

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewees: Larry and Jean Sanderson (LS and JS), Katie Carmedy-Sanderson (Katie), Lisa Riedel from Glen Canyon (Lisa)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Larry recounts Grand Canyon river running starting in the 1950s, making the movie *Ten Who Dared*, working for the Bureau of Reclamation, starting Sanderson Brothers River Expeditions, taking special guests on the river

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TM: This is the afternoon of May 2nd, 2016. This is a second part interview with Larry Sanderson and...

JS: Jean.

TM: ...and Jean Sanderson and...

Katie: Katie Carmedy-Sanderson.

TM: ...Katie Carmedy-Sanderson and Lisa...

LISA: Riedel.

TM: Lisa Riedel. And I'm Tom Martin. Larry, we had talked about the first river trip you did in 1957 and the second in '58. Let's talk now about the third river trip you did, is that right, in 1959. What do you remember about that trip?

LS: Well, we wished to make a movie with Dock Marston's group. They had three of the oar-powered boats, which one of them is here in the museum was the one that Powell was supposed to have set in. But it had the outboard motors, two of them, with steering with just a rod sticking out with a fork on it that you can put your leg in and steer it with your leg while you were running like a sweep oar.

TM: How did you work the gas?

LS: The person up above had the gas throttle. It did have the steering wheel when we wasn't using it to steer the boat between rapids and between shots. We put a round ring, a life-ring, over the steering wheel.

TM: During the filming?

LS: For filming. The person that was supposed to be running the oars it was right at his back. We tried it first. But those outboards smoked a little bit idling, so we had to quit using the motors when we were

filming through the rapids. We made the river trip as doubles. I was Major Powell, my dad was Jack Sumner, who was running the sweep oar in the back. Then they had to pick actors to fit the doubles. That's why the movie never did anything. Disney at that time made a dog story out of the movie of *Ten Who Dared*.

TM: Whose idea was it to use the motors in the boats? Why didn't they just use oar boats?

LS: Well, we used them between rapids and we had to use the motors on several of the rapids. We ran the rapid back up and then filmed it again. Like 210, we ran it up two times so filmed it three times going down to make the long rapid of Separation which was at the end of the trip that Powell... Or it was the last big major. Separation then was a big rapid but 210 isn't, but filming they can. Then the studios throw in a lot of water and pitching the boats up. So, that movie of *Ten Who Dared* didn't really make a movie out of it, to speak of, as far as people seeing it.

TM: Was it a fun river trip?

LS: It was a lot of work. Right at first they put on the clothing. Powell had the wool clothes for like the Civil War. The Park Service Superintendent out of Washington was one of them. He was wearing buckskin. We didn't have life jackets but we had Mae Wests, the rubber blown-up kind, underneath the clothes which made it that much hotter. It was three weeks we were on the river. The first day we were dressed up, made up, and then waiting for the movie crew to get set up. Two hours just waiting for them to get their cameras and all set up. We rebelled against them. Says, "You get the cameras there, then we'll get made up." It came out all right, but we sat around in the sun waiting for the movie fellows to get their cameras ready.

TM: Did they have problems with water or sand, lighting? The camera guys, did they ever talk about the troubles that they had filming?

LS: They didn't really talk about it but I know they had troubles, had problems. Some areas where we were running and filming other than the rapids was of scenic parts of the wall. We would be going along and they would be in one of our boats with the cameras on it filming the three that were the Disney boats.

TM: How many boats total were on the trip?

LS: Six.

TM: So, the three Powell boats, the film boat, and then two other support boats?

LS: We had our three boats, aluminum boats.

TM: So the Boo-2, the Rattlesnake, and the Cactus.

LS: ...Cactus where they carried the supplies, supply boats. The three others were Disney boats.

TM: Plus then the three Powell boats? So nine boats in total?

LS: No, no. They were just six boats all total.

TM: Got it. So, two Disney boats. Or sorry...

LS: Three Disney boats.

TM: Three. How many of the replicas did they make? The ones with the hidden...

LS: Three of them.

TM: Three of those. Okay.

LS: One of them that was Powell's, is here in the museum here.

TM: Okay. What else do you remember about that trip?

LS: It was like any other trip except for it was a lot of work with the filming. Three weeks on the river was fun.

TM: Do you remember what the pay was?

LS: I know dad paid for the boats from Dock Marston, mostly from that trip there.

TM: Okay. After the trip then, Dock sold the three boats to your dad?

LS: Yeah. The pay was mostly because of the filming of the Disney trip.

TM: Nice, so your dad had the money to go ahead and buy the boats?

LS: Yes. Although every year we would fix the boats up for Dock Marston for the next year.

TM: Did he store them with you guys?

LS: Yes, we kept them all year.

TM: Where were they stored at that time?

LS: At our house, wherever we were. One time was at Kanab in our trailer court, had them parked in there. Then was here at Page. We just maintained them, you might say, for Marston's trip.

TM: Why did Marston get out of the boat business there? Why did he sell out? Do you know?

LS: No. Except for he used little rubber rafts when they shut the water off here and only had 1000 cubic feet down. Well he went down in...

TM: In a Sport-Yaks.

LS: Ten footers, I think, or eight footers. Seven foot? I know they little, bitty rubber rafts. Paddle boat you might say, little life rafts.

TM: They were tiny. Yeah, yeah, real tiny. So it's interesting. He sold out his boats here in '59; did the jet boat trip in 1960. I don't know what he did in '61 or '62, but in '63 it's a big reversion because they're back in these tiny little Sport-Yak boats because the water's all gone back behind the dam. So, 1960/1959 is a pretty interesting time there. There is some talk about the Disney people being pretty creative on that trip with some singing of stories about the trip and the filming. Do you remember that at all?

LS: No.

TM: Okay. You're not a singer, so... But I think Garth was on that trip? Is that right?

LS: Yes.

TM: What else do you remember about that 1959 trip?

LS: The main thing I remember is just being made up every day to shoot the movie.

TM: Every day.

LS: Yeah. And it might be for an hour. Most of the time we were made up for maybe three hours to the most. But usually it was just an hour or so during... And it might be just through a rapid that we will be shooting.

TM: Did you get in on the filming up-basin, up around Moab and that country?

LS: No.

TM: Okay, just the Grand Canyon section. So in 1959, what were you doing, besides doing the boat thing for three weeks?

LS: I was Powell in the movie. Going through a rapid sitting in the chair, I had my hand out of my shirt hanging onto the chair where I could wave and signal to the other boats supposedly.

TM: Right, but you're hanging on.

LS: Hanging on, sitting in the chair with your... And your sleeve fastened down with the right arm being missing. It was sort of a fun trip just to be on the river again.

TM: Well, it's a good question here about: Did you guys play around with the part where Powell has to grab the pants and get pulled up by the guys up on the cliff there?

LS: No, that was...

TM: Up-basin?

LS: ...up above where they could get actors at the scene. And that's when the dog was supposed to save Powell.

TM: Well, that's Walt Disney. Did you guys meet Walt at all or was it just the film crew?

LS: Just the film crew.

TM: Was Ed l'Anson on those trips? Does that name ring a bell?

LS: Ed Hanson?

TM: l'Anson. Yeah, it doesn't...

LS: I don't think so.

TM: Okay, okay. What else were you doing in 1959?

LS: Mostly as a high-scaler still at Glen Canyon Dam.

TM: Okay. So let's talk about that for a bit. We kind of left off you were high-scaling with a bucket of paint to do the profiles for the mapmakers. How did you then transition into the next stage of the dam construction?

LS: When there wasn't any high-scaling to be done, we was working on other parts of the... We wasn't actually building the dam but we were involved in just about all phases of the dam that the Bureau had to oversee. I was quite a bit on the river before the lake taking politicians up to Rainbow Bridge. I was involved in a lot of the little films that the Bureau made to publicize the dam. I had a group of Russian scientists on the boat one time. Took them up to Rainbow Bridge and then I took them into a side canyon that I'd been in the day before where I knew I could turn around but it was only about an inch of clearance for the boat. I took 'em in the narrow canyon and then this one's place where I could turn around. It was a 31-foot Uniflite with twin engines. As I started turning it around, I had to put the bow almost against the wall in a little notch. As I was swinging the back end around, holding the bow, just not touching but as close as I can get it, that Russian scientist he'd run back at the back of the boat and look at it and run back up in the front and look. After I turned around and started back out, he told the interpreter to tell me, "I have seen everything. I can die and be happy."

TM: Wow.

LS: He didn't think that I could make it turn around down there. The day before I already turned around so I knew just how I could do it. With those twin-screw V-drives, I could make that boat do about anything.

TM: Did you keep working then for Reclamation here out of Page?

LS: Here at Page. For 28 years I worked for the Bureau here.

TM: Okay. Did you continue being sort of the VIP boatman, if you will?

LS: I was. When there was any boating to be done, I would do that. We had Princess Margaret and Lord Snowden out on one trip which was a fun trip. We've had the Kennedy's, bad trip.

TM: Why? Now I've heard this about the Kennedys. Tell me.

LS: The kids were unruly, throwing rocks and things. It wasn't real pleasant to have the Kennedy kids on the boat.

TM: Was that '67 or '68, in there somewhere?

LS: Could have been.

TM: Okay. Who else?

LS: Norman Rockwell was doing some paintings for the Bureau. I had him up on the lake for... And then the second time I had him up, he had his wife with him. I had the 31-foot Uniflite that they could sleep on. I did all of the cooking and boating and taking care of them. They were the sweetest people you ever knew. I really enjoyed... In fact, Norman Rockwell was doing some sketching and that, well I started sketching with him and he sent a correspondence course for me, an art correspondence course. I didn't really finish it like I should have, but I did make a few paintings.

TM: So while you were working for Reclamation, then your brother Jerry started...

LS: He was on the police force.

TM: Here in town?

LS: With the Bureau here in Page. He came after Page was built.

TM: What did he do then after he got out? Let's back up a little bit, after he got out of the Service, what did he do?

LS: He was working for aircraft in California. He was doing welding, mostly aluminum welding.

TM: Okay. Lockheed? Burbank? I mean, who?

JS: Boeing?

LS: Boy, I can't...

TM: No worries.

LS: I'll think of it later because I even went to work for them, too, for about six months before I came to Page. Or came to...

JS: Lockheed? Was it Lockheed?

LS: No.

TM: Okay, so he's still in California welding. You're out here now.

LS: I was a machinist in California and then came to Page and got on as a high-scaler.

TM: So Jerry is still out there in California.

LS: Jerry is still out there. When Jerry did come to Page as a ranger, which is a police officer, he had to use his experience as being shore patrol to show how he could be a police officer.

TM: Was that basically all the training he got?

LS: That was all the training he got because it was a government town and government people. It wasn't that bad except for he did get in a scrape with two Indians that he tried to pull over. He got in a fight with them and one of them got his pistol and shot, but it missed him. Jerry said he just hit him and dove. It was at nighttime. Dove out in the tules. The Indian that shot at him, went off afoot. A year later, well, they was able to get him off of the reservation. When you're on the reservation, they're safe unless the Navajo police will do something.

TM: So when did Jerry decide that there were other things to do besides work for Reclamation?

LS: When I had to take this government trip down through the canyon, Floyd Dominy, the commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, had out on the lake several times and he knew I still had these boats. He called me and wanted me to take Jean Tunney, congressman from California, from San Diego area, which was on a committee in Washington about the Marble Canyon dam site and Bridge Canyon and wanted me to take him down the river. I told him we can't run power boats anymore, the aluminum boats, because it's too low water just generating from the power plant. But I says, Ted Hatch told my dad and I on one of our trips, that if we ever wanted to try one of his rubber rafts to let him know. He says, "You got three weeks to get the trip ready."

TM: Floyd did.

LS: Floyd Dominy told me. Gave me a date.

TM: Yes, sir.

LS: You know, being a commissioner, the highest boss. He didn't call the Bureau office or that, he'd call me personally. He'd call the dam and have me come up there to the office and he'd talk to me on the phone. So I told him, all right. He gave me the date. I tried to call Ted. He was on the river and it was about four or five days later that he would be off. Then he was in Utah and he says, "I haven't got a thing I can let you use." Here a week went by, he says, "Call Jack Curry. He says he's trying to start a river trip business." He says, "I had to buy some boats from him." So I called Jack, told him I want to rent or buy or steal something. I gotta get these boats because I got this government trip. He says, "I haven't got a thing I can let you use, but I'll sell you some." So I said, "Well, I'll be up there in the morning." So I left that night.

TM: To Salt Lake?

LS: Vernal. Drove to Vernal, Utah and I bought three of the rubber boats from him even though they're just the government... They were pontoon boats.

TM: So now Jack was running what they call that J-rig.

LS: This is before he ever started the J-rig's. They had just bought a bunch of the rubber rafts which were bridges.

TM: Now I'm thinking...because Ted at the time was simply running tail draggers. He didn't have side tubes.

LS: He ran one, just the one.

TM: Just the one.

LS: Georgie ran three.

TM: Now, Jack was thinking about all this and he ended up with all the single tubes and not the oval at all.

LS: Yeah, that was later after he had got started. He just ran with the motor in the back, hanging off of the back, single. Georgie had her motor on the back of the center one, with three. When I brought the three back to Page, I blew them up in my driveway. Blew two of them up and we was looking at 'em. If Georgie runs three and Hatch runs one, let's run two. So we fastened two together, painted them up. Where the two came together in the back, we made a little platform there and the outboard on it. So you ran it, actually, outside of the boat on this little platform. And we ran two of them.

TM: I'm gonna jump in here. At that point the bridge pontoons, they had a floor in them didn't they?

LS: Floor in it.

TM: Right. So that's a good idea. You don't have to cut the floor or anything.

LS: The motor was on the outside.

TM: Exactly.

LS: The newspaper from San Diego came out from the trip. Real good article, several pages, except one little paragraph: how we stuck it to him for price. I was told to just be charging for what it costs me. I had to buy the boat and we used our old Evinrude from the power boat. It cost \$490-a-piece for the five. They were two couples and a reporter from the newspaper from San Diego.

TM: So Floyd and his wife?

LS: No, it was Jean Tunney and his wife and another couple, a friend of theirs. So they was five people. I mounted two oars on it so I could justify Bureau boys to run one oar and one on another oar on the outside of each one. One for a Bureau mechanic. My wife then, Sue, is the cook and I was the boatman in charge of the trip, and Jerry was my second boatman. So they was four Bureau fellows and my wife.

TM: So seven of you in all. You and Jerry.

LS: They was five passengers and five crew. We made a real fun trip out of it.

TM: How long did you take, do you remember?

LS: We had five days to... No, we did go on... Had seven days to Diamond Creek, but they choppered out at Whitmore area.

TM: Okay. Did you fuel up at Whitmore?

LS: With the rubber rafts, we didn't fuel up. We carried enough fuel. I had two 30-gallon gas barrels, so I had 60 gallons of gas mounted on it. So, we made just a fun trip out of it.

TM: And that was '66/'67?

LS: I'd have to look it up but it was after the dam was in and generating.

TM: Right. So it wouldn't have been '63, it might have been '64. But...

Katie: No.

LS: After that.

Katie: I made the last aluminum boat run with dad in our in our hard boats in '65.

LS: So it was probably three years at least, or four years.

TM: So '66 or '67?

LS: Yeah. But when that article came out, they called me up in the office from Washington. "Reimburse them." I had to reimburse them \$200 apiece. \$1,000 I had to borrow from the bank.

TM: And you told him to call Floyd, talk to Floyd. Right?

LS: I told Jerry, let's write everybody that went down with my dad and I. Joe Desloge called me right back in just two days after we had...probably as quick as he got the letter. He called me and says, "I want to take my whole family, grandkids and all."

TM: Is that right?

LS: "When do you want to go?" He says, "In three weeks." So, that was the year we took our second trip with the two boats.

TM: So you were doing the same thing on the second trip, the two tied together?

LS: The two tied together because this is what my dad wanted, to go into the river business when he retired, but he got cancer and passed away.

TM: When was that?

Katie: '64 he died.

LS: 64? But anyway, he had wanted to go into the river business. So I told Jerry, you know, we've got the equipment. That's when we sent off to the different people that had gone with my dad.

TM: So you got some good response from Joe Desloge right away. Did you get response from anybody else?

LS: No, he was the only one that we got a response from. We took him down and we took Stan Jones from here to make brochures out for us. Stan Jones made a beautiful brochure and we was gonna schedule six trips for the next year.

TM: '68 or so?

LS: Yeah, the following year. I went to the bank and borrowed \$5,000 for advertisement. We sent that off for advertisement and before we knew it... I guess we had three trips scheduled but three full charters came in so we had six trips. Well, these boats are not going to hold up. Only three, using two and one for backup. June, Jerry's wife, called around and in Las Vegas they was an Army-Navy surplus place that had these boats. So I went over there and bought four more boats. They had one bigger rubber raft. He says, "I don't know what that is. For \$25 I'll throw her on the truck." It was the pontoons.

TM: The side tubes.

LS: The side tubes. They were fastened together, four of them that were rolled up in one roll all fastened together. We blew it up and we looked at it. Let's put one on each side of one boat. Put the motor inside. We cut a hole out of the center of the back for the motor to go down. And we glued a ring from a truck tire, the rim part to it, so it was round, and tied it up and the motor stuck down inside with the two pontoons on the side. We had one kid that was on the trip with Joe Desloge from St. Louis. He says, I wanna work for you when we talked about it. So we called him and he came over.

TM: Was this Joe Jr.? Was this one of Joe Desloge's kids?

LS: No. This was just a fellow that happened to be here that we was talking to that was out from St. Louis where Joe Desloge was actually from.

TM: Do you remember this kid's name?

LS: Wright? For some reason names are bad.

TM: No worries. No worries. Okay, so he's got this kid who wants to work for you.

LS: We put him on that boat, to run that boat.

TM: So, hang on a second, let me think about this. So, the floor in the bottom of the boat comes back to a truck tire?

LS: Yeah.

TM: To keep the water from coming in and flooding out the front of the boat.

LS: The back of the boat, where the motor goes.

TM: Right. So that's kind of sealed off from the rest...

LS: The floor was still in.

TM: Right. So you hadn't gotten a frame yet to sit in...

LS: And we built a frame.

TM: Oh, you did. Okay.

LS: The picture, I think, is right out here. And we had the barrels for gas. We had them on it and had it for all of the gear. My double boat for the passengers. When I got to Phantom Ranch I called Jerry and told him to, "Start making frames. We've got our unit. We're going to that boat with the two pontoons."

TM: What did you see about that boat that was better than the Hatch one-oval, the Sanderson two-oval, or the Georgie three-oval?

LS: Right. It was the thing.

TM: Why?

LS: It maneuvered easier. We could carry gear and we could carry the passengers on that. So if we ran two of those on a trip, you would be running 2 to 12 people on each one for passengers. You could take up to 24 paying passengers and 2 crew; a pilot and a crew person on each boat. They just looked like that was the thing. So Jerry started welding one, making one up with aluminum, while I was finishing the trip. We got back and bought more of the pontoons and started...

TM: So then, once you made the frame you realized you didn't need the floor at all. Cut that out? Is that right?

LS: We cut the floor out on the second one because water poured in and we'd have to pull the front up and bail water out. We didn't need to stick the motor down in a hole in the water.

TM: You just hang it off the back of the frame.

LS: Back of the frame that we made.

TM: When did you guys start making your own fuel tanks for the frames?

LS: Well, Jerry...his second frame he made aluminum fuel tanks on it. So we had built in fuel tanks in the frame. We had storage compartment plus ice chest compartment.

TM: How was it that Ron Smith, then, started copying you guys?

LS: Probably three or four years. When we see somebody, "Oh, that looks good. Let's adopt it." It's just like now a lift...

TM: The jackass.

LS: The jackass lift, is that... You couldn't pick these newer motors up. David, my son... I tried to design a spring from a door lift to aid in it, but it didn't work. David had a trampoline that had little springs on a trampoline, so we decided to hook the trampoline to the frame and onto the jackass lift. We put six of those springs on. You touched the handle of the lift and – whoop! – up it comes with the motor on it. "Oh, let's take one spring off." Made it so that... I made the first trip with that lift with those bigger motors but I had to tie it down going through a rapid because it would flip up by itself. So I had a loop on a little rope that I can hold the handle, and I could flip it off if I needed it or let the little rope hold it down. So I took another spring off to make it where it...

TM: Would stay down.

LS: ...would try and stay down. But still, in a big rapid that motor would flip up so I still carried the extra little rope to hold the handle of the lift down.

TM: So, the early Sanderson boats had oars there on the sides in the back. Was that right away from the start you had those oars on or did they come later?

LS: I couldn't store the oars on, strictly for justifying two more Bureau boys. We was all being on the government payroll, our government job taking this government trip. So I had two extra Bureau boys, which one of them was Bill Diamond. When we started the business the first year, I was gonna take two trips, and Jerry take two trips, and Bill Diamond could take two trips on our vacation time. I got 26 days a year annual leave. I had enough time in, 15 years in with the government, that I had 26 days annual leave. If you take a trip that's scheduled for two weekends and five days, it would take five days of annual leave to take a river trip because we were running at seven to nine days. Most of them were nine-day trips at first. If I scheduled my trips with a holiday, I'd only use four days of annual leave.

TM: Oh, nice.

LS: So I could take more river trips.

TM: So how did you work out... Once the Bureau guys were gone, why did those oars stay there? Were they just sort of a backup?

LS: They were. We used them, we thought, for a backup. We never did use them. But we only had them for a couple years on there.

TM: Yeah. So you mentioned Bill Diamond. Bill ran for you guys. When did he branch out to start his own company?

LS: After Jerry had bought me out Bill quit and went to work for Jerry. Jerry was giving Bill shares for...

TM: Not cash, he was given him shares.

LS: Plus cash. But see, we went from the two trips to 6, 12, 28, 42. It was almost doubling each year.

TM: In five years, in five years. Wow.

LS: So the business was... After three years, we had to quit advertising because we were getting... People that went with us one year was getting a full trip to go with them the next year because we gave them two free people to make their own charter trip.

TM: Make their own trip, yeah. How were you dealing with the Park Service for permits at the time?

LS: The Park Service didn't come in. Then we could just go down to Lees Ferry and put in and go.

TM: Would you even send them so much as a "how-do-you-do, we're going to launch on the 10th of June" or would you just go?

LS: You just go whenever you wanted. The Park Service wasn't involved. Nobody really controlled it.

TM: When did it come to the point where the Park Service said, Hey, you gotta let us know or apply for a permit, that kind of stuff?

LS: When we had 54 trips the Park Service says, "No more!" So Georgie and Jerry and Hatch had the high quota. The others that were starting up and coming, they had the quota from what they ran that year when the Park Service came in. Then Park Service changed it from so many days or so many parties, to so many people-days. They was making changes.

TM: So in 1972, the Park Service made all of the special use permittees into concessionaires.

LS: Right.

TM: Did you guys get a wind or a word that they were going to do this and they were going to count your 1971 use and make that your 1972 use, so you better get as many trips on the water in '71 to look good for '72?

LS: No, they didn't really. Back then, Jerry was just busy. My job was training boatmen. I'd have a new boatman as a crew onboard with me, and I'd take... When I go down, well, I was training boatmen.

TM: How many trips would a boatman do in the early days before they got their own boat?

LS: One trip with me; one trip as the second boatman. When it doubled up, from...they wasn't any boatman! Well, actually they probably ran two trips. They ran the second trip with the other boatman that I had already trained and started running. They'd run with him and then the next trip they would be a second boat.

TM: So not quite see one, do one, teach one. See one, do two, teach one?

LS: They learn fast.

TM: Yeah. It seemed as though some of the companies got an inkling that 1972 was going to freeze everything and they ran a lot of trips in '71 just because they had some kind of inkling that was going to happen. Was there any bitterness between the groups? You know, they knew and they cranked it up, and now we're frozen. If I had known the year before, I would have put on more trips.

LS: We couldn't put on more trips.

TM: Didn't have the people?

LS: We didn't have the people or the equipment.

TM: Or the boats.

LS: Boats. Yeah. 54 is a lot of trips.

TM: Yeah, yeah. That's a lot of trips.

LS: From 28 to 54.

TM: And you guys were still making your own frames?

LS: Yeah. Jerry had pretty well quit running the river. He might make two trips out of the year when we had that. He was busy doing the politicking and making the frames up. We had rented a warehouse and then he built this building.

TM: When did he build this building? When was that?

LS: It was after Bill Diamond and him were still...before they divided.

TM: Okay, and they divided before 1972. So maybe '71 or '70?

JS: I think Karen would probably know.

LS: Later than that. I'd have to find out, maybe, from Jodie or from Hoss, Kevin.

TM: What do you recall from some of those early river trips from the late 60s/early 70s?

LS: I really enjoyed taking people down the river. It was a different trip because of different people. The people you took down made the trip. Even though it was the same river and the same equipment, it was a different trip each... And different river elevations. You had times when they was releasing more water. You had to gauge the flow of the river from the night-time release would be low. Well, that low would be one day down, two days down. You had to run the river according to the higher releases for some of the rapids you wanted to run. So you didn't just run. Your campsite, you have it where you might have to have an early breakfast to get people on the river early while you still had higher flow for a certain rapid you wanted to run.

TM: And the dam was running some pretty big swings, from 3,000 or 4,000 to 25,000/30,000 every day?

LS: I don't think it was. Averaged probably in the low 20,000s to maybe 5,000. And 5,000 you could still run all of the rapids.

TM: It was bony.

LS: Yeah. I ran one trip for Fort Lee, 3000 was the high. It was over a four-day holiday. I had to pick-up passengers at the Little Colorado, four passengers that flew in. One boat with one crewperson with me. So they was just six of us.

TM: So you were deadheading down to LCR to pick up these people coming in?

LS: Pick up the people.

TM: But then you had to deal with Hance at low water.

LS: And they only had three days to get to Lava Falls.

TM: Wow. So you were making miles.

LS: Ran straight power all the way with that lightweight boat, you know, with[out] passengers and your gear was less. Because they had theirs coming in on the chopper with them, so they were limited. But they were only on for three days.

TM: So you didn't have all that much food.

LS: No.

TM: Okay. But Horn Creek must have been fun at 3000?

LS: Horn was like a waterfall. I went right over the two horns. Almost a 10-foot waterfall. It really surprised me. The two pontoons... The boulders that make the horns were out of the water.

TM: But splitting the horns was your normal modus operandi. Had you thought about maybe coming around them and coming back in?

LS: No, I didn't think... I've never come around them. I've always run the horns.

JS: He likes the worst there is.

LS: But I took it on the boat, rubbed the rocks on both sides of the pontoons. I saw in Dubendorf a big table top rock that I've never seen before that it was out of the water. At House Rock... Well, all of them just was barely...

TM: At Bedrock, did you...?

LS: At Bedrock, the boulder, the water wasn't even running around on the left-hand side of it. I had to pull the motor up and drug on rocks to push me across it...

TM: To get out the bottom.

LS: Water was hardly touching the big boulder.

TM: So it was all going left, you went right.

LS: All going left. Nothing, no water on the right-hand side of it.

TM: Were you able to kind of work around in the eddy in there to get lined up to make the exit or...

LS: I just ran because I was restricted on time! I couldn't stop and look at a rapid. At Lava Falls, the big boulder that causes that, water was going... When I went around it and looked back and saw the boulder water was...most of it...some was going over. Hardly any going around on the left side. Most of the water was on the right-hand side and I was able to get around it. Just have one quick look and... It was really almost a nightmare running. But I enjoyed it. The thrill of just being on the river. Probably, I have seen more from highs to lows than any of the boatmen and maybe one or two other people that had...

TM: Well, all those people that came in in the second half of the 1960s, they had not seen...

LS: They hadn't seen the...

TM: ...the pre-dam high flows.

LS: No.

TM: They'd never seen that.

LS: One year we had 80,000 releasing from the dam.

TM: 1983.

LS: Jane was on it with me. We were able to run Lava Falls on the left-hand side of the hole. It was really, I enjoyed seeing what I had run with the powerboats. She was scared to death.

JS: I didn't want to go in the water.

LS: And we hardly got anybody wet.

TM: Well, that's what I remember Dock saying writing about the high-water trips. He thought they were safer because everything was washed out for the most part. You know, there was some weird hydraulics around Palisades, in there somewhere, if that rings a bell. But most everything... Sockdolager was gone, Grapevine was gone, Hance was gone. I mean, everything that was just...

LS: Well, Hance wasn't gone, but Hance was easier running. The rocks in the front of Hance were covered over. You could scoot around 'em. We still ran from the right-hand side to the left-hand side and then down on the left-hand side.

TM: Let me ask you about that Hance run because I have a series of photographs from a river trip in 1967 of Jack Curry. He's running the left side in a J-rig, going left of that kind of muffin rock. On the left at the top there's a big kind of flat-top sandstone rock there. He comes in left of that thing. Were you always running right to left? I know Dock ran right to left.

LS: Right to left. That's the way I've always run it.

TM: Okay, okay. And that's what everybody's doing now. Because the left side is closed.

LS: With the low water left is out.

TM: It's out now at high water. Well, I don't know what high water is for you. High water, we're not seeing anymore.

LS: You run from the right-hand and cut across... The boulders there in the right-hand side, or center to right-hand side, stops the water so it's easy to cut across. You cut from the right with the big river rafts, you're only, you know... Five miles an hour is fast as those boats will go in the water, plus the river, you know, so you can scoot around and make an easier run out of it.

TM: So you've seen the river before and after the dam. And you've seen some changes.

LS: Big changes in the river. We didn't have campsites. We camped in boulders. The high water, no sand beaches at all.

TM: When the water was really up.

LS: When the water was high, you didn't have sand beaches. Back in '57 and '58 you were in boulders because way above the normal high water, even.

TM: Did you have troubles, more troubles on those trips, '57 and '58, with things like ants? Because some people had said that the high water would push all these ants up and there would be a lot of them, you know, and then the water would drop and they'd kind of come back down again.

LS: We didn't, I don't remember any.

TM: Okay. How much vegetation was along the riverside back then?

LS: We didn't have near as much of the salt cedars. Then we gathered driftwood for camps, or else we cut dead mesquite.

TM: Good firewood.

LS: That was because of the coals that you would make fixing with Dutch ovens. In the days before the Park Service came in, we had to use driftwood and that before we made a fire pit. The worst part about that was, is once in a while somebody would throw out the ashes to build a fire in your fire pit. Instead of using it, they'd be ashes...

TM: They chuck them out.

LS: Just chucked out on the beach.

TM: That got to be a mess.

LS: That's wasn't any good. I had one lady that was from New York. Her bag was full, and her bag kept getting lighter and smaller. I wondered. I finally asked her, "What are you doing?" She was wearing different clothes each day. She says I bought a bunch of clothes from Goodwill. So she had these things, and she was burying her clothes at night. It was the last day before I finally...

TM: Figured it out. Oh, my gosh.

LS: But you have people like that that is interesting. Different people making it a different trip each time.

TM: Yeah. And I had heard Jerry say the same thing. The exact same thing. That it was the people that made the trip.

LS: It is. It seems like because of different people, you enjoy making them happy and in turn it feeds back.

TM: Yeah, if they have a good trip, you have a good trip. When was the last time you saw Dock?

LS: The last time was when we made the movie *Ten Who Dared*, '59.

TM: All right. Because he ended up doing a number of trips with Ron Smith as a trip historian. One trip a year, basically, he would do that.

LS: I guess I did see him but it was just like at Lees Ferry or... I don't think that I ever saw him on the river after the Disney trip.

TM: Okay. Yeah, he was only around a couple days at a time. Was he friendly then?

LS: Oh, yeah.

TM: Did he go out of his way to say hi, how are you doing?

LS: Yeah.

TM: We talked a little bit about Jimmy Jordan. What do you remember about Jimmy?

LS: I didn't have that much time with Jimmy, I had more with his son.

TM: What do you remember about Jimmy Jr?

LS: What?

TM: Jimmy Jr. What do you remember about him?

LS: He was a good kid. Helped as much as anybody. In fact, in those earlier trips you had more people that helped on the trip. And they're the ones that are the happiest. It's a version that... We've had a few psychiatrists -- bad. They need one. I had more problems with, I think, a psychiatrist than anybody else.

Katie: Dad, we had the people, I'm not sure their names, that were from Indianapolis and they had us come as a family after they'd made several trips to watch the Indianapolis 500.

TM: Oh, that's nice.

LS: That was a charter trip. A group from... They invited me and my family to the 500 and to live with them there for three days or so. They just gave back what we gave them. And they had us out to some dance...

Katie: A dinner in a very tall building, with first time an elevator on the outside of the building.

LS: Things that you'd never seen before. Seats was front row seats, right from where they'd pull in to...

TM: The pit to work on the cars? So Jerry bought you out. But you kept working...

LS: Kept working for Jerry. Although I worked for him, I guess I was paid some. But I didn't know that June was paying social security for me. When I retired, well, I found out I didn't have to get my 40 quarters. I'd had a bunch of quarters of the year already in.

TM: Nice, nice. 'Cause she put that in. Why did Jerry sell?

LS: Why did he sell? I don't know. I wouldn't have. I shouldn't have. But I tried to save my marriage.

JS: He asked why did Jerry sell?

TM: Sorry. Why did Jerry sell?

LS: Money. You know, you get \$3 million and get to keep your building and your hangar and your airplane and your boat, this boat that's right out here. He wouldn't have to worry anymore. You know, good retirement.

Katie: They had a good run.

TM: Yeah, Yeah. Fair enough, fair enough.

LS: He didn't run the river like I did. I ran it to please people. He ran to make himself look...

TM: Okay. But it sounded like he only did a couple trips a year, certainly toward the end there when he's busy. I would imagine that... I don't quite know how to put this in words. Your first trip in 1957 and your last trip working for Sanderson Brothers, there was a business that could have gotten between a fella and the river. And that might do something to you. I don't know. I don't know quite how to frame the question or ask the question.

LS: I wasn't involved in a lot of the business sessions. The business part of it we left to Jerry and June.

TM: That might have been why he sold out.

LS: Mine was the other. My interest was the river and the people on the river.

TM: What do you see now? Cause your last river trip was just last year or the year before. Is that right?

LS: Last year.

TM: Last year. What do you see now on the river? How has it changed down there?

LS: Well, it's changed by Park Service requirements. Some are good but some aren't so good. But they want to make the river better. The environmentalists have made changes, because the Park Service is very environmental. They have made some restrictions that the commercial runners would abide by regardless, without the Park Service, to make the river better. But it does keep the private trips that only make a few trips or one trip, it gives them restrictions on what they can do and can't do. Which is not bad but I like to do my own thing. I enjoy that river, something. That's my life. My last trip last year was with my kids. It was my granddaughter's trip, her permit. The other commercial river runners that were come up to me... One of them took his hat off and gave me his hat. "Nobody is worthy of this but you." It makes you feel good. "Will you sign my river book?" Commercial river runners that have made 75 or 80 trips wanted just to talk to me. So, you know, it's people make the river as much as the river.

TM: As we wrap this interview up, is there anything else you want to add to this that I haven't asked you that you were thinking I should talk about or I should cover?

LS: Not, really. I know my life has always been to donate to people. Like, I've put 33 years in the Coast Guard Auxiliary making the lake and the boating safer. I was 18 years on the Page Fire Department; 6 years on the EMT with the ambulance crew. A lot of that just donating time. I look back and think, boy, I donated too much time away from my family. But we would go out on hunting trips, on fishing out on the lake. We did a lot of things together. And so I was... I did a lot of church work. I feel that I'm a strong Christian. Don't drink, don't smoke. But, I enjoy people as much as I enjoy being with you.

TM: Well, we've had a wonderful time. And thank you very much for your time today going over this.

Katie: One thing about dad so much being on the river is even when I was 12 and I made the river trip we were taking archaeologists for the government to document what was in the caves and all where there were pottery beds and just all this stuff. It was so fascinating but it was so... Dad has the knowledge of all those areas, of all where there's drawings on the walls. It's amazing what he can tell, especially when he gets in these areas and then just all these stories come out. It's...

TM: Fun.

Katie: It is.

TM: Lisa, do you have any other questions for Larry?

Lisa: No, not now. I think that's enough probably.

LS: I had a doctor on one trip that was a very close friend of mine. He put down on paper my life. He thought I had a fantastic life. Then he had Jean and I go out... He run houseboat trips out on the lake while he took tapes of my life.

TM: Oh fun.

JS: It was a great trip.

TM: Where are those tapes?

JS: I was gonna look and see if I still had a set of them. They were on two little cassette tapes for each set; and he had made about 10 copies I think. I was gonna look for those. We've moved two or three times, twice. Everything gets changed, you know, when you move but I think they're in his bottom drawer. His keepsake stuff. He has a whole drawer full of memorial...

TM: It'd be great to get those transcribed.

JS: They're in voice.

TM: Yeah, it'd be great to get them transcribed.

JS: When we get home I'll look for them again. We gave sets, I think, to nearly all the kids. Don't know whether they still have them or not.

LS: Think people don't have recorders for 'em. I mean tape players.

TM: I got one.

JS: I don't have a cassette player anymore, but you do?

TM: You simply play it with the recorder running and make an immediate digital. So Jean, do you have anything else you want to add to this interview as we're...?

JS: Oh, the things I remember are the stories he's told that he would tell the people at night around the campfire. If somebody had been doing something wrong on the trip, he could tell a story that would let them know in a nice way that that wasn't right. But at the same time, it was an interesting story to the whole group. He cooked breakfast every morning and in the evening meal they all would help, of course, but he was the main cook. They had a hot meal every morning and every night. Some of the other companies did not do that. That was one reason they were, I think, a little more expensive than some of the others.

LS: Well, you have full-course meals from soup, on. They were full-course meals.

Katie: Ice cream, crank.

JS: Yeah, they made ice cream.

LS: Make birthday cakes. If somebody had on there, you'd make a birthday cake in the Dutch oven. Might have biscuits, and a cake, and something else. You'd have to, sometimes, three different Dutch ovens all stacked cooking.

TM: This is where I dare to tread; and I only go here with trepidation. When you guys started in the mid-60s, do you remember what your per person/per night charge was?

LS: It was \$300 per trip.

TM: 10 nights or 9 nights -- \$300. So about \$30 a day, about, and now it's about \$500 a day.

LS: It's way up there.

TM: It's way up there. That equates to a change in clientele.

LS: Yeah.

TM: What are your thoughts on that?

LS: My 59th trip we went with Diamond's. The only trip that I went without running the boat and it was hard on me to sit there and...

TM: Not drive.

LS: They, they let me run...

JS: About 10/15 minutes is all.

LS: Oh no, it was a couple hours. So I did get to run the boat a little bit but it was for Diamond's trip. It was a hard trip for me to go with somebody else and not be in charge.

JS: Every rapid we went through he'd say, "I would have done it this way."

TM Well, fun. Larry, thank you so very, very much for your time. I really appreciate this.

LS: Thank you for having me.

TM: No, thank you. Thank you for the time; it's a lot of fun. I see there's some pennants out here. The skunk pennants.

LS: That was on our... You'll see them on this picture.

TM: Right there. Yep. Yep. So, what's the story behind the stinkers?

LS: I don't know whether my dad...probably my mother got 'em. After my dad passed away, well, my mother would get trips up.

TM: 'Cuz Dock flew those flags on his trips. Were these the ones off the boats?

LS: Yeah.

TM: Okay. The ones that are over there. Fun. The first ones I've seen. I've seen lots of pictures of them, but the first real pennants. That's a lot of fun.

LS: I don't know if Dock had the skunk pictures, but we had two and it could have been the skunks at Dock's.

TM: In his house in the 1970s in his living room he had skunks. Little stuffed ones and little porcelain ones. Pictures all over the...

JS: Skunk collection.

TM: The skunk collection. Yeah.

LS: Evidently then, the skunk was from Dock Marston but my mother made sure we kept it going.

TM: Good for her. Good for her. Oh, that's fun. Well, thank you again. This is great. Appreciate it. Thank you.