

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewees: Marcia Clark

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Marcia recalls trips to Havasupai and Phantom Ranch, meeting her husband, moving to Grand Canyon when her husband took a teaching job there

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TM: Today is October 13, 2020. It's Tuesday and this is a Part 2 Grand Canyon oral history interview with Marcia Clark. Good evening Marcia, how are you today?

MC: I'm just fine thank you.

TM: Great. May we have your permission to record this interview over the telephone?

MC: Yes you do.

TM: Thank you. After we talked yesterday, I realized I hadn't asked you how you learned to ride a horse.

MC: Well this goes ways back before the war. There was a girl's camp up in northern Luzon called Yosemite Camp. My sister and I rode the train with the whole group of girls and counselors up to Camp Yosemite. One of the lessons we learned was to ride these ponies, Igaro ponies and I just fell in love with it. The leader of the group, who was a family friend, when she realized how much I liked to ride, and some girl was sick or some girl didn't want to or you know, when it was not my turn, she'd call anyway. She'd call me to come and I would run, no matter what else I was doing, crafts or you know, and I got on these ponies. We rode quite a little bit and it was just wonderful for me. My father, being a New Yorker, he wasn't too crazy about having us learn to ride horses.

TM: What about your older sister, did she enjoy that as well?

MC: No she didn't, but that was my favorite thing to do. I was at this camp, I think, for two different summers. You know our summers there were like March, April and May. That was the hottest time of the year. There was, I think, one month the camp was open that I would go and I probably did it for three different times.

TM: Okay, and you were riding these ponies each time.

MC: Yes.

TM: So you got pretty good at that.

MC: Well, I don't know about pretty good, but I certainly enjoyed it.

TM: Well the reason I got to thinking about that was after we finished yesterday we were talking, and you mentioned that you had an outing in your high school year in Flagstaff, actually a couple outings, both of which involved large four legged animals. One was to Havasu and one was to the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

MC: Yes. Actually two trips to the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

TM: Oh my gosh, can you talk about those please?

MC: Well Havasupai was on the bucket list for my aunt and uncle. They arranged to take my sister, brother and I on a trip down the canyon. My parents did not have very good health at that time after the war so they took us and another family went with us. They had to plan ahead and get a big ice chest full of ice and put some cold drinks in there, you know like sodas of some sort and then we went down to Havasupai and it was absolutely beautiful. I've never forgotten it. Where we stayed was interesting because we were not people that liked to camp out especially and so we rented the hospital. The hospital was not being used at that time so they needed to make some extra money I guess, so ahead of time you could rent it out. The whole group if us stayed in this hospital. I think the older ladies, I didn't know anything about cooking then, but the older ladies fixed our meals and we just had a wonderful time. I remember getting up early in the morning and going with my aunt and uncle to go for a swim.

TM: Wow.

MC: It wasn't near the falls of course, but it was in the Havasupai river. We enjoyed that so very much. It was three or four days I think we were down there and it was so beautiful. I can still smell the special odor that you get when you go down there. It was just sky blue water. We just had a wonderful time. That was when I was seventeen and had just come to the states.

TM: So this would have been roughly April/May of 1945?

MC: Yeah.

TM: Wow. Let's back up a little bit. What do you remember of the drive to get out there?

MC: Well, we rode the ponies to get out of there as well.

TM: No, I was thinking to get to Hilltop where the ponies were waiting for you, I'm assuming you would have taken Route 66?

MC: Yes, we were at Hilltop that rings a bell. We left this ice chest up there while we were down at Havasupai so that when we got up to the top again on our way home we had cold drinks, cause the weather was pretty warm then.

TM: Right. I wonder how your uncle arranged to get the ponies.

MC: I have no idea.

TM: Did you walk down the canyon from the village to the big waterfall?

MC: Yes, we saw the waterfalls I remember. And we did some more swimming but I don't know where it was. It was a safe place to swim.

TM: Did you meet any of the Havasupai?

MC: Oh I'm sure we did. And then later years I'll tell you more about it.

TM: Great. When you were there with your group, were there any other tourists there?

MC: I don't think so...not yet.

TM: Wow, how about that. That's something. How did you end up going to the bottom of the Grand Canyon twice?

MC: Well, I graduated from high school in 1946 and my aunt and uncle gave me a gift of riding the mules down to the canyon and staying at the resort down there. You know the name.

TM: Phantom Ranch.

MC: There's a little resort. The name just escapes me for a minute. There was a beautiful pool there. I think they've done away with the pool that I've heard.

TM: Yes, that's Phantom Ranch.

MC: Uh huh. Well, we stayed in these little hotel rooms like...

TM: Yeah, little cabins?

MC: Little cabins and had delicious meals in the place.

TM: Did you go down on the Fred Harvey mules?

MC: Yes, and we stopped to have our pictures taken by the Kolb brothers on our way down. John, I think, has a copy of that. As far as I know I think he has that. Well anyhow, we loved it. Then when I was going to Arizona State, I was taking a geology class. I really didn't care a thing about geology, but the person sitting next to me was very good in geology so I had to have Mr. Buck Clark tutor me in this class so that I could... I needed the credit, I wasn't interested. Well one of the things that we did in those days was the second semester of geology the whole class went down on mules and stayed at... Is it Bright Angel? No. Indian Gardens was on the way down and we stayed again at this wonderful place.

TM: At Phantom Ranch, yes.

MC: Phantom Ranch, yes, that's what I was thinking of. One day we were there we made another trip to see some falls, from...

TM: Okay, maybe Ribbon Falls?

MC: Probably, yes. That was also very beautiful. Then we rode the mules coming back up. But when I was a freshman in college, we had a trip down there with our geology class. Dr. Agnes Allen was our professor and she was wonderful. Anyway, we rode the mules down and spent the night down there and used the pool of course. We had to walk down, excuse me, on that trip we had to hike down to the bottom of the Canyon, but then the day coming up we rode the mules coming up.

TM: Was that so that you could look at the different rock types on your way down?

MC: Different what?

TM: The different rock types?

MC: Yes, and those were pointed out to us. In fact we were supposed to arrange to have a map of all the different levels of the canyon. And again, I had my friend Mr. Buck Clark do one for me so I got a pretty good grade in geology thanks to him. That's how we met. When we were juniors in college is when we got married and that was in 1948.

TM: Where was he from?

MC: He was from Prescott. He had spent most of his growing up years in Prescott and he loved it there, too. We got married in the Episcopal Church up there at Flagstaff and moved into what they called married housing. There're all these friends of ours all around and we had a wonderful time because the college had dances every Wednesday and Saturday nights.

TM: Do you remember the day or the month or the year that you got married?

MC: Yes, September 4th, 1948.

TM: Nice. What kind of dances?

MC: Well, we had what they called the Lumberjack Swing Band. They were amazing and we rarely missed any of the dances. It was just a whole lot of fun for a whole bunch of people. Then, we would go out to Lake Mary. One of our friends had a boat, a little motor boat, and we would take turns riding around the lake in this boat. Then we'd cook our supper outside, either hamburgers or hotdogs, or something easy. It was just a wonderful life. In fact some of my friends years and years later have told us that that was the happiest time of their lives. I don't know if it was the happiest time of your life, but it was a good time of your life.

TM: Right, right.

MC: Buck graduated in 1950.

TM: In what?

MC: With a teaching degree.

TM: He heard about the Grand Canyon needing teachers so he applied and they sent somebody up to interview him and he got a job teaching at the Grand Canyon school, 4th and 5th grade. He had several of his students from Havasupai and he just enjoyed them very much. I did not graduate then, I graduated a little later when I went back and did some summer schools up there. I worked a few months for the Park Service and then I was expecting John. In those days when you got pregnant you just could not work. So stayed home, but I was active with the Girl Scouts. I sponsored a Girl Scout troop. Some of my girl scouts were from Havasupai as well. Watahomigie was one maybe? Does that sound familiar?

TM: Yes. Rebecca? There were a number of Watahomigies.

MC: I'm sure.

TM: Let's back up a little bit. When did Buck get offered the job to teach at the school?

MC: Well, I think it was just right after he graduated from college.

TM: Okay, so the fall semester of 1950?

MC: Yes, and I went to summer school up there. He got a job that summer with the Forest Service in Oak Creek Canyon. Then when that summer was over we moved to Grand Canyon. We were given an apartment, well, we paid rent but it was like a gift really cause it wasn't much rent. It was called a teacherage, and there were like two apartments together. I don't know if you've heard of that or not.

TM: No I have not.

MC: There was another family on the other side of us and we became very good friends for many years. Buck loved teaching there. What he would do...

TM: What were their names?

MC: Stanfields, Ed and Rosalie Standfield. They moved to California and we kind of lost track of them. I don't think either of them are around anymore. Somewhere I've heard that. What Ed would do in the summer would be to take the mules down. He was one of those mule drivers. Everybody had some kind of a summer job. Then Buck, one summer he worked for the Park Service, too, as a ranger.

TM: Let's back up a little bit. You mentioned that you got a job working just a few months for the Park Service. What did you do?

MC: I was in the main office there doing bookkeeping and typing and that sort of thing. I was just there, like I say, for a few months until I realized John was coming and I had to stop.

TM: The superintendent at the time, do you remember him?

MC: Of the schools?

TM: No, of the Park Service. I think that would have been...

MC: Garrison, Lon Garrison.

TM: Was Lon the superintendent or would it have been Harold Bryant?

MC: Well I think, oh gosh. Maybe you're right, maybe that is right.

TM: What do you remember about Lon?

MC: Well he was just a very nice man, and his wife. What we did for fun, people say, "what did you do?" Well, we did a lot of square dancing. There was this community building there and we would get callers to come. Lon and his wife, I can't think of her name, they were delightful people. They were amongst our group as well as lots of other folks, it seemed like, from different areas of work at the canyon. From the laundry. In fact you mentioned a ladies name just a while ago.

TM: Yeah. Mary, Mary Hoover.

MC: Yes. I don't think she was a square dancer.

TM: No.

MC: Well anyhow, that was our entertainment mostly were these square dances.

TM: But Shorty Yarberry was a square dancer, does that name ring a bell?

MC: Say that again?

TM: His name was Shorty, Shorty Yarberry.

MC: Yes that does ring a bell.

TM: He was a mule rider. A short guy but he loved to dance.

MC: Uh-huh. It seems to me that that does ring a bell. This was so many years ago.

TM: 70 years ago.

MC: Well, we were married for 70 years.

TM: Oh my gosh, gee.

MC: Well let's see. We enjoyed it. There was a general store there for groceries. It was a Babbitt's store. We would get most of our groceries right there at the Canyon. Then sometimes go into Williams and have dinner at Rod's Steak House, which was wonderful, and do some more shopping there and whatever. Movies, we could see movies at the Grand Canyon.

TM: At the community center?

MC: I'm trying to remember. There was not an Episcopal Church there, it was a non-denominational church that we attended. I can't think of the pastor's name, but we would go there. John was baptized there by him.

TM: Was the high school built then or was it still just a project coming along?

MC: The new high school was not built then. They had a six-man football team and my husband was the coach.

TM: Oh my gosh. How did they do?

MC: Well, he played football in Prescott and at NAU as well. We would get a babysitter to stay with John when we would go to these dances. You know, we just had a great time there. We were there for six years.

TM: You mentioned that John was born at the hospital there.

MC: Yes

TM: Can you tell me what you remember about the hospital and the doctor?

MC: Well, the doctor was Dr. Schnur and he delivered John. He did a very good job. There were nurses there that were very dedicated and nice people. It was a good little hospital I thought. I was in there a whole week. In those days they didn't let you out. One of the funny things... Of course my husband was teaching and the kids and everybody knew that there was gonna be a baby. So after John was born the word got around the school that Mr. Clark's baby had arrived. I looked out the window at the hospital and I saw this mass of children running down the hill coming towards the hospital wanting to see Mr. Clark's baby. [laughs] It was very small town but everybody was helpful to everybody. The postmaster and mistress were very good friends. I can't think of their names though.

TM: Was that Metzger?

MC: That might be it, yes.

TM: I think its Art, but I'm not sure.

MC: I think that sounds like it could be. Do you have any other questions?

TM: What else do you remember about that time, six years? I don't want to go through six years in six minutes. What else do you remember about...?

MC: I do remember that there was a high school started while we were there. One of the things that my husband did was to take some of his boy students and they would go down to I think Havasupai. And then he would take them hiking just halfway down the Canyon and then back up. So that was a field trip.

TM: Did they backpack and spend the night down there?

MC: Yes. At Havasupai?

TM: At Havasupai and...

MC: I think they did at least once. And then he would take them just hiking halfway down Bright Angel trail, have lunch and then hike back up.

TM: After John was born, did you take a job working for the school?

MC: No, I did not. I didn't have a degree at that time either.

TM: Oh, okay. So you were "just" taking care of John?

MC: Yes. In fact I did not teach school until he was in, let me think...fourth grade? No, Tom, our youngest, was in fourth grade when I started to teach. In the meantime I'd gone to summer school up in Flagstaff and took a year at the University of Arizona. I taught second grade in Nogales for fifteen years after we moved there.

TM: Wow. Your knowledge of Spanish must have come in serving you well there.

MC: My Spanish is not fluent, but I do speak some. I speak some in here, too, because some of our employees are from Mexico as well as from...let me think where else are they from. China? Maybe.

TM: At the Canyon, you're uncle, uncle Bert, was working for the Santa Fe did he come and visit sometimes when he visited with the stationmaster there at the Grand Canyon?

MC: Yes, of course they did. In fact my aunt, after John was born, came and spent about ten days with me. It was very nice. They were wonderful to us. One of the things that he did, he was about to retire when they were building Page, the dam up there?

TM: Yes.

MC: Santa Fe came to him and asked him if he would stay on and be in charge of shipping all that was needed for that. I think they paid him very well. Doubled his salary so I heard. But it was hard on his health, too. It was a tremendous responsibility. He did it but he wasn't quite as strong after that as he was. They moved to Sun City, California to be closer to their son and family there. We visited them over there and I didn't see that much of them after that. I'm sorry I didn't but I was busy and they were busy, you know how that goes.

TM: What do you remember about in 1950 to '55/'56, were the trains still running up to the station then?

MC: I think so yes. One of the things we would do with John when he was a little older, we would take him down to the station so we could see the trains coming in and out.

TM: Okay fun. Did you ever take the train yourself back to Flagstaff or to Williams?

MC: No, we never did that, but we made lots of trips to Flagstaff and we would stay with the Hoepfters. They would babysit for us and we'd go to football games and that was wonderful.

TM: What do you remember about the Turners? It would have been Sam Turner...

MC: Yes, he actually worked for my uncle. One of the things that my uncle Bert did was he had to visit and spend a little time up there, check all the records and everything, whatever. Then he traveled during the week to different places. He went up to Gallup, New Mexico and then over to Blythe.

TM: Sure, heading west you bet. And Kingman and Peach Springs and Truxton.

MC: All the places in between. And then he would go to like Holbrook and Winslow.

TM: All the points to the east, okay. So he traveled quite a bit.

MC: He traveled during the week, yes. He always came home on Friday. When I was staying with them I remember going down to the station to meet him and take him home. Sometimes they would take me out to dinner after that. They were very good to me.

TM: After John was born, did you work seasonally for the Park Service any summers?

MC: No, I only did just briefly there at the beginning when we were there. I didn't work until John was, I think in fourth... Tom, our younger son, he was in fourth grade and I signed my first contract.

TM: You mentioned that Buck worked a summer seasonally for the Park Service. What did he do?

MC: Well he did just what a ranger does. He would stand in that little house there, you know, and collect money from people. That was one of the things. Then he also worked with...it was the Park Service but it was almost like another area.

TM: Are you thinking of maybe Desert View?

MC: No. Gosh, I just can't remember what all he did.

TM: Okay, no worries.

MC: But, we have always said that it was a real privilege to have lived at the Grand Canyon and I will feel that for as long as I live. And John had a lot of fun when he was in the Service. Of course he'd have to sign papers and put down the place of birth and all that, and he would put down Grand Canyon, Arizona. They would look at that and say, "I just can't believe anyone's born at the Grand Canyon." He enjoyed being teased about it.

TM: Fun. Would you do an occasional breakfast at the El Tovar?

MC: Yes, we had a lot of nice dinners there. My parents who were in the Philippines, they had gone back there, they would come over about every two years and visit with us to see the grandchildren. Whenever they came, they loved the El Tovar. We had a lots of good dinners there.

TM: Nice. I'm really struck that your parents went back to the Philippines after the war.

MC: Yes, we did go back. He and I and we took our son Tom with us. John by that time was married and had just had their first child. So the three of us went back. My sister had gone back earlier and had

married over there, so we visited with them. Then we went up into northern Luzon, Baguio it was called, where I went to camp up in that area. There's a beautiful country club up there. We spent New Year's 1980 we were there. It was quite an exciting trip. I got to see some old friends. My sister had a party for us one night and a lot of my old friends from Manila were there. It was exciting. Then we went to Santo Tomas. Santo Tomas, you know, is a university and it was before the war. Then it has again become a very highly ranked university. We have some Filipinos working here and I said, "Where did you get your training?" "Oh, we went to Santo Tomas." And I said, "You know, I went to Santo Tomas, too." [laughs]

TM: Oh my gosh, that's neat. Who else do you remember well of your time at Grand Canyon?

MC: I just remember we were young. I was I think 22 and Buck was a year older. We loved it. We could take rides and we could go over to the rim and ride around. When there was snow in the Canyon, I can remember going there and it was so incredibly beautiful. We would just sit there as long as we could. It was cold though. We would just enjoy it. Like I say, it was a privilege to have lived there. Well is there anything else?

TM: I'm curious, when you moved to Nogales to teach there, what did Buck do?

MC: He was superintendent of schools. He was superintendent there for 17 years and I was teaching there for 15. Then when he retired... We were living right on the border practically, we could see Mexico from our living room window. The Park Service had told us that we probably should move and look for a place that was safer to live because they were having a lot of problems on the border. We have always loved Tubac and so it just worked out for us that this house that we had dreamed of having was available. We sold the Nogales house right away and it just all worked out. We loved living in Tubac. Have you ever been there?

TM: I have, it's beautiful.

MC: It is beautiful.

TM: Nogales is beautiful, too.

MC: Yes it is. We loved both places. People were very nice to us everywhere we went.

TM: Did you return to the Grand Canyon every now and then?

MC: Well when we lived in Springerville I think we made some trips there. We wanted our kids to see it. That was every once in a while. I have a niece who married a Canadian and they live in Toronto. They came to see us several years ago and the first thing they wanted to do was go to the Grand Canyon. So that's what they did and they loved it. When we went to visit them the first thing we wanted to do was see Niagara Falls.

TM: Well that makes sense.

MC: Uh huh. We had twenty-two years in Nogales and twenty in Tubac. It was the perfect place for us to retire. Both of us had horses to start with. We had 14 acres. Then I had to have a hip replaced so that was the end of it. Buck kept his horse and rode until he was 85.

TM: Good for him.

MC: I, of course, had to stop as soon as I had hip problems.

TM: Gosh wonderful. Looking back now in 2020 about your time at Grand Canyon in 1950 to '55, what are your thoughts about... I guess I'm kind of asking about the most dramatic things you've seen over this last 70 years?

MC: Well, we married young and our parents were not sure it was going to work. But, as I say, we had 70 happy years together. And good health until a couple of years ago so we moved into this lovely place here in Scottsdale. It is beautiful here and people are very, very nice. I have extra nice care. They were so good with Buck, too, as he got... You know he passed away a little over a year ago.

TM: Oh my, yes.

MC: They were very good to him. And you know, life goes on. You just have to go with the punches.

TM: Yep, yep.

MC: And you've been walking you said that's really wonderful. Well Marcia, thank you so very much for taking the time to recall your time there at Grand Canyon. I really appreciate it. Thank you.

MC: You're more than welcome. Call me if you have any other questions.

TM: Alright, hang on just a minute. This will conclude Part 2 of Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Marcia Clark. Today is October 13th, 2020. My name is Tom Martin and Marcia, thank you so much.

MC: You're more than welcome.