

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Esther Litton (EL)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Esther recounts her life with Martin from 1970 until his death in 2014 and what she has been doing since that time

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TM: Today is Wednesday, May 27, 2020. This is Part 6 Grand Canyon oral history interview with Esther Litton. My name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon, Esther. How are you?

EL: I'm well, thank you.

TM: You sound loud and clear. This is good. May we have your permission to record this conversation?

EL: Yes, you do.

TM: Thank you. Last time we ended in 1969. You had mentioned the Redwoods National Monument. Can you talk about that?

EL: Oh, the Redwood National Park. It was the Redwood National and State Parks.

TM: I'm sorry.

EL: It was the dedication of the long struggle to achieve a coast redwood national park that included all of the state parks. It was dedicated in October, 1968. Lady Bird Johnson had taken an active part in supporting it, so there was another dedication in August 1969 dedicated to her. There was a grove named the Lady Bird Grove. So that was the completion of the... They finally achieved a coast redwood national park that included the state parks. The Save the Redwoods League had insisted that the state parks be included.

TM: Excellent. Do you remember how many acres that all entailed?

EL: No, no I don't. [139,000 acres] I do know that ultimately the virgin forest only consisted of about one percent of what the original forest had been. It had been from the Oregon line down to almost the Hearst Ranch, which was San Luis Obispo. I don't know, but it was urgent that the park be formed because the lumber companies were doing so much clearcutting. With the clearcutting, the storms that

came in 1955 had sent vast mudflows down on many of these groves for which people had paid a lot of money to preserve. More than 500 of the virgin coast redwoods were destroyed.

TM: Wow, just in the flood alone?

EL: Yes.

TM: So was that a 15-year struggle to make the national park happen?

EL: It was a struggle from the 1920s to 1968 when it was finally achieved. All of the coast redwoods, the virgin areas, are in the national park. There are only a few places, like Muir Woods in the San Francisco area, which is a patch of virgin wood which is a famous area in the Bay Area. There was another virgin patch near Santa Cruz, the city of Santa Cruz. There's another virgin patch down in Big Sur. But the rest of the Coast Redwoods are all second growth. People look at them and, of course, they're very big trees now. They look as though they could be virgin but they're not. They're all second growth. When you cut the coast redwood, it sends a ring of other trees so that it creates another forest. The giant sequoia does not do that. When you cut the giant sequoia, it does not send another tree up. When it's gone, it's gone.

TM: Did you get a chance to meet Lady Bird Johnson?

EL: No. I saw her at the dedication and so were hundreds of people there, but that was all I saw of her. However, Martin was invited to the signing of the park and he did meet her. It was a line of people meeting President Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson. I have a photograph of Martin shaking hands with President Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson, standing there waiting to shake hands with the rest of the guests.

TM: Fun. Did you get a chance to meet Stewart Udall?

EL: Yes, I did. Stewart Udall was a member of the board of directors for the organization American Land Conservancy. Stewart Udall and his wife came to one of the December meetings for the board of directors of American Land Conservancy. Those meetings were held at a place in Big Sur called Post Ranch. So I did get a chance to meet him, but Martin knew him quite well/very well because he had been the Secretary of the Interior with Kennedy. When Kennedy was assassinated, he went on to be President Johnson's Secretary of the Interior. He was instrumental in many of the conservation battles. In fact, he was instrumental in the Mineral King battle. He didn't think it would work. He didn't think that there was any way to save it. But with the Supreme Court, their judgement did save it.

TM: Right, you talked about that yesterday.

EL: Yes.

TM: Well, it must have been a real triumph.

EL: I don't know if you want me to start with the river trips which began in 1970.

TM: You know, I do in a minute. You mentioned the dedication ceremony with Lady Bird. Who else attended that ceremony that you remember?

EL: Well, let's see. I was trying to think who else was there. The first ceremony in the park, earlier in December, Nixon was there with his daughters and Billy Graham. Although I wasn't there with Martin, Ed [Esther doesn't remember who 'Ed' was] was there and took a picture. I remember there were other

officials at Lady Bird's dedication but I'm sorry, I can't remember. I'd have to look at the picture to see who was there.

TM: No worries.

EL: She was not alone. Many young people who had fought for the park were there with posters. Some of them said, "Fatten the Worm", because the boundaries of the national park made it look like a worm. It extended from the Oregon border along the coast down to where it ended. I don't remember where the boundary ended. Somewhere around the town of Orick [CA] It was a worm because it included the Prairie Creek [Redwoods State Park] and some of the other groves that had been saved by Save the Redwoods League.

TM: You mentioned Nixon. Was that President...

EL: I don't know why he was there unless he had been in on some of the early controversy of it. But he was there with Billy Graham and one of the California congressmen, Don Clausen, who had been opposed to the park. And, of course, Mrs. Nixon was there and their two daughters and there were other officials I can't remember.

TM: Interesting. So to go to the river trips in 1970, it sounded like Grand Canyon National Park was making all the special-use permittees into concessionaires and Martin must have applied to be a concessionaire, is that how that worked?

EL: Yes. The crew from the Sierra Club let him know that the Park Service the next year, 1970, was going to stop giving out concessions. They were gonna stop the number of concessionaires because they wanted to embark on a ten-year study of what was happening to the beaches along the Colorado. So they urged Martin to apply for a permit, which he did. He was granted a permit and he had a certain number user days, which weren't as many as most of the other concessionaires. But he was able to run several trips in 1970. During one of those trips, he met a man named Ken Armstrong who asked him if he had any movie footage of the river and the trips. Well, Martin, from the beginning, not in 1955 but later on in the early 60s when they started worrying about the Glen Canyon Dam and they ran some river trips, he took a great deal of footage, 16 mm film. So he did have some footage. This gentleman booked speakers and their films in community colleges and natural history places all over the United States. He asked Martin if he could put together a film and a lecture. The idea was that he would show the film but lecture with the film. He didn't necessarily have to have the words on the film themselves. So fortunately, Martin, through John Blaustein, [a boatman] who was one of our first passengers... John's father was [Julian Blaustein, an independent] producer and he knew about one of the editors who had some free time. I think it was one month after the river trips in 1970 that for one month Martin went down to Southern California and met with this editor. Also the editor brought along someone who had the sounds for all the different things. The film Martin shot didn't have any sound. Well, this man provided the sound of the river, the sound of people, the sound of cooking, the sound of the scraping. He had the whole sound effect for the whole film.

TM: Wow.

EL: Yes, it was. It took a month and they put it together. It was 85 minutes long, so there was an intermission. Ken Armstrong started booking Martin later in '71 and for several years, until California passed Proposition 13, which for some reason, denied the community colleges the finances to have programs like that. Martin would appear with a film and show the film that had sound but he would lecture along with the film. There was no talking, no speech on the film itself. He would book in several

community colleges in California. This went on for years until Proposition 13. He went to Seattle, he went to Denver, he went to New York City, he went to Washington D.C., he went to Corning, New York, and quite a few places. It was a source of some income. Each place where he went was a different amount that he would get in pay, which he shared with Ken Armstrong. It displayed to an audience what the bottom of the Grand Canyon looked like. It involved aerial shots of it and also involved some of John Wesley Powell's history. He told about Powell's initial exploration of the Colorado and his working with the Indians and aerial views and all that. It went over very well. He wasn't advertising the river trips. What he was doing was showing what the bottom of the Grand Canyon looked like. It started with raindrops in the Rockies and then the flow of the water gradually getting bigger and bigger and coming down into the Grand Canyon. It did show the boats going through. The man who put the sound on had the music. He worked out the music. At one place where the boats were turning over at Crystal Rapids, he slowed down the motion and the music was like a waltz. [laughs] It was going over slowly and then it showed the people coming up and hanging on to the boat and all that. It was a three-way production. Martin was there for a month working with them getting that film together. And as I say, it wasn't to advertise his company, it was to show people what the Grand Canyon was and the threats that could come up in the Grand Canyon.

TM: Do you think it hurt bookings? I would think it would have helped to book trips.

EL: Did he have what?

TM: He wasn't advertising but do you think it hurt the bookings? I would think, on the contrary, that the film would have helped people know about him and Grand Canyon and the dories and kind of helped the river trip business.

EL: Yeah. Well, it did because people were aware that there were river trips in the Grand Canyon and this way they knew what they would get into if they went because it showed what was happening in the rapids and the quiet spots. And it gave them a vision of what was down in the bottom of the canyon. It also told them about the history. So Martin, over the years, he was able to buy more user days so that he could offer more trips on the Grand Canyon. The one trip that I was on, that Rich Turner [a future boatman] was on as a passenger, the first time he went... You know Rich?

TM: I do know Rich.

EL: Okay. Alright, the first trip he was on—I don't remember what year it was—but he and his friend were on that trip and I was on that trip. There were some passengers who were going just for the six days and they hiked out at Phantom Ranch. One lady stayed on. So here we were with, I think, three boats empty except for one passenger. When we had the side trips where usually the boatmen would take the passengers on a hike, they figured that one person wasn't worth taking her for a hike. [laughs] So when we got to Tapeats Creek, there's a fairly long really lovely hike up the creek. I did make one of the boatmen come along to take this one lady up the creek. That was one of the early trips when we were never sure that we were gonna have enough passengers. I went only on a 1955 trip and I think three others during the years that we had the river trips. I didn't go every year and Martin, of course, couldn't go on every trip. But I did go three times. On the first one, which was 1955, and the last one, which was 1989. But in between we would meet the pontoon parties. Many of the boatmen who worked for the pontoon parties wanted to come over and row the dories. The colors on the dories were suggested by a friend of Pat Riley who worked for Disney. I don't know why he particularly liked these colors, but he suggested it. I think they were automobile colors—Aztec red, beryl green, and refrigerator white. So the dories were always painted in those colors.

TM: When did you move out to Hurricane and put the warehouse out there?

EL: Well, the first trips that Martin ran were haphazard. He stayed in a motel in Kanab and got the boats together there and the boatmen and all. So the first place was Kanab, where he had the boats. Then in scouting the area he found this unused auto parts store in Hurricane. I think we bought the building. I'm not sure when.

I think maybe we rented this space at first. It was a big space. It had a shop, it had a store in the front part of the building and there was a post office building. Anyway, the people in Hurricane were a little suspicious because it was the time of the hippies. Many of our boatmen sported long hair. One of our boatmen who was arriving by bus was stopped and arrested by the police when he got off because his hair was so long. Martin had to come and get him at the police station and vouch for the fact that he was an okay person. That would've been probably '71 that we moved into Hurricane, Utah.

TM: How long were you there in Hurricane?

EL: Well, we were there forever. We were there until Martin sold the company. George Wendt didn't want to use the Hurricane place. He had a place in Flagstaff. George did very well with our people. When he and John Vail purchased the permit, they kept all of our staff and they kept all... The Park Service required them to offer a trip with the dories. They could use the rubber rafts, which was mainly what they had, but they had to use the dories. They had to offer a trip in the dories, which they did. But we were there in Hurricane, as I say, until 1990. The trips ended in 1989, but I'm sure in 1990 I think we had purchased the warehouse. We were able to sell it and then everything got moved out into Flagstaff.

We never had anybody killed as a result of a river trip. We had one man who came from Texas and he'd always wanted to go on the Grand Canyon/the Colorado. Toward the end of the trip, he sat down while the rest of the people went for a hike in the side canyon. He said, "I'll stay here and wait for you when you come back." But when they came back, he had passed away. So that was our one death on all the years that we ran the river trip.

TM: What a nice, peaceful way to go.

EL: Well, I guess so. That was what he wanted. We didn't appreciate his choosing our place.

TM: Oh, no. I'm sure.

EL: There was one gentleman from South Africa [Wally Baker] who came at least three times and he was a house guest of ours. He had a heart problem. He got to Elves Chasm and was climbing Elves Chasm when he felt ill. The boatmen had to go down, get the oars, and make kind of a litter with ropes between two oars to carry him down to the river.

TM: That sounds very hard.

EL: Well, I don't know if you have other questions. We did have a few celebrities. One of the announcers on *60 Minutes*, I can't remember her name now [Diane Sawyer], but she and Richard Holbrooke, who later negotiated the end of the Balkan War. She came along. There was a radio contact with the rim. *60 Minutes* radioed that if there was a place for her to get out to please get out because they had arranged an interview for her and Russia with whoever was the premier at the time in Russia. I don't know which one it was, Khrushchev or what. But anyway, one of the girls was a cook. They had reached the Tapeats and you can hike up Tapeats and it leads to the North Rim which is near a place called Jacob Lake. It's a long hike. It's a long, long hike. Diane Sawyer. That was who it was, Diane Sawyer. She and the cook

hiked up to a place where they had anticipated she would come out and they had a car for her. They drove her to Kanab Airport where they had provided a plane for her so that she could get back to New York and do her interview in Russia.

TM: I wanted to ask a little more about the warehouse in Hurricane. Were there any other problems with the town there or just that one time with the one person off the bus?

EL: No, that was just the one time. Because once we got settled, we used their local market to buy the food. We used the local bank for our bank account. And we were really nice people. [laughs] They got acquainted with the people around there. It was a small town. I understand a major road goes through there now. But no, they became very friendly. One little girl was our manager and stayed in Hurricane. She bought the apartment building where she was living and she went into real estate after the company was sold. She's a part of the community. She's not a Mormon, but she's been well-accepted by the community. Another one of our boatmen bought the property, which was empty, next to the warehouse.

TM: What was the name of the woman who was the managing of the shop there?

EL: Oh, Jane Whalen. There was a man who rowed for us a while. Mike Taggett. Mike Taggett purchased the corner part of the building and created a... I think he sold it... It's called Chums. You attach it to your glasses so that it'll hold your glasses against your chest so you don't lose them. It's called Chums. What he did was to use the women in Colorado City, which had been Short Creek, but was then called Colorado City. Those women created these cloth tubes that fit over the end of your glasses and hold the glasses against your body. These go on and he made quite a good business of it.

TM: Nice. What was it like working with the Park Service? Prior, working with the Park Service to make more parks and championing/safeguarding the parks and then suddenly to find yourself as a concessionaire, sort of, with a different position with the Park Service. How did that work out?

EL: It worked out very well. Martin was on very good terms with the superintendent. At first, at the launching point at Lee's Ferry, there weren't very many trips taking off. For a long time, Edward Abbey was a representative of the Park Service checking out the supplies and the different boats. It was just a dirt ramp at the time and there was no fee or anything. It was just for safety's sake that they were checking what your equipment was. Martin had a good relationship with the superintendent and everybody up there on the South Rim. However, toward the end of our stay, in the late 80s, the Park Service decided that they needed to charge more. They added fees for one thing and another so it became difficult. The fees amounted to thousands of dollars and it became more and more difficult to keep going because as it was... When we finally sold/turned over the equipment to George Wendt and John Vail, our accountant said, "You know, you're a minus \$200,000 for the return." (laughs) But we were only minus to ourselves because we were the only ones who owned Grand Canyon Dories.

It was a relief in a way and as difficult as it was for the staff because Martin didn't tell them that he was gonna sell it. All of a sudden this offer came and he accepted it. On the 1989 trip, I knew he was gonna sell it and the crew was very suspicious. They wondered what was going on and I couldn't tell them what was ahead until Martin did accept the offer. Then there were some hard feelings about... They were very mad at Martin for years. He felt very guilty about the way he managed it and made apologies. Actually, we stayed friends with all of the crew and so it worked out. But it was an uncomfortable situation. We were at a point where in November at the end of the trips, there was a serious cash flow problem. It kept getting worse and worse because Martin wasn't really charging enough for the trips and not paying the crew enough. So it was a relief to turn it over to someone who was more business-like and able to

do better by the boatmen and the cooks than we had done, although we stayed friends with them for many, many years.

TM: Well, nothing lasts forever and by 1989 Martin would have been 70 or so?

EL: Well, I don't know how old he was. [72 in 1989] In 1987, this is a different thing that came up, in 1987 someone in the Sierra Club in the West Sierra chapter... I guess it was the Audubon chapter near a town called Porterville [CA]. Porterville was where Martin used to take the plane, the Cessna 195. [There] was a mechanic that worked only on Cessna 195s. Near Porterville there's Lake Isabella and Kernville in the western Sierra. In Kernville there was a lady who belonged to the Audubon and I'm so ashamed I can't think of her name. [Charlene Little] I tried to get a hold of somebody who could tell me her name and they weren't home. But anyway, she had a jeep and she lived on the edge of Lake Isabella. She went exploring with her Jeep up into the mountains to the Forest Service roads. All the logging roads that had been built in that part of the Sierra. She was appalled to see how the clearcutting was going on in the giant sequoia groves. She announced this to the Audubon group. Somehow Martin heard about it so that in 1987 he got involved in the clearcutting that was going on in the southern Sierra. So when he left the river business in 1989, in 1990 he just flung himself full-blown into the fight to stop the clearcutting that was going on in the southern Sierra.

The giant sequoias don't end at the boundary of Sequoia National Park. South of Sequoia National Park there are miles and miles to the point of the city of Johnsondale. There's a city called Johnsondale. That, pretty much, is the end of the extent of the giant sequoias. But the groves are many and the trees are thousands. This area was under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service and the Forest Service could let logging companies apply for a certain acreage, certain blocks of forest where they could cut. The Forest Service let them do it and the lumber companies were cutting clearcuts. This was what appalled this lady. So a group of local citizens got together to fight this clearcutting that was going on. What Martin did was to fly over the area because on the ground you couldn't see what was going on. We flew over the area and took many, many photographs of the clearcutting that was going on. Martin had those photographs enlarged into 11" by 14", or something like that, and mounted on a fiberboard. There were about 20 pictures that showed, both winter and summer, what was going on in the way of clearcutting in the national forest. The appeal was to go to Congress and have the national forest turned into a national monument. Martin would go places with these 20 pictures and lecture and show people what was being cut at Rotary meetings or college meetings or committee meetings where they had hearings about what was going on and he showed it. At the same time, there was an environmental group that started in Santa Monica [CA] about the same time. It was called Environment Now. It was started by a man named Frank Wells. Is this important? Is this something you want me to keep on with?

TM: I'm interested. Keep going.

EL: Alright, well Environment Now, he had an office in Malibu, southern California. He had been the chief financial officer for Disney and then had also worked as a finance officer for Warner Brothers. He was very environmentally-minded. He was concerned about what was going on in the environment. At the initial meeting in the late 80s that we went to in Malibu, there were other people with proposals to Mr. Wells hoping he would take them on and finance their project. There was a lady who was pushing for bringing the wolves back to Yellowstone and she was campaigning for that. Martin spoke up for the danger that was going on in the giant sequoias. Ultimately, Mr. Wells did create the Sequoia ForestKeepers and started with a donation of \$10,000. The idea was that he would keep donating every year, which I think they have done. But also, he expected the person who was getting this money to send out grants to get money to keep the Sequoia ForestKeepers going.

TM: That's right. Typically if you get money, you have to go out and make grants to get more money.

EL: Yes, yes. Absolutely. So the ForestKeeper who came on was a man named [Ara Marderosian] He was on the local committee in the area there that had been fighting to turn it into a national monument. He took on the job of Sequoia ForestKeeper and he is still there. He's just one person and he has a secretary and that's it. Every time the lumber company appeals to the Forest Service for a spot to log, the Sequoia ForestKeeper goes to the lawyers who do the work pro bono and they can defeat the proposal. The thing that happened, I must tell you, with all the campaigning and going to Washington, Martin began trips to Washington, D.C. to meet with congress people to encourage them... Well, I should back up. What happened was in Clinton's administration, the Secretary of the Interior was Bruce Babbitt and he was a friend of Martin's. Martin was able to convince him to urge Clinton to consider turning the national forest into a national monument which he could do at the end of his term as president. At the end, they can declare all kinds of things, like national park, national monument, national this and national that. So at the end of his term as president, he [Clinton] did declare that the Sequoia National Forest become the Giant Sequoia National Monument which we thought was just great except that when he did that he kept the supervision of the administration of the monument under the Forest Service, not the Park Service. Martin had hoped that as a national monument, usually the national monuments are under the supervision of the national park. As a part of the national park, it would eliminate the cutting of the forest. But he had left it under the Forest Service, so the lumber companies could still come to the monument office and ask for permission to bid in certain areas. Where they appealed to the monument now for permission to do the clearcutting, Ara, who is the Sequoia ForestKeeper, is alerted to their request and through legal terms they're able to stop it. But sometimes the legal business isn't done quickly enough and the lumber company will start to cut and then they have to stop.

TM: The trees get cut down. That's not right.

EL: No, and it's clearcutting. The only trees that they can't cut because the mill can't handle them are the huge sequoias. So we took lots of pictures. I would take some of the aerals. Martin on the ground, he would take the pictures of these clearcut areas with maybe two or three giant sequoias left standing. The problem with that is the... Well, I don't know if I should go on with the little things like that. But essentially, that was Martin's life, his project. We did meet the two photographers, Michael Powers and Mark Frasier, who came on about the time Martin got involved with the Sequoias. They photographed Martin and they photographed the aerals and they made a film about what Martin was doing in the Sequoias. I think they did sell it to TV, I'm not sure. But anyway, they were along. They were our partners in this and they would bring the film to film shows.{film, "The Good Fight"]

Telluride in Colorado has a Memorial Day vacation day. They have a Mountain Film Festival and the two photographers presented that film at the Mountain Film Festival on Memorial Day. They also showed it at different film groups. One was in Flagstaff, one was in Santa Fe. Then they made use of the film they took of the problem of creating the national monument.

I guess I'm up to around the year 2000 because that took up most of Martin's time. We did have a chance... Martin, at one point, met a lobbyist, a man by the name of Carl Ross in Washington, D.C., who had an organization called Save America's Forests. He was a one-man organization, but he had access to the congress people. In his association with Martin, he came out to California and we drove him over the Sequoias and he saw what was happening there. But he made many appointments for Martin in Washington D.C. for several years when Martin was trying to get the administration of the monument changed from the Forest Service to the Park Service. To do that he had to get a bill presented by

Congress to make that change. Carl Ross was able to secure appointments with Martin with many of the congressmen and Martin presented a portfolio with the information. Usually he spoke to the congressmen's people who worked in the office. But often you could get to talk to the congressman himself. I remember one of the times I went, it was to the office of Tom Udall of New Mexico. But I don't remember the names of the other congressmen. It was going door-to-door, person-to-person. Many times trying to get support for a bill that would change the administration of the monument from the Forest Service to the Park Service, but it never happened. It has never happened. It was quite an education to go to Washington, D.C. and go to the hall of Congress. When you see news reports where somebody's standing in the hall of the House of Representatives that was where we were. We visited so many of the representatives with whom Carl Ross had made appointments for Martin. He went back several times. I went a couple of times. They were all very agreeable, very hopeful. They would write the bill and do all these things, but nothing really happened.

By this time, I'm trying to think... Oh, our last meeting there, the last time we went was 2006. This is kind of interesting, before we left—we were leaving that afternoon—Carl said there was a morning breakfast meeting for the senators from Illinois and would we like to come to see what happens. Residents of Illinois could come to Washington and speak directly with their senators. It turned out it was Barack Obama who was a senator at that time from Illinois, and [Dick] Durbin. Durbin was excellent. There were maybe two dozen people in chairs in this vast room and they asked questions. They wanted help in one way or the other from one of the senators. We, of course, were sitting in the back because we weren't from Illinois. Carl Ross said, "You know at the end you can have your picture taken." I said, "But we're not from Illinois." "That's alright. They won't care. We can have our picture taken." Martin finally accepted this and all the residents of Illinois went ahead and had their picture taken and shook hands with Barack Obama. They shook hands with [Dick] Durbin. We were the last ones. Two years before had been Katrina, the hurricane Katrina. When Martin shook hands with Barack Obama, he said, "As a senator, can you do something about helping New Orleans? Maybe create another CCC because there are so many unemployed people." Barack Obama was very kind. He listened to him and he didn't say yes or no but that was the extent of our visit with Barack Obama and Durbin. And we had a picture taken. [laughs] I think that what happened was that Carl Ross wanted his picture taken with them. That was why he urged us to go up and have our picture taken. So we were all in the picture. That was 2006.

By then Martin's health was not good. In the years in between, he had had peritonitis, had been operated for that, and there were many flare-ups with cellulitis. In December of 2007, during the year, he had been quite ill with urinary infection. It was found that he had cancer on one of his kidneys. So in December of 2007 they operated. They removed that kidney. Then he planned to go on a river trip in 2008, but that obviously didn't work out. But anyway, in 2008... Do you want me to go on with this?

TM: Yeah, please.

EL: Questions with this?

TM: No, just as you remember it. Keep going.

EL: Alright. Well, 2008 on Earth Day a TV group from Germany had heard about the giant sequoias and somehow they'd heard about Martin. They contacted him on Earth Day, would he meet them and fly them over to see the sequoias. So Martin agreed. We found them in Palo Alto and they got in the Cessna and they flew to Visalia where they rented a car and they drove up through Sequoia [National Park]. Somehow Martin got back to the plane because the TV people were going to stay in Sequoia [National Park] and they were gonna make their way back somehow. But Martin was going to return, he was

through with the German TV people. He had flown them over the clearcuts and all that. Anyway, he flew back. He intended to land in Palo Alto airport where we had the plane all the time in a hangar. But the wind was bad. It was a crosswind and he didn't think it was safe to land so he turned around and landed over the hills at a place called Los Banos which has a big airfield which is rarely used. There wasn't another plane on the field. There's a motel across the street from it in Los Banos. So he landed there and he called me and he said the wind was too bad in Palo Alto so he was gonna stay in this motel. The next day it was clear as a bell, there wasn't a breath of wind and I kept waiting for him to come. I even called the tower at Palo Alto airport and they said no, no Cessna had come in.

To make a long story short, I found out where the motel was and called them. The lady called Martin's room and nobody answered. Finally he answered but he didn't sound right. He wasn't making any sense. I thought maybe the cellulitis had flared up again so I got in the car and I drove to Los Banos. I realized that he was in bad shape, so I called the urologist who had operated on him. To make a long story short, he left the plane there and I drove him home. He went to the hospital and he was there for a month because he had a urinary infection that the doctors couldn't figure out what the bacteria was and they didn't know what to use to treat him. So he left the plane back there. Fortunately, our older son who flies was able to get over to that airport with a friend and fly the plane to his home over here in Antelope Valley 'cause it didn't look like Martin was ever gonna fly again, which, of course, he didn't. So that was the end of his flying days.

From 2008 I don't remember what else happened, but it was a very serious urinary infection that kept on until 2013 when he had a flare up of the cellulitis and the urinary infection. He went into a hospital again and then into a rehab place in Palo Alto which was 2014, like in February. He came home and required to have a caregiver with him. The caregiver stayed with me, stayed with Martin for the rest of the year until Martin passed away on November the 30th of 2014. So that's kind of the end of the story.

TM: Well, it is. But I want to ask you, Esther, in this journey with Martin, what were some of the things you were most proud about that you did?

EL: Oh, that I did? Oh, my goodness. Well, let me say this, I was able to take a few trips with this couple, the Cheesemans, who ran Cheeseman's Ecology Safaris. In January 1981, I went with them for two weeks to Tanzania and was absolutely overwhelmed by Africa. Since I was working at school half-time and in contact with a lot of the students, the teacher would ask me to... I would give them instructional materials for their class. In my trips, not just that one in Tanzania, but later another trip I took with them to see the gorillas and another trip when I went with them to see the Komodo dragon, each of the trips that I made I tried to take pictures that I thought could teach the children about the places because there was a unit in, I think, the fourth grade about the rainforest. In Suriname, which I had visited the beautiful rainforest and other places, Southeast Asia, had rainforest. In that case, I would try to put together a slideshow that would appeal to the children of different ages. When the teachers asked me to show my slides I would try to adjust them to the age group that I was showing. In the kindergarten I had a slideshow on Antarctica with the penguins and all. I would adjust the content according to the age group that I was showing the slideshow. So over the years, I really was happy and proud to be able to share what I was doing in other parts of the world, to show the children something they could understand about these different places. I zeroed in on, of course, the wildlife and the plants and the animals and things that were natural to the areas. In the 30 years that I worked half-time, 9:00 to 1:00, I made many, many good friends of the teachers and the kids. The people who quit at school, both teachers and administrators, we formed a kind of tight-knit book group which also lasted about 20 years from which I have very good friends with whom I communicate very, very frequently. So I guess I'm proudest of the fact that I did try to bring some knowledge that the children could take advantage of. It

wasn't just a happy time of traveling, it wasn't just a joy trip, but I did try to incorporate learning for the children.

TM: That's really wonderful.

EL: Well, thank you. Well, it was a great pleasure.

TM: I bet the kids really were able to learn a lot about the world that way.

EL: Well, I hope so, at least the places I went to. Because I also, in June of 1980, I saw a sign on the bulletin board of one of the schools. Some teachers who were considered "overseas Chinese". They were teachers across the Bay in the Oakland School District. These two overseas Chinese teachers had organized a trip to China. A three-week trip to China. It was the first year that Americans were allowed to come to China. In 1979, the government... Mao had died in '76, but in '79 they relaxed the rules and allowed overseas Chinese to come to visit China. So these two ladies had visited China in '79 and realized that they could form a group of people. So I signed up for that. I did go to China for those three weeks and it was a revelation. It was a wonderful trip and I was able, again here, to bring back slides which I could share with the children and show them what was in China. The beauties and... Oddly enough, in Beijing there was no traffic and very little smog, although they cooked with charcoal. The only traffic on the streets, any of the city streets at that time, were bicycles. Except for government vehicles and trucks and buses, there were no individual cars belonging to anybody. There were no gas stations and the streets were mostly two-lane... We left Beijing to visit the Great Wall. It was in a bus that was on a two-lane street. What amazes me in the interim from 1980 to our present day, it's only been just over 30 years and the amazing increase, the advances and the modernization of China in those few years says a great deal.

TM: It does, wow.

EL: The schoolrooms that we visited were very spartan. They had benches. All the children would dress in white shirts and black trousers with a red bandana. Over the blackboard, there were no pictures on the wall. No instructional materials, maps or anything on the walls. But above the blackboard was a photograph of whoever the premier was at that time in China and a picture of Mao and a picture of Marx and Lenin and Engel. Those were all the pictures they had above the blackboard. There was a ping-pong table outside. It was a real education, a very pleasurable time. We visited several cities. We didn't just stay in Beijing. We went to Xi'an, Luoyang, Guilin, and Canton. Well, it's not Canton now it's Guangzhou. But we did manage to see quite a few of the cities. The Beijing Airport at that time when we went to it, the parking lot was empty. There were no cars in the parking lot to speak of. Inside the airport there were very few people. There wasn't that much travel. There wasn't that much going on. It was as if you were in a country of 1920, you know? It was going back in time. So when I say it's remarkable what they achieved in those few years between 1980 and now, they got their act together.

TM: Been huge changes.

EL: Yes, yes. In many, many ways. Not necessarily good ways, either.

TM: Sure, just like there have been huge changes over your lifetime here in the U.S.

EL: I don't know if you have any other questions about the river trips or the Sequoias or what I've left out that you would like to include.

TM: Well, I don't except for this question. Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview series that we haven't talked about?

EL: Well, I would say about Martin's ability, he had an excellent speaking voice. His command of the English language was excellent. When he went to a committee meeting or to any gathering, he was so well-prepared that he spoke very eloquently and understandably about the issues at hand. I was always surprised and amazed what ability he had to convince people, not in a bad way but he had the facts. He had the information that they needed to make a decision. Speaking extemporarily, he had the same facility. So I would say that about his ability and his writing. His writing was not easy. It was not easy for him. I think that the reason he complained about the editors moving a comma or a period or a semicolon was because he had labored very hard on what he had written. He really objected to any changes. I think they made changes just to make a change, not because they thought it needed to be done. [laughs] The editors probably thought they had a job to do. Martin would really resent the changes that they made because he had worked very hard on what he wrote in the stories and the captions.

TM: Well, this has been a wonderful series of interviews and I just want to thank you again so very much for letting us do this.

EL: Well, you're very welcome. If you think of anything else, any other aspect, why I would be glad to cooperate.

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