

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society Oral History

Interviewee: Clare Donato (CD)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Clare recounts leaving Grand Canyon to be a muleskinner at Olympic National Park, mid-1980s

Date of Interview: December 3, 2020, Part 4

Method of Interview: By telephone

Transcriber: Dannie Derryberry

Date of Transcription: Began December 29, 2020

Transcription Reviewer: Sue Priest

Keys: Lake Powell, Bob Sutton, Super Trash Company, Olympic National Park, muleskinner, Al Cunningham, Richard Hanson, Dave Reaume, Bob Mowbray, mule packing, Curt Sauer

TM: Today is Thursday, December 3rd, 2020. This is a Part 4 Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Clare Donato. My name is Tom Martin. Good morning, Clare, how are you today?

CD: I'm fine, thank you.

TM: Great. Clare, may we have your permission to record this oral history over the phone?

CD: You may.

TM: Thank you. End of Part 3, you told us about a number of the people that you'd worked with and some of the fascinating stuff that you did with the lumber on the Black Bridge and the Kaibab Suspension Bridge, things like that. Is there anything else you'd like to add to your time at Grand Canyon before you end up going to Olympic National Park?

CD: Well, I would like to clear something up because I think when I was going through some old photos I think I got my time wrong when I arrived at Grand Canyon. I think I said December of '79 and I believe it was December of '80 because my pictures don't start until early '81 at YACC Camp. So that would make a better timeline for my time in North Carolina life guarding and teaching swimming there.

TM: Okay, so that makes sense. I mean, if you've got that extra help thank you for clarifying that.

CD: Yeah. Well, I don't like to be wrong so. (laughs)

TM: Well, good. I'm glad you're setting the record straight. That's important. Anything else about Grand Canyon before we...

CD: Well, no. I bought a boat while I was there cause...

TM: Did you?

CD: ...I'd been going to Lake Powell quite a bit. I was trying to establish some credit and in order for me to do that I had to get a loan from the bank. And in order for them to give me a loan they wanted the balance of what I was buying in the bank account. I had found a boat I liked and so Mom to the rescue. She put the balance in the bank account and I was able to pay off the bank. When I bought my Volkswagen Bug she had paid for that and I paid her back in installments plus interest. (laughs) Cause she was like that. And so, yeah.

TM: Well, at least she was willing to give you a loan. (laughs)

CD: Yes, yes. She was. But I couldn't get my pickup truck. I had to buy this Volkswagen Bug. (laughs)

TM: And the boat was—I think we talked maybe about this last time—was an aluminum outboard?

CD: Yeah, it was an outboard. It was fiberglass, a little tri-hull, open bow. Maybe 15 foot. It wasn't big.

TM: With a trailer to go with it?

CD: Yep, trailer to go with it. And at this point I had sold my Volkswagen Bug and had bought the pickup so I was set for towing a boat.

TM: Great. And did you get that thing up to Lake Powell?

CD: I did.

TM: Where'd you go up there?

CD: Mainly we went to Lone Rock. My friend Caroline and I, who I had met in South Carolina lifeguarding, we would swim out to Lone Rock and back just, you know, for fun.

TM: How far is that?

CD: That's probably a mile.

TM: Wow.

CD: That's what we liked to do. So anyway, I don't remember much about being in the boat. I have a picture of being on the beach at Lone Rock with my truck and boat right there on the beach.

TM: Cool.

CD: Yeah. Bob Sutton sitting on the sand. I dated him for a little bit.

TM: Okay. What do you remember about Bob Sutton?

CD: Nice guy. He started the Super Trash Company in Tusayan, which I thought was genius cause it was definitely a service that needed to be supplied. You know, just a fun guy. Nothing serious going on.

TM: Where did the Super Trash... Where did they take their trash?

CD: You know, I'm not sure. I think they had a place outside of Tusayan, or they took it down... I really don't know. But I think that's where I met Chris, who was on trail crew for a while, cause I think she worked for him for a little bit.

TM: What was Chris's last name?

CD: Oh, I forget her last name. She's the one that ended up becoming a nurse, and also her sister who was the one we went to spend Christmas with in San Francisco. But I can't remember... (laughs) I can't remember her sister's name and I can't remember her last name.

TM: So now you've got a boat and you've got some skills. Are we in 1983 now or '84?

CD: I think '83. I left in March of '84. I had a pickup with a canopy and the boat and all my worldly possessions at the time and headed north. (laughs) That was kind of an epic trip in and of itself cause it took me quite a while to get up there. I was thinking maybe, you know, three or four days. I'd planned on taking my time, but not this much time. I had been taking birth control pills that I hadn't taken for a while. I ran the gamut of birth control, but anyway, I was back on the pill and I didn't like some of the side effects so I quit taking them. On the drive up I just started getting really anxious and when my leg would push in the clutch it was shaking. I pulled over and I'm like checking my pulse and it's like over a hundred beats a minute. It scared me.

TM: Yeah.

CD: I wrote on a piece of cardboard, you know, "help" (laughs). A trucker pulled over and I said, "I don't know what's going on but I'm real shaky and real nervous." I think now it was an anxiety attack but I didn't know what was happening at the time. I was in Idaho somewhere along the Snake River and he took me to the next truck stop and radioed in so some paramedics had met me there. They just, you know, talked to me for a while and took my vitals and I hung out for a while and calmed down. They just said, "I think that you just had a panic attack." I said okay. So the sheriff took me back to my rig and luckily everything was still there (laughs) cause it was... My whole world was sitting on the side of the road there.

TM: Yeah.

CD: So I just got in and just found a hotel. I called my dad and he said that I shouldn't have just stopped cold turkey off the birth control and that it was for a young person. I said, "Well, geez, I'm in my 20s, how young do you have to be?"

TM: Right.

CD: So anyway... He was thinking like 19. But anyway, I recovered of that, back on the road and I started to overheat. So I pulled over. I had lost my fan belt so I had overheated. I said okay, oh great. So now I hitched to the next truck stop (chuckles) and there was a whole bunch of truckers there cause they were waiting for the weigh station to close before they took off. I told them what was going on. I picked up a bunch of emergency fan belts. They're hard to get real tight because you have to hook them together. But anyway, one of them took me back and I limped back into that truck stop and one of them goes "Well, your radiator is busted." So because they're hanging around not having anything else to do, they take my radiator out and said, "There's an auto parts store, we can go get some solder and we can solder it up for you." I went, "Well, great. Let me just run to the bathroom." While I was in the bathroom they take off and they get the soldering stuff and come back. I said, "Well, did you get a fan belt?" Because that's why I wanted to go and get a fan belt which was the cause of my problems to begin with. They said, no, they didn't get the fan belt. So anyhow I had watched them take it out and they soldered. We put it back in and I bought out all the emergency fan belts that they had there and I got back on the

road. Well, I had to stop every so often to replace the emergency fan belt cause it kept flying off. I couldn't get it tight enough. It's like a Friday. I limped into Ontario, Oregon, which is on the border there of Oregon and Idaho. I found a hotel that had a grocery store across the street, next door to a bar (laughs), and I said, okay, I'm staying here. I called an auto place and said, "I need to have my radiator fixed it's got holes in it, and I need fan belts." He said okay. And they picked up and delivered. I took the radiator out and the guy showed up and seemed a little astonished that I'd done that. (laughs) I was like, well, I'm getting pretty good at it at this point.

TM: Yeah, exactly.

CD: So I gave it to him. It was the weekend so it wasn't coming back till Monday but, like I said, I had the grocery store and the bar and the hotel room so I was set. Monday, brought it back to me and I put it back in. The fan belt was all set now and on the road I got again. I'm traveling along I-84 now, along the Columbia River, and then all sorts of white smoke is happening behind me. So I pull into a gas station and I'm talking to them about what could be wrong. He says, "Well, you probably need a new head gasket after all the other problems you had." I said, "Okay, but can I make it to Port Angeles before I change that?" They said, "Yeah, I think so. You're just gonna be blowing white smoke the whole way." (both laugh). Said "Okay, I'm trying to make it to Port Angeles." I made it and I eventually pulled everything out of my truck and my mud room was now my auto parts area.

TM: Was it the head gasket?

CD: It was actually a cracked head. I ended having to go down to Olympia to find... Yeah, this was an ongoing saga. But that was after... I can't remember, I must have stayed at Richard's for a little bit because he showed me around, showed where I was gonna live. So it wasn't till I moved into my house that I took the truck apart.

TM: What was the housing like there?

CD: It was pretty nice. There was three houses behind the Elwha Ranger Station, which was where the mule barn was. So, yeah, I had gone up to the maintenance yard, which he was gonna show me around. I still had the truck blowing white smoke. I parked the truck up by his office and went in and he was gonna show me all around. We went out. The trail crew was actually building the barn when we went out and I met some of them. Then he showed me where I was gonna be living. There was three houses behind the ranger station. Al Cunningham was the ranger out there and he was living in one of them. Then there was a little house on the hill and the one I was gonna be in. Luckily Cunningham enjoyed working on vehicles. (laughs) That was lucky. Particularly old...he liked the classic old vintage guys. So Richard, you know, just showed me... There was Little Elwha Resort right on the river that had a little like lunch counter bar, and had Elwha River trips running out of it, had little cabins. That's not there anymore. Then he showed me the Consumption Junction Tavern, which was probably where he said I'd end up most of my off time there. He just kind of showed me around locally. We went back into the maintenance yard and here comes the chief ranger, I think he was the chief ranger at the time, and I can't remember his name. All I can think of is Woody. He came up to us and he goes "Well, welcome to Olympic National Park. Do you have any car insurance?" I went, "Yeah." My truck apparently had popped out of gear and rolled down the hill and hit another parked vehicle. (laughs)

TM: Ooh.

CD: So that was my beginning at Olympic.

TM: Was that Woody Smick?

CD: Boy, I don't know. Woody might have been short for his last name.

TM: Right. Okay.

CD: I really don't remember his name. I pretty much stayed away from the rangers as much as possible.

TM: Okay. Oh, my gosh, what a...

CD: Quite the beginning, yeah.

TM: Quite the beginning. Gee.

CD: So everybody was new, you know. It wasn't a very big place. Everybody knew that a woman was coming in to be the muleskinner. And then I tore apart my truck. So I don't know what they thought of me at first there.

TM: So this is a good time to kind of just make sure I get this right. As far as you can tell, had there ever been a female able to shoe mules and pack mules working for the Park Service that you were aware of in this period during the 1980s, going back in time as far as anyone could say?

CD: Right. Well, as far as I know there wasn't for the Park Service cause there was no stock program for like 10 years prior. I knew the guy, and the guys, that ran the program before I came to know them, and as far as I know they didn't have any women working with them. I know that—and this was way back like in the 50s or something—up in the Hogue Valley there was a woman, Minnie Peterson, who packed into the high country, but she did not work for the Park Service.

TM: Right, because I think that Fred Harvey might have had some female guides—you know, dude wranglers—but that's different from packing and shoeing.

CD: Yeah. So, not as far as I know.

TM: Okay. And Olympic was the park that didn't have a large animal program for 10 years prior, mule program, but Grand Canyon did.

CD: Yeah. And I don't know at Grand Canyon if I was or not, to tell you the truth, so...

TM: But we know when you were there so that...

CD: Yeah. There was nobody else. I mean, there were some women that came on after I got there but I was the only woman on the crew for a while. And I don't know if there was anybody preceding me.

TM: Yeah, okay. Well, at least we know when you were there and we have a time stamp for that, and so if anybody shows up earlier we can reassess, but otherwise you can claim that first in.

CD: Okay.

TM: So who did you work with there, who was the crew? Richard Hanson.

CD: Right. And then there was Blaine Dalton—all these guys are retired now—Carl Pangratz, Larry Lack. He's actually trail foreman right now. Gosh, my brain's just not working. Gary Vogt. It wasn't a big crew at that point. I mean, maybe six to eight people, and Richard was increasing it, you know, as we went. So more and more people came on. It actually kind of brought up a few people from the Grand Canyon for a season or two. Yeah, all those guys are gone now.

TM: And how many mules did you all have at the time?

CD: Well, at that particular point in time, zero. Richard and I were going down to California where they were having... What was that guy's name, Chamberlain? Anyway, there was a big mule ranch down there in Los Olivos.

TM: Where's that?

CD: Next to Solvang, south of Sacramento. They were having a drought so Richard was gonna get six mules for the price of four. So we were gonna drive down there and pick out six mules.

TM: I'm assuming then that the Park had trailers and trucks. How did that work out?

CD: Well, not yet. We drove over to Sedro-Wooley, to North Cascades National Park to borrow a truck and fifth-wheel trailer. I had never driven a fifth wheel. I don't think Richard had either. I had just driven my boat trailer. Any trailering we did at the Canyon, I did not drive. A boat trailer, or a bumper pull, pretty much tracks the same as your rear wheels of your truck. A fifth wheel cheats the corners somewhat. I found that out the hard way.

TM: Oops.

CD: (laughs) So still in the ominous beginnings here.

TM: Oh, dear. Oh, dear.

CD: So we go to Sedro-Woolley, which was where the maintenance for North Cascades is, and pick up the truck and trailer. I'm driving first and make a left turn out of the parking lot, which was fine, and then I come to the stop sign and I'm gonna make a right turn and there's traffic, you know, two-way traffic, so I make a right turn like I'm used to making a right turn. The trailer cheats and takes the stop sign out at ground level. So I'm going oops. (laughs) We pulled over. I had to walk back in and tell them what happened. I mean, this is like five minutes later. So they called somebody, it was either a cop or a ranger, I think it was a cop, came out and he goes, "Oh, you all don't worry about it. You do such good work for the Park. I'll take care of this." So we left and got on the freeway. The freeway was easy enough driving, there was no right-hand turns to speak of. But we needed gas so we pulled over. It was in the Kelso area of Washington State still, we were still there. There was a grocery store and McDonald's and gas station. We were gonna pick up something to eat and get gas. Richard wanted to get a book so he was gonna run over to the shopping complex. I had gone in and gotten some food from McDonald's. I was pulling out of the McDonald's parking lot and I was gonna go around and pick him up at the

shopping center. And here again, another little narrow, two-way street, and I'm making a right turn. My learning curve was a little off (laughs) cause I didn't get it on the stop sign. There were some big rocks that was landscaping the McDonald's area. I make a right turn and the trailer cheats and I high center on one of those rocks. So there I am in the middle of the road high centered on a rock. So, you know, traffic is having to go around me and I'm calling a tow truck or a cop. (laughs) Somebody called them. Anyway, the tow truck came and was able to pick the trailer up and winch the rock out from underneath it. When Richard had come back with his book, I'm like sitting there with my hands over my face going, "Oh, my goodness." (laughs) Richard pretty much gives him a government credit card and said, "Thanks a lot, man, charge whatever you need to." The guy goes, "Oh no. The whole thing was just more pleasurable than you can imagine (both laugh) so I'm not charging you anything."

TM: Oh, my gosh.

CD: Yeah. So a couple of nice people there. Then Richard goes, "Well, back in the saddle, you're still driving." You know, I'm scared to death now. But now I figured out that to make a right turn I gotta make it wide like I'm making a left turn. (chuckles) So after that we didn't have any more problems and went down there. It was a good thing the trailer was empty on both occasions.

TM: Yeah.

CD: So we went down. We picked out six mules and drove back without incidents.

TM: I'm assuming that the mules, they need to get out and walk around a little bit every now and then as you're driving down the road. How did you manage that?

CD: Well, we didn't. We just overnighted them somewhere where we could... Cause they were just halter broke. These weren't trained mules. We made sure that we overnighted in a small place that we could sort of run them back into the trailer because, you know, we could catch them maybe in a small area. So, no, we didn't let them out until we overnighted because of that.

TM: And then where... So you looked for a hotel that accommodates mules?

CD: Well, we found little farms and there was fairgrounds. You can overnight at fairgrounds...

TM: Oh, nice. Okay.

CD: ...for a nominal fee.

TM: So you just pull into an enclosure and open up the gate and encourage them to come out and they are...

CD: Well, we could lead them out. We didn't have them tied in there. The way this trailer was set up is we had to back them out. It was kind of funky but we managed and everybody made it home safe and sound. (chuckles)

TM: Cool. So now you've got a bunch of mules and they know what a halter is and will let you put it on but they're not used to pack saddles and doing anything else. Where do you start with that?

CD: I just started. I mean, we would catch them. We didn't have... We had to eventually build a small enclosure to be able to run them in because they were on like three acres and, yeah, they didn't want to be caught. I remember Richard bringing out the trail crew one morning and trying to make a human fence. (laughs) So anyway, we finally built a small enclosure that I could run them in and then I could corner them and catch them. I just started, you know, throwing some saddle blankets on them and just getting them used to stimulus and finally getting them saddled. I had one mule, Katy Mae, she was my toughest. She was the youngest. She didn't like being caught, she liked to kick. But, you know, she finally came around. One of the best things... We also got a couple of horses that were local backyard, spoiled horses, but they started out being who we were riding. One of the mules that we got was rideable. I ended up riding her for many years. But first I started out with one of the horses.

TM: And did you have to shoe all the mules?

CD: Yes. Luckily, one day...cause I had pulled all these saddles down from the attic and I had to clean them up because they'd been sitting up there for 10 years. I was doing that and I saw this little guy wandering around out there looking at the mules. I went out and I said, "Can I help you?" He goes, "Yeah." In fact, I had just finished shoeing one of the horses. One of these horses had a club foot and he seemed worse after I had put the shoe on than he was beforehand so I was trying to figure out what I was going to do about him. But anyway, this guy goes, "Yeah, well, I heard there was stock up here again and it had been a while." He was actually one of the guys that was running the show back when they had it. His name was Dave Reaume. Anyway, he was a horseshoer/farrier in town. I knew his name because his reputation had definitely preceded him. As soon as he said his name I grabbed him and I took him over to this horse that I had just shod that I didn't think was very good. We went in and he took that shoe off and reworked. He told me what he was doing and he put the shoe back on and the horse was walking better. I went, "Well, thank you, thank you." He said, "When are you doing these mules?" I said, "Well, I'm gonna start tomorrow but none of them have been shod before so I'm a little worried." He goes, "Okay, I'll be out tomorrow." He brought his friend who was a veterinarian, Dr. Bob Mowbray, and they were gonna help me. Bob had a sedation concoction so we could sedate the mules. Dave was going to actually do the shoeing and I was gonna be on the ropes, roping their feet up. We got through those six mules relatively easy. I will be forever indebted to both of them for that.

TM: So were they working for the Park Service or were they just...they wanted to see the Park Service program succeed?

CD: Well, Dave used to. He had used to work for the Park Service.

TM: But he quit and he was...

CD: Bob eventually... Yeah, I don't know if he quit or what happened there.

TM: Okay. But he was still in town. He hadn't gone anywhere.

CD: Yeah, he was doing his horse shoeing business. Dave's no longer with us, unfortunately, but... A mule kick took him out actually.

TM: Oh, wow.

CD: Bob became our vet for the Park mules. Bob was always in our life after that, which was a good thing. He was an excellent vet.

TM: Nice. I'm gonna go back to Dave for a minute. You mean he was killed by being kicked by a mule?

CD: He liked messing with the ranker stock, you know, even as an older man. He had gotten a mule. I had, like, run into him shortly before that and he said, "This mule, he's a tough cookie." I guess apparently he had been working with him and he turned him loose and the mule just whirled around and kicked him in his abdomen area. Dave being the tough guy that he always was didn't go to the doctor. I guess that night, you know, eventually... I mean, he was bleeding out.

TM: He bled out, yeah, right.

CD: He ended up going in to the emergency room and he was operated on but he died on the operating table,

TM: Oh, gee.

CD: I believe is the story. So, yeah, that was a sad deal.

TM: Yeah, yeah. So Bob was the town vet and he started working then for the Park Service just as the veterinarian when you needed stuff?

CD: Right.

TM: That's nice.

CD: Yeah. He was a temp. He had his own practice in town and then, yeah, he would come out whenever we needed him. He's retired now, so. We actually don't have a large animal vet around here. Well, I have one in Sequim. Yeah, they just want to mess with the small animals.

TM: Yeah, the money's in dogs and cats, I guess, and people's pets.

CD: Yes.

TM: So now you've got six mules and they've got shoes and they're starting to get a little comfortable with saddles and packs. When was the first time you took them out?

CD: Well, I tried packing them around just in the barnyard there first. Let's see. There was the Hayes River bridge was being constructed and that was 17 miles up the Elwha Trail.

TM: So the Hayes River Bridge, tell me about it. How long was it, what kind of project was it? I'm assuming this is out in the wilderness of Olympic, is that right?

CD: Yeah. It was 17 miles up the trail past Elkhorn, which was 12 miles, 12 to 13. It had a ranger station. Hayes had a ranger station, too, and I can't tell you how long it was but we used to... I think that was the first bridge. It's since been replaced. I think it was replaced the year I retired. The Hayes River Bridge was there my first year and then redone on my last year. It was just a ford across the river, or a foot-log for

the hikers and a ford for the stock. Then they built a bridge and they had to build a trail to tie in. But anyway, so that was a big project and we packed in basically all the hardware. We didn't do the lumber. They milled a lot of lumber on site. They dropped some trees and whatever. But we were doing that. Here we worked eight 10-hour days and was off for six. So within that eight days we were going up to Hayes River twice. It's 17 miles each way. We'd spend the night at Hayes and then back out. Doing that consistently helped get the mules into the work mindset.

TM: Yeah, I bet.

CD: But I had a wreck every time we went out. (laughs)

TM: Well, at least it wasn't a wreck on a trail with a cliff on one side of it.

CD: Oh, well, there was plenty of areas where you definitely didn't want to go. You were going down. It was actually harder than Grand Canyon cause for one thing the trails... We built the trails at Grand Canyon four feet wide where the stock went. This was just like a foot path.

TM: Oh, wow. So you mean through heavy trees?

CD: Yeah. Yeah.

TM: Okay, so there's a way to take out a leg if a mule ends up launching sideways and jams your leg into a tree.

CD: Yeah. We tried to keep the trees back, or the brush back. That was a constant job, too. The mules had to learn to keep the packs off the trees or they'd get bounced off. They learned that pretty quickly. But crossing creeks and... They had to do a lot of learning, which they did. And, like I say, twice an eight-day period, you know, you're doing 34 miles each time.

TM: Right. You do that twice, that's 68 miles in eight days.

CD: That whipped them into shape pretty good.

TM: Yeah, but it sounds like it could whip you into shape, too.

CD: Yeah, it was tough. It was tough and that's pretty much why I went running back to Grand Canyon after that season but... So we, you know, worked through it. I didn't get injured that year. I had a wreck every time. I learned a lot. I couldn't do things exactly like we did them at Grand Canyon. I had to learn how to make things a little more secure. I had some mules go off the trail and the load bounced over so that both of the panniers were now on one side. Luckily they were empty. They were off the trail and both of those, of course, they were on the downhill side, and I had to get down there. There was a guy I was working with, he was a friend of Richard's from Idaho that was working. His name was Che. I'm not sure of his last name. Richardson I want to say but I'm not sure about that. So I was with somebody but, yeah, it was an event every trip. It was a good thing I was young. (both laugh)

TM: So if you end up with a couple mules down a slope off a trail, how do you clean that wreck up?

CD: Well, you tie up your guys that you do still have and you gotta go down the bank. Like this particular time there was two mules off. Untie them, get their loads resituated, and then try and switchback them back up to the trail, tie them back into the string and off you go.

TM: At Grand Canyon I've heard that the packers have a handgun to put a mule down if there's a need to, if the wreck's bad enough.

CD: Right.

TM: Did you guys have that at Olympic as well?

CD: No, although I carried one anyway, but I just didn't tell anybody. That was one of the last things I tried to do before I retired was getting the packers legally able to pack a gun. I got the paperwork started and I don't think it ever got completed. I think what happens is they're packing a gun anyway because you're just not going to dispatch one of them cutting a throat or something. It only makes sense.

TM: And at the time fire arms in national parks would have been illegal.

CD: Right. Now everybody can pack one in except for the packers...

TM: Right, and it's like, hmm.

CD: ...and the trail crews. So it's pretty bizarre. That's why I really was working on getting that legalized. The rangers told me it shouldn't be a problem. You'd have to do some sort of training probably once a year or every two years or something just to...and keep the ammunition separate from the gun.

TM: Right. I mean, these are all tools and the hoops and hurdles you have to go through to make the use of the tools authorized.

CD: Right. But I don't think it's happened. I'm not sure about that but I tried.

TM: Well, thank you for trying.

CD: I never had to... I never had an animal on the trail die so I didn't have to have that experience.

TM: Good. So you survived the 1984 season?

CD: Yeah, amazingly.

TM: And you mentioned as well that—let's see, we've been at this for 48 minutes—you've got a river trip in the fall.

CD: Yeah. I told Richard I was headed back to the Canyon for the winter. He was the one who arranged the river trip. He says, "There's a trip going down in November if you want to get..." I said "You bet."

TM: So that was a trails trip?

CD: Was it a trails trip or just a trip? I think Curt Sauer was on that trip. I was staying with my friends Linda Knudsen. You know, I was gonna stay for the winter. Actually I tried to get back on Grand Canyon I had such a rough year up here.

TM: Did you tell Richard you were gonna do that?

CD: No, probably not. But they wouldn't hire me back anyway. By the time March came around I said, "Well, it's my job, I'll head back up." In the meantime I had done the river trip and a friend of mine and I went to Mexico in February. So I had some good times (laughs) before I headed up. Then it just got easier and easier as the mules got better and better. When we started adding a new or young mule, you know, we had the older ones to integrate them into so it wasn't such a hard thing to do six green mules. We'd had six seasoned mules and throw one green one in at a time.

TM: Right, right. Let's go back to the fall of '84, the November river trip, what else do you remember about that?

CD: I remember what was gonna be my first time going all the way through cause the last trip I had gotten out at Phantom. So I was pretty excited about that.

TM: Was this a do-it-yourself trip or was this a Park Service river trip?

CD: It was Park Service. So we might have done... I don't remember doing much trail work. We might have been. Kim Crumbo was on it. Ruthie. You don't remember her last name?

TM: Ruthie Stoner?

CD: She was one of the boatmen.

TM: Okay. Did she end up working at Phantom?

CD: I don't know. Yeah, I was supposed to have a boyfriend, well, a guy I'd been seeing, he was supposed to get on it too, but he didn't show so it was just me. And I don't remember, I really don't remember if it was a trails trip or not. The other thing I remember was the river was really high and they pointed out... You could see...cause it was the previous year where it really flooded and they had the big event at Crystal and had to evacuate people. You could see the waterline from that and that was still like, I don't know, 20 feet or so up from where we were. I think we were still in the 45,000 cfs. I remember scouting Crystal and we pretty much skirted it. You can skirt it to the right there. But it was fun. I mean, you know, I'm on the water and happy. (laughs)

TM: Fun.

CD: You know, I'd get to row in dead places.

TM: In the flat water? Uh huh.

CD: Umm hmm. So I enjoyed it. I got to know Curt a little better. He's law enforcement and you know how I feel about that so. But I got to know him better so he was more of a person to me.

TM: Nice. I mean, I would assume that during your career you would meet people in law enforcement that actually were pretty fun.

CD: Yeah, you know, I got better. (laughs)

TM: Yeah, yeah. After what you'd been through there's a reason to be a little gun shy but...

CD: Umm hmm.

TM: ...this is a little different so, yeah. Cool. And then Curt ended up in Olympic as well.

CD: Yeah. I forget that timeline, but he was also at Stehekin. I remember Richard and I went to visit them in Stehekin. Richard's daughter might have been there, too, Heather. I don't know what year that was.

TM: In the 80s maybe?

CD: Yeah, it was in the 80s somewhere. But, yeah, Stehekin's beautiful.

TM: And you got there on the boat, took the ferry out there? Is that how that worked?

CD: Yeah, yeah. He had a really nice house on the lake. The lake was really cold. It was like July 4th. I remember doing a hike out there on I want to say Horseshoe Basin, but I don't know for sure. He showed us around. It was a beautiful place.

TM: Nice. Well, maybe this is a good time to wrap up this part and next time there's a couple rivers that have some funny names I want to know about and other stories of packing in Olympic.

CD: Okay.

TM: All right. Well, with that, then, let's wrap up Part 4 Oral History interview with Clare Donato. Today is Thursday, December 3rd, 2020. My name is Tom Martin and, Clare, thank you so very much.

CD: Thank you.