

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society Oral History

Interviewees: Mike and Muriel Kanan

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Mike and Muriel recount their marriage, working at the North Rim Lodge in the early 1960s, living in Flagstaff

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TM: Today is Friday, November 1st, 2019. This is Part 3 of a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Mike and Muriel Kanan. My name is Tom Martin. For the record, Part 2 interview was terminated when the disk in the recorder became full. Mike and Muriel, how are you today?

Muriel: Great.

Mike: We're great.

Muriel: It's a beautiful November 1st day in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

TM: Wonderful, wonderful. May I have your permission to record this oral history interview over the phone?

Muriel and Mike: Yes.

TM: Thank you. Well, again, I apologize for not paying attention to the memory card becoming full. We were a little over 20 minutes into the Part 2 interview. You both were talking about a wonderful way that you had taken your two faiths and tied them together in a relationship that you both shared and set out some ways to make that happen so that you both could be strong in your faith and yet strong in your relationship. I just found that wonderful. You had mentioned that you were both very active in the Democratic Party and that you had a chance to meet President Clinton and Vice President Gore at the South Rim, and then that President Walkup had approached you to help you with a young couple who was trying to work through some of the same things that you had. We had talked about you going back to the North Rim in the summer of 1962 and how much you liked that. Can you pick this story up again transitioning from how you both worked out your relationship together and how that worked with the Democratic Party, how you sort of worked these things, and then President Walkup.

Muriel: Well, when we decided we would get married... We had permission, of course. Both of our sets of parents supported this but both said their advice would be that we would probably be more successful if we met someone of our own faith. But we decided we could do it and we did. One of the things we did was we worked out a scale. I believe I mentioned that earlier and so I will reiterate that.

TM: Please.

Muriel: A scale from 1 to 10. One being if there was an activity or an event, a function or some kind of..., that necessitated one of us to go to a church function we would invite the other person or at least let them know what the situation was and that person could decide. Mike could decide or I could decide, whether or not I wanted to go with him or he wanted to go with me at a pretty low level, a 1. But if it worked up into a 7 or an 8, especially up into a 10, then the other person had to be excited about it and almost act like it was their idea we were going and would be perfectly comfortable at the event knowing that we were both there willingly and supporting one another. We worked out all the in betweens over the years and applied that to many things actually. Kind of a sense of love and respect for each other and the situation and for other people we would be interacting with. We did have an understanding before we were married that any children we raised would go with Muriel to the Mormon Church services and follow the Mormon Church policies, which would be our son. Our older of the two children did serve a two-year mission in Guayaquil, Ecuador after a year in college and then came home. He had gone down to the University of Arizona and went up to Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah for graduation and then on to Penn State for a masters and doctoral degrees. He teaches here at Western which is why when we retired we came here to be with him. We found that we both were Democrats and active Democrats cause we both believe and share the same values of, yeah, we're supposed to help everybody every way we can. The Walkup story, it was his nephew who was dating a Mormon girl and he wanted us to visit with them and talk with them about the experiences we had trying to work out coming from two different faiths because she was Mormon and he was Catholic.

TM: Nice. And this is President Walkup, the president of Northern Arizona University?

Muriel: President Lawrence Walkup. Correct, yes. Over the years, probably two or three other couples, not necessarily from NAU but from friends or associates that we knew that had either children or friends who had children, who would come and talk with us about things you have to think about and be aware of.

TM: That's really wonderful to help the next generation with the issues that you processed through. That's really neat. So you were married in the winter of 1962...

Muriel: Umm hmm.

TM: ...and then how was it that you decided...I think we touched upon this...to come back to the Canyon that summer of '62 as newlyweds now?

Muriel: Right.

Mike: Yes.

Muriel: Because after we would finish our semester in the spring neither of us had commitments for the summer. We loved the Grand Canyon. It was a good way to make money. We had sure jobs and we thought it would just be fun to go back as a married couple, and it was. The people who came back who knew us before we were married, knew us then as Mike and Muriel and then as Mike and Muriel Kanan, were just delighted. It was fun.

Mike: It was a nice place to spend a honeymoon.

TM: Oh, wonderful. Yeah, all summer long.

Mike: Yeah, all summer long.

Muriel: All summer long, it was.

Mike: Because right after we were married we took the train back to Iowa City and that was an overnight trip, a 27-hour trip on the train and then back to school the next day. So that wasn't much of a honeymoon.

TM: So you kind of delayed that for a little bit.

Mike: Yes.

Muriel: Right.

TM: Wonderful. What else do you recall about that summer of 1962?

Muriel: It was just everything we had expected. It was wonderful. We both loved our jobs. I loved waitressing back there with friends and Mike loved playing the organ. We continued to play and sing and enjoy. We had friends come out and visit us from different parts of the country who wanted to come see what the Grand Canyon was like.

TM: Oh, nice. Okay.

Muriel: I cut you off, Mike. What were you gonna say?

Mike: No, nothing.

TM: Go ahead.

Mike: I don't...

Muriel: Oh, I thought you were gonna say something. Sorry.

TM: Okay. No worries. And then you had met Dick Hingson, H-i-n-g-s-o-n.

Muriel: I met Dick in '59, my first summer there.

TM: Right. And then Mike would have met him in '60-?

Muriel: In '60.

Mike: In 1960.

TM: In 1960. So now as you come back as newlyweds in '62, clearly not gonna be housed in the dorm. Where were you housed? How did that work out and how did Dick end up being across the wall from you?

Mike: Well, I had a cabin in '61 and so then the two of us had a cabin in '62. I think Dick Hingson ended up on the other half. It was one of those sharing shower cabins.

Muriel: Was it 108?

Mike: I can't remember. (Muriel laughs) But it was...

Muriel: I think Dick came to us and said, "What would you think about sharing a cabin? I can be on one side and you guys on the other."

Mike: Did he?

Muriel: I think that's how it happened. We said, "We would love it."

TM: Okay. Nice. Nice, cause by '62 he was managing the front desk.

Muriel: Right. He was a busboy in '59.

TM: Right, and he went from busboy to...

Muriel: To desk to managing the desk.

TM: ...desk. Yeah. I think he spent actually one summer...was he washing dishes?

Muriel: Probably. (laughs)

TM: I can't remember. Yeah.

Muriel: I can't either. Then I think he ended up being like assistant manager or something, didn't he Mike, our next summer in '63?

Mike: I can't remember that either.

TM: I think that's right and then went off to Zion for a summer...

Muriel: Yes.

TM: ...and that story. So what stories do you remember about Dick Hingson and across the door there at the cabin?

Muriel: Well, just how easy it worked. There never seemed to be an issue where we all wanted the bathroom at the same time or we made noise or felt like our privacy was invaded. There was never anything like that. And Dick's always fun to talk to. He's a very interesting person.

TM: Yeah, yeah.

Muriel: So we would find times we'd just open up the door between the two cabins and we'd visit late at night and then off to bed we'd go. We got acquainted about our childhoods and how we all ended up at the Grand Canyon. His story's wonderful about his father and being a doctor and the train wreck and all that got him a job at the Grand Canyon.

TM: Yeah. Yeah. Wonderful. What else do you remember about that summer of '62? Any particular events that come to mind?

Muriel: The summer of '63 is when they had the huge rain, right? That was our last summer there.

Mike: The summer... Yes. The summer of '63 was quite different but the summer of '62 I don't have any particular memories of.

Muriel: Other than just good. I know one summer there was [a fire] in the wilderness somewhere and everyone worried a little bit would we have to evacuate but it all worked out.

TM: Sorry. There was a fire, is that right? I missed that.

Mike: Well, one of those summers, either '62 or '63, there was a fire back up toward the Jacob Lake area and the fear was that the fire would cross the road and we wouldn't be able to get out. So we were kind of on alert, but the fire either burned out or was put out or didn't become a problem so we never evacuated.

TM: Okay. Okay. One of the things... Go ahead.

Mike: In 1963 when we went back, we had just been back to the lodge probably two or three days when my mother had a stroke and was dying so we immediately rode the...

Muriel: The wood truck.

Mike: ...the wood truck back into Cedar City and flew back to Kansas City.

Muriel: Flew from Cedar City to Salt Lake City and then from Salt Lake City to Kansas City, Missouri...

Mike: Yeah.

Muriel: ...and attended her funeral. We were there for about two or three weeks, weren't we?

Mike: Yeah.

Muriel: And then we came back to the Canyon.

Mike: Got back about the first of July.

TM: Okay. All right.

Muriel: But the summer of '62 was just a wonderful, fulfilling, happy, good money-earning summer.

TM: Okay. Good. I wanted to ask you a couple details about that that I've been pondering about the North Rim operations in general. One was the laundry. I know I'd already asked you about this, about the laundry, because every day you'd generate a large amount of sheets and pillowcases...

Muriel: Oh, of course.

TM: ...and towels. Did you have a washing service there onsite or not?

Muriel: No. No. It was all sent by truck to Cedar City.

TM: Okay. All right.

Muriel: It'd all be gathered up in big bundles and taken back to the linen cabin where all the linens were kept, the towels and the sheets. Then the truck would pull up and load up all the old laundry and another truck would come up and unload the clean laundry.

TM: Okay. All right. That makes perfect sense and I would assume...

Muriel: And a commissary truck that would come in every day with food for the kitchen and I'm sure supplies for the curio shop.

Mike: And the campground.

Muriel: And the campground, yeah.

TM: Okay. Alright. So you were trying to work out schedules between when the North Rim closed and your schooling started for the fall semester in '62. Did that all work out okay?

Mike: It always worked out then because the North Rim closed on Labor Day and that...

Muriel: And the bulk of employees left.

Mike: ...gave us time to get back to school.

Muriel: By train. We'd take the bus into Cedar City and get on the train up to Salt Lake City. We'd spend two or three days with my family and friends and then take the train back to Iowa City or Kansas City depending on... After we got married we took the train to Kansas City cause we'd leave our car at Mike's parents' home.

TM: Okay. That worked out well. Nice.

Muriel: Yes.

TM: Then in '62, that summer, were there any visitors to the North Rim that you might have connected with or any other employees that you might have connected with that year besides Dick that you might recall some stories about?

Mike: Well, we had a couple from Chillicothe, that's where I was from, came out in the summer of '62.

Muriel: So did John and Marsha from Iowa City.

Mike: Oh, that's right.

Muriel: Two different couples came out to visit us.

Mike: We went in their car out on very rough road to Point Sublime and had quite a nice visit out of there but when we were ready to leave to come back, leave the Point Sublime area, they couldn't get the car into any gear to move.

Mike: I was starting to get a little nervous because Muriel had the day off but I never had a day off so that meant I was supposed to be back for dinner. Then, I think the husband got down and looked under the car and found a rock had wedged its way in one of the rods underneath the car. He knocked that rock out and the car went into gear and we went back.

TM: Wow. Lucky. (laughs) Gosh.

Mike: It was lucky, yeah. They, actually, were out there visiting us and visiting friends of their family who ran a lodge and kind of a resort, but very small resort, in southern Utah.

Muriel: More like a trading post.

Mike: Yeah, it was a trading post up on the Utah/Arizona line. Goulding was their name, I think.

Muriel: Goulding, that's right. Goulding Trading Post.

Mike: It was the Goulding Trading Post.

TM: So that's out in Monument Valley then.

Muriel: That's correct.

Mike: Yes, that's right. That's right.

TM: Okay. Nice. So they knew the Goulding family?

Muriel and Mike: Yes.

TM: Oh, fun. That must have been fun to have friends come and do some exploration in the area and look around.

Mike: Yeah, it was, it was.

TM: Nice. So then back '62 in the fall, back to schooling again?

Mike: Yes.

TM: And Mike, you were working on a Master's in sociology, is that right?

Mike: That's right.

TM: And Muriel, you're gonna be finishing your degree in education?

Muriel: Yes. I finished that in '63.

TM: Okay. In the spring of '63?

Muriel: Actually it would have been over Christmas. I graduated in '64, on January 17th, '64 cause the semesters went through the winter holiday, and started teaching school the next day almost.

TM: Okay. All right. So again, go through the spring of 1963 in school and, again, thinking gonna go right back to the North Rim. Is that kind of how things were going except, Mike, your mother wasn't well?

Mike: That's right. That's right. No, she was as far as we knew. Yeah.

TM: Okay. Okay. And how old was she at the time, do you remember?

Mike: 56.

TM: Wow. So she was...

Muriel: It was a massive stroke and she died within days after having it.

TM: Oh, my gosh. She was very young.

Muriel: Yeah.

Mike: We left Iowa City. She had come up to help us pack things up and the three of us drove back to Chillicothe...

Muriel: Missouri.

Mike: ...and then they took us... My folks took us to the train in Kansas City and we went back out to the North Rim.

Muriel: Then when we left at the end of the summer of '62 our intention was to return in '63.

Mike: Yeah.

Muriel: We committed to Park Service. Yes. Our plan was for both of us to return. I went back as a waitress. Mike, of course, back to play the organ. But the last half of the summer towards the end, the last month, I wanted to just see what it was like to work at the desk so I stopped waitressing and worked at the desk.

TM: That must have been a large cut in pay for you.

Muriel: Yeah. (laughter)

Mike: It was, for *us*. Yeah.

TM: Yeah. (laughs) Well, I'm just...

Muriel: But Mike agreed it would be fun. I wanted that experience and it was fun. I did prefer waitressing, but it was fun to be on the desk and greet people and assigned them their rooms or hand them their keys or whatever.

TM: So Dick explained this to me and I'd like to get it from you as well, how did that system work with the keys? There was a board. Can you explain all that, how that worked?

Muriel: There was just a board with little hooks on it and all the keys had little, oh, about three inch size plastic hangers and the number of the cabin was on it and it corresponded with the number on the board where they hung. Most people had reservations so when they came in and they would tell you who they were you'd just look in the reservation book and it would say whether it was a deluxe cabin or a standard and what number. Then you would welcome them and have them sign in and issue them their key. A bellhop would be standing there and would help them with their luggage if they wanted or take them/show them where the cabins were.

TM: Okay, and did you answer the phone as well? Did you take reservations?

Muriel: I didn't. I did not. If the phone rang someone was trained for all of that and I really wasn't.

Mike: There was a switchboard behind the desk that connected the phones in the deluxe cabins and...

Muriel: Standard cabins didn't have phones, but the deluxe cabins did.

Mike: ...and the curio shop and the kitchen...

Muriel: The soda fountain.

Mike: ...and the kitchen and so on.

Muriel: Yeah. A person trained to work the switchboard would work the switchboard.

Mike: And there was a phone down in each of the dorms.

TM: Okay. So a trained person ran that switchboard.

Muriel: Right.

Mike: Did they or was it just somebody behind the desk?

Muriel: No, I think it was a trained person that would. I know I wasn't trained and I didn't run it. Dick would certainly understand all of that.

Mike: Yeah. He'd know that.

Muriel: Anything Dick said would probably be right.

TM: I'm wondering in that in '62 you shared a cabin on one side and the other side with Dick, and he was working the front desk. Was he instrumental in getting you to consider coming to the front desk for a little bit?

Muriel: Say that again. I'm sorry.

TM: Well, because Dick was essentially managing the front desk was he encouraging and instrumental in getting you to consider coming on over and giving it a try?

Muriel: I don't know.

Mike: I don't remember that either.

Muriel: I don't remember either.

TM: Okay. Okay. (laughs) If he was...

Muriel: If you worked the desk, then you also ate in the dining room not in the kitchen with the others.

Mike: There was a table next to the doors going into the kitchen from the dining room that seated...

Muriel: Called the staff table.

Mike: ...six people, I guess, and it was called the staff table. The manager and the assistant manager and the people who worked on the desk...

Muriel: The organist.

Mike: ...and the organist got to go down and eat at the staff table.

Muriel: During the regular dining room hours.

Mike: Yeah, during the dining room hours.

TM: Okay. Who was managing and who was the assistant manager at the time? Do you remember them?

Mike: Well, Lamar Snyder was the manager during my first two years, I think. Or, no wait. He was the manager the whole four years wasn't he?

Muriel: The whole time.

Mike: My whole time, yeah.

Muriel: Yeah. All five years he was the manager.

Mike: The assistant manager was Ray Bayles at the end, and also...hmm. DeGraw.

Muriel: DeGraw, yeah.

Mike: It was Tom DeGraw, wasn't that his name?

Muriel: I think so. There was also a tall...

Mike: And his wife, Gayle...

Muriel: Snyder.

Mike: ...Snyder ran the post office during the early years. I thought DeGraw's wife ran the post office one of those years.

Muriel: Yeah, I think so, too. What was the name of the people who... He was the chef and she was the curio and they bought that little restaurant up in Provo? Shoot.

Mike: I'll think of it, but not now. (laughter)

TM: So Ray Bayles, is this of the Bayless store chain?

Mike: No, it's not.

Muriel: He was out of Kanab.

Mike: He was from Kanab and from Utah, and the Bayless store chain in Arizona, I think, was headquartered in Phoenix.

TM: Right, right.

Muriel: Same name, though, for sure, spelled the same.

TM: Okay. And Tom DeGraw, that's D-e-G-r-a-w?

Muriel: I believe so.

Mike: Yeah, but I think Tom wasn't his first name now that I hear you say it that way.

Muriel: Yeah, yeah.

TM: Okay. Dick talked about Lamar Snyder as a very intelligent and demanding but certainly cover your back kind of boss, meaning...

Mike: Oh, yeah, he was.

TM: ...if you worked hard for him, he would work hard for you and really tried to bring out the best in people. Is that how you recall him?

Muriel: That was our experience, umm hmm, yeah. There were never any negative issues with him and us, or any I ever heard anyone ever express.

TM: Ray Bayles is a new name to me. What do you remember about Ray?

Muriel: Nice, just kind of followed in Lamar's footsteps that he was supposed to do. He felt like he was definitely in charge. Nice looking and pleasant. I liked Ray. Mike, who did I sing with that was...

Mike: Jack Crowley.

Muriel: Yeah, Jack Crowley was the assistant manager my first year and your first year.

Mike: And my first year.

Muriel: In '59 and '60 Jack Crowley was the assistant manager. We liked him a lot, too.

Mike: He had a friend, Roger Shepherd, that worked as a wood boy, gathering wood and putting wood on the porches of the deluxe cabins and he had a car, so that one time in 1960 probably four or five of us, Roger Shepherd, Jack Crowley, and me and probably two other people went in that car over to Lees Ferry and built a campfire on the beach of the river there and took along beer and other things like that.

Muriel: That was pre-Glen Canyon dam.

Mike: Yeah, that's right.

TM: Nice.

Mike: And then we got back, oh, I don't know, probably 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. That was a memorable trip in my head from having that summer. And then...

TM: Well, gosh. I'm gonna interrupt here and say, Mike, it was a night off for you! That was a big deal!

Muriel: Yeah.

Mike: You know, I'm not absolutely sure it was a night off.

Muriel: You might have left after your...

Mike: We might have left after 8:00.

TM: Oh, that would have made sense. Okay.

Mike: Yeah, it might have been but I didn't take nights, there was nobody to replace me.

Muriel: Yeah, the only time he didn't play is when the organ wasn't there. He was expected to play.

Mike: The three weeks when my mother died there was a waitress names Kaye Priday. Actually, she started out working as one of the cabin maids but ended up being a waitress, I think.

Muriel: She was.

Mike: She liked playing the organ and played the piano a lot and so those three weeks I was gone she played the organ. That was in the summer of 1963 and then we didn't go back in 1964 so she was the lodge dining room organist for 1964, at least that long.

Muriel: She was from Provo, Utah and she lived down the street from me. I cannot remember how they spelled their name.

TM: Well, it's interesting that she would have been making, again, good money as a waitress but then when you left she came in in '64 and took that job.

Mike: Yes, yes. She knew we were not coming back and I think that arrangement was all made before we left.

TM: Okay. Alright. What do you remember about Kaye?

Muriel: Wonderful, talented, sweet, yeah.

Mike: Oh, she was a delight.

TM: Umm hmm. Nice. Nice. So you mentioned some rain in 1963.

Muriel: We had become pretty good friends with the wranglers whose desk was just across from the main desk where people would set up their arrangements for mule trips down the Canyon trail and back. They liked Mike a lot, especially, and they just said, "You know what, just as a kind of going away gift for your guys, at the end of the summer when it's time for everything to shut down, we will gift you with a trip down by mule without charge and we'll just show you all the neat things that you've heard us talk about these years." We were very excited about it. The afternoon and the night before we were supposed to leave the next day...help me with this Mike...I think we got 18 inches of rain. A huge storm came in and just washed away everything. Washed away the trails, took out the water system at Ribbon Falls. I think it was a few years before it was all fixed.

Mike: Yeah. Yeah.

Muriel: So consequently the trip canceled. (laughs)

TM: Yeah. Gosh. Huh.

Mike: I can tell you a couple of things because I have found the listing. Kaye Priday. The thing I'm looking at is somebody named Quinton Bradley, have you come across him?

TM: No, I don't believe so.

Mike: He worked after we left, probably '64 or '65, '66, somewhere in there, and lives, I think, in Texas or California. He put together a North Rim reunion back in, hmm, when was that, 2013, somewhere like that. He put out a list of employees that they had information on and I notice that's how that list is spelling Friday. And the list is spelling Ray Bayles, which is different, I think, than the grocery stores.

TM: That's right.

Muriel: And, you know, we went to that reunion, several people we knew did, and people were there who had worked at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon in the 30s.

TM: Oh, my gosh. Wonderful.

Mike: Yeah. There was a song called Grand Canyon Lullaby that somebody who used to work there in the late 40s or the 50s wrote. I remember hearing it while we worked there but just because somebody was there that knew it, I guess, well enough to sing it. Then when we ran into this couple, Pauline Child was her name, that worked there in '47 and '48, I think, and his... Actually when she was working there her name was Pauline O-m-e-r, Omer, and she's married to Andy Childs. I guess this list is showing it with an s. They live in Salt Lake City and so we had a nice visit while we were there with them because that meant they were 10 years older than we were, or a little more than that probably. Then after we got back to Bowling Green he sent me the copy...

Muriel: Of the Grand Canyon Lullaby.

Mike: ...of the Grand Canyon Lullaby.

TM: Fun.

Mike: And I have come across now a card that Kaye Friday put on the table while she was doing the organ and it is Kaye Friday. She's from American Fork.

Muriel: Yeah, then she was. They lived down the street from me before they moved to American Fork.

Mike: Oh, yeah, that's right.

TM: Nice. Okay. Very helpful. It's interesting, I don't remember the year, I believe it was '63, was it later in the fall, there were a series of rain events that caused much...

Muriel: Additional damage?

TM: ...additional damage. 1963 was a big water year there for that area.

Mike: Yeah. Yes, that storm in November, I think, of 1963 washed out the water line that took water from Roaring Springs to the South Rim.

TM: Right. So this is interesting because I didn't realize that there were storms before that November storm that would have primed the pump, if you will...

Muriel: Yes.

TM: ...to get the land to start moving.

Muriel: Right.

Mike: You know, I am slightly confused, and I may just be confused on this. I have thought the ride that we, that Muriel and I were gonna take, was not in '63. That was with these two friends that visited us from Missouri.

Muriel: No, that was the horses. This was the '63, the end of the summer.

Mike: It was? Okay.

Muriel: Yeah.

Mike: All right.

Muriel: Friends came out earlier in that summer in '63, additional friends, not the ones that we talked about earlier, and we rented horses and went horseback riding. But the mule trip was supposed to happen at the end of the summer and couldn't because of the rain.

TM: Okay. All right. So was 1963 then the last year you worked there?

Muriel: Right.

Mike: Yes.

Muriel: We knew we wouldn't be coming back.

TM: Okay. And yet you ended up living in Flagstaff.

Muriel: That was our goal. As Mike finished up his doctorate and was looking for a position, our goal was if there was any chance we could end up in Arizona we wanted to. And we were lucky, Tom, because when Mike was interviewing hiring was happening everywhere. He interviewed at Ball State and a place in Florida and a place in Missouri and, in fact, had just about accepted a position in Missouri because nothing happened. They hired somebody else in Flagstaff and at the very last minute... We'd already gone down to Springfield, Missouri and looked at a home and Mike was about to sign a contract the next day. We got a phone call that night, late that afternoon from... Who did call you, Mike, Dr. Wright, the Dean?

Mike: No. Ed Rybnicek.

Muriel: Oh, Ed Rybnicek, Vice President, no...

Mike: He was the chairman.

Muriel: Oh, Ed called you? Okay. He was the chairman of the Sociology Department and said a person they had hired at the last minute had changed his mind, or her mind, and was Mike interested. Mike said, "Well, I'm about to sign a contract here. I'd like to come out and look at it, look at the university." So they flew him out. Did you leave like the next day?

Mike: Yeah.

Muriel: Flew out to Phoenix and...

Mike: No, flew out to Flagstaff.

Muriel: Did you fly right to Flagstaff?

Mike: Umm hmm.

Muriel: Oh.

Mike: Well, you'll never go right to Flagstaff. [TM laughs]

Muriel: But from Phoenix to Flagstaff?

Mike: Yeah, yeah.

Muriel: When he got to the campus he called me to tell me he'd made it safely, of course, and he said the ride up from Phoenix to Flagstaff was enough to sell you on the job.

Mike: I'm not sure about that. I can't remember. Back in those days there was regular service between Phoenix and Denver that had a stop in Flagstaff and a stop in Winslow and a stop in Farmington, New Mexico and Durango, Colorado, Alamosa, Colorado and then Denver.

TM: Wow. Up and down and up and down.

Mike: It was up and down, up and down, and I'm not sure I didn't come in that way.

Muriel: I don't think you did. I think...

Mike: Maybe not.

Muriel: You took that trip where you flew back to Iowa City later, years later.

Mike: Yeah.

Muriel: I think, as I remember, there was a phone call where you said just coming up from Phoenix, up that Copper Canyon, was enough to sell you.

Mike: That might be, yeah, that might be.

TM: Was that the first time either one of you had been to Flagstaff?

Muriel: No. We had taken a trip from the North Rim of the Grand Canyon to Flagstaff when we were dating.

Mike: Yes.

Muriel: With a group, we had a car...

Mike: Somebody else was driving.

Muriel: ...and we drove over to the South rim and went through Flagstaff.

Mike: Yeah.

TM: And that would have been 60-...

Muriel: The summer of '62. No, '61.

Mike: '61 I think that was, yeah.

Muriel: Yeah, we weren't married yet.

TM: What do you remember about Flagstaff in 1961?

Muriel: Pretty rural.

Mike: Oh, what struck me was how narrow the roads were. What I remember particularly was San Francisco Street between Santa Fe... Isn't that Santa Fe Avenue?

TM: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Mike: ...and Aspen. That road seemed so narrow and now it's a one-way, is it? I think it is.

TM: It is. Yep.

Muriel: And there's a little drugstore on the corner, Rowan's, was it called Rowan's?

Mike: On Leroux Street corner.

Muriel: Yeah, cause we stopped there and got sundries.

Mike: Oh, yeah, we did. That's right. That's where Collins Pub used to be. Is it still there?

Tom: I'm not much of a pub guy. I'll just say, yeah, I think so. On Leroux and Santa Fe?

Mike: Right across the street from the train depot on the corner of Leroux and Santa Fe.

Tom: Yeah, absolutely, there's a brew pub in there.

Mike: Okay.

Muriel: We commented that we thought Flagstaff was a pretty little town. That was one of the reasons Mike wanted to fly out and visit the campus and be sure that was where we would be happy.

Tom: When you went out there in '61 do you remember where you stayed?

Mike: Oh no, we just drove through. We drove from the South Rim down through town. We were only in town probably an hour and drove back to the North Rim.

Tom: Oh, so this was on your rim-to-rim hike?

Mike: No.

Muriel: Nope.

Mike: This is all in the car.

Muriel: Yeah. We took a couple of days and did it.

Tom: So did you drive all the way around sort of Vegas and Kingman and then over to the South Rim?

Mike and Muriel: No.

Mike: No, just came down through Cameron.

Tom: Okay.

Mike: But I'm trying to remember, could that have been in '61? The reason I think it might have been '61 is because, again, I didn't ever have days off, but I had those two or three weeks off...

Muriel: Waiting for the organ to be returned.

Mike: ...when the organ was broken.

Muriel: Yeah, it might have been '61. That could have been right.

Mike: Because it was in '61 that we also had the time off to go make those two movies.

Tom: Okay. So that would make sense in '61. So if you had a car you could have driven, certainly, down Highway 89 and across the Navajo Bridge.

Mike: Yeah. That's how we did it.

Muriel: That is what we did, right.

Tom: And Glen Canyon would have been under construction at Page. Actually the bridge over the Colorado River at the dam site would have been completed by '61. And then you would of...

Mike: Yes, I think that's right. I think that...

Muriel: Yes, because my parents came down to visit us in '61 and we drove to Page and had lunch there and drove over that dam.

Mike: Yeah, and I remember taking some pictures of it. They just had the very basic bottom part of the dam.

Muriel: And there was just one concrete truck after another all along 89. Like something you would see in a movie, like a caravan carrying concrete from... I guess from Flagstaff to Glen Canyon.

Tom: Actually the Clarkdale Concrete Plant was operating then and they were...

Muriel: Is that right?

Tom: ...running cement from there. They were running gravel from north of Flagstaff, I believe. But you're right, the truck traffic was day and night there on the road.

Mike: Umm hmm.

Muriel: Yeah. Yeah.

Muriel: And we were very sad to see them building that dam because you would have that wonderful experience at Lees Ferry.

Mike: Yeah, but Lees Ferry was still there.

Muriel: I know, but we thought that that would change so many things.

Mike: Yeah.

Tom: Yeah. Okay. And when was that that you were offered the job to come back to Flagstaff?

Mike: In 1967, in March.

Tom: Wow. Well, that (laughs) must have been quite the turnaround. You know, just about ready to take a job, like the next day, and then suddenly finding yourself in Flagstaff. My.

Mike: Yeah. Well, we looked at housing over that weekend, Saturday and Sunday...

Muriel: In Missouri.

Mike: ...and when we left I told them I'd let them know by Tuesday and...

Muriel: Got the call on...

Mike: we got the call and I flew out on Monday and then called Muriel from the airport on the way home and said...from the Flagstaff airport, which was quite different than it is now...and said, "I think this looks like the place."

Tom: Nice. And so then?

Mike: So then I called Springfield, Missouri and told them that we were not coming.

Tom: Okay. So when did you both then end up moving actually into Flagstaff?

Muriel: June of '67.

Mike: We were driving across country heading towards Flagstaff when some Mexican people were having some kind of a revolt in northern New Mexico and it was making national news. We came through the Four Corners but we didn't really get into New Mexico, we drove through Colorado.

Muriel: We were pulling a little trailer of belongings. We got a motel in Flagstaff that night and when we got up the next morning we bought a newspaper. Well, no, before we ever got there we knew that Glen Reed, remember our friend from Grand Canyon, was teaching at Flagstaff. We got in touch with him and had him and his wife Gail send us newspapers from Flagstaff so we could start getting acquainted with Flagstaff before we got there. We could tell by looking at the advertisements for homes that the market was gonna be tight. We arrived on a Friday night, and when we got up on Saturday morning we bought a newspaper, or we drove around town trying to find a realtor's office and they were all closed. Mike looked at me and said, "This is a seller's market." It was shocking cause we had found a lovely home in Springfield, Missouri, brand new. We could even pick out how we wanted the yard done, you know, the landscaping, upstairs, downstairs, a basement. It included appliances. So I think it was like...

Mike: \$17,500.

Muriel: ...\$17,500.

Tom: Okay.

Muriel: We bought a home on Walker Street. I mean, a realtor... It was interesting, Tom. I don't even remember the name of the realtor now, but we were riding around with him in a car. We had a son and I was pregnant. Jimmy was 2. He said, "Where should we start, Mr. Kanan?" Mike said, "Well, what would you suggest?" He said, "Well, what do you do for a living?" When Mike told him he was teaching, "Oh, well, then you'll want to live on the west side of Flagstaff. You'll want to live over in Coconino Estates or up on Cherry Hill." He drove us around and showed us the homes. He said, "That's where the professional people live. That's where the professors and the doctors..." Mike and I kind of looked at each other and didn't say anything to him. He showed us around a little bit that day and we said we'd get back in touch with him. We didn't ever. We called him again and said we weren't ready to work with a realtor yet. We decided to do it on our own because we kind of looked at each other and said if all the professionals live in this part of town maybe we'd be happier in the other side cause we're basically Socialists. (laughs) So we just started driving ourselves around and we found this house on Walker Street in Upper Greenlaw. It was the last street going east in Upper Greenlaw. Am I right, east?

Mike: Yeah.

Muriel: That had sidewalks.

Muriel: We wanted sidewalks cause I knew I'd want to have the kids roller skate and play and...

Tom: How did the house price compare size-wise to Springfield?

Mike: The house price was \$20,000 and it was smaller, no basement and no upstairs. It probably had...

Muriel: I think about 13,000 square feet.

Mike: Yeah, about 1300 square feet.

Muriel: Hundred, yeah.

Tom: Maybe two thirds the size?

Mike: About that, yeah.

Muriel: And it wasn't brand new.

Tom: (laughs) Okay.

Muriel: (laughs) And it didn't have a very nice yard.

Tom: Huh. Interesting because this is 1967 and in 2019 it's still the case. It was the case when my wife and I purchased a house here next to the Sanders on Navajo in the 1990s. So it's just fascinating to see some things that way, not quite changing.

Muriel: Yeah. We built onto our home in Flagstaff the last 20 years because we built a pipe organ into our home and that's a whole other story, but...

Tom: Oh, my gosh. Oh, my gosh. (laughs)

Muriel: What we were able to sell it for we were able to come out here and buy a home and have it remodeled with money left over. It was nice.

Tom: Yeah. Yeah, okay. Well, before I let you go, and this has been a wonderful series of interviews, from '67 until you left Flagstaff, could you recount for me a couple of the more memorable interactions you had at the Grand Canyon during the time when you lived in Flagstaff?

Mike: Well, one that comes to my mind, remember we mentioned didn't we earlier, the snow storm that December?

Tom: Of '67?

Mike: Of '67, yeah.

Tom: No, you haven't mentioned that yet but I certainly know it well.

Muriel: Yeah.

Mike: Yeah, that was our first fall in Flagstaff and we ended up with something like 84 inches of snow in about 8 days. The school didn't want to really release. Back in those days you had Christmas vacation off and then you went back after Christmas for the last two weeks of classes and then a week of finals. So they didn't want to release school but the storm just kept snowing and it looked like it wasn't gonna stop so they finally...they released school a day at a time. They released first Thursday, and then Friday, and the over the weekend they said "We won't have any." We were gonna have school on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday but they dismissed school for all of that. And then at that point we got out of the area and away from the snow and drove up to Provo to see Muriel's folks and we were gonna spend Christmas up there. But on the way up on 89 you drive past an area through, what's that called... Red, not Red Cliffs, what's it called?

Muriel: Painted Desert.

Mike: No, not the Painted Desert. It's along 89A between the river and Jacob Lake.

Tom: Oh, the House Rock Valley, the Vermillion Cliffs.

Muriel: House Rock.

Mike: House Rock Valley, yeah.

Tom: Yeah.

Muriel: Yeah, Tom, yeah.

Mike: So we were driving through House Rock Valley and after we got up there we found out that that day or right around that day, the Mackelprangs had a family that owned a lot of ranches around in there and the woman that had married their father did not get along with the children and the children ended up harassing her. At that point I think she ended up killing both of those brothers and then walking out along 89A and hitching a ride up to Jacob Lake. That was, of course, making big news. They're an old, old North Rim family living near there. So that...

Muriel: That was a memorable event but the memorable experiences that we had were we met family up at the North Rim a number of times. Remember I had brothers and sisters who worked there, and we met friends up there and we took friends from Flagstaff and went up and spent time and watched sunsets. One particular time we were all out kind of on the rim waiting for the sun to set and people were laughing and talking and you could hear the clanking of dishes, they were picnicking, human noises, human activity noises, and all of a sudden you just became aware that everyone had stopped making any noise and became very quiet. We all stood there and watched the sun set.

Tom: Wow.

Muriel: What point was that on, Mike? Was that on...

Mike: Out at...

Muriel: ...Royal?

Mike: ...Cape Royal, yeah.

Muriel: At Cape Royal, yeah. And then whenever we drove to Utah, which was often, over the summer, you know, for summer trips or Christmas, we always tried to go through Jacob Lake and if at all possible drive up to the North Rim. So it just has an extremely special place in our hearts.

Tom: Yes, indeed.

Muriel: We had a family... Eight of us were up there, husbands and wives, again around 2012/2013/2014, I forget, and we watched the moon set on the North Rim. So it's just...

Mike: Umm, that was wonderful.

Muriel: We've had wonderful experiences there. And the two reunions we attended of employees. So lots of memories. We could write a book.

Tom: You could and I would encourage you to do that. (laughs)

Muriel: Yeah. (laughs) It's been fun reminiscing all of this with you. And we will get all these papers together, Tom, and send to you.

Tom: Good. I'd love to see that material. That would be wonderful. Well, with that maybe this is a good time to go ahead and conclude Part 3 of a wonderful oral history with Mike and Muriel Kanan. Today is Friday, November 1st, 2019. My name is Tom Martin and Mike and Muriel, thank you so very much.

Mike: Well, thank you, Tom.

Muriel: Yeah. And happy November!