

**Transcription:** Grand Canyon Historical Society

**Interviewee:** Peter Brown (PB)

**Interviewer:** Tom Martin (TM)

**Subject:** Peter recounts the eighth segment of his tule reed boat trip, travelling from Schist camp to Bass camp

**Date of Interview:** January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Part 8

**Method of Interview:** In person at Bass camp

**Transcriber:** Ashlyn Van Wyk

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**Transcription Reviewers:** Sue Priest

**Keys:** Schist camp, Colorado River, Bass camp, Lees Ferry, tule reed raft, Boucher, Crystal, the Gems, Bass Rapid, Fiona Gormley, Tuna Creek Rapid, Nixon Rock, Esmeralda Elbow, Wannabe Ruby, Serpentine

TM: So today really is January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Last oral history we said it was the 9<sup>th</sup>, it was actually the 8<sup>th</sup> when we were at Schist camp, when Pete and I last did an interview. This is a Grand Canyon Oral History interview on the Colorado River at Bass camp, 109 miles from Lees Ferry. Pete is the first person in recorded history, that we are aware of, to paddle a tule raft from Lees Ferry to this spot, which is pretty amazing—Peter Brown. My name is Tom Martin. Good evening, Peter. How are you today?

PB: Pretty good, Tom. Thanks.

TM: Good. You know, there was just a couple rapids of note today.

PB: *(laughs)* Yeah.

TM: The first being Boucher, the second being Crystal, the third being all the Gems, and then Bass Rapid to get us down to Bass camp. So can you recount your thoughts as you pulled away from camp this morning?

PB: Well, of course, everyone thinks of Crystal when they're starting to come down to it. I always think Crystal is actually a little... The one nice thing about Crystal is it does have the right-hand cheat run. So all of us kayakers did that today and everybody had a good run. In fact, everybody had a good run; the rafts all did just fantastic. We had several going down the left-hand side, and they did just great as well. So Crystal was just fine today.

TM: Can you describe your run at Crystal? There's some laterals on the right you need to bust through and then you kind of go down this little right channel, not too close to shore.

PB: One nice thing with the tule reed kayak was, I was able to go a little bit even more right than the rafts were doing. The rafts kind of have to start a little farther out and then pull quite a bit to get past those laterals. Once they're on that right-hand side, then they're golden. So I could actually... I came in off of a little bubble right at the very top of the rapid and really kind of missed some of the laterals and was already on that right-hand side. Hit a couple of those side waves off of the main holes, but nothing drastic at all. Got over into the eddy on the right. We stayed there for a while—Fiona was with me—and then we headed down the right channel no problem.

TM: Fiona Gormley. Then the right-hand channel just has some chop in it, and all the boats were there.

PB: Yep. We all gathered up at the bottom, and no problem at all.

TM: And took off then for Tuna and then...

PB: Past Nixon Rock. Everything went fine down there.

TM: Esmeralda Elbow there, above Nixon Rock, and then into the Gems.

PB: Into the Gems. We stopped for lunch at Emerald camp. Up until that time I had a perfect day in terms of not sliding or falling off the raft, and the raft did great. And then right after lunch—and I blame it all on the fact that I ate too much or something—but I did slide off, fell off, in Emerald.

TM: Okay. Or is that Wannabe Ruby? I think it's Wannabe Ruby where we had lunch. Yeah.

PB: Well, we had lunch at Emerald camp, right? So the rapid right after lunch, immediately after lunch. That's Emerald, I think. Because then we got down to Ruby after that. I did videotape, by the way, both the run at Emerald and the run at Ruby.

TM: Okay. Alright.

PB: And Serpentine. So I'll have those to confirm.

TM: To look at. Yeah. Somehow I'm thinking that's called Wannabe Ruby, and Emerald's back upstream. But regardless, you fell off there and got right back on again. And nobody noticed.

PB: Pretty much. Yeah. The raft flipped.

TM: Oh, it did.

PB: Yeah. If got off on a... One of those lateral waves just caught me, which is actually a bit of a surprise because I thought I'd gotten pretty good at being able to catch those and lean into those. But it caught me going one direction. Anyway, so I went over. Actually, this was the first time I was able to actually come up on a wave and use the wave to help me flip the raft back over.

TM: Oh, interesting.

PB: So it was about two waves later and got the raft back over, climbed back on, and no problem at all.

TM: Took off again.

PB: Yeah.

TM: Wow. Okay.

PB: So that's a new trick. I'm going to have to remember that one.

TM: Yeah. The raft seems to be turning into a crescent shape...

PB: Yes.

TM: ...instead of being flat with a tipped-up bow. Do you have any thoughts on why that's happening?

PB: Weight, maybe, in the middle of the thing. Yeah. It does seem like the rear end is riding higher, almost, than it did previously, at the very beginning. The tules are pretty flexible and I think they're just sort of taking the shape of the upturn.

TM: Where the loading is.

PB: Yeah, where the loading is.

TM: Do you get a sense that you're sinking day by day by day, or is it kind of stabilized now?

PB: I think it's kind of stabilized. I really do. It does not seem any more difficult to get out of eddies or anything like that than it was at the very beginning. It seems to be going through the rapids just fine the way it has been. It's going to make it another 170 miles, I know. It is. *(laughs)*

TM: I'm looking at Pete sideways, like, dude, you're dreaming.

PB: Nope. It's going to, Tom. It's going to.

TM: Well, I appreciate your confidence. I need such confidence, because the designers and manufacturers have long since voided the warranty on this boat. *(TM and PB laugh)*

PB: What are you talking about? I got the manufacturer right here. I'm hoping that...

TM: Boy, I don't know. I'm just like, wow. Well, you made it 186 miles through some really impressive rapids, just taking them straight on. I wouldn't have thought it would be able to do that. But here we are.

PB: Well, we'll see. You know, Lava's going to be the big test. I think I'll...

TM: Lava! You got to get to Lava first! That's 67/69 miles downstream.

PB: Oh, that's no problem.

TM: Okay, okay. I like that optimism. *(PB laughs)* We'll see what happens. Tomorrow we have a layover day. We go nowhere and do nothing, and the smart people will stay in camp. And that's that. Alright, well this will conduct a...

PB: Conclude.

TM: Conclude. Yes, this will end the conducting of... This will conclude Part 7? (actually Part 8)

PB: Eight. No seven, seven. You're right; I think seven.

TM: Right. We think this is a Part 7 oral history, but you'll figure it out once you get home and look at the computer, Tom. Today is the 9<sup>th</sup> of January, 2021. This is Peter Brown and Tom Martin at Bass camp. Thank you very much, Peter.

PB: Sure thing, Tom. Thank you.