

on KNAU (Arizona Public Radio), she excels in reporting on water, agriculture, and exploration (often of space). She also whips jaw-dropping metaphor from thin air, not losing momentum as she weaves beautiful poetry through a clear, engaging narrative.

In 1938, Michigan-based botany instructor and researcher Elzada Clover teamed with whitewater pioneer Norm Nevills to boat the Colorado. Clover aimed to gain access to the flora in canyon country. Nevills planned to extend his river-running business downstream of Utah.

Neither Clover nor Nevills had boated the Canyon before. Stakes were high: women who'd attempted the run hadn't survived it. Nevills knew how much the future of commercial river running depended on the trip's safe passage. Time was short: Clover understood that geographically limited plant species would soon be lost to reservoirs that were planned or already filling. Clover invited Jotter and another Michigan colleague, Gene Atkinson, to assist with the science, while Nevills built three plywood Cataract boats and recruited two men (engineer Don Harris and photographer Bill Gibson) to row.

On June 20, 1938, the crew launched on a lively, swollen Green River. Downstream, the Green would meet the high-water Colorado (running 50,000 cubic feet per second at the confluence, about thirty percent above flood stage). A media storm raged all around, labeling the "daring boat trip" an ill-prepared venture to collect "botanical freaks." Experienced river runners opined that the mix of women, untried boats, and high water would end in tragedy.

Meanwhile the crew put their hearts and muscle into the daily business

of getting downstream. Clover and Jotter rose before dawn to collect plant specimens—some familiar, some not—for their wood-and-paper presses. Clover specialized in cacti, Jotter in primroses, but they sampled and described everything they could.

The women would return to camp to cook breakfast, help line boats and portage gear around rapids, and ride with enthusiasm through whitewater Nevills deemed runnable. Boating pioneer Buzz Holmstrom met them at Lees Ferry and noted, "The women in the party are really doing better than the men." Nevills agreed: "The women are standing up beautifully

so far,' he recorded, but he had a complaint about every one of the men." (As a remedy, Nevills swapped a few boatmen at Lees Ferry and added Emery Kolb as an experienced advisor.)

Sevigny draws from expeditionary journals and archives throughout the West, plumbing the historic boaters' own words for their rich humanity. Nevills and Holmstrom are seen expanding their perspectives about gender and river livelihoods. Independent, brilliant Clover has come for the plants (and finds them) but also falls for the river, turning to poetry to express love and longing for it. Jotter bonds with "shy, funny, and self-deprecating" Holmstrom, who changes his mind about women not belonging "in the Canyon of the Colorado." Nevills, anxious while leading the green crew, sees the end of his boating career lurking around every river bend.

Often, while sketching nuanced, flesh-and-blood portraits of Clover and Jotter, Sevigny reminds us they "weren't just women: they were botanists." Yet they couldn't help but

shatter myths about gender, despite its irrelevance to their science dreams. As media hysteria grew, Jotter wrote home to reassure her family that warnings about trip risks and women running rivers were exaggerated. Clover, so key to the expedition that her name belongs beside Nevills' in its historic title, believed that Bessie and Glen Hyde's 1928 run made Bessie the first non-indigenous woman through-boater in the Canyon.

Clover and Jotter both "seem determined never to complain about the hard work and danger," as the eyes of history turned to them. In private, they believed that "running the river was less dangerous than collecting plants, with sheer walls to scale and things that stung or stabbed in every corner." Clover wrote, "You've no idea how difficult it is to keep the mind on mere plants when the river is roaring & the boats are struggling to get through." Her commitment to succeeding, and Jotter's, is part of their legacy as steely-eyed river women.

Sevigny drives us toward an ending we can't pretend not to know. River maps and guidebooks tell us that Clover and Jotter survived and thrived, while Nevills grew his reputation in professional boating. The river worked its magic "tying [the crew] together" throughout their lives. Still, Sevigny's narrative holds us like a familiar campfire story told in a fresh, captivating voice.

Brave is a welcome and important contribution to Grand Canyon literature that will fit on nonfiction bookshelves somewhere between Wallace Stegner's *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* and Louise Teal's *Breaking into the Current*. Sevigny, too, pioneers new currents in the genre with extensive, informed passages on indigenous culture and consistent, refreshing use of gender-inclusive language.

Above all, like any good trip down the challenging, deeply beloved Colorado, *Brave the Wild River* invites us to return again and again.

Rebecca Lawton

