

The Grand Canyon Controversy: A Chronology of Key Events

Date	Event
1986	Dr. Ed Holroyd gave Dr. Steve Austin a sketch of a single lake near the Grand Canyon. Holroyd was trying to explain the absence of rock debris at the base of cliffs. This led him to postulate one huge lake at 5,577 feet, situated east of the Kaibab Plateau (elevation 8,000+ feet.)
1986-1987	Dr. Walt Brown spent an entire year physically exploring and researching the Grand Canyon and making several discoveries that revealed how Grand Lake breached at Marble Canyon and then carved the Grand Canyon. To this day, only Brown's discoveries and theory solve these mysteries.
1988	<p>Brown begins presenting his breached dam explanation in lectures and radio interviews (broadcast over two hundred stations on 16 September 1988).</p> <p>ICR publishes 1988 version of Austin's Grand Canyon Field Guide (FG). In it, Austin muses about the possibility that a torrent of water carved the canyon. He also mentions several problems must be overcome by any explanation, but proposes no solutions, answers, or evidence.</p> <p>Brown obtains copy of Austin's 1988 Grand Canyon FG.</p>
1989	<p>Austin produced a revised FG in 1989 with a 1988 copyright. This version modified the prior 1988 edition to make room for Austin to insert Holroyd's 1986 sketch showing a single lake near the Grand Canyon. The map caption states, "<i>ancient lake which breached its dam to form Grand Canyon</i>" and uses an elevation of 5,700 feet (the same elevation as Brown's) instead of Holroyd's elevation, 1,700 meters (5,577 feet).</p> <p>Brown publishes the 1989 (5th) edition of ITB. In it, he publishes his two-lake, breached dam theory with a detailed explanation including how the two lakes formed after the global flood, sequence of events of the dam-breach, the underlying mechanics, and the specific breach point.</p>
August 1989	Austin purchased the 1989 edition of Brown's book, <i>In the Beginning</i> , only one month after it was published (Austin, personal correspondence, 29 August 1994).
1990	ICR/Austin published the 1990 edition of the FG, in which the section with Holroyd's map was completely revised. Along with Holroyd's map (page 68), still mistakenly showing just one lake, Austin also inserted Brown's map of Grand and Hopi Lakes and the breach point (Marble Canyon) without attribution (page 76).
~1990-1993	<p>Beginning in 1990 and for three years, Brown receives calls from many people alleging that Austin claimed he (Brown) had plagiarized his (Austin's) work on the Grand Canyon.</p> <p>Only when this falsehood threatened to have a large financial impact on a video production of another creationist (Dr. Robert V. Gentry) did Brown determine that he must act.</p>
June 18, 1993	In accordance with Matthew 18, Brown's first step to resolve this controversy was to contact Austin directly and privately by letter
June 21, 1993	Austin sends response to Brown. He denies that he had ever accused Brown of plagiarism. He attached a copy of the April 1989 version of his Grand Canyon Field Guide (containing a 1988 copyright stamp), claiming that the content, which included his breached dam theory, was written in November 1987, prior to Brown's presentations / publication on this subject. Austin concludes that this proves, " <i>I am the first creationist to propose the breached dam theory for the origin of Grand Canyon.</i> "

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Brown compares the FG Austin sent with his June 21, 1993 letter (“copyright” 1988), which Austin states is identical in content with his 1988 version, and the 1988 version he (Brown) already owned. Brown notes the following differences between the two versions:

- The 1989 version, page 54, now has a map, which was not in the prior (1988) version. This was the map that Holroyd gave Austin three years prior, in 1986. Holroyd’s map/figure showed a single unnamed lake that encompassed both Grand and Hopi Lakes. However, Austin changed the lake elevation on Holroyd’s original map from 5577 ft to 5700 ft, the same elevation proposed by Brown. The map caption now includes the brief statement, “*ancient lake which breached its dam to form Grand Canyon.*” This is the only mention in this entire lengthy book of a breached dam explanation. Brown finds it inexplicable that there would be no other discussion of this theory anywhere else in the book had it been part of the original. (For any lake to breach and carve the Grand Canyon, there must be an explanation for how the water flowed vertically 2,000 feet to traverse the Kaibab Plateau or how it penetrated this thirty-mile-wide dam of limestone, which is denser than concrete.)
- The earlier text, in which Austin muses about the possibility that a torrent of water carved the canyon and mentions several problems must be overcome by any explanation, remains unchanged. Brown wonders, how did Austin’s uncertainty in the preceding pages of the same guidebook, which does not even mention the lake, suddenly disappear by page 54?
- Four paragraphs (references) on page 55 had been deleted, ostensibly to make room for the map on page 54 without the need to re-number the pages. Also, the page number is crooked, evidence that this page had been manually “doctored.”
- Other references in the book were dated 1989. How could a book with a 1988 copyright include references to 1989 documents?

The evidence seems to suggest that Holroyd’s map was inserted at the last minute when there was no time for other revisions before the 1989 version publication deadline.

When Brown confronted Austin with the above, Austin then said he accidentally put a title page with a 1988 copyright from the previous year’s publication into the 1989 publication (after originally claiming the 1988 copyright gave Austin priority).

1993-94

Brown and ICR/Austin exchanged many letters over the next year. Despite the detailed evidence that Brown presented, Morris and Austin denied any wrongdoing and tried to sidestep the issue. Brown responded that since they could not reach agreement, they should both submit to binding arbitration with an independent, knowledgeable Christian arbitrator. For six weeks Morris refused, finally agreeing only when Brown said that he would no longer keep the matter private unless they did agree to arbitrate.

Over the next seven weeks, Morris/Austin proposed two arbitrators. Upon checking, Brown discovered that both proposed arbitrators had previous ties to ICR. Brown insisted that the arbitrator be *independent of both* organizations. Finally, ICR agreed to use a Christian arbitration and mediation service in the Los Angeles area.

Morris then sought legal advice and was told that he and Austin should *not* submit to binding arbitration. However, Morris and Austin did not tell Brown they were withdrawing their written agreement to arbitrate until four days before the scheduled Christian arbitration at Pepperdine University in Los Angeles. At that time, Austin and Morris announced that they would only mediate. (Arbitration results in a binding decision, while mediation seeks harmony and understanding.)

With airline reservations and preparations made, Brown was faced with a dilemma; should he cancel everything or proceed with mediation? Brown knew that mediation would not force Morris and Austin to comply should the ruling go against them. Reasoning that after a year of correspondence, something is better than nothing, Brown agreed to mediate. (In hindsight, this decision was a major mistake.)

June 21, 1994

A Christian mediation panel comprising three attorneys and one retired federal judge, led by Peter Robinson, Associate Director and Assistant Professor of Law at Pepperdine University, reviewed the facts of the debate between Brown and Austin on this issue and ruled in favor of Brown.

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<p>Austin signed the agreement, which instructed him to insert an errata sheet into the unsold copies of his book, <i>Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe</i> (January 1994). (In preparation for publishing this book, Austin changed the name of the lake from Grand Lake to Canyonlands Lake.) Per the agreement, one of the corrections to be made was that Austin was to revert to using Grand Lake and give credit to Brown.</p> <p>Minutes before the mediation ended, Austin proposed that there be no errata sheet, because, he said, the January 1994 edition was almost out of print and a new edition would soon be printed. Brown agreed only if Austin's book inventory was less than 1,000 copies.</p>
June 22, 1994
<p>Since the mediation session was not recorded, as Brown had requested, Brown wrote detailed notes of the meeting and produced a memorandum that he forwarded to all parties for review and comment/correction. No one responded.</p>
June – September 1994
<p>Austin sends a barrage of documents to Robinson to persuade him to minimize the required corrections to his soon-to-be-published 2nd edition of <i>Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe</i> and insisting that his book be allowed to continue using the name Canyonlands Lake instead of Grand Lake.</p>
September 21, 1994
<p>Robinson responded that Austin was to stop using the name "Canyonlands Lake" when referring to the Grand Lake explanation for the formation of the Grand Canyon. Instead, Austin was directed to use "Grand Lake," the name given by Brown, as "a symbol of his commitment to reconcile with Brown and as one way to acknowledge Brown's contributions regarding this body of water."</p> <p>Also in this letter, Robinson proposed a joint statement that would be the "press release" groomed for public consumption. It was determined at mediation that this statement would be agreed to and signed by both parties. This was never finalized because Austin continued to stall and barrage Robinson with more arguments.</p> <p>Austin now argues that Robinson does not have the authority to dictate the name of an extinct lake (Grand Lake). Austin also wants the "Joint Statement" to be changed to reflect that he thinks Brown plagiarized his work.</p>
November 14, 1994
<p>Tragically, after countless hours, Robinson caves in and retracts his determination that Austin <i>must</i> change the name back to Grand Lake and instead makes it a <i>suggestion</i> only. Robinson also rewords the Joint statement to include that the mediation covered Austin's charge that Brown used Austin's written work without attribution. Since this was untrue, Brown did not sign it.</p> <p>Austin ignores Robinson's recommendation and now publishes a Note 62 in the second edition of his book in which he makes misleading statements that are impossible to discern without having a deep understanding of the facts. He also reasons that "his" lake is better than Brown's and deserved a new name (Canyonlands Lake) because it was at a (new) 5,800 ft. elevation.</p>
December 29, 1994
<p>Letter from Brown to Morris II. Brown documents the ways in which Austin and ICR violated the mediation contract with Brown and how they otherwise continued to spread false and misleading information. Brown notified Morris that under these conditions, he (Brown) would no longer unilaterally hold himself to the contract that Austin and Morris had already broken. In this letter, Brown informed Morris and Austin that he was going to go public with the correspondence because of their failure to comply.</p>
January 12, 1995

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ICR/Morris II responds: *“As I have often stated before, neither Steve nor any of our staff have ever plagiarized anything you have written or spoken, and we shall not do so in the future. Neither have any of us ever, to our knowledge, defamed you or demeaned your work, either in publications or public meetings, and we shall not do so in the future.”*

Abundant documentation is available that shows this to be false.

A new lie begins to circulate, that Brown had threatened (or did) sue ICR, thus defaming Brown’s character as a Christian. Over the years, this lie has been repeated by many creation ministry leaders including Dr. John Whitcomb, Dr. John Baumgardner (formerly of ICR), Dr. Don DeYoung (President of the Creation Research Society), and Mr. Mark Looy (Chief Communications Officer for Answers in Genesis).

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2001

Authoress Julia Mulfinger Orozco reviewed the documentation on this topic while researching her book, *Christian Men of Science: Eleven Men Who Changed the World*, which includes biographies of both Henry Morris, Sr., and Brown. On page 305, footnote eleven of her book, she writes:

“For over a hundred years, geologists have known that if a large lake begins to erode a point on its rim, canyons can be carved in days. Another geologist [Austin] had similar ideas. He published Brown’s data on the elevation, name, location, and breach point of Grand Lake without proper crediting and then backdated his publication to a year before Brown’s publication. This geologist also claimed that an even earlier, obscure publication of his contained this explanation for the Grand Canyon. It does not contain this explanation. The claims of this geologist have caused confusion as to who first published the data and who set forth this explanation for the formation of the Grand Canyon. Careful examination of the evidence indicates that Brown was the first.”

Creation/global flood apologist, former US Navy nuclear engineering technician, and now pastor of Calvary Church of Port Orchard, WA Kevin Lea, becomes mystified by and curious about the mainstream creation organizations’ antagonism toward Brown’s Hydroplate Theory and Brown personally.

June 6, 2006

Face-to-face meeting at ICR’s then-headquarters in California between Pastor Kevin Lea (Calvary Church of Port Orchard, WA) and Mark Rasche of ICR. In that meeting, Pastor Lea requested that employees of ICR stop slandering and misrepresenting the work of Brown and gave examples where they had done so. Lea even offered to pay three-days’ salaries for any ICR scientist(s) who would carefully read and critique Brown’s work. Rasche said payment was not necessary and that the suggestion that their scientists carefully read Brown’s work was reasonable.

June 15, 2006

As Rasche’s requested, Lea sent him a summary of their June 6 discussions to discuss with ICR management. Rasche’s /ICR’s response to Lea included the following:

6. *Given the long history of disputes between ICR and Walt Brown and the mediation agreement between Walt Brown, Henry Morris, and Steve Austin on June 21, 1994, our leadership team has determined that it would be counter-productive to begin revisiting Walt Brown’s theories since we are already familiar with them, and potential for agreement is minimal.*

May 28, 2007

Answers-in-Genesis opens the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky. The museum and AiG’s *Flood Geology* DVD use the name “Canyonlands Lake” and other information that Austin had plagiarized from Brown.

December 2007

In a face-to-face discussion between Whitcomb and Pastor Kevin Lea, Whitcomb indirectly disparages Brown, hinting at a moral problem. Pastor Lea calls Brown to ask about what had happened. Brown send Pastor Lea all related correspondence on this controversy.

March 2008

Pastor Lea provided Austin, AiG, and ICR with documented proof of Austin’s plagiarism and poor science in the AiG museum and requested a response to either correct his information or to correct the museum displays. He received no response that dealt with the facts.

April 2008

Pastor Lea distributed a clarified version of the same letter to approximately two hundred creation organizations so that they could be aware of the poor science AiG and ICR were promulgating as well as the history behind it. This second letter generated several streams of correspondence between various parties. (Pastor Lea revised the letter in July 2009 to incorporate the additional insights gained from those who responded and to correct a minor error in the first two letters.)

July 2008

Austin inadvertently exposes his deception when he published an article in the July, 2008 issue of ICR's *Acts and Facts* titled, "Red Rock Pass: Spillway of the Bonneville Flood." For example, in reference eight of that article, Austin states:

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"Early in 1987, I used topographic data [obtained from Dr. Holroyd] to show that if Grand Canyon were blocked today by a giant man-made dam with 5,700 feet elevation, the lake formed would rise behind the dam to a maximum of 5,620 feet elevation and would extend into four states. The overflow location out of that lake at 5,620 feet would be 20 miles east of Kanab, Utah, at Telegraph Flat."

So in 2008, Austin is back to 5,700 feet (Brown's elevation), when in 1994 he said in his book's Note 62 that the reason his lake was better than Brown's and deserved a new name (Canyonlands Lake instead of Grand Lake) was because it was at the 5,800 foot level.

While Austin's original use (for years) of Brown's 5,700-foot level for the elevation of Grand Lake, instead of Holroyd's 5,577 feet level, may seem trivial, it shows the origin of what Austin was using; that is, Brown's work—without attribution. Other statements in this article conflict with prior statements / documents, further revealing Austin's deceptions.

July 2009

Pastor Lea sends letters to AiG, ICR, Austin, Whitmore, and Holroyd with copies of his narrative and conclusions, to give them opportunity to correct any errors.

August 2009

After receiving no fact-based response, Pastor Lea did post the documentation on the church's web site (calvarypo.org), but deliberately made it difficult to find by the casual searcher, instead sending direct links to those who requested them.

December 31, 2017

Pastor Kevin Lea sends another letter to ICR as a final appeal for a face-to-face meeting, with Austin present, to correct the wrongs they have committed but received no response.

June 2018

Bob Enyart of Real Science Radio gained access to Austin's 1988 Field Guide and his obviously doctored and back-dated 1989 guidebook by which he falsely claimed priority.

On air during our RSR's Grand Canyon series, Enyart discussed the above account and many more details. You can hear that at rsr.org/gc4. (Also at 17 minutes into RSR's flood video, you can see how ICR's founder Henry Morris, Sr., introduced Walt Brown and then at the end of his career you can hear how Morris Sr. honored Brown.)

April 2019

Austin submitted for publication to *Answers in Genesis* a Grand Canyon paper that claims priority with his evidence that, at the ICR headquarters he had "posted in 1987" on a "bulletin-board" the map in question. (If this were true, why did he not mention this at mediation?)

May 2019

Update posted to KGOV.com: <https://kgov.com/icr-steve-austin-plagiarized-walt-brown-see-proof-of-fraud>

August 2019

In August 2019, a friend of both Austin and Brown tried to set up an arbitration to resolve this matter. Brown agreed; Austin refused, now claiming an amazing coincidence—that both he and Brown produced the Grand Lake explanation independently: name, location, *and* elevation!

Today

The plagiarism, slander, and confusion continue. The critical issue is not who gets credit for the name of a lake. As Brown acknowledges, others before him had suspected that the Grand Canyon was formed catastrophically. But no one had been able to explain the how or where, including Austin.

The critical issues is that this sad state of affairs hinders others from learning about the only scientifically viable explanation for the formation of the Grand Canyon, which is a powerful apologetic tool in support of the global flood. Because with Brown's discovery that Grand Lake was separate from Hopi Lake (and not connected as Holroyd had thought) key questions could finally be answered including :1) What uplifted the massive Colorado Plateau 6200 feet above sea level? Had that not happened, the mile-deep Grand Canyon would not exist. (2) How did Grand Lake form?

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(3) How did both Grand Lake and Hopi Lake breach and flow over what is now the higher Kaibab Plateau? (4) Where is the eight hundred cubic miles of dirt that was carved out of the Grand Canyon?

Furthermore, with his insights about where to look, Brown was able to locate the breach point, which is clearly seen on the ground and from the air—a key piece of spectacular evidence. He also explains what produced multiple spectacular geologic features that lie within a few hundred miles of the Grand Canyon. These and the underlying mechanisms that caused them are only understood in the context of Brown's Hydroplate Theory explanation of the flood of Noah, which AiG and ICR have shown no interest in understanding. Austin cannot explain any of these. He does not even address how the overflow from the lake could have traversed the much higher Kaibab Plateau!

The Grand Canyon chapter of ITB is a comprehensive presentation on the origin of the Grand Canyon, including a detailed explanation of the initial conditions (and reason for them), the chronology of events, and mechanisms and forces that created this incredible world wonder. His 44-page explanation is very popular, currently the fourth Google hit out of 4.5 million.

The confusion caused by Austin's failure to set the record straight continues, and AiG's displays, videos and DVDs are tarnished because of his dishonesty. It is time to set the record straight once and for all. How can we Christians effectively defend the biblical record and battle the evolutionist enemy if we cannot even function with truth and integrity within our own camp?