

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society
Interviewee: Abby Holcombe (AH) with mom Kathy (KH) and dad Peter (PH)
Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)
Subject: Twelve year old Abby and her parents recount her Grand Canyon kayak trip where Abby kayaked the entire 277 mile length of the Grand Canyon
Date of Interview: 03/29/2017 [ACTUAL INTERVIEW DATE IS THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2017]
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TM: Today is the 29th of March. [ACTUAL INTERVIEW DATE IS THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2017] It's 2017. We are in the Cameron Trading Post parking lot in a wonderful motor home with the Holcombe family. There's three of you here. There's Peter and Kathy and Abby.

My name is Tom Martin. This is a Grand Canyon Historical Society oral interview. Earlier today on Facebook, I was notified by some people that Abby, along with her parents, had just completed a Grand Canyon river trip from Lees Ferry to Pierce Ferry and Abby kayaked the entire way in a kayak. Except that Abby is 12 and her kayak is about five feet long. So I got on the phone to Peter. Peter very kindly said, "Yes we can meet you at Cameron and we can do this interview." I'd like to back up a little bit to start here. I'd like to ask Peter and Kathy... We'll start with Peter, were you into the out-of-doors when you grew up?

PH: Yeah, I was. I grew up racing motorcycles and rock climbing, scouting and things like that. I've always been into the out-of-doors for sure. I lived in a neighborhood that had a lot of open spaces. My friends and I definitely took good advantage of that.

TM: Where did you grow up?

PH: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Not a lot of wild rivers running there till recently. They've got a new whitewater park there that's manmade. But that's another story.

TM: Kathy, where did you grow up?

KH: I grew up in Arkansas. Spent time camping and canoeing and spending time outside with my family as well.

TM: So both of you are very comfortable camping outdoors.

KH: Absolutely, in fact our second date was going rock climbing in the Ouachita Mountains in Oklahoma.

TM: So hang on a second, when I think of Oklahoma I don't think of mountains.

PH: Yeah, most people don't. Southwestern Oklahoma has some really good granite. Really amazing granite rock climbing there. It's real isolated. Little islands of granite here and there but it's really good stuff.

TM: So you guys started hanging out together. When did you get married?

KH: We got married in 2001. Our second date climbing was in 1995, so 22 years ago.

TM: That's fun. Happy anniversary.

KH and PH: Thank you.

TM: When did you have Abby?

KH and PH: In 2004.

TM: Had you discussed what you wanted to do with your lives? How did it all work out?

PH: In college, we were enamored with rock climbing. Basically we decided as soon as we're out of school we're either moving to California to be close to Yosemite or we were going to go to Boulder and live in Colorado. Both climbing meccas. I was in Costa Rica finishing up some Spanish credits, it was my last thing of college. Kathy was done with school. I called to check in one day, talked to her and she was going crazy. Her mom was driving her crazy and she was back from school. Not in a bad way, but she was used to more freedom than her mom was giving her. She's like, "I'm going to either California or Colorado, so tell me which one. Where are we going to go?" I was like, "Aaah, I got to decide right now? I'm in Costa Rica" "Yea, I gotta get out of here. I'm going somewhere." I was, "Ah, Colorado. Let's go to Colorado." So she took off to Colorado, was there a couple weeks ahead of me. I finished with my Spanish in Costa Rica, did a little rafting down there on the Paquare and some things. Then ended up packing my bags in my Honda Civic and driving to Colorado and getting a job at REI. Never really looked back since.

TM: What did you graduate in?

PH: University of Oklahoma with a degree in photography.

KH: I have a degree in zoology.

TM: Did you guys kayak or canoe at the time? You were climbing but were you into water?

PH: No. Kathy maybe a little.

KH: I canoed a lot growing up. You'll laugh at this, our first experience kayaking was on the McKenzie River in Oregon. Neither one of us had any idea really how to do anything. So we got the William Nealy book out of the library. We looked at the little kayaker in the corner doing a roll. I stood waist deep in the lake flipping through this page of the library book watching the kayaker roll in the corner and telling Peter, "Well I think you put your paddle this way or this way." After about 45 minutes of freezing in the cold lake we figured it out. Then we ran the McKenzie the next day.

PH: Swam the McKenzie.

TM: Both of you learned to roll that day or to attempt something?

PH: We were with a group of friends, it was climbers. It was hot, we were climbing Smith Rocks in Oregon. One guy suggested to go to the McKenzie River. So we went to the place that rented some rafts and duckies. You know, it sounded great. I got there and saw this Perception Dancer sitting as part of

their rental fleet. I was like, "You know, I don't want to be in these rubber things. I want to be... I used to race motorcycles, I want to be in the motorcycle of the river." I saw this Dancer and I thought that's what I want to do. So I talked to the guy renting and said, "Can I rent that thing, that kayak?" He said, "Do you have any experience?" I said, "Oh yeah, kind of. I think I'll do alright." The guy reluctantly rented me this Dancer. Our next stop, this is pre-internet, was the library. "There's got to be a book here about how to go kayaking." So we found the William Nealy book. We read it the whole way up to the McKenzie River, from Corvallis up to the McKenzie which is 3 hours or something. It's not that much.

TM: So you had a little time to read ahead.

PH: Then our first stop was this lake. I got a couple rolls and Kathy basically got cold feet standing out there in the water with me. Then she picked it up a little bit, too. The next day it was mostly me and the kayak and everybody else in one raft and a couple of duckies. I was really hooked at that point. It was awesome. I swam a lot, I swam almost every rapid. I didn't get a roll at all in the river. But, it was great. When I got back to Oklahoma... I had a friend there who was a kayaker. I asked him, Dr. Bob, I asked Dr. Bob, "I want to get a kayak. I've tried it now." He's like, "Well, this new kayak came out. I just got one. It's called an RPM. I've got my old Crossfire for sale. If you want to buy it I think it would do you well." So I bought his Crossfire for like \$300. Then pieced together the rest of my gear and been a kayaker ever since.

TM: And you Kathy?

KH: I rode in the raft that day. A couple months later we went to Oklahoma and it was my turn to learn to roll. I actually rolled on the first try after figuring it out in the William Nealy book with Peter. It was great. So after that, every day that it was raining and we couldn't rock climb, we were kayaking. That started it all. Then when Abby was born it was easier for us to go kayaking that it was to go climbing because we could go one at a time. That's when we really started paddling a lot.

TM: So one of you would run shuttle and the other one would boat?

PH: We met up with some other families that had kids. So sometimes it was that. Kathy would sit it out for the morning and I'd go paddle with the boys. Then she'd go paddle with the girls after that. We'd swap watching kids. We had other paddling friends that had kids. Sometimes it was the flip of that. It just worked really good for us to have time to get out and do things but yet the kids could come along.

TM: This sounds like something you'd plan. We're going to have a child, I want to keep on cruising. We're going to keep boating and climbing.

PH: All along... I remember before we were even thinking about kids, we were at a climb and we ran into this woman who had a little baby in one of those little snugly things on her chest. She's going up to do a climb with another woman. We got to talking to them and she's like, "You know with kids, you take whatever you can get. Every moment you get outside is a golden nugget." If you think of it that way, then you'll always be happy and excited. So when we had kids, we remembered back to that. Kids, it doesn't mean we can't do the things we want to do it just means we do them a little different. Really that's been our guiding light. The last three years of this trip that we're on, this fam-a-go-go, this adventure, is to really...

TM: Fam-a-go-go. That's FAM-A-GO-GO?

PH: You're close.

TM: I can see some transcribers going what??

PH: You're close. It's just FAMAGOGO. It's basically family that's go going. Our idea there is just that we want to inspire other families to know that if you used to be a climber, if you used to be a paddler, if you used to be a mountain biker, skier, whatever, just because you have kids doesn't mean you have to stop doing the things you love. You don't have to go and sit on the sidelines at the soccer field or whatever it is. You can get out there as a family and do the things you've always loved. It's a little harder when the kids can't walk and stuff. But as they get bigger we really tried to hold true to that and here we are today. Abby's grown up with that idea.

TM: Abby, what's your birthday?

AH: May 13, 2004.

TM: Gotta write this down, cause you know the people are going to be counting numbers. What are some of the earliest childhood memories you have?

AH: I remember some little things like the first time I crawled on the couch. It's really random. I remember scrambling on these huge boulders. Looking back at the picture they're like 2 feet tall. These massive boulders. "Yes, I've climbed to the top of this massive boulder!" You look at pictures and, "Wow, this is tiny. This is nothing." That's probably the earliest. We started off really climbing. I guess I started climbing before I started kayaking just because I couldn't swim. It wasn't safe for me to go kayaking when I was that young. So I started off. My parents would tie my baby doll up and put it about 15 feet above me, 10 feet above me. They would tie me in and then I'd chase my baby doll up the rock. I would go over anything to get the baby doll. Now looking back at all my dolls, they all have scratched, beat up faces from dragging their faces up the side of rock. But it got me to go and start to love climbing. Then, once I learned how to swim they got me a kayak and I started kayaking. It was pretty cool.

TM: What are some of the hardest climbs that you've done?

AH: It's embarrassing. When they had me, they started kayaking a lot more and a lot more. So soon kayaking became what we always did. We'd climb maybe once or twice a month. We didn't climb very often but we went kayaking all the time. So I really became a kayaker rather than a climber. Sure, I know how to climb and I can climb but I don't climb very hard stuff. Maybe 5.10/5.9.

TM: Only 5.10 or 5.9. [laughing]

PH: On a good day.

AH: On a good day. I'm happy at 5.6.

TM: What are your earliest remembrances of water?

AH: I remember starting off with swim lessons because I had to learn how to swim to go in the river. I remember being terrified to get in the pool. So baby steps happen, I finally get in the pool, dip my feet in and start to swimming. I remember learning to swim. I remember one time I went to my grandparents for the summer (just for a month) and I came back and my parents wrapped up this kayak. "Oooh,

what's that?" It was all wrapped in wrapping paper. "Oh, what's this? A big present, I'm so excited!" I tore it open and it was a kayak. I was, "Yes, I get to go kayaking!" I'd sat in my parents lap before that. I was able to get my own kayak and I started in the pool.

TM: How old were you when that kayak showed up as a present all wrapped up?

AH: When I first got my kayak I was 4 years old. Pretty little. It's probably maybe 4 feet long.

TM: Excuse me for laughing cause your current kayak is like 5 feet long. [laughing]

AH: I don't know, it was really short. I remember it being like twice the size of me. It was like huge.

PH: It seemed big. She was really little. We had to put tons of outfitting in it so she wouldn't fall out of it. I still today think that a kayak is the best toy you can give a kid. It can take them so many places and teach them so many things. It's something they can use for the rest of their life. I tell parents that all the time. I think a lot of them who aren't outdoorsy think I'm crazy when I say that, but it is. It can shape the rest of your life, boating, and it can take you so many cool places that kids who don't have access to a boat will never go.

KH: It teaches kids independence and self-sufficiency and determination and how to deal with adversity. How to just persevere on your own. So many life lessons from that. From paddling into the wind or flipping upside down unexpectedly or dealing with a scary rapid. There's just so many life lessons all wrapped into one amazing toy.

TM: I want to throw in a word called teamwork.

KH: Absolutely.

AH: A little bit. When you say that I think of soccer where you have your team and everyone works together to win the game. It's not really like that. We just have my friends and we all go kayaking together. We're not necessarily all one in a competition with each other but we're competing against each other and we're helping each other grow. "Oh, that kid got a roll, I'm going to learn to roll. I don't want to be the one who can't roll. I'm going to roll." You do a trick and then everyone else is like, "Oh, I want to be able to do that. I can't be the kid that doesn't do that." The cycle repeats and repeats so we all just get better and grow from it.

TM: What I was thinking was a little different. When I fall out of my kayak, cause I'm not a very good kayaker, and I reach out my hand you're going to catch my hand aren't you?

AH: Yeah.

TM: That's teamwork. You're competing against your buds, but aren't you there for them?

AH: Yeah, totally.

TM: That's teamwork. So, before the Grand Canyon came on to your radar screen, can you think back that far? When was it before the Grand Canyon came on your radar screen?

AH: I kind of heard about it. "I know about the Grand Canyon." Then I heard that there was whitewater in the Grand Canyon. It took me a while to get really addicted to kayaking.

TM: So, what were you doing? You heard about Grand Canyon, you heard about the whitewater there, what level/where were you at at that time?

AH: Probably not a very good kayaker. I was probably just beginning. Maybe didn't have a roll, just beginning. Probably scared of being upside down. So I wasn't really... "Oh whatever. It's this thing my parents want to do."

PH: It was probably my first trip is when you really started hearing a lot about it.

AH: Yeah. He was talking about his trip. It would be, "Oh there's whitewater, there's big whitewater." Then I'd hear about all the big whitewater.

TM: When did you get your first Grand Canyon trip?

PH: It was 2014 I think. Yeah, 2014. We launched February 16.

TM: 2014 is only like 3 years ago. Is that when that got on your radar screen?

AH: Yeah, I would say that's when I seriously learned about it. I heard about it before. But now I really knew what it was about. I saw the pictures and I saw the videos.

TM: Did you have your roll down by then?

AH: Yeah.

TM: When did you get your roll?

AH: I was probably 7 when I got my roll.

PH: I think you did your first one at 6. Then you lost it for a little while and then you got it back.

TM: Isn't it funny that way.

AB: Yeah.

PH: Then she lost it again. Then she got it back and she's had it ever since. It was the kind of deal where she would... We'd do a lot of pool sessions in the winter in Colorado. There's a lot of that going on. It was perfect for Abby at that stage to go to the pool and she'd work on things. Then in the Colorado run-off season, everything was too big and fast and cold. So she ended up sitting out a lot of that. We'd take her to lakes and stuff here and there. That's when I was doing a lot of the harder stuff that I liked to paddle. So she got sidelined a little bit. As run-off ended and things started mellowing out, then she'd be paddling again. Sometimes in that gap she would kind of forget things and then have to relearn them. That's part of being a kid. I think when you were 7 or 7 ½ you got your roll and started really hanging on to it. It was maybe 8 when you really...

AH: I think I got my roll when I was 7. I did a few rolls. Then I didn't really have it, I lost it. Got it back when I was 8. Then when I was 9, I was really like okay... I kind of forgot it in that time period but I got it right back instantly. Ever since then I've been getting better and I've had a roll.

TM: I was talking with someone on the phone this afternoon and they said that you're a champion kayaker now?

AH: I'm the junior women's freestyle kayak national champion.

TM: Congratulations.

AH: Thank you.

PH: That's a mouthful.

TM: When did that happen?

AH: Last May in Reno.

PH: The Reno River Festival.

TM: So almost a year ago. So let's back up a little bit and talk about this Grand Canyon trip you guys just completed. Who applied for the permit and when did you win it? When did you get notified, hey we have a chance to go boating.

PH: I won the permit. My previous trip was on another friends permit. I'd been putting in for permits for I think 8 years or more.

TM: So this would have been in February of 2016?

PH: No, we got a cancellation permit. I think we were in Colorado when we got notified.

KH: It was in May.

AH: Right around my birthday.

PH: In May. We were in the middle of the whole competition season of the freestyle kayaking stuff so we kind of, "Ah, this is great!" But we were too busy to think about it. So yes, we're going to go. Then we didn't think about it for a couple weeks. Then we came back to it and we started thinking what would be the perfect trip? Started thinking who do we want to go? Our first thought was we wanted to get a bunch of river families together. A trip with a lot of kids. So we went about inviting... There's a few people we knew that we wanted to invite. Izzy Collett from Boulder City.

TM: Can you spell that name please?

PH: I-Z-Z-Y C-O-L-L-E-T-T, I believe. She runs Desert Adventures there in Boulder City which is an outfitter. We loved Izzy and knew she loved to raft so we thought she was going to be a great fit. Then we asked a few other families with kids that are strong paddlers. They all wanted to go. We got yes's and then a month later they were, "We don't know how we'll do with school." So we kind of went through this whole list of kids. We thought we would have this big kid posse going down the river which

would have been really cool. It turned out that Abby was the only one that could make it so she ended up going with all the old folks. [Laughing] But it still was a great trip. Izzy went along. We had Doug Haines from Garden Valley, Idaho. He came along to row. We had one other person, Ron Stowe, he's from Salt Lake City. He rowed on Izzy's raft. He's Izzy's uncle. So we had those 3 people in 2 rafts. Then the 3 of us in our own kayaks.

TM: So Abby, you're doing the National's competitions and now you're thinking about Grand Canyon. What was the hardest rapid-type water you had run up through this fall or certainly before you did your Grand Canyon trip?

AH: We went to Alaska in late summer. There wasn't a lot of whitewater there. It was a lot of flatwater. We ran some stuff but it wasn't very hard. So I felt a little nervous in my kayak. Not nervous but just rusty. So I wasn't really sure what to expect with the Grand Canyon coming up. I felt really rusty, how am I going to do? I got in my kayak, I got used to kayaking again.

PH: What did you do after Alaska though?

AH: We went to Bend, Oregon and I boated there. Then we went to Rock Island, Tennessee and we trained with Emily Jackson and Eric Jackson, Nick Troutman and Steven Wright. A bunch of different world champions, Clay Wright, all over there. I got really comfortable in my boat. I was feeling better. Then I started running harder things. I'd say that probably the hardest stuff before the Grand Canyon was IV-/III+.

PH: You ran Numbers on the Arkansas River at low water. Which was cool. She did a Westwater lap at about 3500 CFS. That was pretty good. That was kind of like for me a Grand Canyon feeler to see how she was going to do. She was ready. She was charging.

KH: She ran the Ottawa River. The main channel of the Ottawa is big water, Class III+ water.

PH: Big, pushy, high-volume water.

TM: How many CFS?

PH: They do their gage in meters. So I would think it's around 10,000-12,000. Something like that. I'm just guessing that.

TM: Get a sense of what boils are like, turbulence. Was that helpful doing that?

AH: Yeah, definitely. We were there with Claire O'Hara and she helped me get more comfortable with the whirlpools.

TM: Who is Claire?

AH: Claire is former world champion freestyle kayaker.

TM: Of all this work that you did this last year, what part was the most helpful now looking back? Having just finished Grand Canyon, what was the most helpful for that?

AH: Everything. The Ottawa helped with the big, pushy water. Paddling with EJ and Emily, and Steven and Clay, they all helped a lot making me confident and pushing me and getting me prepared for it. All those little pieces added up together and it made me feel more confident. Then of course I looked at the first Class V rapid on it and I was like, "Uh-oh, I'm not prepared."

TM: So let's start into it. At Lees Ferry you're camped at the boater's camp. I'm assuming that's maybe where you camped on your first night. Did you sleep?

AH: Yes.

TM: What were you thinking?

AH: I guess I wasn't very educated about the Grand Canyon before we went. I saw some pictures but to be honest, I didn't want to know very much about the rapids. I just wanted to block it out of my head. "I know about Lava. I know it's the hardest rapid. It can't be that bad. I watched a video of a raft flipping and it didn't look that bad. So it has to be fine."

TM: You know I like that thinking!

AH: "It doesn't look that bad, so just don't think about it. It's going to come eventually. Just don't think about it. You know that's the hardest rapid, so you've got all the other ones." I didn't even know about Crystal or Hance or Granite or any of those rapids. Upset. I had no idea about any of those. It was like, "Oh yeah, we have an VIII today." I was like, "What? What's Hance, oh no!"

TM: First day, did you scout Badger?

KH and PH: No.

TM: You just ran it. What were you thinking? Badger sort of sets the stage. You run down through Cathedral Wash, little splashy-splashy, you're fine. You get on some flatwater. That's a lot of flatwater. You get to Badger and hmm. Do you remember Badger at all? Do you even remember it?

AH: I don't even remember Badger. [Laughing] We camped at Soap. I don't know if that's before or after.

TM: It's after. So you got hear this little 'kkkkk' all night long.

AH: So we camped at Soap. I saw Soap and we scouted and I was, "Oh-no, this is awful, this looks terrifying. It's huge and the waves are just so big." So I was really nervous to run through. Me and my GoPro. "Oh no, I'm not ready for this. I didn't prepare at all, I'm totally not ready for this, I can't do this. It's going to be really hard." I ran through it and I ran just fine. I started to get more comfortable with the III's and more comfortable with the IV's. Finally I started to become friends with the V's. Then the VI's I got more comfortable with those. VII's, they were really scary. I got more used to those. Finally Hance came and I was, "Okay..."

TM: Let's back up a little bit before we get to Hance. After Soap Creek you have House Rock, which for the rafters it's the first time you got to really sit up and pay attention. You have to do something with your boat. Try to miss that big hole at the bottom. Maybe you hit that hole at the bottom. You might flip, you might not. But if you're in a kayak, it's a little easier but it's a mind thing. So for you it was

another ho-hum? This looks like upstream, I can do this? I'm assuming you scouted it. That might have been your first scout?

PH: Yep, first scout.

AH: Besides Soap, but we camped there. So we scouted House Rock.

TM: What did you think? "Ho hum, I can see a line here, this looks pretty easy"?

AH: Yeah, I saw the far, far right line and thought, "Okay, we can go far right, that looks good. I'm way away from the hole." So we ran far right. We got into the eddy and were watching the rafts come down. It was, "Wow, that's a big hole." That's like the biggest hole I've ever seen. It was huge.

TM: Did you get out into the eddy fence at the bottom of House?

PH: Yeah, I think so.

TM: There is a really, wickedly hard eddy fence there. Jet of water comes out of that rapid and that eddy just plays with that fence. It's really interesting.

AH: I don't remember it.

TM: So you paddle downstream again and journeyed off into the Roaring Twenties. Any thoughts on that? Just fun? More confidence building? What were you thinking?

AH: I guess how I've always handled scary rapids is you just don't think about them. Don't ask questions. You just don't think about it. As soon as you're about to drop into the rapids it's, "Oh yeah, what does the guidebook say." Even though you've been wondering this the whole time. "Ok, what does the guidebook say? There's a big hole. Oh no." Then you work away and try to find the best line. I feel like I did that. So I try not to think about the big, scary rapids. But in my head it's like, "Woah, this is a big rapid. These are huge. They're terrifying." Then I got through them and they were fine. They started to become fun. All of a sudden you're out of the Roaring Twenties. "Where'd they go? They were so awesome."

TM: Then you suddenly got to the miles of flat. How'd you handle that?

AH: I didn't think the flatwater was too bad. There's quite a bit of current. It's not like just paddling across a flat lake. There is current and there's little spots to play and do flatwater freestyle. It wasn't that bad.

PH: She spent most of her time in a stern stall on the flatwater. She would just pop her boat up and be floating with her bow sticking straight in the air. Just trying to see how long she could hold it. Abby and I do a lot of that. We like to play around in the flatwater.

TM: So you're using the current to pull you along because you've got your tail down in the river. Is that how that works?

AH: Yeah. You don't really use the current. You can do it in completely flatwater. It kind of depends on what way you like to get up. There's easier ways to get up in the current. The way I typically do it...

TM: So your feet are sticking up in the air.

AH: Oh yeah.

TM: You're lying on your back right?

AH: Yep and your paddle behind you to balance.

PH: It's a way to pass the time while you're still going down the river. It's fun.

TM: So lots of flatwater. Then Nankoweap comes along, splash, splash, fine. Then Kwagunt, it's a little hmm, there's a little something over there. But you miss that and there's big chop coming along. Then you get a little more flat for a while. Couple little things here and there. Then Sixty-Mile, okay fine. Then the Little Colorado River showed up. By this time was your water clear to the Little Colorado River?

AH: Very clear. You could see the bottom. It was awesome.

TM: Then what happened?

AH: Brown, mud.

TM: How did that change your boating and your ability to read water?

AH: I couldn't see the rocks. I'm really bad in general at seeing rocks and holes. Maybe I just don't pay...

PH: You do fine.

AH: OK, well maybe I just don't pay enough attention. But it's always like, "Woah, there's a hole over there." And then I paddle really hard around it. The mud didn't help that. It made it harder to see rocks and holes and stuff. I don't even know how to describe it. Then of course it made everything look bigger. The big, muddy water and you can't see white. It just makes it look bigger in my opinion.

KH: More ominous.

AH: Yeah.

TM: Did you find that it helped you with your boating skills? Because you no longer could look into the water to see what was going on down there. You had to sort of try to figure out what was going on underneath by looking at the top/at the surface. That's all you had.

AH: Not really. I don't really ever use underwater I guess.

TM: Alright. So now it got brown, the water's all dirty.

PH: She played around in the eddy line there at the confluence.

AH: I was really excited. "Oh, muddy water. This is so cool. It's merging. It makes a pink color. This is awesome." Then, "I'm muddy. Now I'm all gross and muddy."

PH: She was doing rolls in the muddy water.

AH: Yeah, I was doing rolls in the muddy water. "Oh, I'm all muddy and gross." Then I'd go back into clear water and do a roll. Then I'd do a roll back in the muddy water. Then I realized that the clear water was gone. It was, "Uh-oh, oh no, what's happening? I'm stuck with the mud."

TM: Did you come to like it?

AH: Yeah. I got used to it. I got used to the mudiness. It didn't really make that much of a difference.

TM: Do you know what Colorado means?

AH: I should know this. This is embarrassing.

KH: We failed.

TM: I'm just asking. You don't have to worry about it.

PH: I do.

AH: Red?

TM: Why? Why is it called red?

AH: That I don't know.

PH: What are we talking about?

AH: I don't know.

TM: What happened at the Little Colorado River?

AH: The confluence?

TM: What were you playing in? What were you rolling in? What was happening?

AH: The merging of the two colors.

TM: And what happened to the river afterwards? It turned red.

AH: Yeah.

TM: That river was always red. There was no dam. Okay, so the water turned brown and off you went. Things are coming up. There's 75-Mile, Unkar. Any thoughts on Unkar, 75-Mile?

AH: I don't remember. I'm really bad with names.

TM: So then Hance showed up. And you might not even stop and scouted 75-Mile.

PH: We scouted it.

TM: No not Hance but 75-Mile or Unkar.

PH: No, we just ran right through it.

TM: Then here comes Hance, ok fine, another big, flat lake, lots of water, paddle, paddle, paddle. Then what happened?

AH: I was kind of nervous because I really wanted to paddle the whole thing. "You know it's the first VIII and I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to do it. If I can't do the first one, then I'm not going to be able to do the rest of them." So I was kind of nervous about that. Then I saw there was a sneak line. "Ooh, there's a total easy shoot off to the left." I thought that's awesome. That's my favorite part about the Grand Canyon. There's not just one big line with these huge holes that you have to go through. There's always some eddy. There's different lines. It's a big, wide river. So I scouted and we sat there for a while. I was like, "It's okay. Not necessarily my favorite line." There's this awkward little lead in. I watched dad go through. I made him go through, run it twice. I watched him go through it. Thought, "Okay I actually didn't like that line. So let's do the second choice." I had two options that I put in my head. I didn't like the first one so we're going to do the second one. It's maybe a little harder move but it looks a lot easier, just how the boat maneuvered in it. So we did that one. Ran it perfectly. Then there's some little waves and then it was fine. I was pretty easy so then, "Oh, if every one's like this I can do it!"

TM: Bingo, nice. After Hance did you guys run down to Phantom? Where did you camp for that night? Clear Creek? Could have been Zoraster, could have been Grapevine.

PH: Clear Creek, right above Clear Creek.

AH: It was after Grapevine. There was that perfect little...

PH: Clear Creek is where we stopped and played on that first...

AH: It was a little bit above Clear Creek.

PH: It was on the right.

TM: It would be Clear Creek, Clear Creek camp.

PH: Maybe it was Clear Creek camp.

TM: You got to walk across all the rocks. You got to walk a ways and then get into the canyon. Go up the canyon to get where the water is.

PH: That was it.

M: So by the time you got to Clear Creek you had run Grapevine, Sockdologer, 84.5-Mile. That was like...?

AH: Grapevine was really scary. I saw the lip and I got really nervous all of a sudden. I ran Hance and everything was good. Then I saw Grapevine. I heard that it's hard for the rafts. I heard Izzy talking about it and I thought that sounds really big. So I was a little nervous. I was, "Okay, we'll just run it. We'll just do it." Then I realized there was another group scouting. So I was, "Let's just go scout. We'll scout." So we scouted it and we watched the rafts go through. It made me feel a lot better. I was able to see the

line. We got to the top and dad was, "Are you ready?" "As ready as I'll ever be." So we got down and we ran through. It was completely fine. Huge waves, super fun.

PH: You did great. The rafts were waiting for us because they didn't think we were going to scout. That's kind of the nice thing in a kayak. Last second, change your mind. She was, "Let's scout!" So we jumped out. I was nice to watch our rafts go through. She could... It helped her read the water by watching how the rafts reacted.

TM: Get to Phantom Ranch. There's lemonade, candy bars. There's people walking around. At that point, from Lees Ferry to Phantom, how had your boating changed?

AH: I became more confident. I started to believe that I could do it. At first it was like, "Maybe I can paddle the whole thing. Okay, I've gotten through a lot of it. This little dream of mine is actually maybe possible. Maybe I can paddle the whole thing."

PH: I think so. Definitely her confidence went up. Not that her confidence was low in the beginning. She just has a good time in her boat and she's usually not too worried about stuff. We got there and it was like, "We can do this." I tried to really never pressure her. I always gave her the chance to walk a rapid if she wanted to. So it wasn't like we went into it, "We're going to paddle the whole thing." It was like, "That's what you do. You go down a river and try to paddle the whole thing if you can."

AH: I told myself the whole time going down the Canyon it was okay. I didn't know about any of the other rapids. So, "Okay, Lava is really big. If I don't think I can run safely through it, I will walk it. As hard as that will be, I will walk it. Or if there is a dangerous spot, I will walk it. Even though it's going to be awful, I will walk it." So I told myself that the whole time. If I feel like I can't do it, I will walk it just because that's safe. I had that in the back of my head but I really didn't want to do that. I really wanted to paddle the whole thing.

TM: Kathy, what were you thinking?

KH: I'm always nervous for my little girl and I want her to be safe. So as I watched her paddle through the Roaring Twenties and pick these beautiful lines. And then Hance, she did exactly what she told me she was going to do. I think at Hance is when I started thinking maybe she can do the whole thing. Every rapid, again and again, she hit the line that she was talking about. So I was proud of her and nervous for her and worried about her and excited that she was doing all this. It was a whole jumble of emotions.

TM: Terrifyingly awesome.

KH: Exactly.

TM: Then comes Horn Creek. I'm assuming you scouted.

AH: Yep.

TM: It was like ho-hum?

AH: Yes. I saw the line right away. There's big waves and I don't really want to go near those so I'll go a little further left. Kind of nip the waves. Not go through the meat of them but still hit some of them. I was so excited to go left that I almost ran straight into the wall on the other side. [Laughing]

TM: At that point you realize, “Wow. Here we are, it’s happening and we’re managing to survive.”

AH: I was like, “These are awesome. All the VIIIs you can sneak. This is amazing. There’s an easy line on everything.”

PH: You weren’t really sneaking them

AH: I wasn’t sneaking them. “There’s a line that I can see on everything. It’s amazing.” Then Granite came. I was asking the whole way, “Are there similar lines to what I’ve been taking on Granite, like the other ones?” They were like, “Oh yeah, sure. Totally.” “Oh, yeah, I’ll just take similar lines that I have been.” Then I got there and I looked at it. If you look at the far, far left it’s just pourover and awful holes. “Okay, if I boof over this hole and boof over that hole I’ll make it through without having to go through the meat of it.” I was, “Okay, we can do this.” Dad was, “That’s awful. If you’re going to flip you’re going to hit your head on a rock. That’s not safe. You can’t do that line. Not only that, you’ll get stuck in a pourover. Not a good idea.” “Okay, what’s the line?” He goes, “Straight down the right.” “I don’t want to do that.” So I sat there and I debated. Sometimes I get so nervous that I start crying and then I hyperventilate. Then it’s not safe to run it because I can’t breathe. So the whole time I was, “Don’t hyperventilate because then they’re not going to let you do it. Don’t freak out.” So I’m sitting there crying. “Should I do it or should I not? This isn’t even the hardest rapid. I totally can do this. I know I can. Worst thing that happens is I roll or even worse than that I swim. But I’ll be fine.” So I sit there and I’m contemplating. Finally it’s, “Okay, I can’t sit here much longer. It’s starting to get dark and I guess I just have to go run it.” I really don’t want to walk it. I can’t walk it. I really want to run the whole thing. I knew I was capable so I went and it was, “Okay dad, will you paddle through it and just let me watch?” He did that and I watched it. I was, “Okay.” He styled it and looked great. “Okay, I can do it.” I looked at it one last time and I went, “Okay, here we go.”

I turn on my GoPro and we walked down and we get ready to paddle through the rapid. I do a roll. I get ready. Drop in. There’s the first big wave I was, “Oh no!” I just freeze. I’m just frozen. Then I flip. Then I roll and I’m good. “Oh my gosh, I just flipped. That’s the worst thing that could happen! Oh no.” Then I’m paddling through and another big lateral almost flips me but I recover it in a brace. Then a second one hits me and I recover it in a brace. Then the third one hits me and I just fall right over because I’m still in a brace. There’s this wave hole at the bottom on the center left. I didn’t want to go through that because I knew that if I went through it I’d probably flip. My goal was to stay upright through it. I failed that miserably. So I’m ready to roll. “Okay, I’ll roll.” Felt a brake. I was about to roll and then felt “Psh, psh, psh.” All this pressure on the bottom of my boat. I went through the hole right as it broke and I went through it upside down. “Oh no, thankfully I scouted. I know now that I’m through the hole there’s maybe some waves but by the time I roll, I’ll be able to roll.” I was able to roll up. That was 10 seconds. I was under for 10 seconds. In a pool, I can hold my breath for a minute. It’s not that big of a deal. But in whitewater you’re thinking about what’s going on around you, thinking about rolling. You’ve just paddled through a big rapid that you’re scared of so you don’t have as much oxygen. So I was really out of breath and really tired. We paddled down, tried to catch the eddy. Missed the eddy and went down through the next rapid and caught the eddy. It was not the line I wanted, but I made it through fine. Even the worst thing that could happen happened and I was fine. I made it through. I’m sure, had I not have been so scared, it would have been a much better run through. I was almost so scared that I messed it all up. But I pulled it together and did a roll.

TM: There was a passage in a book that you’re reminding me of. It was a book called *Doom* that your parents may have read. The passage is ‘fear is the mind killer’.

All: Totally, yep.

PH: I think getting through that moment, gave her the confidence to know that it's okay to roll. You don't have to stay upright the whole time. We always roll a lot. We play around and roll. I think then, the next big rapid she was, "Okay, if I roll, I roll. No big deal. I'm going to roll right up and I'm going to keep charging through the rapid." And she did.

AH: Even when I was nervous to flip in the rapid I was, "Okay, I flipped in Granite. I flipped in the place where I didn't even want to flip and I went through the hole I didn't want to go through upside down and I'm fine. I made it. Maybe not the line I wanted but I made it. So even if I flip in this one it will probably be no different. Maybe I do go through that whatever I don't want to go through. I'll be fine, it happened in Granite." That was my first big combat roll of the trip, in the big rapids. Of course I'd done the little rapids, but that was the first big combat roll in the rapids. With that is was, "Oh wow, I can paddle this. That was not the best run ever but I did it and I'm fine so maybe I will be able to paddle the whole thing."

TM: At this point it's late in the day. It's getting close to being dark which makes me think that your raft team had your back.

KH: I was photographing on the bank so I was taking pictures of her going through that. That was definitely the scariest moment of the entire trip. That 10 seconds when she was upside down and that little pink boat is going through all of that and I can't see her, that was terrifying as a parent to watch that happen. I kept waiting to see her head come up. That she was swimming. Eventually she got down to the bottom and rolled right up. But it was an excruciating long amount of time that she hung in there upside down to get through that.

AH: In the end, I was crying tears of being afraid. When it came down to it, I was, "I'm going to regret not running this. Who knows, this might be the only trip I ever get in the Grand Canyon. It'd be awful if I didn't get to run it." So instead of having tears of regret and missing out on something, I'd rather have tears of joy and tears of happiness. Complete it and finish something that's really hard. So I was really happy and felt good instead of disappointed in myself which made me feel so much better in some of the other bigger rapids.

KH: It was a pivotal moment. She was a different kid on the river after that. Charging into everything and just, "Oh, I got this. Oh, is this a VII? Is this an VIII? Cool, I can't wait. Let's go." It was definitely a transformational time.

PH: She was more relaxed, more comfortable, more confident. She started playing around more in the bigger rapids trying to surf waves. That's always a good sign. If you're willing to surf a wave in the middle of a big rapid, you've got your head around it.

AH: Something my dad did on his trip that I remember him talking about is sometimes in the little rapids you're paddling and you get kind of bored. Him and his friends started doing this thing where they close their eyes in the rapids and the person behind them would tell them where to go. So I was, "Oh dad, we should do that." I started feeling more confident. "Okay, we can do that." So I'd close my eyes in the rapid and he'd lead me through these huge waves. I'd just be totally airborne in my kayak. My eyes closing, "Did you peek?" "Maybe when I was at the crest of that wave." When you're flying and in midair, you just can't help it. You just have to open your eyes. I'm trying so hard to keep my eyes closed but, "Woah!" and your eyes open.

TM: That's very fun. Then there's Hermit. Did you get on the big ride? Where are you going to camp?

AH: We camped at Hermit. I knew that I would be nervous to camp at Hermit and not run it as soon as we got there. So I got out of my boat. We scouted it real quickly just so I knew what was happening. Had I not scouted Granite, I probably would have swam because I did not know that that hole was there. I probably would have freaked out. "Maybe it's the smallest rapid ever. Maybe it not a big deal. I'd just like to know if I flip I know what's coming and I can feel it." So we scouted it, saw the line. I went center right and had a... So fun, the waves were so big. As soon as I dropped in I was, "Woah, these are a lot bigger than it looks from the bank." I felt a quarter of the size of the waves. They were just huge. We hit it all at high water, Granite and Hermit. So they were really big. But it was so fun and I felt really good. Then I carried my boat back up to the top. The next morning when we woke up I ran it again. So I ran Hermit twice. It was really fun.

TM: Then you get Crystal. My running assumption is... I drive wood, I drive an eggshell so I'm really worried about Crystal because there's little rocks and I gotta deal with that stuff. But in a kayak it seems like you have a little more liberty to make it a little more funner.

AH: I didn't look ahead in the map. I was so excited about running Granite and Hermit that, "I'm done with the VIIIs. I just have Lava and I'm done." Then I was like, "Oh yeah, we have Crystal today." Ran Crystal, I ran the right line as normal. I think everyone does that or tries to. Ran the right line, did it perfectly, got the bottom, "Yes, I'm done with the VIIIs! This is awesome." Then like a week later it was Upset. "What's Upset?" "Oh, it's just a Class VIII." "A Class VIII? Another one? I thought we were done at Crystal. Dang it."

TM: You didn't get upset about Upset did you?

AH: No. Of course I saw the line right away and it was super fun.

TM: Did you run right or did you run left?

AH: I ran right.

TM: That's a nice, safe line there. Now there's a lot of flatwater. Were you zoning in to the flatwater? Was it becoming more tolerable?

AH: I got used to it. It wasn't really flatwater. When I think of flatwater, I think of Lake Superior. Just flat. This has current. Even on that line there's a bunch of current and there's some waves. I guess maybe it's just because I'm so small. Those waves felt big on the side even though they weren't necessarily going through the hole or something.

TM: At this point, you haven't swam and you haven't gotten out of your boat. Haven't put the boat on the back of a raft and said someone else can push me down through the moving flatwater?

AH: I was a little bit tempted. "Oh, you know, kayaking's great, I love kayaking but you know I'm kind of tired. I'd like a layover day but no one else wants a layover day. I'm kind of tired so let's get on the raft. Oh no, I ran Granite and I sucked it up through Granite so I'm not getting on the raft. If I sucked it up through Granite, I'm definitely not getting on the raft and sitting in flatwater." You know Lava, if I didn't like it I would walk it and that was fine. I'm not going to ride though the raft on some flatwater just

because I ran on Granite. That was really big for me. I just didn't want to do it. I did it and so there's no way I could get on a raft and ruin that motivation to go through Lava.

TM: Then what? Lava.

AH: Lava was the only one that I knew about and the only one I was really nervous about. It's the hardest rapid on the river and I wasn't really sure if I could do it. When I saw the video, it was really far away. I guess the camera didn't zoom in. All I saw was one big wave, raft flip, and then flatwater. That's all I saw. That's all I expected. I didn't see the ledge hole, I didn't see the V-slot, I didn't see Big Kahuna. I didn't see any of that. I just saw one big wave. We got there and we were waiting for the rafts to tie up. I got so anxious. "Oh no, this is really big." I'm nervous. "I'm sure it will be fine. It's just one big wave. I can get through the one big wave. But, I just gotta go look at it right now." Mom said, "Go get the camera." So I run get the camera. Then I'm practically running up the scout trail. So nervous. I look at it and, "Uh-oh, there's a big ledge hole. There's a V-slot, the Kahuna. Don't want to go through the V-slot. Don't want to go in the ledge hole and don't want to go near Big Kahuna. What are my options here?" So we sat there. Doug and Izzy and Ron were so patient. We sat at the top of Lava for 3 hours. For the first 30 minutes we sat at the scout rock.

PH: You looked at the left line.

AH: We looked at the left line. "Okay, that looks good. We'll ferry across the top and go scout on the left." Dad said, "You know, maybe you shouldn't run that. There's some big pourovers over there and I don't think that would be safe. Kind of like Granite." "Okay, is there any way I can get away from the V-slot and all that big stuff?" Didn't find anything. "If only I could move the ledge hole. Get the ledge hole out of there, then I'd be fine."

TM: You and everybody else! With my magic wand!

AH: So I was thinking about that. "You don't have magical powers, you can't change it. You just gotta look for the line." I had dad run it. I didn't like the line very much but he had a beautiful line. I finally sat there and I got sick to my stomach. I felt like I was going to throw up. I couldn't look at it any more. By then we were probably there for an hour, so I went and sat at the boats for maybe 30 minutes. Sat there and cried and thought, "Should I run it, should I not? This is really big. It can't be that much harder than Granite. Maybe shorter and there's only one or two moves. Not a bunch of oncoming laterals." I thought about it and thought about it. Went up to the scout rock one last time. "Okay, if I don't see the line and if I don't like it, I'm walking it and that's it. Game over." I saw the line and I talked about it. There was another party, they would get ahead of us. I watched them go through it. They did fine. Then I was, "I guess it's time to run it." I decided I was going to run it. I knew I could do it.

Our line was... There's a lateral that comes off the ledge hole. Our line was to punch through that and go to the V-slot. There's another little wave coming off the V-slot and we were going to punch through that. So that was our line. I was going to motor it left so I could go right around Big Kahuna. I thought I was going to catch the left eddy and go look at that little waterfall at the bottom. So we got to the top. We talked about it some more. Let the rafts go through, the other party's rafts. Finally it was time, after 3 hours. Izzy gave me a pep talk and I just felt really good. Maybe I just became used to it by then and how it looked smaller. So it was time to get in the boats. I did a roll. Then we got in. There's the bubble line. I thought I'd have 30 seconds there. All of a sudden the bubble line is gone. I was, "Oh no." Then there's the ledge hole and we were punching through the lateral. As I went through that little wave that we were going to punch next to the V-slot, I got spun around backwards. I'm not really sure what

happened but I went through the wave sideways. Somehow I didn't flip. I don't know how that happened. But I went through it sideways leaning upstream. I really have no idea how I didn't flip. But I did it. Then going off the back of that wave it felt like I was dropping off a waterfall. "Woah, this is so big!" Then I spun around quickly and realized that Big Kahuna was coming up. I paddled as hard as I could to go around. Caught the left eddy. Looked at the waterfall. Dad was, "Come over here. Catch the right eddy." I thought I was going to the left eddy. So I had to ferry across to the right eddy. At the end I just felt so good.

I don't know why I do this, even though there is still some more rapids to come. Even in Granite there's that one big wave who I didn't like, but I knew that once I was past that I was done with the rapid. That was that nervous part where I knew I was going to flip if I were to flip. So once I passed that I felt good. The same thing with Lava. On the whole river, that was the rapid. I knew if I passed that I could paddle the whole thing. Once I got to the bottom, I paddled the whole thing. Even though I didn't paddle the whole thing, I knew I can paddle the whole thing. I just knew I could. So I felt almost done even though I wasn't anywhere near being done. It just felt so good to be down at the bottom. I was so proud of myself for sucking it up and paddling through these big rapids. Feeling very accomplished in doing what I know I could do.

TM: So it's the last day. You guys started out at Surprise, you've got 30 miles to go and the wind is blowing. What were you thinking?

AH: For me flatwater has always been a problem. I guess I don't think anyone really enjoys flatwater. I in particular really don't like flatwater. "Oh, if I can run Lava I can paddle though flatwater. It'll be fine." It was really hard for me to do that. "I want to just go down in the raft. This is hard." Really high winds. You're thinking, "Ah, this is so miserable." Finally mom and I started talking. It's not miserable. We were playing games, this is more fun. Finally I started to motor and we got half way, "Oh, I can do this." Then I started to get cold. We found a little hot spring on the side. I filled my gloves up with hot spring water and stuck my hands in. Started paddling on. We finally got to the takeout. I tapped the side of the bank and, "I'm done. I did it." It just felt so good. I was pretty tired to be actually excited. I was so tired but I was so excited. It felt good to set my mind to something. "Hey, I'm going to paddle the whole Grand Canyon." Then actually do it. I feel like sometimes, "Hey, I'm going to do this..." Then I don't actually do it. It felt good to finish something and get it completely over with.

TM: What was the coolest thing you saw on that journey?

AH: I think the whitewater was really cool. Ever since I saw the pictures of my dad's trip... I wasn't really interested in whitewater. I paddled whitewater a lot but I wasn't really into it yet. I saw pictures of Elves' Chasm and I was like, "That's the coolest thing ever." So when we got there I was so excited about Elves' Chasm. That was one of the big things I was most looking forward to. It was one of the only side hikes I knew about besides Havasu and stuff. We got there and I motored up there. Swam around in the pool in my drysuit. Then it was finally time to jump off. I wouldn't say I'm the bravest person of jumping of things. I don't like to jump off things. Maybe a little scared of heights. I climbed up and, "Okay, this is going to be awesome. I'm going to jump off." My dad jumped off. It was all good. "Just don't hit the ledge below. You have to jump out." I got to the edge and looked down. The ledge right below me is right there. "I want to jump far enough out. Okay, you can do this Abby, you can do this Abby. One, two, three, go." And I'm still standing on the ledge. All I could think about was me slipping and falling off and hitting the ledge. Finally I was, "Okay Abby, you've really got to do this now." So I jumped off and I

cleared the ledge by a lot. It was super fun. Then we rushed down and ate lunch. Then we moved on. It was really fun to go to Elves' Chasm and play around there.

TM: What was the thing you liked the least?

AH: I don't know. Probably the flatwater paddling. Probably paddling that last 30 mile stretch with the wind. It was really hard to motivate. That was the crux part for me. That was probably my least favorite part. And leaving, of course. Taking out, that was awful. Driving away was really hard.

TM: I'll ask Peter the same question. What was the coolest thing you saw on that trip?

PH: The coolest thing that I saw was at Granite. Even though she didn't have the perfect line, she broke through some huge barriers. And, really on her own. I tried to never pressure her or set any expectations. It was always, "Okay Abby, this can be whatever you want it to be. If you want to walk, that's fine. If you want to run it, that's fine. No judgment either way." She was over there crying, not sobbing but you could tell she had tears of fear.

TM: Just like all the other boatmen that stand there.

PH: We just let her... I kept trying to talk to her a little bit. But then I was, "I'm just going to let her come to her own conclusion and let me know what she wants to do." So we just let her be quiet. She walked around, looked at everything over and over. Then she walked up to me, the tears were gone and she's like, "Let's run this thing." That was a highlight. Then paddling and dropping into that tongue into Granite. I looked back at her, "Okay, here we go." She's like, "Okay." Then she just disappeared in the waves behind me. That was pretty awesome. You're also probably getting ready to ask me my low point or scariest moment. There when she's rolling, I thought for a second, "Oh wow, you gotta roll, you gotta roll." We've trained Abby to wait until she feels the proper time to roll. Not to just to go for a roll blatantly but to wait until she feels her body positioning, feels some pull on the paddle. To really make her rolls count. Don't just go through the motions when you're not ready. That's exactly what she was doing. I could see her boat upside down, I could see her paddle set off to the side out of the water. She was in that setup position to roll. She just didn't roll and it was like, "Come on roll, come on." As the father, I'm thinking, "Wow, come on roll, roll, roll. Please roll." She was just taking her time. It was everything I trained her to do. When you're going through the last part of Granite and you see your baby girl upside down, she couldn't roll fast enough in my opinion but she was doing everything right. I actually started paddling towards her. I was going to try to give her what we call the 'hand-of-God' and flip her back over myself. I got about 6 feet from her and boom, she popped right up. She took a big breath because she'd been under for a while. Then she instantly went from big breath to the biggest smile I think I've ever seen. She knew she was through it. It was all whoops and high fives from there. That was really cool.

KH: Same thing for me, exactly. Mine wasn't watching her drop in, but at the end watching the change in her. How she paddled with so much more confidence. Everything was brighter after Granite. In camp she was so helpful and happy, joking and playful. On the river she was laughing and charging and playing.

PH: Surfing.

KH: Surfing. An amazing person on this trip with us. That transformation was absolutely the highlight for me, too. And the scariest moment right before that when she was upside down. I couldn't even breathe.

I was crying and I couldn't breathe. I was photographing it and capturing the whole thing. I wasn't anywhere near where I could do anything.

TM: There's a reason why we as a species have survived so long. It's called 'Mom'. It's not called "Dad", I'm sorry. [Laughing]

KH: Yeah, it was terrible. Way worse than me being upside down in the rapid. Watching her and waiting for her to deal with it on her own. When she did I was so relieved and proud and sobbing still. It was amazing.

AH: There was a funny moment at the bottom of it. Dad was, "Wow, that was some combat roll!" "You didn't see the first one? I flipped twice in that." "No you didn't." "Yeah, I flipped twice." He was, "What?"

KH: I saw both of them.

TM: Documented with the camera.

KH: Exactly.

TM: So Abby, the next 12 year old is out there somewhere. What would you want to tell them?

AH: I think even if it's as crazy as wanting to paddle the whole Grand Canyon or whatever that is, do whatever you want to do. I might take 3 hours of crying at the top of Lava but eventually you'll come around. Maybe you'll see the line and maybe you won't but you can do anything as long as you set your mind to it.

TM: Very cool. I'd like to wrap this interview up with one last question for each of you. What is the question I should have asked but didn't? We'll start with Kathy.

KH: Oh my goodness. I think we've talked so much about the rapids and the water and the river. I think my very favorite part was the 3 of us for 25 days unplugged, together, focused on this adventure, and working as a team. Being together in that environment was magical. I think we're so fortunate. So few people get to do that as a family. Especially with an almost teenage daughter. That was my very favorite part of everything. The time around the campfire. The time on the water. The time talking and hearing what we're each thinking and what's going on with everybody. It was really magical.

AH: I liked all the relationship's we made. Some of it was with the Canyon. Some of it was the river. Some was with the new friends we met on the trip. It was all really cool. How we met new people and new things. It was cool to learn about new stuff.

PH: A surprise for me was at Havasu. We went up, we're checking out the beautiful water. Then it was, "We have to kayak this, too." Abby and I carried our boats up and we ran the last 2 or 3 drops of Havasu.

AH: I ran 4 of them.

PH: There was a little waterfall in there and some other little creek lines. The whole scenery there is so beautiful. Being in your kayak in that beautiful water going downstream is just amazing. Seeing Abby in that environment, too. We laughed, we probably did it 4 or 5 times.

AH: It was my first waterfall.

PH: That was really neat. Yeah, she went off a little waterfall. It was just gorgeous. The light's so beautiful in there. That was a highlight. A bonus round.

TM: Thank you so much for this wonderful interview in a very windy Cameron parking lot. This is a Grand Canyon Historical Society oral interview. Today is the 29th of March, 2017. [ACTUAL INTERVIEW DATE IS THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2017] We're signing out.

All: Thank you.