

boatman's quarterly review

George Wendt



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Books!

Going Down Grand: Poems from the Canyon, Edited by Peter Anderson and Rick Kempa, Lithic Press, 2015, 144 pages ISBN 978-0-9883846-5-1, \$17

THE SAYING GOES: People seeing the Grand Canyon for the first time declare it to be indescribable, and then they expend hundreds of words trying to describe it. Often not very well. Sometimes our best tribute to the canyon would be to be struck dumb by it. Poets are supposed to be the best artists of

words, but most Grand Canyon poetry has been either superficial or overblown, or both at once. Most poets have viewed the canyon as rim tourists, viewed it as a distant visual spectacle, never gone down the trails or the river, never transmuted the scenery through breath and muscle, never been engulfed by the silence and the roar, the beauty and the heartache, never heard the canyon speaking with its own

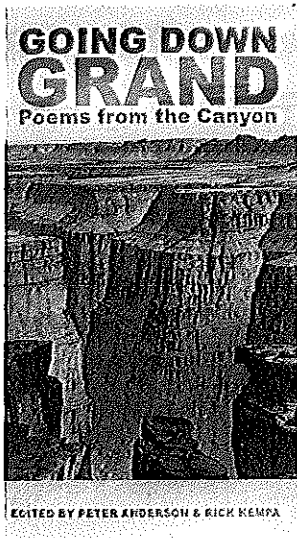
voices, but merely forced upon it lots of old purple literary habits.

Yet for decades now the canyon has been generating quite a bit of good poetry, generating it through the eyes and hearts, the rock-sore feet and wave-stressed arms of people who have gotten to know the canyon from the inside. This poetry has been published in widely scattered outlets, hard to find. At last, it's been brought together into an anthology, and a very attractively designed one. This may be the first book of poetry in world history to be dimensioned to fit into an ammo can. It's been brought together by two editors who have devoted decades to hiking and rafting the Grand and other canyons, who can spot from a mile away the difference between a condor and a turkey vulture, a wave and a hole, an honest or bad canyon poem.

The editors ruled out Victorian-era poets whose style—O thy rhetoric!—would seem archaic today, and offer mostly contemporary voices. There's a few famous poets: Carl Sandburg, whose words are engraved on the walls of the park's Visitor Center

auditorium; and Yevgeny Yevtushenko, the Soviet dissident poet who filled stadiums in the 1960s. There's well-regarded southwestern voices: Mary Austin, Maynard Dixon, Michael Kabotie, Bruce Berger, Reg Saner, Margaret Randall. There's members of the Grand Canyon community past and present: William W. Bass, Vaughn Short, Rebecca Lawton, Amil Quayle, Ann Weiler Walka, Jean Rukkila, Seth Muller. There's a whole section on running the river, poems about Lava Falls, Crystal, Georgie, Powell, Glen and Bessie Hyde, Bass Camp, Blacktail, much more. There's poems that bring out the spirit of hiking, geology, side canyons, the night, wildlife, sunsets, Native Americans, personal connections and disconnections, the magic of it all.

Don Lago



Flipped Out for Grand Canyon: One-of-a-Kind Grand Canyon Photographs, TOM MYERS AND BRONZE BLACK, Puma Press, 2015, 226 pages, ISBN 978-0-9847858-1-0, \$26.95 (soft), \$39.95 (hard).

PERHAPS IT'S SOMETHING of a cliché to say that the finest books about the Grand Canyon almost always wind up doing the same thing, which is that they immerse readers in the peculiar rhythms of the canyon by mirroring the shape of a river trip: a languorous and meandering journey through pockets of wonder, punctuated by moments of high and unholily terror. But this does nothing to diminish the sense of delight when yet another author comes along—or

