

Comments on the Glen Canyon by Keturah Gashwiler Pennington

(June 2014)

Phil and I were on a total of 9 boat trips in Glen Canyon, and there were at least 4 hiking trips, and one other boat trip. I don't suppose we shall ever know much more about the other boat trip. All I know is that it was a winter trip at Christmas the same year Phil led a trip starting with a portage of boats down Hole-in-the-Rock. Barbara Tihen led a small trip of herself and 3 others. We all experienced ice on the Colorado River. Phil's group were lucky enough to have large floating 'lily-pads' of ice that we could paddle around, or sometimes beach ourselves on and ride down the river. Barbara encountered bank-to-bank ice and they had to drag their boats for several days. The other three on that trip were fairly inexperienced outdoorsmen (all guys, but they weren't regulars and I've forgotten their names) and if it hadn't been for Barbara they probably would have frozen and never been heard from again. She kept them warm (enough), fed, and moving, and got them all home. And never spoke to them again, I think.

Below is a piece I wrote some time ago to more or less explain a photo on Phil's web site:

Once we had seen Glen Canyon, it became an addiction. We went 9 times and spent every college holiday there, and became more in love with it on every trip. It was obvious that we could never see it all and we became discriminating about where our time would be spent. We quickly consigned the upstream canyons to the category "Just Run of the Mill Glen Canyon spectacular" and started man-handling our boats down Hole-in-the-Rock to concentrate on the Truly Spectacular lower canyons.

The lowest place above the dam where a road reached the river was Crossing-of-the-Fathers so that's where we took out, since most of us were in rafts and couldn't go back upstream. But below Crossing-of-the-Fathers was one canyon that we just couldn't pass up - Labyrinth. With a name like that, among all those fabulous Glen Canyon canyons, we HAD to see it. The lake was rising, and Labyrinth was just above the dam, and would be gone in a few months. Phil could not tolerate losing it without seeing it. So he studied the topographic maps and planned a route from Labyrinth Canyon across the desert to a road 2 miles away where we could park for a car shuttle. It meant packing our boats across the desert, but was it ever worth it!

The first half mile of Labyrinth was GREAT. Then it became FABULOUS! There were cries of delight as various people first arrived at the point where the canyon narrowed and earned its name.

But as did all the other lower canyons, eventually it came to a jump-up - a waterfall too high for us to get over - dry at this season. We always tried to get past them some way, and usually failed.

There were about a dozen people in our party and it was fortuitous that Phil, Jim, and I were the first to reach the jump-up. It was about 13 - 14 feet high, slightly under cut and worn by water to a curve at the top. For any other trio in our group it would have been the end, I think. But Phil wasn't giving up, and we three were determined and resourceful. We decided to try a 3-man shoulder stand. Phil was exceptionally strong and could be the base man. Jim, long and lanky, volunteered to be in the middle, and I, ever the optimist, thought I could see some irregularities near the top that would do for handholds. It is amazing how brave the guys were to let me try it, because if I failed and fell, I would knock them onto some rather nasty rocks.

But we did it, and I moved along the still-twisting canyon. Around the first bend was the scene in the slide. I let out an involuntary Ooooooh! Immediately from below were cries of "What is it?" "What's there?" I was speechless, but after a moment I answered "Wait a sec while I see." The guys were determined, resourceful, and brave, but NOT patient. The next thing I heard was "Get back here. Get us up. Get the rope"

So I did.

We always carried a length of 1/4 inch nylon rope which the guys tossed to me. They swarmed up it hand over hand and I heard their involuntary cries of delight as they rounded the next corner. By then our shouting had collected the rest of the group so I tied foot loops in the rope and lowered it. We could tell by the sound as each person rounded that corner.

That one view alone would have made the whole trip worth it. And there was more, so much more. But that was definitely a highlight.

Which came before the 2 mile portage of the boats back to the cars. Which was a different kind of highlight.

This makes me wonder if you all have seen the Glen Canyon part of Phil's website:
<http://explorepx.com/glen.html>

Keturah Gashwiler Pennington