

## The Kenton Grua Memorial Scholarship

At this time of year some folks might be humming a few bars from Alice Cooper's famous song "School's Out," but if you are considering undertaking an educational pursuit, now's the time to get the ball rolling. The next deadline for application submissions for the Kenton Grua Memorial Scholarship is June 1, 2008. What is the selection process, you may ask? The selection committee is comprised of several members of the Whale Foundation Board of Directors, all of whom receive completely blinded copies of the applications. All references to name, social security number and outfitter are removed from the applications in an effort to prevent bias. Candidates must have guided in Grand Canyon to be eligible. The application packet must include:

- A completed application form
- A personal statement letter explaining the program the guide is entering and reasons for their decision
- Two letters of recommendation (one must be from their outfitter)
- Proof of enrollment
- Copies of all college transcripts
- Copies of most recent W-2 (if married or living with a partner, must provide copies of theirs as well)
- Amounts of any other scholarships, whether received or under application
- Number of years as Grand Canyon guide (other rivers don't count)

All of the information is reviewed and candidates are scored based on:

- How outstanding/enthusiastic the letters of recommendation are
- Extent of financial need
- Past academic performance
- Urgency of attaining new degree / skill
- Spirit ( how closely applicant emulates Kenton's characteristics)
- If needed, a tie-breaker score of years guiding in Grand Canyon + Age in years is utilized.

Definitely the most difficult aspect of ranking applicants involves evaluating the subjective elements of "Urgency" of need and "Spirit." Urgency of need is the easier of the two to explain. In keeping with the intent of the Whale Foundation, and remembering that quite possibly, an inability to obtain other life skills and pursue a different career may have contributed to Whale's demise, we feel that if the goal is geared towards transitioning out of guiding due to disability, it bears greater weight than pursuing another career solely by choice. Therefore, on the score sheet, we rank candidates from a highest to lowest urgency as follows: 4=Urgent or extreme need, such as disability or a lifetime guide making a brave change; 3= Above average need, such as adding a degree to supplement guiding while building a transitional bridge out of guiding; 2=Average need, such as a degree to supplement a guide's knowledge of the Canyon and 1=Minimal need, such as pursuing a new career solely by choice. An example of minimal need might be a guide who has only worked one or two seasons in the canyon, and now wants to go get a degree in mechanical engineering. The most difficult portion of the score is the "Spirit" component. In this section, we try to get a feel for how closely the applicant's goals, ideas and outlook on life emulate the spirit in which Kenton lived. Kenton's been

gone now for almost six years, and it's occurred to us at the Whale Foundation that there may be a fair number of folks out there who never knew him and aren't sure whether they possess those elusive qualities. In short, Kenton was a man with an insatiable curiosity about life. Whether he was puzzling out the best way to right a flipped boat, grappling with convection theory versus plate tectonics, practicing transcendental meditation or trying to achieve the best solution for flow fluctuations in the canyon, Kenton pursued his endeavors with audacious and sometimes maddening tenacity. He considered problems from every possible angle, remaining open minded and crazily capable of arriving at conclusions that may be 180 degrees opposed to his original hypotheses. He was unfailingly generous with his time, his knowledge, his skills and experience, gracious to the old-timer and the wet-behind-the-ears rookie alike. He believed in enriching other's experiences in the Canyon by sharing what he knew of the place, be it folklore, geology, rowing skills or politics. Perhaps the single most important way in which he interacted with others was the respect he granted others, always making them feel valued, no matter what their station in life. He possessed a *joie de vivre* that was contagious, and never missed an opportunity to be whimsical and playful. Despite having achieved some monumental feats in his own right, he remained humble and didn't take himself too seriously.

While there is no way give a complete picture of Kenton in one short article, hopefully this brief description helps clarify what elements we are looking for. Therefore, any and all of you energetic, creative, joyful, intelligent folks out there who are dedicated to bettering yourselves and thus, all mankind, please download an application and get busy filling it out today!

- Michelle Grua

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