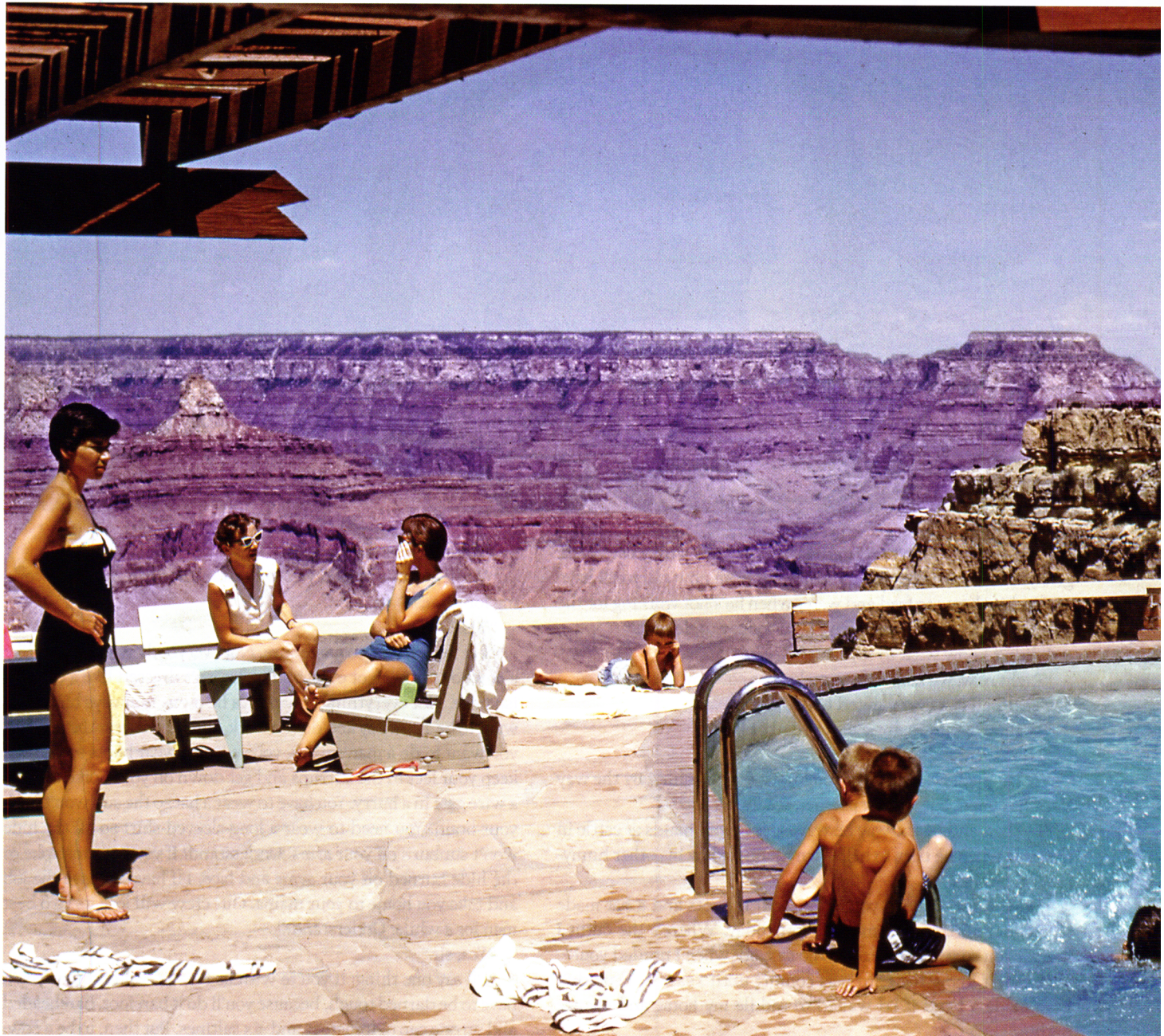


# Is That a Swimming Pool on the South Rim?

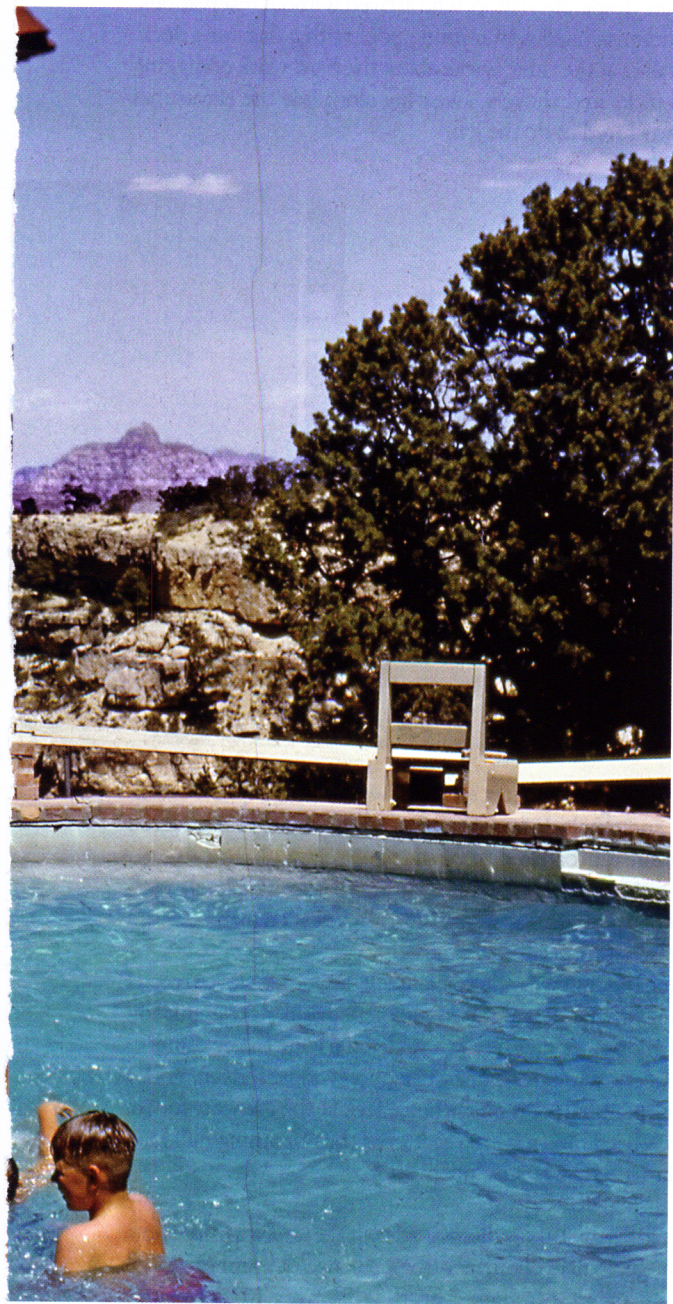


Almost no one remembers it, but, for a few decades in the middle of the last century, Grand Canyon Inn welcomed visitors with “a patio overlooking the Canyon, a swimming pool, fine foods and cocktails.” There was a curio shop, too, which sold everything from Indian art to uranium samples. ➤ By Kathy Montgomery

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK MUSEUM COLLECTION



Grand Canyon Inn's swimming pool, which overlooked the South Rim, was known for its bitingly cold and heavily chlorinated water. And for the view, of course.



Bill and Dotty West picked the Grand Canyon for their 1962 honeymoon, figuring they could escape the August heat and still get back in time for fall classes at Arizona State University. Bill's fraternity brothers made the reservations at Grand Canyon Inn. Its brochure advertised "a patio overlooking the Canyon, a swimming pool, fine foods and cocktails."

They arrived at "a quaint place, nicely kept," about 2 miles beyond Grand Canyon Village, with "a little café and Indian art for sale in the lobby."

Years later, the couple returned to celebrate their anniversary, but the inn was gone.

"We found remains of what we thought might have been it," Dotty recalls. "There was rigging for what looked like a mine shaft. We could barely tell there had been a facility there."

The couple asked around in the village, but no one remembered it.

"It was a beautiful place," Bill says. "It became very, very special to us. And then it went away."

**T**HE STORY OF GRAND CANYON INN spans 30 years, beginning with a mining claim and ending with the stroke of a U.S. president's pen. Its destiny was shaped by colorful characters, a world war, a celebrity's son, the arms race and an act of Congress.

It started with the discovery of green mineral stains on an obscure Canyon wall by a prospector named Dan Hogan. Born in Syracuse, New York, Hogan found his way to the Canyon in the winter of 1890, when he completed the first known Rim-to-Rim-to-Rim backpacking trip. During that expedition, Havasupai Indians led him to a spot 1,100 feet below the rim between Maricopa and Powell points, where markings indicated the presence of copper.

In 1893, Hogan filed the Orphan copper claim with a partner. Then, the Spanish-American War took him to Cuba, where he fought with Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders. After the war, he returned and patented his claim in 1906 with the backing of Charlie Babbitt, a prominent resident of Flagstaff. The claim consisted of 20 acres: four or five on the rim, the rest extending down the Canyon wall.

Two years later, the Grand Canyon became a national monument, and in 1919, it became a national park. Mining was forbidden. But the Orphan was grandfathered in.

Hogan found work in Flagstaff and returned periodically to improve his claim, but it never produced much copper. Grand Canyon National Park, however, brought tourists. So, in 1936, Hogan built a trading post, and later, he added an inn. He called it Grand Canyon Trading Post.

World War II brought rationing and travel restrictions. Fred Harvey closed Bright Angel Lodge and Lookout Studio. Hogan, too, shut down until the postwar boom revived tourism. Then, he sold his place to Madeleine Jacobs, who reopened it as Kachina Lodge.

Jacobs approached a former Harvey girl who was working in Harvey's laundry to moonlight in the restaurant. Mary Hoover was fed up with waitressing but needed the money, and Jacobs was convincing.

To Hoover, the lodge looked more like a warehouse than a curio shop and restaurant. But Jacobs maintained a nice dining room, and it hosted a lot of parties.

"I remember one," Hoover says. "The man was an artist, and his wife had a bottle of champagne for everybody. It was hard to serve because they were all so happy. You couldn't get by. They'd want you to dance with them. But how could you dance when you had an armful of steaks?"

## One employee recalls a cook who was “fabulous” but would get “drunk as a skunk”

Hoover recalls that Jacobs also had a nice curio shop and didn't take kindly when a customer referred to its wares as “junk.”

“[Jacobs] said, ‘I cut my teeth on the gold doorknobs at the Waldorf-Astoria, and my things are not junk,’” Hoover says. “‘If you don't want to look at my things, there's the door.’”

But Jacobs was kind to Hoover. “I could never say I liked something, because the next day, it would be there for me,” Hoover says. “I didn't think it was right for me to take her things, but she insisted.”

At the time, Dan Hogan was living there.

“He was just a lonesome little man, but he was a nice person,” Hoover says. “I would see him pulling a bucket of ore up over the top of the rim by hand. That's how he mined.”

Eventually, he and Jacobs parted ways. “I think she just didn't like him wandering around,” Hoover says. “And he still felt it was his property.”

Jacobs kept a big white horse that had been in movies and reared up on command. She also had a car, which arrived on a truck.

“It was an old car that had New York license plates on it,” Hoover recalls.

People told her she couldn't drive around with expired New York tags, but Jacobs insisted that the Grand Canyon was a national park and Arizona law didn't apply.

“She was very adamant when she thought she was right,” Hoover says. “She kept the car and drove it in the park, never out of it. And when she left, she put it on the truck again and took it out.”

When she moved, Jacobs leased the place to Will Rogers Jr., who called it The Rogers Place and ran it, briefly, as a tribute to his father.

It was vacant when James Barrington, a successful California homebuilder, heard about the property through a real estate agent he shared office space with — someone who knew Jacobs. It had been stripped of most plumbing fixtures and saleable items, but he loved the idea of restoring it. He and his brother, Dave, bought the place and went to work with help from their parents; their wives, Ellie and Tess; James and Ellie's two children, Penny and Jim; and a crew of Navajos, Hopis and Havasupais.

The main building contained three stories, Penny recalls. A wobbly staircase led to the top floor, which held guest rooms, staff quarters and two unheated rooms partitioned off for Penny and Jim.

The entry floor included a flagstone patio, which they enclosed to make a lobby with an 8-foot fireplace, a soda machine and a mechanical horse you could ride for a nickel.

Stairs led down to the restaurant, kitchen and bar, which they gutted, removing a wood-burning stove, a tiny tin-lined ice cupboard, a galvanized dishwashing tub and “the perfectly preserved skeleton of a squirrel.” In their place, they installed a six-burner

stove, two sinks and a real refrigerator, although they continued to use a cold-storage room, cooled with huge ice blocks bought from the village icehouse.

The bar included a small grandstand with a baby-grand piano, and a 20-foot-by-30-foot hardwood dance floor, which was well-used, especially on Friday and Saturday nights when there was live music. So were the large windows they installed on the north end, which offered magnificent views of the Canyon.

In addition to the lodge, there were eight cabins, four on the rim, and a “long building” with 15 or so rooms.

The Barringtons also erected tents behind the long building to accommodate desperate visitors who arrived without reservations, and they commissioned a swimming pool with a flagstone deck. Jim, who was 12 at the time, wrote about the hard work of digging it out with picks and shovels, sweating alongside the Havasupai man who was hired to do the job.



Water was always in short supply. Two cisterns collected rainwater and snowmelt. When it ran out, the Barringtons ordered water from the railroad and trucked it in.

“My mom learned how to shampoo and bathe completely with one bucket of water,” Penny wrote in an unpublished memoir. Even so, water ran out from time to time.

Managing the staff was another challenge. One employee recalls a cook who was “fabulous” but would get “drunk as a skunk” on her day off and sometimes be too hungover to cook the next morning. And once, a wrangler named Chappo, who was given money to buy hay, spent half of it on entrance fees at the Prescott rodeo. When James fired him, Chappo scattered the remaining half-load of hay and turned the horses loose.

■ In 1951, radioactivity was discovered near the Orphan Mine. Government geologists confirmed the presence of uranium. With the nuclear-arms race in high gear, the discovery would change everything for Kachina Lodge.

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In 1953, the Barringtons sold the lodge to a lawyer named William R. Grant, though they continued to manage it. Grant renamed it Grand Canyon Inn. The same year, Jacobs, who had retained the Orphan's mineral rights, sold them to Golden Crown Mining Co., a subsidiary of Western Gold & Uranium.

The Barringtons left the following year. Penny remembers that her parents were broke and bitter, and she says they never wanted to talk about the inn. They didn't even keep a photo.

Max Kofford, the mine's chief geologist, says Golden Crown was out of money and facing a litany of troubles. It didn't help that the mining activity upset Grand Canyon Inn's owner, who threatened to sue.

The mining company bought the inn, taking over some cabins for mining operations. When the uranium turned out to be some of the highest-grade in the United States, the Orphan made the company a lot of money.

ular with visiting ladies wanting to dance with a cowboy — and tourists who came after Fred Harvey's bars had closed.

**B**Y 1961, the mine and the inn were at a crossroads. Most of the ore in the claim had been mined out. The company wanted to follow the lode into the park and believed it was their right. The federal government disagreed.

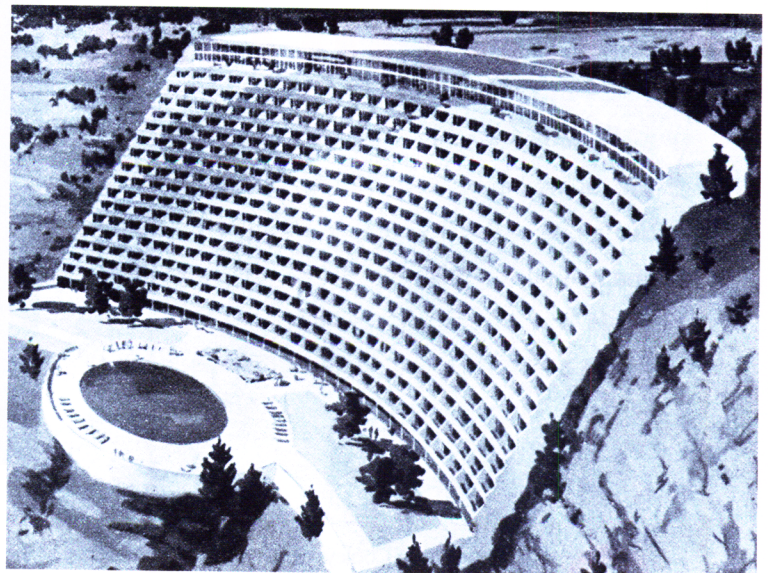
Rather than fight it out in court, the company lobbied Congress to pass legislation allowing it to mine under the park. It also proposed that Grand Canyon Inn be torn down to make room for a 600-room hotel that would cascade 18 floors down the Canyon wall.

The proposed hotel created a national uproar. Letters published in *Arizona Highways* prompted a response by the company chairman, who wrote in the magazine: "If Uncle Sam will let us mine, we will mine. If he forces us to build a hotel, we will build ... one."

**FAR LEFT:** Dan Hogan's property at the Grand Canyon Inn site included this nightclub.

**LEFT:** The windows of the inn's upstairs lounge offered unobstructed Canyon views. This photograph was made in the mid-1950s.

**RIGHT:** This artist's rendering shows a 600-room hotel that would have cascaded down the Canyon wall. That idea never became reality.



The dismay of the National Park Service grew in proportion to the mining operations, and after the construction of ore-loading facilities, a 60,000-gallon water tank and other structures, the Park Service closed the rim walk.

The mine also captured the attention of tourists, who showed up so often that in the late 1950s, Western Gold (Golden Crown had, by then, merged with its parent) printed a flier with a map to an overlook where tourists could watch the mine's operation. The flier expressed regret that tours were not possible, but said uranium samples could be purchased from the inn.

Miners' kids and residents of Grand Canyon Village mostly remember the inn in those days for its pool, which was the only one around. One former resident, Mike Verkamp, recalls that the water was bitingly cold and had so much chlorine it turned swimmers' hair green. As a young adult, the inn became one of the bars on his circuit.

"There were some interesting characters, always," he says. The bar was a hangout for locals, employees, mule wranglers — pop-

Bills introduced in Congress were debated, defeated and reintroduced. Three months before Bill and Doty West's honeymoon, the inn's fate was sealed. In May 1962, President Kennedy signed the Orphan Mine bill into law. It allowed the company to mine under the park for 25 years in exchange for title to the property and its structures. It required the inn to close by 1966.

Meanwhile, the closing of the processing mill in Tuba City, the demise of rail service to the Canyon and the loss of government subsidies made mining operations more costly. The 1967 bankruptcy sale of the Orphan Mine by the company, then called Westec, to Cotter Corp. marked the beginning of the end. The mine closed for good in April 1969, although its headframe stood for about four decades after that.

People connected with the mine wrote to the Park Service, asking that the headframe be left in place to mark the mine's history. In the end, it was dismantled for public-health reasons, removing the last traces of the Orphan Mine and Grand Canyon Inn, except for those that live in memory. **AH**