

Interviewee: Brian Maytum (BM) and Shaina Maytum (SM)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Brian recounts his 1970's river-rafting in Colorado and his Grand Canyon river trip in 1983

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TM: Today is Tuesday, December 15th, 2020. This is a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Brian Maytum and his daughter Shaina, also Maytum. And my name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon, Brian and Shaina. How are you both today?

BM: I am great today.

TM: Good. Brian, may we have your permission to record this oral history over the telephone?

BM: Yes.

TM: Thank you. Brian, what year were you born?

BM: I was born in 1950.

TM: Okay. Where were you born?

BM: I was born in Minneapolis.

TM: Okay. What were your parents doing in Minneapolis?

BM: My father was doing the GI Bill. He had finished the—he had been in the Great War—

TM: Yes.

BM: —and flew bombers. And then he went to the university at—he went to the university and learned to be a—he became a...

TM: No worries.

BM: Sorry about that.

TM: Yeah, no worries. So—

BM: He became a...

TM: That's fine. So he met your mother there in college.

BM: Actually, he did not. He met my mother in—he met her at a USO show.

TM: Okay. Cool.

BM: And that's where they became friends and then got married.

TM: Do you have any older or younger brothers or sisters?

BM: I have an older brother. I am the younger brother.

TM: Okay. Nice. And did you grow up, then, in Minneapolis?

BM: No. I grew up in Littleton.

TM: Oh, okay. When did your family move out to Littleton?

BM: In 1956.

TM: Okay. And do you remember what your dad was doing in Littleton for a job?

BM: Yeah, he was building high-tech airplanes.

TM: Okay, nice.

BM: And lots of secret equipment at the time. This was the days when nobody knew what it was their father did. *(laughs)*

TM: Right. *(laughs)* Exactly. Yeah. So growing up in Littleton, did you go to high school there as well?

BM: Yes.

TM: Okay.

BM: So I went to Littleton High School.

TM: Did your mom and dad like to camp out when you were growing up?

BM: No. They didn't really have much to do with the outdoors.

TM: Okay. So no station wagon and summer vacations off to the national parks, and things like that?

BM: Very little.

TM: Okay. What about you? Did you pal around with your friends in high school and get up into the front range, or up into the Rocky Mountains there, and do any hiking and climbing?

BM: Yes, I did, while I was at the University of Colorado in Boulder. There were lots of opportunities to go up in the mountains at walk around and see lots of wonderful local stuff. And just checking out to the degree that my parents never did.

TM: Yeah.

BM: And they were certainly not interested in riving running at all.

TM: Okay. Before we get to your river running, what were you studying at the University of Colorado in Boulder?

BM: University of Boulder. I was studying—I tried quite a few things. Ultimately got a degree in Art.

TM: Okay. Nice. Did you work a camera? What kind of art was your specialty?

BM: I was a glass blower.

TM: Oh, wow. How did you get into that?

BM: *(laughs)* I found somebody who was blowing glass, and the idea fascinated me. So they were available. They taught me how to do it, and I just kind of worked my way into that part of the art world.

TM: Wow. Who was your mentor? Do you remember who taught you about how to blow glass?

BM: I had a mentor by the name of Norman...

TM: Not to worry. We're going to call him Norman.

BM: Okay.

TM: What do you remember about Norman?

BM: He was incredibly talented. He went to the University of Oklahoma at Norman, Oklahoma. And he was one of these people who was just so talented that I started learning from him, and three years later I was still at it, because he had so much to teach me.

TM: Nice. Very nice. Did you stay working with glass, then, for many years afterwards?

BM: I did.

TM: Very nice.

BM: For 25 years.

TM: Wow. Excellent. That's just beautiful art. So how did you learn to swim, Brian?

BM: *(laughs)* How did I learn? I took classes.

TM: Okay.

BM: Learned to swim and take classes. And overall I hated it (*TM laughs*) and struggled with the technique of learning how to swim, but ultimately learned and—learned how to swim the hard stuff in the—they had a swim tank that had a big, high, tall, semi-circular building. So I just went there to make my—my mother kept making me go.

TM: (*laughs*) Good for her.

BM: And so I just learned. And I went, and I went, and eventually I learned how to do it.

TM: Nice. Did you participate in any sports at all in high school?

BM: No.

TM: Okay. Alright. And so how did you get into river running? What was your first experience with boats and rivers and things like that?

BM: I took a—I was at the University of Colorado, and they had classes that you could take, where you could learn how to do various river rafting items, such as—well, we went down the... We fought our way down and got at a 3,000...

TM: Is that cubic feet a second?

BM: Yeah. Which was really, really high.

TM: Yeah, it sounds like it. And this was one of the local rivers, maybe the—I don't know, the Saint Vrain or the Poudre or something right there near Littleton?

BM: Well, it was up at the far north end of the—it was on the north end of the...

TM: I'm thinking maybe the Yampa in Dinosaur National Monument, or the Arkansas River over near Salida, or the Colorado River up Steamboat Springs side. I'm just starting to shoot out rivers here.

BM: Yeah, it is none of those.

TM: Okay, good. (*laughs*)

SM: I'll jump in—Dad was at—was it Lodore? Didn't you say the first trip you did with them was Lodore?

BM: No, it was not Lodore.

SM: The other one I'm thinking—was it Northgate?

BM: Yes.

SM: Yeah. (*laughs*)

BM: Yeah, and the 3,000 cubic feet per second. Northgate was just screaming fast.

TM: So help me out here, because I'm from Arizona, and we don't have a lot of water here. So when you say Northgate, I'm like, "Hmm. I wonder what river that's on?" (*laughs*) Can you tell me where that is? And Shaina, please jump in to help here.

SM: Sure. It's on the North Platte River, which is undammed, which is kind of novel around here. But it flows out of northern Colorado up near Walden, which is near-ish to Steamboat. And it flows north into Wyoming. And you take out in Saratoga Springs, Wyoming.

TM: So it eventually spins around and goes into the Mississippi, then?

SM: Yeah, I guess so. And it just—

TM: And Brian—

SM: —one of those—sorry.

TM: Do you remember roughly what year this would have been? Maybe 1968 or '69, or '70 or '71—something like that?

BM: Yeah. This would have been '69.

TM: Okay. And I'm assuming the water would have been pretty cold.

BM: Yes. Yeah. Freezing cold.

TM: Yeah, and this is snow run-off, (*laughs*) snowmelt runoff. It's usually pretty cold on the North Platte. And 3,000 cubic feet a second. That's, as you say, a lot of water. Was this just a day trip in paddle boats, or were you actually doing an overnight kind of thing?

BM: We were planning on doing an overnight kind of thing—with an overnight—and doing it relatively easy, though the result was that that river, with that much water, is insane. It's insane. (*TM and BM laugh*) It was really a bad idea. You know, sometimes you'll go do something that turned out—follow-up was just a bad idea. (*TM and BM laugh*) And this was one of those.

TM: Do you remember the names of any of your instructors?

BM: One went by the name of Tory, who was teaching the class.

TM: Okay.

BM: It was about—gosh, maybe a dozen people in the whole group.

TM: Alright. And were you using university boats?

BM: Yes.

TM: Okay. Did any of the boats on that trip decide to turn over and—turn turtle, as they say?

BM: Yes.

TM: I see. And the water's cold, and the water's fast, and now people who think they are sitting on top of a boat have turned into swimmers. Then what happened?

BM: Well, I took a header into the water, and then nearly drowned, and managed to make my way through the bad part until I got—can you hear okay with the dog?

TM: It's a little loud.

BM: Hey! Can we quiet the dog down, please? Okay.

TM: So you nearly drowned.

BM: Yeah, and then ended up being kind of stuck in a crack in the wall of the river, unable to get out, and finally worked my way through. This was really one of those badly planned river moves—I shouldn't have been there. I was basically coming close to swamping, mentally, and eventually my friends managed to grab me and pull me up and out of the river so I could find a way out.

TM: So was that one of the, okay, we're going to do a bunch of boating in this class, and the first trip we're going to do is Northgate, and then there's going to be more river trips after that in this class, or was the Northgate trip sort of the culmination of all the learning and other things that you did, and it was the one trip for that class?

BM: Actually, they cancelled the class.

TM: *(laughs)* Okay.

BM: The water level was so high that they didn't think that it was safe. So a couple hotdog guys who thought it would be fun to go out there and really rip it *(laughs)* for this trip—it wasn't an official trip by the time we got there.

TM: *(laughs)* Okay.

BM: So we went on that basis. The place where we could pull out was basically not—you couldn't really reach it.

TM: Oh. So you missed your takeout.

BM: Yeah. And then they—I kind of injured one of my feet, and they ended up throwing me in the back of the pickup truck and driving me back to Boulder for the... And so, no, we didn't do more than that. We did that much, and even at that it was much more difficult than anybody had planned for the adventure.

TM: So Brian, I must ask you. What you went through is typically enough to turn most people away from river running for the rest of their lives. How is it that you stuck with it?

BM: Well, you know, I think there's two different kinds of people. *(TM and BM laugh)* And one set of people, they have an opportunity to go out there and do something just really wild. And it's so exciting that they decide to continue.

TM: Nice.

BM: And I was the one who was—this thing was scary—terrifying, really. And I found myself in that position without needing to, but it was enough of a wild experience that I got hooked.

TM: Adversity makes the heart grow fonder. That's good.

BM: *(laughs)* Yeah. Yeah, Tom. And so I had that experience, it was wild, and the next year—the next season—I decided it was a wild enough experience that I wanted to continue.

TM: Okay. And did you develop a group of friends that sort of wanted to give it a try as well, or how did you—if you weren't in the class, how did you go out and seek more river running the next year?

BM: Well, *(laughs)* I started out with another trip down that same river. And it was wild, and I figured out how to run that as—it was definitely a major experience the next time—real high water—and I went anyway, just to finish that experience.

TM: Nice. And how did the second trip go?

BM: I flipped my boat. The Pro —I flipped it—I was trying to be careful about where I ran it through and missed. *(laughs)*

TM: *(laughs)* Okay. So this is an Avon Pro, is that right?

BM: That's correct.

TM: Okay. So had you purchased a boat by then?

BM: Yeah.

TM: How much did that Avon Pro cost you? Do you remember?

BM: In those days, it was \$3,200.

TM: Wow, okay. And did you get a frame and oars and some sort of mechanism to tie the frame to the boat?

BM: Yeah, the whole thing. And I was also selling river raft equipment—

TM: Okay.

BM: —to my friends, and so that probably ran \$3,200 back in those days which was actually relatively inexpensive.

TM: Really, because I'm thinking 1970—that's a lot of money.

BM: Yeah, this was like '89.

TM: Okay.

BM: In any case your estimate is good. I'm very good with a businessman.

TM: Cool. Okay.

BM: *(laughs)* So I've been good at getting good prices. And I was selling rafting equipment probably at one-third of normal price.

TM: Okay. Oh, so that was—if you were selling it wholesale, people were very happy to come buy from you.

BM: Yes.

TM: Yeah. So this is 1970. I'm a little confused on the timeline here. Did you buy your boat then, in 1970—'69/'70?

BM: '89.

TM: '89, okay. So from '69 to '70—did you keep boating in the 1970s?

BM: No, I didn't really get heavily into it until the latter part of the '80s.

SM: I'm sorry, but I am going to jump in, because Dad, I do think you're a little bit confused on the timeline at the moment—

BM: Okay.

SM: —because your early canyon trips were in '81 and '83. Right? Because by '89 I was already born. So I'm wondering if you've got the—you must have got the Pro like '79.

BM: Okay.

SM: Wouldn't that make more sense? Did you take the Pro down the canyon, or did you take another boat?

BM: My first trip down the canyon was in the Pro.

SM: Okay. So by '81 you would have had it, right?

BM: Yes.

SM: Okay. So maybe just a little clarity on the timeline.

TM: No, that's good. I'm just wondering, throughout the 1970s—you mentioned a Lodore trip. Do you remember roughly, was that Lodore trip in the early 1970s?

BM: It was in the late—it was more in '80s.

TM: Okay. So it sounds like after the harrowing adventure on the North Platte, you kind of gave it a rest for maybe a decade.

BM: No, no, no. I was solid from then on.

TM: Okay. So throughout the '70s, which rivers were you running?

BM: Throughout the '70s—we're really talking the '80s.

SM: Hey, dad, can I maybe again just jump in with the timeline, if that's okay?

BM: Please. Go for it.

SM: I'm just wondering if your mixing up the '70s and the '80s a little bit, because before you did your Grand Canyon trips, you did a lot of other stuff, right, like on the Arkansas and the Dolores and Lodore and the Colorado. All of that was before your first Grand Canyon trip, right?

BM: That is correct.

SM: So that would have been in the '70s. Does that make sense, right?

BM: That makes sense.

SM: Okay. If you graduated college in '72 or '73, it seems to me that if all that was happening before you went down in Grand Canyon in '81, this would have had to have been the '70s and not the '80s. Does that seem reasonable?

BM: Yeah.

SM: Okay. Cool.

TM: Yeah, cool. Let's take some of these rivers one at a time. What do you remember about the Arkansas? And did you ever take your boat through the Royal Gorge section, or did you run the Numbers farther up, or go through Browns Canyon? I'm just thinking about the different sections of that river.

BM: Okay. I never ran the Numbers.

TM: Okay.

BM: Back in those days, that was considered to be a very dangerous river.

TM: Okay.

BM: And in fact, I had a friend who got a real bad concussion running the Numbers, (*laughs*) so I just thought I'd maybe tell us, "Not such a good idea." However, I ran the Browns Canyon almost all the time.

TM: Nice.

BM: It was easy to get to; it was fast to get to; it was a quick run. And so I ran that one really very regularly, and—

TM: There's a lot of—you've got to be on your game to run that. There's some good rapids in there and a lot of rock-dodging.

BM: Yes. Yeah, *(laughs)* and some things that end up swirling in such a way that you really have to be on your dime to make sure that you don't end up being slammed into the wall.

TM: Back then in the '70s, Brian—today we have cam straps, these metal buckles with straps. But back in the '70s, were you using hoopies, or were you tying down your frame to the raft with some sort of cordage? What were you using for that? Do you remember?

BM: Yeah. I was mostly using cam straps. That was one of those things that came relatively late into the field.

TM: Yep.

BM: Late on you could get lots of cam straps for a reasonable amount of money, and tie everything down. And that was fairly safe. *(laughs)*

TM: Right.

BM: I didn't go through some of the steeper rivers, but I ran the Three... It was the Three Points River—

TM: Yes.

BM: —also the Five Points River, which were outrageously dangerous.

TM: Okay. Hey, did you—

BM: Spinning around, slamming into the wall, generally flipping. The trips that the commercial companies were running—but again, it was one of those things where all of it was fast.

TM: Oh yeah.

BM: Yeah, so you'd go screaming down through there, and if you could stay on top of it, the ride was outstanding.

TM: *(laughs)* Did you enter the FIBArk races at all?

BM: No.

TM: Okay.

BM: I had this daughter, Shaina, who kind of got in the way *(TM laughs)* of my wild rafting above a certain time level.

TM: Okay. So children led to a little bit of sensibility, I guess, in a way.

BM: I was not totally crazy. *(TM and BM laugh)* I was not irresponsible. So it did get in the way—having children did get in the way of my high-level river rafting.

TM: Right. You had to settle for low-water San Juan or low-water Deso Gray, or something a little more tame, I suppose.

BM: Well, not that low. I mean, I still ran the Grand Canyon three times. *(laughs)*

TM: With your kids?

BM: No.

TM: Okay.

BM: I had this very helpful wife who was willing to give me the chance to get out there and just rip out on the rivers. Up to a certain point, and then we just decided that that wasn't responsible for our marriage.

TM: Hey Brian, Shaina mentioned the Dolores. When did you run the Dolores? Do you remember?

BM: It was probably around—

TM: That'd be the mid-1970s, 1975 to 1978? Something like that?

BM: Yeah, in that range.

TM: Okay. It was very popular there in the mid-'70s, for a while.

BM: Yeah. There were only so many rivers that were runnable.

TM: Yeah.

BM: And so you picked the ones that were available and—but I was a pretty gung-ho rafting guy.

TM: Okay.

BM: So... {00:40:15} was the name of that rapid?

TM: Snaggletooth.

BM: Snaggletooth, yeah.

TM: Tell me about Snaggletooth.

BM: *(laughs)* There was a time when I was willing to run Snaggletooth at any river level.

TM: Okay.

BM: The thing was huge. It was just up over the top of your head. Huge. But you try not to hit it when it was too high, because it could really flip you. And flipping in the middle of that one was really—it sucked.

TM: Yeah. *(laughs)*

BM: Plus there was this raft—there was this overhang (*laughs*)—this overhang thing that would get you, even if the rest was not so bad.

TM: Okay.

BM: I told Shaina not to run that part. (*laughs*) It's like, you look at your daughter and you say, "Shaina, don't do this one."

TM: (*laughs*) And she's like, "But Dad, you did it. I should be able to try it."

BM: (*laughs*) So she listens to what I have to say. And she keeps herself out of the craziest parts of the river.

TM: Good. Well, you've taught her well.

BM: Yeah. I believe that she has—maybe I taught her well, but she learned well.

TM: Nice. So clearly it was important to teach your children about river-running, and that's pretty neat. Shaina mentioned Lodore, the Gates of Lodore up in Dinosaur National Monument. What do you remember about that trip up there—and there's a rapid in there called Hell's Half Mile, and all kinds of other really fun rapids in Split Mountain and Whirlpool Canyon and Echo Park. What do you remember about that country and those river trips?

BM: I remember having a great time up there.

TM: Nice.

BM: It was high. The water level was good and high. And so Hell's Half Mile was—well, compared to the run that Shaina and I did on Hell's Half Mile a couple years ago, this thing was relatively out of control. You'd go over the top, and it would just—it would start out by throwing you up in the air, (*TM laughs*) which was—it's rare to find that much water in there these days.

TM: Yes.

BM: So there was that. This was one of the very first rivers that I ran at that time, and so I was really surprised by the whole experience. You got tossed in the air, came back down, kept going with this just great flying feel. And then the rest of the river was really high, so the swirls in the rest of the river and the lower part were way more exciting than I was ready for, psychologically.

TM: Okay. I wonder if we're blending a little bit in with Grand Canyon, because if you were running the Grand Canyon in '81/'82/'83—'83 was high, high water. But by the time you got to the Grand Canyon in the early '80s, it sounds like you were on the top of your game, I mean, very well-versed with how to run a boat and how to rig a boat and how to plan multi-day river trips. Is that right?

BM: You know, for one thing, the water was real high the first time I went down there. And so I discovered things like, how do you surf an Avon Pro (*TM laughs*). Humongous, like the beach boys. (*laughs*) She's my little —well, it's like that. You have 12-/15-foot water. You throw the boat into that water at a 45-degree angle, and it picks the front of the boat up, turns it, and then surfs it across three-

quarters of the rest of the rapid. And so yes, I was good. *(laughs)* I learned how to do that, and that's something that—I don't know very many people who can surf an Avon Pro.

TM: *(laughs)* And have a good time doing it.

BM: Or perhaps would want to. Yeah, or have a good time doing it.

TM: Yeah.

BM: And we were also running a 22-foot pontoon raft—one of those ancient things from the '50s.

TM: Yeah, a Snout.

BM: Yeah. *(laughs)* Managing to keep that thing right-side up was also a high—I didn't run that one a lot, but it was definitely a high-skill run.

TM: Did you have a motor for that, or did you use very long oars?

BM: We used very long oars.

TM: Okay. That is a hard boat. I mean, it's a big boat, it's a heavy boat, and it's a challenge to get around.

BM: Yes. Yeah, I did learn how to row it, because my—there were two of us that were rowing boats, and it was so difficult to row that we just had to swap rowing the boats, because that's the only way we came up with enough strength to do it.

TM: Yeah. Did you build your own frame for that boat?

BM: No, this was actually owned by some people sort of from down in the Four Corners. And they built their own frame, which was huge.

TM: *(laughs)* Yeah.

BM: *(laughs)* And there was a young woman who came with us who rowed the thing, who was nowhere near—she was relatively lightweight. She was nowhere near big enough to row that thing in high water in the Grand Canyon.

TM: Do you remember her name?

BM: I don't.

TM: Okay. Alright. But it's nice to have a boat that big to carry so much gear.

BM: No, I wouldn't—

TM: No?

BM: *(laughs)* If I had the choice to run one of those or not, it would be not.

TM: Oh, yeah, I'd never run one. *(laughs)* They carry a lot of gear, but that comes at a price. *(laughs)*

BM: Yeah, well, the thing was, it was—gosh, what was it that—I mean, there was all this stuff hanging down below the frame.

TM: Yep.

BM: So there was all this stuff, and it hung down, and you'd have to deal with supporting it and getting it so it was raft-able. It was just an outrageous amount of work. For the people who were in charge of rowing it, you just fought your way through the process constantly to keep it sort of right side up and separate from the rowing—the rowing frame. So it was one of those things that was, if you wanted to learn to row boats, you take one of those, and it was just outrageously difficult.

TM: Yeah.

BM: And very easy to go upside down. *(laughs)* And so this was not a row-able boat from any standpoint. But it's an opportunity to learn how to do it. And so it was one of those things where it's a chance to—it's like learning how to drive a dump truck or something—

TM: Yeah. *(laughs)* That's good.

BM: *(laughs)* You get a chance to learn how to keep it right side up and all the other stuff that goes along with it. And by the time you've done it five days, you do okay.

TM: Yes. Did you have any trouble missing the pull-ins on that highwater trip in Grand Canyon?

BM: Missing the what?

TM: The pull-ins. I'm thinking, were there places like—I don't know, Redwall Cavern, or Vasey's Paradise or Saddle Canyon, where you wanted to stop, but the river wouldn't let you stop. You just kept right on going by and couldn't get to shore.

BM: Yes. That was a very difficult boat to row. And learning to do landings in an Avon Pro is not trivial either. But with that thing, it was terrible. *(TM laughs)* It was terrible. It would smash into the rocks; it would smash into the walls. Just not a favorable device. And yet, did you have a hard time? Sure, but you have to learn how to deal with it.

TM: Right.

BM: If you want to run the river at high of a water level, you just end up having to learn how to do it.

TM: That's right.

BM: I have several friends who told me that they were impressed with me, because I could row better than anybody they knew.

TM: Nice.

BM: So there's a point where you figure it out, and you keep going with it, and you thrash it around, *(laughs)* and you eventually learn to pull out when you need to pull out and make the stops that you need to stop. Yeah, it's a whole series of skills that you learn.

TM: Right.

BM: A lot of people never develop those skills. They're just pounding into the walls. But if you know what you're doing, you learn how to make landings when you need to make landings.

TM: What else do you remember about those 1981/1983 Grand Canyon river trips?

BM: I remember that the rapids were frightening in their size and the speed with which they could slam you into things. And so Granite Rapid, you have this opportunity—that opportunity, excuse me—you come cooking around the corner. You can't see it, you can't really hear it, but it's a perfectly level line, with this water that's throwing itself up in the air—

TM: Cool. Yeah.

BM: —50 feet in the air, and makes a noise like a big, large jet roaring. And you come cooking around the corner; you can't see what you're doing; you can't tell how much you're supposed to—where the thing goes. And all you can do is just try to post yourself at the entrance and hope that the thing is not going to do something really awful to you, and then pick your line and end going over the top of this giant drop that—hopefully you pick a line that will run you through it safely.

And with Granite, the main run is way off to the right, and so there's no easy run. It is rugged no matter how you enter it. And so you just pick your best run, you hope—if you're a praying man (*laughs*), you pray that it will get you down through that pile of stuff safely. And then you hope that you'll be alright and that you'll end up being able to run the river reasonably smoothly, without something really terrible happening to you.

TM: Right.

BM: There's a lot of rapids like that at that water level. (*laughs*)

TM: Yeah.

BM: And then you just—ultimately you end up running it blind and just dropping over the edge and hoping that it's going to be okay.

TM: (*laughs*) In 1983, for a week or so—well, maybe a little less than that—the river was closed, as Glen Canyon Dam could no longer tolerate the amount of water that was going through the spillways, side tubes. Were you on the river then, or were you before or after that? Do you remember?

BM: I was just slightly after.

TM: Okay. So what was Crystal—

BM: I have a story for you that you're really going to like.

TM: Yes, please.

BM: The dam people were trying to avoid having the river just tear that wall out of the side of the Canyon.

TM: Right, the outlet works, the spillways.

BM: Right. And if that went, it was going to be catastrophic.

TM: Right.

BM: Well, the guy who figured that one out was my father.

TM: Okay.

BM: He worked for the dam people; he got a job working for them later in his career. And he figured out how to raise the level of the dam to the point where there was going to be enough headspace for the thing not to be totally destroyed (*laughs*) when it filled all the way up with water.

TM: Wow. That's pretty good.

SM: Yeah, Tom, it was like the wooden boards they put up—

TM: Right.

SM: —that was like his...

TM: What was his name?

SM: Dave Maytum.

TM: Dave, okay. Nice. So he came up with the idea of, hey, let's just put up some plywood here, and we can raise the level of the reservoir and save the dam.

BM: Yep.

TM: Okay. Very good, yeah. So—

BM: And unless most things invented by people who work for the government, his worked. His fix actually functioned.

TM: Yes. It saved the structure, no doubt.

TM: What do you remember of Crystal Rapid when you got there in 1983?

BM: What I remember of Crystal in '83 was that it was huge, and it was fast, and it wasn't obvious that there was a safe place to go through. It had changed to the point where this was no longer a safe river, and that there were just really—the run through there was—it was dangerous. It was frightening. It wasn't obvious how a person could run it and not get knocked back while running it. And I actually ended up running—not running, but... We didn't run it.

TM: Did you portage your boats around the side of it, then?

BM: Uh-huh.

TM: A lot of trips did that.

BM: Yeah. At that point, a lot of trips did that, and it was just one of those things of, well, you get there, and you look at it (*laughs*)—and you just look at and think, “{01:06:36}. How am I going to get around this?” And the thing is, that it wants to suck you in. It wants to sling you against that giant wall. It wants to suck you in and do nasty things to you with that great big hill—the water. And the only other option is not to run it.

TM: Right. Is to portage. Yeah.

BM: Yeah, because the thing was, on the left—in the center, and on the left side—you had this big old nasty thing that, if you didn’t succeed in running it well, you were going to be running this just nasty rapid that was going to go on for a couple of miles. In retrospect, I don’t think it was quite as bad as it looked.

TM: Okay.

BM: But I certainly chose not to run it at the time.

TM: So I wanted to ask you if you remembered a place called the Granite Narrows, between Tapeats Creek and Deer Creek Falls. Because at high water—and the water had to be pretty high, and you might not have seen it there—the river starts going sideways, comes up on river left and sheets across to these cliffs on river right, and then dives down. So it’s sort of like a corkscrew thing laid on its side. The water comes up on the left, sheets across the river to the right, to the wall, and then drops in. Does that ring a bell at all?

BM: Not really. I mean, both Tapeats and Deer Creek—my remembrance of that was that they were both easy to deal with.

TM: Yeah. Yes, that's right.

BM: Getting out of the water at Tapeats Creek, to look at it, was easy. Getting out of the water at Deer Creek, was, if anything, easier still. And so I'm not an expert on those two rivers.

TM: Okay. No worries, I just wanted to check on it.

BM: As far as things being sucked under, I don’t remember that particularly.

TM: Okay. And again, if you ran it at 50- or 60,000, you might not have seen that. I think it kicks in about 70- or 80,000. And it really gave river runners a challenge, when the water ever got up that high and people were boating. Did you take out at Diamond Creek, or did you go all the way out to the reservoir out there at Pearce Ferry?

BM: We went all the way out.

TM: Okay.

BM: That's one thing. We had that giant raft that we had to deal with.

TM: Right.

BM: So it was easier to get out later. It was quite expensive, back in those days, to have a boat that size hauled out to the lake.

TM: Okay.

BM: So what we did is, we just got a couple of people who were total privates, and just asked them if they would be willing to pull us out. And they said, "Oh, okay." We saved what would otherwise have been a fairly expensive trip.

TM: Yeah. No, that's good to have friends help on things like that. It keeps the costs under control.

BM: Yeah. These were total strangers.

TM: Oh, nice.

BM: It was one of those things where you just sort of managed to get some strangers to haul you out.

TM: Fun.

BM: We left the truck and stuff down at the lake. We just let them haul us over to where it was. Had to deal with getting it out of it—that giant raft out of the water—which was okay. And it all worked out fine.

TM: Good. Brian, did you get a chance to boat some rivers with your daughter Shaina?

BM: Uh-huh.

TM: What did that mean to you as a father?

BM: I think it's really one of the most special things that I've ever had in my life. She's very good at it, she thinks very clearly about the best way to run rivers. She has a group of friends that are just really outstanding human beings to run with.

TM: Nice.

BM: And you have the opportunity to run together, and it's just really one of those things that's just truly special.

TM: Nice.

BM: Yes. It was very nice.

TM: Yeah. Well, we've been talking here about an hour and a quarter. Time has just zipped on by. Is there anything else you'd like to recount about your time boating?

BM: There's a couple of things. One is that I have run some really special rivers, such as the—some real tough ones up in Idaho. And in the process of doing that, I've learned how to maneuver in some just really tough and challenging rivers. And it looks different, it feels different—I still feel that that set of

rivers is very different from running in Idaho or Montana. And I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to do that.

TM: Are you thinking of the Main Salmon and maybe Hells Canyon of the Snake River?

BM: No.

SM: He's talking about the Selway and the Middle Fork.

TM: Selway and the Middle Fork. Thank you. Those are beautiful rivers.

BM: Yeah. And the Selway in particular is not only challenging, but also one of the most challenging rivers out there.

TM: Okay.

BM: Other than the Grand Canyon. And the other is—I have this love for the Arkansas. And there's a couple of places where there's these whirlpools (*laughs*) that are just amazing. And there's a lot of it that has really unique things about it. And because it's two hours, two and a half hours, to get there, you can really work it through there in some difficult stuff.

And it's one of those things that I always thought was delightfully challenging, was rivers that really fought my skills. Grand Canyon is certainly that way, but getting close to the—some of the really tough ones on the Arkansas—finding tough little bits like that, catching it at the right height, you have some really challenging rafting.

TM: Yes.

BM: And I've always enjoyed that.

TM: Nice.

BM: Yeah. I've always, I think, very lucky to be able to raft the hard ones, and learn to make the absolute best use of those tough ones.

TM: Brian, I wanted to ask you how the river impacted your glass blowing? How did the river impact your art?

BM: Well, my glass blowing, I think, was—the glass is one of those things that flows, and is also a challenge, especially from a flowing standpoint. And so it ended up being a real challenge to get that right, to get that smooth—get it to flow through the glass and down to the finished product. And I always really enjoyed the fact that it was a big challenge on that level.

TM: Nice. Yeah. So in a way, did river running make your glass blowing easier?

BM: Yeah. It did. There were certainly some difficult parts, because I had to find the flow of the glass—(*laughs*) and the glow of the glass—and bring it all together. And being able to get the whole thing to flow, getting the whole thing to begin with the flow of the glass and wind up with the finished pieces, was really a real challenge.

TM: Nice. Well, maybe this is a good place to wrap this interview up. What do you think?

BM: I think it's a good time.

TM: Okay. Well, with that, this will conclude a oral history interview with Brian Maytum and his daughter Shaina. My name is Tom Martin. Today is Tuesday, December 15th, 2020. And Brian, thank you so very much for this.

BM: My pleasure.