

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Richard "Dick" Griffith (DG)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

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Interview note:

TM: Today is the 31st of March. We're at the home of Tom Martin and Hazel Clark. This is a Grand Canyon Historical Society oral history interview with Richard 'Dick' Griffith and we're in Flagstaff, Arizona. Dick, what year were you born?

DG: 1927, June 27th.

TM: Where were you born?

DG: Fort Collins, Colorado. In a farm 8 miles east of Fort Collins.

TM: So you were born at home then?

DG: I was born at home.

TM: What did your parents do?

DG: They were farmers and ranchers, because we moved to Wyoming when I was 8, I think.

TM: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

DG: I had one brother.

TM: So you grew up on the ranch, then?

DG: On the ranch in Wyoming, basically, yeah.

TM: Horses and cattle, working cattle?

DG: Lots of horses. Twenty horses, 20 head of cattle, a few sheep, turkeys, goats, pigs. We had the works.

TM: How big a property?

DG: Not very big. It was 320 acres under cultivation and about 8000 acres under the Taylor Grazing Act for the livestock. It took all of it, too. It was poor country.

TM: And you were helping out?

DG: Me, I was helping out? Oh yes. You better believe it? [Laughs] It was a hard life. A lot of riding to do, work with a team of horses. We didn't have any mechanized equipment at all.

TM: How young were you when you were working with the team?

DG: Oh, 9 years old, 10 years old.

TM: So working a team of horses was pretty easy?

DG: They could do everything. They put up/stack hay, plough, rake, cut grass, they can do everything. Even pick spuds. We had probably 5 acres of cultivation for potatoes. We had a thing that scooped out the potatoes and put them up on a rack & cleaned off the dirt and dumped the clean spuds at the back end. Pulled by horses, pulled by 3 horses in fact. It was heavy going.

TM: And you were riding that train, running that machine?

DG: I actually walked along side.

TM: 5 acres. How long would it take you?

DG: It'd take 2 or 3 days to do that, at least.

TM: To harvest in the potatoes?

DG: Yeah. Then we had to come in behind and pick 'em up and put 'em in gunny sacks. 100 pound sacks.

TM: Ok, and then where would the produce go? Would you keep stuff for yourself and take the rest out to the railhead?

DG: No. That was a cash crop. We made a little money. I think we got \$3 a 100 or something like that.

TM: How did you get interested in boating?

DG: In boating? I read an article in I think it was *Saturday Evening Post* about Buzz Holmstrom. I think he made that trip in '38.

TM: '37-'38...yeah.

DG: Somewhere in there. That was about the time that I was doing lots of reading.

TM: You were 10-11 years old?

DG: Yeah. So I got interested. Then I saw pictures on National Geographic of Norm Nevills' boats.

TM: Did you have any rivers nearby the ranch?

DG: We didn't have any lakes, no rivers, no nothing.

TM: Did you know how to swim?

DG: I was a good swimmer.

TM: How'd you learn how to swim?

DG: I had learned in the Platte River. Yup, I was a good swimmer. In fact, on the Green River, when we went down the Green river, I'd swim across the Green River every night after supper and back.

TM: Just for fun?

DG: Just for fun.

TM: How cold was the water?

DG: It was warm in those days. It wasn't cold like it is now.

TM: So you got interested in rivers from looking at these articles and then what did you do?

DG: Well, I was on the ranch and you know, it was long days and it was just a lot of hard work. I had to milk cows twice a day and I hated that. So I said I had to get out of here. So I built a boat. That's the way I escaped.

TM: How old were you?

DG: I think I was probably 20 when I did that.

TM: What kind of boat did you build?

DG: I built one I copied out of National Geographic. One of Norm's boats he used on the San Juan. It didn't have any dimensions on it, so I build mine five feet too short.

TM: How long was it?

DG: About ten foot.

TM: Ten feet long? Great. Did you name the boat?

DG: Yeah. Someone named it 'The Padre'. I don't know where they got it but that's what they wanted to call it.

TM: Where did you get the material to build the boat?

DG: At the time, I was working at a chicken hatchery and I made little money. So I bought marine plywood and oak and I very carefully put it together.

TM: Did you use nails or screws or glue?

DG: I used glue. I used glue everywhere. You mix it up and put it on all the joints. Glued the whole thing together.

TM: Did you screw it together as well?

DG: No. Just glue.

TM: Where was the first water you got the boat out on?

DG: First time I used the boat was at Shiprock, New Mexico.

TM: So, never been in the water before?

DG: Never been in the water. Didn't try it out. Didn't know anything. I couldn't even row across the lake, I don't think.

TM: What'd you use for oars?

DG: At that time I had homemade oars but they were too heavy and poorly balanced. So they were kind of awkward. I had some I bought and they worked a lot better. They were lighter weight but they broke all the time. So it was a tradeoff.

TM: How did you get to Shiprock with your boat?

DG: My dad had a Studebaker and he put a frame on it, up on top. We put the boat on top.

TM: What did your dad think of all this?

DG: You know my dad was pretty supportive of me. He hauled me to the river and dropped me off. He says, "This is crazy. Why don't we just get a horse and a packhorse and you just follow the river on a horse. That's the proper way to go down a river."

TM: What were you thinking when he said that?

DG: Well, I've got to try this way first. See if it works.

TM: So this is Shiprock, New Mexico. How long, how many days did it take you to get there from Wyoming?

DG: Actually, We were living at Colorado at that time. So I just took a day to get there, really, from Colorado.

TM: To drive over with the Studebaker.

DG: Yeah.

TM: And then what happened?

DG: Well, I put the boat in the water. My dad went home and I made it to Bluff. Actually I didn't know how to run the boat. I had a lot of troubles because I couldn't get to shore. Once I got to shore, I couldn't get away from shore...you know, that kind of thing. And when I got to Bluff, I ran into Harry Aleson. He had a Boy Scout troop he was taking down the river. I went with him from Bluff to Mexican

Hat. Spend a whole day with him. At the end of the day I was a boatman. It's that simple. It only takes 20-30 minutes to make a boatman.

TM: And you were by yourself on this?

DG: I was by myself until I got to Mexican Hat. Then my friend Jim Gifford came in and we went down together to Lees Ferry.

TM: Do you remember if Harry said anything when you showed up coming down the river in the Padre?

DG: No, he just smiled. Harry thought that was pretty interesting, of course. Me all show up all of a sudden like that. The new kid on the block is what I was.

TM: What did you remember of Harry, the one day you spend with him that day and the Boy Scouts?

DG: I really didn't talk to him that much. We were so busy packing boats and stuff like that. He was busy. He just showed me the Galloway Method and after he showed me that method, then I was set to go.

TM: Describe that method.

DG: It's where you look downstream and row backwards. The current pushes you back and forth wherever you wanna go, if you do it right. If your boat is quartered right. You know how it goes. It goes back and forth. You can miss rocks. You can do anything. Get to shore. Get away from shore.

TM: So from Shiprock down to Bluff, had you been rowing kind of looking over your shoulder?

DG: Yeah. I was rowing downstream trying to figure how to miss stuff. It didn't work. I hit a tree once and tore off an oarlock, a submerged tree. I couldn't miss anything I wanted to. I stopped at Aneth, there was a trading post there.

TM: You got some supplies there?

DG: Yeah. I got a little food there at the trading post. I don't know if Aneth is still there anymore or not. Is it still there?

TM: Yes.

DG: There was nothing but a trading post there when I was there and a lot of Navajo Indians.

TM: Did you see anybody else on the water between Shiprock and Bluff?

DG: Never. In fact I've never seen anybody on the water except Norm Nevills, Harry Aleson and Bus Hatch. That's the only ones I've ever saw on the water. Ever. Can't think of anybody. Oh, and Art Green with his airboat. Saw him. That's it.

TM: So by the time you got to Bluff, before you met Harry, were you thinking your dad's idea about going along a river with a horse might have been a better idea?

DG: No, I was never going to go backwards. Never! I had enough of them damn horses.

TM: So Harry taught you ok, face your danger, look downstream, row downstream and...

DG: And always keep your boat pointed towards the danger spot so you can row away from it. That's the secret he told me. You always got the boat quartered so if you get in trouble, you can quickly row away.

TM: There's some pretty wonderful scenery there between Bluff and Mexican Hat. But upstream from there, there's a lot flat water and low hills.

DG: It's a lot of flat water.

TM: What did you think of all that run by the time you got to Bluff versus by the time you got to Mexican Hat?

DG: Mexican Hat got a little bit... You know, in those days, you had sand waves. Last time I was down the San Juan there were no more sand waves. They're gone. And those waves are big, 2 or 3 feet high. They were fun in fact.

TM: So you got to Mexican Hat and who came and joined you there?

DG: Jim Gifford.

TM: How did you know Jim?

DG: We went to School together, Colorado School of Mines. Classmates.

TM: Whose idea was it for him to come join you?

DG: We decided to travel together.

TM: How did he get to Mexican Hat? That's out in the middle of nowhere.

DG: I don't know how he got there. Because getting there in those days, you had to hitchhike. You couldn't go across Monument Valley very easy 'cause it was just a plain sand dirt road. And coming from Blanding and Monticello... That's the way I got in there, was by hitchhiking. When I went and joined up with Harry in later years, that's how I got there.

TM: Was just hitching in. Alright. So then what happened?

DG: We went down the river and we stopped at Aztec Canyon, of course.

TM: How did you know to stop at Aztec?

DG: We didn't. We just kept looking at all the canyons. I don't know how come we knew, 'cause there were no maps or no river guides.

TM: Had Harry pulled ahead of you by then with the Boy Scouts?

DG: No. He was behind us. When we got there, we was out of food. So I left Jim at the boat and I walked up to the lodge.

TM: That was the Navajo Mountain Lodge?

DG: Yeah. That was Navajo Mountain Lodge. I got some food and then walked back.

TM: And how many miles is that?

DG: I don't know. It took me all night to get there.

TM: 20 miles at least, maybe?

DG: Yeah. I was able to follow the trail. They said, "How'd you find your way up here?" when I got there. I said, "Gee, them horses have horseshoes on and they leave a good trail. I can follow it in the dark."

TM: Was there a moon to help you?

DG: Yeah. There was a moon. I could follow the horse because they had shoes on. I could follow them no problem. And when I got back, Art Green pulled in. His inaugural run with his airboat. And Norm Nevills pulled in. He was there.

TM: And you hadn't met either of these guys before?

DG: I wasn't overly anxious to meet either one of them. I didn't really meet them, they just happened to be there. I was the new kid on the block. They kind of looked down their nose at me.

TM: There you were in the Padre, this little built boat, you and Jim. What were you thinking when these two other trips showed up? One from downstream in a airboat and the other one from upstream in his San Juan boats.

DG: San Juan boats. I didn't think anything about it, really. In the register at Rainbow Bridge, we made fun of Norm's drawings about Thirteen-foot Falls and said, "Where are they?" or something like that. He got mad at us. Really mad at us. He chewed us out.

TM: How did he catch you to do that?

DG: He caught us camping down below. He caught up with us. We were sleeping in our sleeping bags one early morning. He woke us up.

TM: Were his passengers there with him?

DG: No. He'd come over to the bank. He was all by himself. That was my first run-in with Norm.

TM: What did he say?

DG: He said, "Stupid kids" or something like that. He got mad because we changed some of his drawings. He had every good reason, I guess. What the heck. We shouldn't have done it, but we did. We were just kids.

TM: What else do you remember about Norm?

DG: I ran into him in later years when I worked for Harry.

TM: Let's hang on to that thought for a minute. But I'm just thinking about that first contact. It's late 1940s. You are there at Rainbow Bridge.

DG: That was '48.

TM: 48? Ok. The next day, there's Norm waking you guys up at 0-dark-30.

DG: He woke us up and he just... He did all the talking. We just listened to him and that was the end of it.

TM: What do you remember about Art Green and his big airboat?

DG: Art Green? The only thing I remember about him is he was complaining it used up all his gas to get up there and he didn't have any to get back 'cause he needed it for steerage. I don't know how he got back down the river. I guess he had enough. He'd turn it back on and steered when he had to, but he had a downstream current. He was complaining that he was... That big 450 horsepower Pratt engine, it's a big engine on that thing.

TM: Was it loud?

DG: Very loud. You could hear him coming for miles.

TM: So then you guys had some food and you'd met a couple of other riverrunning parties and then what happened?

DG: We just went on down to Lees Ferry. Called my dad to come pick us up and come pick me up.

TM: What did your dad think about all this?

DG: He just kind of smiled. He was ok.

TM: And put the Padre back on top of the Studebaker?

DG: Yup. Hauled us home.

TM: So after that first trip, what were your thoughts about river running and the whole experience?

DG: Of course, I wanted to keep going. Harry had come forth and needed a boatman. So after that, I started working for Harry.

TM: What year was that?

DG: I have a hard time remembering all this, but I'm sure it was '49 and '50 that I worked for Harry.

TM: What was that like? What do you remember of that '49 trip, working for Harry. Was it just you and Harry or were there other boatman there?

DG: You know, I can't remember another boatman. I think it was just I and Harry, just the two of us, 'cause there were no other boatman. Like I said, it seemed like we had more boats and that, but I can't remember any other boatmen. You know, we had probably 4 or 5 people in a boat. Those big ten-man

boats, you know, you could put a lot of people... And we didn't have a bunch of gear. There was no tables, no chairs, no coolers, no stoves. Just some spuds and some onions in the bottom of the boat, a slab of bacon and some flour to make bread with. There was very little. You'd sit in the sand when you ate. No chairs. You just built a fire and cooked on it. Cowboy coffee... all that good stuff.

TM: Dutch oven cooking?

DG: Dutch oven cooking. Strictly Dutch oven.

TM: And they rattled around in the bottom of the boat?

DG: Yeah. We just set them in the bottom of the boat. No big deal. Put them in, loading the boat in the morning. Few minutes and you are on your way again.

TM: What kind of bedrolls did you have?

DG: I had just blankets rolled up.

TM: How'd you keep them dry?

DG: Didn't matter. The sun was hot. If they got wet, they dried out.

TM: And the passengers, did they bring a lot of gear?

DG: No, they'd come with a little bag, a sleeping bag and that was it. Not like today. They had very little gear.

TM: Harry was running trips then from Bluff?

DG: Bluff to Lees Ferry. Then we'd turn around, load up the boats and come back and we'd do another trip.

TM: What kind of vehicles did you use for the shuttle?

DG: He had a Dodge Power Wagon because we had a hard time getting across Monument Valley with all that stuff.

TM: Because of the sand?

DG: Yeah, sand.

TM: The road was one lane or two lanes?

DG: One lane.

TM: And not paved?

DG: Oh no. Just a single track in the sand.

TM: You guys would cross the river at the wooden bridge at Mexican Hat?

DG: Yeah, at Mexican Hat.

TM: And drive on up to Bluff?

DG: To Bluff, right.

TM: You ran two trips with him back-to-back that summer?

DG: Yeah. Every year I ran two trips with him. Maybe even more.

TM: What else do you remember about Harry?

DG: The main thing I remember about him is he had a peptic ulcer. He couldn't eat anything. Poor guy was starving all the time. He could only eat milk toast. Finally killed him.

TM: So he was hungry but wasn't eating much.

DG: Couldn't eat much.

TM: Was he hiking? Did he take people hiking?

DG: Oh yeah. We hiked Forbidden Canyon, went up all those places. Hiked up Rainbow Bridge. I don't know if he went with us to Rainbow Bridge. I probably took the clients to Rainbow Bridge. Because I took the rope and then I climbed Rainbow Bridge and then I threw the rope off and then I drug them all up on top of the bridge.

TM: What else do you remember about Harry? Did he crack jokes? Was he quiet?

DG: No. He was a very quiet man.

TM: Did he ever tell you anything about his history? About where he was from?

DG: Not really. He maybe talked once or twice about that trip he made with Georgie White in a small boat, when they swam down the lower end of the Canyon. Maybe that. No, Harry didn't talk much. He wasn't like Norm. Norm was an entertainer. They both got to Aztec Canyon at the same time, or we got there just ahead of Norm. And, of course there was a lot of friction between the two of them because we had inflatables and he had the wooden boats. Norm says inflatables will never make it, you know. He looked down on inflatables.

TM: What did Harry say from his inflatable boat?

DG: Harry, he got to Aztec Canyon. We were there ahead of him. There was a lot of conflict going on.

TM: This was 1949?

DG: Yeah '49.

TM: 'Cause Norm would die later that year.

DG: He died later that year, yeah. So it was '49. He died in the fall, right?

TM: Yeah. And there was conflict going on between those two guys back then.

DG: Norm was an egomaniac and maybe Harry was getting close to it.

TM: How do you mean? Can you give me examples?

DG: I can't give you an example. Norm was a showman, there's no doubt about that. At Aztec Canyon, when we were there, he would drag a bunch of driftwood up the cliff, set it on fire at night and then throw it off.

TM: He liked his fire.

DG: Yeah, he liked his fire. I think Harry went down the river once with him but I don't know where or when. He might even went through the Grand Canyon with him.

TM: A little bit.

DG: He could have.

TM: Hiked out at Hermit, did Harry.

DG: He did? He went down the Grand Canyon with him?

TM: Yeah. I think he started at Lees. Don't hold me on that, I'd have to go back and look. But I remember he hiked out at Hermit. He could have actually joined the trip at Phantom.

DG: But they didn't get along on this trip 'cause they had two different personalities. Harry was quiet and Norm was all over the place. He was in everybody's face, you might say.

TM: Was that the year, '49, that you met Izzy?

DG: Yeah, '49 was when I met Isabelle/Izzy.

TM: Was that on your first or second trip?

DG: I can't remember, but it was '49 because that's the year we started in Green River, Wyoming.

TM: And that was after you met her?

DG: Yeah.

TM: So tell me about how you met her and how that all happened.

DG: She found out that I was going to start this big trip and she wanted more than just the San Juan and Glen Canyon. She wanted to do more. I couldn't take her because I just had the one boat and Jim was gonna go with me. No way could I take her. Besides she didn't know how to swim. So then she popped up and said she had checks she was using for bookmarkers. So she bought a ten-man boat, oars and food, and pickup truck to move all that stuff. So we were set.

TM: Let's back up a little bit into that first trip that you met her on in '49. She couldn't swim?

DG: She learned how to swim but, she could... She went 20 feet before she sunk. Let's put it that way.

TM: Then you jumped into the water to save her, is that right?

DG: Yeah. We were going down Glen Canyon and the wind was blowing upstream. She was just a few feet from the boat and all of a sudden the wind come up so strongly we couldn't go downstream anymore. She was going downstream with the current and there's no way I could get to her with the boat. So I jumped in and swam downstream and held her up long enough for boats to get to us.

TM: So you weren't wearing a life jacket and she wasn't?

DG: We never wore life jackets.

TM: Nobody? Neither Harry nor Norm?

DG: No. You just didn't wear 'em. If you come to a bad rapid you put it on, but there's no rapids in Glen Canyon.

TM: So you had them but you just weren't wearing them?

DG: I can't even remember having them, to be honest with you, but we might have somewhere on the boat. I don't remember any life preservers. I would have to look, see if we had any life preservers.

TM: So you met Isabelle. Her last name was?

DG: Gadel. She was a Hungarian. Her parents immigrated from Hungary. They were Hungarians.

TM: Where was she living at the time?

DG: Milwaukee.

TM: Were you taken by her at first sight?

DG: No. I didn't like girls. I had nothing to do with them.

TM: So how was it that besides buying a truck and a boat and everything else...

DG: It was money. [laughing] Strictly money, because I didn't have any money at all. She had these checks and she had a job. I didn't have anything.

TM: So in 1949 after the two trips with Harry, you and Jim and Izzy went boating again. Where did you start?

DG: Green River, Wyoming.

TM: Where was your intended destination?

DG: We wanted to go as long as we could. We didn't know how far we could get. We were just going to give it a try.

TM: Tell me about that trip?

DG: It went good until we lost our boat in Disaster Falls 'cause we were using... We didn't have a guide book. We didn't have any maps. So we never knew where we were for sure. We were using Kolb's book to figure out where the rapids were. We didn't read it close enough because it certainly mentioned Disaster Falls. Just like Powell, we ran around the corner, there it was.

TM: Who was driving the boat?

DG: I was in the inflatable and Jim was in the wooden boat. Of course the wooden boat went end-for-end and crashed into some rocks. Of course Jim didn't have a life preserver on. We did have life preservers but we just didn't use them. I think that was it, on this trip anyway. So the boat hung up in some rocks and one bulkhead was busted open. So I swum out to it, tied a rope to it and we pulled it in. Put it up on the shore. That's it.

TM: Were you able to get any gear off the boat?

DG: We got part of our gear out of the one bulkhead. We lost a lot of film. Some stuff. It didn't matter. Food...

TM: So now there's 3 of you on one boat?

DG: On one boat, right.

TM: Head on downriver?

DG: Went on downriver and we got to Green River, Wyoming, not Wyoming but Utah. We had parent troubles. Jim's mother said, "You got to come home because I'm sick." Actually she was worried about him being on the river. Isabelle's parents wanted her to come home, find a nice Hungarian boy or something. And my parents says, "Well, Jim's gone, you can't go down the river by yourself with a girl." You know, so we had all kinds of parents. We should have never called them but we did. So basically I threw Isabelle off the boat and went on by myself after that.

TM: Let's back upriver a bit. In Vernal, did you run into any other... When you ran Lodore, down through Disaster Falls, lost the Padre there, did you run into other river runners on that trip in '49?

DG: No. I didn't run into Bus Hatch until a year later. I was going through Lodore Canyon. I ran into Bus. He had a bunch of dam builders onboard and I run into him. It was in the fall of the year. I run into him just this one time.

TM: In 1950. So back to Green River, Utah. Jim's got to go, so he leaves. You throw Izzy off the boat and then you head on down solo in this raft.

DG: Yup.

TM: And then what happens?

DG: Of course, Isabelle was hitchhiking and I was on the boat. I come to Cataract Canyon. In those days Cataract Canyon was a challenge, a real challenge to get through. It was 40 rapids in 40 miles. You just about had to go down and check every one of them before you went through them.

TM: Did you do a lot of scouting?

DG: I did a lot of scouting. I didn't go through any rapid unless I looked at it first because you didn't know what was gonna happen. They were so lined up together, if you had troubles in one, you're going to get swept in the other one. You had to unload the boat of water 'cause it's a bucket boat. So you had to get to shore and take all the water out before you ran the next one. So you had to have everything figured out. Where to stop, backwaters, the whole works.

TM: How long did it take you to get through?

DG: It took 4 days to get through Cataract Canyon, 40 miles.

TM: Did you see anybody else there?

DG: I saw Kenny Ross at Dark Canyon Rapids. He had some Boy Scouts that came down Dark Canyon. First time anybody went down Dark Canyon.

TM: So they had hiked in?

DG: Yeah. They hiked in.

TM: What do you remember about Kenny Ross?

DG: He was a boatman. After he saw what I was doing, then he really got interested in inflatables and running Cataract Canyon. I found out later he started a rafting business out of Bluff. Jon Lindberg was with him, by the way, on that trip. So I met Jon Lindberg.

TM: What was he like?

DG: He was... Of all the kids that were on that trip, he was the only one went through Dark Canyon Rapids with me.

TM: Did you offer? Say, "Hey, I'll take y'all if you wanna go."

DG: I only had two life preservers, but I would have taken them.

TM: What were your thoughts when you headed on down? You cleared Cataract Canyon and you were in Glen Canyon and then what happened?

DG: I got to Hite. And of course when I got to Hite, there was Isabelle sitting there waiting for me. She hiked to Grand Junction and then they turned around and she came back and hitchhiked to Blanding or Monticello, I forget which place. Then she managed to hitchhike in there. She caught a ride with a Mormon who had the farm there. She stayed with them and waited for me to get there.

TM: What were your thoughts when you saw her?

DG: [laughs] I don't know if I was happy or glad. I can't remember. I had mixed emotions to say the least. So we stayed. I helped him put up the hay because they had a team of horses. Everywhere I go, I got to put up hay. My lifestyle, I guess. But, I cut the hay for him, raked it all up, and we hauled it in and stacked it. Then they supplied us with fruit and all kinds of melons. I had a whole bowl full of that stuff. It was neat. Hite was a Shangri-La, really was. It was flowers and beautiful trees, and vegetables and fruit. Just a wonderful place. That all got flooded out, of course.

TM: How many people were living there at the time, roughly? Do you remember?

DG: It was a whole family. It was a blended family. There was 3 or 4 kids.

TM: And the ferry was in operation there?

DG: Art Chaffin operated the ferry.

TM: Did you talk to him at all?

DG: Oh yeah. In fact, I even got enlisted to dig a well for him. On the side of the river we dug. I went down in the bottom. I think I got down about twenty feet. It was in sand. We got down and just touched water and we had to go deeper but it started caving in on us. So Art says, "We got to stop, it's going to cave in on you", he said. So we got out of there before it did.

TM: Was it lined or was it just a hole in the ground?

DG: It wasn't lined. We had a windlass up on top. We'd wind the stuff up.

TM: Haul the buckets of dirt out?

DG: Yeah. Haul buckets of dirt out. Art was a nice guy. I liked him. Art and his wife, neat people. I don't know whatever happened to him. But they got flooded out of course, like everybody else there.

TM: You picked up one of the rancher's sons, wasn't it?

DG: Yeah. It was Farnham Young. Part of the Young dynasty, I guess. There's lots of them in Utah.

TM: Then there were two guys and a gal.

DG: It looked a lot better to our parents. Looks were very important to my parents.

TM: That's good.

DG: Yeah. That's good. Made it more palatable for them, anyways. He wanted to learn how to row a boat anyways, so I took him with us.

TM: Then you ran down through Glen?

DG: Went through Glen.

TM: Did you see any other river runners at that time?

DG: There was one guy that was behind us. He had taken Boy Scouts. Boy Scouts were pretty popular in Glen Canyon. His name was Stu Campbell. I don't know if you have ever heard of that. He was taking a bunch of Boy Scouts. I can't remember if he was ahead of us or behind us. I run into him again. No, that was the next trip. Discount him.

TM: You did some hiking around through Glen?

DG: We didn't do much. We just went up Rainbow Bridge and that was it. Then turned around and went back. That's all the hiking because I had to get back to school and Isabelle had to get back to her job. I think by that time they'd fired her because she'd been gone so long. [laughing] She had to get a new job.

TM: Did you guys get married then? How'd that work out?

DG: Yeah. We married. We got through the 30th of August and one year later on the 30th, just by coincidence, we got married one year later.

TM: In 1950?

DG: Yup, 1950.

TM: Then you went back to work for Harry again another summer in 1950?

DG: I don't think so.

TM: So you just worked for him for that one year, '49?

DG: I don't know. I could have gone back and worked for him in '50 because I had to go to science summer camp. I think I did go back to work for him in '50. Yeah, I did. I had to. In fact, I made a couple trips.

TM: So by that time Norm had died in the fall of '49. Art was still driving his airboat in there.

DG: He was still driving his airboat, yeah. But every time I saw him, the only time I saw him was that one time.

TM: In '49?

DG: With Norm sitting on... Every time Norm was on the boat.

TM: What was Norm doing on Art's boat?

DG: He was fishing. Everybody fished in those days.

TM: Did you? What kind of fish did you catch?

DG: Catfish. You'd stop anywhere you wanted to. You'd catch catfish.

TM: How big were they?

DG: They were nice for eating. About this big.

TM: Maybe a foot, foot and a half?

DG: Yeah, it was good eating. Good fish.

TM: So in '50 a couple trips maybe with Harry. Then another trip with Izzy? You guys got married in August.

DG: We got married in August. We did go down Lodore Canyon in September in 1950. That's when I met Bus Hatch. In fact I left my boat with Bus in his garage.

TM: In '50?

DG: In '50 yeah. Poor Bus. He had a single car garage. It was crammed full of everybody's else's stuff.

TM: This was in Jensen or Vernal?

DG: I want to say Vernal but it could have been Jensen. I don't know where he lived. Was it Vernal or Jensen?

TM: Vernal maybe.

DG: I think it was Vernal.

TM: So that was '50. What do you remember of that Lodore run in '50?

DG: Oh, it was low water, it was easy. No problem getting through Hell's Half Mile. That was the bad rapid, Hell's Half Mile. A long one.

TM: Did you portage? How did you get down through it?

DG: We just run through. No problem.

TM: And Izzy was wearing a life jacket?

DG: Yeah, because she doesn't swim. She tried to. I've got lots of pictures of her going down the river no life jacket.

TM: Then you guys thought to come back in '51?

DG: We came back in '51 and that's when Johnny Schlump joined us.

TM: How'd you get the idea to start at Green River, Wyoming?

DG: 'Cause we were still trying to duplicate Powell's trip.

TM: How'd you get the idea to do that?

DG: Dellenbaugh's Canyon Voyage, I read that. I've still got a first edition of that book. I guess that's how it got started.

TM: When did you guys rendezvous out there at Green River, Wyoming?

DG: I was in Laramie at that time. John lived in Laramie, also. That's where we met up. Laramie, Wyoming.

TM: You guys were friends then?

DG: No.

TM: How'd you talk him into going along?

DG: I just heard that he wanted to go down the river so I called him up. Good small town, you know. Word gets around.

TM: So he bought a boat?

DG: He bought a boat.

TM: Rubber?

DG: Rubber.

TM: And you already had a boat that Bus was storing for you?

DG: Yup. I already had a boat. I forgot how I picked it up. But eventually I picked it up. Got it out of his garage.

TM: When did you guys launch on the Green, roughly?

DG: We launched July 1, something like that.

TM: So after the runoff of the year then?

DG: Yeah.

TM: What do you remember about that trip?

DG: It was just a good trip. It was really no big problems. We had problems getting through Hell's Half Mile because we decided to line the boat and always went first. I snubbed my boat on a tree and of course, when it stopped in the current, the whole river jumped into it. It was so heavy we couldn't handle it anymore and it got hung up in some rocks. But being rubber, it squeezed together like a wiener and went right. If I had a rowing frame, it'd still be there. It would have been stuck.

TM: How did you attach your oars to the boat?

DG: It was pretty crude. If you ever saw a picture you would realize it was very crude. It was just rope loops with D-rings glued on to the boat. That's all it was.

TM: No rowing frame?

DG: No rowing frame. Johnny had a rowing frame. He made one out of a bed. He cut up an old metal bed and welded it back together with some three quarter... He had a good rowing frame. His frame was so strong he kept breaking oars. He would go through oars just like kindling. Eventually, he had to make his oars. He found driftwood 2 x 6. He had a little saw and a rasp and every night he'd work on oars. He made them.

TM: So if that boat had had his frame on it, it would have made it through there. How did you guys do it? How'd you get the second boat down?

DG: The second boat, we unloaded it so it was lightweight and we could handle it. That was the secret. It was too much weight. We didn't stop it because when we stopped it, snubbed it on the tree, that's when we made the mistake because the river jumped in. Soon as you stopped, the river jumped in it. So we were very careful how we did it the next time.

TM: So down from Lodore and then on in the Uinta Basin. How were the mosquitoes in there?

DG: Oh, they were terrible. We lived on the boat some nights and some nights we'd climb up a big hill. We tried everything. We had no tents. We couldn't get away from them.

TM: And the sun?

DG: The sun, we put little covers over made out of willows. We had some canvas and made them to keep out the sun. Soon as we got in Desolation then it was ok after that.

TM: Left the mosquitoes?

DG: Yes. Left the mosquitoes.

TM: Then down to Green River, Utah? Got supplies there?

DG: Yup. Got supplies. I think at Vernal, I think, Bus Hatch helped us get more oars because we ran out of oars. He scrounged up some more oars for us. I remember that.

TM: Nice. What do you remember about Bus?

DG: He was just a nice guy. What can you say! He was just a nice guy. Very helpful. Anything you needed. He fed us, took care of us, you know. Just a good guy.

TM: Did he give you any pointers about the river?

DG: Didn't need any.

TM: And you're still thinking about, 'OK, we're going to run down through Canyon'. So you resupply in Green River, Utah and head out for Labyrinth and Stillwater before Cataract? That all went well?

DG: That all went well.

TM: How long did it take you to get through the 40 miles of Cataract?

DG: Same thing. It took 4 days. We'd start all over again. Looked at every rapid. We stopped at Spanish Bottom for a couple of days to go up on top to Land of Standing Rocks. We spent a lot of time up there. It was wonderful up there. It had all those spires sticking out. There was canyons up there that you could jump across, you know. It was so narrow.

TM: Have you seen anything like that before?

DG: No. Nothing like that. It was a neat place. If I remember right, they had that Old Spanish Trail out of there. Is that true that they had the Spanish Trail out there? We followed those steps up. It was still there. I guess the Spaniards crossed their horses there. I don't know how they got up the other side. That's pretty wicked up there. I had to check that out because the trail coming down in there was good but going out the other side was pretty bad.

TM: Where do you go from there?

DG: How they ever got up to the top was beyond me, or even got across the river. That'd be good swimming horses to get across there. With Cataract Canyon, it took same process. 4 days.

TM: This was July-ish?

DG: July-ish. Maybe August.

TM: Had the monsoon rains come in yet?

DG: No. Although when we got down to the bottom of it, the river rose 5 feet in just a couple hours. Just shot up like that from a big storm up above somewhere. In fact when we got to Dirty Devil, there was so much water coming down. The first time I ever saw a real whirlpool was at the Dirty Devil River. It was a huge saucer, maybe a 100 foot across with a vortex in the middle as big as a washtub. Never seen anything like that.

TM: What'd you think about that?

DG: I couldn't believe it when I saw it. Of course, was no problem, you could row around it. It was stationary. You never see a stationary whirlpool, ever. It's the only time I ever saw one. The river is pretty benign right there, there's nothing there. The Dirty Devil. It's Glen Canyon.

TM: Did you stop at Hite?

DG: We stopped there and we got a basket of fruit again.

TM: Was the same Young's were there?

DG: Uh-huh, we stocked up on watermelon and peaches.

TM: Did you visit with Art some then?

DG: Saw Art again, yup. Still there. Still in business.

TM: Did you run into Stu Campbell again? Were there more people down there?

DG: That's when we ran into Stu Campbell. He came in, he was ahead of us and he had some Boy Scouts or something. He went ahead of us. We eventually caught up with him at Marble Canyon. He was a nice guy. He gave us all his leftover food. It was hard to get groceries at Marble Canyon at that time, you know. So we had a hard time supplying the boat.

TM: What did you do? 'Cause you were getting ready for Grand Canyon and that's going to be another couple weeks.

DG: Actually we were kind of short of groceries. But we could still catch fish and we had a little flour. Stu gave us all his eggs and Bisquick and whatever he had leftover. So that got us through. You couldn't buy any groceries in Marble Canyon. So we had to make a run for Phantom to get more groceries. We resupplied at Phantom. Walked out and walked back in. And we also went to Kolb, we saw Kolb.

TM: What did you remember of him?

DG: He showed these movies. We weren't impressed.

TM: Did you talk with him at all about what you were doing?

DG: Yeah, talked with him.

TM: Was he encouraging?

DG: No. Not in the least.

TM: Did he try to talk you out of going?

DG: No.

TM: So he wasn't helpful, he wasn't not helpful, he was just...

DG: He was just doing his thing. He was too busy making money.

TM: What do you remember about that run from Lees Ferry, Marble Canyon down to Phantom?

DG: There was nothing there that was outstanding, I would say. The rapids were pretty normal, we thought. We had no particular problems.

TM: When did the monsoon rains start coming in on you?

DG: Not until we got way down the canyon. Matkatamiba, just before we got to Upset Rapid, then they came in.

TM: Were they with you for the rest of the trip on and off?

DG: No. That's the only time when we really had any rain, was that one time. 'Cause we didn't have tents. We couldn't deal with rain, really. We weren't prepared for it. In fact we didn't even own a tent.

TM: Did you guys have a tarp at all?

DG: We had a tarp, we could put it up in emergency. Tarp we could spread it up. Yeah. We did have a tarp for light rain but it wouldn't work for a heavy rain.

TM: So you get to Lava Falls. What were your thoughts when you saw that rapid?

DG: Johnny and I decided that we couldn't run it. It looked pretty nasty. In fact, I think Lava Falls is a little bit more mellow now than it was then. It was pretty vicious looking. That ledge hole was huge so we carried Johnny's boat around. We lined it partway, as far as we could. Actually, then we had to carry it partway. It took us just about the whole day to get his boat around. Almost got bit by a rattlesnake there. Sat down beside a coiled up rattlesnake that was this four foot rattlesnake, two feet from my butt. It didn't strike fortunately. I said, I was pretty lucky, so I ran the rapid. It was no problem. On the left hand side, nothing to it.

TM: You had one boat down.

DG: We had one boat for safety. In fact we loaded up all the gear on Johnny's boat in case he had to chase me. But got there easy.

TM: Then loaded stuff back up and headed on downriver?

DG: Yeah. Headed on downriver.

TM: Did you see anybody else on that trip that year?

DG: Never. The only one we saw was the dam builders in Marble Canyon. Rod Sanderson, that's the only one, the only people we saw.

TM: What was that visit like with Rod?

DG: He invited us up to camp. Took us up the ledge. Fed us a wonderful meal a thousand feet up.

TM: Up the cable car?

DG: Yup.

TM: That was the Marble Canyon Dam site?

DG: Yup, Marble Canyon Dam site. That's the only people we saw.

TM: Then headed on from there. So how did you get across Lake Mead?

DG: We rowed across. Two miles an hour. Sometimes the wind blew the right direction. We hung up our blankets and it pushed us across. Most of the time, the wind blew against us. Those boats don't row very good in dead water. They're terrible. That was a tough trip.

TM: How many days roughly?

DG: I don't know, 5 or 7 days to get across there. Hot sun. It's August, very hot.

TM: So when you got to the Hemenway Harbor then, what were your thoughts about running this whole section of river all the way up from Wyoming, finally putting it all together? Did you have any thoughts about it at that time?

DG: Nope. None at all.

TM: When was your next return trip back to Grand Canyon?

DG: Back to Glen Canyon?

TM: Or to Grand Canyon? Either Glen or Grand.

DG: I never went back to Glen again.

TM: So let's talk about that now. What are your thoughts about Glen Canyon Dam and what's happening up there?

DG: It ruined the whole place. There's nothing there. Same way with San Juan. It's gone, too. I did go down the San Juan about ten years ago. But I went down in a packraft and then hiked out at Grand Gulch. It's gone.

TM: From downstream from there.

DG: The same with upper Green River. I don't know where that dam is on the upper Green. But it's probably gone, too.

TM: Flaming Gorge.

DG: Flaming Gorge. Is it in Flaming Gorge or is it down below Ashley Falls? I think it's below Ashley Falls.

TM: It's below Ashley Falls.

DG: So the whole Red Canyon is gone.

TM: That's right. So thinking about progress, what's called progress, we build these big dams, we need electricity, people can move to the southwest with their air conditioners and enjoy this wonderful life versus the loss of places like Glen Canyon. Any thoughts on that?

DG: You fly over Phoenix you can see where it all goes to. You look down there you see all the swimming pools and golf courses. It's a lifestyle that people are not going to give up. They're gonna hang on to it. That's where it comes from. It comes from the dam. That's the only way it can come.

TM: They say Glen Canyon was a place no one knew. But you knew it and Gus Scott knew it. There's a number of other people. Actually the Boy Scouts, Stu Campbell, Norm Nevills, Harry Aleson, and Georgie. There's a whole bunch of people, actually, that did know Glen Canyon. So can you give me just a sense or a flavor of what Glen Canyon was?

DG: It was just a fairyland. Just unbelievable. You could walk up a side canyon and there's Indian stuff all over the place. Petroglyph's, ruins, deep pools of water you can go swimming in. Warm water, fresh water. The greenery was wonderful too. Ferns, moss.

TM: You could drink water out of the streams?

DG: We never treated any water, ever, out of the river. We drank water wherever we found it. Never had any problem.

TM: So when did you come back to run Grand Canyon?

DG: You know, I can't remember the first year. We kept coming back and kept coming back to the Grand Canyon. 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, all those years.

TM: Your last river trip through Grand Canyon was when?

DG: Last February.

TM: Just a month ago.

DG: A month ago yeah, 24 day trip. Then we had one last October. Then I got one coming up next February, another one. I've got one every year actually. I can take em' long as it's not in the summertime. Summertime I don't go. It's too hot. Can't stand the heat.

TM: So from '51 to 2014, we can work out the math for 65 yrs. What's better now? What's worse now? What are the changes that you see on the river in Grand Canyon?

DG: The water was warmer when we went down. Now it's cold. Can't swim in it very easy. The sand is all worn out. I still think the sand is worn out. You take part of it when you go home. You find it in the bottom of your washtub. It sticks to you now. The sand is just not the same. And of course, the permit system. When we went down first time, there was no permits. Nobody couldn't care less what you were doing down there. Those tens of thousands of people who go down. When we went, was nobody. We were the only ones. So people made a big... But the camps, they keep it clean. They do a good job managing it. Got to admit. With that many people, an excellent job of managing it. What else is...That's all I can think of right now. Of course, our lifestyle was different. When we went down, it was girls upstream, boys downstream. Take a shovel if you needed it. We threw our tin cans in the river. You never saw a tin can ever again. Of course we never treated the water, we drank it just like it came. I see no reason to even treat it now to be honest with you. It's good water.

TM: So less sand. Meaning the sand's like gone, moved on?

DG: There was many more camping places than there is now, of course. One thing I noticed was there was lot of vertical ledges of sand. Every camp had a one or two or three foot ledge of sand vertical. You never see that anymore.

TM: Where the shore was working the sandbank?

DG: Yeah, working the sandbank. I don't know why that is but that's the way it is.

TM: Do you remember the wind moving the sand around?

DG: On every trip you'd see wind moving sand around. I never have been down there on a trip where the wind wasn't blowing something around.

TM: I wondered was there a difference between '51 and 90s?

DG: I don't remember any difference there.

TM: What about vegetation?

DG: Vegetation, of course, was 20 or 30 feet away from the river edge. Now it goes all the way down to the river edge. Big difference in vegetation.

TM: Today we go downstream with our chairs and our tables.

DG: Oh yeah, we got chairs and tables. We cook on propane. Everything is different now. We've got big chest coolers. You keep ice for 24 days. Was no such thing as ice in those days. You just put your stuff in the bottom of the boat and it stayed cool. If it got rotten, you threw it in the river. Onions and potatoes and carrots kept a long time in the bottom of the boat, especially those rubber boats, there's was always water there. Kept it cool.

TM: Again, trying to just grasp is it better, is it worse, is it different? What have we lost? What have we gained?

DG: Well, it's not the same, of course. People wise, it's definitely not the same. Nowadays you wonder if you're going to get the next camp you want, stuff like that. There's competition for camps, let's face it, when you get down there. Even in the wintertime.

TM: That sounds like it was happening between Harry and Norm at Aztec Creek.

DG: They both got there the same time. They had the whole river but they managed to get there at the same time.

TM: Then you did a pirate trip through the Canyon.

DG: Yeah, the packraft, yes.

TM: With a packraft. Packrafting, was that kind of developed? Can you tell me a little bit about the background of that?

DG: Actually, I'm credited with developing or being the first to use a packraft because I used them at Barranca del Cobre, to get through that canyon. That was in '52. Then Alaska Wilderness Race, I started using it there. I was so successful that everybody after that started using it.

TM: Can you describe that to me?

DG: Well, the Wilderness Race is... You got big rivers in Alaska and they were swimming the rivers, those guys were, in the cold. When I come to a river, I could go down it. They had to walk along the side of it. I could go much faster, even though I was twice as old as they were I could go faster. So after that, they started developing a packraft. It's big time business now.

TM: What size are we talking here? This raft, how big is it?

DG: It weighs five pounds.

TM: So we're talking about a pool toy?

DG: A what?

TM: A pool toy. Like the size of your bathtub.

DG: Yeah, right. But you could put all your gear on it. Actually you could do a lot with it, you know.

TM: So let me get this straight. You are thinking about Grand Canyon in a pool toy? What were you thinking?

DG: I was thinking if I didn't do it, somebody else would do it. I had to be first. [laughing] That's what I was thinking. And there would have been, too. The Alaskans were looking at it pretty seriously. So since I knew the Canyon so well, I could do it easier than they could because I could portage the rapids, the bad ones. Of course, it's hard to portage rapids down there because you got all this backwater. Like House Rock, you really end up running House Rock because of the backwater. You can't get down unless you get in the wave train. And that's the way a lot of the rapids are. You gotta get into the wave train. You've got to go way back up to get in.

TM: So you take the eddy back up and then get in and then the tail waves...

DG: Yeah. You have to take the eddy back up to get in.

TM: And you are in this tiny little boat and those waves are sharp.

DG: Yeah. But once it gets filled up with water, it doesn't flip. The biggest problem was the whirlpools at the bottom, like Sockdolager, Grapevine, the Gems, and the Roaring 20s. Really had to struggle to get through on the bottom.

TM: What time of year was this?

DG: It was March.

TM: So it was cold?

DG: Oh yeah.

TM: And this was 1991-ish, something like that?

DG: 1991. I got sick and I had to pull out at Phantom Ranch so I buried my boat and all my stuff in a sand pile down there. Then I went back to Alaska and I'd been reported. Photographs were taken of me and they turned me in, I know. I found out that they were looking for me but I was in Alaska. So I come back two weeks later, they'd stopped searching and they start all over again. They went through the rest.

TM: Tell me the story, you were hiking in and you ran into a ranger on your hike?

DG: Oh, I ran into a ranger and I didn't have a backcountry permit. I didn't know you needed one. I was carrying this huge pack and I also had a metal staff because I wanted a better pole for my paddle. I didn't have a backcountry permit. The ranger said, "There's something wrong with this guy? He's carrying this huge pack and says he's not gonna camp." She didn't have anything on me. If she caught me camping

she'd of had me. But I wasn't camping. I just told her I was carrying all this stuff resuppling somebody on the Tonto Rim or some feeble excuse. She had to let me go. Had nothing on me.

TM: Then did you get down to the river and get things sorted out and split right then?

DG: Yep. I got down on the river. It was in dark. I drug up my stuff, floated out in the dark. [Timer rings]. That's good, I'm all done. I'm out of here. I'm done, too.

TM: I want to thank you so much for your recollections and your remembrances.

[Giving directions to event]

DG: Look at that Johnny Schlump thing. I won't look at it anymore.

TM: Yeah. I'd love to try to contact his kids.

DG: Well you take a look at that before you decide you want to contact his kids.

TM: I'm just curious to see what other data they got.

DG: I don't think they got any. I think that's all they've got.

TM: Ok. Thank you for that.

DG: Johnny told me that he lost all his film in Florida. Because of the moisture down there. I can't figure out how he made this thing. I have no idea. Actually the quality is good. He lost all his film in the Grand Canyon and his camera in the Grand Canyon. He lost it in Bedrock Rapid.

KJ: There was some stories in there that he told that Dick had no recollection of. In fact the one about them leaving Isabelle. They left Isabelle overnight and she had wept through the night thinking that they weren't going to coming back. I don't remember that in her journals either. So there's a few stories in there that he had no recollection about.

DG: He took a lot of liberties with it. No doubt about it.

KJ: And he didn't even mention th at Dick had gone through Lava Falls. So it is kind of interesting. And the were pictures though...there were pictures that I hadn't seen before so that was neat.

TM: So this is Kaylene Johnson that's speaking here. Johnny Schlump was also on that 1951 trip and his family has recently send Dick a DVD that John put together about the 1951 river trip. Thank you very much for bringing that.

DG: It's over an hour. Doesn't it take over an hour?

KJ: Yes. It's about an hour and 20 mins.

DG: It's a long. It drove me crazy. Can't watch it anymore. If you want to watch it, you go ahead.

TM: I will. Thank you.

DG: It is so inaccurate. He's got Salmon Falls in there.

TM: Oops!

DG: 'Cause we did go down the Salmon River, Johnny and I.

TM: Did you?

DG: Yeah.

TM: When did you do that?

DG: I don't know, '54 or something like that. Before I went to Alaska. Yeah, we went down the Salmon River and Salmon Falls. I gotta get out of here. We've got to go to Sedona.

KJ: One quick question. Bill suggested you talking about how Isabelle knew you were going down the Green River. How did she know you were actually going to do that trip with Jim that first time?

DG: I was talking about it and she decided she wanted to go with us.

TM: Where was she at, at that time?

DG: We were going down the San Juan. We did that trip right after...same month almost.

TM: Bill, what's your last name?

BS: Bill Sullivan.

TM: Bill Sullivan is here as well, just for the record. He was asking some good questions.

TM: Well, thank you so much for all your recollections on this.

DG: We've got to get out of here.

TM: You headed to Sedona?

DG: We're headed to Sedona. We've never been there.

TM: That will be fun.

DG: We don't know what's there. If anything.

TM: Well, thank you. I look forward to seeing you guys tonight.

DG: I guess we'll be there, right?

KJ: Yeah. [laughs]

TM: There will be a lot of other people if you aren't there. I'll show them the photo rematch. That'll keep them going for about two minutes and then there'll be trouble if you don't show up.