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Interviewee: Keturah Pennington (KP) PART 6

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

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TM: Today is Monday, April 29, 2019. This is a Grand Canyon Historical Oral Interview with Keturah Pennington. My name is Tom Martin, and this is a part 6 interview with Keturah. Good afternoon Keturah, how are you today?

KP: Very good, thank you. And you?

TM: Very well. Thank you. May we have your permission to record this interview this interview over the phone?

KP: Absolutely.

TM: Thank you. At the end of part five we had traveled from Hite, Utah following these photographs all the way to the mouth of the Escalante River at mile 88.2. The Escalante, well why don't you describe the Escalante, what is it exactly?

KP: It's one of the deepest and longest of the side canyon and it has side canyons emptying into it, which are really spectacular and worth a trip each for their own sake. It's very deep, as the Colorado River is, but it's significantly narrower than the Colorado River.

And in some parts of it, the steep cliffs on the Escalante come right down to the, near the water's edge, and in some places there's more greenery and talus between the water and the cliffs, but it's one of the ones that may, well has proved to have a lot of the upper reaches not touched by the lake, so... It's worth a trip going down there just to the Escalante River.

TM: Nice. When I think of Glen Canyon from Hite, Utah all the way to Lee's Ferry, this is well over one hundred miles, the one tributary that really jumps out to me is the San Juan.

KP: Right.

TM: Which drains a big part of western, what is it? Southwestern Colorado.

KP: Yeah.

TM: And so, is the Escalante drainage coming in from the north, is it as big as the San Juan?

KP: Oh no.

TM: OK.

KP: San Juan and Dirty Devil are both major tributaries to the Colorado river.

TM: OK. And the Dirty Devil is above height a little ways.

KP: Right.

TM: OK, but it's a big drainage as well.

KP: Yes.

TM: So, the Dirty Devil, is that the next drainage east? Does its watershed boundary to the west border the Escalante?

KP: I don't think I quite understand the question, but I would really urge anyone who wants to know the answer to what you just asked to go consult the lab.

TM: That's right, go look at the map. Yeah, OK.

KP: I've not been on the Dirty Devil, we've driven across on the bridge, but I don't really know anything about the Dirty Devil. I don't really know anything about the San Juan either, except that there's a really terrific canyon that ends on the San Juan. It's probably worth talking about too because it's such an interesting and different canyon

TM: Huh, OK. Did, and, well, we'll get to the San Juan when we get to it, we should probably focus on the Escalante, because one thing leads to another, and I'm like – now I got a San Juan question, but it's like wait a minute, because we're not there yet. So, the Escalante River, is this a river you need a boat to travel on, or can you just walk the creek bed? What is it like?

KP: At times there you can walk the creek bed in the upper parts. In the lower parts, we boated a fair distance before it got so shallow we had to get out and walk.

TM: OK, so there's a flow of water in it...

KP: Yes.

TM: ...what, maybe five cubic feet a second? Something like that? What would you think?

KP: You know, I have never learned to gauge cubic feet per second.

TM: OK.

KP: It doesn't dry up like a lot of the other side canyons do. That's mostly because it's quite long and reaches way up into the upper reaches of the cliffs up there.

TM: OK.

KP: I don't think Phil has any pictures in this series of Wilson Creek, but I can tell you a story when we get farther up the Escalante about a flash flood that we were there for.

TM: OK, so there are four pictures here on this page that's titled Escalante River - Mile 88.2. The first picture looks like it's been raining. It's almost like there's a mist in the air. And...

KP: I think that's just the lighting.

TM: OK.

KP: That's a picture of a pictograph panel at the entrance. And they're fairly faint.

TM: This is the picture above the panel. It shows the river and some rocks and some cliffs in the distance and a bunch of clouds. The sun looks like it's trying to break through in the distance, but the cliffs almost look wet.

KP: I don't think it was probably raining. I noticed Phil doesn't say what year that was. And that – no, it couldn't have been the year that we got in the flash flood. It's quite possible that it is raining farther up the Escalante River and the clouds are hanging in low, but if you look up high in the picture, you'll see that they are very low clouds. So, I mean, it's not overcast.

TM: Yeah. No, no, no. No, it looks like a storm cell. It's a very nice picture. And--

KP: It's vaguely possible we were coming in near sunset.

TM: OK.

KP: And it's just the lighting is that way.

TM: Got it.

KP: But all summer long, thinking of our summer trips, except for the one hiking trip up in Wilson Creek, I can't think, of the two times it rained, and it didn't rain very much then, so I don't think that's a rainy picture.

TM: OK. The next picture is of some pictographs at the mouth of the Escalante. This is one of those photographs where there's nothing for scale, but there's a series of people standing there

KP: Those are good sized figures, 18 inches high, 20 inches high.

TM: They're really nicely done, with very fine detail. Headdresses and big hands, lots of fingers. Yeah, that's just wonderful.

KP: The figure I found most interesting is the one in the next picture down. That's the one that I think of as a whale. I'm sure that couldn't be a whale, but I don't know what it would be. You know, it might even be a tool that they had. But it is huge.

TM: Really? Huh.

KP: If I was standing in front of it and spread my arms out, I couldn't reach from side to side. It's longer than five and a half feet, which is my span.

TM: Gosh, it does kind of look fish-like, doesn't it?

KP: It's strange. And I've never yet found anybody who has an informed opinion of what it is, but when you say did you see the whale, they know what we're talking about.

TM: Huh. And again, these were at the mouth. So, if I came down the Escalante on foot from the Rim Rock country, when I got to the river, could I go downstream or upstream along the river?

KP: For a little ways.

TM: OK. And if the water was low and I could wade across and I got to the other side, could I get out on the other side? Meaning, is this a -- could this possibly be a trans canyon route? A way to get from rim to rim.

KP: Oh. I don't know, but I -- I was never there. We were there in June, September, January, February, April, and we were never there when I feel one could wade across the Colorado River.

TM: OK.

KP: And of course, at flood time, it's deep and fast.

TM: Yeah. Absolutely, yes. Yeah. Well, it's curious because people clearly got down to the confluence here.

KP: Oh yeah. There's an easy route into the Escalante.

TM: And then the..

KP: And that's where they were when they discovered they really had to come back and come back and come back. They had come in from Hole In The Rock, the road to Hole In The Rock. They'd come in that way.

TM: The fourth photograph on this page is a picture of a canyon with a little water in it, and the water doesn't look very deep, but I can't quite tell.

KP: It's not very deep, no. I mean, it's wadable.

TM: OK. And so, is this picture sort of typical of what the Escalante would look like?

KP: Sometimes it was narrower. And some of the curves had been washed out so the river was now running in a big horseshoe curve with a sandbar above it that was -- had vegetation on it.

TM: Oh, OK. So, during a high flood there would be a bench deposited, silt would be deposited up on...

KP: Yeah.

TM: ...up high. OK. Nice. And I'm going to just read the text here: The Escalante has many very fine features: Cathedral in the Desert in Clear Creek; accessibility to the Hole in the Rock road at the gauging station; two natural arches and extensive Anasazi things at Davis Gulch; Gregory Natural Bridge and a spectacular canyon in Soda Gulch (Fiftymile); Skyline Arch and Coyote Gulch plus many more natural bridges and arches and numerous Anasazi sites.

KP: It's a great canyon and as I said, it was very long and rose a lot, so there was stuff left even after the lake was at its highest.

TM: Well, I'm going to click on the button that says "Explore the Escalante" and see where that goes.

KP: Oh, I just lost my picture.

TM: Uh oh. Well I'll tell you what I'm seeing, and I should mention that the website we are at is www.explorepx.com. That's E-X-P-L-O-R-E-P-D-X.com. So Keturah, before we started this interview

today, mentioned that she doesn't have an internet access. So, when you left that page on your computer, that doesn't get you...

KP: I'm just not getting the picture, I've got the caption, and this one I know. The canyon of the Escalante brings many delightful surprises. Fresh spring water. And there was water all along the Escalante River.

TM: How – so there's two people standing there. It looks like you in the sailor's hat, maybe?

KP: If it's a sailor hat, it's me. Everybody else had different kinds of hat or none at all.

TM: Standing next to you looks like a gentleman with a pack and, kind of, khaki pants and a dark shirt. Dark hair.

KP: Yeah, I don't know who that...

TM: OK. And do you have any idea how far up the Escalante from the mouth you might be where this spring was?

KP: Well, there were springs all along and I don't know, exactly, where this one was. You didn't have to really carry a very big water jug if you were hiking up the Escalante. A quart would probably do, and a half gallon would be plenty.

TM: So, the photos of two people standing – clearly, there's water coming down a cliff here, and on a small bench up above these people is a bunch of vegetation that looks like it's in flower.

KP: Tamarisk.

TM: Is that tamarisk? It doesn't look like tamarisk. It looks like possibly some pretty unique water happy vegetation. It doesn't look like willows, it's certainly not cottonwood. These are, oh, I don't know, maybe three feet high bushes. I wonder if you remember, as a botanist, seeing any unique plants in there that surprised you.

KP: None that surprised me, but there were a lot – what color are the flowers?

TM: Yellow. It almost looks like brittlebush, but...

KP: Oh, I wouldn't have thought we had brittlebush down in the canyon, but near the mouth of the Escalante that's possible.

TM: I don't know, I mean, it's just – it's hard to pick out.

KP: Yeah.

TM: So, OK. The next picture down is a little bird nest. There's a morning dove nest there.

KP: Right. There were mourning doves all over the canyon...

TM: Really?

KP: ...and this was the first June trip in '62. And I don't even remember who the guy looking at them is, but they were there just at the right time. There were the baby doves.

TM: Nice. And the next picture is absolutely amazing. It's titled left bank waterfall near Indian Creek. And there is...

KP: Yeah, Indian Creek is the first side canyon in the Escalante if I recall. And...

TM: There's a seep coming down from a side canyon, and there's a sloping sandstone wall that goes right into what looks like a sheet of water.

KP: Oh, I would guess that the darkest parts of that are wet. And I would also guess that maybe it had rained not too long ago. Because it looks like that's mostly dry, but when it rains up high on the plateau you get a lot of waterfalls falling down.

TM: OK. And then the picture below that shows again, this -- the Escalante creek with a good, at least, I'd say, five cubic feet a second of water there on a very wide channel, maybe 25 to 35 feet wide, and a couple of people are walking with backpacks along the shoreline.

KP: Yeah, I do have that picture. And we have parked our boats, as high up as we can paddle north on the Colorado river. We parked in the Escalante River, but we're planning to hike up and camp somewhere upstream. We wanted to spend the part of the day that we had left when we landed, and the next day in the Escalante because we wanted to explore all the side canyons except Wilson.

TM: Nice, how many night overnight was this away from the river?

KP: Oh, one.

TM: Just one, OK.

KP: In the back is Helen McGuinness and in the middle is me, and I expect that's Helen's brother in front of me, but I'm not certain of that. But everybody, you know, put supper and whatever you wanted to carry in the way of sleeping gear, and water bottles of course, and we just went up the canyon for a ways. Helen and her brother decided that it was warm enough that they weren't going to bother carrying blankets and sleeping bags and whatnot, they just planned to camp in some sort of a nice cozy little shelter -- rock shelter/alcove.

TM: How did that work out for them?

KP: Very well.

TM: Really? OK.

KP: One of our group picked a flat piece of sandstone and said that was her orthopedic mattress and it was the most comfortable night she'd had. Apparently she slept on sandbags. But now we're going up to explore the Escalante and its side canyons which were magnificent.

TM: So, there's a photograph of a guy walking along, he's wearing maybe a swimsuit, he's holding his shoes, he has no pack, there's what looks like...

KP: Oh, that now, those weren't the same year.

TM: OK, yeah, it says June 1961.

KP: Yeah, this is the year that they hiked in from Geneva's Gulch.

TM: Oh, OK.

KP: Hiked the Escalante and decided they had to see more of Glen Canyon.

TM: So, this is a typical view, possibly looking downstream, typical of what the Escalante looks like then?

KP: Yeah, I'd say. Well, it's hard to say typical about any part of it. There was a lot of country like this.

TM: That's just gorgeous. There's cliffs going up to the Rim Rock country, which only look to be 100 to 150 feet high. There's...

KP: Well...

TM: I mean, it's hard to say in the distance here, it could be a much bigger cliff than I'm looking at.

KP: I think it is. I don't know where in the Escalante they were, but those are good, high cliffs. I'd say sometimes they drop right down almost to the water's edge, and sometimes there were big talus floats between the water and the cliffs.

TM: Nice.

KP: I can't think of anywhere in the Escalante where the cliffs weren't big. You can see a fourth person in the middle of the river, just to the right of the three people that are more evident.

TM: My thinking is, if this June of '61 this is quite a ways up the Escalante from the river. And so...

KP: I would imagine so, yes.

TM: ...so the cliffs won't be quite as tall, given that they are further way from the water grade at where the Colorado River is.

KP: Yeah.

TM: So the cliffs wouldn't be quite that high. Still, it's stunning, water filling the channel, ankle deep in many spots.

KP: The walls striped with the manganese stains.

TM: Yes. Yep, and there's riverside vegetation, looks like willows there.

KP: Probably -- yeah, the lower stuff may be willows. The taller is almost certainly tamarisk

TM: OK. OK. It's really -- it just looks really fun, and I would not want to be in this with a boat at that water because it's just too shallow

KP: Yeah. This is too -- well, that's why in the picture that I said people were carrying their supper and overnight sleeping gear we were walking then. If we could have boated, we would have.

TM: Right, yeah. Would've come up from the bottom. So clearly, during spring runoff, that might've been a boatable trial. I remember reading of a group in the 1950s that attempted to boat the Escalante, pulling the boats more than riding them.

KP: I would believe that.

TM: It was a long journey. Then then next page to click on here is: route to the gauging station from Hole in the Rock road.

KP: Yeah, and I don't have any of that. My server can't find any of it so...

TM: OK. I'm going to click on it and see what happens. There's one, two, three, four photographs and the first photograph is titled June 1961, A swirl hole above the gauging station. And it's John Faust, Chris Suzeck, and Cy Benton. And it's...

KP: Oh, I do remember that picture, yeah. During the flood season, swirl holes like that were gouged out by boulders that got caught in eddies and whirled round and round. Then as the hole got deeper, other rocks got caught in there and whirled round and round and dug it out even more. And as I recall that one's a fairly deep one there. Looking down what, four feet, maybe?

TM: It looks bottomless in this photograph. It's hard to tell how deep it is, and there may be water down there. I don't know.

KP: When we were there on another trip, during the dry season, there were some that were so deep and so broad that we didn't want to go into them because we didn't know that we could get out. They were too broad to chimney; you couldn't reach from side to side. They were deep enough that I don't think I could have climbed out of them. So yeah, the flash floods really do a job there.

TM: That's amazing. The next photo shows some slickrock country in the distance. Blue, blue skies. There is a drainage, it looks like a pretty small drainage. The caption is: September 1962. The gauging station route seen from a bank above the Escalante River. It's that ledge near the left edge of the photo, and we are looking directly up the route. See the photo below. OK. And the next...

KP: OK, look at the photo below. Is that what looks like a very nicely carved ramp for our very convenience?

TM: Yeah, and it almost looks like somebody's done a little stock improvement there at the bottom to make a little trail to get down off that wonderful ramp.

KP: Well, that's the way that the park rangers came in to go down to the gauging station that measured the water flow in the Escalante River. That was their route in.

TM: OK, yeah. So, the caption here says: On the route from the Hole in the Rock road to the gauging station. This is one of the few places a walker can get down the cliffs into the Escalante Canyon. There was a skeleton of a horse just below those walkers higher up. From the bottom of this rock ledge trail, it's a short walk down the sand and slickrock to the Escalante River and the gauging station. Art Knobel, Henri Benoit...

KP: Yeah, he's Italian, that's Henri.

TM: OK. Benoit is his last name and John Faust, are the people walking down the ramp here. That looks like great country to walk around in.

KP: That was the trip that got them interested in this part of the world, yeah.

TM: So here is a great aerial photo titled: Escalante Canyon near the gauging station. Do you think this aerial photo of the Escalante was taken when Phil was in the air trying to search for the lost hikers?

KP: It very well could have been, of course, because that's the area that they were in. But we also talked the pilot into flying over whatever Phil wanted pictures of.

TM: Nice. This picture, this aerial photo picture, is actually of the same spot we talked about how high is that cliff. It's the same – it's looking down on the same spot from the air that the other picture has looking downstream. Now I can appreciate how big that cliff is.

KP: Yes, it's big.

TM: It's big. That's really wonderful. And I'm just surprised to see how the Escalante is so torturous. It's going to right, it's going to the left, it's going to the right, it's going to the left. It just is so sinuous. You walk a long distance to go a short horizontal line.

KP: Well, I can imagine that a very long time ago the Escalante River was a crack and the flash floods brought down a lot of boulders that banged first the left wall and then the right, and it carved itself a sinuous path and then side canyons got carved into it over time. It's one of the longest...

TM: It just looks really gorgeous, especially from the air here. OK, the next link to click on looks like Lower Escalante Creek – sorry, Lower Escalante River.

KP: Well, I'm not going to have any of that.

TM: You know what? We were just there, so I've seen these, and we went to the route to the gauging station, so we did that. It looks like then the next one to click on would be Clear Creek, Cathedral in the Desert.

KP: Yes. Yes, nothing else could have been saved, and I don't really know how they'd have done it. Aw, I don't have Clear Creek either. That's too bad because it is spectacular.

TM: It looks incredibly well vegetated.

KP: Yeah, it looks really nondescript right at the Escalante. But at that time, everybody was exploring everything, and Cathedral in the Desert, I think, was one of the main stops of the commercial river trips too. So, of course it had to be explored.

TM: So they would hike up from the Colorado then?

KP: Yeah, I know they did after Phil alerted the Sierra Club to what was there, but I suspect they may have before as well. Not the Sierra Club, but other commercial – Georgia White and Matt – do you know about Georgia White?

TM: Yes, oh yes.

KP: Yeah, OK. Yeah, I have a feeling she took her people up there. So you turn into a reasonably nondescript ravine and in canyon spectacular and keep going. I don't have the pictures, but I know they get better and better.

TM: The caption here for the first one, and you can see there's cliffs in the distance, but there's a lot of vegetation. It looks like big cottonwood trees. They almost look like maybe they're ash. It says Clear Creek is a wide canyon with much greenery up to its spectacular jumpup. And the stream runs over a

bed of bare rock and occasionally drops over a small cascade or waterfall. Must have been really fun to walk it up.

KP: Oh yeah, we waded all the way. It was very shallow when we first got there, and I don't think we were ever there when it wasn't, except when it was late.

TM: And then -- there's four pictures here. The fourth picture looks like: well, you better turn around here. It's narrowed right in, there's a cliff on the left with a lot of wonderful striped staining on it coming down. There's a cliff on the right. You could easily go huh, I guess that's it, ho hum. Suddenly, the walls close in overhead it says. Your first visit here is bound to be a stunning surprise. You have never seen anything like what lies around that corner. And that corner looks pretty nondescript.

KP: It does, yes. Right.

TM: And so then, the next link here says Step into the Cathedral in the Desert, and I'm going to click the button.

KP: And I do have those pictures.

TM: OK, oh my gosh. One, two, three, four, five, six photos on this page. Jumpup pool -- so by jumpup pool, do you mean there's a pool over here that you can't get up without rope? You'd have to come down from the top with a rope?

KP: Right. Well, no wait. I need to make sure I answered your question. You can see a stripe of light running diagonally across the lower left corner.

TM: Yes, yes. And a person in the light on the far lower right.

KP: Right. The person is me, and I was instructed to get myself around there and stand right there while Phil took that picture. The sun is coming in from the upper left, and it comes across the top of the waterfall there. Which is -- oh, I don't know -- somebody measured it, 80 feet high?

TM: OK, that sounds about right.

KP: And it fused in a large, reasonably deep pool right where the strip of light is cut off. The black at the bottom of the page is all water. And it's a big pool, and it's sandy around more than half of it. But part of it is either straight up out of the water or slightly overhanging straight out of the water. You could swim over, but you couldn't get up.

TM: And it looks like the canyon is almost a slot canyon that comes down to a large area that has been eroded out, as if making a cathedral that is still open to the sky in a narrow slit overhead. Wow.

KP: When people are hiking up the canyon, everybody's, you know, chattering and calling, "Oh look at this," "See what I found," and so forth, and when people stepped around the corner, yeah. The next picture shows what's backwards. When you step around that corner everybody gets quiet. It's really very nice.

TM: That's just gorgeous. The lighting reflecting to the cliffs above, lighting them diffusely with the desert varnish staining, stripes coming down, the cliff's sandstone, really just gorgeous. In the third picture down is the plunge pool and waterfall. OK. See a more recent trip into this spot from above.

Seeing a person rappelling down this face will give you a much better idea of its size. OK. I'm gonna click that from above.

KP: Yeah, I don't have those pictures.

TM: No, it went someplace else. So I'm gonna go back. That link is broken, but that's alright.

KP: Yeah, that was somebody else then. It was a link to his website, and I suspect he's taken it down, and I don't know how to get it back.

TM: Oh I see. So, looking up into the canyon above the waterfall, you do get a little glimpse of that. But you can't climb up there, and so...

KP: If you can go back up to where we first came in and saw the Cathedral in the Desert with the stripe of light across the lower left-hand corner. That stripe of light ends in a little knob, and if we go back down to the picture we were just at, there is that little knob, only it's huge.

TM: Yeah, that's amazing. Oh, and I see what you mean about the plunge pool and the sand. There's a -- so when you were standing on a little sandy area there, but there's a much deeper pool of water at the base of this waterfall.

KP: Yeah, and it is deep. I'm not keen on swimming so I didn't swim out there. Besides, it's cold, very cold. Even in summer it was cold because the sun never hit it.

TM: Gorgeous light, and then, the last picture on this page shows the pour over, and in the lower right are a cluster of people, and they look mighty small.

KP: Yes, it's a big alcove.

TM: Wow. Then there's a link to click for more of Cathedral in the Desert and I'm going to click that.

KP: Well, I don't have those.

TM: So it's a -- one, two three, four, five, six -- six photographs, and the first one is looking straight up.

KP: Yeah, Phil liked to do that. Shows you how narrow it is at the top and how wide it is at the bottom.

TM: Yeah, that's really just amazing. The walls close in overhead to form a vast cathedral in the desert, and it is by this name that this place has been known, for the only too brief time that it has been known. Gosh. And there's water seeping out of the walls. Again, I imagine the vegetation -- oh, maidenhair fern grows in the water seeps. OK.

KP: And often, mimulus which has bright yellow flowers and early in the year and often poison oak -- poison ivy, excuse me. Poison ivy.

TM: It says a broad, flat sandy floor. I would not want to be in here in monsoon season.

KP: No, definitely you don't want to be there.

TM: This is a gorgeous picture. The sun is coming into the cathedral area with the plunge pool and the sand, and the cliffs around it are dark. There's a little bit of vegetation in the bottom and the slide is titled: yes, that's poison ivy.

KP: Right. Phil wasn't allergic to poison ivy and he never really paid any attention.

TM: Oh the lucky man!

KP: That's my opinion, yes. But he brought that picture back and selected that one because it was the one he wanted for the nice overview, and I said to him, you know, that's poison ivy, there in the corner of the picture. And so he acknowledged it in the caption.

TM: That's very nice. It's just gorgeous. It's really just gorgeous.

KP: Well, I wouldn't go where he was, because it was all poison ivy.

TM: Wow. Really stunning. OK, so I'm going to click the link here to go back to Clear Creek. And...

KP: Oh, hell's bells. I lost everything, and I'm not going to get it back either. I'm going to have to...

TM: Well, I'm very happy to say we can reconvene when you get your computer up online again. 'cause I think it would be really important to have you know what we're looking at here. I can carry on and try to wing it, with what I'm seeing. Do you want to try that? What would you like to do?

KP: Well, whatever you feel like. I don't know how long I'm going to be – I lost everything, and I have to go back to....

TM: Yeah.

KP: OK, I don't seem to have – oh, I've got some of Davis Gulch.

TM: OK, well I'm going to click on Davis Gulch here, I see that. There's one, two, three, four, five – five photos here on the first page of Davis Gulch. And the first photo shows high cliffs, of course, lots of vegetation, some water. It looks like a jungle down there.

KP: Well, there's a spring there. Which was another good reason for going up there to camp.

TM: Nice, 'cause it was water.

KP: Yeah, it was potable water. We didn't drink the Escalante River water either.

TM: OK. It says -- on the text here, it says: Davis Gulch is the first saw-cut canyon downstream from Soda Gulch (right bank) on the Escalante River. It can be easily entered from the Hole in the Rock road by walking the desert to the west of Davis and dropping down an old Mormon Cattle trail to a corral in the bottom of the gulch. And it says, it has unusually large stream alcoves. They look giant.

KP: Yeah, they were. The Escalante had some of the biggest.

TM: And then there's a photo which is kind of hard to describe of Moki Window, or the Ruess...

KP: Right, I do have that one.

TM: Ruess Arch. It's a tiny hole worn through one of the ribs of stone. So what we're doing is: we're looking at a rib here, of stone. The gulch is curving around right and left, and it sounds like it's kind of poked through here a little bit to the other side. Is that a tiny hole?

KP: I believe there was a big hairpin turn there.

TM: OK, that makes sense.

KP: And we're – oh, maybe that's the arch over on the left. This is a tiny arch.

TM: Oh, yeah. There is a little hole over there.

KP: Yeah, I think that that is – most people call it Moki Window, but I think the official maps call it Ruess Arch. Ruess was a young man who explored the canyon very thoroughly, and probably knew a lot more about it than any of us did, but he disappeared.

TM: Right, that's Everett Ruess.

KP: Yeah, uh-huh.

TM: Yeah.

KP: OK, the next picture down – yeah, I'm sure that thing over to the left is Moki Window. The next picture down shows it.

TM: Got it. It is – it's amazingly small, but I imagine in it is gonna be a little bigger. That's amazing that it poked through there. Did you get here by walking up from the Colorado, or were these pictures taken coming down from the top?

KP: I don't know on some of them. They could've been either because the first hiking trip in, no boats came down from the top, and then all the others came up from the bottom. The one down below with the white flowers, I know was taken in September of '62, but I don't know for sure when the one above it was taken.

TM: So the picture at the bottom is of a sacred datura or...

KP: Yeah, datura.

TM: What's it called? The night --

KP: Jimson weed?

TM: Night-blooming lily. Yeah, Jimson weed.

KP: Oh, I can believe any. That's the thing, datura, all the botanists will know what you mean. Jimson weed and night-blooming lily and so forth. Weaking lily is one. It doesn't have a good smell in my opinion. So the common name is whatever the local people call it, and that's that. Datura'd be fine. I say that because I was working my way through college with a job in the botany department. I was sitting on one side of the table, and my boss was talking to somebody else on the other side, and they must've asked him what that was. And he says, "Datura," and I looked up, "Yes, boss?"

TM: And he said, "No, datura," and you said, "Yes, boss?"

KP: Yeah, something like that.

TM: Oh, that's great. Fun. I'm going to click the button --

KP: Oh, Phil has the name down below. I'm sorry.

TM: No worries. I'm going to click the button that says more Davis Gulch.

KP: I clicked, and I got a picture. Good.

TM: Great. So it's one, two, three, four, five, six photos here. And the first...

KP: I've got some of them.

TM: ...the first photo shows – there's a -- some of the best preserved Anasazi sites, it says. There's a, looks like a structure under an overhang. There's a person in a yellow shirt with maybe some green shorts there. Who's the person standing there? Do you know?

KP: I think that's Henri. H-E-N-R-I. And if you look -- one knee is bent, and right at the tip of that knee, although it doesn't really show up, but I happen to know that's a metate there. That's the portable metate. So anybody could have carried it off. Not real heavy, and it was still there. People left things like that, and I say bully for them.

TM: Well the next picture shows some metates right there on the ground.

KP: Oh, I don't have that picture.

TM: Over by the wall, it says corn grinding stones.

KP: Yeah, right, OK. No, I don't have that picture.

TM: It's right up next to a wall there. There's a stacked stone wall with mud chinking, or mud mortar, right next to these metates here. Nice. And then there's the third photograph, it says – the caption is: some of the finest pictographs in The Glen are in Davis Gulch.

KP: Yeah, there's... Apparently, Davis was broad enough that they farmed there, so they spent a lot of time there. That's Helen McGuinness taking a picture, and the next picture down is the one she's taking – is a picture of what she's taking a picture of.

TM: It reminds me of the cartoon character the Tasmanian Devil in the Bugs Bunny series. It's funny there. Did you guys have a name for this panel?

KP: No, I wouldn't be surprised if Georgia White does. We didn't particularly have a name. There were several panels scattered around.

TM: There's -- it's funny, some has scratched some name – Glover, maybe 18, no is that 19? It couldn't be 19 – oh, it could be 1962. Somebody who would have just come up there and done that. Just too bad. On the wall there. But there's some very fine white paint, it looks like, is the...

KP: Yeah, some of them were white, some of them were red. I think the next picture down shows some of each.

TM: Right, there's some red figures, feathers in there, coming out of there. There're heads there. The second photograph with this panel, there are some really intricate things there. Spirals, and almost looking like thumbprints, corncobs, all sorts of things there. Really wonderful. What else do you remember about Davis?

KP: The regionsw grass, the grass that sort of resemble cat tails, but it's truly a grass and grows taller than me. There was a lot of that in the upper reaches. And there were biting flies, they sneak up behind you and bite right behind your knee. But it was always easy walking and quite long, but we were more interested in the Native American remains. It was great for that.

TM: What other remains of the First Nation material did you find in there?

KP: Oh, houses, storage pits and things.

TM: Ok. Corncobs?

KP: As I say, there was a lot of standing benches in the curves, and I suspect they farmed there extensively.

TM: Alright. The last photograph is an aerial picture which shows a lot of slickrock country and then a deep canyon entrenched on the far left side of this photograph.

KP: Well, it says June of '61, but I think that's a typo, I think that's June of – I mean, it says '51, I think that's June of '61. And probably from the flight where Phil was looking for the lost hikers.

TM: It's gorgeous country.

KP: I guess it shows the flat mesa up above and Davis Gulch down below.

TM: Yeah, it says the Hole in the Rock airstrip is about a mile to the right or east.

KP: Yeah, that does imply that it was when he was flying, hunting for the hikers.

TM: OK, so I think that's gonna be Davis Gulch. I'm gonna click back here because I think Soda Gulch is the next place to go. For the Gregory Natural Bridge. And the first picture is stunning, it's just a wall that looks many hundreds of feet high. Tiny people down, walking a wide creek bed, if you will. Sand there, and some water, and deep shade, but nice sun as well.

KP: Well, according to the caption, it's just downstream on the Escalante from the mouth of Soda Gulch, and we were probably hiking up to Soda Gulch.

TM: It says 50-mile. Where do you think that 50-mile reference is from? Do you know?

KP: No, I don't. It's interesting. Phil must have gotten it somewhere. Oh, yes, I do know. Soda Gulch is called 50-mile Creek in some places.

TM: OK, that makes sense. I wonder...

KP: I am assuming that because I know where 25-mile Gulch is, and all the rest of it. That would be just about right, but the river runners all called it Soda. I don't know why.

TM: The next picture shows what looks like three people walking toward the camera. They're in a gorgeous little canyon that doesn't look all that wide. It's definitely very deep. They're in the shade.

KP: Well, it doesn't look all that deep, because that little dip up to the first bench that's sunlit and sweeping up to the right, isn't all that deep, but you can see behind it, it's steeper and deeper, and behind that it's...

TM: Deeper again, yeah. Yeah.

KP: And the stripes are going vertically on the parts back there. They aren't curved under an undercut. Let's see, those two people are Julie Verran on the left, Cy Benton in the middle, and I don't know the guy. That was, it says below, June '61.

TM: June 1961. Looking to the right from where the picture above was taken, we see the mouth of Soda Gulch. Ah, interesting. OK, so the next thing to click on is continue to Gregory Bridge.

KP: Oh, and I have pictures, OK.

TM: Great.

KP: Yes indeed. Now that top picture, it may not appear real obvious, but Gregory Bridge is just above the center, in the center, left and right, just above the center vertically.

TM: It is not apparent.

KP: No, it really isn't. One can find it, there's greenery in a sort of a V pointing to the right. And across the creek and just above the tip of the V, there's a little knobby thing.

TM: Yeah, and that's it.

KP: And the bridge, you can see through the bridge, just off the left curve of the knobby thing.

TM: Right, that's right.

KP: It's not real obvious.

TM: So this is a wonderful picture because it looks like it's looking upstream to the bridge, but the photographer is scrambled up quite a ways up the side of the canyon and is looking out across the high benches along the side of the watercourse. You can see...

KP: But knowing the photographer and knowing how well he loves to scramble; I think that's an aerial. I think he persuaded the pilot to fly it for him.

TM: Oh, alright. It looks like there's a nice cottonwood tree there, there's water in the creek. Really, just a gorgeous looking little canyon. Then the next picture, it's the second largest natural bridge in the US. Only Rainbow Bridge is larger. And it has a wonderfully curved underside to this bridge, but otherwise it's a fairly big, blocky mass of sandstone that makes the top of the bridge. And then the next picture is definitely from a plane, you can see the plane window. And the fourth picture is also from the plane, but it's a great shot of the bridge with sunlight in the mouth of the bridge, so it's nicely lit up.

KP: Yeah, I don't have that one.

TM: It says – the title is from the air looking upstream. The old stream meander that made the opportunity for a bridge to form is clearly visible. The easy breaking through the thin ridge is easily visualized. It would be many millennia before this sturdy bridge would collapse. Yeah, gosh.

KP: We think that our party may be the only one that – no, let me rephrase that. As far as we know, our party was the only one who has climbed it, but if anybody else claims to have, why, I can believe them.

TM: So I think it was climbed in 1940, do I want to say 7? Maybe I do, by some people who brought some string, and they wanted to know how high it was, so they dropped some string down and its written up in their journals and that roll of string that they used is actually in the Otis Marston Collection. It's unbelievable. It's a little thimble with a whole bunch of string on it. It's crazy.

KP: Wonderful.

TM: Yeah, it's really neat. What do you remember of climbing up there?

KP: The party before the first trip I went on had tried it and not made it, and of course, that was the challenge. So I tried it and found that it wasn't nearly as difficult as I thought it was going to be, but I couldn't get anybody else to want to try it, and the rope had already gone. Phil was carrying the rope at that time, so we didn't have that as an incentive. And coming down was a lot jolly harder than going up.

TM: How did you do it? Where's the route to climb it?

KP: Off the left end...

TM: Yeah, it looks like the way to do it...

KP: Go up to the one before, off the left end, yeah. It'd be left end in the next picture too. It was just sort of a walk up. There's only one difficult move, and then the rest of it was pretty easy. Getting down onto the bridge was a bit of a scramble. You can see broken rock there, which made it quite possible.

TM: Yeah, but it's interesting, it looks like you end up walking up the slickrock, and then you have to get down to get to the top of the bridge.

KP: Right. It's broken there. You can see in the picture with two people. Well, one's under the bridge and one's looking at it. So it was climbed back in the '40s. I can readily believe it, alright.

TM: And it was originally surveyed, I believe, in the '20s, and the survey crew left a bunch of tin cans there, and they may have climbed it at that time. I don't know.

KP: Survey crews are usually very skillful, yes. Well, Phil has stories about survey crews and the things they did, yeah. But not surveys here, surveys on roads in Alaska and other places.

TM: It really is a beautiful picture here. This fourth one from the air really gives a good sense of the bridge and what it looked like. It's really wonderful. And the same with the – there's the second picture which shows the person walking, and the other person's got their hands on their hips, just looking at the arch. It is a massive arch.

KP: Yes, it is. Well, one is closer to the underside of it. Then one gets to the Rainbow Bridge underside. Maybe it just looks a lot thicker, but it sure seems a lot thicker to me.

TM: The text here says in the early 1960's, road maps began to show Gregory Bridge up on the plateau above, well away from the waters of future Lake Powell.

KP: Yeah, people started learning about Gregory Bridge, and the Parks Bureau didn't want to admit they that were drowning it, so they moved it off the map.

TM: Really? Wow.

KP: Yup.

TM: Well away from the waters of future Lake Powell where earlier maps properly showed it. However, the top pool level of Lake Powell, 3710' is well above the top of Gregory Bridge. My.

KP: Yeah, Phil was never sure if they did that on purpose or it was an accident by a careless surveyor or what. It's kind of irking.

TM: I imagine it did. I don't blame you. Yeah. I'm going to click the button here, it's titled More at Gregory Natural Bridge, so I'm going to click that.

KP: Yep, I'm without pictures at the moment.

TM: One, two, three, four, five, six. Six photos here. The first photo shows June 1961. There's one, two, three, four, five six people, they're mostly on their hands and knees, looking at the water. It says examining the critters in the water under the bridge. Our first party in Glen, left to right: Julie Verran, now an antiques dealer in California; Jim question mark; Mel Bernstein, physicist in Bay area; John Faust, physicist; Art Knobel, is a mathematician; Tim Taylor, physics demonstrations, Oregon State University. Very nice. And then there's a bunch of people standing here, discussing the critters under the bridge.

KP: I think they went fishing and finally caught a fish.

TM: It has a list of the people here: it says Phil Pennington, far left, currently typing this picture caption. All you can see is the guy's legs and shoulder, can't see his head. He looks like quite the strong guy. And Peter Barna is hidden behind Art Knobel, and far right is Cy Benton, and picture taken by Henri Benoit. Nice. Looking downstream from under the bridge, that's a nice shot. And then looking up at the bridge overhead. Looking upstream from under the bridge. It's a great series of photographs here. Upstream from just above the bridge. Gorgeous. Sandstone. Weathered. Really, really gorgeous set of photos. And then hiking upstream from Gregory Bridge. I'm going to click that.

KP: Well, I'm not getting any of that.

TM: One, two, three, four, five, six. Six photos here. The first one shows water in the creek, and it's now only about twenty feet wide. It says the hike up Soda Gulch to the desert above and to the Hole in the Rock road is cool and shaded -- for the first several miles. A very pleasant walk on the hottest of days. So it sounds like you can get out this canyon.

KP: I didn't remember that. I was never on a trip that did, but could I believe it.

TM: It says a few of the pools are deep enough to require swimming.

KP: Yeah, and often they were cold

TM: I bet. The walls are always gracefully curved and finely patterned. This is a wonderful sinuous canyon, very tight at the bottom, maybe, again, twenty feet wide. Vegetation here and there, small alcoves often contained low waterfalls. But nowhere is our progress...

KP: Oh, I've got pictures back again.

TM: Great.

KP: Yeah, and I see that there's a lot of cobbles that have collected there at the top of that one.

TM: And running water?

KP: Uh-huh.

TM: Gosh, what did it sound like?

KP: The running water?

TM: Yeah.

KP: If it was very shallow, it was quiet. In the next picture down, you can see a tiny little waterfall near the bottom, and of course, those splashed nicely. It was just very pleasant. Mostly, when there were a bunch of us, oh it was shlurp, shlurp, shlurp, as we all waded through the water. But if you took the time to sit down, why, you know how water sounds like, and it sounds just like that.

TM: It must have been heavenly.

KP: You're surrounded by all these wonderful walls. With stripes, curves. Very pleasant.

TM: Soda Gulch is a deep canyon, even for Glen. That helps make the walk up it shady and cool and very spectacular. It says hiking further upstream, so I'm going to click on that link.

KP: Yeah, the one you were just looking at, you can see how deep it is by the three little figures down there at the bottom.

TM: I'm going to go back and look at that. Yes, I can see a couple people there, down at the bottom. It's high. I wouldn't want to be here in monsoon season. There would be no escape. Giant stream alcoves. Nice.

KP: We're walking into the alcove that's on the left.

TM: OK, so this is still walking up canyon?

KP: It must be, because Phil would do them in order, but we hiked up and then hiked back down so it could have been from either side.

TM: That's gorgeous streaking coming down from above. The desert varnish streaking down the sides of the sandstone. Really gorgeous. And a gravel bottom, look like, there. And then, it says from the back of the alcove we look up into a great crescent of sky and wall. Wow. Water seeps are generally located there, maidenhair fern and monkey flower (mimulus) commonly grow there. Calls of the canyon wren and mourning dove are frequently heard echoing off the walls.

KP: Yeah, there seemed to be a water table not too far above the creek because often there was a line of maidenhair fern and mimulus a short distance up from the water.

TM: It just looks gorgeous. It's really pretty. I'm going to click the button that says hiking further upstream.

KP: OK. Yeah, I'm missing the first picture, but I've got the next one.

TM: On the first picture, it looks to be a pool of water that is now touching the canyon wall side to side. Maybe we're looking at ten feet wide.

KP: That happened, yeah. Sometimes you waded it and sometimes you swam them.

TM: Soda Gulch is one of more varied canyons in Glen. It's just gorgeous. The sunlight comes in and hits the water, but there's deep shade all around, and of course, when it hits the water, it throws up on the walls with a spackled, reflective pattern. Really gorgeous. And this is almost getting into a slot canyon now. Very, very tight overhead for quite a ways. Oh, and here's a picture looking straight up, which almost – it's sort of reminiscent of Antelope Canyon or your typical slot canyon.

KP: Well, I think he took that to show that there were places where one side overhung the other side, and if you were to shoot a BB gun straight up, you wouldn't get out...

TM: You wouldn't hit the sky.

KP: ...the BB wouldn't get out; it would hit a wall on one side or the other.

TM: Yeah, yeah. No, definitely, it's a sinuous type canyon that has overhangs coming off each side. Really gorgeous, and then the last picture, upper reaches of Soda Gulch, on a hiking trip from the Hole in the Rock road, down Davis Gulch, and up Soda Gulch, so few people pass this way...

KP: Oh, they did go up Soda. OK, that was the first trip that I wasn't on, and I had not remembered that detail.

TM: It says this family of birds was comfortable nesting in the rock. Do you know who that person is there? He's wearing...

KP: That's Fetch Leaper. He made totems for a while. Made for sale.

TM: OK. Wearing a pith helmet, how about that.

KP: It kept the sun off his nose and his ears.

TM: They were the hat of choice for river runners in the '40s and clearly into the '50s. So, here we are, early '60s, that makes sense. And it looks like that's the last of the Soda Gulch photos.

KP: Yep.

TM: OK, I'm going to backtrack to the middle map, which shows – OK, it shows Soda Gulch, and it shows the Cathedral in the Desert and then Davis Gulch. OK, so you could go down Davis and then up the Escalante and then out Soda? Or down Soda and then down the Escalante?

KP: That's what Phil seemed to have been saying, yeah.

TM: And then there's the Hole in the Rock road, I see. It's a wonderful looking country, gosh. OK, so I'm going to do a shortcut off the map and go back to the mouth of the Escalante. Great. Maybe this is a good place to call it a day.

KP: I would imagine, yeah.

TM: After such an exhausting journey as we wandered all over the Escalante Canyons. What a gorgeous, gorgeous canyon that is up there. I wanted to ask you though, what do you remember about spending the nights up there? Away from the river it might have been quiet. Was there just anything else you remember about that?

KP: Oh, it was always quiet. I mean, on the river it was quiet. No, that's not true. Very often we had a chorus of tree toads, and at certain times of the evening and morning we'd have bird songs, but yeah, it was very quiet. The wind, but there was nothing else out there to make noise except our companions.

TM: Did you get wrapped up in any flash floods in there at all?

KP: Never on any of the hiking club trips. Oh, man, I am in big trouble. My calendar is missing, so I don't know what I'm doing.

TM: OK, well, I'll tell you what. Hold that thought, let me wrap up this interview and hold the line for a minute. This will conclude part six of a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Keturah Pennington. My name is Tom Martin. Today is April 29, 2019, and Keturah, thank you very much.

KP: You're very welcome.