

# GRAND CANYON FOOTPRINTS

SPECIAL THANKS OSKAR FOR HIS PHOTOGRAPHIC CONTRIBUTIONS

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## The People Who Hike Grand Canyon

By Cliff Beck

My name is Cliff Beck and I am the heretofore-anonymous editor of Footprints. Let me crawl out from behind the pages to say hello and welcome you to the latest edition of the newsletter for those who like to walk the Grand Canyon. In the short two and a half years of its existence, my experiences with the Grand Canyon Hikers and Backpackers Association suggest that a diverse, passionate group of people have made the canyon a vital if not central part of their lives. My goal as editor of the newsletter is to inform our members, encourage them to see the canyon on foot, and to share common events and interests.

Members of GCHBA appear to hold a wide range of interests and opinions. I have personally met a number of the members, and have followed virtually every thread of discussion at the Yahoo website. What have impressed me most are the breadth of personal background that has led us to the canyon for enjoyment, and the range of pleasures that can be obtained from it.

First, geography. You would think that by far the majority of interest in the canyon would be from localities that are within close proximity. I took an informal survey of GCHBA membership and found that, while many of our group is from Arizona, there are just as many from the Southeast and Northwest as come from neighbors New Mexico and Utah. Over 30 states are represented in our group. Interestingly, the preparation of this newsletter is representative of the downsizing of the country: it is written in several states, edited in Maryland, graphic design comes from New Hampshire, and printing and mailing is done in Los Angeles.

Second, age. It seems consistent with other hiking groups that backpackers get

started late in life and don't blossom until past the age of 30. For many, it is an avocation that won't go away. A man to whom all Grand Canyon hikers revere, Harvey Butchart, continued hiking until his body would no longer cooperate. Another famous canyon hiker who was recently interviewed for the cover story of Backpacker magazine, Colin Fletcher, cannot forget hiking despite a severe accident that limits what his body can do. Mr. Fletcher first hiked the canyon in the 60's. Later in the newsletter I wish a birthday greeting to another of those canyon hikers that cannot get it out of their system, Maverick, who celebrated his 76th birthday with a hike from rim to rim.

Third, the breadth of personal ideologies is staggering. Folks from all walks of life share a love for this place. Sit on a bench at Indian Garden for a few hours and you might encounter the following: a 53 year old Phoenix real estate lady whose favorite discussion item while hiking is Democratic Party politics, or; two brothers and an uncle from Kansas City and Seattle, and all the Seattle musician wanted was a tan to show off back in the damp Northwest, or; a grizzled, white-haired hiker from Miami Florida who has spent every summer for the last 25 years coming to the canyon for another hike.

Our politics and ideologies are as vast as our geographic distribution, but we share the goal of preserving this place for future generations to enjoy. I am a "joiner", i.e., I join with groups of like-minded souls for the enjoyment of a shared interest. What has typically been the case, however, is that most members of a group have thoughts on a range of things that are similar to mine. In the case of the Grand Canyon Hikers I find that, despite the obvious common de-

nominator, our group has a wide range of opinion on matters that tangentially affect our favorite place. Sharing the goal of preservation, for example, can still lead to exceptional discussions on how it can best be accomplished.

Take the subject of park access. Many would agree with the objective that access should accommodate as many users as possible while maintaining the wilderness features of the park. Trails should be maintained, or not, to achieve a range of hiking opportunities for different skill levels and physical abilities while retaining the Grand Canyon's qualities as a wilderness.

The trick is in the balance. Policies that enable access from the air have an impact on those obtaining access on foot, for example. The policies for obtaining backcountry permits can favor long distance applicants to the detriment of local users or commercial users over private, un-guided parties. They can favor the long-term plan over the spur-of-the-moment idea. They can determine whether you experience the quiet and solitude of an at-large campsite, or the relative security of a campground with facilities and a ranger presence.

Grand Canyon National Park policies will continue to play a huge role in how we enjoy the park. Should the park maintain more trails or less? Should the park build more facilities, such as



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## People Who Hike Grand Canyon

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backcountry toilets, or less? More air tours, or less? More vehicle access to the rim, or less? More permits, or less, or a different method of allocation?

I can envision the GCHBA sorting through these issues and, over time, formulating a position that best represents the position of our members. We won't always agree, but hopefully our consensus will settle on what is best for the canyon. As our organization matures, the Park will look to us as a representative of the hiking community and will want to know what our position is on subjects that affect us. If we want to represent the hiking community, we will need to clear our throats and speak up.

The GCHBA is not the only organization actively involved in supporting the park. The Grand Canyon Association and its Grand Canyon Field Institute, the Grand Canyon Pioneers Society and Arizona's Sierra Club chapter are just a sample of the groups that provide tremendous support in a number of ways. On occasion, we have partnered with them to accomplish service projects and look forward to joint efforts in the future.

Our group is off to a great start in demonstrating our commitment to the park. We have established ourselves as a major participant in volunteer work. Board member Mike Coltrin is now recognized by the Park Service as our liaison for service projects. In an article in this issue Mike describes his efforts to establish our credentials in a number of service areas, including periodic maintenance of the corridor campgrounds, mapping over time the location and condition of at-large campsites, and soon we will undertake our first re-vegetation project. In addition, member Bill Orman is becoming our National Trails Day coordinator. See his article on the work done this past June on the Old Bright Angel Trail.

There has been a lot of progress in getting the GCHBA off and running, but there is so much more to be done. Please stay with us as we develop and grow together.

See you at the October meeting!

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## Don't Let This Happen To You

By Doug Nering

Everybody knows Murphy's Law, but there are a few less-well-known points about it. First, Murphy's Law is sometimes confused with Finagle's Law, which is about how things always go wrong no matter what you do to prevent it. The real Murphy was an engineer so Murphy's Law has nothing to do with things always going wrong. If that were true, every mechanical device would break apart and every building or bridge would fall down before we put it to use.

Murphy's Law: If things can go wrong they will go wrong. The main point is that there are things that will go wrong if you don't act to prevent it. Backpackers are believers in Murphy's Law because they are always thinking of the things that could go wrong on a hike and always thinking what they can do to make sure it doesn't happen, or at least prepare. We do things like making checklists of essential items. We test equipment like stoves and sleeping pads and tents just before the trip, such as standing in the sprinkler wearing our raingear. Each of these things we do to make sure something that could go wrong doesn't.

And so we get to the story of something that we didn't think could go wrong... but it did.

The trip was one of the best planned and organized I have ever been with. A group of 8 for the Royal Arch loop. I had hiked only once with this bunch but I could tell they knew what they were doing and I appreciated the chance to team up for this very technical route. We even had a day of mandatory rappel practice with a climbing instructor.

Day One went from Bass Camp to the head of Royal Arch Creek. Day Two involved the dreaded Supai traverse, down the creek and stop at Royal Arch, a fabulous photo spot. Day Three meant up and over to the rappel and down to the river with enough time for a day hike to Elves Chasm. Day Five was to Copper Canyon, and this is where things started to go off the plan. A few people were worried about water here, but I had been into the lower part near the Bass copper mine and offered to take the lead for a shortcut directly off the Tonto to where I was sure there would be water in this fairly wet season. The group split because some had enough water for a dry camp and 2 others (highly experienced Grand Canyon hikers - they claimed) I suspect were just not paying attention. An Anasazi track gave

passage through the Tapeats cliff and down to a trickle of water, and I immediately gained respect as a knower of ancient ways and hidden truths.

When we rejoined next morning we learned that the 2 "experts" of the group had been out of water that night and so decided to continue to Bass. Serious impatience now took hold of several people. The group (save 3 of us) was in a stampede for the rim even though we had another night reserved in Bass Canyon. So we split again, camped the next night above the huge rock water pocket in Bass (but did not find the other 2 of our party) and hiked out the next day. We arrive at the top and there are no vehicles left from our group, and nobody else at the trailhead. We are 35 miles from civilization with no transport, a couple food bars, and a half-liter of water.

What went wrong? I was a rider with 1 of the 3 who skipped the last night. It turned out that 1 of the 2 who went on from Copper the previous night had been a rider with the other 2 who stayed with me. They had given him a spare key to get stuff out of the truck. The story we got later was that when they found no water at Bass they hiked on all night, arriving at the rim dehydrated and worn out. Although there were supplies in the truck they opted to drive to GC Village for dinner and spend the night and then return the next day. But they did not come early. When they came back to the trailhead and found the other vehicles gone they concluded that everyone had come out and headed home. So they drove the truck back to Phoenix.

What happened to us? Good luck. A solo hiker who had gone down into Bass for an overnight came up and drove us to Tusayan where we rented a car to get home.

Whose fault was it? Small Claims Court agreed it was the 2 who took the truck. Most of the decisions and actions were somewhat reasonable taken alone (some less so). It seemed that everyone felt a little guilty about abandoning us (accidentally) except the 2 who were using someone's truck for an evening without permission.

Is there a useful lesson here? If there is, I still haven't figured it out. But if I ever give my key to anyone there will be some rules what they can do with it. And I developed an appreciation why horse stealing was a hanging offence.

### VIDEO

#### Hiking the Grand Canyon: □ The Corridor Trails

by Ken McNamara and Rob Kleine □  
Produced by ConMara Publishing, Inc.

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## Happy Birthday, Maverick!

By Cliff Beck

What a way to spend a birthday. Imagine that you have been hooked on the Grand Canyon for over 40 years, having spent many days and nights in the backcountry. Imagine also that you are now in your mid 70's, and to celebrate your birthday, you take off on a seven day hike from rim to rim, renewing acquaintances while enjoying the place you love so much. Many Grand Canyon hikers imagine such a situation, some get to live it, and quite a few hope it will be available to us. I have met a man who lives it, and lives it with a passion and enjoyment rarely seen. He is called Maverick, but came into this world as Laurent Gaudreau.

During my annual spring trip to hike at the Grand Canyon, I had the fortune to be in the right place at the right time, although for all the wrong reasons. While fidgeting an extra two days at Bright Angel Campground due to a medical problem, I was hanging about learning as much as I could on heat stress and self monitoring from Volunteer Sjorss and Rangers Bryan Wisher and Allison Mathis. One of the many visitors to the ranger station was an older gentleman and lady with considerable spring in their step. The gentleman was familiar to me.

Yep, I had met him years ago while I was spending my last night in the canyon after a long hike across the Tonto. Maverick and his wife were volunteer assistants at Indian Garden, and we had talked at length about the canyon in general. Then a year ago this past April, our GCHBA held a spring service project at Indian Garden and I spied Maverick in the pictures.

So with that history, having developed such a warm bond (?), when I saw him approach the Phantom ranger station this spring he must have been confused when I shouted "Maverick" and approached him like a long lost friend. Soon we were chatting as if I was (a friend, not long lost) and I learned more of this very interesting person.

His hike had run into the usual canyon surprises. For example, he and his hiking partner had to turn back at Cottonwood due to a three day trail closure near the North Rim and was treated to a huge birthday cake

(carrot, delicious) by the Phantom Ranch staff as he headed back to the South Rim. He showed considerable alarm at the condition of Cottonwood Camp, and was telling anyone that would listen that he would volunteer to fix it up.

Maverick is no longer serving as a volunteer at Indian Garden, but remains a park volunteer wherever he is needed. He recognizes the need for help, particularly with maintenance of the Corridor campgrounds, but so far is stymied by the lack of housing at Indian Garden, Bright Angel, and Cottonwood. Having completed classes for first responders and preventive search and rescue, I expect to see him on PSAR patrol helping those who have been overwhelmed by their Corridor adventure.

He is hiking more than he has in the recent past, and this can at least partially be explained by his new line of work - employee at the backcountry store in the Marketplace and product representative for Go-Lite, the super lightweight gear company founded by Ray Jardine.

What does this have to do with hiking more? As Maverick explained to me, one of his first hikes into the canyon back in the 60's was a hike down Red Canyon on the New Hance Trail to Hance Rapid. He estimates that the pack and contents for that first hike tipped the scale at about 65 pounds. For his rim to rim hike in 2002, everything but food and water tipped the scale at about 9 pounds, approximately the weight of just his pack from his early days. Whether you are over 70 or over 7, dramatic achievements in weight control can mean more miles on the trail and less wear and tear on the knees and other body parts that suffer weight poorly.

Suffice it to say, I thoroughly enjoyed my conversation with Maverick. Hopefully we will continue to see him somewhere around the Grand Canyon. He is trying mightily to make himself more useful to the Park Service in a voluntary capacity, and if he is successful, I suspect he will click his heels and dance a little jig in celebration. On a personal note, I mentioned that I was reserving my first rim to rim hike for my 50th birthday in 2005, and he offered to join me. Could I ask for better inspiration?



*"Maverick" lending a helping hand at the Indian Garden  
GCHBA Service Project*

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# GCHBA Service Projects for 2002

By Mike Coltrin, Service Projects Coordinator

It has been a busy 2002 for our service projects program, with GCHBA involved in four projects at Grand Canyon. Volunteers for the first project were Bob Ribokas, Hank Schnieder, Steve Parkis and Mike Coltrin. The project was a Campsite Assessment in the Garnet Use Area. Park officials use the information provided by campsite assessments to help determine the boundaries of Use Areas and the number of permits it allows in an area. The survey was directed by myself (Mike Coltrin) while hiking the Royal Arch Route in mid-April. (Park officials have trained me to teach the assessment techniques.) The last assessment was made in 1996 by Ranger Chuck Sypher. We were able to identify sixteen of the eighteen sites from that survey. The other two were on a beach near the Colorado River that had eroded down to bedrock in the intervening years.



Our second project was at Indian Garden and followed the April GCHBA meeting of the board of directors. Bob Ribokas, Mike Coltrin, Dick and Joan Gladson, Lynn and Pat Davis, Doug Nering and Gene Fowler attended. Directed by Ranger Chuck Sypher, the group reworked the Tonto Trail at its crossing of Pipe Creek, cleared trash from below the Tapeats at Plateau Point, did a Rapid Campsite Survey at Horn Creek and rehabilitated some picnic tables at Indian Garden. The highlight of this project was the afternoon that Gene offered to make an ice cream run. He hiked to the General Store on the rim and brought back a gallon of frozen delight for his fellow GCHBA'ers.

The third project was at Cottonwood Campground in early May. This was a joint project with a group from the Sierra Club lead by Bob Audretsch. GCHBA volunteers were Mike and Kathy Hayes, their son and Mike Coltrin. There were six volunteers in Bob's group. Ranger Bryan Wisher was our Park leader. By prior arrangement, the GCHBA bunch came in a day earlier than the Sierra Club.

On our first day young Hayes helped Mike C. build an industrial size water bar across the trail at the upper end of the campground. Mike H. worked on building a floor in the clean-out below the composting toilets while Kathy assisted Bryan prepare some of the buildings for painting. When Bob's bunch arrived they pitched right in.

The storage battery box behind the tool building was rehabilitated and a wood fence was built around the propane storage area. Two buildings were scraped and painted, diversion ditches were dug and several social trails in the campground were obliterated. On Friday night Bryan treated us to a pasta dinner.



We all ate our fill and there were leftovers for lunch on Saturday.

On National Trails Day, June first, Bill Orman led a group of GCHBA'ers on a trail clipping party. They cleared the upper stretches of the Old Bright Angel Trail. Bill provides us with a full report on his project elsewhere in Footprints.

This October a group of GCHBA volunteers will work with the Canyon revegetation program at Indian Garden pruning berry bushes. Ten members will be involved in this project. Space was available for this project as this issue of Footprints went to press.

Other projects will follow. If you would like to become involved in GCHBA service projects at Grand Canyon, contact me at Coltrin1@cox.net or by telephone (520) 624-1831.

## National Trails Day on the Old Bright Angel Trail

By Bill Orman

The GCHBA undertook its first official National Trails Day event this year. We were very ably assisted in this effort by Jim Boucher, facilities manager for the North Rim, who helped me with the logistical planning (obtaining permission to do the project, obtaining a group campsite for us, providing some tools, etc). John McFarland, a North Rim trail crew employee, joined us on the trail and helped both with the work and with safety and trail maintenance techniques.

The inspiration for this event came about 5 years ago, when, more or less on impulse, I decided to hike the Old BA as part of a long day hike loop, descending the North Kaibab to Roaring Springs, then regaining the rim via the Old BA, and closing the loop on the Ken Patrick Trail... I had a long but wonderful hike, marred only by the bad, scratchy overgrowth on the upper portions of the Old BA. When I finished the hike, full of enthusiasm for this old trail, I headed straight for the visitors center and asked the ranger on duty if it would be possible to organize a trail maintenance project on the Old BA. Her words in reply are still quite vivid! "Sir, that would be illegal. That trail is government property and is officially abandoned." Ranger Bob Audretsch of the South Rim provided me with much more helpful contacts, and this led to my meeting with Jim Boucher.

As it happened, June 1st, National Trails Day, coincided with funeral services for Harvey Butchart.

We had a few understandable cancellations, including Jim Ohlman and his family. Harvey's memory came to me several times during the day, and I thought that perhaps it was a fitting tribute to his memory to be out working in the place that he had loved so much.

We ended up with a large group of volunteers on the project, plus John McFarland. Included in the group were Doug Nering and his dad; Dick Gladson and his wife Joan; Helen Hill; Pat Smiley and her son Charles; Merle Parmer and his friend Rick Obermiller; and 3 friends of mine from the hospital in Tuba City.

Actual work on the trail took place on Saturday, June 1st, and lasted from about 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. We divided the group into 2 work groups, one working down from the top, and the other hiking down to the top of the Redwall and then working back up. The work consisted of cutting back heavy overgrowth of manzanita, scrub oak, and maple, for the most part. Doug Nering and John McFarland also did an excellent job of rerouting one section of trail that had become overgrown and braided. In all, we probably cleared 2 miles of trail.

There are several ways to get to the Old BA. The most straightforward, though not the shortest, is simply to hike the Ken Patrick Trail on the rim to the east from the North Kaibab Trail parking lot. The start of the Old BA is signed along the Ken Patrick. It is about a 2 hour hike just to get to the Old BA trailhead. You can also hike in on the Ken Patrick from the other end at its crossing of the Cape Royal road, coming west. That way takes a little more than an hour.

The shortest way is to park at the first pull out you come to after turning onto the road to Cape Royal and Point Sublime, finding the old road crossing the meadow, and hiking to the rim. That is about an hour hike.

Ranger Jim Boucher was very supportive of our efforts, and is open to suggestions on other North Rim projects. We hope to do another National Trails Day project with him next year. Many thanks again to all our outstanding volunteers and to the Park Service.



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# The Scary Spot in the Trail

By Cliff Beck

On a number of occasions at Yahoo's Grand Canyon website, hikers have commented on, and weighed the relative risk of exposure on some of the canyon's more interesting trails. Many trail sections have been debated, as well as the definition of exposure. Mentioned but not highly rated have been the South Kaibab and Beamer trails. Highly rated, but not achieving the title of Scariest, are the Boucher and a particularly risky section of the "river route" near Deer Creek. But the unofficial title of Scariest must belong to a stretch of the Nankoweap Trail. My first encounter with the subject came years ago as I was researching future hikes and read the trail description for Nankoweap on Bob Ribokas' Grand Canyon Explorer website. I guess Bob visited the spot again and commented on Yahoo, and the flood-gates of opinion opened up.

I have undertaken a little research on the subject of exposure, defined by a reliable dictionary as "the condition of being exposed, especially to the forces of nature". So we are discussing the right thing, since gravity pulling us over the edge is a prime force of nature! A sampling from the Yahoo discussion follows:

Bob Ribokas, post #2817: "The definition of exposure seems to vary wildly from person to person. I personally don't consider either of these trails (Grandview and Boucher) to have much exposure though my wife would probably disagree. I thought there was a lot more "exposure" along Dripping Springs between Hermit and Boucher than either Grandview or Boucher. I also never gave the Deer Creek route much thought but I am sure that I would have felt differently had I been carrying a pack. The only place I have ever felt exposed on a trail was on that 10-15 foot eroded section of the Nankoweap."

Gil Nyerges post #2886: "Hate to keep harping on an old subject but I did the South Kaibab - Bright Angel loop yesterday. I paid particular attention to the exposure along these two Super Highways. Both had much more direct exposure than the Boucher. By direct exposure I mean a long distance fall by stumbling off the trail. In several spots along each there are several hundred-foot falls just over the edge. I had never really noticed them before. I suppose I had just become complacent because these trails are "wimpy" tourist trails that for the most part are 5 or more feet wide. The Boucher has its spots but for sheer thrills if you mess up I think the Super Highways win. Don't take my word, check them out for yourself. Chow."

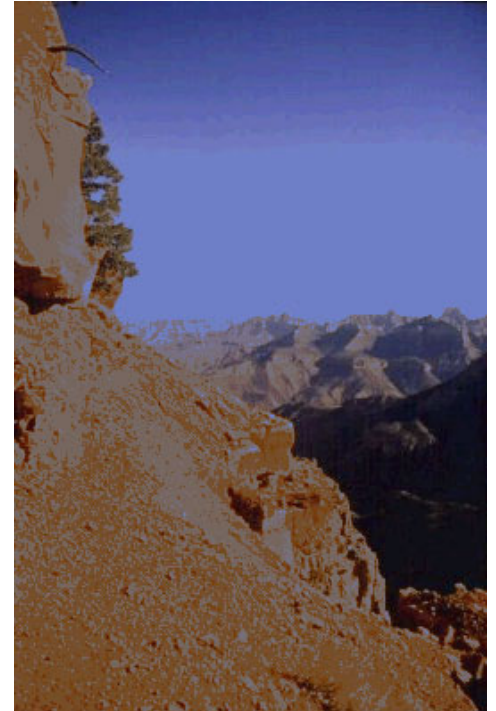
Mike Hill post #792: "On our hike of Nankoweap, what I consider a strange thing happened. On the hike down we noticed, and were very cautious, over a very narrow spot in the long traverse before Marion Point. On the hike out I planned to take a picture of someone walking across that portion of the trail. And I was looking forward to the section, thinking, "I hope the wind isn't this strong when we go across that". Here's the strange part, I never

noticed the narrow spot. What happened? Maybe we had gotten so "trail tough" we didn't even think it was hard. Or, could there be two small variations on the trail. One that is normally followed on the way down, the other on the way out. Anyway, it seemed very strange to all four of us. We had spread out on the trail, and passed the long traverse somewhat separately. And nobody noticed the section that had given us pause on the way down. What do you think?"

Interesting observations, but lets focus on that Nankoweap spot mentioned by Bob and Mike. Two veterans of Grand Canyon trails have availed of themselves the opportunity to comment on the Nankoweap Trail; as mentioned before, Bob Ribokas' trail description and photograph are a terrific summary of a Grand Canyon "bad spot" that must repeat itself on many of the canyon's trails.

As Bob describes it: "The worst of these spots occurs just west of the approach to Marion Point where the trail is confined by the upper and lower cliffs. There is a slope of reasonably solid ground about 4 feet wide between them with a little trail about 6 inches wide at the top of the slope. One wrong step here and it's all over. There are a couple of other bad spots just west of the approach to Titled Mesa, though they are not nearly as bad as the first. This first one frequently causes some concern for people and many hikes have been aborted because they have not wished to take the chance and pass it. I was lucky and hit it both times with the ground being dry. I'm not sure what I would have done had the ground here been wet or muddy."

Sounds scary, wouldn't you agree? But what cemented the description for me was an article I recently read by Harvey Butchart, published in Summit magazine (Routes into Grand Canyon's Remote Upper Corner, March 1968), which goes like this: "At one place below an overhang a man feels like creeping on all fours along a narrow ledge. At other places the route is across exposed clay and shale slopes where one must test every step. Again one must make his way across rockslides. The Nankoweap Trail is only occasionally used by the adventurous." Mr. Butchart included two photos with the article. The one labeled, Precarious place on Nankoweap Trail shows a hiker making his way across the stretch of trail shown in Bob's photograph, down on his hands and knees!! It looks like Harvey, but could it be Doc Thomas?



Nankoweap "narrows"  
PHOTO BY BOB RIBOKAS

IN MEMORY OF  
**Harvey Butchart  
 and  
 Roma Butchart**



**In Fond Memory**

*By Cliff Beck*

Let us keep in our thoughts the following members of the Grand Canyon hiking community that have recently passed away.

**Roma Butchart** on April 3, 2002 passed away after a long illness. The loving wife of renowned Harvey Butchart, she befriended many of his hiker friends.

**Harvey Butchart** on May 29, 2002 as a result of declining health. Mr. Butchart has been regarded as the dean of Grand Canyon hiking, having charted many of the known rim descents and scaled many of the high points within the canyon. A true pioneer.

Sabra

Kenton Grua



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