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Grand Canyon History Tidbit by Kim Besom

**Summertime... and the living is easy...**

Grand Canyon School got out for the summer recently. Growing up in the park, summertime activities for the local kids are often typical, though sometimes with a uniquely Grand Canyon twist.



#07541: LOCAL CHILDREN SITTING ON RIM OF CANYON, 1919

In an interview from 1994, **Ruth Stephens Baker**, who grew up in the park in the 1930's and 1940's, talked about some of those activities

**Baker:** ...We used to play house down in the cave between Lookout and Kolb Studio. There's some caves under there. We used to take our dolls down there and go play house. I wouldn't like to see any of my grandchildren doing that! What's down there? NOTHING [but 500 feet of air!] And then as we grew older- do you know where Duck on the Rock is on East Rim Drive? There's a tremendous, big cave over there right below the rim. That's where we used to go have our

watermelon feasts. I'm sure that way, way, way down there somewhere watermelons are growing- about two thousand feet below.

**Interviewer:** What were the watermelon feasts?

**Baker:** Oh, this was when we were in high school and college and came home for summer and we'd just decide to go out there after work and eat watermelon. The boys drank beer too. But that was part of the growing up...

From a 2015 interview with sisters **Bertha Talakte Bradley** and **Pearl Talakte Evans**:

**Bertha:** There was one year, I don't remember how old I was, but somebody said there was a lion at the dump. So, a few of us kids, we were curious, we wanted to see the lion. So, we all got together and walked all the way to the dump. No lion. Came back home.

**Pearl:** Oh, the other thing I can remember we would go out from the Canyon- in Tusayan there were little roads, dirt roads- we'd go out there for picnics.



#17634: DONESBAH TIMECHE, 1929

Older kids got summer jobs:

From a 2016 interview with **Gloria Honanie**:

**Gloria:** And then as we got older, I wanted to do something... to help my Dad make some money. I went to my uncle Porter Timeche and I asked him if I could dance up there [at Hopi House] with them to earn some money. He said OK, so I started dancing with them and we used to make a lot of money... I liked it. I liked going up there and dancing. So, every time I'd get out of school then I'd run up there and then I'd dance and then I'd come home.

[We also used to dance out in Tusayan and pass around a collection] ...there would be about \$3 we would all each get. It wasn't much but we had some spending money to take us to the movie. And that was a good thing about Grand Canyon too, remember we used to go to the movies, and it used to cost like ten cents to get in. And we used to run up to the Bright Angel Lodge to my grandpa and ask him for some money cause he used to work up there shining shoes and he always had cash. He would give us like fifteen cents... So, when we got to the movie we had popcorn, pop and candy.



#13711: BABY GRACE LAWS, DAUGHTER OF RANGER ED LAWS, AT HARVEY MEADOW CABIN WITH PORCUPINE, CIRCA 1928.



#13714: LENNA AND GRACE LAWS, HOLDING A SNAKE, SHOWING OFF FOR UNION PACIFIC BUS TOURISTS AT HARVEY MEADOW, 1933.

Summertime meant free time, which often meant messing with the tourists;

**Interviewer:** Were there any practical jokes, anything that stands out in your mind, things that the kids did or things that happened while you were working?

**Ruth Stephens Baker:** Oh, the only practical jokes that we did- it wasn't really a practical joke- it was just because the dudes [tourists] were so gullible. [At Kolb Studio], Gene Morris and I would sit and be coloring something- because this was before color came out for taking pictures, so Mr. Kolb had the black and white pictures- and Gene Morris and I would tint these up and sell them as tinted photos. As we were working we'd take a look outside and we'd say, "You know, they colored [the Canyon] wrong this year. We've got to talk to the Park Service about that, they used the wrong color red. Well, you know what, the plateau doesn't look quite the right color either. I don't know whether to color it this way or the way they had it last year." And these dudes thought the thing was actually done. So, I say gullible!

From a 1994 interview with **Jane Verkamp**, who also grew up at Grand Canyon in the 1930's-1950's:

**Jane Verkamp:** But probably the worst thing we did, had a couple of teenage friends that we used to walk up and down the path of the canyon that goes out to Yavapai. We'd find a place where there was a ledge about five feet below where the path was. One person would go leaping off the thing and scream and then land on that ledge and just sit there. People walking on the path would just get terrified and walk up. Then we'd all start laughing, or else we'd say, "We'd better save him! We'd better go get him!" We were awful.

From a 1994 interview with **Dean Tillotson**, son of Superintendent Minor Tillotson, who also grew up at Grand Canyon in the 1930's-1950's:

**Tillotson:** My friend John Cook and I would sometimes be guilty of selling under false pretenses. The Hopi House would occasionally have accidents when Hopi or Navajo pottery might be broken. They would dispose of them by tossing them over the rim of the canyon. By climbing over the rim, John and I would sometimes find the broken shards. We realized that groups of tourists would be standing on the rim looking at these two boys climbing around the canyon. When we felt that there were enough of them watching, we would gather up a number of these shards and climb back on top again. Soon we would have a group of tourists around us wanting to know where we'd been, what we saw and what we brought back. We told them about a fictitious ancient village that could not be seen from the rim. Many of them would want to buy the shards to take home along with our fictitious story. From twenty-five cents to one dollar a piece. This gave us a little extra money for candy and such at the grocery store. It was a time of profitable larceny until the ranger caught us and it ended with the help of our parents.



#16255: EDITH KOLB AS A CHILD SITTING AMONGST FLOWERS NEAR INDIAN GARDEN, CIRCA 1908.



## MARILYN TAKALA AND SISTERS AT GRAND CANYON, 1940'S

Some downsides to growing up at Grand Canyon were also mentioned:

**Jane Pritchett:** Well, I think some of the downsides were isolation... It was a long time before we got T.V. up here, for example, and I don't consider that all bad. I think that was great. We all read. We made up our own games and did a lot of things. I remember playing with Ronald and Laura Timeche that were right across the parking lot from us, and we'd always have tourists



come up because they were Hopi Indians and the tourists thought it so strange that the Hopi and the white kids were playing all these different games. We just saw each other as kids. They would always ask my sister and I if we were Indians. Finally, I got so tired of them doing it I said, "Yeah, we're Irish Indians," so I could get in on this thing and people would shut up.

**Dean Tillotson:** Looking back at it now, some sixty years later, no, I can't think of a thing that I didn't like. I remember as a kid we decided to have a baseball team and we went around to all of the boys to get them to play and in order to get nine men on the field we had to get little Georgie Bolton. Mr. Bolton was the assistant superintendent at that time. Georgie was about four years old. The rest of us, not all of us, some of us were fourteen [or] fifteen and then it dropped to ten and twelve and so forth. Maybe a complaint I might have is that there weren't more guys to play with.

**Pearl Talakte:** ...In that small town, whenever we did something naughty, someone reported it to Mom and Dad before we got home, and they already knew.