

**Transcription:** Grand Canyon Historical Society

**Interviewee:** Pat “Kuru” Gannon (PG), Mat Schuette (MS), and David Schwantes (DS)

**Interviewer:** Tom Martin (TM) and Wayne Ranney (WR)

**Subject:** Pat, Mat, and David recount a three-person winter river trip with Wayne Ranney and Tom Martin.

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**Method of Interview:** In person at the home of Tom Martin and Hazel Clark

**Transcriber:** Grayson Kelmer

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TM: Push that button, and we’re recording. Today is January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

All: ’15. [All laugh.]

TM: See you guys are paying attention. That’s good. This is the home of Tom Martin and Hazel Clark in Flagstaff, Arizona. Sitting around our kitchen table are five individuals: myself with...

WR: Wayne Ranney. Flagstaff, Arizona.

TM: Wayne is the President of the Grand Canyon Historical Society. And...

MS: Matthew Schuette. Dillingham, Alaska.

TM: And...

DS: David Schwantes. Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

TM: And...

PG: Patrick Gannon, more commonly known as Kuru. I’m from all over but mostly Big Sky, Montana and up in Alaska.

TM: Cool, and you gentlemen have just come off of a Grand Canyon river trip. Again, it’s 2015, January 4<sup>th</sup>. January 4<sup>th</sup>. That means you guys just did a winter river trip. Kuru, what was it like?

PG: It was beautiful. Yeah, we were expecting it to get a lot colder than it was, so we actually got really fortunate with the weather and ended up having some great sun days. We didn’t get frozen on until the end of the trip. Even though the days were short and sometimes it was dark, we didn’t really suffer in terms of the coldness for it being a winter trip. We really got very

fortunate in that. Stayed fairly warm most of the time, which is one of the big concerns on a winter trip is it can get really, really cold. You can have a lot of problems with that with your boats and rafting with three of us. We were very concerned if we had any issues in the cold in the short days of December. That that could be a very big problem for us, so that played a big factor in our decision making on the trip which was a really good experience for all of us because we both hadn't participated in such a small group expedition before. That was brand new for David and myself – to manage a group in a different way, often more conservatively than we've run in the past.

It was excellent. We got to use a whole bunch of new lines since there was higher flow than we've run before, which was excellent. The water was beautiful and we could take a lot more cheat lines and sneak lines around some of the bigger waves and kinda manage our risk a lot better, which made for a really exciting trip in that way in terms of being a good boatman and learning to run the river in a whole different way than you usually look at it when you're with a big group of boatmen. You have those safety features of being able to flip a raft easily, and you have kayakers that can pick you out, but we didn't have that option. It brought a whole different intensity to the trip.

TM: So, let me get this straight. Just the three of you on this trip with three boats?

PG: Three 18-footers.

TM: Three 18-footers. Wow, okay. I've got a question about the temperatures and then about the rapids from what you've talked about. Did it freeze at all?

MS: Two days.

DS: Froze at Lees Ferry. Then it froze the last two, three days. That was it.

TM: Patrick, I'll ask you then. I'll try to steer this because if y'all chime in, the poor person who's gonna transcribe this is gonna be: "Who's talking? Who is this?" Patrick – I'm sorry – Matthew, you haven't rowed before?

MS: Never in my life.

TM: Did you guys scout the rapids? Did you look at them?

MS: We scouted the Jewels. We scouted House Rock and Killer Fangs. That'd be it.

TM: Was that helpful for you? Did you just try to follow these guys?

MS: Oh yeah, I had to scout it. If I hadn't scouted it, I wouldn't have got it. Seriously. It's nice to know which line I hit, and if I miss that line, what's my second option. And it helped me out in Lava. I had to take a second option 'cause I missed my line.

DS: Which is a ledge hole. [All laugh.]

PG: Still floating!

MS: Only like three foot of my raft actually hit ledge hole.

TM: And then what happened?

MS: I just went over on the left side. Then, I went over a rock that I wasn't trying to go over.

TM: The left run?

MS: The left run. I went over a rock I didn't wanna go over, but I ended up going over it. It got me pushed in there, but I seen another line going between two rocks, so I hit that. Of course, I couldn't paddle really or anything. You had to use rocks to turn the boat around this way and that way, but it worked. I got out of there. I didn't even hit Hawaii Five-O. I just kinda skimmed right past it. It was good.

TM: Still, that means way up front where the trip started, you ran Badger without scouting and Soap until the Jewels, the Roaring 20's somewhere.

DS: Oh yeah. House, Hance, the Jewels, Lava. House, Hance, Jewels.

MS: Bedrock.

DS: Bedrock, Lava. We scouted Upset too.

MS: Yeah, we did do Upset.

DS: Maybe ten rapids, something like that.

MS: The scouting helps. I mean, being new, but the first rapid I scouted didn't help me at all. That was House Rock. David goes off first, and we watch him go down, so I'm like, "Okay, cool." Their talk was like four hours.

PG: They scouted for quite – it was the first major rapid in terms of consequence coming at us, and so we talked it out for quite some time. I think it made him a bit nervous.

MS: We went right. You know backwards, went right, and as soon as I got into it, my oar hit a rock, spun me around.

TM: Which oar?

MS: The oar going downstream 'cause nobody told me I can't dig.

TM: The downstream one.

MS: The down one, yeah, the bad one. So, I learned my lesson there.

TM: So now you're in the rapid. You're trying to go to the right. You're down an oar. Did it actually like blow out a lock?

MS: No, it just kinda went like this but it kinda turned me, so it turned me forward and back into the main rapid, which is House Rock. The big hole, and I hit it.

DS: Well, he almost flipped in the way of above the hole. He didn't even get to the hole. He almost flipped in the way though. He was right above the hole. [David Laughs.]

MS: Of course, me, I just like – deer in the headlights shining. I just stood up and didn't do nothing.

PG: I came down afterwards 'cause I was running safety, and we were like: "You didn't do a single thing we told you to do! Not once!"

DS: I was like, this is gonna be a long trip.

PG: But it was a great wakeup 'cause before it had been kinda mellow rapids and we had been getting into it and having success, and then to hit a larger rapid like that where you had to make a move. It was kind of a wakeup call. Where you'd be like: "I gotta put some real hard effort into this. This isn't just a float thing. I gotta really learn how to oar this boat." After that, you snapped into gear, and started really working harder and playing in eddies.

TM: So, Mat, had you ever paddled a canoe? Kayak?

MS: A canoe, yeah. I've done canoes before. No kayak, well I guess I kayaked once.

DS: You got in it once and did a four-foot log drop into a lake and made it and then tipped over and got out and that's about it. [Tom and David laugh.]

MS: In Texas.

TM: I'm just asking because I'm wondering if you have any experience with current and water flow.

MS: Jet boats, yeah, but never paddling, no.

DS: He's never done whitewater before this.

MS: Never ever. Just our little trip in Alaska, which is what? Class Is? Class IIs?

DS: It has some Class III when it's bigger water. That's about it.

MS: Canoeed but like short half a mile, mile rivers.

TM: So, what was your most – this is a question to Mat here – what was your most exciting moment? Would that have been Lava on the left or was there another rapid?

MS: Oh, my favorite rapid was Hermit. Hermit was huge to me. I hit the line perfect and other people didn't, but still everybody had a good time on it. I hit the line that I didn't get splashed. All the ways perfect. [Mat makes smooth swooshing noises.] I was just so geeked. Before I got out of the rapid, I was standing up like, "Yeah!" It was fun. It was. The Jewels – we ran with another

group just in case something happened. We were with eight other boats, just in case. We ran them hard all day, and then we did our own thing after that. It was easier to run them with a big group there, 'cause I didn't worry too much. Like, "Okay. Yeah." Watch the other boats go down, and now I'm like, "Hey, if they can do it, I can do this." Pretty simple. Plus, if I do flip, it's gonna be easy to get taken care of. So, I mean it was less off my mind, 'cause I didn't wanna disappoint these guys and have you guys working all day long trying to flip my raft.

TM: Good thinking. What challenged you the most on this journey?

MS: Hiking. Diamond Peak. Yep, I did Diamond Peak, so that was pretty cool. That was challenging for me. I'm not a hiker. Me and Kuru made it up. David almost made it up.

DS: I got about 200 feet from the top and I was like, "Uh... That's far enough for me." [David laughs.]

PG: 'Cause it's getting down, you know.

MS: Yeah, that was the most challenging and the most rewarding thing in the whole trip. They of course had us do Beaver Falls, been over there. That water is amazing over there. That whole place is amazing. That was the second-best highlight of my trip was definitely the hikes. And then, you know, the rapids too.

PG: We got to do a lot of them too 'cause of the space, which was great. We got to explore a lot of places and stop in unusual places that you don't go in big groups 'cause you kinda have these set modes where you're gonna hit the big attractions and you're gonna move at a certain pace. So, you maybe get one or two and we were able to get a whole bunch of new things in that we hadn't really been able to explore or could explore them further than we'd ever been able to go before 'cause we had a lot more time.

TM: So, Kuru, Mat hadn't done this before, but you had. How many trips had you done before in Grand Canyon?

PG: This was my second trip. And I came in in a similar way. My first whitewater trip was in 2010 with David down in Grand Canyon. That's where we met and then he introduced me to whitewater and then we've been running whitewater since.

TM: What was the coolest hike that you did on this trip?

PG: Oh man. On this trip? The unnamed butte outside of Fat City. Fat City Camp, back up in there, awesome, phenomenal butte. I really loved that. You can get way back in the Canyon, get up those spines. You can look back upon the Lava fields one way, and you can see Peak Springs the other way. It's just a beautiful contrast and a different view of the Canyon than you usually get. You're used to a month of monuments and steep walls, and all of a sudden you see this Lava flow that's coming down and you really get a whole different sense of the Canyon. To me, that one was probably my favorite hike, a new one, one that I probably wouldn't have done if we didn't have a little chance to do it. I looked it up in your book. I had your hiking book. Checked out a whole bunch of those.

- DS: Yeah, we're doing a lot of studying your book trying to figure out what other places we can go that we don't normally go with a big group kinda thing.
- TM: Kuru, I'm gonna come back to you again and ask you the same sort of series of questions that I asked Mat, which was what was your best rapid work you thought on this trip and what was the hardest?
- MS: Tell him about Upset. [All laugh.]
- PS: Alright, I would say that maybe my two most interesting rapids of this trip – because this was a new experience for me too because I was running safety in back and this was my first full oar of the trip. Last time I had duckied some of it, so it was a new level for me. In Upset Rapid, we had scouted Upset, and Upset had a great wave. I love that rapid. David went down first, and then we were coming to sneak around to the right, and you have to get around the boulder field, but it was running high so we had a good move in there, and we launch out, and David runs through and makes the right. Then, I'm floating up on Mat.
- We were on slightly different eddy lines, and Mat slowed, and I was coming in to him, and I need to pull out, and we're coming in to the rapid, and I was like, "Oh no. I'm not gonna be able to back out enough to have enough momentum to get to the right and to bust through the wave in order to make this move. And if I push in, we're both in trouble." So, I ended up going right to left at Upset, and I got on my oars and I oar all the way to the other side of the river and hit the left side of the hole at Upset. Standing up, screaming the whole way, yelling at Mat: "GO MAT! GO MAT! GET OUT OF MY WAY!" I ended up passing him at the hole. He was sideways at the hole in our video, and as I'm hitting the hole at Upset, topping out over it. It wasn't I'd say the cleanest, but it was far the most interesting in terms of how we were working.
- TM: So, then, back to Mat, what happened to you in that Upset hole?
- MS: Oh, I was fine. The thing was I couldn't go any faster 'cause I would miss my line then. I was trying to pull in right past this rock perfect, and I did a really good run at it actually.
- PG: Yeah, his run was perfectly what we'd talked about. It was one of his cleanest runs.
- MS: Go in, flip around, come back around, flip around this rock, and then start flowing down. Worked pretty good. Yeah, it was awesome.
- TM: So then, question for Dave: So, Kuru's running sweep, and Mat's in the middle, and you're leading. And that is a good boat orientation 'cause you've got the strongest in the front, but not a weak person in the back either. Kuru's got some skills there. So, what was it like for you with these two guys behind you?
- DS: Mostly I was just hoping that Mat was gonna do what I was doing for the most part. Each time I was like, "Mat just do what I do," and he did. I mean he'd watch how many strokes I took, what angle I was going in to it and different things like that. I wasn't too concerned about Kuru. I've seen him do stuff before, and I was like, "Well, he'll figure it out. He'll make it happen like it's supposed to." But Mat, being his first time and everything, I was like okay, well you know, just

hoping he'd follow me as close as he could and all that, which it worked out most times. There's a couple times he didn't really wanna follow me or do what I was doing.

MS: I learned my lesson on that one. [All laugh.]

TM: Let's go back to Kuru for a minute. So that was one rapid. What was another one?

PG: Oh, I mean I had a great accomplishment in Lava Falls on this trip. I never have to go left at Lava again 'cause I went as far left as humanly possible. I took the 18-foot raft down the kayak sneak line. And it worked, but I think I set the record for the longest Lava run. I think it was a 40-minute Lava run.

DS: 45-minute Lava run. [All laugh.]

PG: So, I had a lot of time to check it out. I know a lot about that rapid now. We were, again, working conservative lines and Lava's run clean. I've run right, run with ducky. I know that line, but we were gonna try this left line, which we were really excited about 'cause this was a new test for us, and we'd been working on a few things upriver in terms of getting our rafts tucked under these waterfalls and around these rocks and making some sneakier moves, which kept us out of danger, but it was also a little more technical. David had been rowing on the Rogue two years ago and learned a lot about those kind of maneuvers and in the Salmon River, and he'd been teaching me. We were gonna go far left, and instead of doing the normal left line at Lava, we decided we could go even further left. There's a small little waterfall drop into a eddy pool and then you can push back out in to the backside of ledge hole and run through, if you can make that move out right.

So, David leads, and he hits it, and it hit a little bit different than we had talked about, but it pushed out and made it down just like we'd talked about. And we're like, "Alright." I was concerned because we needed to give a lot of room. I wanted to let everyone through Lava one at a time, and I was concerned about being able to see the entrance, 'cause it was pouring over and you have to move through it lateral. So, then Mat goes, and I gave Mat lots of room, 'cause I learned my lesson. And then Mat didn't go anywhere close to that entrance though. Mat goes 30 feet, like two boat-lengths over and hits the ledge hole. I'm like, "Excellent! So, I'm gonna go way left." [All laugh.] "I want nothing to do with what just happened." I'm pulling left and I wanna tuck into this eddy line to set up for this fall drop that I gotta do backwards.

I'm going, I'm going, I'm getting ready. All of a sudden, I'm not moving. And my stern, my starboard side stern was just barely stuck on a rock at the top of the eddy. I had pulled in just a bit high. I couldn't spin back into the current. I was stuck. I kept trying to maneuver myself, but it was just too strong. I was just too stuck, and I'm too light to bounce my raft myself off. Another hundred pounds and I could maybe get a little bit more but those are big tubes. I was exasperated, tried for twenty, thirty minutes, everything I could. Pushing on my oars, and I was four feet from shore in my dry suit, red-faced. They had pulled down below and David was hiking up through the sawgrass to come try and help me. I'm just sitting there being like, "Man, I'm the safety guy," and I'm right next to the ledge hole, roaring the whole time, standing on my boat, jumping around, twelve feet from the waterfall.

Finally, I get the right combination of pull on the right oar, and I had my left oar jabbed against a rock and braced, so I could brace enough to get enough of a current to push me up off that rock and get enough current under my boat. But at that point, I had just been really busting for another 10 minutes, and now I'm moving. And now I'm dropping into Lava exhausted, and I've got two strokes to set up for this line. I dropped it, and I didn't get a good push out of the eddy on it, and I ended up going over every pour-over on the left side on the way down. I had the left side of that raft tipped up vertical and pirouetted it out of the pour-over pool and came out far left of Five-O and just fine and exhausted.

DS: The slot at the bottom where he went through, the slots only like this wide, and he took his 18-foot raft through that slot.

PG: I learned. I don't like that line. It didn't feel good in my heart, and I didn't hit it. I learned a lot from that one. It was – just 'cause it was a little bit out of my comfort zone, and I had been – I didn't commit to it fully in the right way. It was good. It was a real lesson for me for the rest of the Canyon.

TM: What would you do differently next time?

PG: Oh, I'd go right. [Tom laughs.]

WR: This is Wayne. I was just wondering why you guys didn't go right to begin with. Was it just –

DS: Well, it was partially 'cause of what you'd told us about going.

PG: I wanted to try it.

DS: I had never gone left. I've always gone right and everything so we were taking a bunch of sneak runs down the Canyon and all that. So, we come up onto Lava, and right was huge and everything. I was like, I kinda like the right run and everything but I've never gone left. He had mentioned going left before we did the trip and everything, so I was like well let's give this left a try. I think I see a pretty nice run on through there kinda thing, and it worked out pretty good for me, but even mine was only – the very top of it there's a couple of things that happened that I wasn't quite expecting and everything.

'Cause I dropped backwards over that drop in between the rocks which is only like ten feet wide, just barely enough for us to slide through into an eddy. I was gonna come back, and then I figured I was gonna bounce off on a rock on the shore and then spin my front end around, and it didn't quite work out that way but I got myself spun around in the eddy that was there above the ledge hole, above and to the left of ledge hole. Then I pushed over from that, and I was right on the shore, and I pushed over to the ledge hole 'cause it's got that big rock on the left side of ledge hole. I was pushing over towards that, but before I got into that, I slid on down through. So, it worked out just fine in that respect and everything. It didn't go exactly like I figured but it was pretty close to like I figured.

TM: So, Dave, what were some of your runs that you were real happy with?



DS: I would have to say I liked Sockdolager the best this time. Sock had the biggest wave in the Canyon on this trip. On all my other trips that I've done before and everything, Sock never really impressed me all that much and everything, but this time, Sock had the biggest wave in there.

TM: At the top or bottom?

DS: Right in the middle. Right in the middle of it. I'd say the wave was fifteen, twenty-foot high in the middle of Sock. I'd never seen the middle of Sock look like that before. I mean it was easy enough to just go right through it and everything. I actually hit the wave sideways kinda thing, but I high sided real good and everything. Yeah, Sockdolager was huge. Lava, yeah it was just – Lava was kind of a pain in the butt in a way kinda thing. I'm definitely going right next time kinda thing. Right's big and huge and fun and everything.

Crystal, I tried going right at Crystal, and that didn't work out for me. Then, I went straight in to the hole at Crystal sideways, and went up and completely got my raft up sideways like this but I was all the way up around the tube sitting on the tube high side and everything. There was a whole group of people at Crystal, and as soon as they saw me going in the hole sideways, I went down, I went up, and my raft is sitting like this, and I'm up in the tube sitting up and I'm like way, way up in the air in the middle of Crystal, right in the middle, top of that hole on the backside of it and everything. The whole group that was over there, everybody just started cheering, all just yelling and cheering. It was a good time. Crystal was interesting, and I didn't do quite what I figured on Lava.

WR: Bedrock went okay for everybody?

DS: Bedrock was just fine.

PG: Yeah, Bedrock was really clean.

DS: Yeah, Bedrock was – there was enough water to where we could stay way over to the right and not have to get right in front of the rock kinda thing. Bedrock was actually really easy.

TM: At Crystal did you go right or left of the rock garden at the bottom?

DS: I went left of the rock garden.

MS: We started right. But David missed his line, right? So, we had to go – yeah. This is Mat.

DS: Well, I mean, I could've gone right too but I always go left of the rock garden for some reason. I just always go left. There's a few good waves in there, and its more interesting than going the other side. So, yeah, definitely left at rock garden. Most everybody else went right.

PG: Yeah, I went right.

TM: Question for you Dave: on hiking, what was the funnest hike you did?

DS: Best hike I would say probably Diamond Peak, even though I didn't get to the top. I'd say Diamond Peak was the main hike, and I just got to a certain point. I had no problem going up. I

could easily go up. It's just I didn't like the idea of coming back down and stuff, so that's what turned me around 'cause I didn't like the idea of coming back down Diamond. Once I got to a certain point, I was like, "Okay you guys go ahead. I'm gonna work my way back down the side and I'll wait for you down there."

TM: What was it about the hike that jazzed you?

DS: Just getting up there kinda thing. I got a feeling I'll do Diamond again someday. I'll go up to the top kinda thing 'cause when I did come back down and everything, it wasn't quite as bad as I was anticipating kinda thing, but I was already coming back down. I wasn't going back up then kinda thing. Yeah, just getting up there. I'd never done that hike before, so it was interesting in that respect.

TM: What would you – I'm gonna start with Mat then. What would you do differently next time?

MS: Well, I don't know. Probably get up a little earlier in the morning.

TM: What time did you get up?

MS: Oh, we got up at sunrise, but, I mean, with three people it took us a while to get rigged up and ready to go every day. With short days, you can't get as many miles as you want to get in. Differently? What's the waterfall I missed?

DS: Elves Chasm.

MS: Elves Chasm. I've seen pictures of it. I wanted to see it really bad. I didn't eddy out on that one, so I missed it. I hadn't realized it was that waterfall, so I kept on going down and eddied out like forty out waiting for these guys to come back. Then like five days later I'm like, "Let me come up that waterfall." They're like, "You missed it."

DS: He said it's the only reason he wanted to come down here was to go that waterfall that's the one he missed. [Dave laughs.]

TM: Alright, next time, Elves Chasm.

PG: Gotta keep you coming back, right?

TM: What will you do next time? What did you take away from this trip that you're like, "Alright, next time I wanna –"?

DS: Probably not gonna wrap the inner gorge after dark again.

PG: Who knew?

TM: Again?

MS: Again, yeah.

DS: Yeah, we did the hike up to Clear Creek up to the waterfalls and got in the waterfall and had a good time and everything. When we got back it was dark by the time we got back to the boats and we had to meet friends of ours at Cremation that night. So, we went from Clear Creek down to Cremation completely – it was pitch dark. Couldn't see anything 'cause the walls are black and there's no moon out or anything like that. We were listening to where the holes were. Just by listening we were moving around to where different things are and all that.

TM: So, you ran Zoroaster and you ran 86 Mile?

DS: Yeah.

TM: Did you have flashlights?

DS: No. Well, we had headlamps, but they don't do any good.

MS: They just help us see each other.

PG: Yeah, we just put them on red like boating in Alaska, just know where each other are.

DS: The headlamps actually messed you up more because they made your eyes – 'cause you could see your raft really good but you couldn't see anything outside your raft really good. We ended up turning off our headlamps and going like that.

WR: How did you find Cremation?

DS: I'd been there before so I knew where it was at and everything. It opens up and there's that big eddy there and everything, so it wasn't – finding Cremation wasn't a problem. We got to Cremation I think about 10 o'clock at night, something like that.

WR: What did your group say? Were they there?

MS: They were there in the morning.

DS: We had two friends of ours hike in. They came in. They hiked in that night, so they didn't get down there 'till about 10:30 at night, and then we'd just come through and that, and we're all real tired and everything, so we went to sleep. I guess they started yelling at us from the other side, but we were sleeping already, so we met up with them in the morning. Then they rode down to Granite with us, and then they hiked out Granite.

TM: Cool. Did you do any other nighttime driving?

MS: No.

DS: Yeah.

PG: But each and every time we swore that we would never do it again.

DS: Yeah, we're not doing this again. [Dave laughs.]

MS: What was the last one we did? That me and him missed the eddy?

DS: Oh, at Travertine Canyon. They missed the eddy at Travertine Canyon.

TM: Which is not – don't beat yourself over that, up over that one. It's an easy one to miss.

MS: Yeah, well, so, anyways. We ended up camping at those rocks.

DS: We were camping in a certain eddy about an eighth of a mile down past Travertine Canyon. We got up in the morning and walked back up, got in the waterfall and everything. We were close enough that we could get back up to it. But we slept in the boats and the boats were doing like this all night and everything.

MS: Fell in twice that night. Getting in the front of my boat. I fell in from the shore 'cause the rocks were so slippery. So, I got on the rocks, slipped down. It's really deep there. It's deep! Then I almost lost my boat. I jumped off again 'cause I went down 'cause Kuru totally missed the eddy. I got worried about him and I wanted to go down and make sure he was okay. I didn't know how far down he is. He's just right around the rock in the middle of that. I get down there and I do the same thing. I get out and go slip on the rock again. I don't have my rope in my hand, so I'm hanging on to the strap right here, and the boat's going downstream, so I have to do one of those quick, grab my ropes, jump on the rock, sit on my rope, and you know just sit there exhausted, wait. Could not go find a place to tie it up.

PG: In the dark.

MS: In the dark. Slippery rocks.

PG: He didn't have his headlamp out either.

MS: Yeah, I didn't have my headlamp out yet.

DS: As we're coming into it, it was dark and I knew these guys might – I knew that eddy's a hard one to get. I put my headlight on and I put it on backwards, and I put the strobe on my headlight, so I was figuring if these guys could see me, and see my strobe and follow my strobe into the eddy there, they would work it out.

PG: And we did, we just totally – I just totally missed. I got typewritered across the rapid 'cause I came into it wrong. Was on the wrong side of it and couldn't make it. There was some expletives yelled that evening. Damn.

TM: So, what other misadventures happened on this trip? This is quite the journey.

MS: Did we tell him about Havasu? The nighttime walk.

DS: Yeah, we went up there to see it. We went up to Beaver Falls and hung around. Went up there, walked through the falls and back up and around and I kinda had a feeling that when we got up there and we were sitting at the picnic table like, "We should get going 'cause I think we might

have some issues with darkness coming on.” And it got dark halfway back to the river from Beaver Falls. Completely dark, no moon out, no nothing like that. And so, he took off in front of us. He was walking faster, and Mat and I got to a point that we had no light, couldn’t see anything at all.

TM: No flashlights?

DS: We didn’t have any lights with us. We were still on the upstream side of the cave that you gotta walk through to get on through. So, we were like, “How are we even gonna find the cave?” Somehow, we found the cave in the dark, completely dark and everything. We found the cave somehow and everything, could kinda see a little bit of something through the cave and all that. My camera battery was up, but I turned on my camera and used the light from the screen to see us through the cave, and then as soon as we got to the other side of the cave, camera went out again. We were walking from the cave going on down completely in the dark. He ran into a cactus a couple times. Well, he ran into a cactus, and then as he turned to get away from the cactus, he kicked the cactus again, ‘cause the cactus was over in a spot that he couldn’t see where it was at. [Dave laughs.]

MS: We finally found a big stick and kinda felt our way. It worked, plus there was a creek. There’s a canyon here. The creek’s over here. It has to be this way. You can’t mess that up.

PG: There’s not much of a trail.

MS: Yeah, there’s no trail there though. You know, still, I mean. He came and rescued us though.

DS: Yeah, he jumped in the water.

PG: I ran ahead ‘cause I’m a faster hiker and I was like, “Well, we need a light. That was silly of us not to bring a light. We need to deal with this, and we’re not gonna make it out of here in the pitch dark.” There’s a lot of danger in that. So, I was like, “Alright, this is my shot. I got a little bit of moonlight left. If I scramble ahead, quickly, I can go get a light and come back.” So, I worked my way out to kinda where the narrows start, and I know about the cliff trail on the other side, but I didn’t know a good – it was too dark at that point. The walls get so high that there was no light at that point, and so I couldn’t remember the right spot to cross the river, and that trail is really sketchy as it is. So, I stuck my clothes – threw them back in my dry bag, and jumped into the narrows in the pitch dark, and just felt for the current ‘cause I couldn’t see anything.

There was total vertigo. It was like cave darkness when you’re going through there because there was no stars and you couldn’t tell where the walls were. I was swirling, and the tide had come up so the water level had changed. So, I couldn’t touch anywhere. I was just floating, and swimming, and reaching for current to kinda feel my way through it. I feel where I start to get shot out, where it really pinches and starts to get into the mouth. I’m getting rushed out, and I’m like, “It’s still really dark. I know the boats are here, but I’m also in this current that’s pulling me out into the rapid!” That made me a little bit worried. So, I swam as far as I could to the sides, and felt for a raft. I felt, and I found my raft in the pitch dark. Reach up, grab my ammo can, grab my emergency headlamp right out of it. Swam over to the cliff trail. Hiked back the cliff trail. Hiked back up, and found these guys, and then we walked back and back to our boats. It was a harrowing fifteen minutes of swimming.

MS: I was a bit frustrated. I wanted to stop where we were at and sleep for the night. It was pretty warm out. I was like, "It's safe if we just stop and sleep here," and anything else. I mean it's safety, you know what I mean? So, I was a little frustrated, but whatever. We made it through though, so.

PG: Well, in the end it was good too because it ended up raining that night.

MS: It did, yeah.

PG: So, we pulled up safely and said, "We've had enough. We'll leave at dawn. This is safe. Not after that." We'd been having on and off rain showers in the nighttime during that section of the Canyon. So, we'd been wet for a couple of days. Some of our gear had gotten wet, and so we were kinda grumpy. The middle of the night, it rained, and we were on our boats, and so we were setting up whatever we could to just stay dry and stay out of it for a little bit. If we had stayed out, it would've been a bad deal. It would've been cold and wet. We were fortunate in that aspect. One decision paid off in another way, when maybe it's safer to pull up in those moments, but in the end, getting back to our safe zone and getting dry and warm worked out.

TM: Any other adventures like that?

DS: I'm sure there is. I'm trying to think of some more.

TM: Don't make anything up! Did you see any other people on the water?

DS: Yeah. The first weeks of the trip we actually saw probably as many or more people than I've ever seen on the river. There was a group of guides out of Flagstaff here that we met up with and those were the ones we ended up doing the Jewels with. Ran through the Jewels with those guys.

PG: They were a full group, yeah.

DS: Yeah, full group, and then there was another group from Tahoe that we met up with. We actually, we all camped out together a couple of nights and had a good time and all that sort of thing. Meeting people and all that. For the first two weeks of the trip, we saw all kinds of people. Then, after that we didn't see anybody for probably ten days. Nobody at all for like ten days. There was a group of three guys that passed us. Then, another group of five people that passed us and that's all we saw for the last three weeks of the trip was just almost nobody from – what was it? Where did we leave everybody?

MS: It was Upset.

DS: No, it wasn't Upset. It was Granite was it?

PG: No, Blacktail.

DS: Blacktail, yeah. From Blacktail down we were pretty much on our own. From Blacktail.

MS: Oh yeah.

PG: Yeah, then the second half we didn't see anybody.

DS: We did a double layover at Blacktail. Yeah, it was nice cuz at lower Blacktail – lower Blacktail's really nice with the water and the recent flood and everything. Lower Blacktail was awesome. We told the other groups and everything. We got into Blacktail Canyon. We went and set up the disco ball and those laser lights and the show and all that sort of thing inside the Canyon. Said, "Well yeah we'll get it all set up. You guys just come on down. You take the upper camp. We'll take the lower camp." So, we had a good time in there.

TM: Cool. Did I ask you Dave what would you do again? Did I ask you that? What would you do next trip?

DS: Well, yeah not run the inner gorge after dark. I'm not gonna do that. I don't know. I'd probably do a lot of the same things we just did. Maybe go on some more hikes, go on some other hikes that I hadn't gone on again. I'd run – I don't like running the sneak lines at all. We ran sneak lines on almost everything and I don't necessarily care for doing that. If we had say ten or more people in our group we'd run all the big lines 'cause it's easy to flip back up and everything. Just with three people in our group we did the water real conservative kinda thing. Just to try to make sure that we didn't have a problem or get a flip and then have to deal with us getting a full raft over and all that.

TM: So, question for you on that – just for clarification. You ran conservatively. It sounds like those runs worked except for sitting on a rock for Kuru there in Lava a little bit, but you wouldn't do that 'cause it's not fun or it just?

DS: Well to me running the right side at Upset or running the right side at Crystal or something like that it's a lot of work and it's not much fun. So, you can run the left side and you take two strokes on the left and it's all kinds of fun and there's not really much work involved kinda thing. It's just a matter of do you wanna work hard and not have any fun or do you wanna not work really at all and have all kinds of fun? That's why.

TM: Cool, did that help you though work on your boating skills?

DS: Yeah, I'd say so just 'cause we were running a lot of tight chutes and everything. Just real, real narrow chutes that I'd never actually seen anybody run a lot of the stuff that we ran before. Like Hance. When we got to Hance. Hance is big and burly and everything, but Hance, the way we ran Hance was straight up simple, straight simple. We ran way, way left at Hance. Like way, way left at Hance, and then dropped in uh –

MS: Right of the rock.

DS: Yeah, there's a rock on the left-hand side, a big rock on the left-hand side, and there's a little bit of water going left side of that rock. But then there's all the other water, and you got the rock island in the middle kinda thing. We went right next to the rock that was on the left-hand side, but there's a pour over. We got close to the pour over and then slid in behind that rock, and then used the eddy that was behind that rock to keep us on the left side. Hance was nothing.

PG: That worked great.

DS: That was nothing. It worked out perfect in that respect.

PG: Y'all ran that one really clean too.

DS: That was kinda part of the reason too why I think we ran some of the other sneak lines 'cause Hance worked out so good for us and everything. Like, "We'll keep on going along with that style through the trip."

TM: Cool, Dave how many times have you run through Grand Canyon?

DS: This is the tenth time.

TM: Okay is there anything else about this trip that you want to bring forward? 'Cause I do want to talk a little bit about some of the stuff Dave and I talked about, about some of your Grand Canyon history past and some of those adventures. Before we head on in that direction, we can start with Mat maybe. Did you find anything on this trip that really inspired you?

MS: Yeah, Diamond, getting up there really inspired me. I was like, "Okay, I know I can do that now. I was geeked. I was happy as hell when I went up there." You know and just being able to do this trip without flipping. You know I thought that was pretty good. I'm happy with it. We're all safe, and that's my biggest – yeah, I was worried about being safe with three people, you know, but just getting down here safely is inspiration enough, and the beauty of Grand Canyon obviously. I don't wanna leave. Stay there for a long time if I could, so that's about it. Diamond was it. Diamond really just that view there, spectacular.

TM: And Kuru, you?

PG: In terms of highlight?

TM: Yeah, just what inspired you about this trip?

PG: Being able to live in that environment. I spent a lot of my life really trying to get into beautiful environments in this world and do a lot of traveling to do so, and Alaska and tracing the Rockies. For this trip I drove from Alaska all the way down, so I traced the entire mountain range until it sunk into the Earth, and went to the bottom of it. It's been an amazing journey to watch the land shape like that and then to be able to just be around in Earth that's that incredible, to truly get a sense of it.

One of our greatest friends has a great quote. He says, "Only those who have spent significant time in the desert truly understand our insignificance in time." That sense of wonder and awe that can often leak out when you're in the front country and you know you get so busy with your daily life and for the whole world to just stop and make you look at it and contemplate that space and to be there and how you interact with it. You feel so fortunate and so grateful to be present in those spaces and to spend that time in a very different place in a very different world. So, that really inspired me the first time and even further this time, to keep coming back and to



keep being in that environment and exploring it a lot more. It's really an incredible place and treasure in the world.

TM: Cool, Dave you?

DS: I would say for me it'd be teaching somebody that didn't know anything at all about whitewater. How to get down the Canyon and do it successfully. I think that was probably the main thing for me overall.

TM: Dave can you tell me some of your other Canyon adventures?

DS: Well, I started in 2001 was my first time down. I had done some whitewater before that but not really. Just canoe and whitewater in Wisconsin when I was growing up. Class II maybe a little bit of class III, something like that. In 2001, I got invited on a Grand Canyon trip and got down to the landing there and the trip leader asked me how I wanted to do it and everything, if I wanted to row a boat or how I wanted to do it and all. There was a ducky there, which I had never even seen a ducky before. Didn't know anything about it and everything, and I said, "I'll take that thing down." So, I duckied the entire Canyon the first time, and I swam probably a hundred, hundred and fifty times something like that.

But it got like two weeks into the trip. It was another December trip just like this thirty-day December trip, and two weeks into the trip I got to a point where I was aiming for the holes just 'cause I was ignorant of what the whitewater could necessarily do and everything. So, I'm aiming for the holes. I ran into the hole at Crystal. Ran into the hole, got out, went up, and did it again. Got out, went up, and then the third time I did it one of the girls in the trip, she wanted to ride with me into the hole. Everybody on the trip was like, "No, you don't want to do that. You don't want to go where he's going." She's like, "Yeah, I do." I was like, "Okay, get in. Let's go."

Just the top hole like pretty much all the big holes. Run straight into the hole just to see what it would do and everything and it worked out pretty good. Then it was 2004 before I went again. I took my dad on that one and had a good time taking my dad on down. My dad got in the ducky a few times, did some things on his own. Me and him ran Lava in the ducky. Didn't make it, but we tried. Then I got out and ran Lava three more times.

TM: Right side or left side?

DS: Right side. Yeah, right side. I got out and did it a few more times. Eddied out and did it a few more times. That first time I went down the Grand I did Lava five times in the ducky. Get out, eddy out the bottom, walk back up, and do it again. Made it once. [All laugh.] Tried five times and made it one time. So yeah, 2004. 2007, I had some issues at the put-in. Ended up getting put in jail for a few hours and losing my permit.

TM: Tell us that story.

DS: Well, I had an old girlfriend that had sent some anonymous emails to the park service saying that we had all kinds of meth and heroin that we were bringing – massive quantities of meth and heroin that we were bringing down to sell to everybody in the bottom of Grand Canyon. As soon as the law – like four different law enforcement agents came up on us all at the same time

the ranger, Dave Chapman, the ranger – I knew something was different ‘cause when he asked for the IDs, he didn’t give the IDs back. Instead of just looking at it and then giving it back to you, he kept all the IDs, so I was like, “What’s going on here?” ‘cause he doesn’t normally do that. So then as soon as he got all the IDs and everything that’s when the rangers walked on up. Said, “Is David Schwantes here?” “This is my permit and everything.” “Is David Schwantes here?” Was like, “Yeah that’s me.” “We understand you have massive amounts of meth and heroin that you’re gonna sell to everybody.”

I looked at the rangers like, “You guys know there’s nobody in the Canyon, and anybody that’s in the Canyon doesn’t have any money with them.” So, I was like, that’s just foolishness. And they’re like, “Do you have anything that you would like to tell us about?” I had a bag of marijuana, so I was like okay. I was hoping that they would take mine and just leave everybody else alone and give me a citation and be done with it. So, I told them I had that, walked them over to my camp, got it out of my bag, gave it to them, they turned me around, put me in handcuffs, and stuffed me in the paddy wagon immediately. Then, a few minutes later, both my brothers were in the paddy wagon with me. Then, about a half hour after that there were two more guys on the trip that were in the paddy wagon also. All five of us just for possession of marijuana. That was it. Nothing else.

So, then they take us up to Page. We went to Page. Got put in the jail in Page. Then, like three hours later, a judge came in to the jail. When I was sitting in the jail, I got a phone call from Dave Chapman. So, the guard came in. Had me go in this other room. David Chapman has me on the phone like, “I’ve revoked your permit,” which was the worst thing. I was like give me a fine, whatever kinda thing. I’ll deal with it. It’s wrong. I’ll deal with it kinda thing, but you took my permit away. I had fourteen people there that were all set to go for thirty days down Grand Canyon. So, when he took the permit away, I went back in there and told everybody about that. We were all trying to – you know we’re like, “Well that’s the hugest hit right there.”

TM: On what grounds Dave did he tell you he’d revoked your permit?

DS: Possession of marijuana.

TM: Thank you.

DS: I think at that time – ‘cause when the judge came in like three hours later, the judge came in and the very first thing she said to me when they pulled me out and I had to go talk to her – the very first thing she said to me is, “I have no idea why you’re here. They should’ve not put you in jail for possession of marijuana.” She said, “I have no idea why you’re here.” We went through some things and then they let me out and then they let everybody else out. We stayed in Page that night and then the next day, my parents came up and picked us up. We stayed in Flagstaff – we were in Flag for five days I believe it was trying to figure out what we were gonna do ‘cause we were thinking about going around to San Juan.

We had all these people here. We had everything packed, ready to go. Actually, when we got hauled off, we had everything blown up, everything packed up on the river. So, then they had to de-rig all that stuff, and then five days later we were able to – a friend of mine that was on the trip talked to his mom and she knew some people. She knew Harry Reid in Nevada apparently, and somebody made some phone calls or whatever and then the other nine people that weren’t

arrested were allowed back on the river. So, they got back on the river. I think it was five, six days later or something like that. They had a nineteen-day trip at that point.

Of that nineteen days, my brothers and I, we hiked from the rim to the river back to the rim six times I believe it was and camped out with them nine nights of the nineteen nights that they were on the river. We tried to set it up to where they did layovers when we got down to camp out with them, we tried to set it up to where there was a layover. We did Soap Creek. We did Tanner down to Unkar, then camped at Unkar. We hiked down Tanner one afternoon. We hiked out the next morning. And that was all not just down to Tanner but down to Unkar also. I have no desire ever to hike the Tanner Trail again. [Tom laughs.] If there would've been a layover day, a day in between kinda thing, it would've been a whole different story, but hiking down one afternoon and hiking out the next morning, that was more than I care to do kinda thing.

When we went to get the permits at the Back Country Permit Office, I did my itinerary. I said we're hiking – well we didn't have to get a permit for Soap – but I said we're hiking down Tanner, and then we're hiking down Bass. I forget just what it was all I put on the permit, but they looked at the permit and they looked back at me and they're like, "Nobody does this." He was like, "You guys realize that your Tanner hike is a three-day hike in and a three-day hike out, and you guys are going in one day and coming out the next day." I'm like, "Yep, that's what we're doing." So, then they had to go get the supervisor of the Back Country Office. The two rangers that were there didn't know who we were, but the supervisor came in. He knew immediately right away who we were, 'cause most everybody in the park knew who we were then. So, he looks at it and was like, "You guys can do this?" And I'm like, "Well, that's what we gotta do. My mom and dad are down there, and we're gonna go camp up with them. That's what we're doing." He's like, "Okay, I can't say no, but I'm saying your itinerary is next to impossible" is what he said.

He gave us the permit and everything, and each time we went down – we went down to Soap. We could see that in the morning, we could see people with binoculars up top 'cause you could see the lights, the shine off the glass of the binoculars. So, we knew that they were watching us up top there, thinking that we were gonna jump on the river then. We didn't. And then when we went down Tanner, there was – an older ranger had gone down Tanner before us that morning. He started a few hours before us and we passed him up probably a third of the way down. Then the next day, we passed him up when we were coming back up, and he was halfway down the next day. Halfway, maybe two-thirds of the way down the next day as we were going back up. Right away as soon as we come up past him, he's like, "You guys the Schwantes brothers?" We're like, "Yep." He knew that we were and everything, so he asked us questions and stuff like that. Then we just went on by him and everything, and saw him on the way back up, and as soon as we passed him on the way back up, he turned around and started walking back up kinda thing.

So, then the next time we saw – we went down Bass and hiked down the Bass Trail. The Bass Trail is awesome. That's probably my favorite hike out of all the hikes we did. The Bass Trail is just beautiful kinda thing, and it's not near as hard a hike as Tanner. Not even close. Just a beautiful hike. Went down Bass and met up with our group and they came across, picked us up, went over, and we did a layover at Bass, but we could see that when we were doing the layover at Bass, we were looking up in the rocks, up about 500 feet in the rocks above us, there was two people camped out up there. We didn't see them during the day, but at night we could see their

headlights. We were like, “Why is?” – we knew, had to be rangers ‘cause nobody – you can’t hike down from the North Rim in the wintertime anyways, so we knew they didn’t come from the North Rim kinda thing, so they had to come from the South Rim. They got there before we did, and they were – I think they were trying to be sneaky but with headlights at night, well, people right there kinda thing. I was like, we know it’s gotta be rangers ‘cause nobody’s gonna camp up there when you can camp down here by the river. It just doesn’t make any sense at all. So, they were up there watching us a couple nights, a couple days over there.

And then, what else? We went down – we hiked into Lava. We hiked down Prospect Canyon. Went down the Canyon, drove out to the edge, and went down the Canyon, Prospect. Prospect was – that’s probably another hike I’m not ever gonna do again [Tom laughs.] ‘cause it’s super sketchy going down into Prospect. Coming out wasn’t that bad, but it’s like I said. I don’t have a problem going up stuff. It’s just going down stuff I don’t like kinda thing.

TM: And just for clarification, you came down Prospect Canyon that’s on like river left on the south side through the wildlife reservation?

DS: Yes.

TM: How did you figure out where to go?

DS: I had been out there before ‘cause I had done some exploring in my truck out there. Driving out past – you get out to Frazier Wells. Frazier Wells you drive out, you pass by a couple houses, and then you got like another 30, 40 miles out to the edge. I had been out there a few years before. I had driven out there before, so I knew just how to get to where it was. As far as doing Prospect Canyon, part of it was reading your book, but a lot of it was Harvey’s book, ‘cause he had the route – he had written a route in there. We actually didn’t find necessarily his route, but we knew it could be done because he said he’d done it kinda thing.

So, I was like okay, it can be done kinda thing. It’s not like you can’t do it. It can be done, but going down there was a couple times like we dropped over the edge into the rim or under the rim, and every step you’re taking you’d be kicking rocks. The rocks – you’d stop and the rocks would – you could hear them going for like another 45 seconds to a minute later, they’re still rolling down Prospect wash. We got down that, but when we come out, it wasn’t a problem coming out at all. We got back in the truck and we drove out.

We came in at Havasu, went down to Supai. Actually, got horses there ‘cause we’d done enough hiking and like we got there and we saw those horses there. We didn’t know anything about the horses necessarily until we got to the hilltop parking lot. We’re looking at all the horses. We’re like, “I betcha we could get some of those and ride ‘em on down.” Went over and talked to this guy Claudius Petulai or something I think was his name. One of the Indians that lived down there. He’s like, “Yeah, I got horses for ya’.” So, he’s like, “135 bucks.” You gotta take the horse, go on down, and we’re gonna be down there I think two days, something like that.

We stayed at the motel in Supai, which I wouldn’t recommend at all. That motel sucks. Supai sucks. The village of Supai is just – it’s terrible that they have that much garbage and crap and everything all over that village there in such a pretty spot. It’s ridiculous. I don’t even like Supai. It’s like as far as I’m concerned, you get down there, close your eyes until you get out the other

side of Supai and then open 'em back up and everything's nice. But we went on down, went down through the falls, and went down to Beaver Falls. Didn't end up meeting up with our group. We were hoping that we'd meet up with them there, but they didn't come up that far. So, we did that one.

TM: Just for clarification, you missed them there at that pass point?

DS: Yeah, we didn't see them there, but we weren't quite sure. That is a huge hike for them to come up from the river up to Beaver and everything. So, we missed them there. See, where else we hike? It was Soap, Tanner, Bass, Lava, Havasu. There was one more.

WR: Diamond Creek?

DS: Well, we came – that was back when you had two permits. You had a permit for the Grand and you had a permit for Diamond Down. So, they didn't take my Diamond Down permit. So, we jumped back on the river there. We jumped on the river at Diamond and went down. There was a bunch of people that got off. Myself, my brothers, my mom and dad, and my ex, we went on down from there.

WR: Did you go around to the north side and maybe hike down more of Wash?

DS: No, we didn't go on the north side at all. I'll come up with it here shortly. I'm trying to figure out what that other hike we did was.

WR: Hermit or Boucher?

DS: No, it wasn't those.

TM: Was it Phantom Ranch? Bright Angel? Kaibab?

DS: No. We didn't go down those. I forget what it was. I'll come up with it here shortly. There was one more hike that we did down.

WR: I think that qualifies as an epic Grand Canyon story.

TM: I think all these trips qualify as epic Grand Canyon stories.

WR: This is one you don't hear every day.

DS: Yeah, so it was nine nights, nineteen nights we camped out with our friends and family down at the bottom. Got back on the river at Diamond, went down there, took out at South Cove.

TM: Yeah, Dave I want to touch upon something that Wayne's talking about. This is perseverance and dedication above and beyond. What is it about the river, your family, Grand Canyon – for some marijuana they revoked your permit – most people I would assume would say, "Oh, I'm gonna go home," and trip goes on and I'll catch you at the bottom or I'll see you when you get back at the ranch. Why was there the drive to interface with the trip and basically –

DS: Be part of it.

TM: Be part of it.

DS: Mostly it was my mom. She didn't want to go at all without me, and I told her she already took time off work. We've already spent this money on it and everything. Just go on the trip and we'll figure out a way to get down there and camp out with you. We can't go down the river with you, but we'll figure out a way to get down there. My dad, he was up for going even without us kinda thing, but my mom was the main thing. She didn't wanna go at all because of all that happened and seeing her sons all get thrown in the paddy wagon and everything. She was done with it. I talked her into going with her knowing that we were gonna try to get down there as much as we possibly could.

That was the main thing that we did all that hiking. And, I don't know that I'd ever done that much – I may never have done that much hiking in the Canyon unless we were forced to do it so under the circumstances so that worked out pretty good. There was some great hikes. Like I said, Bass Trail was awesome. Tanner, I could do without. Prospect Canyon I could probably do. I don't know. I could maybe do that again, but I don't – I'd come in from the north side. I've done the north. I've hiked down from the north side three times and everything, and that's sketchy too but it's not near as sketchy as coming down Prospect.

TM: Sounds like you're quite a hiker. I mean you've got some fairly obscure routes in your repertoire of hiking the Canyon now. Is there a difference between the hiking and the river running? How does that –

DS: I would say that I'm not necessarily a hiker in general. We hiked because we had to then. I do like doing the hikes from the river up and back kinda thing. I could see myself doing more hikes in the Canyon from the top sometime but it's not a big priority of mine. I really like running the river probably partially because I don't have to carry all my stuff. I can put it in my raft and I don't have to carry it with me. The hikes that we did do, we were running light 'cause we had our sleeping gear and all our food and everything was down at the bottom. So, we didn't have to take a lot of stuff most people have to take. We hiked real light. We had the basic necessities if we had to get stuck overnight and sleep on a trail or something like that. We had the bare minimum that we could get by with. It helped a lot with the hike not having to carry a huge heavy pack. Carried a light pack in general.

TM: What other river adventures have you had?

DS: Other rivers?

TM: In Grand Canyon.

DS: Oh, in Grand Canyon? I don't know. I'll have to think about that one. But yeah, we did that 2007, and then ran it. I had a permit in 2007. Somehow with the lottery system and everything, I got another permit for 2008. So, I had a permit two years in a row somehow. I'm wondering possibly if there was a little bit of respect given to us because of all the hiking that we did. 'Cause the park service, they were watching us, every movement we made and everything. Maybe I just got lucky with the lottery. But I'm wondering if there was a little bit of extra something there that

helped get me a permit that very next year kinda thing, 'cause maybe they thought that they pushed us, went a little too hard on us the first year, so maybe they helped me out getting a permit in 2008. I don't know, but got a permit in 2008 and that one went great. Actually, since we had the problem in 2007, I've been in the Canyon every year, so it almost seems like it may have helped me do the Canyon every year somehow, someway. I don't know. Kinda seemed like it worked out that way.

2010 we did a – he [referring to Pat] was on the trip. We had 16 people and pretty much everybody was a rock star on the trip. We had to deal with a wild, crazy trip, and we ran all the super hard lines, running, shooting for the holes. We only had one flip in the trip, and we were aiming for the holes with our rafts, with the duckies and everything. We had 16 people so if we had a problem, we could take care of it just like that. That trip was probably the trip where we – I mean, we were seriously aiming for all the big holes. Pretty much everything but the ledge hole and the far-left side of Crystal was game. Like anything else? Go for it.

PG: Joe ran the ledge hole on that one in a kayak.

DS: Our buddy, our kayaker, he ran the ledge hole at night, by himself. [Dave and Pat laugh.] Nobody knew that he was gonna do it. He didn't say anything. All of a sudden, he put on his gear and jumped in his kayak. I was like, "Joe, what are you doing?" He was like, "I'm going to run Lava, right now." So, we all ran up to the patio area, the viewing area 'cause we were camped out at above Lava, so we all ran up there. Joe went in, and he was doing the right run, but he didn't go far enough right. He needed to be over like another 20 feet. So, he dropped right into ledge hole. Had one huge forward brace and made it through the bottom of the rapid, and went and surfed Hawaii Five-O, and then slid on out and everything. Brought his kayak back up so he could do it the next day. But he didn't tell anybody. The sun had already gone down like an hour before. I guess he just had the desire right then and there. Said, "I gotta go do this right now."

PG: He surfed it.

DS: There was nobody else in the water, so I mean if he had a problem, he had no support. 'Cause we were – you know we didn't even know he was doing it, and all of a sudden we're running up there to see what happens and all that. So that was interesting.

We came across a group one time that had an upside-down boat. They had been sitting there on the rocks, camped out on the rocks for three or four days trying to get their boat back over. I think that was down below Crystal. So, we came up on them one time and got up there right away. I think that was 2011. Got out there and they had their Z-drag set up and everything. We got there, me and my buddy that was on the raft with me, and we went on up like, "We can get that raft over for ya'." And they're like, "Oh yeah how you gonna do that?" I was like, "Well, first of all, take all that stuff off." They're like, "We've been setting up this Z-drag system for a day and a half." They didn't wanna take it apart. I was like, "Well you guys aren't getting anywhere." Was like, "We'll help you out. We'll have your raft flipped upright in five minutes if you do what we say" kinda thing. They didn't wanna take it all apart and everything, so I was like, "Okay, we'll leave you alone. You guys keep on doing what you're doing" kinda thing.

The one guy had come on over and he's like, "You really can get our raft over?" I was like, "Yeah, of course we can. Take all that stuff off and the rest of our group shows up and we'll get your

raft going.” They showed up two minutes later. We had that raft upright and everything and they’re like, “Woah, we never even seen that before” kinda thing. So that was interesting, helping those guys out. I mean they were camped in the rocks. There was no flat areas in between the rocks to sleep or anything like that. They’d been there for a while.

We’ve helped out a bunch of people, flipped their rafts over. Just ‘cause usually if we’ve got a bunch of people and everything. We know just what to do and everything, so we see somebody upside down that doesn’t necessarily know what they’re doing and everything, we jump right on it and put our flip lines on and get ‘em back going again.

We had one group that they flipped twice, we helped ‘em out, and then they camped out with us at Bass. They were a bluegrass band from the New England states. There were six of ‘em, and so when we were camping, they camped with us at Bass and everything. We made a fire and everything, and all of a sudden, they bring out all their instruments, and they start playing music for us. They played music for like two, three hours that night and everything which was awesome. It was excellent, excellent music and all. It was really good.

TM: Well, is there anything else?

DS: Well, on this trip I would say – the trip that we just did, I was gonna mention is – the one thing that I really wish we would’ve done different is that we stayed at Olo. Olo was the best camp I’ve ever seen in the Grand Canyon. There was no tracks on it. Nobody had even stopped. The hole inside of Olo filled up with twenty or thirty feet of sand. So then even where the waterfall came down, it was dropping into a clear pool in the sand. It wasn’t even dropping onto rocks. It dropped into a clear pool in the sand, so there was like two huge sand dunes or sand bars in there. Each one of ‘em’s as big as a football field.

Each one of ‘em, and it was in the sun and everything, but we had just camped – we had just got off a camp like two miles ahead ‘cause I was – every other time I camped at Olo, I thought it sucked. I mean as far as a camp goes, it’s not a good camp at all. Then like we go two miles up the river and stop at Olo, go up and look at the falls, and we climb up out of the sand, and we’re looking around like, “Woah! This is awesome!” Just awesome in the sun and everything. Yeah, we should’ve stayed at Olo, and even though we just did two miles that day I kinda wish I had just said, “Okay, we’re staying here.”

TM: Did you stop at National at all?

DS: National? No, I don’t think – no, we didn’t stop at National.

PG: No, we didn’t stop at National.

TM: Just kinda wondered what the state of that beach – after it had been flooded out and washed out. The whole camp was washed out. Did it do well with this recent habitat flow? Like, Olo did well.

DS: Yeah, very, very well, and there was a lot of places that were – like Redwall. There’s that huge sandbar at the front of Redwall. I actually ended up staying there. We didn’t stay in Redwall. Of course, you can’t and everything, and I don’t necessarily know whether we were supposed to



stay that close to Redwall or something but there was nothing that I read that said you can't camp on the sandbar out in the middle of the river kinda thing. The sandbar's gonna be gone pretty soon anyways. It's gonna wash itself out and everything.

So, we ended up setting up camp on the sandbar there, and then there was about 40, 50 feet between the sandbar and the shore. We made a bridge with our rafts all the way across back to the shore so we could walk back up into Redwall Cavern pretty much any time we wanted. That was nice, and we listened to the Green Bay Packer game with a Sirius satellite radio out in a sandbar. We're Packer fans and everything, so we had a good time out in the sandbar and everything. It was a lot of fun there.

Because of the recent flood, we had a lot more options that aren't necessarily, aren't normally there. Probably come middle of summer when it starts, when they have the big water flowing through, those options won't be there again. We'll have to wait 'till the next big flood. There was quite a few places that we camped that there was no camps. It wasn't even a camp in your book or anything, it was just a place that we – well with three people we can camp pretty much anywhere kinda thing. So, a lot of camps, you know you have these camps and you gotta walk way up, take your kitchen way up there and everything. We saw a lot of these sandbars that were just up above the river and we're like, "Right there. That sandbar looks good." No one's gotta carry a kitchen table fifteen, twenty feet kinda thing. So, we caught a lot of those.

PG: Which helped us to explore a lot of new places 'cause we stopped there, go into lots of unnamed side Canyons and stuff that we would never get to go walk on a regular trip, on a full trip, so that was really fun. We named a lot of camps.

MS: Not the best names.

WR: So, it begs the question, you did all these trips before with full groups. How come three people only this year?

DS: Everybody said it was gonna be too cold. That's the main reason.

WR: So, you just couldn't find the bodies.

DS: I had a bunch of people but then they just started backing out. The main reason – well, I think probably half of it was because they figured it was gonna be too cold, which it wasn't cold at all as far as I was concerned. It was like an October trip kinda thing. The other half was that we were gonna be in the Canyon for Thanksgiving and Christmas, so I think that was – that took some people out of it too. The thirty days of missing two holidays and everything. That took some of the people out of it would be my – it's the way I see it kinda thing.

PG: But yeah, we had an almost full trip two weeks before.

DS: Yeah, I couldn't even get the stuff together with Ariel necessary to figure out how many people were going and how much food we were gonna need and how many boats and all that sort of thing 'cause it kept on changing right up 'till like two weeks to the end kinda thing. Then finally I was like it is what it is. Nobody else coming on. Sorry, you know kinda thing. I'm not changing any more. But I had never done a three-day trip down the Grand. I mean a three-person trip

down the Grand. I've done three people trips down other rivers and everything, but not down the Grand. Learned new things, and I had never thought about the complexities of having only three people. Everybody's got lots of chores to do every day. There's no days off kinda thing. That was different in that respect.

TM: What do you think the ideal group size would be?

DS: I do like 16, but I had no problem with three either. I think if you got 10 people you can run the Grand however you want 'cause you got enough people to help with flips and problems and stuff like that. But if you got less, say eight people or less, then you gotta start thinking about what possibly could happen if something goes down. You don't have enough people to make things happen like that. It's gonna take a while to make things happen. I would say 10. You know, if you wanna run anything you want, 10 or better is the way to go. If you wanna run all the hard lines, the big water lines, all the fun lines and everything, you want people on your trip. But I had no problem with three people either, doing it a different way. It was something different.

PG: And we like to row big boats. Like there was the small groups that go down. Three men had small cats. You know they flip; they can get right back over. But we like rafts. We like big rafts. We like to bring a lot of gear and have extra food. Especially being a winter trip. Yeah, there's ways of doing it of course, but the way we like to go, that's what it ended up being.

TM: One last question for you David 'cause you've got this experience going back for quite a while to 2001. Now we're looking at 13 years or so, 14 years of running in Grand Canyon. If you were king for a day, how would you manage the river differently?

DS: I guess I'd – I don't really know that I'd do much different other than maybe having an option to extend your trip in the winter times. I mean that's probably the only thing I'd do is have set it up to where you have the trips that are set for the length that they're supposed to be and everything, but then you have an option like maybe even a second day lottery or something or whatever to where if the park service sees that there's not as many river user days as what they were planning on kinda thing, if they had some extra ones and everything, they could go ahead and give people another week on the river or something like that. I would say that'd probably be the only thing I'd change. I'm sure there's other stuff too but there's a lot that I don't necessarily know whether it's this way or that way, so I don't know what there would be to change on it kinda thing.

TM: I mean it's interesting because it goes back to something Mat said which was, "I wish I had more time," and it was his first trip.

DS: We actually had the option to get on the river again yesterday.

TM: That's right 'cause you launched last year.

DS: There was a trip on the third that I was invited on, so we could've gone and got right back on the river yesterday which was a possibility, but I gotta go make some money. [Dave laughs.] But I would love to do it.

PG: We were close. Thought about it.

DS: Yeah, it was 2012 we started up at Gates of Lodore and went all the way through to Grand Canyon. Did 54 days on the river. We did the Powell trip in 2012, and I was hoping to do it again this year, but I got a really good job set up right now. I work as a geologist in oil and gas, and my current situation, I didn't want to take that much time off of work. Especially now, seeing the price of oil's gone way down. Probably gonna be out of work for a good portion of this year. This year I was hoping to start up at Green River, Wyoming, was my original plan, but then when this really good project came up, I was like, "Well, I'm gonna have to put that off to another time" kinda thing.

TM: Question about the Lodore trip, so you go through Lodore, and you go through Split Mountain? What are those next sections that you go through?

DS: Yeah, we have Gates of Lodore, then you got Split Mountain, then you go by Vernal. You go by Jensen, Utah, go by Vernal. Then we went down through – there's a whole long section of flatwater before you get to Deso Gray. Went down to Sand Wash at Deso Gray. Went by Sand Wash. Did Desolation Canyon, Gray Canyon, and then stopped in Green River.

We stayed at the River Terrace Motel in Green River. That's an excellent motel to stay at. It was surprising. It was like 75 bucks a night, which is more that we want to spend, but the beds were excellent, the food was great and everything. I mean it was – and I asked for the rooms right in the back of the motel right on the river, so we tied up right out you know. We actually tied up our boats underneath the road deck of the bridge because nobody could see our boats under the bridge. We weren't worried about people messing with 'em kinda thing 'cause they didn't know that they were there necessarily. So, we tied up under the bridge, stayed at the motel for a couple days, and resupplied, went in Junction, resupplied, and then got back on the water, and then went and did – what was it – Labyrinth Canyon I think below Green River there, and then got into Cataract. We actually didn't see – from Desolation down through Cataract – we didn't see anybody else on the river. The only time we saw anybody was when we were in Green River, Utah, that was the only time we saw people, and then we didn't see anybody at all between that section. There was like three weeks there that there was nobody on the river. Just us. Nobody else.

TM: What time of year was this?

DS: This was – we started in August and we finished in October.

TM: How did you deal with Lake Powell?

DS: We drove around Lake Powell. Friends came and picked us up. Packed up and went around Lake Powell and then rigged back up again at Lees Ferry.

TM: So, what did that journey through the basin tell you about the river?

DS: I don't necessarily know if I have anything to say about what it told me about the river. It was quite low water. There was only 800 cfs coming out from under Flaming Gorge, so we had 800 cfs all the way to the confluence pretty much. We got stuck a lot. There was those sandbars

everywhere kinda thing. There was days that thirty, forty times a day we'd have to get out and push our rafts off the sandbars.

There's that dam near Green River. We hit that dam and we all got stuck. Everybody except for one got stuck on the top of the dam, and we had to push our rafts off the dam. Then we went into the rock garden below, which was the very worst part of the trip 'cause we only had 800 cfs to start and like 600 was going off into the watermelon fields. So, we got into that rock garden there, and that rock garden's probably two, three-hundred yards long. The widest spot between the rocks was like this [gestures a distance], so we're trying to take full-size rafts and everything through the rock garden.

TM: Two, three feet? Through these two-to-three-foot width openings?

DS: Yeah, so we had to pick up the rafts, push 'em up over the rocks and everything, and everybody had to help with one raft to get one raft through. Then everybody had to help with another raft to get another raft through kinda thing. So, that was tough. Once we passed Green River, went past Green River Wastewater Treatment Plant, the river was a whole different story from there, 'cause we were swimming in the river every day kinda thing. It was August and September and everything. We got past it and we saw the treatment plant, and it was just pumping all kinds of nastiness into the water. We didn't even get back into the water for like a week 'cause the river was so nasty from the treatment plant coming out and everything. It was just things floating in the river. It stunk and everything, so from Green River down to pretty much the confluence, we didn't get in the water at all 'cause it was nasty. Didn't wanna get in the water kinda thing.

WR: When did you do this? 1914?

DS: Two years ago. [Wayne laughs.] Yeah, two years.

WR: Can't believe they can do that.

TM: How was Cataract at low water?

DS: Cataract wasn't bad at all. We had – everybody that was in the group was experienced river runners. We had done plenty of rivers together before and all that, so we knew what each person could handle. Cataract wasn't a problem at all. Not a problem. Big Drop 3 was – we saw – actually we did see another group that was down there that they ran Big Drop 3 the same day we did. They had a lady in their group. She got worked in there. She got – she didn't go upside down, but she went in in a small cat and went into a hole, and she got surfed in that hole for probably two or three minutes kinda thing. She finally gets herself out of that hole without flipping, and she goes right into another hole and gets surfed in that hole for a minute or two. Then she got out of that one and went into another hole. It was like one after – but she made it all the way through. Tired, crazy tired, 'cause she was like working hard and everything but it was interesting seeing that.

TM: Yeah, there's not a lot of people who put the basin together that way. To see how the drainage works, how the basin works. All that's different sections.

DS: And it was hot. It was hot, 'cause we had probably – I betcha we had three weeks over a hundred degrees every single day. Hundred, hundred and ten every day for like three weeks of it.

TM: There were no mosquitos and no biting black flies?

DS: No, we didn't have 'em. We didn't run into any at all 'cause usually they say that near Green River you run into that stuff and everything. We didn't have any problem with it. It was good.

WR: That's one good thing about the low water.

DS: Yeah.

TM: Amazing. That's amazing.

WR: I'm gonna have to take off here.

TM: Okay.

WR: But I'm gonna get out of the interview. Nice to meet you guys.

DS: You too.

PG: It was nice to meet you.

DS: Mm-hmm.

WR: And thank you, Tom for inviting me to sit in.

PG: It was really nice to meet you, definitely.

TM: Well, I'm thinking we're kinda gonna wrap things up. Unless there's anything else you're thinking about.

PG: We had a great time. It was an amazing experience, I think.

MS: It was.

DS: Yeah.

PG: Unless you change anything, I don't think we could change anything. It just kinda became exactly what it was. We didn't have any expectations.

DS: We didn't have any plan for any camps at all. We just made everything we did on the fly. If we got going, started getting dark, we're like, "Okay, that looks like a good sandbar right there. Let's camp there." There was no plan for any of our camps or anything.

PG: So, it was super fluid like that. That was really special. You don't get to do that.

MS: It was nice having the sandbars from the high release. It gave us a lot more camps, a lot more choices. Quick choices too, you know. You gotta camp there, you can do it.

DS: Also, I thought it was kinda nice just having three people, and I respect that we were all kinda on the same page. It wasn't like we had part of the group wanted to do this, part of the group wanted to do that sort of thing. We did pretty much whatever we wanted to do, which worked out with all of us 'cause we pretty much all want to do the same thing in general and everything. It was nice in that respect that there was no hard decision making or trying to talk these people into that or anything like that. It was just we did whatever we wanted for the most part.

MS: It was nice.

PG: And we get to come back and do it some more.

DS: Like I said it was crazy warm. It froze on us at Lees Ferry and then it didn't freeze on us 'till like the last two, three days of the trip.

TM: How did you deal with this big storm that just came through?

DS: We were at Columbine Falls that day. We did a layover at Columbine. It snowed on us all day long. Through the night and then all day and then a little bit that next night it snowed on us. It didn't stick on the ground where we were at but just like 200 feet above us it was sticking. So, we got a bunch of pictures of snow almost all the way down to the river and everything. It was nice.

PG: Snow on the falls. It was pretty cool.

DS: We were gonna take off and go down to Pearce that day but then we woke up and it was snowing and everything. We were like, "This looks too cool. We just kinda wanna hang out and do this." I actually took my computer along. Me and Mat set up a tent, a big tent that he could get into and watch the movie inside the tent and everything, and read books, and just kinda went up to the falls and everything.

MS: Relax a little bit.

TM: Cool. Wait for the storm to clear out.

DS: Yeah, and then it was nice and sunny the next day. We got down to Pearce. Went and took a look at Pearce, and we're like, "Eh, I don't know about that." The hole goes all the way across the river now. There is no line through there. The hole's all the way across to the left side. Actually, right now I'd say there was enough – the way I saw it – there was enough water that we could've slid through that double drop on the right, and I would say that's actually probably the best run right now. But, if you miss that shot right there, you pretty much just push down and jump off and let your raft go, 'cause you don't wanna – I mean if you miss getting in that slot on the right and everything, just forget about your raft, jump on the island, and wait for your raft to come around, and jump in the water, and swim out to it or something like that you know.

PG: Not worth messing with.

DS: Yeah, there's that. If you miss it, I don't see a way that a raft's getting through there at all. I mean if you went far, far left there's a way to get through Pearce. Far, far left there's a line that I looked at and I was like, "That's a 50/50 chance of somebody flipping in there" kinda thing. So, if all three of us go through, chances are we're gonna have one or two boats upside down. We had an excellent trip so far and everything. We're like well, we don't wanna deal with a huge hassle at the end right now kinda thing, so we backed off on doing Pearce. But my vehicle's parked over at South Cove, so we hitched a ride over to South Cove. Get my vehicle, came back, and then it was coming on dark by then, so then we took a drive up to Mead View to go up and get something to eat, and that sort of thing and hang out in Mead View for a bit that night and everything.

Came back down the next morning, and that next morning was when there was that big cloud inversion. We were stuck in the fog on the river and everything. Then I was like, "I wanna see what this looks like from above it," so we jumped in the truck and we drove up above it so we could look down on the cloud inversion. That's when the ranger came on by and went on down and we hadn't cleaned up our camp and we were actually camped out there, and he's like, "Well, you guys can't camp there." I was like, "Well, we looked at Pearce and decided we don't really want to do that." He's like, "I understand. I'm not gonna write you a ticket for camping here. You guys did the right thing" he said.

There was another ranger that came through, an old guy. He had been there 54 years. He was a ranger in different places. I forget what his name is, but he lives in Mead View there. He came up and talked to us in the morning when the younger ranger came by us. He was telling stories and everything. He told us that – he said that there was three more rapids bigger than Pearce below Pearce in Iceberg Canyon. I don't know for sure just how much truth he has to that. He didn't do it himself, but he said that the last person he talked to said there was three more that were bigger than Pearce down there. I knew about the one kinda thing. He said one of 'em was a sheer 20-foot waterfall, which I didn't think was necessarily the case either and all that, but he's like, "Yeah, you guys don't wanna go down there. There's still a dude down there that we haven't found yet." The guy that went a couple years ago, something like that.

TM: This one guy has died down there. He didn't have a life jacket. Yeah, it was in a story.

DS: He took his life jacket off 'cause it was wet. He didn't wanna get it – he wanted to dry his life jacket is what the ranger told us. Took it off to dry it.

PG: As you go into a rapid. Yeah, but so we were foggy on our information. We had gotten some different – we ended up being like, best to just not.

MS: Yeah, we didn't know.

PG: We'll do it again next time when we have 10 people and we have pros.

DS: Yeah.

PG: Different trip, different style.

DS: If we'd had 10 or more people on our trip, we'd have easily done Pearce because whatever problems we have, we got enough people to take care of it kinda thing. I don't know whether we'd run right. We would probably run left 'cause that right side, it looks like the best way of doing it, but if you miss that thing, you got a huge problem.

PG: And we've run left every time.

DS: I mean you got serious consequences if you miss that right drop.

TM: Do you think you could line it on the right? Would that make that right side more attractive?

DS: I bet you could. I bet you could line it on the right.

PG: Yeah, sure you could.

DS: But the right side actually looks like a lot of fun, so I wouldn't wanna line it. [Tom laughs.]

PG: It looks hittable. It totally looks droppable. Since we were doing all these waterfall drops, we were eyeing it up pretty good being like, "Well, that looks like a fun drop."

DS: There is a lot of current along that right side though. You have to have multiple people hanging on to your boat to keep it from going down without you kinda thing. I think it would almost be easier just to push yourself in there at the oars of the boat, and if for some reason you miss it, jump on the island and watch your boat go around, get chundered.

PG: I'll go left.

DS: 'Cause it drops in there and then –

PG: I'll take my chances on the cross current over there with the bubbles.

DS: Yeah, all that current drops in and then curls back up and around down through itself. Then there's water bubbling up down below it. It comes like five, six feet up in there, the water pushing up from the bottom of the river. Keeps moving the river like five, six feet up and down. I mean even if you went far next to the left side of the island at Pearce there, you're gonna get chundered there, and then you're gonna get – you probably go down deep. Then, you get pushed back up and surfed back into the hole again kinda thing. You'd have a hard time just getting out of that system there.

We didn't run Pearce. We wanted to, but we didn't do it. It was just – it was the thing. If we had ten or more people, we'd have just done it right away. We'd have went and scouted it and been like, "Okay that's what we're doing." The left run right there. You gotta slide right through there and then hopefully – 'cause the current that's coming from it – there's that line down the left, but then all the current coming from the river underneath of that line slamming into the wall on the left side there. So, I figured we had the line all the way through, through the hole and everything. I figure we could've made it through the hole, but right on the other side of the hole



was all this current that was shooting like 20 miles an hour that way, and there's a big lateral coming on the left. So, you come through the hole and then you hit this lateral, which is pushing you this way, and then you have all this current pushing like that. So, I figured it was – and it was 90% of the time. There was like every once and a while it would break. There was a line through there like 10% of the time, but 90% of the time the current was just slamming into that left wall.

PG: So, on a good day, with good luck, it wouldn't kill us.

DS: And I've swam Lava before – or I mean I've swam Pearce before. In 2009 I think it was. Yeah, we were all tied up. We had seven rafts tied up and we hit Pearce. I was in the front raft and everything and it pushed me into that wall and dump trucked me in. Didn't have my life jacket on. All I had was my shorts and my sandals on, nothing else, and I got swept underneath the raft in the current, but I'm a super strong swimmer. I swam all over the US for 17 years. I swam out, got myself out from underneath the raft. None of the rafts flipped. The people that were on the rafts, they were trying to figure something out.

A bunch of people yelling at people and everything, trying to save me. My friend on the back of the raft, he had the video camera going, the HD video camera going, and he's just laughing. You could hear him on the camera. He stopped and yelled at everybody. He's like, "Hey! David's fine! Settle down!" I was looking at people. Somebody threw a throw line out that went out like 15 feet and dropped in the water kinda thing. I looked at them. I looked at the shore. I was like, "Okay, you guys forget what you got going on. I'm swimming over to the sandbar over here." Swam over to the sandbar, waited for somebody in a ducky to come get me and take me back up to the raft. So, that was good. I learned a lot about Pearce that time. Then, the other time, I think I told you I swam from Diamond down, down to South Cove.

TM: Tell me about that.

DS: I was hoping to swim the entire Canyon, but that was part of my 2007 thing. That's when I was set to swim the whole Canyon. In 2007, when we got tossed in the clink. Jumped in the water at Diamond Creek. I think it was 2006. Jumped in at Diamond Creek, and had to sneak past the ranger down there 'cause I knew the ranger wasn't gonna let me out without a boat kinda thing. I parked my truck at the motel in Peach Springs, and hitched a ride down with a couple out of New York. Then I had them drop me off like an eighth of a mile from the river, something like that. I told them this is why I can't be seen by the ranger kinda thing. Then I snuck through the tammies along the creek bed there, then went down. Halfway down the rapid, got behind a big rock. Put on all my gear and jumped in and swam.

I jumped in the river that night that evening at about 6:30 or so. By 8:30 I had gotten down to Gneiss. Got down to Gneiss and there was a group that I knew people in the group and everything. Then from there I swam by myself, completely by myself, from Diamond down to Gneiss, and then I joined that group that was there, and then I swam alongside those guys.

TM: So, what was swimming Killer Fang Falls like?

DS: I hate Killer Fang Falls. [Dave laughs.] I swam into it. I had all the rapids memorized in my head, looking at your book and everything. I had thought that I'd went through Killer Fang Falls, but it was actually 231. So, I thought I'd already did it, so I swam into this other one, and when I'm

halfway through the rapid, I see the fangs down there. I was like, "Oh, this is Killer Fang Falls." I had to stop scouting. I just jumped in the water and swam all the way down to Gneiss.

But so, I was in it, and a current pushed me right into it, and I knocked my shin on a schist fin under the water that I didn't see. I had my dry bag with me, so when I hit the rock fins, I tried to put my dry bag between me and the fins. But then I ended up hitting. I thought I broke my leg. It rolled me. I hit the fins, and it rolled me up over the top of the fins, dropped me onto some fins, behind the fins, and then I dropped off of that, and I was stuck in the hole that was behind the fins. I thought I had a broken leg at the time. All by myself, bottom of the Grand Canyon with a broken leg. Nobody around kinda thing. But I'm in the hole kinda thing, so I finally get myself out of the hole, and I get away from it and everything. I reach down, and my leg's still in one piece. It hurts like hell. I mean it hurt real bad, but my leg was still in one piece, and I'm like, "Okay, I'm fine." Just kept on swimming.

TM: What were you wearing?

DS: I was wearing a 7 mil wetsuit, and I had a – with the Farmer John. I had the bib, and I had a Farmer John, so I had 14 mil over my core. But my arms, my arms were just 7 mil and my legs were just 7 mil, but I had a 14 mil over my core.

TM: And how'd that work?

DS: It worked out fine, but it's kinda bulky I would say. You almost don't even need a life jacket 'cause there's enough buoyancy in the wetsuit itself and everything. If I was to do something like that again I'd probably try to get a dry suit but I wanna get a dry suit that's not – I want some dry suit with some stretch to it 'cause I want it to be tight on my body instead of being all kinds of baggy. You got too much drag in a normal dry suit and everything. I think I saw O'Neill makes kind of a wetsuit dry suit combo kinda thing, which I figured I'd try something like that if I do it again. I'd probably try to get something custom made just for my size. Something that would give me the least amount of drag going through the water.

TM: That sounds like fun.

DS: Yeah.

TM: Do you wanna jump in to Lees and head down to Diamond at one point?

DS: Well, that's what I was gonna do in 2007, but then the problems we had kinda turned me off on it. Now I don't know, 'cause at that time I was absolutely gonna swim the Grand Canyon. The whole thing. But now I'm kinda – I don't know if I'm actually gonna do it now kinda thing. I don't know if – I don't necessarily know that I wanna swim the whole Grand Canyon now. Then, I really wanted to. Now, it's not as much of a desire as I had at one time.

TM: Fair enough.

DS: Well, I got problems with the park service at times too, so I'm sure they wouldn't appreciate that either. [Dave laughs.] But I don't know, maybe it'll happen someday.

TM: Cool. Well, good luck if you do it. Would be fun.

DS: We'll see. Got another trip this year, so I could maybe do it later on in the year. I don't know. We'll see.

TM: We'll see. Cool.

DS: But yeah, I would like to do it in general. I just don't know whether it's gonna happen or not now.

TM: Well, you got a bunch of it done. I'm just saying.

DS: Yeah, I've already swam quite a bit of it.

TM: [Tom laughs.] That's right.

DS: I got no problem swimming the rapids. There's a lot of rapids I'd rather swim than take a kayak or a raft through kinda thing. 'Cause I don't have a problem swimming. Swimming is second – I swim like a fish kinda thing. It doesn't bother me one bit.

TM: Yeah. You people that like water. Just like yeah, I like swimming. I appreciate that.

DS: I've swam Lava before. Actually, I have friends of mine, they swam Lava naked on a Paco Pad. [Dave laughs.]

TM: How did that go for them?

DS: It worked out just fine. [Dave laughs.]

TM: Were they able to hang on to the pad?

PG: Rubber ducky.

DS: They just kinda grabbed the pad like this, and went down.

MS: Life jackets, right?

DS: Yeah, they had life jackets and helmets on. Other than that, they were naked on a Paco Pad. Swimming in Lava. They jumped off that rock at the top, the big rock on the right. They jumped off of that into it, right into the top of Lava. Went down right side from there.

TM: Well, they managed.

PG: That'd be fun.

TM: Next time.

PG: Next time. Yeah see? You gotta have new goals. You always have to. There's always new goals.

DS: That's not necessarily a December thing to do.

PG: No! [Dave laughs.]

TM: Brr. Well, thank you guys very much.

MS: Yeah, thank you for having us.

PG: Yeah, thanks.

TM: To be continued. We'll meet again next trip.

PG: Definitely.

TM: Do it again. It'll be fun.

DS: I'll be back down in October.

TM: Cool. Alright, thank you again. Here we go. Gonna turn this off.