

FIRST DRAFT

First commercial river trip a perilous success for Nevills

July of 1938 was an anxious time for those tracking Norman Nevills' river trip down the Green and Colorado rivers.

The expedition launched in Green River, Utah, on June 20, and was considered the first commercial boating trip through the Grand Canyon.

On July 3, The New York Times reported that people at Lee's Ferry, Arizona, where the expedition was supposed to arrive on July 4, feared for the safety of Nevills and the five people with him.

The Daily Sentinel reported that the Colorado River was at its highest level in 10 years. "The water's too high" for boating, one unidentified "river rat" said. "You couldn't pay me to join them."

There was another reason for consternation: Two women were on the trip, University of Michigan botanist Elzada Clover and her lab assistant Lois Jotter. And no woman had successfully boated these waters. The only one who had tried, Bessie Hyde, had disappeared with her husband a decade earlier.

Buzz Holmstrom, who successfully floated from Green River, Wyoming, to Lake Mead alone in 1937, refused to join Nevills' 1938 trip because, he said, women were "too much of a handicap."

But Nevills had ignored such concerns. He had eagerly worked with Clover to organize the trip.

On July 8, much to everyone's relief, the expedition members were spotted from the air as they approached Lee's Ferry. They planned to rest a few days before tackling the Grand Canyon.

Norman Nevills was an unlikely man to invent commercial river running. His first recreational trip — a 1933 honeymoon jaunt with wife, Doris — logged only 21 miles on the San Juan River.

Born in California in 1908, Nevills and his mother moved to Mexican Hat, Utah, in 1928 to join Norm's father, Bill, who had an oil well nearby.

Norm helped his father and assisted groups working on the San Juan. He learned to run the river in small, fold-up rowboats.

But those weren't adequate for his honeymoon trip, so he designed and built his own boat, the first of many.

He and Doris launched a new boat in March 1934. This time, they reached Copper Canyon, 70 miles downstream from Mexican Hat.

Nevills' river reputation



BOB SILBERNAGEL



Norman Nevills, kneeling at the back of the boat, leads a party on a 1936 trek on the San Juan River.

MUSEUM OF MOAB/Special to the Sentinel

grew and he piloted more trips. In 1936, he ferried three California men down the San Juan and Colorado rivers to Lee's Ferry. He also began contemplating a trip through the Grand Canyon.

Others had done it, beginning with John Wesley Powell's expedition in 1869. Julius Stone and Nathan Galloway ran the Grand Canyon in 1909. Brothers Emery and Ellsworth Kolb ran it in 1911 and captured the first motion pictures of a river expedition.

Nevills consulted with Emery Kolb for his 1938 trip.

Government survey parties floated the Green and Colorado in the early 1920s and created maps that Nevills used on his trip. And Holmstrom's 1937 trip stirred interest in Nevills' expedition.

Clover visited Mexican Hat in 1937, and she and Norm began planning the 1938 trip. It would include her, Jotter and grad student Gene Atkinson as paying passengers.

Nevills designed new vessels, which he called cataract boats. He and a friend built three of them.

Unlike later river dories with upswep prow and stern, the Nevills boats were relatively flat, with hulls made of a new marine-grade plywood.

They were surprisingly resilient. After one challenging rapid, Nevills wrote in his journal: "Twenty-one miles an hour ... The sensation is indescribable! And how the boat rode!"

Although the beginning of the trip was exhilarating, Cataract Canyon — downstream

from Moab — proved difficult and threatened Nevills' abundant confidence.

Having nearly lost two people when a boat flipped, Nevills wrote: "The worry of this trip is hard, and the responsibility is tremendous. I sometimes wish I had never taken this trip as expedition leader."

There was dissent among the crew and passengers, and Nevills occasionally lost his temper. But they all made it to Lee's Ferry.

There, Nevills hitched a ride to Mexican Hat to see his family and recruit additional boatmen.

They launched again from Lee's Ferry on July 11 and had little trouble in the Grand Canyon, despite the high water. They reached Lake Mead on Aug. 1, greeted by Doris Nevills and Holstrom, a Nevada congressman and many newsmen.

Later that month, the Nevills and Clover traveled to Grand Junction, where they stayed at the La Court Hotel as the guests of Preston Walker, son of The Daily Sentinel's publisher, Walter Walker.

Preston would become a friend and frequent customer of Nevills.

During the visit, Clover was interviewed by the Sentinel. Despite the danger, she would make the trip again, she said, adding, "I wouldn't advise it as a common practice for women."

After the success of the 1938 expedition, Nevills had more commercial trips. In 1940, he and Doris led a trip from Green

River, Wyoming, to Lake Mead. A young Arizonan named Barry Goldwater joined them.

Others began to realize the business potential in river running, and by the mid-1940s, Nevills had several competitors. About that time, he learned to fly and bought a Piper Cub.

On Sept. 19, 1949, he and Doris took off from Mexican Hat, headed for Grand Junction. The engine sputtered and quit, and the plane slammed into a rock wall. Doris and Norm were killed in the fiery crash, leaving two daughters behind.

But Nevills' legacy lives on. The company he founded still operates as Canyoneers, out of Flagstaff, Arizona.

Numerous early river runners traced their training back to Nevills, or to people who learned from him.

And, in the 21st century, thousands of people — many of them women — pay commercial outfitters to take them on trips down the Colorado, Green and San Juan rivers.

Information for this column came from Gaylord Stavely's book, "The Rapids and the Roar: A Boating History of the Colorado River and Grand Canyon." Roy Webb's, "High, Wide, and Handsome: The River Journals of Norman D. Nevills;" The Canyoneers website, canyoneers.com; and Daily Sentinel archives.

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REGION SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

Man mistakes son for intruder, kills him

SEDALIA — A Colorado man who reportedly mistook his adult son for an intruder told deputies he shot and killed him.

Douglas County deputies arrested 58-year-old Frank Leon Huner of Sedalia on suspicion of second-degree murder. He was released after posting a \$50,000 bond.

Sheriff's spokeswoman Lauren LeKander says Huner called 911 at 10:15 p.m. Saturday to report the shooting. He later said the victim was his son.

LeKander said investigators believe the victim is Huner's son, but they are awaiting the coroner's confirmation. His name hasn't been released.

Sedalia is about 260 miles southeast of Grand Junction.

2 die in cop-involved shootings

FORT COLLINS — Two people died after separate officer-involved shootings in Larimer County in north-central Colorado.

One person was killed during a confrontation with law enforcement officers near the campus of Colorado State University in Fort Collins on Saturday night. Campus police officers responded to a report of a threatening man and Fort Collins police officers arrived to assist.

The man was armed with some type of weapon, and several officers fired shots. His name has not been released.

On Friday night, a Larimer County deputy shot 23-year-old Chet Knuppel of Fort Collins while investigating a crash involving a stolen vehicle between Fort Collins and Loveland.

The suspect fled on foot and was shot by a deputy.

Resort cities cancel fireworks displays

Two Colorado resort cities have canceled their Fourth of July fireworks displays because of the recent hot, dry weather.

Steamboat Springs Fire Rescue Chief Mel Stewart says that city's display was canceled after officials determined the show could spark a wildfire.

Little precipitation and hot weather over the past month also led the Aspen Chamber Resort Association to cancel its show. Aspen Deputy Fire Chief says the decision was made after noting the dry vegetation in the display area and in consultation with neighboring fire districts.

Cañon City's display was canceled because of a shortage of federally licensed people to ignite large displays.

Hank Holloway, chairman of the Fremont County Fireworks Committee, says the show will be rescheduled for 9 p.m. on New Year's Eve.

Colorado had a larger number of cancellations in 2012 and 2013.

Irrigation water on Redlands may flow by Tuesday

By ERIN MCINTYRE

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Redlands irrigation water customers could have water back as early as July 4 if repairs go smoothly for the provider.

The power plant operated by Redlands Water and Power Co. went down last week, and customers have been without irrigation water since Friday.

Redlands Water and Power Co. only provides irrigation water seasonally to customers located within 4,500 acres, but it produces power year-round and averages a generation of 1 million kilowatt-hours per month.

The parts that malfunctioned in last week's incident, called exciter brushes, are used in power production and are essential for the generator to function. Though they are replaced regularly, they erode over time from contact with other parts in the generator that wear them out.

Repairs to the inner workings

of the generator were in progress over the weekend, company representatives said.

The damaged pieces were taken to Denver for repairs, and officials hope to have those repairs completed by today.

"When the parts arrive in Grand Junction, we will immediately begin reassembly and work through the night if necessary," the provider said in a statement to shareholders and on its website. "As soon as we are ready we will restart the generator which provides electricity to our pumps. It will take several hours to return water to all of the ditches as we have four pumping stations to restart as the water reaches them."

More than 1,000 shareholders own shares of the company's irrigation water, and they receive water diverted from the Gunnison River and transported through 26 miles of ditches across the Redlands.

Agency probes E.coli outbreak in polygamist Utah city

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HILDALE, Utah — Utah health authorities said they are investigating an outbreak of E.coli after two children died in a city on the Arizona border that's home to a polygamist Mormon sect.

The investigation in Hildale, Utah, comes after the deaths

in recent weeks, the Southwest Utah Public Health Department told the Salt Lake Tribune.

The cause and number of E.coli cases was not available, said David Heaton, an official at the department.

The agency does not consider the town at large to be at risk, the Tribune reported.

"All the water testing we've

done in Hildale has been clean," Heaton said, "so we're focusing all our efforts on contaminated food or exposure to animals."

The department is looking at one location, he said, declining to identify it because of the ongoing investigation.

E.coli can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches or other symptoms.

It has been a while since there's been an outbreak of E. coli in southern Utah, Heaton said, adding that there have been individual cases.

Hildale and adjacent Colorado City, Arizona, have been dominated for decades by members of the polygamist Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints.

BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

New Castle man jailed

A New Castle man who had numerous warrants against him was taken into custody at the Garfield County Jail on June 15, according to the Glenwood Springs Police Department.

When contacted by sheriff's deputies, Andres Carrillo-Delara, 20, allegedly assaulted one officer and tried to flee on foot, but later was caught.

He was jailed on suspicion of felony menacing, second-degree assault, first-degree assault, possession of a weapon by a previous offender, obstructing a peace officer, resisting arrest and reckless endangerment.

According to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office:

■ Darrell Baker, 59, was arrested on June 17 on suspicion of arson, criminal mischief, tampering and assault in the 400 block of

Manzana Drive.

■ Deputies are investigating a possible sex assault reported in the 400 block of Ananesa Drive on June 24.

■ Marcos Hernandez-Perez, 36, was arrested on suspicion of DUI in the 3300 block of C 1/2 Road on June 24.

The Grand Junction Police Department did not release crime reports on Sunday.

Pick 3 Midday Sunday: 3-9-8 Evening Sunday: 7-9-7

Cash 5 Sunday: 10-12-16-20-21

For information, go to www.coloradolottery.com.

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The employees of The Daily Sentinel have joined together to adopt a local non-profit organization/charity of the month. We want to help raise awareness and badly needed funds for these organizations that are dedicated to helping people in our community.

JULY JEANS FOR CHARITY ORGANIZATION:

Kids' Aid

While adults are going through difficult days, it seems children end up paying the highest price.

Right now - in our community - there are elementary and middle school children who have little or nothing to eat over the weekend. They must make the school lunch on Friday stretch to lunch on Monday.

Kids' Aid was founded to help. Children in the program are given backpacks of food and snacks to take home to share with their family over the weekend. We invite you to join with us and help this deserving program feed children.

Please send your tax deductible donation to:

Kids' Aid, P.O. Box 2569, Grand Junction, CO 81502 or call (970) 712-2847