rest of his life in prison.

Near the end of my last visit to Supai, I meet Carla Crook, Randy's mother. She is looking out her office window at a crowd gathering in anticipation of a prisoner arriving by helicopter. It's the Saturday when the village juvenile delinquents arrive from holding facilities Up There to be tried at Supai's tribal court. Once sentenced, they're shipped to a prison or detention facility.

As villagers sit on a rock wall sipping coffee from styrofoam cups, the helicopter touches down. A young Havasupai in an orange jumpsuit and handcuffs is escorted by a U.S. marshal to the courthouse. The prisoner smiles smugly at the tribal members who've gathered for the event. Crook shakes her head. "It's like they are movie stars or something."

I've planned to take the helicopter out to the trailhead this trip, to save time. I run into the field, holding my hat against the rotor wash. I slide in and click my seat belt as the door is latched from the outside. The pilot works a few buttons and levers. My stomach drops as we rocket a thousand feet in seconds. The village instantly shrinks to a muted smudge of plywood and pasture as the Grand Canyon wraps around us. This is how Tomomi Hanamure left Supai, passing through layers of rock and geologic time that move in close and then fall away. Orange. Red. White. Green. Ivory. It is a jolting yet peaceful sensation, of suddenly rising up and floating through the most beautiful place.

Southwest Editor Annette McGivney visited Supai for the first time in 1992.

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