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Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

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TM: Today is Tuesday. It's May 26, 2020. This is part 5 of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Esther Litton. My name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon, Esther. How are you today?

EL: I'm pretty well, thank you.

TM: Good, good to hear it. May we have your permission to record this conversation?

EL: Yes, you do.

TM: Thank you. One of the things I had been meaning to ask you as we go through the 1960s and 50s is about the names of your children and how you and Martin came up with those names. Could you recount that for us?

EL: Yes. John, I think, was named for Martin's grandfather. [No. Martin's grandfather was James Riley Litton. Esther says to correct this. She was mistaken. She doesn't remember the reason for John's name]. And then Kathleen, we had a neighbor when we lived in Brentwood. Her name was Kathleen and she was a very lovely neighbor. We were very good friends and I did love the name. So I named Kathleen after her. And Donald was named for Martin's younger brother, whose name was Donald. And I don't remember Donald's middle name... Donald [Clyde]... He will scold for forgetting it.

TM: Oh dear, no worries.

EL: Donald was named for Martin's younger brother. And my fourth child, Helen, was named for somebody—a very good friend of Martin's mother [Mrs. Helen Sharkey].

TM: Nice. Very nice. Thank you for covering that. When we left off last time, you had mentioned Martin worked closely with Wallace Stegner.

EL: Yes. Wallace Stegner and Martin were on the board of the Sierra Club. And Wallace Stegner lived fairly close to our home and so for the board meetings, in the evenings when they occurred, Martin would pick up Wallace Stegner and take him to San Francisco for the meeting and return him to his home. I got to know Wallace Stegner and his wife Mary later fairly well because in the later years, I went on a trip to Tanzania, where he and Mary were part of the group that traveled to Tanzania [in January 1981]. However, at the time Martin was on the Sierra Club board, there was the argument about the proposed Diablo Canyon, [CA, coast nuclear plant site], and unfortunately, Wallace Stegner took the opposite side that Martin took. Wallace Stegner sided with the people who said Diablo Canyon was acceptable and Martin and some of the others debated they were against the selection of Diablo Canyon, so I think their friendship kind of frazzled at that point.

TM: I see. It's interesting in reviewing the conservation record of these issues being so passionate that if people disagreed, they'd basically stop their friendship.

EL: Yes. In fact, Martin disagreed heartily with Ansel Adams because Ansel Adams also took the side that Diablo Canyon was acceptable. And the Diablo Canyon argument resulted in David Brower leaving as executive director of the Sierra Club. I don't remember which year that was, but it did cause him to leave and form his own company. I don't remember the name of the company.

TM: Was that—was that Friends of the Earth?

EL: Yes, Friends of the Earth. Yes.

TM: Okay, thank you.

EL: He formed his own company, but I've forgotten the date. But it was as a result of the arguments about Diablo Canyon [and some other issues].

TM: Do you briefly, very briefly, remember the pro and con arguments of that issue? This is a nuclear power plant on the ocean, isn't it?

EL: Yes. I could give you the details if you want the details.

TM: Oh, just briefly. Yes, please.

EL: Yes. The original location was to be in an area south of that called Nipomo Dunes, which—a part of it is part of a state park. And Kathleen—let's see... Jackson—of the Santa Barbara chapter of the Sierra Club was adamant about it not going into the Nipomo Dunes. So PG&E looked around and they found Avila, the town of Avila, and that harbor. And they proposed building it in Avila. But the owner of the property in Avila had substantial beachfront property, which he wanted to develop into apartment

houses. But he also had access to Diablo Canyon. So he talked PG&E into considering Diablo Canyon. At the time, PG&E had a geologist who we met later, who did the geological studies and did warn them that there were faults, earthquake faults, under the area of where—of Diablo Canyon—where they proposed to build the nuclear plant. Diablo Canyon was an untouched side canyon that went deeply into the mountains and had some magnificent coast live oaks. Tremendous spread to the branches and it was fern-covered and had a little stream going down. And Martin had visited it a couple of times and taken pictures to show the Sierra Club board what would be lost if PG&E covered that canyon, as they surely would if they built the nuclear plant. So he then showed them all these photographs of the area, which was very beautiful. And—but PG&E insisted on that area, and so the permission was given, in spite of the fact that they knew about the earthquake faults, which later on, many years later, we met the geologist who said in the years after Diablo Canyon, he found that there were many more faults than he had discovered since the time of the proposed nuclear plant. So at that time, there was not—there was just maybe one or two faults that PG&E thought that they could deal with. So they went ahead with the plant.

TM: Is that plant still in operation today?

EL: No, it isn't. Because they have found that it is more dangerous. They have found lots of earthquake faults and I believe it's being des—not torn down, but it's not working now.

TM: Decommissioned?

EL: Decommissioned, yes. That's the term, yes. Actually, when the man who owned the property on Avila, where he was going to build his apartments, he did build those apartments and he went broke with them. Anyway, this is what I remember about the issue, because I made trips to the area before it was covered up and it was a beautiful canyon and we discovered a place in the rocks by the kitchen midden, where there was a big rock that had a depression and a pestle. So it was a mortar and a pestle used by the Indians at the time they were living there. It was a very popular and well-documented living space for the Indians at the time.

TM: Nice. So did that happen frequently or very rarely, where there would a decision and it would split people apart one way or another in the conservation community?

EL: Well, it was debated in the Sierra Club. I don't know about any other conservation community, but it was hotly debated and as I say, Martin took a lot of aerial pictures of the place and pictures on the ground of the canyon itself to try to convince the board that they should not accept that position. So it divided the board. Most of the board went in favor of Diablo Canyon and there were a few who did not like the choice of Diablo Canyon.

TM: I guess I was thinking of Bestor Robinson and the rest of the board on the—with the Sierra Club and... Just some other issues where people who were friends and friendly suddenly realized they were on different sides of an issue.

EL: Well, I don't remember the individual members of the board who were for or against it. For was one of the members of the board from Santa Barbara and I think his name was Fred Eissler. So Martin had a few supporters of his objection to Diablo Canyon. But I don't remember... I know Ansel Adams and Wallace Stegner, specifically, were in favor of Diablo Canyon. They thought it was a good alternative to the Nipomo Dunes.

TM: Well, let's go back to Wallace before the Diablo Canyon issue. What else do you remember—just interesting things about him and his wife?

EL: Well, the only time that I really got to know him was later in January 1981, when we were on the Africa trip. But while Martin was on the board of the Sierra Club, I think I met him casually when we first moved up to the Bay Area and Martin got involved in the Committee for Green Foothills, which Wallace Stegner started, along with other citizens from Palo Alto. And the reason for the Committee for Green Foothills was that Stanford University, with its vast holding of thousands of acres, had decided to dedicate part of the acreage to possible business ventures. And they decided which businesses they would accept. One was IBM, one was Xerox, one was Hewlett-Packard, [one was Varian] It was the specific companies that they agreed on, that they gave permission to start building on this commercial land. And the building started at the main drag, which was El Camino, but their property extended many, many—a couple miles—up into the foothills. And suddenly, Hewlett-Packard had built fairly close to the foothills. Their business building, it was not a plant—it was a business building, administration building—and the hills were threatened, as far as the local people who lived nearby were concerned. They were concerned about future manufacturing—future business buildings going up. And so they referred to the Green Foothills, they objected to Stanford's plans, which seemed to extend into the foothills. So they formed, Wallace Stegner and a few others, formed the Committee for Green Foothills. One of their objections was that Hewlett-Packard when it opened, kept their lights on all night. But anyway, it was the threat of future development. But it pretty much stopped where Hewlett-Packard and a few other business buildings came up and it edged up to a street called Foothill Expressway. So some of the foothills were still left alone. But that was their concern with Stanford's plans. And at the time we moved up to the Bay Area, 1954, Stanford had already developed quite a big acreage along the main street [in Palo Alto], El Camino, and into a very large shopping center [Stanford Shopping Center], which became a tourist attraction in future years because they had some shops like Cartier and other companies that really catered to the wealthy people. But when they opened the shopping center, it was just a grocery store, five- and ten-cent store, the emporium, and a bank. [No, Esther has this confused with another shopping center. There was no grocery store or five and ten at the Stanford Shopping Center in 1954. There was The Emporium Department Store; not sure about the bank] And so it was limited to a few really useful stores that the general public could use, up to five and ten (?) the grocery store. But anyway, Stanford had started to expand their holdings—building on their holdings—and the people who lived in the foothills were really concerned with what Stanford was going to do with this foothill property. So that was the beginning of the Committee for Green Foothills.

TM: Okay, and there's a lot of vineyards there today, aren't there?

EL: A lot of what?

TM: Of vineyards?

EL: Vineyards?

TM: Yeah.

EL: No, no, no, no, no. There are some in the [coastal range, further west, not on Stanford land].

TM: Yeah, in the foothills. Right. Okay.

EL: Yes, up on Skyline (Blvd). (Thomas) Fogarty had a vineyard there and then there were some neighborhood vineyards. In their backyards, they'd have a little vineyard, but there was no great vineyard development up there except for Fogarty's.

TM: Okay, all right. Nice, so they got to work together on that project. And then Ansel Adams. What was An—Ansel was a photographer. He's taking black-and-white images and using them for conservation purposes.

EL: Yes, yes he was. Yes, and the Sierra Club did publish his book, I think it's *This is the American Earth*. Can't remember for sure what the title of the book was. [This is the correct title] But it was of Ansel Adams' black-and-white photographs.

TM: And what do you remember about Ansel?

EL: I remember that when Martin first went to work with *Sunset* and was attached to the Sierra Club, we were invited to Ansel Adams' home, which was then in San Francisco in an area called Sea Cliff, which had been his family home when it was just sand dunes. And the family had settled there and he still had the family home. And we were invited to a meeting at the time he was introducing Beaumont Newhall and—this was a couple who admired Ansel's work and considered his work artistic. And they wanted to have a photography designation in the arts for a gallery in the East Coast. And Ansel Adams was introducing the Newhalls to a group of people and we were invited to that. There were several artists there. And that was the evening that we went and I remember, among the artifacts that he had scattered around in the room, was a chambered nautilus, which, of course, was cut in half so you could see all the divisions of the chambered nautilus. And I thought it was very charming, but the variety of objects he had scattered around the living room and we did meet—I think we met some of the other people attached to the Sierra Club. But that was my—that's the only social thing I ever did with Ansel Adams.

TM: Okay, okay. There were some other river-running people that I wanted to ask you about. Do you remember a river runner named John Vail?

EL: Yes. John Vail had, I think, a few user days on the Grand Canyon and he used the rubber rafts. He and George Wendt went together at the time they proposed purchasing Martin's contract—permit. And this was many years later, 1989. But I think Martin was aware of John Vail on the river. And I think he was aware of George Wendt. They were simply on the river at the same times and he met with them off

and on. But they were not long, thick friendships, but as I say in 1989, they came forward with a proposal to buy Martin's permit in the Grand Canyon.

TM: I see, okay. Yeah, I was mistaken there. I thought he might have had a collegial, friendly relationship with them back in the 1960s.

EL: No, no.

TM: Okay. Another river runner was Joe Munroe.

EL: Oh, Joe Munroe. He was a photographer, a magazine photographer. And he had some rafts. Joe Munroe and Martin got together to do a short, half-hour film—I think it was a half-hour film—called *Dare the Wildest River*. And the idea of this film was that Joe, who thought he had connections with the TV stations, would present the film to the TV people, and have them buy it and show it on TV. It was a very sad split at that time, with Martin and Joe, because Joe failed to sell it to the TV people and the argument was that Joe hadn't thought ahead to decide on the price that he wanted, the price that he wanted for the film. And so he kind of fumbled the ball and Martin never forgave him. He didn't speak to him for years after that. It was very embarrassing because sometimes in social gatherings, Martin would absolutely not speak to him and I wasn't supposed to speak to him either. However, this is kind of scattered, but I have to move ahead to the fact that Joe Munroe had two rafts tied together and he was along on the Powell Centennial, the portion of the river trip from Green River, Utah to Labyrinth, Stillwater, and Cataract. And he had the—this is before they split up in anger—but he had these two rafts together, that he was experimenting with. And in going around Cataract, Martin was taking a film of his rafts and Martin jammed his leg down into the talus and damaged it very, very much. He was in great pain until they got to Hite, which was the take-out point for the Green River trip. And Martin went to hospital in Page, where the doctor told him that he shouldn't—he should stay off of his leg—and Martin said well, he had to row on the Grand Canyon portion, which was coming up. And the doctor said, "Well, if you are in the boat, be sure you have your leg above your heart. You're in bad shape, here, with your leg." Anyway, that was the result of that particular...

TM: Well, don't end this story there! Then what happened?

EL: Well, Martin went on with the river trips. They ended at the Grand Canyon portion of the Powell Centennial. And toward the end, he had a black hat and black coat, an empty sleeve, and at Overton (Nevada), he played the part of Powell in a ceremony that was supposed to duplicate Powell's ceremony when he got to Overton and he had a watermelon feast or something like that. So that was when the Powell Centennial ended as far as we were concerned. Powell, of course, went on and got to the delta. But the Powell Centennial celebration ended at Overton on Lake Mead. (laughs) We've gotten way ahead out of order, but anyway, that was what happened.

TM: No worries, because we'll go back. And what happened to Martin's leg? Did that heal up, then?

EL: No. It healed up, but he forever had cellulitis. He had very damaging cellulitis in that leg, which he also got in the other leg. So over his lifetime, I was constantly aware of when he would get a fever and

he would kind of be out of it and I would get him to the hospital. And he would spend quite a bit of time over the years in the hospital from the flare-ups of the cellulitis.

TM: So before Joe and Martin had a falling out, what do you remember about Joe? What was he like?

EL: Oh, he was very, very, very nice. Very friendly. And the thing is, we went to his home—I think it was in Orinda (California)—when they had the footage together for the film and we had a showing of the film at his home. And he had a lovely wife who was very artistic. It was a very friendly relationship. It was just that when he presented—when he went to the TV people and they had these high expectations of the fact that this film would be purchased, shown on TV, and it all fell through, Martin got so mad.

TM: Oh, that's too bad.

EL: It is too bad. Because we did come in contact with them off and on later and it was never—well, Martin didn't speak to him.

TM: Okay. Is there anything else in the 1960s before 1968? I mean, just—there were so many different conservation issues going on. It sounds like you traveled a lot. Are there any other travels that you wanted to mention?

EL: Well, yes. Mineral King. Mineral King came up toward the end of the 60s. Mineral King was a beautiful wilderness canyon. It had been a mine. It had been a mine which petered out. Mineral King was a small settlement. It was no longer being mined. There was a small segment of the boundary of Mineral King that was part of Sequoia National Park, otherwise the whole area was National Forests. And sometime in the—before the 60s—Disney had visited it, apparently, and thought it would make a wonderful ski resort. He admired it. He was going to do such a good job and keep it just as beautiful as it was. And the Forest Service said okay. They would give him a temporary okay. Well in the late 60's, 1965, Kathleen (daughter) researched this recently. Disney reminded the parks—the Forest Service—that they had been agreeable to his making—to creating this [ski area]. Well, the Sierra—Martin and I had been there at that time in 19... Our son John was just two years old, he was born in '46, so I think in '48, when I was pregnant with Kathleen... We had done a pack trip taking John into Mineral King. So we knew what Mineral King was like and he argued with the Sierra Club that it should not be turned over to Disney. They should fight this okay by the Forest Service. And so Martin took pictures—had pictures of it—and over the years, from '65 to '70—which was beyond the time that he was at *Sunset*, but he was still on the board—he had members of the Sierra Club come demonstrate. A visit to Mineral King. As a result of this argument—actually, the Sierra Club did not have political clout. They couldn't sue as a conservation company. And it was—turned out to be a very important case. Well, I'll tell you what happened. The Sierra Club formed [the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, later renamed Earthjustice] Earthjustice, and through Earthjustice they could sue. But the suit was against the government—to protect a natural place, which was Mineral King. And technically you could not sue for a natural place, a natural thing instead of a company, corporation, or a person. At that time, there was no possibility [no precedent]. However, it went to the Supreme Court and William O. Douglas, who was on the Supreme Court at the time, was an ardent conservationist. And he backed the idea of being able to sue for a place, or an artifact, or something that was not a person or a corporation. And it passed the Supreme

Court. They could now sue. And Reagan, who was the California governor at the time, was all gung-ho about Disney to do this. But the Supreme Court knocked it down and said no, they could not build the ski lift at all. They were out of the business. And what essentially happened was that the hope that they had was a small section of the road, which is still a very narrow, winding road. And it would've required tremendous amount of engineering to build a road that would serve a ski lift. But anyway, because of that little bit of the road, which was part of the Sequoia National Park, the whole thing became—the whole area—became a part of Sequoia National Park. And curiously enough, in years later, there was a group that came to see Martin from Japan. It was a Japanese conservation group that was trying to sue the government about something—some natural phenomenon in the delta, one of the rivers. Something they wanted to save from destruction. They wanted to see Mineral King. So they contacted Martin, and Martin took them up to Mineral King. It was winter, so they weren't able to get down into the canyon itself very far, but they did see enough that they realized what had been saved. And they went back to Japan. I don't know whether they were able to save what they were trying to save, but they were interested enough and knew enough about the suit that they came to California to see what had been—what had happened.

TM: Nice, very nice. You also mentioned that in 1968, Martin left the job with *Sunset*.

EL: Yes. In the 1968, quite a few things happened. First of all, my mother was very ill and I brought her up to the Bay Area to stay with me. And at the same time, I was offered a job by the (local school) librarian as a partial—part-time job. She had acquired from the San Mateo County a great amount of instructional materials. Each school district had an instructional materials center where they had extra materials for the teachers, in our case, from kindergarten to eighth grade. It covered the curriculum of the different grades. She had acquired quite a bit of this material and she wanted somebody to come and catalog it and accession it. It wasn't going to be a full-time job. It was going to be just a part-time job, from nine to one, and would involve additional activities like delivering the mail in the morning from the superintendent to the two schools. And then in the afternoon, at one o'clock, deliver the mail again at different places. And then between—I would gather these materials, collect them, catalog them, accession them, and then add to the collection for the school in items that I might find [in magazines] like butterflies, lizards, volcanoes-- anything that would add to the instructional materials for the school curriculum. So that was to be my job. It was from nine to one and I thought it was just perfect. Absolutely perfect. So I started in September, soon after my mother passed away, which happened while she was asleep. Well in December, Martin had scheduled for the following year, an article about the formation of the—the fact that there was now the Redwood National and State Parks. It finally was a national park. And Mrs. Johnson, Lady Bird Johnson, had taken a very active part in supporting the national park. She had come out several times, apparently, she was in love with the redwoods, and they dedicated a—made a grove [the] Lady Bird Grove. And in December, she came out to dedicate the Lady Bird Grove. At the same time, Martin had written a short article, I think, to announce the fact in a future issue that the national park—the Redwood National and State Parks was in existence and where they had put it. Anyway, an article about the park. Well, all of these years between 1960 to 1968, the lumber companies had watched what Martin was writing and Martin in December, went to a meeting in Eureka [California] and took Bill and Jean Lane off to this meeting, which was taking place in Eureka. Was going

to be presented by some of the lumber companies. And while they were there, Bill Lane sat next to the Weyerhaeuser representative and Bill Lane mentioned that they were going to have this article about the new national park in the redwoods. And the Weyerhaeuser representative said he would like to see this article before it was printed. So Martin did not [know this]—the Lanes went on up to a meeting up in Washington State and Martin came home. The custom was that proposed future articles were to be put on a bulletin board. And the article had been posted on the bulletin board when Martin left for this meeting. When he came back, Bill Lane had called and told him to take the article off the board because the Weyerhaeuser people wanted to see it before it was printed and they could always print it at a later date. But when Martin saw that the article was off of the board, he was furious and he quit. He absolutely quit. He came home and he said, "I quit." And when Bill Lane came back from that [meeting in Washington], he sent Martin's secretary out to our house several times saying he was sorry Martin was so offended, but they were going to print the article later and to please forget it. I didn't say a word because over the years that Martin had been at *Sunset*, he had had many issues with the editing of his articles. Every once in a while, somebody would move a comma or change a word or change a caption, and he would complain, complain. And I really was sick and tired of his complaining. So when he decided he would quit—he would quit—I didn't say a word. I think that the Lane family thought I would surely say something because we had four children and, you know, what was Martin going to do? But I didn't know what he was going to do, but I know I was ready to accept the fact that he was quitting. So he quit. December 31st. And he had to keep on doing another story. He had a story on Death Valley scheduled, so he had to finish that. But 1969 was the Powell Centennial. And he had been asked [by] the Sierra Club board to represent Powell when they were going and Martin had a couple of boats by that time, so they were going to reproduce Powell's journey from Green River, Wyoming to the edge of Overton, as far as they can go during the year. And they scheduled portions of that trip, which they couldn't do all the way anymore because there was Flaming Gorge Dam and Glen Canyon Dam, —but they did do portions of it. So that was what he did. He became Powell and they started at Green River, Wyoming. All they were able to do at that point was to launch the three boats that they had, representing Powell's three boats. Well, you could only go a few miles and get out because there were dams along the way that impeded their trip. So they had that part scheduled and then they had Gray-Desolation Canyon on the Green scheduled, which ended at Green River, Utah. Then there was Cataract, Labyrinth, and Stillwater, so that part of the Green. And then they would hop over, because they got out at Hite, and then they would hop over to the beginning at Lee's Ferry and do a couple of the Grand Canyon sections and end up in Overton at approximately the time that Powell had reached Overton. And so that was the Powell Centennial. And as a result of the Powell Centennial, the young people who worked for the Sierra Club had been involved in the planning and all that. So they urged Martin to keep on. He had these two boats and why didn't they schedule more trips? And at the end of 1969—oh, I must say that I joined them. I joined the trip at Green River, Utah for the Cataract, Stillwater, and Labyrinth sections.

TM: So tell me all about it.

EL: Well, yeah. So before I left the house, I had all the food in the car. Food cans and everything labeled with nail polish so that if the label fell off, we know what was in the can. I had all of that ready. Martin had [taken] Donald with him, who was ten, and my older children were in college and they were not

involved in the centennial. So I was ready to start the car and go. But Donald's dog had gotten into the habit of running down the hill to the street to the—Beer Garden [a Stanford University student hangout] at the foot of [our] street—and the people who—the working men who'd be there would feed the dogs. So unfortunately, she had disappeared while I was busy loading the food, loading the car. And when I went to look for her, I couldn't find her. And I went looking—I went [all] over the neighborhood calling, I went down to the Beer Garden, calling—looking for her, I couldn't find her, I didn't know what I was going to do, because I didn't know where the dog was. Fortunately, Donald had a collar on the dog that had his name and telephone number. There was a creek that ran behind the Beer Garden. And so a lady called to say that our dog was dead in the creek. It had been poisoned. It apparently had gone down to the creek to drink. But it had died there, so there I was. I went to get the dog and the workmen there helped put the poor dog into the car and I had to run to the veterinarian's to say, "What could I do with it?" Poor dead dog. And they took the dog off my hands and I drove from there, and I picked up Marge Childress who helped me get the food. And she was going to be on the trip. Her husband, Clyde Childress, had a rowboat called the Mabel T, which was on the trip. And so she and I made our way across Nevada over to Utah, to Green River, Utah, and joined the river trip there. And it's a beautiful section of the river. Labyrinth, Stillwater, Cataract. It flows through Canyonlands [now Canyonlands National Park]. It's not a very violent river until you get to Cataract. And Cataract has some really big rapids.

TM: So, Esther—Esther. Where were the rest of the children?

EL: Oh, they were in college. I think John was already in Vietnam, involved in the Vietnam War.

TM: Okay, thank you.

EL: I believe that Kathleen was not involved [except for hauling boats for a few early trips]. Martin had never encouraged her. She had never shown any great interest in the river trips. She, I think, was in college at the time, so... And Helen, you know, that's a good question. I don't remember what I did with Helen. I think that I found somebody to come and stay with her... let's see, the... Anyway, I had found a place for Helen. Just for that week that I was going to be gone.

TM: Okay, so from Green River, Utah, the river goes through Labyrinth and Stillwater. Picks up the confluence with the Colorado and then goes off into Cataract Canyon. And what do you remember of that river trip, that section?

EL: I didn't hear that last. Because at one point, it joins the Colorado. Green and Colorado come together when you are still on Green. And then it becomes the Colorado. The Green pretty much ends there.

TM: Yes, and so what do remember of that river trip?

EL: Well, it was delightful. It was the people... Phil Hyde was along to photograph it. We had some interesting people along on the trip. One of them, a dentist, Dr. Torgan, and his wife, Linda. Linda later got so enamored with the river trips that she came back several times and later, she divorced her husband and married one of the boatmen.(laughs) But anyway, it was a lovely group and Phil took—

stopped many times to get pictures. And Donald had a great time. He was just 10 and having a good time. And Marge and I were very compatible with the food. We did the cooking and all that. And I remember Joe Munroe was singing some of the Simon and Garfunkel songs. He had the tape on his machine and he was playing a lot of those songs as we went along on the quiet stretches. So I always remember that and when we got to Hite, somebody from the group met us and took us to Lee's Ferry while Martin went on up to the doctors to see about his wounded leg. Actually, I didn't stay for that because I had to—I don't remember—but I think I had to go home. I didn't go on to the rest of the river trips. I went on home. But it was a beautiful part of the river and it's the only time I ever saw anything of Canyonlands.

TM: Oh, nice. Nice, okay. So there were people on that trip, young people, who were encouraging Martin to basically do more river trips, is that right?

EL: Oh, yes. Yes. There were young people who had scurried around transferring cars from the passengers to the end of the trip, helping to load the boats and they really were very helpful in the preparations for the trip. And they all said, "Oh, this is so much fun, Martin. You should do this all the time. We'll help you. You don't have to do anything but sit in the bow of the boat and lead us all down the river." Because the—in 1970, the Park Service was going to—were to stop giving out permits. They were going to do a ten-year study of the effects of the water on the river—what was happening to the beaches and all. There would be a ten-year study and they weren't going to add any more concessionaires. So they persuaded Martin to apply for the permit, which he got. And so...

TM: Esther, do you remember who those young people were?

EL: Oh yes, yes. There was Connie Flateboe, who helped us a great deal and stayed with us and let's see... There was some of the... Tom Turner, I think, of the Sierra Club. And of course, Dave Brower came along on part of the trips. And I forget now who all of the other young men who were working, being part of the Sierra Club in their office. But Connie Flateboe was definitely a marvelous person, and she'd stayed on a couple years, but anyway... They were the ones who said, "Oh Martin, all you have to do is sit in the bow. We'll do all the work." So in 1970, Martin was granted the permit, but with not very many user days, which meant that he couldn't take very many people and he couldn't schedule very many trips. He could buy extra user days from some of the other concessionaires who had more user days than they needed but they didn't use, so if they had extra user days, Martin could get them to give him these extra user days. But it still wasn't going to be enough to keep a crew busy all summer. And so that was when he started looking around. One of the boatmen, Curtis Chang, I think, suggested that in Idaho, the Hells Canyon area, the Snake [River] in Hells Canyon, that it was possible to get a permit from the Forest Service to run the Snake in the Hells Canyon area. So Martin looked into that and Curtis Chang and his wife agreed to move to Lewiston to handle possible river business on in the Northwest, in Idaho, which at that time, just consisted of the Snake. The six-day trip.

And I have to tell you about the food, because Marge Childress—who lived in Palo Alto and was the wife of Clyde Childress, who was the staff photographer at *Sunset*—she and I would go shopping for the food for the first trips. And our menu was the menu that Pat Riley had used, which was very spartan.

Breakfast was a can of Vienna sausage and a can of grapefruit slices. And for a while, he would bring eggs and there would be scrambled eggs, and for a while, there might be bacon. But mostly, it was these canned Vienna sausages and then grapefruit (laughs). We copied his menu for lunch. I think it was just maybe—I don't remember what—it was just crackers and cheese. And then in the evening, the evening was a soup. One of the Lipton's dried soups. And a can of tamales or can of macaroni or, actually, Pat Riley, the first day or so, would bring chicken. He would bring chicken or steaks for the first two nights, but after that, it was canned food. And so we would mark the cans with nail polish, because that wouldn't wash off, whereas the paper covers on the cans would wash—would disappear. And you wouldn't know what was in the can. So we painted them with nail polish so we'd know what was in the cans. It was very little regular [food]—I think, we used dry ice.—something that we would use to freeze. We did pack a few pieces of chicken and some steaks for the first two nights, but after that, it was just... But Martin got the idea that there was—there was a day-old bread store, Orowheat. And Palo Alto had this store for day-old bread. So by that time, he had the plane and had—I forgot when he bought the plane—but anyway, he would stock up on this day-old bread and fly it to the put-in. I thought that was such expensive day-old bread. It would be older than day-old by the time it got to the river. But anyway, she and I worked out the menus for the first trips and we—Martin, published a small brochure. We had a mailing list from the Sierra Club and gradually, the mailing list got bigger and the brochure got more—got bigger. But the thing is, the cost of the trips was, you know, I don't—I think it was about \$700 for the 20-day trip. And you could go for the first six days and hike out, or you hike down the Bright Angel Trail and join for the last days—the big part of the trip. And the cost of the trips was really unreal. But Martin did that because he wanted families to come. He wanted people to come to see the canyon. He was not a businessman. He really didn't get into it to make any money. What he wanted was to show people what was there in the bottom of the canyon so they would be conscious of the threat to the Grand Canyon. Although they had defeated the two dams, there was always something that was coming up. Anyway, —we did develop the Northwest trips. We advertised those as an alternative. Many times when people called, and they couldn't go on as long a trip as the Grand Canyon was, I would steer them over to the Idaho trips because they were really, in a way, safer for smaller children. And so it was a cheaper trip, and it was six days. We expanded from the Snake trip to the Salmon. The Lower Salmon. Later—many, many years later—we did the Middle Salmon, but primarily, it was the Lower Salmon and the Upper Salmon, which were beautiful, beautiful runs. And we scouted the Owyhee, added that to the list, and then we added the Grande Ronde. And so there was quite a bit of choice in the Northwest trips, with much less rigor and much, in a way, safer, if you want to say that, for families with small children.

TM: Okay. Let's back up a minute and pick up the airplane. You know, Martin loved to fly and so what kind of plane did he end up buying and how did that work out?

EL: Well, I was asking John when we bought the plane and he didn't remember, but Martin's secretary at the time was familiar with the wife of a man, Arnold Senterfitt, who had a Cessna 195 and he used the plane to go to Baja. And he wrote a catalog of airports in Baja—a big catalog of all the airports, most of which were dirt. And he would fly down to Baja quite a bit. Well, when Martin started the river trips—and I don't remember when he bought the plane—but Arnold said he was very protective of his 195, and he didn't want to sell it, necessarily, but Martin persuaded him and Martin bought his 195. I think

when we started the commercial trips. So... and I don't remember what he paid for it. But he had the plane, which he flew from [our base at the] Palo Alto airport to the Grand Canyon, to Lee's Ferry. Art Greene was a trader and on the approach to Lee's Ferry, Art Greene had a motel and a gas station, which is where everybody stayed before the trip started. So I think there was a small dirt strip near there. But anyway, that was where everybody stayed at the beginning of the trip. And as I say, he got the 195. In later years, he damaged it and got another 195 and that one, I think, was the red and white one. I'm skipping all over the place at this point, because I don't remember the year, but Martin was about to take off from the—I can't remember the name of the town, but it was near Hurricane [Utah]. It was a commercial strip.

TM: Is that St. George?

EL: Yes, St. George. Yeah. He was gunning the engine to take off when the propeller broke. And it was going so fast, it swung around and pulled the engine off of the fuselage. And the engine crashed into the right wing, which smashed the right wing. And Martin was just lucky that he hadn't taken off because it turned out—in an x-ray of the propeller—it had a crack, which had never been noticed before, which was not visible. It was in the propeller. So then he had to get another 195 (laughs). They were always 195's, which is a tail-dragger; a single engine with high wings, but no struts. It was excellent for photography. And it had 13, what is it, spark plugs? Because he'd have to turn the propeller 13 times. So that was how we got into the airplane business.

TM: Oh, my. Well, Esther, you know what? We've been talking here happily for an hour. Maybe this is a good place to stop, and the next interview—

EL: I'm sorry I didn't get into the actual workings that created the Redwood National Park, because that was quite complicated, but it would be backtracking.

TM: We can do that. Let's talk about Redwood National Park and then we'll talk about the river in the 1970s. How does that sound?

EL: Yes, that sounds fine.

TM: Okay. Alright.

EL: I'm sorry about the fire drill.

TM: No worries, no problem at all. Okay and—

EL: Awfully loud.

TM: Yeah. With that, this will conclude part 5 of a Grand Canyon oral history interview. Today is May 26, 2020. This interview's been with Esther Litton. And Esther, thank you so very much for a charming interview.

EL: Thank you, thank you for listening. After 1989, when Martin sold the company, then the dates get kind of foggy. I'll try to remember things that happened after that.

TM: You know what? We're in 1960—sorry, 1970. And we have 20 years to go, so no worries.

EL: Technically, 1969—the Powell Centennial.

TM: Right, right. So 20 years. We'll go slow and it'll be fine. We'll cover that ground.

EL: I hope I live long enough (laughs).

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