

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewees: Joe (JB) and Carolyn Braun (CB)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Joe and Carolyn Braun recall their 1978 Grand Canyon River trip with Larry Stevens

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KEYS: Vladimir Kovalik, Wilderness World, River City Rafting Club, 1978 Grand Canyon River Trip, Floyd Walker, Larry Stevens

TM: Today is May 3rd, 2017. This is a Grand Canyon Historical Society oral interview. The interview is conducted at the home of Tom Martin and Hazel Clark. My name is Tom Martin, and with us today are Joe and Carolyn Braun. Joe, standard J-O-E; Carolyn, C-A-R-O-L-Y-N. Last name is spelled B-R-A-U-N. Joe and Carolyn have a very interesting connection to Grand Canyon, including an early river trip with Larry Stevens and others. Let's start this interview. Joe and Carolyn, how did you two meet?

JB: Well, it's very interesting, Carolyn will maybe fill in some of the blanks. We were living in the San Francisco Bay area. I was playing volleyball for an athletic club in San Francisco called the Olympic Club. Carolyn was teaching school at Contra Costa College over in the East Bay of San Francisco Bay. She had two students in one of her biology classes. They were sort of out there, they kept inviting her to do kind of unusual things.

CB: Which I declined.

JB: Which she declined. They kept asking her this or that. They asked her if she would like to go to a nudist camp. That seemed like the most innocuous thing that they've asked her to do, so she said sure. At the same time, I had a guy on my volleyball team who asked me, "How would you like to go play volleyball this weekend at a nudist camp? They're having their spring festival and there will be nudist camps from all over the Bay Area coming to this one place to play volleyball." I said, "I'm there." So, as a consequence, she and I came together at the same place. I can recall thinking that she was very attractive, a very interesting person just listening to her talk. She was talking to an older man, talking about food. She said, "You should come and I'll cook you a dinner." I said to myself, "Well, if she'll cook for this old man, maybe she'll cook for me, too." So, I got her phone number and called her.

TM: What year was this?

JB: This was 1970.

TM: Berkeley, 1970?

JB: Close, close.

TM: Joe, how was it that you were in the Bay Area, at the time?

JB: My family moved from Texas. My dad was moved on his job in 1951 from Texas. We lived in San Mateo which is down the peninsula from San Francisco.

TM: 1951?

JB: 1951 is when we came here. Yeah.

TM: What year were you born?

JB: I was born in 1937.

TM: Carolyn, how did you end up in the Bay Area that summer of '70?

CB: I was teaching. I lived in the Monterey Bay area and I was offered a teaching job at Contra Costa College.

TM: Did you grow up in the Monterey Bay area?

CB: Yes. Sunset Beach, outside of Watsonville.

TM: And so clearly, you had him over for dinner.

CB: Yes.

JB: Actually, I didn't come over for dinner yet. Our first time that we went out officially, we went to a restaurant in Sausalito called Ondine's. I don't know if you know of it. It's right on the waterfront, it was owned by the manager of the Lamplighters, the music group called the Lamplighters. I'm trying to think of the lead singer's name. I think his first name was Glenn. But, anyway.

CB: Glen Yarborough.

JB: That's it.

TM: How do you spell Yarborough?

JB: Y-A-R-B-O-R-O-U-G-H.

TM: Thank you.

JB: I was working, at the time, for Merrill Lynch in San Francisco and Carolyn was teaching. So we agreed to meet there. She was dressed in the manner that most teachers were in the early seventies and late sixties. I was dressed in the manner of a Wall Street stock broker. I came early and she finally came and she said that she was meeting somebody there, "He's tall."

CB: "Is he really straight?"

JB: "Is he really straight? Yes."

CB: I said "Probably, I don't know".

JB: Because I had wing tipped shoes and a coat and tie.

CB: Brooks Brothers suit.

JB: Yeah so anyway, then we got to talking. So our really first date was a backpacking trip to Tuolumne Meadows. We drove to Tuolumne Meadows on a Friday evening and it was a beautiful full moon. Just as we were driving on the road to Tioga Pass, the full moon came right up over the road. Anyway, we spent the weekend camping along Tuolumne Meadows on the Tuolumne River.

TM: It was 1970 then?

JB: That was 1970. Yup.

TM: How did you get into river rafting, then?

CB: I have a real good friend, Vladimir Kovalik, that I had met in Monterey. He worked for SRI, Stanford Research Institute, at the time. I met him mostly at parties. We just got to be real good friends. He was married at the time to Nada Kovalik and they were just starting... Not even then, they hadn't started yet the company. They started Wilderness World some years later. We just remained friends for a long time. He invited us, as a wedding present, on a river trip with him on the Stanislaus River.

TM: Okay, let's back up a little bit. Can you tell me your earliest recollections of Vladimir and what year did you guys get married before you took that trip on the Stanislaus?

JB: 1971 was when we went on the Stanislaus.

CB: Vladimir is a wild man. I don't know that I should expand on that. He was a free spirit.

JB: Well, he was one of the Hungarian freedom fighters that escaped from Hungary when the communists took over.

CB: Or was he Czech? I thought he was Czech.

JB: Well....Budapest, Hungary.

CB: He was in prison camp. That's actually how he met Nada. Refugee camp, maybe that was a better term for it. He was in a refugee camp. He was one of the freedom fighters trying to change how things were done.

JB: He escaped the camp and he said, "There isn't a prison in the United States that could keep me after getting out of that prison camp." He was just a free spirit. We can remember the first night we were camped on the Stanislaus River. He wasn't with us at the time. But about dusk, just as we were finishing dinner, we hear this kind of yodeling and hollering and stuff like that coming down the river. Around the corner comes Vladimir with three of the prettiest girls that you could imagine seeing. All four of them with no clothes on and just, you know, having a ball. Here are his river guides trying to keep things together and here comes the owner of the company up to the shore with nothing on. From then on... The Stanislaus is only a two-day trip. But anyhow, he was instrumental in us getting involved in river rafting. We, from that point on, went and bought the same kind of rafts that he was having made by a company in Italy. They were...

TM: Do you remember the name of the company?

JB: If I think about it for a little while. I don't. The river company was Wilderness World, but the company that made the rafts, I'd have to think. They were sixteen feet long and real high quality rafts and stuff like that.

CB: Real high quality.

TM: And this was 1971?

JB: '72 was probably when we ended up buying. I think it was the spring of '72. My middle son and I took the initial ride down the Middle Fork of the American River in Sacramento. So that was the first time we really went rafting. We had no clue what we were doing.

CB: There was a real good rafting club in Sacramento. What was it called?

JB: River City Rafting Club.

CB: We joined them and that was a group that we rafted all over with for many years.

JB: That's where my memory was wrong when we first talked. Because members of that group did their own 'do it yourself' rafting trip down the Colorado.

TM: Do you remember who was instrumental at the time?

JB: The three that I remember the most is a fellow by the name of Stu Patrignani. P-A-T-R-I-G-N-A-N-I.

CB: And Paula...

JB: No, not Paula, she wasn't on that trip. But Craig and Roni Reiser, R-O-N-I R-E-I-S-E-R, who have unusual capabilities as well. She was a very slight, small girl, plays the violin very well but she can handle one of those big rafts all by herself. No problem whatsoever. Those rafts were all just one person oaring. There wasn't any paddle assist or anything like there is now.

CB: Then there was another couple. It was a second marriage for her. She had a daughter and a son from a previous marriage.

JB: I can't recall who that would be.

CB: I'll think of it later.

JB: Yeah, those were the three that I can remember doing this. I did a lot of logistic stuff, you know. Getting the food. Because we had to bring our own food for one of those things, you know. We contracted with a company, I can't recall the name of them. They had the boats and the whole deal but we brought our own food. They gave us packing lists. I helped them do that. That's why I kind of felt like I'd done it, but I didn't as it turns out. I just had done a commercial trip of Wilderness World. Carolyn did a trip. Do you remember the name of the company you worked with? She worked as a cook.

CB: I think it was Oars.

TM: And what year's was this?

JB: '78 was when we did our trip with Wilderness World.

CB: I think it was...

JB: You probably did it two or three years later.

CB: It was '79 when I did it with Oars as an employee.

JB: She cooked on the trip.

TM: And so both of you went with Wilderness World in '78?

JB: Yes. That's when we met Larry Stevens.

TM: That's when you met Larry.

CB: And his sister was also on that trip with her husband. His sister's name was Meridan and her husband was Donny.

JB: M-E-R-I-D-A-N and I think it was D-O-N-N-Y.

TM: Between buying a raft in '72 and going through Grand Canyon in '78 what rivers did you boat?

JB: We did the American River, the Stanislaus River...

CB: The Kings.

JB: The Kings.

CB: The Rouge.

JB: The Rouge, the Kern, the Owayhee. Do you know that river in eastern Oregon?

TM: It's supposed to be very gorgeous, the Owayhee.

JB: It is. It's just like here. It's a small version of the Grand Canyon. There's another one that goes out of... I have Carson City on my mind. Markleville. Whatever that river is that flows through Markleville.

CB: The Truckee?

JB: No, its north of the Truckee, no south of the Truckee. Anyway, it starts in the Sierras and goes through Markleville. It's not a very long river, but it's a real nice river. It's only raftable certain times of the year.

CB: Spring.

JB: Spring. Same as the Owayhee. It's not really raftable. Let's see...

TM: Did you get up to the Middle Fork and the Main? That far north? Up a little north of the Rouge, and a little further west of the Owayhee.

JB and CB: West of the Salmon? No, we never did get there. We wanted to but we never did.

TM: Have you done any of the dry western rivers - Yampa, Lodore, Labyrinth, Stillwater, San Juan, Cataract, Desolation-Gray?

JB and CB: No. Everything was north of here.

TM: Clear water, big trees.

JB: No.

TM: I mean your boating experience on these rivers that you talked about are basically heavily forested, big trees down to the water's edge, clear water mostly.

JB: Oh, I see.

TM: Really different from the southwestern dry desert rivers.

JB: I see. Yeah, that's right.

TM: What else can you tell me about the River City Rafters?

JB: It would be similar to a bicycle club.

CB: Maybe there were twenty members. Mostly couples.

JB: Everybody had an interest in being out in nature and rafting.

CB: There were several single women, too, who belonged to that club.

JB: It was more of an affinity group where we could just... We also did some backpacking together.

CB: It was pretty much our whole social group, was that group. We did a lot of other things with them other than rafting, too. Like Joe said, a lot of backpacking in the Sierras.

JB: We would have dinners at each other's houses and things like that. So, you know, it wasn't anything earth shattering. We certainly didn't go on all the trips that the rafting club did. Cause we had to work, too. So it wasn't like we could just take off all the time.

CB: Several of those people were teachers and so they had the summer off and so they had a lot more free time. Neither one of us had jobs at the time where we got big blocks of time off like that.

TM: So you guys were still then in the 70's, working and living in the Bay Area.

JB and CB: In Sacramento.

JB: This River City Rafting Club was from the Sacramento area.

TM: Well, you guys have brought today a carousel and a half of slides. And these slides are of what?

TM: This would be of the '78 Wilderness World trip. We can go through them quickly. I'm not sure there's anything in here that you haven't seen already a hundred times. [laughing]

TM: So what we're going to do is, I'm going to turn the machine on. We have a slide projector right here. The quality of the recording will drop a little bit because there will be a hum in the background. I'm going to give you the button to advance. So you're going to drag me along going as fast or as slow as you want to go.

JB: Okay. You just tell me when you think you'd like to see something or talk about it more and so forth.

TM: Or if you see something and we'll try to follow along, where we are, what we're doing. I will describe some of the slides so that the people who are listening to this or transcribers can try to understand what we're seeing as well. So with that, we'll turn this on. Set the stage for this trip. You guys are river runners and suddenly now there's a chance to go in Grand Canyon. Did Vladimir invite you guys on this trip or did you...?

CB: No, we paid for it.

JB: We paid for it and I'm not sure if we got an email about it or just a notice that they were...

CB: It was something we'd always wanted to do.

JB: We knew that it was happening and we signed up for it.

TM: Let's turn this on, then.

JB: Which is the advance here? Forward and reverse, okay. That, of course, is Lees Ferry.

TM: Lots of rigging of boats, people standing around.

CB: Same thing.

JB: Different view.

TM: Very crowded picture of Lees Ferry.

JB: Yeah. I think there's probably more than one company here.

TM: You hold that right there. I'm going to take a picture. It's very crowded, there's multiple trips launching. Looks like a dory trip launching.

JB: That's Floyd Walker, who is the main guide.

CB: With the hat on.

JB: With the hat on. Yeah.

CB: And that's Donny.

JB: This guy right here.

TM: With the sunglasses on the left.

JB: That's Larry Stevens' brother-in-law.

JB: So here we start down the river and you can see that the Canyon is not very tall at that point.

TM: Moqui Dugway there, the lower ferry crossing.

JB: That's Carolyn. Picture of Carolyn.

TM: With a white visor and sunglasses and a little gold earring in her ear.

JB: Another picture of Carolyn.

TM: Nice facial shot of Carolyn. Wish she's taken her sunglasses off.

JB: You probably would know things better than we. But it looks like that bridge is the bridge across the Colorado.

TM: Navajo Bridge?

JB: Yeah. Downstream a little bit, we're approaching that. A lot of this stuff is just gonna be what I'm thinking I'm a great photographer, by taking little things. This looked nice to me. There's a grasshopper that's riding along on some of the rigging on our boat.

CB: Really calm there.

JB: So we're going under the bridge. This is a little picture of the stratus that's starting to show different levels of stratus. You probably know about how long these took to lay down. It's astounding how long it would have taken, to me anyway.

CB: I thought the geology of the canyon was particularly interesting.

JB: This, I believe, is where we camped first. I don't recall where. It shows them setting up the tables for the food and so forth. We ate very well. It's astounding how well we ate.

JB: That's Floyd Walker.

CB: No, that's not Floyd.

JB: That's not, his name is John - the river guide. Don't know his last name. There were three of them that I remember. Floyd, for some reason, I can remember his last name. His name was John and then there was Jimmie.

CB: And Gary. Gary was a poet, too.

JB: This is just a tamarisk tree. This is very interesting. This is what I kind of told you about. This is when we were approaching Redwall Cavern and playing. You can see some boats on the very far right. There was a trip before us. It wasn't very big. But playing back in behind that big sand dune was a well-known string quartet that was part of the Windham Hill stable. I'll have to think of it as we go along. Put a blank

there, I'll fill it in. But it was sort of magical to hear this sound unamplified, you know, coming as we approached. Just as we got there, they were getting ready to pack up and leave, so anyway. You can see a couple people on the beach. There's more shots of this. These ravens were in the canyon wall.

JB: I'm not sure but I think this is part of the Vishnu Schist.

TM: Can you back up one? It's just a nice downstream view. I just want to get some thumbnails of what we're seeing here. Thank you.

JB: If I'm not mistaken, this is the Vishnu Schist.

TM: It could be. Because you're still in Marble Canyon and you're in deep Redwall, this could be the jasper chert layers in this. Algal mat layers in the limestone, washed and polished by the river. It's really pretty like that.

JB: This may be kind of out of sequence but I think this is taken out of Redwall Cavern.

CB: Looking up the river.

JB and CB: Same here.

JB: This is one of the funniest things...

CB: Trilobites.

JB: This is, to me, is amazing. This is Nautiloid Canyon. We took a walk up there and poured a little water on it and out came the...

CB: The fossils.

JB: One of the things I remember is how astounding it was that this was this far up away from the ocean.

JB: Then we're continuing on down the river. More artistic shots.

TM: That was the Bridge of Sighs that you just went by. It's a natural bridge, you were shooting up through the bridge at the blue sky behind it.

JB: Is that right? Then it shows how the new limestone has gone away and its white underneath versus the red.

CB: Some of these were salt...

JB: I think we'll see that as we get a little further.

CB: Oh, this is the tailings from when they were...

JB: This is where they were thinking of originally building the dam. Where they had done exploratory stuff. You may know better than I about that, but that's what that is.

JB: I'm not sure what rapids these are. There's a couple that I know of, but this one I can't recall. This may be out of sequence as well.

CB: More fossils.

JB: That little thing that looks like a little worm right in the middle with his eyes. I forget what that's called.

JB: Is that Indian Dick rock?

TM: That's right. This series of pictures is the Roaring '20s, if you will, in the morning. That's a nice shot. That's a little upstream of Redwall Cavern, but that's okay. It doesn't matter. Your pictures are great quality.

JB: I need to put them back in sequence. I think this was just to exhibit different strata that's coming and the gradient of the river.

TM: All this limestone, Redwall, is coming out right there.

JB: Yeah. Same deal.

TM: This is a picture of a raft somewhere near fifty-mile and there are...

CB: That's Larry Stevens on the stern talking about the geology of the Canyon.

TM: He's the only one wearing his lifejacket. [laughing]

CB: Yeah, he is. You're right.

JB: Another artistic... sorry about that. Had little tracks across it. These, I think, were to exhibit the underground streams that were cut off as result of the canyon. There used to be underground... If you looked across the canyon you would see the same thing if I remember right.

TM: The karst limestone cavern systems.

JB: Yeah. The river cut through them. What are they called? Hanging streams or something like that?

CB: Hanging valleys.

JB: Not valleys. There was underground conduits of fresh water and when the river came through it, it cut it off. If you look at the same strata across the canyon, they'll be there, too.

CB: Oh, you're talking about the holes in the walls.

JB: That's right.

CB: Oh I see that, okay.

JB: Tell me about this.

TM: This is Vasey's Paradise.

JB: Oh, right.

JB: There's an example of one of those.

TM: And this is Stanton's Cave.

TM: Upstream view to Vasey's Paradise.

JB: Now that's Jimmie. I don't know Jimmie but he was a loose cannon as well, but he was a good river guide.

CB: Just a great river guide. I think he had had some issues with alcohol in the past, and running the river kind of straightened him out. This woman sitting behind him is Meriden, that's Larry Stevens' sister. She was a model in New York.

JB: She was a model in New York City.

JB: These were kind of cool because as we got down in here, we could pull underneath those to get out under the sun if we needed to. And if we were experiencing rain where they were dropping barrel cactus over the edge, it helped to keep the boats inflated.

TM: So this is the Tapeats Sandstone with some slabs knocked off at an angle coming down to the river. You're just a mile or so above the confluence with the Little Colorado River. Downstream view here.

JB: There we are. We were surprised by where we were staying last night as to how much water was in the river at that point and how it got like this. The lady there sort of explained that it was sort of an eddy where the water would come up. Also, there is... cause it's a lot warmer.

TM: The biggest natural spring, artesian spring, in the state of Arizona is Blue Springs on the Little Colorado River. So you were exactly right, there's a lot of water there. At Cameron, where you spent last night, is dry.

JB: Maybe there's a picture of some of the fish that are in there. There's some, if we look carefully.

CB: There were big fish.

JB: Yeah, there were big fish. On the other side, was sort of a natural, cosmetic mud bath.

CB: We all partook.

JB: And again these may be...

CB: That's Dave with the book.

TM: Dave has a beard and maybe dreadlocks? Not quite.

CB: No.

JB: Just long hair, wore it in a ponytail.

TM: Okay. And who's...?

CB: That's Joe.

JB: That looks like me laying down there. If we looked carefully, we might see to get the name of those boats. Can't see it there, but it's in kind of a oblong...

CB: Well, you can see some printing.

JB: Yeah, but that's just Wilderness World.

CB: Oh, okay.

JB: Yeah. It'd be in orange print.

JB: And that was just to show how high the water has gotten. The log is jammed up there.

JB: And this...

CB: That's the salt.

JB: Yes. We were told that the Anasazi would come from miles and miles to gather the salt. The most able warriors and so forth were sent to get this. Cause it was valuable what they got, and to bring back to where they were. I don't know. We did see/will see a little further an Anasazi village, the remains of it and so forth. But it was interesting to see that this was used to harvest salt.

JB: Is this the Great...

CB: Divide?

JB: No.

TM: This is a downstream view above Lava Chuar Canyon. The Desert Watchtower on the eastern drive, that you are going to drive today, is just there on the skyline. This is a view looking south. So you'll see today from the rim, you'd be looking straight up this direction.

JB: This is the Great un-something.

TM: This is the Butte fault. The Great Unconformity...

CB: That's it!

TM: ...is not quite here because the Supergroup, the red beds there between the regular Grand Canyon stack and the schist below. There's quite a thick layer of the Supergroup here which will be eroded away in different areas.

JB: So the Great....what's it called?

TM: Unconformity?

JB: Is that it?

TM: No. This is an unconformity, there's a series of them in here. This is Cardenas Basalts and the Dox Sandstone.

CB: That's beautiful.

TM: Palisades of the Desert. This is just above Unkar.

JB: Now that's Meriden. Little better picture of her.

JB: This is what I think is the Anasazi village. It's up on a little...

CB: It is.

TM: It's called the Unkar Complex, it's the Unkar Complex there. Yes.

JB: Some more of it.

JB: I think there's a deer standing over there in between those tamarisk trees.

JB: I can't recall this rapid.

CB: Crystal?

TM: This is Hance Rapid. An interesting water level. Little bit of low water there.

JB: We will see, I think, some of the dories who had to wait in a couple of places. This may have been one of them.

CB: I know that after we did this trip, Crystal changed remarkably to become much more complicated.

JB: I can't see. It would be on one of the fronts of these boats, the name of that company.

JB: This is just more geology.

TM: So this is now the Vishnu Schist. We're down below Hance Rapid in the Upper Granite Gorge, the very start of it here.

JB: That's Carolyn rowing. That's Meriden in the background there and Donny on the other side. I guess I'm taking the picture.

TM: And no life jackets?

JB: No, of course not.

TM: What's the yellow thing behind you? Oh, that's your life jacket. You've just undone it. It's right there.

JB: It probably would have been bad for the tan line.

TM: Sure. Absolutely. I'm with you. [laughing]

JB: That's Donny. That's her husband, Meriden's husband.

TM: So this is Carolyn and...

JB: And Donny. You'll see more of his behavior.

JB: Is this Elves Chasm?

TM: You guys have walked up Clear Creek to the Clear Creek waterfall. Do you remember the month of this trip in 1978?

JB: I'm pretty sure it was May, the end of May. We were told that the earlier you do it the better because it's maybe cool up on top but it's warm in the bottom.

CB: And the flowers.

JB: And the guides aren't burned out yet. So you probably know how that is in August. [laughing]

JB: Here's more of the waterfall.

CB: That's you and somebody else.

JB: This was a fellow who was with another woman whose husband just didn't like to travel. So this man and his wife travelled all over the world together - cruises, river trips, whatever. They were a couple so you didn't have to pay a single supplement, number one. And they both liked to travel and neither one of their spouses liked to travel. So they were friends and that's the way they did it.

JB: This is dinner here. Carolyn is sitting there in the blue top and Donny is up there right behind her, with no shirt and the rest of the folks around.

JB: This looks like the bridge to Phantom Ranch, if I'm not mistaken.

TM: That's right. That's Black Bridge, downstream view.

JB: That's the mules going across.

JB: There may be a sheep in there somewhere.

JB: Here's the unloading ceremony.

TM: Here there's a number of people all in a line facing the camera spread apart from one another. There's a bag being transferred from one individual to another. That looks like a black bag.

JB: It is. It's a waterproof bag.

TM: Is that what you had your gear in?

JB: Yeah. They were kind of WWII.

CB: Old military.

TM: Did you two learn how to fold them up really well?

CB: Yes. They did not leak.

TM: So you guys had already done multiday river trips with the River City Rafters. Did you have your own black bags?

CB: Yeah. We had everything.

TM: Were you familiar with that system and how it worked?

JB: Yeah. Ammo cans, same deal.

TM: This is at Quagunt, your camped here.

JB: This was....this is kind of an unusual detail. This guy Sheffield was a partner in Mont Saint Michel Winery in Sonoma. Because it was built on a natural mineral spring, he decided that he would bottle this water. I brought this along as sort of a promotion to see where this Sheffield water is taken. So that's what that is. The artistic value is clear. You can see the top of the bottle is right in line with it.

TM: Right. You worked very hard to make that happen. Put that on a piece of driftwood there. [laughing]

JB: Here's dinner, eating out of a Sierra Club cup. There's our ammo cans on the right there.

TM: Is that you?

JB: Yeah. That's me.

TM: So Joe is sitting in his life jacket. There's some material scattered either side of him and some ammo can that's open. Maybe some books and a camera there. And as you ... a Sierra Club cup.

JB: This lady was a nice lady that was on the trip as well.

JB: That fellow there with no shirt and the beard.

CB: He taught me a life story. He was a teacher. He had been a professor all his life.

JB: In Oregon.

CB: His lifetime dream was to take a trip on the Colorado River. So when he retired, he came on this trip and there was nothing about it that was good in his mind. Nothing drew, nothing met his dream, his expectation. All of the rest of us thought this was the most fabulous experience. But for him, it was a terrible experience.

JB: The worst experience.

CB: It taught me - don't wait your whole life to do what you want to do. Do it. And, you know, don't build your expectations to be something that are... I have no idea what he expected because the crew was terrific, the food was terrific. Everything, we thought, was wonderful. He did not think anything was good about this trip.

JB: And this is where... This particular point where was where my admiration of Larry Stevens came out. After dinner one night, it was getting darker than it is here, he was sitting on a log with 2 or 3 people beside him. Larry came by and he [the retiree] was always grouching. Larry said, "I don't want you to get upset but just don't move anything because there's a little rattlesnake right between your legs under this log." So he reaches under and gets this Canyon Rattler and moves it right over away from everybody else. That was the first instance. I'll show you the second one as we go. But even that didn't seem to astound him.

JB: This is that couple that traveled together.

JB: This was another... I'm not sure who that couple on the right is/or that fellow on the right. Wasn't that woman in the background a river guide?

CB: No. There were no women. This was a couple, I think, that came along. But I don't remember who they are.

TM: That's out of sequence. That's way up by the bridge. That last sequence of shots looked like were at Granite Camp.

JB: It could have been. Yeah.

TM: This is a Ten-mile Rock, back way up by Lees Ferry.

JB: That's way up, further up? Okay. So they're way out of sequence.

TM: That's all right. Once they're digitized you can move them, relabel the images and sort them all out.

JB: We can remember being told on the trip that they had seen Georgie White go by that rock when only the very top tip was visible.

TM: They had seen a picture of her running before the dam.

JB: That's a side view of it. Was it called Anvil Rock at any time?

TM: There is a Vulcan's Anvil but that's down by Lava Falls. This rock is known as Ten-mile Rock because it's ten miles from Lees Ferry.

JB: Way out of sequence. Now isn't there a big bend here?

TM: Downstream view looking down to Soap Creek. The river hangs a left there and Soap Creek comes in on the right. Soap Creek rapid is right down there.

TM: This is the Supai Gorge.

JB: This is kind of... I love these things here. We'd just hang out underneath there.

CB: We'd hang out.

TM: This is Boulder Narrows at nineteen miles.

JB: This is some of the pictures that you have on the wall. I kind of like that picture. It kind of reminds me of the picture that's on the front of John Blaustein's book there. But it's not.

JB: This is just showing sunset.

CB: Or rise.

TM: Now we're back into the Vishnu Schist, Inner Gorge. You guys had a nice moon on that trip.

TM: So this is, I want to say somewhere in the 40 and 50s, Nankoweap or Saddle Canyon. Bunch of boats, bunch of people.

TM: Royal Arch. That section right there is a match with the last picture.

TM: Nankoweap.

CB: That's Canyonlands isn't it?

JB: Canyoneers. I think, if I'm not mistaken, maybe we come close to them at Havasu. Don't think this is Havasu yet but it could be.

TM: This is the Powell Plateau in the distance down there. So this is going to be above Bass. Below some of the big rapids, Crystal and Granite. Looks like they're passing you guys. The boatman there is probably chatting with your boat people.

JB: Probably trading cold beers if I remember right. [laughing]

JB: Here we were on kind of a flat area so we were sailing.

TM: When you start there in the wind.

JB: But, with life preservers on as you can see.

CB: That's Larry.

TM: Sure looks like it.

JB: This is, I can't recall exactly the name of it but this is an area where they gave us the honeymoon suite.

CB: The honeymoon suite.

JB: Which is kind of up a little bit. It's essentially a cave. It was hotter than the devil in there. It was like being in an oven.

TM: This looks like Bass Camp up against the rocks there.

CB: It was a real rocky area where we were camping.

TM: Big, open area?

JB: Yeah, down below.

CB: That's Gary. I can't remember Gary's last name.

TM: Gary with a big beard.

CB: Yeah.

JB: Some kind of spring coming out of there.

JB: Is this Elves Chasm?

TM: This would be Elves Chasm.

TM: Very nice shot of Elves Chasm.

CB: Probably an animal.

JB: Maybe an animal somewhere in there but I can't see.

TM: It's a great make of a photograph of travertine.

JB: Here's a storm coming, afternoon rain.

TM: This is Steamboat Mountain so you're closing in. That's a great shot.

CB: It was just this horrendous rain storm.

JB: And I think we'll see some cactus coming over the edge.

CB: There were barrel cactus coming down there off of the rim. We had pulled in as far as we could get off the river. We got off and then tried to wait it out.

CB: They knew that the water was going to rise. Even though the boats, you can see at the edge there, they pulled these up as far as you could possibly get them. And when we woke up in the morning, the water had come up to the boats.

JB: Now we're having to move them down to river level.

JB: That's one of the river guides just having a little coffee by himself. He was a good guy.

CB: He was a great kid. He was a young guy compared to...

CB: Is that it? [end of carousel 1]

JB: I think it is.

TM: That's the first. Now we'll put in the second. [changing carousels]

JB: You don't have to see all this stuff you've seen a hundred times.

TM: You know, there are some very fun images here.

CB: Peeing downstream.

TM: Somebody's camera was quick there, catching that guy peeing in the river.

JB: You said Gigi.

CB: That's Clyde.

JB: He said "You can you pee in the river, there's a lot of fish in there that are doing the same thing." That was the logic.

JB: What is that?

TM: This is Deer Creek Falls.

TM: Ledges Camp.

JB: Yeah, we camped up there.

JB: This is Havasu. This is another place that Larry astounded me. You know how it's like Hawaii in there. I walked through here and he said to the people behind him, he was right behind me, "Hold up just a second." He reaches over and pulls another little rattlesnake that I had just stepped over.

CB: It wasn't little, it was big.

JB: Yeah, but it was pink. It was the typical Canyon Rattler. I remember him saying they're pink because of the dust and number two, they're not very aggressive. So he picked him up, walked him across the creek, put him over there and came back, "OK, here we go."

JB: Is that Beaver Falls?

TM: No, this is one of the many travertine cascades in Havasu before the big floods blew a lot of the Ash trees out. That's a great shot.

CB and JB: There's the little rattlesnake.

JB: That's Larry with that same rattler. See how the trail is, it's up to your waist.

TM: In the grapes.

JB: Oh yeah. There's Carolyn.

CB: I loved that. I thought it was so fun.

JB: That's me. These aren't Beaver Falls?

TM: This is probably Beaver Falls here.

JB and CB: There's Larry.

TM: That's a good picture.

CB: There's Joe and Donny.

TM: Who's on the oars?

CB: Joe.

TM: Joe is on the oars, okay.

JB: That little belly, I still have that right then don't I? Clear back in '78. [laughing] That's a hand-me-down from my grandfather. We had the same kind of little belly.

CB: The helicopters.

JB: This was just after they started taking people out by helicopter after Lava Falls so that they could save river days, is my understanding. Maybe you know better than I do.

TM: That's right.

JB: I think flew them to Las Vegas.

CB: That's Lava.

JB: Here we're scouting Lava.

JB: There we're giving people the option to walk around if they wanted to.

JB: That's not us.

TM: That's a Grand Canyon Expeditions motor rig.

JB: With two big pontoons on the outside.

JB: So here the river guides are either psyching themselves out or us by getting into a little confab before going through the river/the rapid.

CB: One of our boats flipped in there. Gary's boat.

JB: Probably that guy from Oregon was in it, too.

CB: No, nobody was in it but him, I don't think.

JB: Oh yeah, one of them was rowing the 'honey boat', but that wasn't it.

CB: That's Clyde.

JB: Yeah.

CB: Floyd. not Clyde. It's not Clyde, it's Floyd Walker.

TM: Is this Floyd here?

JB: Yeah and the one we've been calling Clyde all along is Floyd. Can we see on the front of that boat?

TM: It's an Avon.

JB: No, it looks like an Avon, but it's not.

TM: Really?

JB: No. It's a special-made boat. It's got an oval. I always thought it was on the front but it may be on the back, back there.

TM: It looks like an A and an N either side of that bowline there.

JB: See that little rope hanging over on the right-hand side? It would be right there, it would be a little label. But probably in the back.

TM: Maybe we'll get a picture of it.

JB: I'll just have to keep thinking about it.

CB: You sure it wasn't Avon?

JB: No, it wasn't Avon. He had it made especially in Italy.

CB: Wow that was exciting going through that. I don't think they made it. I think that was probably Dave's boat flipped.

TM: He's right side up, down there.

JB: That's Donny.

CB: No it isn't, that's Floyd.

TM: So Floyd, wire rimmed sunglasses and little cap covers for reflected light, handlebar mustache. So that's Floyd Walker.

CB and JB: Right.

JB: This is a big, old log. Must've come down there before the dam, but who knows.

JB: Is that the Unconformity?

TM: This is the lava flows cascading down through the Redwall stack, now, which has gotten thicker. That is one of the basalt flows cascading down to the river off of the Toroweap Volcanic Field.

JB: Is that Pyramid Rock?

TM: No, we're still above Diamond Creek here, Diamond Peak.

JB: Diamond Peak?

TM: Not quite yet.

TM: There it is. Classic Diamond Peak downstream view.

CB: Dismantling.

TM: So this is at Diamond Creek. Breaking everything down, taking everything apart.

CB: Washing the boats.

CB: Oh, yeah. I love that shot. That's all the guides.

JB: Larry, I think, is on the far left.

CB: Yeah, he is.

CB: And that's them cleaning up to go home.

JB: Yeah.

TM: Nice.

JB: Nice of you to go through all that. [end of slideshow]

TM: So 1978, here we are forty years later, roughly. What was your takeaway from this trip? How did this trip effect your lives over the next four decades?

CB: I can answer that for me. I just felt like I had lived kind of a very simple life, I guess, growing up. Kind of very natural. I grew up on the beach in California. Not the beach as it is now. It was very isolated and very few people lived there. Just us and a couple other families.

TM: What did your parents do?

CB: My mother was a school teacher, taught second grade. My dad was pretty much a bookkeeper for various businesses. My dad was an alcoholic and was not a real good dad. He was gone a lot. We suffered as a result of his alcoholism. Anyway.

TM: So this trip....?

CB: Joe and I get married. Joe grew up in a very different kind of world than I did. Much more structured and much more successful. His association, his dad was a shooter. He worked for Remington and taught

people to shoot. He was the best shot in the world. So that was Joe's upbringing. That group of people. All very wealthy, very successful people. So we get married and our way of lives tend more toward Joe's way of life. For me, we'd been married for several years by the time we went on the river. To me, I felt like I had gone home. These people were more... I was more of the hippie generation. Joe was more of the Brooks Brother generation. We were a few years apart. I just felt like I had found myself again, who I really was. It was just that core simplicity that I loved on the river. And I loved the nature and the scenery and the hikes, and the side trips. I loved that. But to me it was a very spiritual experience, very spiritual. It has affected my whole life. I just felt like I'd come home and it sort of stayed with me, like it was okay to be this way. I don't know how else to explain it. You can say what it did for you.

JB: Well, I was astounded by the scope of this canyon. Where you put in at one story high and take out at a mile and a half or two. What a small, small person is in chronological time. I think it was one of the probably top three events in my life as far as going away and doing things and so forth. So it was quite an eye-opening thing for me.

CB: We just loved it. We loved it as much as that gentleman who came on it hated it. We just couldn't have been happier.

JB: Yeah.

CB: I felt like I just wanted to go back there and live there. Which is why I went back and worked on the river because I really wanted to go back there.

TM: Was that second trip as magical as the first?

CB: No. It was on what we called at the time 'bologna boats'. The huge motorized... It wasn't anywhere close to that experience because it was a much bigger group and it was all motors and no oars. There was no participation in that. I worked but there was no... The guests were just riding on a boat down the river rather than participating. The other thing is, we didn't do that many side trips. It was 'just get down and get off the river'. It was a very different experience. It was not the same at all.

JB: I think it was like six days.

CB: Yeah.

JB: And our trip was sixteen. We got to stop and go up. They went by a lot of those side canyons.

CB: They didn't experience the Canyon. They were on the river and they went down the river. And also, I think a smaller trip you get to know the people and the guides. We felt really 'one' with the guides. It was just very different.

JB: I think as a result of this, we got involved in being volunteer trip leaders for the Sierra Club. We did that from about 1985 until about 2005. Something like that.

CB: It was later than that. Probably twenty-five years.

JB: We did trips all over the world. One of the ones very similar to this is we would lead trips down the Napali Coast down in Kauai.

CB: Kayaking trips.

JB: Yeah. Kayaking trips. We would go where the road ended on one side and started up on the other. So we went all the way around and stuff like that. That's how we really got involved in Hawaii. My favorite, and still is, is the Dolomites in northern Italy. So, in between we've done different places. I've done trips in Spain and Italy. Carolyn has done trips in Costa Rica and Mexico, working for Baja Expeditions. Do you know Baja Expeditions?

CB: I was a kayaking guide for them in Mexico for several years.

JB: The owner of that company was another kind of wild hair who was educated at Prescott College.

CB: Tim Means. He owns Baja Expeditions.

JB: Anyway, she worked with him. So anyway, this, I think, was probably.... I never really did a lot of outdoors because as Carolyn said, my dad was considered the best shotgun shot in the world for many years. So we were outside hunting and stuff like that but we never did any camping or anything close to this sort of stuff. I think this was what got us interested in doing stuff like that.

TM: We're probably going to wrap this interview up now. Is there anything I didn't ask you about that you wanted to mention?

JB: No, because if you do it'll probably take us far afield with one of my stories and then we'll have to come back. No. I think as for this is concerned and as far as anybody would be interested this covered a lot of it.

TM: Carolyn?

CB: No, I don't think so. I just have such fond memories of the whole association. The Vladimir end of it and Larry Stevens and having his sister. It was just very special, a wonderful experience. I'm not sure I'd want to do it again because, again, it's the 'you can't go home again' sort of thing.

TM: Joe and Carolyn Braun, thank you so very much for participating today in the Grand Canyon Historical Society oral interview. Today is the 3rd of May, 2017. My name is Tom Martin. Thank you both very much.

CB and JB: Well, thank you.