


# The Confluence

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## A Tribute to Steve Arrowsmith

by Tim Thomas and Friends

For Steve, it all started with a Grand Canyon trip.... a gangly fourteen year-old asthmatic kid from West Virginia, seeing the West and the Colorado River for the first time. The river worked it's magic and Steve returned West to live and start a guiding career with the American River Touring Association (ARTA) in California. A quick study, Steve picked up on the more important, yet subtle aspects of river running; how not to burn dutch oven desserts, bring your guitar whenever possible, sleep late if you could, don't be indecisive in a Class V rapid, and a love for that which gives much to your life and asks nothing in return.

While in college at the University of Colorado, Steve became more involved with river conservation issues. Being quite articulate, he used his knowledge and love of rivers to impassion others towards the river's plight. After graduation, Steve started his own commercial river rafting business and named it Humpback Chub River Tours, operating from "Granny's Attic" in Dolores, Colorado. The name, Humpback Chub (an endangered fish), itself is a testament to Steve's concern for the river and it's inhabitants. In retrospect, it seems fitting that the particular river Steve choose to base his company on was the Rio de Dolores, or The River of Sorrows.

After numerous low water years in the late 80's (post McPhee Dam), Steve moved to Moab, Utah, where he could also run commercial raft trips on the Colorado and San Juan Rivers. Humpback Chub offered some of the lowest priced commercial river trips available to environmental organizations and concerns, as well as special populations and individuals who otherwise would have been unable to afford a raft trip. This was Steve's way of sharing the river experience and simultaneously encouraging others to protect this unique natural resource. (Which is also how Steve could range from talking about pancakes to river politics in the same breath.)

In 1992, Steve decided to sell Humpback Chub's operation to Canyonlands Field Institute, an organization he believed to share his concerns about educating others on environmental issues. Steve's decision was based largely on his continuing struggle with asthma, which constantly hampered his abilities to accomplish the goals he had set for himself. A malady since childhood, Steve's asthma eventually killed him in June of 1992. Steve's death revealed much about his personal wealth, which while alive he continually down-played. Namely that he left numerous, generous bequests to environmental and social advocacy groups, in addition to helping fund such ventures as Operation Nighthawk (aerial watchdog group) and the Valdez Principals. In light of his untimely death, at the age of 30, those of us fortunate enough to have known Steve are amazed at this man who accomplished so much and touched so many in his own quiet and unassuming way. Steve... you'll always be in our hearts... and we'll all be down the river.