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Interviewee: Dick Hingston (DH)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

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TM: Today is Friday, September 6th, 2019. This is part six of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Dickson "Dick" Hingston. My name is Tom Martin. This oral history is being conducted at the kitchen table here on our house in Flagstaff. Good morning, Dick. How are you today?

DH: I'm doing good on a lovely Flagstaff summer morning.

TM: Great. Wonderful. We ended up part five at the start of a 10 day backpack in June of 1989. How did that backpack come together? What was the thought behind it?

DH: The thought behind was actually through a friend who was connected in turn to some of his friends in Santa Barbara where I had left. But they were...some of these people were back there and they had made arrangements somehow for a 10 day backpack, which did have to be permitted through the park service. So there were a certain number of spaces available for these guys. All guys, maybe a half dozen or so, half dozen maybe. And they gave...they offered a chance for me and a very good friend of mine from the Santa Barbara days...still there...to go on this 10 day backpack starting around the 10th of June, and which would end about June the 20th down on to the Tonto Trail along the Hermit and Boucher and Tonto trails getting down to Boucher Creek, where they had permitted campsites down there for three nights plus another night getting out. So...and some other time, I can't remember every route...part of that route, but it was basically those trails and then to come out around the 20th at the South Rim at the village. So I took the chance. I didn't have anything better to do, but I realized that of course that this was a little iffy being in June. And so I went...not sure what that might mean, perhaps a bit naively. And so to talk about the trip, we started down in the regular way, but it was not so long before, of course, all the usual aches, pains and heat began to set in. We certainly noticed those things going down. It's not easy with 10 day backpacks. But we got through that. In fact, listening part

of the way to helicopters because it was under the Dragon Corridor. I was annoyed at that, but there was also plenty of arduous distraction going on with the hike itself. And so we stumbled and clambered over the path down there to Boucher Creek. I never forgot the sight. The towering as we entered Boucher Creek drainage, there's the site of the towering Tower of Ra. It's an amazing site straight ahead down that trail toward the river. High in the air like a huge skyscraper. But we got down to the creek and set up camp right there near the boat beach. And we were there three days. And I...my memories of that were just simply the second the sun cleared, those cliffs, you were in the oven. The second it cleared. There was no grace period whatsoever. You were going to be in the shade after that. So we settled into the days that we had there, and they went without other particular event. Saw an occasional, you know, boat crew come down. Maybe there was one other hiking party, I can't remember. And then it came time to come out. And that was scary because now you got to climb out into June heat.

TM: So let me get this right. You're going down. You would have taken the Boucher Trail...the Hermit Trail down the Boucher Trail into Boucher Canyon and hike all the way down to the river that first day. That's a long walk. And then spent three days there. And then did you hike right back out again? That would've been a 10 day trip.

DH: Well, what...you know, we must've had a stop on the way also.

TM: Did you go back to Hermit and go down Hermit?

DH: No, we didn't do side trips like that. It was involved with the Hermit and Boucher trails and some Tonto I think. But beyond that, it wasn't anything else.

TM: So I think of this as a triangle. And you start from the rim and you go down Boucher to the river.

DH: That's correct.

TM: And you could take the Tonto to the Hermit. And then you could hike out the Hermit and end up at the same point you started. Is that...

DH: It was something like that.

TM: Something like that.

DH: That's what I remember of the route. That's right, and yeah, there were...there was at least maybe one night on the Tonto. I'm going to talk about one of them in a minute. It's possible that it was eight or nine days. I mean, I... I mean, my memory is...

TM: No, 10 days would make sense. It'd be nine nights, and it would be, you know, two or three down there, and then one across and then over and then...but there's always water nearby, which is nice from the river.

DH: That's correct. So the river was...what you do down there is just...I just kind of hold up in the shade for the day once that hits. And there's running creek there for bathing and so forth and so on. It was fine at Boucher Creek. And the more memorable experience was the business of getting the most memorable after the Tower of Ra. And the general reversing was the...what happened in getting out because the fear...it was 109 degrees in the shade on those hot days we had to hang out at Boucher. And it was hot the start of the climb out day. But what happened is that unseasonable monsoons came in along about the...I guess something like the 17th of June, 16, 17, whatever that day was. And we found ourselves up there on the Tonto with a sudden clouding over, and a kind of a cooling. And I had a pocket thermometer or a backpack thermometer that showed us at in the middle of the afternoon of June, say 17th, at about 83 degrees. What a blessing on the Tonto in June. That's 20 degrees below normal there. And in the shade. And that of course called off the airplanes. You know, storms around. So there was... they quieted, it was quieter coming out. Now there was a bit of an emergency of unexpected shower, and setting up the tent quickly, you know, you get thunder and lightning around. But these guys who were with me were very skilled with quick setups. And so we had a tent just in time. And so that was lovely, in the rain, you know? And the cooler weather. And after that, I did have a kind of a transcendental experience because you know, I remember out in the quietness and the damp cooler weather walking out to the lip of the Tonto Trail where...not the Tonto Trail, but just the lip of the shelf or bench, and right there at the edge, right at the cliff top there are little rocky, small mini alcoves just because of the change of rock layer there, erosion. I spent this incredible 30 to 45 minutes. It was just me and a little mouse scurrying about its business just on the lip of the canyon there. And it did provoke some very long and beautiful thoughts, you know, about our place in the universe, and evolution and that this species had been there for millions of years. And here's this one representative of this species doing what it is, had always done. Through all those millions of years, you know, getting his food, making its nest, whatever. And so there was a kind of a bond between me and the little mouse. And of course you have [Carl] Sandburg's poem of the blue jay blue and the gray mouse gray went up the canyon walls. So the connection was pretty obvious that that mouse was important in the scheme of things. So that was...I remember that as a kind of a transcendental elevating, nearly sacred experience. A high point in some ways, of that trip. And then we came back, and it was comfortable, of course, for the rest of the evening. And that monsoon stayed with us. So we fortunately, so the rest of the climb out had cloud and unseasonably cool weather that wouldn't normally be there in June. And my friend that actually would...the one...the friend from Santa Barbara that one of the friend...two friends, the one that became the closer friend over time, he actually took two extra days by himself to stay down there at the... at the bottom. I think the permit allowed it, or for some reason he could just do it. And he did it. And the report back on that was that was a life changing experience for him to have those extra two days by himself down there. So I was very glad of that because he was a good friend and stayed at that. His name was Tyke Borwick. I should mention the other good friend I was down there with was John Sanderbeck. I didn't know the other boys or young men as well, but those two mattered to me. So that was the important part of my party. So I think that's the main highlights of that trip it's what I most remember.

TM: Okay. And then it would've been back to California?

DH: Yes. Let's see. Not...well, 1989, yes because I was still employed with the ACLU Southern California. I only had now about six months to go that the timing of that wasn't very well known

to me because the unexpected was about to happen again, but I had about six months to go. And then I guess I should talk about what...some...another thing that happened in 1989 which facilitated the change that was coming. And it had to do with overflights. It was a different friend that I was with this time, and this was a friend that I lived with or near next door to in Hollywood named Tim Brewi. And we went to Joshua Tree National Park. I don't remember which month, but it doesn't really matter much. It was I think after the canyon trip when it's cooler. And we were behind the...right in the rocky ledges there behind the visitor center on the road leading south out of the park. There's a...I think it was called Cottonwood, but I believe that. And we were just minding our business and relaxing in the summer, taking a nap or something, you know? All of a sudden out of nowhere, there was this horrific sudden screaming. Noise rushing at us at high speed and low. And what it was we were being subjected to a military training overflight of couple hundred feet above our heads with no warning. Very frightening in the middle of a national park unit. Well, right there, that was pretty eye opening about... a need to figure out what is allowing this in the middle of a national park wilderness. And people who are out for contemplated recreation and further investigation led that it was the navy, It was US Navy operating out of Lemoore Naval Air Station, in California. And first I didn't know anything, but I researched it, and I found after talking a little bit with the park of course too, which knew about this sort of thing, but was helpless. And it turned out that for quite some time, I think since the late 70s, the navy had this military training route (MTR) with the acronym VR, which means visual rules, VR-1257. That was the route that these fly boys were on. And I...so I did some more because I thought they should be protested that this was happening in the heart of Joshua Tree National Park. So I've found a way to research that route. I forgot how, but yes, I mean, it's these routes. We had NEPA, I mean, these routes are known that they have routes, although there'd been a warning. And I was able to make a map of the route. It's a straight line with an allowance on either side of the straight line, which angled right through the heart of the park from West to East or right over the visitor center and picnic area behind it and campgrounds too. And the park service felt helpless. Well, I had the map. Next thing I knew was that, it was becoming obvious. I was going to need to leave the ACLU. Eight...it was eight good years there, but over time, you know, I think that it's certainly clear that something was fraying there with the executive director, who after all had four husbands already. I mean, she, you know, continuity is not guaranteed. And I think she wanted something else. And then there were other fraying about just what my mission was there and what the...what I was doing. I wasn't going to advance there...became pretty clear. So I started looking for work and a want ad in the paper showed up at just the moment that changed my life, again. It was one ad for the local chapter...the Angeles chapter of the Sierra Club. And they needed a conservation coordinator, which was a staff position to help...it connect up all their various volunteers and manage their environmental impact responses. The office was half mile from the ACLU office. So it was easy to go over there and get interviewed. And what I did with the interview, I never forget it, I had the conservation chair that was a woman named Joyce Coleman and Robin Ives. They were the core conservation as Robin Ives being a professor. He was professor...I think at Occidental. His wife partnered with him thoroughly on putting together the whole regional volunteers booklet for the Sierra Club. So they were deep. They were John Muir type people. Almost both of them dedicated. So I had my interview with those people, and I brought in with me since I thought maybe a little show and tell would help. I brought in the map that I'd made of VR 1257 overlaid on Joshua Tree National Park and talked about it, and talked about the experience. Well, that is a singular thing to bring into a meeting like that with the California Desert Protection Act being

lobbied for to, among other things, protect Joshua Tree and make it from a national monument to a national park. So I brought in something of perhaps more significance than I realized because that was a decades long struggle that was going to come to a head over the California Desert Protection Act. And here I was with a map of Joshua Tree and that experience, which I had researched with some difficulty, and then of course the rest of my resume and so on. So I was offered the job. And in fact, I negotiated the backup to a proper salary from what they initially were at and a better salary, and I only had three weeks to close out with the ACLU. There was a final farewell ceremony with the ACLU, with Ramona Ripston, the executive director of the other end of the table. I'll never forget that. And I read, from a part of my farewell remarks, I read from a long essay by Walt Whitman, which merged the liberation philosophy or, you know, social philosophies of change and growth with the need to remain connected with the outdoors. And I read from this, which I think was effective because it bridged the one experience to the next in a way that would enlighten them to because some of them in the legal world do not get into nature nearly enough. They're buried in the job into the law and the court, and the written word. And I thought that was just the best thing I could do on leaving was to leave that offering with them. And so I went to...there was a three week hiatus where I was able to...I went to...I think it was to Oaxaca, Mexico. I got a little interlude with Mexico. I flew back from there just before my first...it was going to be a press conference of some sort. I was supposed to show up, and I came back with the worst flu. Had to go to the emergency room in the hospital and get treated for, you know, just a bad intestinal flu coming out of Mexico. You can get that in there. And so, you know, with a little bit of that, just remember memorable start, I began work with the Angeles chapter of the Sierra Club with its offices on the Wilshire Boulevard.

TM: Is that called the Angeles chapter? Was it called the Los Angeles chapter?

DH: Called the Angeles chapter. And it's important to say it's the largest, and oldest of the Sierra Club chapters. Larger than the bay chapter, which is where John Muir had founded it. But it's a large population. Large, I mean, they had money, and memberships, and guidebooks, and a pretty decent office. And so I was installed in this office, but, you know, with all this, you know, backpacking, they understood the backpacking and then the connection to the canyon. That's all selling points to them. And so I started this job. The...I remember the very big and angry hearing when the first couple of weeks, but was...which was handled more by the club's regional staff, which was housed with us. In other words, we had the chapter staff, but we also have the South what pacific regional staff in that office headed up by a man named Bob Hattoy, who became of some significance, who was deeply connected to politics and Democratic Party politics. And so he had his own staff in there, two or three people along with the chapter staff. I remember the hearing because it was a full house at Beverly Hills High School, and I saw the anger that the environmental movement had to face from people who wanted to develop the California desert and the people who wanted to just do whatever they wanted out there. I mean, you were totally clashing philosophies if you were going to make big national parks and wilderness areas out of that. So it was a very angry scene at Beverly Hills High School. It's a little scary. Fortunately, the police were there in large numbers and nothing happened and I didn't have to stand up in front of that because that was all handled by the regional staff of the Sierra Club, not the chapter staff who was there. Business to make that work, and they handled it very well. But it was an eye opener. It wasn't long before I also experienced conflict and what it can be like inside the Sierra Club in terms of my job, because I represented a like an unknown force coming in with the

people that it just had this kind of complacent staff situation with no other... they did not have a director in that...in there. They didn't have an executive director. I had come... from the Sierra Club, I mean from the ACLU, excuse me, with its executive director model I had. That's right. Hierarchical with a person who ran things. And I guess I made the mistake of just talking about it as a model, but there were...you learn about the human dimension. There are people in there who are afraid of change, of any change, or even the hint of a change. And I represented a force because I had ideas, you know, that might've drifted towards that kind of a maybe more workable model. And I didn't realize that these people, some of them just...they didn't like their comfortable tea party disturbed. Their empires. And I represented even talking about that was threatening to them because that meant that if those ideas were to gain traction, well, you know, I might...maybe I was the one who wanted to be this executive director of the Angeles chapter. And so a kind of a little vendetta got going inside that office and it was fairly soon...not so long after I came, maybe two or three weeks or four or five weeks maybe. And they dealt up these false charges. It led by Mary Ferguson, who was the development director. Now she had this long history in that office of entertaining rich ladies and raising money out of tea parties. And she was very effective at that. She knew how to talk the talk. She was a very, you know, like a knowledgeable, personable woman and so forth. But they did not...she in the office manager, it turned out, tried to...they brought up a, a list of charges...supposed charges against me, maybe five or six things that I was supposed to allegedly doing that undermine the function of the office or the mission of the Sierra Club. And it could...in fact, it got to the point where they scheduled a meeting of the personnel committee, which is the committee that had the hiring and firing capacity or the punishment, whatever discipline thing. But there were no...the...there were some allegations there and they were floating around I knew what some of them were. Unexpectedly though, that meeting was called off. So somebody had got to the chair of the personnel committee and they said, now, wait a minute. What that meant was that the ladies bringing this little vendetta had not done their homework properly, and that there was going to have to be more behind the scenes investigation before we got to anything like that. And so what did happen was that I got some very good assistance from Robin Ives as the professor who was chair of the regional conservation committee. And we...he just developed for me a kind of a little self interrogatory where I just needed to document what my role is for four or five or six matters. One of them including the Grand Canyon National Park though. And so I might just report that one in this history since it was about Grand Canyon. It was proposed in meetings that I'd gone to not long before that they wanted to...park service wanted to restore 20 cabins on the North Rim that had been burned down in the 1928 fire. They, you know, the argument was that they were...that that would not be an imposition to restore part of the commercial footprint of the Union Pacific Railroad through those 20 cabins. And it was alleged among these other charges that I had been advocating for the restoration of the 20 cabins, which was offensive to Sierra Club policy. Interesting because I... frankly I thought Sierra Club policy is a little overbearing on that one. I didn't...frankly, I questioned it.

TM: Did you know where this location was from your time at the North Rim?

DH: I didn't know the footprint of that.

TM: Okay.

DH: So I didn't know what 20 cabins it was. Now we... this could be researched you know, somebody really want to dig in to it. But they must've been...I don't think they were the deluxes. They must've been something of a smaller cabins, but maybe back at the end even, but

TM: Well, I'm gonna...can I play the devil's advocate for a minute because I would assume from the club's position, any more development in the national park should have critical review.

DH: Well, I agree with that. That was all they were doing, critical review hearings and the NEPA process going on.

TM: Okay. And I can also appreciate that on your side, having worked there, having run cabins, it made perfect sense. Hey, cabins burned down. Replace them.

DH: Replace the cabins. And you need people who want to see the cabin. They want the 24 hour experience.

TM: Right.

DH: You send them back to Kanab.

TM: Right, right

DH: I knew that. So I was more sympathetic, probably philosophically. And maybe I had been overheard saying something at the hearing itself just on the side to a representative of the concessionaire or somebody. Even maybe before I took the job. I can't remember. It was just at that break. Somehow you see, you get a rumor mill that goes back to this development director, Mary Ferguson, She became... I think she was my kind of archenemy there. She led the vendetta. And so that was one allegation. But no, I did not give testimony. I did not write letters to anybody about restoring these cabins. It was just maybe somebody overheard some conversation between me and the club staff director in Phoenix or, you know, the rumor mill has its way. Never mind the internet years later, but I mean, some word somehow had... was back there, you know, of all that. I had met the southwest regional director of the Sierra Club, Rob Smith already. And I had met him, I should say another event that had happened in '89 that helped me with the Sierra Club job. So we'll fill it in slightly retroactively was in 1989 symposium on the national parks at the Sierra Club organized in Salt Lake City. I had gone to that. So I should insert that that's how I knew Rob Smith, and had first met him. And they had these t-shirts that they were giving out about the takeover of the canyon by the fly boys, you know, and it was a whole...the issue was obviously big at that Salt Lake conference because that was...the southwest regional office had decided that they were...there was a overflight problem that needed to be addressed.

TM: So the southwest regional office was out in Phoenix. Is that right?

DH: They were based in Phoenix. That's correct.

TM: And there would've been an Arizona chapter?

DH: Yes.

TM: Maybe in Phoenix and in Tucson?

DH: I believe they had a Utah chapter, but they had a regional representative for the four corner states in Rob Smith.

TM: How was it that the Angeles chapter, which had a ton of California issues was dealing with an Arizona issue? Is that...is it common then to have a different... different chapters working on the same issues?

DH: Sometimes they would line up over certain things or they would...there were ways that there was communication going on you know, about needs the Grand Canyon would have been enough of a common concern. I'm sure that there probably was conversation that was getting over into Los Angeles about what was going to be developed at the Grand Canyon. We didn't have the internet, of course, in the same way as now, but they knew. So you know, I think you would have that lead and also through the club's office in San Francisco which was whole nation. So all...they're linkages. The regional conservation committee chapter comes you know, and 13 chapters in California so they're all... all kinds of committees and ways you get linkage. I do not know though the routing of that particular, you know, piece of information. However, meeting Rob Smith had been an important part of my job interview. Actually to also point out getting into the, you know, because I had gone there to the national parks meeting, and gotten into concerned about it and...but I met Rob. It's possible that some things I was saying that I personally just as an individual had no problem with the cabins may have got back through the mill roundabout to this Mary Ferguson who felt threatened by my new presence in that office. And she was also in league with one other person we could talk about who was a... became a confirmed enemy. And that was James Dodson, who was eventually to run for president of the Sierra Club. Well, it turned out he was the financial manager for Edwards Air Force Base and a Republican. Now he was all for the desert. You know, he was all for protecting the desert. But I am pretty sure that there was a conflict of interest here between his role as the budget manager for Edwards Air Force Base and my concerns about the training route, the military training route and a Republican. And then maybe some kind of personality conflict. People sometimes see each other, they do not like that person they see. They don't want that person. They would like to get them out. And Dodson, and Mary Ferguson, and Ellen Greef was her name, who was the clerk in the office. That quasi office manager, you know? I mean, I had this little cabal that was lined up. But I was able actually to use Rob Smith in basically vindicating...we went through the entire little interrogatory that Robin Ives developed, and I got his Rob Smith support to say I never testified enough that I didn't say anything about the North Rim. So what was...what they had been confronted with was a confabulation by a mental ill person. No question. It you have to be mentally ill as much as the one in the head of our government now to be doing these kinds of things. No sense of restraint. Just act. And so that's my connection I can make today. You know that's a very pernicious illness. And I saw what it's like when somebody gets a vendetta going. But we were...with the help of a very thoughtful interrogatory developed by Robin Ives, I wound up with written answers and documentation for each one of the charges. And we never heard

from that again. And eventually, Mary Ferguson coming out of the elevator, and I think it was... the only word she had used for me once in the argument was smarmy. When I was trying to defend myself, she called it a smarmy remark. So you see there was hostility there, but after a couple of years maybe after this, maybe within a year, she actually apologized after a fashion. But it was... it didn't convey 100% apology. It conveyed like she was told that she needed to say something, and she kind of did what she was supposed to do, but I don't know that it really was felt very deeply. That's all. So I survived that. So that I think gets you into now the... I guess the next thing I could say in terms of my experience with the chapter was that I linked up with a man named Louis Quirarte. And another one named David Czamanske. These two were high in the chapter. Quirarte on the Ex-Com maybe...and oh, I think was...Czamanske was high on regional conservation and public lands. But they were connected to the Pasadena chapter, which was putting on...wanted to put on the hundredth...no, the...yes, the 100th birthday celebration John Muir founding of the Sierra Club. John Muir founded the Sierra Club on May 28th, 1892 in San Francisco. And now I had come in without realizing it to the Angeles chapter, the largest chapter of the club, getting ready to celebrate the 100th birthday. And it would... had been determined that the 100th birthday would be celebrated in Eaton Canyon Park in Pasadena. And the Pasadena chapter was a core, culturally core, highly educated, rich, group of the Sierra Club. Naturally is Pasadena. And, you know, Cal Tech out there and you know colleges, money. And so they decided they wanted to have that celebration at Eaton Canyon Park, and I found a way to align myself with that out of my love of history John Muir and so forth. So one of my first roles there was to help them develop the 100th birthday picnic. And I actually found a John Muir ...there's a little small group of John Muir impersonators you might say, who go around. I found one through the...I think it was the American Council for the Humanities. And I made the connection got him there. I'd have to look up the name, but the...what it...what the point was that that was a big success. He did a bang up job. So that would have elevated my standing and shored me up once I got linked with the Pasadena people, And helped put on a bang up celebration. A large crowd in Pasadena. Well, what else could they possibly want? Big success. So now I was past the initial challenge from what you might call is...well, I don't know if I'd say right wing, it was just that Dodson remained a thorn in the side all the rest of the time. He would not relate to me. I have a feeling he found out about the gay stuff too. I have a feeling that he was prejudiced, military, Republican. I have, you know, I've got the most problems out of the republicans along the way. He wasn't the only one. But anyway, we put him in his place for the time being and he wasn't...it's just he would not...he remained distant and unapproachable. Fortunately that was not true of the others. I also need to put in to this before we get too far, cause some memories are coming back, being my connection to the Sierra Club and how I got hired. The other thing that...and this was to figure after 1990 also so it's all right I'll just bridge it with this. In the late 18...1980s, somewhere around 1988 then I came in beginning of 90. We'll just talk about this connection, which preceded it and endured. And that connection was that there were people in the Hollywood community, and the area around the Angeles chapter who wanted to organize a social group within the chapter. This group was called the Gay and Lesbian Sierran's. So they had the model of a single chapter for unattached men and women. They already had done that with some controversy, I might say, that had not gone through that easily. But they had the model. Well, once you have the model and here's the gay movement and you've got gay people inside the Sierra Club, well guess what's going to happen? They want to make a gay and lesbian Sierran's. And so I wasn't yet wired to that at the beginning, but I became because I worked with a guy named Murray Aronson, who was a very devoted Sierra Club

member of that chapter. And so we did all kinds of...developed some materials that you needed to do to lobby such a move inside the chapter. Well, it's a democratic chapter though. You can't just...if you have an executive director, yes, you... the director might have ordered it, but we didn't have that and we...it had to be lobbied through committees and through a club council. I think it was the clubs, they had something called the club council a leadership council. And it...that one was so controversial that they had to run that through three successor monthly meetings which were only about that. and we drew largest crowds of people haven't seen in years who started coming to council meetings. So it just goes to show that even inside the Sierra Club, this has been...this is not been an easy issue. You got the cultural stuff deep and historic, and it was a fight. But I led that fight and from kind of...I led it and spoke. And one of my supporters, it turned out from the work I had done, that was Elden Hughes, who was the...one of the chief architects of the California Desert Protection Act and a Republican, would you believe it? But for whatever reason that mattered to him on my side. And so I...and I'll never forget the speech that...I mean just the power of the speech that Elden Hughes gave about that. At the third of those climactic council meetings, he gave off stemwinder of a speech. I wish I had the transcript. But I don't have the transcript. You know, it was just it swung the final vote. I think we won it two to one, at least in the final vote. But Elden had respected me. So in the face of this there was this triumvirate of Elden, of Judy Anderson and Jim Dobson. Judy Anderson was the third one in that triumvirate, she was a math teacher in the school district up there near Pasadena. And it turned out...I didn't know it then, but later turned out she's gay woman. So you had the two...one closet gay, one straight advocate against the military man, but I was protected by the fact that that triumvirate had the majority rooting for me. And Dodson could not use his triumvirate on the desert act to get me out. So that's just an important background that I've synthesized somewhat after. But it was important part of my...maybe of my getting hired because that was known before my...I got hired that I had...I was part of that. And undoubtedly figured in the politics because they accepted this group, and this was all new, and that group became a large active supporting group of it within the Angeles chapter. You know, money, members, hikes, outings, the works, you know? In fact, during those first years in the Angeles chapter, there were a whole number of backpacks at New Year's that Murray Aronson would organize to Phantom Ranch in the bottom of the Grand Canyon at New Year's. And I went on more than one of those. I went on three or four of them. So that was all part of the underplay of, you know, what I was about. I had to support this group, you know, all their new outings. That was a new thing that would bring them money and resources.

TM: I think I want to tie in a couple of things here going back to Joshua Tree. Were you able to change that flying route?

DH: Good question. Just the logical question. The answer was that I had seeded the wheels in motion, which led in fact to my becoming acquainted with the wilderness coordinator of the national park service. Wes Henry. And, of course, they were in a jam by this, by 1990. They were in a jam over the Grand Canyon. They were in a jam with the military. What they gonna do? And so Wes Henry was the connection there that my work was inevitably leading towards because he was assigned out of Washington's office the responsible of not only what are we going to do about the military and what are we gonna do about the Grand Canyon? And then what are we going to do about the other parks? Because now the grassroots was lobbying for thing like a ban on overflights at Rocky Mountain. And so the dust was being stirred up, and

especially once Bush was done, and Clinton came in, in early...in the '92 election. Obviously there was going to be...something had to be done because during the Bush years, not much had been done useful on Grand Canyon. So there was an opening coming here. And so you know that election and all this...some of it behind the scenes obviously. But there was Wes Henry and they were of course needing to measure the noise because everything has to be defended with science, you know? Otherwise you're considered subjective crazies talking about the noise, you know, you have no standard. So they had to go through noise metrics. Well, who's going to do noise metrics? The EPA noise control office had been disbanded by Ronald Reagan in 1980. One of his first acts of office was to get rid of it. And it was funded at the rate of \$1 a year for his programs. However, they were kept on paper there with some one person to represent it. So they had no quiet zone metrics. And how are you going to develop that? Well, you're going to first have to measure how quiet it is, and this is...had nothing to do with the FAA standard of 65 averaged decibels. So you've got to actually get on the ground and it turned out that they were doing that work in around 1990 and '91, including at Point Sublime through their subcontractor, which was Harris Miller. Miller and Hanson based in Massachusetts. And they had teamed actually went out to Point Sublime and some other...few other canyon viewpoints and had been doing measurements...of...with, you know, highly sensitive noise equipment, how quiet it was. Forest service was also good with that because we have a national forest right there too. And so all this was background. But I guess my...how did I get elevated in the midst of this? It may have been the Joshua Tree route that made the connection to Wes Henry I suspect.

TM: Tell me more about Wes. What do you remember about him?

DH: Well, he was a kind of...he was a middle aged man, maybe at that point about 45. And I didn't actually meet him until they did a kind of a preliminary session with me in the summer of '93 out at Bryce actually...they kind of...they, you know, they kind of interviewed me, but that's where I met him. He was a kind of intellectual sort of person. You know, I...you...a little bit inscrutable in some ways on a personal level. You know, you couldn't figure him out. He was strictly professional it seemed to me in what he was doing. The most personal side of him that I actually saw was when we...when I was at Bryce because we were scouting for sites to measure noise. And I was with Wes and a couple...another ranger. And a heavyset German woman stumbled on a rock near the... had stumble on a rock near the top of the Queens Garden Trail or one of those trails and broke her leg. And there's where I saw a whole other side of him as a wilderness ranger because he...we had to put off our scouting while we dealt with a heavy German woman in extremist with a broken leg. And he did a very effective job of what to do to get this taken care of so we could get her off the trail. So I was, you know, kind of impressed with that. I mean I think we got on fine on an intellectual level, but I can't remember, you know, anything other than just that he was the man and I saw him in action that way. I saw him sit with the superintendent, you know, then once it came time to figure out where to put me in a couple of years later, but I mean, I don't have many other...I didn't have a deep relationship with him. It was more like a kind of a professional thing. Although I did relate to him over the years and he had...there was a certain way he could sometimes be detached from the...in certain settings because he was...he had to protect a certain professional role that he had. He had to protect his bureaucracy. I saw him in action politically, and I'll get to this event in 1994 for the first time when he was the one in the park service in March of 1994 the finding the balance workshop on the Grand Canyon overflights, which was an FAA NPS collaborative that involved the

environmentalists, including Roger Clark of the Grand Canyon trust, and Rob Smith, and me. I mean I saw this because I...you know, I was starting to follow things pretty closely enough to get into that. I'd got sent to that. I represented Sierra Club at that. So that...I bet you have questions about Wes, see we're going to come back and to finding the balance. But Wes had a certain amount of power and staying power in there because he had the Clinton administration behind him. So he stood... I'll just say he knew how to stand ground when he had to. He was a man of science. He later went on, you know, to...he had developed...there was developing or did... was the lead in the national parks report on overflights to congress. And that was Wes Henry who wrote most of that supervise...putting it together. So he's a scholarly man. I mean to do that, you've got to be. And...but he would not go to...he having to walk tight wire and you could see a man walk who had the ability to walk a tight wire all the time because you know, the right size ready for his...get him out anytime they could or go after it. So that's all I know, professional. I didn't really know him deeply, you know, except that I was just with him here and there.

TM: And so did Joshua Tree then...its overflights issues get wrapped into sort of the national flights issue? Did it have its own overflights

DH: Parallel track. It was a parallel track for the park service. It was a parallel track within my work in the chapter because Wes tried to make military...they had a big problem with Sequoia that had to be solved. Sequoia Kings Canyon Park, these same kind of overflights in there. So they in fact did quite a lot of groundwork with the the Sequoia situation. And so I would just say that we had to work them as kind of like parallel things. Not...it wasn't...well, it was part of when you think about it though, there had to be...this was an ordered report on effects of aircraft overflights on units of the national park system because the overflights act itself was based on aircraft. It didn't say military aircraft. It didn't say air tours. It just said aircraft. And so the scope that that law handed to Wes Henry was broad. And they had to work all fronts at once. Aircraft including commercial aircraft. Congress made no distinction. They just kicked the... punted that ball out into the ether at all levels of the atmosphere and all types of flying. And so Wes got caught up in all of it. So there were parallel tracks going with it, and I would sometimes be talking to Wes about, you know, the military. And then there were contexts that were spinning off of that for 10 years, dealing with just Joshua Tree. West dealing with Sequoia in some successful way. I think successful. They wrote up a success story on all this in the end but it won't be after 10 year. So there was that track. And then we had Wes working on the Grand Canyon issue. And we didn't yet have the...it was not resolved about the other national parks, except they knew they had noise issues in Zion, which they needed to address that and Rocky Mountain because of the overflow. So they had by necessity it was that that report had to be about all the units, in the national park system , quite a charge. I mean, humongous. And so I connected him all along the line on all those fronts.

TM: Okay. And then let's go from there as well to your New Year's Eve backpacks at Phantom Ranch. Do you remember when the first one of those would have been?

DH: Boy, this could maybe...it's probably in a file somewhere. But I suspect that they must've got that going in '93 or 4 something they were coming along quite regularly, all through the middle 90s for me. You know? And I mean as far as the... I mean, you would want to know a few details about that if I can remember much.

TM: Just because that concept of being at Phantom Ranch for New Year's Eve resonated with a number of people, not just people of the Sierra Club, that go year after year after year. And so

DH: I think we were in that week. I don't believe we were ever there on New Year's Eve, the night. So we didn't get to experience Christmas and we didn't get to experience New Year's Eve there, but we experienced the days...some days...a couple of days in between usually. And we had...you can get the reservations also much more easily than now. I mean it wasn't yet found by the whole wide world in the same way. And somehow they were able to get us amazing, and got us booked in there. And we were in the dorm where you'd be put in the dorm. I don't remember being in cabins for those. So we would have these dorm outings, and of course I knew this route I mean for me, it was a just a lovely way to get out into a favorite place each year with them and do that, but there was nothing that singular really about what went on there. They were not...there was nothing sexually riotous or, you know, they were the kind of people who really...to do that you're going to have people who are know what they're doing about hiking, and that is why they're there. But I guess you would say yes, you had this kind of interesting constituency. People getting to talk to each other and be with each other. So it was fine. There was nothing to report about it beyond what any other group would do though. And so we just kept doing it. Murray would organize those. And not on New Year's Eve. So I can't report the particular holiday.

TM: That's a different group that targets that.

DH: That's right.

TM: So...okay. So you've got this job now with the Angeles chapter. The issues are many. There's Joshua Tree, there's the California deserts. And that the California deserts plan was being drawn up through the bureau of rec...no, sorry, through the bureau of land management. Is that right?

DH: Yeah. Well, it was BLM, but you also were going to make national parks in there. So Yeah, you were going to expand Joshua Tree. You were going to make that...no, Mojave National Preserve.

TM: That's right.

DH: And then you...we're going to expand and make a wilderness out of Death Valley National Park. So those are the three centerpieces. However, you had other wilderness units in the desert, which would been...I guess, BLM. And so BLM was thoroughly involved with all these wilderness plans. I missed out on all that mapping. I had come, and there was a core that was continuing to do it while I was there. But that was now part of the regional office. I didn't get in on that. I was just, you know I was too late to...I would like it, but I missed it by a hair.

TM: Okay. Then let's start focusing in on Grand Canyon overflights. As you mentioned, the first thing the park needed to do was collect data on noise. Was that the first time that the park service

had started to do this to realize they needed scientific data on noise? I guess my question is, were you aware of earlier efforts the park service had dealt with on overflights issues?

DH: Well, the Grand Canyon had forced some stuff in as early as the opening the airport. I'm...so I was aware that a number of noise studies were done in the early 70s and it's in the archives up there...the museum. So I've come across, you know, those kinds of studies, but what you often found there were they're being done by private sector teams. I don't remember a lot of systematic park service overseeing effort up there in the 70s. I...the park service got serious though after the overflights act of 1987. I mean, that's where they...well then they have the mission and the charge from Congress. They did have the enlargement act of course, of 1975, which would assign them the authority to begin looking at adverse impacts. And they were responsible for that. And so I am sure that through the resource, you know, the resource division of the Grand Canyon NPS, there were some kinds of noise studies that went on between '75 and '77 which would have gotten into the report on solitude along with the private studies or the academic studies that would have informed all that. But that I think the real program to build up anything systematic came after the overflights act. And it took a couple of years to fold in Harris Miller, Miller and Hanson in this the firm and in, H&MH for short, in Burlington, Massachusetts led by Nick Miller. Nick Miller is a key name that you should have because he figures throughout this history. And so when you get to Point Sublime with Nick Miller and Rick Horonjeff, that's another name that was involved in that. And then there was another one, the name I don't remember. You've got a team that out there at Point Sublime in early...in '90 and '91 and also some forest service noise people out there on like...on the Kaibab plateau and all that. '89, you know, you've got the forest service got some interested in this too.

TM: Were Nick and Rick working for the park service, or they were working for the contractor you mentioned?

DH: Horonjeff, they were, you know, they were contractors to NPS.

TM: Okay. What was the name of their company again?

DH: Harris, Miller, Miller and Hanson.

TM: Okay. And they were noise contractors. What exactly was their

DH: They were primarily...their experience had come out of the metropolitan noise issues. You know, they're based in Massachusetts, and they had quite a repertoire noise studies that had to do with aviation, but they... I don't think they... I don't know that they had this huge reservoir on parks. And I'm not exactly...it's just that Nick Miller was...he was very interested. He was one of the co-partners in the firm. He was very interested in the outdoors. So somehow Nick Miller had found his way to the park service and Wes Henry. That's all I can conclude right now. And that established the beginning trials that they did around the Grand Canyon in 1990.

TM: Okay. All right. I'm wondering if this is a good place to wrap up part six. And part seven would talk about the 1990 studies.

DH: Sure. You know, you see, we sometimes a little bit of sudden retroactive memory pops back in as you talk, but you're probably used to that happening. It's just

TM: And that will happen and that's fine.

DH: and then you get it in.

TM: Yeah. Yeah.

DH: So, yeah. I mean, we'll... so you pick up with the early 1990s and whatever I know but...which is, you know, the memory wasn't... where's all the files on this. But I know something about what they did. You know, I know something about it. And I'll talk about what I know. And we can pick up with the noise studies they were beginning to inform the overflights report.

TM: Yeah, and that's going to be

DH: And they're in that report. I can look at it meanwhile.

TM: That's going to lead to defining the balance workshop. The start

DH: Yes, it will lead to that, and also through hearings. And there were hearings. Oh yeah, you've got to do the public process don't you? No way out. And they're going to be angry. This is threatened to people. Empires threatened. That's right. But I don't know everything about everything and their reasons. I don't know everything about that. I couldn't go to everything. Sometimes I was even caught by the, doing the noise work, but they're missing a hearing. I mean, I've had you know,

TM: Can't be everywhere at once..

DH: Yes, it was getting hot.

TM: Okay. Well with that, why don't we wrap up part six of oral history interview with Dick Hingson. Today is September 6th, 2019. My name is Tom Martin. And Dick, thank you very much.

DH: You're welcome.