

ESCAPE TO THE NORTH RIM - LURED BY BRIGHTY

NOTES FROM OUR TRIP - BY SHARON BERNIER

“Especially on moonlit nights a shaggy little form can be seen flirting along the ledges, a thin swirl of dust rising behind him. Some say it is nothing but moonbeams caught up in a cloud. But the older guides swear it is trail dust out of the past, kicked up by Brighty himself, the roving spirit of the Grand Canyon – forever wild, forever free.”

-Excerpt from Brighty of the Grand Canyon by Marguerite Henry



View from Dog Point, Grand Canyon North Rim

According to the National Park Service, 4 million people visit the South Rim of the Grand Canyon each year and 75% spend four hours or less in the park. Less than a half million visit the North Rim and stay an average of four days. It had been a few years since visiting the North Rim and having read the story of Brighty, knew it was time for another visit and we made the trek in late May of this year.

When sharing our excitement about the upcoming trip, someone said, “Who would want to see a big hole in the ground?” I got to thinking that perhaps a few facts we learned might entice others to enjoy this alpine respite.

Although it is only ten miles (as the eagle flies) from the South Rim to the North Rim, it is 22 miles by foot on the Rim-to-Rim trails and 204 miles by road. It is a mile deep and the 1900 square miles that make up the park is about the size of Delaware. From Phoenix it was an easy six-hour drive.

Park rangers, in front of the massive fireplace at the Grand Canyon lodge, describe the history of the geologic processes that formed a most powerful, inspiring landscape where water is the lifeblood. President Theodore Roosevelt designated it a national monument in 1908; in 1912, when Arizona became a state, the ownership dispute between Utah and Arizona was resolved (belonging to Arizona); and it became a national park in 1919.

Volunteers lead nature hikes and we learn that the average snowfall is 142 inches annually; that the old-growth ponderosa pines survive fire due to their self-pruning of the lower limbs, and watch multi-colored, short-horned lizards scurry over the ancient rocks. You watch the shy, isolated, tassel-eared Kaibab squirrels with furry white tails (known as the North Rim silver ghosts).

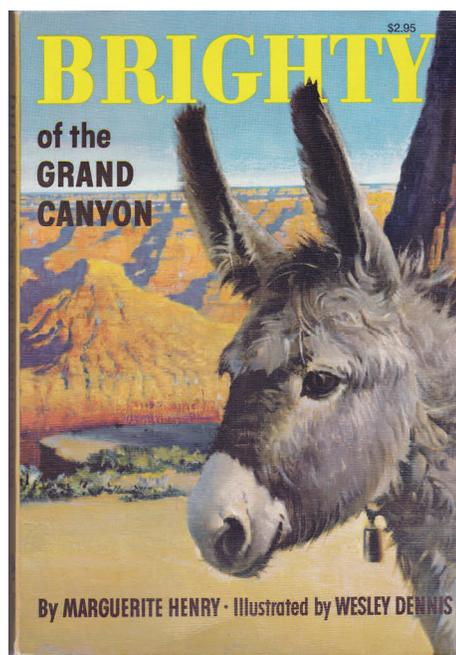
After driving the scenic, winding drives to Imperial Point, the highest viewpoint at almost 9,000 feet, having a picnic at Dog Point (along the East Rim lined with shimmering aspens) and hiking a portion of the Arizona Trail across the Kaibab Plateau, it is easy to see that the North Rim is much more than a hole in the ground. I am thankful the Canyon is in our back yard, is protected and worth visiting whether one explores or simply admires the view from the edge.

If you plan to visit, cabin [reservations](#) should be booked a year in advance. Know the cabin type you want (Pioneer, Western or Frontier) as these go quickly. Eating at the lodge is a “must”. The food and service is outstanding - again, reservations are needed about four months in advance.

And, of course, there was Brighty, the little lone burro who lived at the canyon from 1892 to 1922 and carried water from Roaring Springs to the early tourist accommodations. A statue of Brighty along with his history stands in the lobby of the Grand Canyon Lodge. Rubbing his nose brings good luck. Brighty lured me to the Grand Canyon and perhaps his wild, free spirit will lure you.



Don and Sharon with Brighty, Grand Canyon Lodge, North Rim



Sharon's original copy, found at a local thrift store, that started her interest in Brighty many years ago.

If you can't make the trip, you may be interested to know even more trivia:

[Brighty has a Facebook page!](#) And to celebrate Arizona's centennial in 2012, the Rare Books room of the Phoenix library exhibited the third draft of *Brighty of the Grand Canyon*.

If you'd like more tips on making a visit to the North Rim or [read about Brighty](#), drop an [email](#) to Sharon.