

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Wes Hildreth (WH), Jack Fulton (JF), Nancy Brown (NB), Diane Fulton (DF), Judy Fierstein (JYF), Gail Mahood (GM), Roger Brown (NB), Unknown (U?)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: With Nancy providing logistical support, Wes and Jack recount their thru-hike from Supai to the Hopi Salt Trail in 1968.

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TM: Today is July 30th, 2016. We're at the home of Nancy and Roger Brown in Livermore, California. This is an oral history interview, part of the Grand Canyon Historical Society Oral History Program. My name is Tom Martin. In the living room here, in this wonderful house on a hill that Roger and Nancy have, are Wes Hildreth and Gail Mahood, Jack and Diane Fulton, Judy Fierstein. I think what we'll do is we'll start with Nancy, we'll go around the room. If you can state your name, spell it out for me, and we'll just run around the room.

NB: I'm Nancy Brown.

RB: Yeah. Roger Brown.

JF: Jack Fulton.

WH: Wes Hildreth.

GM: Gail Mahood.

DF: Diane Fulton.

JYF: Judy Fierstein.

TM: Thank you. This interview is fascinating for a couple different things for the people in this room in that Nancy assisted Wes and Jack on a hike in Grand Canyon in 1968 from Supai to the Little Colorado River. And then in 1969, Nancy and Wes accompanied Otis Marston on a blisteringly fast river trip through Grand Canyon. So we will want to talk about these two things. I'm going to start with Wes. Wes, what year were you born?

WH: '38.

TM: And where were you born?

WH: Newton, Massachusetts.

TM: What were your folks doing there?

WH: My folks were married that year. My father was a retail store manager and my mother was a stay-at-home housewife. They were the blend of two different social classes. My father from definite working class and my mother from kind of the elite financial class in Boston.

TM: So the Boston Brahmin type class, or not so much?

WH: No, different sort. Tories who had fled Massachusetts in the Revolutionary War and spent a century in Nova Scotia before coming back. Scots, definite Scots. [laughs]

TM: Did you then grow up in Massachusetts?

WH: I'm bicoastal. I've lived virtually all my life in either the Boston area or the Bay area.

TM: Did you spend a lot of time as a child exploring the woods in Massachusetts/the backcountry or not?

WH: How did you guess? Of course. [laughs] There are family stories about me disappearing all day when I was five years old seeking mica schist up in the granites of New England.

TM: Have you always been interested in rocks?

WH: Always loved the landscape. In those days, of course, geography more than geology. I was making maps by the time I was five years old. Mostly street maps. [laughs]

TM: How did you come west? When was the first time you came west?

WH: My father joined the navy during World War II and my mother's parents had moved to California. So we came out and spent the latter war years in Sausalito and Belvedere in Marin County.

TM: So then did you go to high school here in California or did you go back to Massachusetts?

WH: I said I was bicoastal. First and second grade in Belvedere, third grade through the 10th in Massachusetts, and 10th through the 12th in Mill Valley. And that's where I ran into him. That's the first guy I met when we came back to California as high school sophomores.

TM: So now I'm going to shift over then to Jack. Jack, what year were you born?

JF: '39.

TM: Where were you born?

JF: San Francisco.

TM: What were your folks doing there?

JF: Both my parents are Scottish. My father left Scotland on directions from his mother to take his brother to London and to the new world of Canada. Saskatchewan was too hot for a Scotsman, so they went to northcentral British Columbia where he got a piece of land and cleared it and built a log cabin. Became a lumberjack and a milkman. Then after 15, maybe less than that, 12 years, his brother went to Marin County, San Francisco. Saw Marin and thought it was like Scotland and convinced my father to come where he settled in Mill Valley. Then in '35 went back to Glasgow and married his girlfriend that he'd had when he was six and took her family and his family to the United States where they settled in Mill Valley.

TM: And then you grew up in...

JF: San Anselmo. We lived in Mill Valley for a tiny bit of time and moved to San Anselmo. And like Saskatchewan, it was far too hot for my dad so he bought a new house in Strawberry near Tiburon which is part of Mill Valley and I went to high school where I met Wes.

TM: So before we go that far... While Wes was wandering around as a five-year-old looking at mica schists, were you exploring the outdoors as well? Were you interested in that kind of country or not?

JF: Too much. My grandmother called me a wee scunner which means a little imp because I would always go down to the creek and walk to the farthest end of the creek I could. That was in Sleepy Hollow in San Anselmo. At the end of it, there was a mansion which somebody lived in and there were cattle. I would go up to the top of that hill and see another hill and I'd go down that. So I was gone a lot. I liked nature and built treehouses, and had a victory V garden, and tried to catch fish but my father was not a hunter or a killer. I would have a piece of lathe wood with a string on it and a bent safety pin and try to catch fish, which I never did catch any fish. [laughs] But I was very curious and would generally go extremely far away and come home late in the day.

TM: Did you turn those journeys into overnight campouts at one point?

JF: No, I was only five and six and seven. I joined the Cub Scouts and then got to see the city, San Francisco, and other things like sports. Then I joined the Boy Scouts. I had a wonderful troop that was run by a man that lived up the street from Nancy when she was a child. That's when I learned my camping and I learned how to cook apple pie in a reflector oven with wild apples. I became a good knot tier and things of that, what Boy Scouts are supposed to do.

TM: I'm going to go back to Wes for a minute. Wes, when did you start doing overnight journeys as a child/young man?

WH: Oh, I didn't. I only really became a serious outdoorsman when I married Nancy and she made me buy a backpack, [laughs] hiking boots, and all those things and hike around the Sierra together.

TM: Okay. So at this point then I'd like to introduce Nancy. Nancy, what year were you born?

NB: I was born in 1943.

TM: Where were you born?

NB: Redwood City, California.

TM: What were your folks doing there?

NB: That was during World War II. My father was a landscape architect but he was currently working in the shipyards as a designer during the war effort. My mother was a wonderful homemaker.

TM: And same question for you. While Wes was out looking at mica schists and Jack was going up one hill and down the other and up the next hill, my running assumption is that you two got introduced to the outdoors. How did that happen?

NB: My parents bought a shack in the Redwood City hills for \$2,000 that would now sell for well over a million, and I have been back to look at it. But anyway, we were always out of doors. My parents were constructing this, turning it into a home. We had fields around us. I lived there till I was seven and then I moved to Marin County. During the war the gas was rationed and then after the war they had enough gas. They could buy gas, so we went over to Memorial Park and the Redwoods. At age two, I took my first hike and they said I was a good hiker. They told me that all my life so I think

that's probably where it started. We moved to Marin County when I was seven and we always took family camping trips. My parents did fly fishing and we went to Hat Creek in northern California. We went all over in old cars all the way up into Oregon, camping on rivers and lakes, and getting stung by yellow jackets. [laughs] I remember digging in mud by rivers with my brother, just entertaining myself in the out of doors while my parents were fishing. So, yes. When I was in high school later, I really started hiking in earnest. Living in Mill Valley right at the base of Mount Tamalpais, there were just wonderful hiking trails. I had girl friends who liked to hike and we just started hiking. And I like to sketch, so I would draw and hike. Mill Valley is a wonderful place. It has redwood trees and creeks and bay trees and good smells and great views. Yeah, so that's when I started hiking.

TM: But it sounds like none of the three of you had yet to be introduced to desert hiking.

NB: This is Nancy again. In 1950, when I was seven years old, my parents took us to Death Valley National Park. I was scared to death to go. The name Death Valley, you know, I was kind of a sensitive child and this just sounded too scary for me. I cried and cried. I didn't want to go there. So off we went to Death Valley in our old woody station wagon and we camped out. In those days you could camp just about anywhere so we camped out way down by Eagle Borax and all these places along the westside road camping out. The coyotes would howl at night. I was still scared, and the wild donkeys were all around [laugh] our tent. That's where I learned to love wild burros and donkeys. Yes, we did some walking there. Not a lot of hiking, but we camped out there in Death Valley. I found it a scary place at that time. It was nice during the daytime. But anyway, that was my early desert experience.

TM: But you got over that.

NB: Oh yeah. [laugh]

TM: Okay. So trying to start to pull these threads together a little bit. Wes and Jack, you guys met in high school. What year were you in? Were you in the same class?

WH: Yes. Class of '56. We met in '54.

TM: Okay. Do you remember what attracted you guys to each other?

JF: I told him a bad joke in the cafeteria. It doesn't appear that I am, but I'm kind of a shy person. In the cafeteria which sold hamburgers for 25 cents apiece, and they weren't very good, he was sitting there and I just walked up and started talking to him and told him a horrendously long bad joke.

TM: Wes, do you remember that?

WH: It was my first day at the high school. We had just driven across country. I went down and registered with the administration and by that time it was time to go have lunch in the cafeteria. I didn't know a soul in the whole place. The first Californian I talked to was this [laugh] and this shaggy dog story. We've been close friends ever since.

TM: What were some of the early outings that you went together on?

JF: Wes was much more socially adept than I was and was also not more physically adept, but more into sports, and I couldn't compete. And also I didn't date girls. We did go on a couple adventures to San Francisco in a friend's vehicle. Would go down to the stripper areas in San Francisco just to gawk. And then there were parties at school, but we didn't do much together.

WH: Went to Playland with Tom Coster.

JF: That's right. My uncle was the CFO for Playland which was like a... I mixed all the sugar for candy floss machines so we had free passes.

TM: [laugh] So was it then in college did you guys keep your friendship together? I'm slowly going to try and get this to Grand Canyon and how you got this harebrained idea to do this hike that you did.

WH: We were great friends in high school but then I went east to college. I took a year off between sophomore year and junior year in college and speculative plans fell through and I was worried I'd be drafted. So this guy cons me into joining his reserve unit. He gleefully rives me in an open sports car to Fort Ord to deposit me for basic training there for six months.

TM: Did you know that was in the cards or did you figure it was...

WH: Oh, sure. It arrived rather spontaneously over a period of a month or two. I thought, I better do this now or I'll get really drafted. So six months in winter/spring of '59 and then I went back to college in the east.

TM: And you were studying geology?

WH: Very mixed background between what they call political science and geology.

TM: Okay. Jack, were you in the service then or were you in school as well?

JF: I joined the service when I was under 18 because you would be in for six months and I feared war. I didn't like war. It was a lull between the Korean and the Vietnam conflagrations so I wanted to get it over with. It was a good decision. I learned a lot from that. Then I came back to school and I had no idea of what I wanted to be at all. I studied engineering, architecture, art, history of art, creative writing, poetry, and never did get a degree. Sort of dropped out and started doing more outdoor stuff. Hiking in the Sierra. I had a sports car that I drove him to the army in and I drove it everywhere. Would go to Yosemite and go hiking in Yosemite. Climbed domes and go in the valleys in Tuolumne, and every pass you could imagine. Down to Death Valley and around. I liked the desert. I did that primarily in my vehicle. Then I came back and I had met Diane at that time. We got married and I still didn't know what I wanted to do.

TM: Okay. Wes, how did you meet Nancy?

WH: Gee, I don't know.

TM: Please jump in Nancy.

NB: This is Nancy. [laugh] I remember.

WH: Through Lloydine?

NB: Yes.

JF: Oh my goodness.

NB: Wes had a girlfriend named Lloydine who was in high school with me. I'm five years younger than Wes.

WH: You can leave her out of it. [laughter] That's a bit piece.

NB: Anyway, that's how I met him though. We have a friend named George Cagwin. In about 1959, I was invited to go on a double date with Wes and Lloydine, and George was my date. George and Wes were good friends. So that's the first time I met him. Then I didn't see him again for quite a while. I actually don't think that was 1959, but I can't remember. [laugh] Anyway, back to the question how I met Wes. So that's how I first met him. Then a few years later we met up and we dated briefly for a summer. Then I didn't see him again until the 60s. We met up again and we dated for quite a while and then eventually got married.

TM: When did you guys get married?

NB: We got married New Year's Eve, 1964 in London, England.

TM: Jack, New Year's Eve 1964, where were you and Diane?

JF: We were raising a baby that came suddenly. [laughter]

DF: Well, nine months later.

JF: Yeah. We had taken our honeymoon in Mexico and were living in Lloydine's sister's house. [laughter]

DF: Well, not her house, a cabin on the property.

JF: Yeah.

TM: See, Lloydine's important here. [laughter]

DF: Sarah was Jack's sister...I mean cousin.

JF: Yeah.

NB: This is Nancy again. I love when things overlap. I have a neat overlap here with Jack and Diane around that time. I'll back up a bit, I had known Jack since I was in third grade because I played with his little sister. So we've actually known each other in this room longer than anyone. He played with my brother, I played with his sister. That was in Strawberry in Mill Valley, California. To move ahead, probably in the early sixties, I was dating a friend named John when I went to College of Marin. He said, "I want to take you to meet some friends of mine." So we drove to Mill Valley and we go up to the house and here are Jack and his wife Diane. Diane I had never met and their baby Stephanie was in a bassinet, probably just born.

DF: Just months.

NB: So that's when I saw Jack again. I had not seen him since I was a child, really, or maybe high school days. So we overlap a lot. It's kind of interesting how those things happen.

TM: Absolutely. So you guys were married in the mid-sixties then. 1964 in London. How did you get from London back to the Grand Canyon?

WH: On the bloody Queen Mary. [laughter]

NB: Throwing up the whole way.

TM: Oh no.

NB: Oh yes. [laugh] I was.

TM: A rough crossing.

NB: Yes, it was.

TM: So by 1968, from basically '65, Wes, were you getting interested in the Park Service and how did that work out?

WH: Okay. I was in and out of graduate school for a period in the early 60s.

TM: What did you get your undergrad in?

WH: Geology, but with lots of other stuff.

TM: All right. So political science minor or...

WH: The terminology wasn't there then.

TM: Okay. Thinking about going to grad school, what did you want to further your studies in?

WH: Foreign policy.

JF: Tell him about going through Iran toward Afghanistan, for crying out loud.

TM: Please.

WH: I guess that's a desert. [laughter] I went around the world the year after I got out of undergraduate school. All the way around through those countries and many others. Then came back and hung out in Mill Valley for a while. Then traveled to Central America for four or five months and then went back to graduate school. In and out of graduate school a couple of times. Dragged Nancy back there once and then went to work for the Park Service as seasonal for a few years. Backing up a bit, as an undergraduate, I got to take a summer field course in the Inyo Mountains of eastern California. That was a liberating experience for a suburban Boston kid. Spending the better part of a summer in the eastern Sierra was what one could argue has dominated my consciousness ever since. It was certainly my first summer in the desert. Five years later, after the graduate school and initiation of the Park Service business, Nancy and I went and spent four months at the Grand Canyon for the Park Service.

TM: What year was that?

WH: Would have been spring of '67. I was totally bored with the Park Service propagandaization so Nancy and I spent every possible moment, from like Friday night until Sunday midnight, hiking the various inner canyon trails.

TM: Were there other Park Service people doing that as well?

WH: No. Zero. They were all a bunch of would-be traffic cops in those days.

TM: Can you expand a little bit on your thoughts about the Park Service? Now by this time in 1967 you'd been around the world.

WH: I don't want to trash the Park Service. I love the Park Service.

TM: We all love the Park Service, but the Park Service needs our help to understand how to make them better.

WH: They have become much better. In recent decades, Judy and I have been to Katmai National Park 20 times and loved it. Had a great relations with the Park Service. Been to Death Valley many times including two seasons that I worked there for the Park Service. What other park areas? Of course lots of hiking in Yosemite. In the last decade, I've been a consultant for the Devils Postpile National Monument cause I'm mapping the volcanic area all around it. So been thick with them and it's been very rewarding. Great relations with them. So, I love the Park Service. I'm wholly behind their mission especially now that it's become more ecologically oriented and less of a police organization. I remember some of these guys back in the 60s and early 70s were trying to beat up hippies in uniform. No. I don't want to trash the Park Service but there was an element that was in control of a lot of the Park Service in that interval when I was working for them that I've never had any respect for, ever. They're contrary to the spirit of the organization, in my book.

TM: You know, Wes, this is interesting because in the research that I've been doing, I have been finding memos from chief ranger to the superintendent, superintendent to the regional, regional to...and they'll mention hippies as the bad guys.

WH: Yeah.

TM: So I'm beginning to learn this, This is why I'm trying to tease this out of you a little more.

WH: Did they treat you that way?

TM: No, because I'm too young. But, as a organization with a militaristic structure, top down, by-the-book, consciousness and awareness outside the structure of the organization wasn't necessarily appreciated or recognized. So when you mentioned these issues of what was happening in the Park Service in the 1960s that you were not appreciative of, I snap to attention and want to learn about that. So I hope to try to give you some background of why I'm asking you this question because I think it's important.

WH: Well you're going to turn over this report to the Grand Canyon National Park History Association or Museum Association. I don't want it to be in print that I'm trashing the organization.

TM: No. But what you've told me is the Park Service over the last 50 years has gotten much better, and that's historically significant. So in order to understand how we got from there to here, what was "there" like? That's what I'm trying to learn. So that's why I'm asking about that. You don't want to talk about it that's good. But I just want you to understand I'm like, wait a minute.

WH: I think the Vietnam War had a lot to do with it.

TM: How so?

WH: Getting over the Vietnam War led to better attitudes in lots of people. I think that sentiments about the war and the polarization between those of us who hated it and those who supported "my country right or wrong" was really at the heart of the Park Service ranger enforcement problem.

TM: Interesting. I had never put it in that framework.

WH: Well, it was a cultural divide which maybe we all didn't appreciate that much in 1968. But that was it.

U?: They were tough times.

JF: I would like to add here that I was a stone cold hippie. For my experience with the National Park, they didn't know what I would call jack shit about being a true person that loved nature. Part and parcel you saw Glen Canyon Dam built, you saw kind of a disregard. As Wes says there were more policemen in the Park Service. I had lived on an Indian reservation in Northern California working for the Bureau of Public Roads. I had resided in Yosemite for a summer and also lived in Elko, Nevada working all on roads. I loved the outdoors so greatly, that's why I turned into being an artist. I wanted it to relate to that. Maybe the Vietnam War, but I think the assassination of Martin Luther King, and the president of the United States and his brother, and Malcolm X who have a huge range in who people like and stuff like that, that it forced this country into realizing what might truly be valuable as a human being. That went into the Udall family and other people who paid attention to the parks and they just slowly got better. You saw them cleaning it up, making better bathrooms and more intelligent signs and better free information and maps. It was like a thankful revolution, at least for me. Diane and I by that time we couldn't have our sports car cause we had a child. I had a Citroen vehicle which could go anywhere on earth, really. We just went on every single back road you could ever imagine through Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada. Everywhere we went we would run into really great rangers who loved their little remote areas and very helpful. And they were oh so happy to see us out there cause a lot of people didn't go out there. Here's the good thing about the hippies, the hippies were communers, they were lovers of the outdoors, nature, organic food, all that sort of stuff. It sounds bad, I call them New Yorkers, but they're people from the east coast who came west. They just wanted to get laid and stoned. You still hear that everybody wants to get stoned and that had nothing to do with it. I think that the harbor that some young people were in in those days who were affected by war and hate changed all that. Thank god the public picked up on it a bit, you know.

TM: Jack, I want to go back to Wes for a minute. Given what Jack just said, what clicked to me is big parks versus little parks because Jack would, in the backcountry of Utah, run into somebody from the agency and it was just a great exchange, if I may paraphrase this.

JF: Diane would substantiate that.

TM: This is my question, sort of big park, little park. Big parks we're dealing with crowd control and they didn't really know how to do that, if you will. It was a different journey as you say. Nobody was going into the backcountry of Grand Canyon.

WH: My experience was special, idiosyncratic. I worked at Muir Woods, Olympic, Grand Canyon, Death Valley, Glacier Bay. I would say the Grand Canyon and Muir Woods were the most fascistic in those terms. Death Valley was intermediate. Mostly it was the patrol rangers, cause it's a big, long-road park, were in one camp and those of us who love the desert were in another camp. Olympic was really ecological and so was Glacier Bay. Nancy and I were together in essentially all of these. Death Valley is a big park. But the husband of the school teacher there, a few doors from us, was a young aspiring writer named Edward Abbey. So we knew him our first year there or second?

NB: First year there in 1966/'67. I have some comments. This is Nancy again. I have some comments about Death Valley. All the park experiences were wonderful and varied but Death Valley... I think I felt less included or that I didn't fit in there with the rest of the Death Valley park service family as well as maybe some of the other parks. At that time I had very long hair that I often wore in braids. I remember our VW bus engine broke down and I remember one time while it was being fixed, we were walking to the visitor center from the living area. That was quite a hike, three miles. Here I was with my long braids and some park service employee went by and later said, "Oh, I didn't know that was you. I thought you were a hippie."

WH: You tried to be.

NB: [laugh] Yeah, right. I also very vividly remember how we migrated together with Edward Abbey. Wes and Edward/Ed were really on an intellectual level. They could really share a lot of stuff. Ed's wife, Judy at the time, we got along fine. She'd been hired to be the school teacher in Death Valley. But Ed had not been hired to work for the Park Service because he had a beard and he was beginning to develop a reputation as being an anarchist or whatever.

WH: Chief naturalist said he used swear words. [laughter]

NB: Yeah. Right. But anyway, they did hire him—I thought this interesting—to drive the school bus. The older children needed to go an hour's drive from Death Valley village all the way out to Shoshone to go to school there, middle school/high school. His wife taught the kids in the elementary school. Anyway, we shared many dinners together. One time they had us to their little house for dinner. I remember Ed sitting in a kayak on his living room floor just trying it on for size. He was going to be going on a river trip. It may have been a folding kayak, I'm not sure. But he had it all laid out on the floor. A very funny guy. Very sarcastic. Always wore the red bandana around his neck. Just funny and bitter at the same time. Then when he was going to have his 40th birthday, we invited in to our little, tiny, studio apartment for a birthday dinner. I made him a cake and we did candles and everything. I always remember that 40th birthday for Ed Abbey. Then Wes and Ed...they did several hikes together probably, but I remember one in particular where they got dropped off up near Dantes View and hiked all the way down. Way, way down past some dinosaur footprints and fossils and stuff. Then maybe we picked you up down below. I can't remember the details for sure.

WH: Took Ed Williams on that hike, too.

NB: That's right. Took my father on that hike another time. Yeah. That would have been in 1966/'67.

TM: Was that your first long hike together?

NB: I didn't hike on that one. That was a hike they did. That Edward Abbey and Wes did there.

WH: Nancy and I had done many long extended hikes in the Sierra Nevada well before this. She's the one who broke me into backpacking.

NB: I remember the first.... Okay, I can remember some...

WH: Remember that Lake Italy thing to Lake Florence? That was a real marathon.

NB: The sunburn I got was just... I'm still paying for it. [laugh] Okay, I remember the hikes that Wes and I did. Well, let me skip back to the Edward Abbey story just to finish it. At this time Wes was working for the Park Service there and decided that he would go to the Albright Training Center in Grand Canyon. We were leaving a little bit earlier before the end of the season there and Ed came walking up to our VW bus to say goodbye to us. He brought a dry salami dried in a New York review of books tied with a red bandana or a string. I never saw him again, Ed Abbey, but we knew he was a writer and that he was writing a book.

TM: Ed ended up working on that book at Lees Ferry.

NB: Okay.

TM: This was 1967?

NB: Yes. So the next summer when we were in Glacier Bay, we received a copy of Desert Solitaire in the mail. I remember sitting in this little cabin reading this book. I read it, read it, read it. I remember I was by myself when I finished it and I said right out loud to myself in this little cabin on a little Island. I said, you have really done it now, Ed. I'd never read any of his other books. I knew he'd written at least one other. I was so impressed with that book and how he captured the desert.

TM: Hm. Nice.

NB: And sure enough, I never saw him again. But wow. He went on to become famous with that book.

WH: My favorite anecdote about that season knowing Abbey was we went down to dinner at his house and we took with us the then chief naturalist, John Crisco, who was not a hard-ass guy but a fairly straight, uptight guy. We walk in through the front door, confronted by a full length, ceiling to floor, blow up picture of Ho Chi Minh. I just loved it. [laughter] But the chief naturalist was just flabbergasted. Didn't know what to do. This was the height of Vietnam bitterness.

NB: So you were asking about the hikes we did previous to that.

TM: Yes, because at one point you're going to jump off the deep end in Grand Canyon so I'm trying to understand your skillset before that.

NB: Okay. Well, just as highlights, what I remember is I hiked in Marin a lot, so did Wes. I remember climbing Mount Lassen when we knew each other. I remember hiking in Yosemite that first summer. We used to drive there, no permit needed in those days, drive there. One time we climbed Half Dome all in one day, up and back down, in street shoes. There were no lines then, no permits, no lottery. You just parked. You drove up there on Friday night, you got on the trail in the early morning and you just went and did it and came back. So that was a 20 mile hike up and back down. A good 5,000 foot climb up and down. We were sore. Then another time I remember climbing...this probably was my very first mountain climb there....climbing Mount Hoffmann. That's in the center of Yosemite. We've seen it many times since. Not the top but... It's kind of in the center of Yosemite. You hike up to May Lake and then you climb. These were not technical climbs. These were long hikes. So we climbed Mount Hoffmann, saw the Hoffmann thumb. Another time I remember driving to Kings Canyon National Park and going to Cedar Grove and hiking up Bubbs Creek all the way to the John Muir Trail at Vidette Meadows and all the way back down in one day. That was 30 miles. We didn't plan to go that far but we did it. [laugh] So, yes, that gives you a little...

WH: I was a marathon runner and she'd get dragged along. [NB laughs] But she was a good runner, too. She could of run a six minute mile or better on the track.

NB: [laugh] I don't.

WH: That Florence Lake to Lake Italy loop we made must've been a hundred miles.

NB: Yeah, I don't remember, but I do know it was over snow.

WH: Went up through Humphrey's Basin and...

NB: Yeah, I remember the hike.

TM: How many days did you take to do that?

WH: Several. I don't know. Several, lots.

NB: Several days. Four or five days.

WH: I remember there was still a lot of snow over...

NB: Oh, a ton of snow.

WH: Raging Creek, so together we'd carry a log as we raced across the snow in case we fell in. [TM laughs]

NB: Like a ice bridge or a snow bridge over the creek.

WH: We'd carry our own bridge. [laughs]

NB: It really stands out in my mind because I didn't take any sunscreen with me. I forgot it and we ended up up there crossing ItalyPass in the snow. I remember just hanging my bandana over my face or something. By the time we came back several days later, my whole face peeled off. Yeah, it was a terrible burn.

WH: That was the last time I ever got the roof of my mouth sunburn. [NB laughter]

U?: What? How do you that?

WH: Reflection off the sun. Easy to do.

U?: Really? That's a first. [laugh]

NB: So that gives you some background on the hiking we were doing. Those hikes would have been in '65 and '66 I think.

TM: How are you guys connecting at this time? Are you writing letters or are you trying to spend part of the year together or are you just out there doing your own things?

DF: We visited you guys in Death Valley one summer.

NB: Mhm. You did.

WH: Intermittent. We were traveling a lot. Jack and I were traveling when they could around the desert. We weren't together in those days. By the time we, in the spring of '68 when we undertook this hike, we were all three very experienced hikers. There was no hike we would have been scared of trying to do. Climbing technical walls was another thing. He'd do that but I wouldn't. [laugh]

TM: Let's back up a minute to the spring of '67. You said every weekend you were down on the trails. What were some of the hikes that you did then in 1967 in Grand Canyon?

WH: All the inner canyon trails.

TM: Okay, so Bass, Tanner, Hance, the corridor...

WH: Grandview.

TM: Grandview. Okay. Kaibab, of course, Bright Angel.

WH: Apache Point. Havasu.

TM: Stop for a second. When you say Apache Point, now you've left the "traditional Grand Canyon hiking" of today. So this is in 1967. How did you even hear that the Apache Point route existed?

WH: We didn't hear anything. I am an expert reader of topographic maps. Just looked at the map and said, oh, there's a dotted line goes down there, maybe it'll work. Oh yeah. It was totally spontaneous. We knew nobody at the Grand Canyon who would even hike to Indian Gardens.

TM: [laughter] Indian Gardens of course is down a major corridor trail half way to Phantom Ranch.

NB: We knew one family...I'll never forget this. I don't remember their names. They had a little five or six year old girl. They hiked all the way down to Phantom Ranch and all the way back up in one day and they said the little girl wanted to go to the playground afterwards. [laughter] So we did know one person. I took a hike with two other women down from Hermits Rest. The only reason I remember this is I looked at the slides. Oh my gosh. Yes. I did hike with two other women. We were out two nights, three day hike. We went down from Hermits Rest down Dripping Springs?

TM: Pass Dripping Springs.

NB: Along the Tonto Plateau and camped out there somewhere. It rained and then we came back up Bright Angel.

TM: So you made that loop, the Hermit to...

NB: These were other Park Service wives.

TM: Do you remember their names?

NB: Yeah, they're written on the slide I looked at. Diane Hulick.

WH: Ken's wife.

NB: First wife.

WH: At the time.

NB: At the time.

TM: That's right.

WH: He got in touch with Ken when I gave him his name on...

NB: And...it's written on the slide, Nora...somebody Nash.

WH: Where is Ken now?

TM: He's somewhere in California. If you'd like, I'll give you his contact information and you can get in touch with him. It's up to you.

NB: We were at Death Valley with him and Grand Canyon.

TM: So what were your thoughts on the Apache Point trail. I'm going to go back to that route because there is no trail there. There's nothing.

WH: We left a cache there.

TM: It's probably still there.

NB: I'm forgetting where Apache Point is. Is that where we left a cache for your trip?

WH: Yeah.

NB: Okay. That's the point I keep remembering, but I don't know the name of. Okay. I remember we drove out there and I dropped you off.

WH: We conceived the trip in four segments. Supai to Nankoweap or Little Colorado. So we first of all, the three of us put in a cache at Tanner.

TM: So let's back up a minute Wes. It sounds very simple. We conceived the trip. Wait a minute. No one was doing anything like this except for maybe Colin Fletcher, Harvey Butchart. Very, very few people, the McCombs and the Glendening's, that were doing anything like this. How did you get the idea at all to do this?

WH: We had done this every weekend in Death Valley or in the Sierra before. If we could find a remote hike that you could fit into a few days and we did it. It's what we did in those days.

TM: Were you connecting those hikes up or was it, we're just going to go over and hike for some days here, or we're going to go over there and hike some days.

WH: Well, we only had a two day weekend off at the Albright Training Center. So going down Tanner and up Tanner in two days is what you could do. Same thing with Bass or the others.

TM: Actually going from Havasu to the Little Colorado River, which is...

WH: That was the following year.

TM: ...a good hundred miles. How did you develop that concept? Did you even think, oh, hey, let's do this.

WH: It all seemed the thing to do. And, of course, in the meantime I encountered Colin Fletcher's book and then got to know him in Berkeley. Went and kinda did our homework comparing notes with him. I thought he exaggerated the danger of everything, but I didn't tell him that. But, you know, that's for selling books.

NB: Had you met Harvey Butchart when we were at Grand Canyon?

WH: No, I never met Harvey.

NB: You never did?

WH: But through Dock I corresponded a bit with Harvey. And through Dock's voluminous files, I read many letters between Dock and Harvey. I was looking for specific aspects of different geographic areas of the canyon to see whether we were going to run into an impasse here or there.

TM: How did you meet Colin?

WH: I don't remember, but I probably phoned him up. He lived in a small apartment near the tennis court in Berkeley so we played tennis together several times during the month or so before Jack and I took off. He'd already published the Canyon book and was then writing a generalized book on

hiking and all the equipment stuff. It was pretty clear that Colin was more interested in camping than he was in hiking. My idea was to totally minimize the camping. Carry as little as possible and just cover the ground and see as much landscape as possible. Colin's was to try out all kinds of new equipment and gadgets and spend a large fraction of the day camping and presumably writing his notes. Different styles.

NB: I remember his book about... Was it called The Complete Backpacker or something?

WH: The Complete Walker.

NB: No, it was The Man Who Walked Through Time and it was The Complete Walker. I remember reading that book and we'd already been doing a lot of backpacking. I remember agreeing with what he's saying. A lot of detail about fold it four ways, put it in this side of the pack, bring this out. I just remember thinking, wow. [laugh] It was too much. It was too much detail. Even though as a backpacker, I always was doing that also to fit it in. I had a favorite pocket for this and a favorite pocket for that but I never would [laugh] have written a book about it.

WH: I've always disliked guidebooks. There's a plethora of them now. You can't go anywhere without there being multiple guidebooks on the store shelf. I've always felt it takes the magic and the mystery and the discovery of out of things to have read up beforehand on what you're going to encounter. The expectation that you should be able to cover the 6.3 miles by late afternoon. I mean, come on.

NB: I remember when Wes and I were married, I always used to say I wanted to hike the John Muir Trail. Doing 111 miles from Yosemite to Mount Whitney. Wes used to always say, "No, I just want to do the non-Muir Trail." [laughter] And in fact, that's kind of what we did. We went on established trails in the Sierra a lot but if there was a knapsack route going over... There are a lot of established knapsack routes in the High Sierra but they're just marked with rock cairns. They're written up in some of the Sierra Club stuff. You can find your way from one drainage to another by going over these. So we did that a fair amount.

TM: It sounds like, Wes, you had that skill as the navigator to look at the maps to figure out what would work and what would be problematic.

WH: Kind of basic to being a field geologist.

TM: You bet. Was Colin helpful for the finer nuances, or did he just basically say, Wes, it'll go, go do it. Do you remember?

WH: Quite the contrary. I don't think he was keen on my doing it at all because it would be repeating what he'd done. [laugh] So, no. He was, I'd say it a little...

JF: Snarky.

WH: ...reserved about the whole thing. If I remember, he gave us tips on where he had found water easily. Of course, some of which turned out to be dry and others... All depends on the canyon and seasons, I'm sure you know, and how long it's been since the last rainfall. One of the first big embayments out of Supai is called Matkatamiba. Colin had made a big deal of that. It was a pain because there was so many gullies, but it was not scary or dangerous.

TM: So in this journey there are a couple different ways to do it. One is down near the river and the other is up on the Esplanade. Did you guys take the Esplanade journey then?

WH: Oh, the Esplanade. Sure. I don't think you can walk the river for a majority of the time below the Esplanade.

TM: You can. It's not fun.

WH: You'd have to climb all the way out many times.

TM: It's in the Redwall. It's a very different journey. But that had not been discovered yet. So the classic route at the time, all six of you have done it, was the Esplanade.

NB: Who were the six?

TM: Well, I threw that name out there and I'm like, hmm, is this going to be right or not? It would have been Harvey, of course, and it would have been Colin, and it would have been Eber Glendening and John McComb, and then you two.

WH: Had Harvey done a long continuous hike?

TM: Not at all.

WH: He kinda did weekend, everywhere.

TM: Harvey was what today we would call a segmenter, a segmental hiker. Though in Grand Canyon, you can ask, which is the worse journey [laugh] the segmental people or the one shot people. They're both different. They both have their pros and cons. So you mentioned four different caches.

WH: Conceptually divided into four segments. So we put in caches at the one/two transition and the three/four transition. The two/three transition, we came out and slept in a bed at night at Bright Angel and went to Babbitt's grocery store and bought all kinds of stuff that we'd been deprived of. [laughs]

JF: Tasters Choice instant coffee. I remember that. It was brand new at the time. [laughter]

TM: Where was the first and third cache then?

WH: Apache Point and Tanner.

TM: Okay. How did you wrap Jack into this?

WH: Do you remember? I don't.

DF: Through that lecture at College of Marin, I think. Remember we were all there listening to somebody who was talking.

JF: Somebody was talking and...

DF: And you said, wow, Wes is going to the Grand Canyon.

WH: Imogen Cunningham?

DF: Well, it was somebody. Yeah, it was somebody like Imogen.

NB: I don't remember that. I mean, I knew Imogen Cunningham but I don't remember that talk.

JF: Anyway, we hadn't seen one another for... We weren't very close, we were friends. I think I was still in my phase, which I'm probably just exiting now, of not knowing what I wanted to do [laughter] and he said that he was going to... I'd already known he'd been a ranger at these places. Diane and I had visited many of them. He just asked me, just kind of casually, how'd you like to go walking? I told Diane cause I don't think I was doing anything. I was just a photographer. I said, sure.

TM: And you had a child by this point?

JF: Yeah, we had a child who was five.

WH: And he pined for her the whole trip.

NB: Speaking of him pining for his child, when we went down to Supai and then we went to camp, this is when Wes was going to start the first leg of the trip and the three of us went down to Havasu Canyon to camp below the falls, I remember Jack being homesick. They hadn't started the hike yet but I remember him looking at his shadow and saying, gosh, it looks like my little girl. I really miss her.

JF: It was a small shadow.

NB: Yeah. His profile face or something. I just remember him saying that cause Jack is so good about just [snap fingers] saying whatever comes into his mind. I found that very touching, I really did. And of course I never forgot it.

JF: I did.

WH: That little girl is, as we speak, in the end stages of finishing a PhD at the University of Georgia in Environmental Studies.

JF: 54.

DF: Almost.

RB: She's 54?

DF: In October.

NB: When they were on the hike, that same little girl who was six years old when we went to stay at the coast cabin... Diane and I went to stay at the coast cabin while they were in the canyon. That same little girl dug a big hole in the sand and said, "I'm making the Grand Canyon bigger."

RB: Just cute.

TM: So the concept is you're going to do this in four chunks. The middle chunk is going to be great because there's a highway to a hotel and a place to stay and lots of food.

WH: That was to us a negative.

JF: Yeah, I was going to say that's definitely a negative.

WH: It really kind of spoiled the middle of the trip. We just didn't like that. But obviously we enjoyed what we could of it. Six pack of beer, a lot of ice cream. What else? [laughs]

JF: Milk.

WH: Milk. And a night at the Bright Angel Lodge. Then we immediately fled the tourist mob and headed back in.

TM: Colin had headed for Nankoweap on his way out. You guys chose the Little Colorado River. Was there a reason for that?

WH: I think the river was too cold for us.

JF: It was. I thought Colin went from the east to the west.

WH: No.

JF: He did the same thing we did?

WH: Yes.

JF: I'll be darned.

WH: Anyway, I presume he was later in the season. Either that or the river was warmer or he had more blubber on than I did. I was wary of paddling all the way across the river. When we went back with Dock the next year, we did in August or September. I was in the river with an air mattress through many of the rapids. No problem then. 10 degrees makes a big difference. Anyway, I think that was the main reason we decided to go out the Little Colorado instead of Nankoweap. There could have been other factors like burnout or maybe we weren't sure whether the north rim was open yet. I'm not sure.

JF: No, as I remember we tried swimming it, but it was extremely cold and it seemed to me it was fast.

WH: It was fast.

JF: It was really fast and you didn't know if you could swim across without being swept down. Plus then you had your pack.

WH: We had quite heavy packs. We were each carrying two gallons of water along the Tonto because of uncertainty of where our next water would be, especially on the Esplanade.

TM: So just thinking about the exit point, were you aware of the... Sorry, let me back up. How were you thinking to exit at the Little Colorado River?

WH: Interesting question. I just this week reread my handwritten narrative and it was clear that once we get off the east end of the Grand Canyon map, we didn't have the appropriate topo map. [TM laughs] We were flying blind looking for some reputed Salt Trail. Ultimately we found it but it was just a matter of scouting. Something in my notes says, oh, well, maybe we'll have to walk all the way to the bridge at Cameron. [laughs] That would have been a trip.

RB: That wouldn't have been fun.

TM: How did you arrange your pickup then?

WH: We didn't have a pickup.

TM: So how did you get out across the reservation to Highway 89?

WH: We walked halfway and a Navajo gave us a ride in the back of his pickup the rest of the way.

TM: Very cool.

WH: We spent the one night there on the plateau in a broken down hogan.

TM: At the top of the Salt Trail?

WH: Plus 10 miles.

TM: Plus 10. Okay. Inland a ways to the east. Wow.

WH: And then we hitchhiked into Flagstaff by evening and had the worst night of the whole trip. Snowstorm. Cold snowstorm.

TM: Where were you guys staying that night?

WH: In the woods.

JF: In the woods.

TM: Oh my gosh.

TM: With clearly no clothes because you'd been hiking in the heat of the canyon. [laughter]

JF: It was perfect. We could have slept anywhere, downtown New York. I mean, it didn't make any difference.

DF: Such a boy scout. [laugh]

TM: Well, my running assumption would be that it was pretty warm in the canyon and you weren't necessarily bringing clothing to hike in the snow, but you could have been.

WH: No, we were not carrying winter clothing for sure. We were carrying as little as possible in most respects except the water.

JF: And it got cold in the canyon.

WH: We were wearing shorts on the Tonto in the later leg of the canyon. But we were definitely wearing long pants almost the whole trip prior to Bright Angel cause of catclaw and mesquite and every other damn thing out there that scratches your shins up. [laughs] There were cold nights. We got snow flurries and a few rainy nights. We were not carrying a tent.

TM: Roughly what were the dates again?

WH: March 15th to late April.

JF: Yeah. Something like that.

TM: Okay. Nancy did you think 'I want to go do this' or did you think 'these guys are crazy. I'll do support. I'll do logistics' or was it something else entirely?

NB: I think it was more than I wanted to do. I loved hiking, but this sounded pretty rugged with no trails. I think I was in school at the time, I was a student. So probably we went down there on my spring break or something.

WH: Yes.

JF: I think so.

NB: We went down to Havasu. Well before that, we drove...was it Apache Point? Is that what you're saying where we...

JF: You go past the turnoff to Bass and then you go to the head of Topocoba Hilltop.

NB: Okay. Anyway, the three of us went there to deposit a cache. Am I right?

WH: That was Apache Point.

NB: Okay. And then the three of us went around and we went down to Supai and went and camped. I think we have a picture of the three of us down there with backpacks.

WH: That'll be in the slides and I suppose the film.

JF: No, I don't know. Part of the film I either don't have or I didn't make.

WH: Doesn't matter. With the slides they complement each other.

NB: Wes started on his hike and Jack and I hiked out all the way back up to Hualapai Hilltop. Then we drove all the way around. Where was it that I was dropping him off to come in and meet you?

JF: It was pretty much at the top. We hiked back up. They had a Volkswagen bus and we wanted to make sure that she could drive out safely because there's a lot of dust. So I made sure that she could leave on a solid road. Then I walked mysteriously across Great Thumb Mesa trying to figure out how to get to meet him.

NB: But what I remember is that we went around somewhere and then we camped there, Jack and I camped there. We actually had a little trouble in one spot with that bus on a dirt road.

JF: Yeah.

NB: We had a dip and, I mean, we almost got stuck.

JF: But we didn't.

NB: And wow, we didn't. That's cause I was with you. [laughs]

TM: So, Wes started out this journey solo.

NB: Yes.

TM: Where were you?

WH: We were apart for two days. In part it was to make sure Nancy got out of there alright.

TM: Got around and got out.

RB: So that's why you didn't start out.

JF: Yeah. It's the safety factor.

NB: But I didn't start driving out of there from Hualapai Hilltop because when I left you, I drove all the way back on dirt roads, as planned, to Grand Canyon Village.

WH: Yeah.

NB: And then I drove to Williams and then I started driving home. I stayed in a motel in Amboy. How old was I? 27 years old or something. Never driven anywhere by myself [laugh] driving this VW bus bouncing along the road. I got out of there. So I stayed in the hotel in Amboy and thought about the movie Psycho the whole time. [laughter] Ate breakfast by myself in the cafe the next morning. And then I drove from Amboy all the way to Berkeley.

RB: Wow, that's a good one.

NB: That's a good one. Not that we hadn't done it before, but anyway. [laugh]

WH: What's the name of that movie? Not Amboy Café, it's something out there.

DF: Bagdad Café.

NB: Meanwhile Jack is going down the Apache Point route, or were you going down Topocopa?

JF: I'm on the Great Thumb Mesa after seeing Nancy is safe. Wes is walking around Great Thumb cause he's better topo reader than I. I can read a topo cause I had made maps as a younger kid and worked surveying. [laughs] I had a topo map, he pointed out where it was. I just used my intuition.

TM: So the end of the thumb/the north tip of the thumb is the Tahuta Point route, which is a pretty easy route down to get directly to the Esplanade.

JF: It is. There was nothing hard in the whole trip.

TM: Okay. So at that point you arrive on the Esplanade and Wes is coming from the west. How did you guys... Did you hear him? Did you see him? Did you shout out?

JF: It took a while to walk across Great Thumb cause it's quite big. I camped out, set a fire and burned a hole in my sleeping bag. I thought, well, this is not a good beginning.

WH: On the plateau or down...

JF: On the plateau. On the plateau. I thought, oh my goodness. So then I went over there and as Diane can attest, I never get lost. And if I'm lost, I just say I'm there. I found a spot to go down. I tested it and it was right. We had made a prior agreement to meet at a specific spot. I don't remember the name of it, but there's a spring down there. So I camped out at the spring and set myself up and waited. About not quite a day later, I saw him walking and I felt greatly relieved.

TM: In the meantime, you had walked around what's... No, that was coming up. Hang on a second. I'm just thinking.

WH: I've got my maps so we can lay them out.

TM: You guys got together and the next thing you needed to do heading east was go through what was called the Owl Eye's Bay. It's a very steep Hermit Shale. There is no Esplanade. The Esplanade basically cliffs in here.

WH: That all runs together now.

TM: Okay. Walked right through there and then headed out into the giant fossil bay going to Apache Point.

WH: Right.

TM: Made it through there and then linked up eventually with the South Bass, got on the Tonto Trail.

WH: No. We had to pick up our cache at Apache Point.

TM: Did you leave your packs and go up or did you go up with your packs and then bring them back? How did that work?

JF: When we dropped the cache?

TM: To get your cache.

JF: No, no, no, no. We had hiked down to a spot on Apache Point and found kind of a niche and put the caches in there and filled them up and then hiked back out.

TM: So you'd gone down to the Esplanade with your cache?

WH: Yeah.

TM: Great. All right, got it.

WH: I was worried that the water would freeze if we left it at the rim. It was March.

JF: He's very smart.

TM: You brought in a couple gallons, as well, of water again?

WH: Oh, lots and lots.

JF: Lots.

TM: Okay. By this time it was starting into mid-March. Had it been a snowy year? Was there a lot of pothole water or very little? Do you remember?

WH: I thought there was rather little pothole of water compared to what Nancy and I found the year before. Which is why we each carried two damn gallons of water in our backpacks. [laughs]

RB: That's a lot of water.

WH: It weighed more than everything else we had.

JF: I was just thinking. '68, I was just 28/29. That's young and you're extremely strong. And he was a runner.

TM: My assumption here is you put that cache thinking it would be so many days from point A to point B to get there. And then from that cache to Phantom and then from Phantom to Tanner. So there was a day schedule. Where you keeping that schedule? Were you are ahead or behind? How was that working out?

WH: I wouldn't have remembered at all except I read the narrative last week. It worked out very well. We were never starved and there was never much excess at the end of each quarter. It was well planned.

TM: The reason I'm asking that question is one thru-hiking couple, they knew where their next cache was and they didn't want to race through paradise, so they basically went on a little bit of a starvation diet to explore the country they were traveling through knowing the next cache was there. I haven't run across anybody who was doing that. Were you guys doing that or were you like, hey, we've got to make so many miles today because we've got that cache to get to.

WH: No, we were not compulsive at all about it. We took lots of side trips. Dump our packs, go up to the rim or go down a side canyon. We went down to Royal Arches and Elves Chasm without the packs and other things like that. Lots of little side trips.

JF: No, we had our packs. And here's a funny thing is that Harvey Butchart had never been into Royal Arch.

WH: At that point.

JF: We made it down there, but he took a helicopter... No, he walked in there, got to Royal Arch and fell and broke his ankle and they had to helicopter him out.

TM: And that would have been the year after or two years...

JF: No, a year before. No, it was just weeks before. The winter before.

WH: I don't remember.

JF: So when we got there... You've been there, I guess. It's a paradise. Hummingbirds, butterflies, watercress, frogs. We hiked out from there up onto the Esplanade past that monument and then took that little tiny rappel off the cliff that Harvey had told us about.

TM: Were you guys bringing ropes for that?

JF: Yeah. There was no rope there. There is now.

WH: He was back there a couple years ago.

TM: Was there only one rope or were there many ropes?

JF: There was a good strong batch of ropes. You mean since I've been back? I've been back three times.

TM: You know, when I've been there, there's tons of rope. People bring rope and they leave it. And the next person brings rope and leaves it. And the next... [laughter]

JF: As far as I remember, and I might be exaggerating, no one had been there since Powell and maybe Harvey, or Hance and he dropped down from walking.

TM: Or Fletcher.

JF: Yeah. But there was no path. There were burros.

TM: So at Phantom, Nancy, did you drive back to link up with these guys at Phantom or did you just wait until they called for you and then you drove back to Flag?

NB: No, I never went back. I was in school. Diane and I visited on weekends. We got together several of the weekends.

JF: Hoping their husbands weren't dead. [laughter]

NB: Yeah. [laugh]

DF: Cause you were gone six weeks.

TM: Diane, what were you thinking at this point? Jack sort of leaves you with your five year old daughter and says, I'll be back in a month.

DF: Six weeks cause they took time to go out there and then stash their caches. I was working, actually. I had a job. Our daughter was in school and a friend would take Stephanie after school. It worked out great. And like Nancy said, we did things on weekends.

NB: Yeah. I think you came to Berkeley some of the time and I went over to see you.

DF: I'm used to it. Jack is that kind of a guy. [laugh] That's fine with me.

NB: Yeah. I mean, it's so different now because people can contact easily with cell phones. At that time, no, you just dropped off the rim and you didn't hear another word for two weeks or more.

RB: Do cell phones work there?

TM: In a couple spots. Sat phones of course.

WH: If you can find them.

TM: Yeah. What other memorable things do you remember from that journey?

JF: The miserable sucking ranger that signed us the... We had to sign and give the route we're doing and he wouldn't let us go. We had to go to a store and buy a mirror so we can signal airplanes on the way out if we broke our legs. [laughter] He was a grumpy, stiff guy.

WH: Petty. That was Jim Bailey. We made jokes about Jim Bailey the whole trip. [laughter] We gave Ken Hulick a lot more slack because he was himself a good hiker.

TM: This was the thing about Ken when I talk with him is he was out there, as well, trying to hike the corridor trails, the Hance and the Tanner, and get out of the main Bright Angel/Kaibab routes. But he made it very clear that there were many, many employees who were Chevy rangers. They never left their vehicles and when they did, it was five o'clock to go home.

WH: Ed Abbey said, "Well, those goddamn rangers, they ought to make the buggers range."
[laughter]

TM: Well, this goes back to a question to Jack and this guy Bailey. No one in the Park Service at the time had done what you guys were doing. So you came to them with an itinerary that would have just been...

RB: Off the map.

TM: ...off the map, literally. Certainly off the Eastern Grand Canyon map. The quads didn't go that far.

WH: Well, Nancy and I already had a park service reputation in Death Valley. They'd take us on a sightseeing tour up on top of the Panamint Range just for the day. We said, we'll get off here and we'll walk back to Furnace Creek. [laugh] Walked down the range and across the valley back to Furnace Creek. That just shocked most of the park service people. They just couldn't imagine doing something like that. [phone rings] It was a lot more fun than driving around in a Carryall. Anyway.

NB: Death Valley, just backing up, I think Wes wrote the first little one page sheet of hikes that people could take in Death Valley, a handout.

WH: And the rangers hated it.

NB: Oh really?

WH: They just hated the whole idea cause they might have to get out of their cars and go rescue somebody. [TM laughs]

NB: I mean, now there are big fat volumes of books how to hike in Death Valley. I mean, everywhere you go there are people there hiking in the backcountry and four wheel drives and stuff. He wrote the first handout to go over the desk there in Death Valley.

JF: I even returned later on one of my three returning with friends and children and the rangers often did not know, and they had never been there. You talked to a ranger, woman or a man, and they had no idea. They might know where the Hermit Trail was but they could not fully inform you of what was there.

TM: Right. So besides Bailey and laughing about Bailey with the mirror, what else happened?

WH: Why don't we watch the film and the slides first so...

TM: We could do that.

WH: ...we can highlight in my memory the all the better things.

JF: I just want to say this is that I really admired my friend here because he had already a couple of degrees. He had traveled the world. I was a quite naive, somewhat traveled, young fellow, quite unaware of where I'd ever end up, you know? When he said he wanted to do this, I just didn't have anybody that would do that with me.

WH: Ditto, which is why he went with me. [laughter] She would of but as she said it was a little daunting for six weeks.

NB: Yeah. I don't think I would have wanted to do that.

WH: But she was a hell of a good hiker.

JF: He was into geology and I didn't know very much about it. Innately, I really liked it. How do you tell what happened centuries/millennia ago, you know? The initial part before we got to the first half, he was looking for this dike of quartz that goes through which we did find. He found it. And I remember standing on Vishnu Schist and picking it up. He says, that's two and a half billion years old. I thought, what? So I did it for not only experience, but when you like somebody, you want to know a little bit about who they are and what they know and it gives your life more value.

WH: This narrative, it has occurred to me, could be called the hippie and the hard-ass. [laughter] It was a great complementarity. I was really into planning details and making ultra-sure we were not going to get into trouble. Cause a lot of stuff we were doing was risky. We were out there and that's why we each carried two gallons of water. That kind of thing. He was really loving the landscape and was very much into the experience. If you ultimately read the narrative, you'll see I got impatient with him at times for taking risks that I thought were unnecessary.

JF: I found him a little conservative.

WH: Still is, by your standards. But we're still here 50 years later. [laughs]

NB: Both of you.

JF: At the end when we were hitchhiking, I guess we're in Williams and it was snowing [laughter] and a guy picked us up in his car. I had my hat on and my hair was not long, you know, it was LONG. Considered to be illegal in those days. I had a hat on. He picked us up and his face was covered with oil and he had like scar marks going like this down his face. He was driving and he said, "God damn hippies. Hate them. I got a gun in my..." And Wes is up front. "I've got a gun in my glove compartment here." And I never took my hat off. [laughter]

WH: Jack is sitting right behind him. This was a really far out guy.

JF: He was bizarre.

WH: He was something else.

TM: So your plan was we're going to hike the length of Grand Canyon National Park from west to east, and then we're going to hitchhike back to California.

WH: Right on. Did it.

JF: It was fun.

WH: We're, let's say impecunius.

JF: Boy, [laugh] that's for sure.

TM: It's brilliant.

WH: We stayed in the snowstorm in the woods outside of Flagstaff because we couldn't afford a motel. We didn't have \$10. [laughs]

TM: It was like, get us off this mountain, it's snowing. [laughs]

JF: No. Why carry money when you're walking? [laughter]

NB: Weighs too much.

WH: Yeah. It was a different time.

NB: It was.

JF: It was. And I would like to say that we got along quite well, even though there were differences. Which is, I think, an important thing, too. When you do something that is that arduous or complicated with somebody who knows what he's doing. I mean, I know all about camping. I could camp anywhere. So I had no fear. But there's a possibility of personalities clashing. But there was really none of that except a few moments and they were short. It wasn't a bad moment, but when we walked out the Little Colorado, I was really stoked because I knew that the Hopi Indians holy sipapu was there. Man, I wanted to get Native American culture. I wanted to feel it cause otherwise, you know, you don't really get to touch those origins of spiritual value to a Native American. I guess I picked that up from living on Hupa for a little bit. That was pretty neat. Basically it's just a big mud pot, [laugh] a 60 foot wide mud pot.

TM: It's a travertine mound.

JF: Yeah. Travertine mound.

WH: Travertine starts as mud.

TM: You had to cross the Little Colorado River to get there.

WH: Talk about mud. [laugh]

JF: And catclaw.

TM: Well, it would have been spring runoff, whatever there was that year by late March/early April. And if it was muddy, then you were in...

WH: Well, the confluence was an incredible contrast. Clear water coming from Glen Canyon and just total brown slop coming from the Little Colorado.

TM: Which was your drinking supply. I mean, how did you work out your water from there?

WH: We had a whole bunch of liter bottles. Right? Slop this muddy stuff in it. Let it settle for half an hour. Decant off the top one third, which was largely clear by then. That took a lot of time to decant all this muddy water in the Little Colorado. Once we swam across I think we found a spring going up some side canyons. We filled up there before we went up.

JF: Yeah, but the spring we found, [laughs] it was not really quite drinkable but we were so dirty. I washed my hair and my hair and my hair turned into concrete. [laughter] I couldn't get a comb through it, I couldn't do anything. It was solid concrete. [laughter]

WH: Travertine hair wash. [laughs]

JF: And being slightly long, it was horrid.

WH: I'm sure the Navajo appreciated it.

TM: Your Tanner cache, had you hiked that down to the Tonto as well?

JF: Right to the water.

TM: Right to the water. Right to the river then.

JF: Yeah. Where they had beavers which was, again, quite comical.

WH: Almost everybody in this room's been to Tanner Rapid. Hiked Gail down there years later. Nancy and I'd been there the year before. The three of us went down there to deposit this cache. That's where we hitched a ride to Phantom.

JF: Yeah.

DF: Oh, on the rafts.

WH: When we were laying the cache in.

NB: Was that when the three of us were there? I remember being there and Hatch River Expeditions came through.

DF: Oh, you got to do that, too?

NB: Yeah.

WH: Hatch came through. It was a training run. They didn't have any clients. So they said, why not? We'll take you down. They took us and we hiked up Bright Angel and hitchhiked back to the car at Desert View.

TM: Sweet.

NB: We got a little bit acquainted with them and they said if we were interested in coming and working for them...

JF: Yeah, that's true.

NB: ...on the river, we could consider that. I don't remember if it ever came to a job offer. But I do remember some mail about it at some point. But we decided not to pursue that.

WH: You expressed some reservations about being a guide on the river. My reservation was mainly having to treat high rollers as if they were elite clients.

JF: Plus that they they ate steak and drank bourbon.

TM: If I may be so bold, knowing what you guys have done now as you've taught me during this interview, I think you would have quickly found it frustrating because your clients that you're working for as a crew have not seen what you've seen. So you have to stop at the Little Colorado and you have to stop at Saddle Canyon and you have to stop at Elves Chasm and you have to stop at Havasu because they haven't seen that. To be fair to them, you need to show them this again with the next crew and again with the next crew. So the river guides that really work hard to see more of Grand Canyon work hard to see more of Grand Canyon. They have to work at it to...

WH: You still have to stop at all the crown jewels.

TM: You have to stop again and again and again at the same spots again and again and again. You might find that a little... At one point it's like, okay, I want to see these other places that aren't really nice.

JF: Do that on your vacation.

TM: Well, that's what many people do. Many people just walked away from the commercial scene and said, I'm going to do it myself because I want to see if I can hike out the Apache Point route from the river and go up as far as I can and come back in a day from a layover. No commercial company is gonna really let that happen because people want to see Deer Creek just downstream. So that's where you're going to go.

WH: It's the repetitiveness of one crop of tourists after the other that made me bored with the Park Service.

NB: Glacier Bay.

WH: Same old nature walk day after day after day.

NB: We spent a summer in Glacier Bay and Wes rode the tour boat up to the Muir Glacier every day and all the way back. But I mean, it's a spectacularly beautiful place but he gained 20 pounds eating donuts on the tour boat. [laughter]

RB: That's a lot of donuts.

NB: I mean, I found it very ironical. He just was bored and I completely understand what you're saying. Again, on our days off, we took the tour boat and they dropped us off somewhere and waved goodbye to us. We went hiking and climbing or whatever. Yeah. It's the repetition and dealing with the same questions over and over and over again.

JF: And I think, too, anybody, certainly in this room, would not want a job like that. The other people do it because of money. So much stuff is done because money... Some young people might see it as an adventure for a period of time, but not a lifelong position.

WH: It was a wonderful thing for a few years. In the aftermath of spending months and months in the bowels of the Widener Library... Maybe I shouldn't trash [laugh] library research, but that's what I was into in grad school before the park service liberation.

TM: Or you can balance the best of both.

WH: Well, I do now.

TM: Exactly.

WH: Got a research degree in the meantime, which makes it easier to do both.

TM: So maybe at this point we should adjourn to the basement where we have the slides and the film. Should we do that?

NB: Okay.

[01:44:00 regroup to the basement for a slideshow. Start slide narration at 01:59:46]

WH: The South Rim Bright Angel area is here and the trail down to Phantom Ranch. The black wiggly line's the river.

JF: No, the white line's the river. The black line one is our route.

WH: Here's Supai the Indian village and Havasu Canyon over here. Here's the Great Thumb Point. The red is the inner canyon, the gray is the plateau on both sides. There are various old trails. Bass Trail here, Royal Arch, Apache Point, Great Thumb, Tahuta, Topocoba Hilltop where we hiked down to Supai, Hermit Trail, Boucher Trail. Probably people have been on it. Here's the North Rim Trail that goes across the canyon. There's a couple more trails down in here, Grandview. And the Tanner Trail is at the far east end. Then the Little Colorado comes in from the east here. We had originally thought we'd follow the river up and come out at Nankoweap to the North Rim, but we shortcut and went out the Little Colorado. See the map ends here so we were flying blind for the rest of the way out to the Navajo reservation.

NB: So that's clarified for me now. I thought we had driven to Hualapai Hilltop. So did we drive to Topocoba?

JF: Topocoba.

TM: It looks as though there's Hualapai Hilltop right there. And your dotted line comes in. So indeed you did both it would appear.

JF: I think the Hualapai Hilltop is when you drive in from Peach Springs and then you can either take a horse... That's where they start delivering the mail into Supai. Topocoba is here. 14 miles from here to Supai.

NB: So for this hike did we drive into Topocoba?

JF: Yeah. We took this right here and walked down here. And as you can see, the Havasu River, or whatever they call it, comes right out of the ground. It's dry and you walk around a corner and all of a sudden this blue river is there.

NB: So then Jack...so then you and I came out. Wes started his hike. You and I came out back up to Topocoba. And then did you hike to Apache Point to meet him?

JF: No, I hiked all the way across here. I can't remember, I think it was...

RB: That's a long way across there.

JF: Yeah, it was a long...

WH: You went out to Great Thumb Point.

JF: This is Great Thumb Point?

WH: All the way to the point.

JF: And it's all trees. There's no trails.

NB: We had put a cache at Apache Point?

JF: Yeah.

WH: At Apache Point, yeah.

NB: Okay. Now I'm getting. This has just been puzzling me.

WH: Apache Point's here, Great Thumb Point's there.

NB: Got it. And then I drove that dotted road. I didn't go out to Peach Springs. I drove all the way back to Grand Canyon Village when I left alone.

TM: So just trying to figure out logistics. Wes goes down the trail to Supai.

WH: We all did.

TM: You all did. Okay, down to Supai. Then Wes is going to go out Carbonate Canyon, it would appear. And meanwhile, then Jack and Nancy go back up to the rim where the vehicle is at Topocoba Hilltop. Then Nancy starts driving out alone and Jack heads overland north to intercept...

WH: To Great Thumb Point.

TM: ...Wes. I'm still confused as to why that was the plan.

WH: Get Nancy safely home.

JF: Yeah.

NB: You think so?

U?: And they could still say that they walked the length of the...

TM: Got it. Okay. So basically Jack was a chaperone to get Nancy back to the car.

WH: That's a nice way to put it. [laughter]

NB: I can't remember why I didn't just leave from...

JF: It was because you could have got stuck.

WH: Havasu.

NB: That happened after Wes went in. Yeah. Anyway, yeah. Anyway... Okay, there we are.

U?: I want to see that long hair, Jack.

WH: He's hiding it from the rangers.

TM: So the three of you are here in Supai at the village. Now we've jumped to Tanner. Now this is the foot of the Tanner Trail. That's the Palisades of the Desert.

WH: These are a little out of order, I suppose, for the cache laying.

TM: Cache placement.

TM: Okay, so this is Hatch River Expeditions at Tanner because that's Temple Butte there in the background. Maybe why we then jumped to Tanner is because this is the cache placement and you guys now are booking downriver back to...

JF: So that's Temple Butte? I got it mixed up, I couldn't remember. I thought it was Dox Castle.

TM: Well, Dox Castle is over by Bass.

JF: My memory. Since they're doing that, a very comical thing is that one of the guys that had gone down there was John Newberry, like Penstemon Newberry. Diane is a Newberry and her father looks a lot like the original John Newberry.

TM: Really?

JF: When you look at Newberry Point or whatever it is...

TM: Butte, yeah.

JF: ...they named that after him because of the shape of his nose. [TM laughs] It's just same shape as her father's nose.

TM: Oh, that's wonderful.

NB: Hey Tom, what's that peak...

WH: So instead of hiking back up from our cache at Tanner we hitched a ride to Phantom Ranch, which was...

TM: Yeah, that's Temple Butte there.

NB: Okay.

WH: ...a days trip. That's Hance Rapid I think.

NB: How many boats did they have there? Three?

TM: The Escalante Route is... this is Escalante Rapid and 75-mile or Nevills Rapid is just downstream of here.

JF: Which rapid is downstream?

TM: 75-mile. Hance is just around the corner down a ways. These are the Hatch tail-draggers there. No side tubes.

JF: What do you mean no side tubes?

TM: It took Hatch a while to figure out that they needed to add two more outrigger tubes to keep those boats from flipping over.

DF: Did they flip over a lot?

TM: Not a lot, but enough to hurt and kill people.

WH: Dock used to call these things baloneys.

TM: Did you like them?

WH: No, he hated them. That's why he called them baloneys.

RB: I enjoyed going down. It was very comfortable.

WH: Dock was a hard-boat man.

TM: He was. So now we're back. Well, I should be quiet. Where are we?

WH: I think Havasu, but I'm not sure.

TM: That's right. Top of the Redwall at Havasu. And a fascinating journey again, this looks like Carbonate. This is looking back upstream here, but that doesn't make sense cause we're on the wrong side of Havasu.

WH: And this is back with the boat crew. Think they stopped for lunch halfway between Tanner and Phantom.

TM: And they built a fire here.

DF: It looks cold.

TM: It is cold on the river.

DF: Is that Jack? Jack with the bandana.

JF: Yup.

WH: Havasu.

NB: That's Supai, Roger.

TM: Supai village from halfway up in the Esplanade looking down.

TM: This is a green table probably the campground in Havasu Canyon.

WH: Yes.

TM: And at this point, this would be in the Park Service now because the Supai Reservation at the time was 500 acres or some very, very small little postage stamp of their original tribal domain.

WH: The place was totally run by a BIA pro council named Willaby at the time.

TM: The village was?

WH: Yup. He just totally dominated the Indians like an old fashioned overlord.

TM: Wow. Do you know who the ranger was? Was there a ranger?

WH: There was no ranger. The BIA sheriff's name was Willaby.

U?: So what happened to the natives?

TM: In 1975, what was called the Grand Canyon Enlargement Act greatly expanded the Indian reservation.

JYF: Did you carry pots with you? Those pots that were on the grill?

WH: Well, sure we carried pots.

TM: This is Judy's question, which is good. These look like Kelty hard frame packs.

WH: Yup.

TM: And there are some what look to be aluminum pots that are right on a grill there in the fire. There's a lot of plastic water jugs on the table. And those are big packs.

WH: That's what we had those days.

TM: And Nancy is wearing a sweater. So it's cool.

WH: It was mid-March.

DF: And Jack's wearing two shirts.

JF: I might say also a poet, kind of a beat poet, lived down at Mooney Falls. We spoke with him and he was virtually the only other tourist there. I was so romanticized after this journey I took Diane back there a number of years later, maybe half a dozen years later, and Mooney and Havasu had been placed on an LA Times magazine, Sunday magazine...

DF: Sunset magazine.

JF: ...and the cover of National Geographic.

WH: That did it.

JF: So when Diane and I went back down there, they were literally helicoptering in Boy Scouts packs and where Wes and Nancy and I had been able to walk below Mooney Falls and pluck wild celery, which was already salty from the water, there was toilet paper everywhere and it was completely...

RB: Trashed.

JF: It was horrid.

WH: Is this Mooney Falls?

TM: Yes.

WH: With all that travertine drapery on both sides.

NB: The trail comes down the right, doesn't it?

JF: Yeah it does. Is that Mooney?

TM: This is not Mooney.

JF: It's not Mooney, it's the other falls. Mooney is a broader...

TM: Mooney's taller.

WH: Esplanade. So the first half of our hike was largely on this level because going along the river was too difficult. So we're here on the Supai Formation, all this stratified sandstone with higher Permian formations yet above it forming higher cliffs.

TM: That could be Stanton Point across Fossil Bay.

WH: I think they're all labeled but I don't remember, myself.

JF: Is that where he stopped surveying his railroad?

TM: No. No. They just named a point for him.

WH: So here we are. Often would take side trips out to the rim to get good long shots along fairly linear stretches of the canyon.

TM: This is a view north past Fossil Rapid making its big dogleg turn. Steamboat Mountain is center right on the skyline here. So this would be the top of the Apache Point route.

NB: So this is looking downriver?

TM: Downriver to the north. The river is going away from us.

U?: So at the bottom of this is where you put your first cache?

WH: No. On the Esplanade.

TM: At this level. Yeah. And there is of course no riverside vegetation. The big debris fan at Fossil Rapid is huge.

WH: The big cliff in shadow is the Redwall which is usually the biggest barrier to going up or down. And above it, the step topography, is the Supai Formation which is the eroded surface which forms the Esplanade. Then there's another thousand feet of younger formations on top of that that go up to the plateau.

TM: This is a view looking east up Conquistador Aisle or Stephen's Aisle. The rapid below is where the Esmerelda hung up.

U?: Why did you carry glass jars?

JF: Because they held water.

NB: Maybe that was just the cache?

WH: Possibly the cache. I don't think we carried them.

NB: Cause there are wine bottles there and everything. So that must be your cache.

JF: I'll add, too, that being a professional photographer, I had had my camera rebuilt from top to bottom. And first day I put my foot in the Grand Canyon, it jammed up and wouldn't work.

U?: So you didn't get any pictures?

JF: No. I never got a single picture.

WH: Trail dust?

DF: It was a broken wire, wasn't it?

JF: It was the mechanics inside the camera that the repair guy didn't repair.

NB: Aw. These are great to see. Geez, his shirt was already ripped.

WH: Probably Apache Point Pass.

U?: Your hair's not so long.

DF: No, it's not at all.

JF: That's what I said. I had a little ponytail.

TM: So the five gallon cans, did you guys pack those in? Was that water?

JF: No.

TM: Were they there already?

JF: Food. That's our food.

TM: That's your food in those cans?

JF: Yeah, and then you can see the red can has got the fuel fluid.

WH: What fuel? We did not carry stoves.

JF: Oh that's right.

DF: So was this a cache?

TM: So was this someone else's cache?

JF: It's probably Wes's cache of Snickers bars. [laughs]

WH: Snicker bars. [laugh]

RB: So you just left those cans there?

WH: Don't remember. Probably.

JF: We did.

NB: I didn't go and pick them up. [laughs]

JF: Now is that the end of Great Thumb over there to the right?

TM: Well spotted.

JF: So we walked... I met Wes around the corner there and he had walked from there over...

WH: The other way.

DF: The other way around. Other side.

JF: It's the other side?

TM: You're exactly right, Jack. He's come around. You went out the point and caught up to him and then you guys came around the mid-ground coming to our left, coming towards where the camera is. That's called the Fossil Bay on that level of the Esplanade.

JF: Yeah. That's what I thought.

TM: It's just huge country.

WH: And getting to the river from that Esplanade surface takes a whole day.

JF: Yeah, it did.

WH: So you've got to have a good route and a reason to go down.

JF: Is that a topo map aerial view?

WH: [laugh] You betcha.

WH: That's Coconino over Hermit I think.

NB: Can you review something for me? Esplanade, did you say that's mostly in the Supai Formation?

WH: Yeah. You see the deeply shadowed Redwall, the Supai's the red stratified, multilayered stuff above it. Then most of the cliff above is the white Coconino Sandstone.

NB: Then the Tonto Plateau is below the Esplanade?

WH: It's below the river level here in the west. It's on the Cambrian Tapeats Sandstone which only comes up farther upstream.

NB: Got it.

JF: That area, could that be the Tonto down there?

WH: Could be.

TM: So what you're looking at right there...this is a wonderful picture. There's Mount Huethawali way out there by the South Bass on the left-centered skyline. In the near-ground is the big travertine outflow below the Redwall just east of Royal Arch of Elves Chasm. So you guys are looking at this going, okay, we're going to go that way. We're going to head out there. Most of the travertine and what would be the Tonto, of course, is gone. They're covered by that big travertine fan.

JF: Think that was Elves Chasm?

TM: To the right. Next drainage over. Up there. Yup.

JF: Up there?

TM: And you guys are going to do your little rappel. You're going to come around...

JF: We're going to come around and go down here.

TM: A little more to the left.

JF: Yeah, right. I remember walking and that cairn is right there.

TM: That's right. That giant cairn is right there. And then you're going to drop in and head down to the Tonto level.

WH: Did you and Marin and Steph get down there two/three years ago?

JF: I did a solo walk doing the same thing. And then I took my friend Bruce Nalman and Roger Jacobson there. And then I took our two daughters there and did the same walk.

WH: We didn't find many caves or overhangs like this to sleep in. There were enough rainy nights why we would have appreciated them.

JF: Remember we slept in that cave one night. It had a bed in it.

WH: Bet it had bedbugs, too. [laughter] And scorpions.

JF: That's beautiful.

WH: That's Huethawali, isn't it?

JF: It seems too sharp.

WH: That pinnacle over there.

TM: It could be Sinyala.

NB: That's what you found when you were sleeping.

JF: It was about that size, too.

WH: We had to shake our sleeping bags all the time. [laughs]

JF: Scorpions.

NB: Did you ever see any snakes?

WH: I think we did not on this trip, but when you and I were there the previous year I saw a lot. We saw a lot.

NB: I think I remember seeing snakes.

JF: And the rattlesnakes are colored based on the ground that they're on.

RB: I've seen a rattler in there in a side canyon.

JF: That's Royal Arch.

NB: Oh. Never been there. On the Dock Marston trip we didn't take... [laugh]

JF: Oh, no you couldn't. You probably couldn't get there.

NB: Oh, it isn't near the river then.

JF: Right behind where Wes is photographing was a 200 feet downdrop.

NB: Got it.

WH: Where was this Jack?

JF: Royal Arch.

WH: This is Royal Arch?

TM: Mhm. You can see the arch.

JF: Yeah. The arch is here and then there's all that watercress and stuff, and then this comes down here, and then this flows off 200 feet.

WH: This would have been considered one of the best water sources on the whole hike.

JF: Oh that's beautiful, too.

WH: Watch out for chalk stones.

DF: Blisters Jack?

JF: I had 22 blisters. I so desperately wanted to do this.

U?: No hiking boots.

JF: I had my army boots. Talk about impecunious.

TM: That's the monument tower. It's a standing pinnacle in the arch of the Royal Arch.

WH: Is this the arch?

TM: This is the Royal Arch your shooting through and the monument tower is just right there.

NB: Tom, have you hiked up there from the river or used a rope to get up there?

TM: From the river. Yeah.

JF: How did you get up from the river?

TM: We had ascenders. We just climbed up, a copious quantity of ropes there.

WH: Who built that pile of rocks?

TM: The running assumption is that this is a Matthes-Evans monument from 1907 or whenever they surveyed.

JF: Oh, I thought Powell did it in 1888.

TM: Nah.

WH: Matthes-Evans?

TM: Yes, François Evans.

WH: He made his geologic reputation later in the Yosemite region and the whole San Joaquin Canyon which is what Judy and I are studying now.

TM: Hold on a second.

WH: You got to really want to get down there to go to the trouble to do so.

TM: This would be, I believe, Elves Chasm. Downstream view from on top of that travertine fan. It's a great shot. Tapeats sandstone across to the river on top of the Vishnu schist. Nice picture.

U?: It should be digitized before they fade any more.

WH: Not everybody realizes that before the Cambrian marine invasion of southwestern North America, this whole area had been stripped to a crystalline basement of schists and granites that are on the order of 2 billion years old. It was stripped clean and then the marine section came in and cut deeper and deeper and deposited layer after layer of all these sediments starting with the Tapeats Sandstone in the Cambrian and continuing layer after layer, still horizontal in the Grand Canyon, which is really remarkable for things to be horizontal and not deformed, right up through the Permian. So from about 550 million to 250 million, the entire Paleozoic is laid out in the walls of Grand Canyon.

JYP: And consider, for those of you who've been to Convict Lake, that same sort of section is now nearly vertical right there on the east side of the Sierra.

JF: The same thing?

JYP: Same thing.

WH: Same age rocks.

U?: Pushed up by the granites

U?: So the limestones are turned to marbles and the mudstones are turned to schists and the sandstone to quartzites.

JYP: It's the same time period.

JF: Holy cow.

U?: That's amazing.

WH: This is the kind of thing that occasionally made me irritated with Jack and occasionally made me very grateful for his finding a route that we could actually continue on.

JF: He had the great idea to go back up and all the way around. It just seemed far too far.

WH: I don't remember the particular location.

TM: This is the rappel at the Royal Arch.

U?: Really gives you an idea of the scale.

NB: Well, Wes, that reminds me of some of the hikes you took me on.

WH: Well, I was never as daring as Jack. I thought I was always pretty conservative.

NB: [laugh] You were.

WH: Not to say chicken. [laughter]

TM: It sounds like you guys were a pretty well balanced team. Jack had the rope work down and you had the attention to detail.

WH: I said the hippie and the hard ass.

TM: That's good. It worked. [laughter]

JF: And there's a third H in there, helpful.

TM: This is a great picture of the Monument fold.

WH: One of the monolines comes across there?

TM: It's this amazing little fault block fold here and the river goes right around to see the other side of it as you go around the monument on the other side of the river there.

TM: Upstream view. You guys are gonna walk there on that lower bench. You're leaving the Esplanade up on the rim now and heading down toward the Tonto level.

TM: Garnet Canyon.

RB: So I guess you couldn't ride a horse down there, huh?

TM: You can on the Esplanade. And they did in the 10s and 20s.

TM: Jack on a ledge giving poor Wes heartburn.

JF: This is a beautiful shot of this. This is the ledge that is on the way down to Elves Chasm, I think. I took both my daughters along that a while ago with packs. It drops off a considerable distance. It's only about 50 feet, but when you go down the 50 feet, it'll bounce another 200 or 300.

WH: Water. [laugh]

TM: Water and Redbuds in a little side drainage.

WH: You know, the lion's share of our water sources were full of mosquito larvae wrigglers.

TM: Did you filter or did you just drink?

WH: Always.

JF: We used iodine.

WH: Yeah, halazone it was called then. And we probably filtered it through Jack's bandana [laughter] cause we didn't have...

JF: Or my socks.

WH: ...anything like modern filters. Just filtered it through a bandana or something to make sure we weren't eating too many wrigglers.

TM: So speaking of water filtering, here's Jack on all fours. Looks to be drinking straight out of a little pot of water in the middle of a drainage. Sans filter and sans halazone.

WH: He's filtering it through his teeth. There were areas where there were practically no burros or deer or horses.

JF: And we would always taste the water first.

WH: This is before anybody ever heard of the word giardia.

JF: Yeah. Exactly.

U?: We never worried about that.

JF: I was just reading a little thing on hiking and I think it's near the Hermit Trail or something. They say don't drink the water cause it's contaminated with uranium.

TM: That's actually from the Orphan Mine that's just west of Indian Gardens.

WH: Uranium might kill the wrigglers.

JF: Yeah, sounds right.

WH: That's Huethawali. This was one of the days we got a snow flurry. Not much, but a little. [laugh]

JF: I must say, too, not that it's important, but there is a flower down there called the desert primrose. It blooms at nighttime with the most gorgeous perfume. And as soon as the sun strikes it, it sucks all the ultraviolet out of the sun, turns purple and dies. It's a beautiful, beautiful plant. Remember those?

TM: This might be sand verbenas.

WH: Not really.

TM: They smell gorgeous. That was a very nice picture that you just passed there looking down on the mouth of Shinumo Canyon there. You guys are on top of the Tapeats. You're almost to the South Bass here. The view is looking to the north with just the base of Fan Island in the far upper left. A great shot.

JF: There's that bed.

U?: How did it get there?

RB: Is that a mine?

U?: Must be a mine. Yeah, it looks like an adit.

JF: It's not Hance but there's some other guy that...

WH: Maybe one of the western Bass mines?

TM: Yeah, that would be my guess.

U?: Looks like you had a little fire to warm your water.

WH: Oh, we had no compunction about that. Burning whatever we could find.

TM: So before the 70s...before 1975, fires were allowed, and clearly you're using a fire here to cook your food. You got your pots on the fire. It was the stove.

WH: We did not carry a stove.

TM: Right. Building a fire was the stove of choice cause it didn't weigh anything.

RB: That's kind of...I mean that's pretty far out. [laughter] I mean not carrying a stove.

U?: And no tent either.

WH: In those days not carrying a tent was considered far out, too.

RB: I guess so.

WH: We didn't need one.

DF: You had tube tents though, right?

WH: Now Bass.

JF: Wasn't that the old crossing that they had a wire that went all the way across?

WH: Yeah, I think there used to be cables in two spots at Bass.

TM: Indeed it is and this cable was cut just a year or so before you guys took this picture. And the cable car is still more or less in shape there as the cable dives down to it there with the little hand crank on top of it. A lot of that the hardware's still there, but it's all kind of tumbled down. You can actually see the box of the cable car cause the cable has recently been severed.

RB: So when was this cable put in?

TM: This was put in by Bill Bass in the late 1800s.

WH: And then Jim Bailey wrecked it. [laughter]

JF: There we are purifying our water.

U?: Decanting. Settling.

TM: This is down by the river. This is polished river rock that you're sitting on here. I'm assuming this is past the Bass cable where the trail drops down right next to the river. You guys probably walked right down there to maybe get some water.

U?: Boy, look at those boots. Amazing you could walk.

WH: What's the matter with those boots? [laughter]

U?: You guys, how many pairs of boots have you guys gone through?

U?: About a pair a year. [laugh]

U?: I'm looking at the size of the sleeping bag.

JF: Yeah, that's true. Everything is quite smaller and lighter today.

TM: Great shot of the inner gorge. Isis view to the east.

WH: Look at the Precambrian and the steep walls with the Cambrian Tapeats Sandstone rim.

TM: Oh, that's not Isis. That's Ra and Osiris. So that'll be just getting close to Crystal here. Looking upstream. That's Willies Necktie Corner.

NB: Okay. Where is this?

WH: What are we talking about?

TM: I'm thinking Boucher.

JF: That is Boucher you think, this little place?

TM: Yeah.

JF: So we're way over near the Little Colorado.

TM: No, no, no.

WH: No, no. Near Hermit.

TM: Yeah, near Hermit. This is all in chronological sequence. Not too much further east of the last picture. Another, you know, six miles or so.

JF: Who was the guy that had the little cabin over by the Little Colorado?

TM: That was Beamer. This is Hermit Rapid, the great roller coaster, the fifth wave. Again, no vegetation on either side of the river here in 1968. Great shot looking down from...

WH: Is there a lot of vegetation now?

JF: Is it all tamarisk?

TM: Yes. And some willow, some native willow in there.

NB: Ah, a trail.

U?: There's the bed.

WH: This Hermit?

TM: Yeah. Hermit's camp.

NB: I remember it looking like that with the beds.

U?: Why is there barbed wire there?

JF: I think it was some kind of border, wasn't it?

TM: They had brought down a tramway and trammed in a whole bunch of stuff. There was livestock down there. There were burros down there. If you wanted a place where the livestock wouldn't bother you, you had to fence them out.

WH: [laugh] What time interval would that have been?

TM: Twenties.

WH: That was national park by then.

TM: Correct.

WH: They had no objection to livestock?

TM: Well, they were using a lot of livestock down there. That's how they got around.

JF: They really had a lot of livestock down inside there?

TM: Not a lot, but they had packers. They were packing up and down the trail as well.

JF: I mean like a hundred cows or something?

TM: No, no. This would have been the concession as well.

WH: Park Service contractors.

JF: Oh.

TM: That's the monument tower.

WH: Is that you Jack up on top?

JF: Yeah.

U?: [laugh] In the air.

RB: What's that little knob again?

JF: Is that Indian Gardens?

WH: Not quite.

TM: I kind of want to turn this picture around. It's not Zoro. That's Bright Angel Creek right there. So that's going to be Buddha maybe. One of those temples up that side in the Coconino.

JF: Is that slide backwards you think?

TM: I don't think so. I think I'm backwards. I think it was right.

U?: Is that still Coconino Sandstone at the top?

TM: That's the whole stack there. That'd be Kaibab Limestone at the top way on the rim up there. But what you see, the little white tower there, that's going to be Coconino.

U?: And then Supai?

TM: Supai's below it, the red.

U?: Then Redwall?

TM: Down to the Redwall which is kind of red there. And then the green starts the Bright Angel Shale in that mid-range.

NB: So down below, did you see Bright Angel Creek?

TM: Right.

NB: Is that Indian Gardens?

TM: No, that'd be Phantom Ranch.

NB: Oh, Phantom Ranch. Okay.

TM: Again, the year is '68. The big flood of '66, fall/winter of, has happened. So you can see it's all scoured out down there.

WH: I see. I see.

NB: And when you sent that picture online of the bulldozer, I recognized the campground washed out but I just couldn't imagine how they got the bulldozer down there.

JF: A bulldozer?

WH: They helicoptered it in. The white splotch is Phantom Ranch with the flood gravel.

NB: Yeah, we were there right after that happened. I mean, the next year.

WH: Jack and I kept a running tally of how many things scratched or wounded us. It was a question whether it was catclaw or mesquite or cholla or prickly pears or what. There some other contenders.

JF: Beavertail. That was a miserable one.

TM: Blackbrush.

WH: I think catclaw won.

NB: I remember the catclaw on the North Rim.

WH: Civilization! First people we saw in two weeks.

TM: Here's a woman maybe in her late twenties leading two children, maybe in their early teens or early, early teens, and then the man bringing up the rear. And there's the family here on what clearly must be the South Kaibab?

WH: No, I think when we went up Bright Angel.

JF: Bright Angel. Subsequent walk, I went down the Kaibab and up the Bright Angel. On the way down the Bright Angel, there was a rather stout young woman, you know, like 32. She was cursing and swearing and they were sending a set of mules down to take her out. Down about where that family was, was an elderly couple probably in their seventies. He was wearing a suit and he had taken his tie off. She was holding onto his tie and he was helping her. They walked by and they said, isn't this wonderful? [laughter]

JF: Boy, that's a great shot.

TM: So that's...

JF: That's powerful.

TM: Zoroaster.

WH: The middle part of the canyon is a great kind of upwarp so that the basement Precambrian rocks come up to a much higher level than they do either east or west along the canyon. So you get this very deep inner gorge cut into the old crystalline rocks.

TM: All of the 1960s hikers that I've talked with talk about burning yuccas. Did you actually spin them around on their stalks and launch them?

WH: We used them for firewood in many places because of the lack of alternatives.

TM: It's a gorgeous shot of burning yucca.

WH: I don't remember at all what that was.

TM: Water. Water possibly in Cottonwood or somewhere one of the side canyons.

WH: More like an oil seep.

NB: Algae I bet.

TM: Yup. Algae. You guys had been very happy to see that.

TM: That may be Newberry Butte on the left. This is looking east. There are the Palisades out there and a wonderful chunk of the inner gorge.

JF: Some rafters down there.

TM: So how were you guys doing here? Were you feeling pretty good? You'd passed Phantom. You were cruising along the Tonto now. In theory you're on the top of your game. You've kind of weathered in and things are cruising along. Is that how it felt?

WH: Yes. We got fitter and leaner as we went along I think. Apart from scratches [laughs] from the vegetation, we were probably faster and smoother and leaner and less uptight about uncertainties, in my case, than before cause the east half of the canyon is much simpler and much closer to civilization if you get into trouble cause there's so many exit trails.

TM: So at this point, was there a real trail?

JF: I don't know.

WH: There was a bit of a trail along the Tapeats surface, what do you call it, Tonto, here and there. I don't remember how much of a continuous trail there was. Once we got beyond Grandview I don't think there was a trail at all until we got to Tanner.

JF: I thought there was a kind of a good trail east of the Kaibab.

WH: There was from Bright Angel to Kaibab.

TM: This is a stunning view. It's Isis on the horizon. This is Sockdolager rapid and the view is looking west. It is a gorgeous picture.

NB: Beautiful. Great shadows.

WH: A little underexposed on the left. [laughs] Hey, we made it to the river! First time in a long time.

RB: Did you ever take swims along the way, too?

JF: Is that Newberry?

TM: I think it might be.

WH: When we got to the river occasionally we tried, but it was so damn cold.

RB: Yeah, it was pretty cold. Yeah. Some of the side canyons have some nice places.

JF: See how neat we kept ourselves?

TM: So this is a nice general generic camp scene. It looks like you guys had Visqueen plastic for ground cloth.

WH: It's what was called tube tents in those days. It was a cylinder of thin plastic.

JF: And what do you call that very thin foam?

U?: Ensolite?

WH: So if it rained, you could crawl inside the cylinder.

TM: Got it. Okay.

WH: So as a ground sheet it was double. But that was it. They were very lightweight. Probably the heaviest item I was carrying was my sleeping bag apart from the god damn water. [laughs] The water was...

NB: Did you carry a pad at all?

JF: Yeah, those Ensolite.

WH: Yeah. Yeah. I remember that.

JF: Which I wouldn't dare carry anymore. I need air mattress. Gosh that was so pretty.

JF: A little frog.

U?: Frog and a green rock.

TM: Little bit of copper. Maybe you guys are near the Grandview.

TM: This is at the foot of Hance rapid and looking west. The Hance asbestos mine tailings visible.

U?: Is that snow?

WH: Where are the mines?

TM: Jack's going to point it out.

JF: There's a cable. Am I right?

WH: Yeah, there is something across there.

TM: I'm not sure about that, but if you go straight up from where you pointed there and toward me a little bit. Yep, right there. That's the asbestos mine drainage right there. You can see that little layer.

JF: Oh, that's asbestos.

WH: The white layer is where the...

TM: The Bass Limestone on top of the diabase sill in there. Is that right? Is that Bass Limestone? That's a layer of asbestos-rich material. That is the Bass Limestone that's in there metamorphosed.

WH: So the asbestos is in Bass Limestone intruded by the diabase?

TM: Correct. And then there's a conglomerate and then you go right into the schist. That's part of the Grand Canyon Supergroup there. And you guys had come down to the river here because the route drives you to the river and you've got water. That's what drove John Hance down here.

JF: I'm sorry, could you repeat that again? What drove Hance down there?

TM: Well, the topography meaning you can see there's a slope that goes right to the river and it's like, yay we made it. This is Hance rapid.

WH: That's the same exposure in the distance.

TM: Yup. You're just further upstream now.

NB: And what was Hance mining?

TM: Tourism.

NB: Oh, oh. Tourism.

U?: What is the red strata?

TM: This is the Dox Sandstone, although the Shinumo Quartzite. No, that's not right. That's the Shimumo Quartzite up there and below that is the...oh, geez... What's the name of that?

WH: Hakatai.

TM: Hakatai Shale. Thank you very much.

TM: This is Hance rapid looking upstream.

RB: Is the river fairly low?

TM: No, that's probably 10- to 15,000 average. That's all blown out now. That rock on the right side as we're looking at this picture...

JF: Way up there?

TM: No, not quite that far. Closer down.

JF: This one?

TM: Yeah. Right there. A new debris flow has come out this side canyon you guys are just next to and now you can walk right out to that rock. So the river has been moved over to the right as more material has been washed in.

NB: So is the vegetation nowadays much thicker along the river? Time has gone by, almost 50 years.

JF: That could be the dreaded catclaw. [laughter]

RB: What's that?

TM: This is Papago Canyon. You guys are gonna have to clear this, walk around it.

WH: That was the deal. Every time there's a beautiful canyon you got a long lateral hike to get around the head of it.

JF: Yeah, right. [laughter]

RB: That must have been nerve wracking. [laugh]

JF: Yeah. You're looking at something like basically quarter a mile away, takes you like five miles to get there.

TM: 75-mile Rapid.

JF: Who's down there? Is that a time shot and we dashed down there?

NB: [laugh] Are those people or rocks?

U?: They look like people.

TM: Oops. Now what did you guys do here? Hang on a second. This is Unkar Rapid, the view upstream.

WH: Yeah, and if I'm remembering the narrative I reread the other day, I think Colin had said we could get by this. There was just no way at the stage of water we were there.

JF: We did walk a considerable distance.

WH: We had to hike way the hell up the hill and around it.

TM: Correct. Had to walk way back and go around.

JF: Really irked me.

WH: Jack might've tried to rock climb along that cliff but not me. [laughs]

DF: That's Wes.

JF: Yeah. I was scared to death.

WH: I don't know how he ever got me into that kind of position.

NB: Oh, that's a nice picture of camp.

WH: This is probably our Tanner camp, huh?

JF: That's what I would think. You can see the tin cans being opened up.

TM: Oh, right. Your cache, your cache cans. Well done.

NB: Wes, what's that orange thing on your Kelty pack?

WH: What's that?

NB: What's that orange circle on your Kelty pack?

JF: I think it was a little heart that you gave him. Every time I was behind him, hummingbirds would come up and try to go to it.

NB: It does look like a heart but I don't remember that.

WH: Too cold.

TM: Okay, so there's a picture of a naked man draped across a air mattress in the water. Legs are thrashing around. Water's flying up behind him. It would appear here is that you guys considered actually crossing the river.

JF: Yeah, that was all his idea. [laughter] We had to lug those air mattresses hundreds of miles.

WH: So we gave it a shot but it was too cold.

U?: What did you do with your packs?

TM: Okay. So the concept was that you guys were thinking you could exit through Nankoweap?

WH: Yeah. But whether it was the cold water or burnout or uncertainty about the North Rim route I'm not sure.

U?: You would have had to deal with your packs.

WH: Oh sure.

NB: Did you ever sleep on that air mattress?

JF: No.

WH: I don't think so. [laughter] We didn't dare risk catclaw punctures.

NB: I hear you. That's why I'm asking this question...

JF: Oh gosh. Never thought of that.

U?: ...cause I'm pretty sure I know the answer. [laughter]

JF: Cause if we went across, we'd have to put our pack on that wrapped in plastic and then swim it across.

NB: Good decision.

WH: This was at Tanner Rapid, I remember well. This little guy decided I wasn't so bad after all. Good perch for nailing flies. I think that's a fly on my toe.

JF: That is.

WH: He's about ready to get it. The lizard was a lot pleasanter company than the flies.

TM: You're trying to warm up after swimming in the river.

U?: Which temple was that?

TM: It was Comanche Point.

NB: Okay.

RB: So what's this?

TM: This structure is mostly gone now, but there was some mining activity in this area in the late 1800s. The Palisades area.

WH: How far upstream from Tanner is this?

TM: You are probably three or four miles upstream of Tanner.

U?: That must be a mine.

U?: Oh yeah, that really is.

WH: We didn't have any trouble starting our fire that night.

JF: I wonder why I'm carrying my camera, cause it didn't work.

U?: I think you took Wes's camera to carry.

U?: Oh, well then who's taking this photo then?

JF: I was so disappointed.

NB: We're very scientific. We're very observant.

TM: So now you're doing the up-climb up onto the Tonto top now to walk up to the LCR. That downstream view is of Lava-Chuar rapid and the river heading off to the south there back toward Tanner out of sight. Gorgeous. Gorgeous pictures. Chuar Butte upstream past the Hopi salt mine.

RB: The Hopi salt mines, is that where the Native Americans got their salt?

JF: Were they near Beamer's cabin?

TM: It's a ways downstream from there down.

JF: Downstream from Beamer's?

TM: Yes.

JF: Oh. I never knew where it was. There's Georgia.

TM: This is a picture that indeed is a triple rig down there. How about that. No vegetation. That's the island below Crash Canyon.

JF: Is that all full of vegetation now?

TM: Yeah.

WH: What's the tributary?

TM: Crash Canyon, it's coming out across on the other side of the river. It's made this delta there.

JF: Wes carried this the whole route hoping he would sleep comfortably, but you can see the springs came out of his mattress. [laughter] Isn't that the wrecked plane, that crashed plane?

WH: Yeah. Two planes crashed into each other over the eastern canyon in 1955 or -6, I think it was. They took out most of the bones and personal effects, but they left all kinds of fragments of the aircraft all over the place.

U?: Must have been a lot of them.

TM: This is on river right. I've asked people about this. Was there bits of the airplane debris on river right? And you guys' is the first picture I've actually seen of this certainty.

WH: In my terminology, this is the left bank.

TM: You're exactly right. You're exactly right. I'm exactly wrong cause we're on the east side of the river here and here is clear a photograph of aircraft debris. There's twisted aluminum.

WH: We could see across the river there's a whole lot more on the right bank.

TM: You bet. You bet.

WH: That's where most of the debris landed.

TM: But what this does show is that debris from this accident actually crossed the river and landed on both sides.

WH: Yup.

RB: Must've been a heck of a wreck.

TM: And now you're at the Little Colorado River and its mud, mud, muddy. That's upstream view.

JF: There's his little spot.

WH: That Beamer's?

TM: That's Beamer's cabin.

WH: Did we stay there Jack?

JF: Yeah, we stayed at the confluence. We just slept on that little ledge next to it. And there was some stuff left inside, too, as I remember.

TM: Beamer was a prospector. There was a Native American ruin here and he pulled all the rocks and made a little cabin. There was a lot of stuff there.

NB: He ruined the ruin and made a cabin.

JF: Is this the point that the Navajo want to put a tram or something down?

TM: No, but if we back up a bit...

U?: The Esplanade?

TM: ...I could show you. Back up. That's it. Go forward. So from that center skyline point coming directly at us is the route of the tramway.

WH: To the confluence.

TM: Correct.

U?: Are they doing it?

TM: It hasn't passed as far as yesterday. I checked my email yesterday. The legislation has not been introduced to...

RB: They want to put a tramway across the river?

JF: They'd have to put a huge thing, pylon or something to bring people down?

WH: Right. But you got to have a Congressman to introduce it.

TM: No, this is Navajo tribal nation.

WH: Ooh. Uh-oh.

JF: Isn't this their land?

TM: It is their land. But the locals who live up on the rim and run cattle and sheep up there, the traditionalist, they don't want it. And they're trying to fight it very hard.

NB: So they're fighting amongst themselves.

TM: That's exactly what it'll do. Ah, there's the Sipapu.

JF: But what I found peculiar about that, if you take that travertine stuff and drop it in the water, which is up on top, it all bubbles. I dunno what it is. Yeah, if you take a piece of that and drop it into the pit, which is, you know, it's a pretty big pit.

U?: It's not like a hot spring.

JF: And it had little fetishes of tied up hummingbirds and stuff like that inside.

TM: Yeah. This is sacred ground.

RB: That doesn't look like fun.

JF: It was really miserable.

WH: Is that Jack or me? I can't see.

U?: That's Jack. You see the red headband.

WH: Oh, he's bending over, I see. Yeah. Good old catclaw.

TM: What's happening there?

WH: Sooner or later we decided to swim the Little Colorado.

TM: On your attempt to wade or swim. Might have got deep enough where you actually had to...

JF: We had to swim but then you got ground. Sand silt.

TM: So hang on a second, I'm looking here now. It looks like you're on your air mattress with your pack on your back. Is that right?

JF: Yeah.

WH: Pack's in a big plastic garbage bag or something.

TM: All right. Great shot.

WH: I did it with half my kit first, so I had to go back and make a second run.

JF: I was not that foolish. [laughter]

RB: Once was enough?

JF: Once was enough. [laughter]

U?: I don't see any bag around.

JF: Inside. Inside.

TM: Okay. And so how did that work out for you? You've got your pack and inside your pack is your gear wrapped in plastic. Did that work out okay?

WH: Oh yeah. Barely anything got wet. Reading my narrative last week, I noticed that even the Kelty side pockets, which were exposed to the water, did not leak. The zippers were tight. But this the kind of stuff we were worried about crossing the river. We didn't want to get swept into something like that trying to carry our packs across.

JF: There's concrete here.

WH: Washing day...oh my god. [laughs]

TM: This is spring here at the Hopi Salt Trail canyon and it looks like you guys are taking a bath.

WH: This is where your hair went to concrete?

JF: Yep. Turned to concrete. [laughter]

WH: [laugh] Getting pretty long there, too.

JF: Oh, isn't that a delightful picture.

WH: I guess we're climbing out the Little Colorado now.

TM: You are. This is an upstream view. Actually at the top of the Redwall now looking east into the Little Colorado River gorge. Great shot.

WH: That's what I was worried about. We'd have to hike all the way to Cameron [laugh] in the canyon. We couldn't find a way out cause we did not have a topo map of the Little Colorado not having planned to go out that way.

JF: But there is a large slab about like that and has a demarcation on it. It showed where the trail starts. It's an old petroglyph.

TM: Did you see the cairns here? There would've been two large cairns. That's your route out that you would've walked past here. There's quite the mythology going on right there.

WH: I don't remember.

JF: Just remember that it's one side.

TM: You guys did some excellent route finding to work your way out the Salt Trail with no map. Well done. Picture of Wes on the rim. The view is to the south.

U?: [laugh] That's a heroic shot. Perfect ending.

WH: That's the top of the Salt Trail.

TM: Top of Salt Trail. Great journey.

JF: I sat there with our oldest daughter and ate a Hershey bar.

WH: Look at how unburdened we are relatively now.

JF: Yeah.

WH: You know, you see people on the John Muir Trail going two nights or something over here and Devils Postpile and they're carrying twice that much.

TM: The ultralight people are carrying half that much, to their defense.

U?: Oh wow.

NB: I bet they were surprised to see you walking through.

WH: They had a broken down hogan is where we spent the first night on the plateau.

NB: Oh man. How did you feel finally then about getting up that? Mixed feelings, I bet.

JF: Angry. We still had 25 miles to go. [laughter]

TM: You guys were in the middle of nowhere with a long walk in front of you.

JF: With no...those roads. You don't know what road to take.

WH: I nonetheless knew east from west.

JF: Yeah.

RB: Did you have a compass?

WH: Probably not, but I know where the sun comes up.

JF: We had a signal mirror. [laughter]

U?: Jack, every time we see you, you don't have your boots on. [laughs]

WH: Cause he was always fixing them. [laughs]

JF: No point.

WH: They didn't even have duct tape in those days.

TM: So what are you doing here?

WH: Hammering nails back into his sole.

JF: Yeah. I think that's exactly what I'm doing.

NB: Oh that is his boots.

JF: I really wore them out.

WH: I wore mine out, too. Reading the narrative, my soles were nearly off and the sides of the boots were wearing through and all that. It's tough hiking on that kind of rocks.

U?: You know, compare those boots to the kind of boots we wear today.

U?: Yeah. Yeah.

U?: There's no comparison.

TM: A great shot of those almost look like steel toe boots.

WH: Are those yours or mine, Jack?

JF: I think that they're yours. Mine were army boots and they're a little bit more broad in the toe.

NB: Yeah, but these look different than the ones Wes had in the previous picture.

JF: Well, they could be mine.

NB: But what do I know? [laughs]

JF: I have a pair of new boots that I must say are really nice.

WH: The jeans have been a bit frayed too. [laughs]

JF: Yeah.

WH: [laughter] Welcome to Flagstaff.

U?: It did snow.

JF: See there's our tube tent.

U?: Yeah, you needed it.

U?: Yeah. The left tube tent seems a little more compacted. [laughs]

TM: Camping in the forest in the snow. There's probably three or four inches of snow there. Yeah, brr.

U?: That's Jack on the right.

WH: And now to the highway. Nobody would pick us up. They were all creeping along at 20 miles an hour with chains on and they were not interested...

JF: We flagged a bus.

WH: ...in picking up a couple of hippy-ish vagabonds.

JF: Look how handsome he looks.

TM: Was this the start of the trip?

WH: Nope. The end.

TM: You look a little clean.

WH: This is probably a photo by Nancy as I straggled back into Berkeley.

JF: In Berkeley.

WH: Think that's Hilgard?

NB: It looked like it might be. You probably went outside. It looks like you have a clean t-shirt on.

U?: Very clean white t-shirt.

WH: Well, I wouldn't have had a chance to get a new one. Probably washed it in the river and this was my backup. Anyway, that was the end.

TM: This is the I survived and I'm alive shot. It looks great.

U?: Maybe it was the before shot.

NB: Oh my gosh. Look at that.

TM: Nancy she has a pack. She's at the top of the Bright Angel Trail.

U?: That must be cause you weren't there at the end.

NB: No.

TM: In the snow.

U?: This is the Bright Angel.

U?: This isn't later when you went back?

NB: No, I didn't go back down there.

WH: We met Emery Kolb who's shop was right at the top of the trail. And as we learned years later, Judy and I worked many seasons at Katmai, and the very first explorations of Katmai, Emery Kolb and Julia Stone were members of the expeditions.

TM: I wasn't aware of that.

WH: 1917 to 1919.

JYF: He took photos.

JF: Emery, with his brother, they went many different places.

WH: Yeah.

TM: Did you go visit with Emery as you were doing your thru-hike when you hiked up to the rim?

WH: I don't know. I don't recall.

JF: It was either before we left or after we got back or during our break.

TM: What did he think about what you were doing?

WH: I don't think I talked to him. Jack would have been the social...

JF: Cause he was a photographer and he would go down...as I remember...he would tie himself up with a rope and his brother would take him in the middle of a rapid. He'd be floating in the rapids and his brother would photograph him. So we're talking about that. As I remember he was just happy to do what he was doing and he didn't think much either one way or the other.

WH: That's all.

[hands clapping]

TM: That's an incredible series of photographs. You guys could take this on a speaking tour and the young kids would just be all over this.

WH: I've done all the speaking I ever want to. [laughter]

TM: Oh my gosh. So looking back now, almost 50 years, what are your thoughts about this journey now? Did this journey change you in any way? Was it just another day in a wonderful life you were living or was it instrumental or pivotal in any way in the rest of your journey?

JF: Well, for me it was because I found another human being that was like a brother in a way. Same adventurer. Had done more than I had done, but it substantiated who I wanted to be. I had been an engineer working in a drafting office designing duct work. The people I worked with were wonderful, but I just quit that work to be who I wanted to be. It was such a spectacular thing to do. I mean, if you look at my artwork today, it is radically different than virtually any other photographer that I know. It's goofy.

WH: Very heavy outdoor wilderness influence.

JF: It's the influence of that that did it. And it led me to help Diane raise our children and both of our children are enmeshed in nature and help, particularly water. So it's a legacy to the family. Caused just to go live in East Africa and camp out for three months a short while after that. I've been all over biking and hiking and stuff. So it really was a substantiation of who I thought I was.

TM: And Wes, you?

WH: It was a great experience. I always thought I'd go back and climb some of those temples and explore other parts of the canyon but never really did cause this was a hard act to follow. I'd already made the transition from the library to the outdoors a couple years before that. So this wasn't all that formative. It was probably in a sense an affirmation that, you know, we can take on a tough outdoor project like this and safely bring it to fruition and enjoy the aesthetics of it in the meantime. But I think another aspect of it was as you know, I know pretty much all the stratigraphy of the Grand Canyon, the lithology of the sandstones and shales, but I gotta get serious and go back to graduate school so I can really do independent research beyond that level. No doubt that experience helped trigger me to go forward in that respect.

TM: So trying to kind of encapsule that. It sounded like both of you received a lot of affirmation that you could do what you wanted to do. I mean, cause Jack, you were saying you were really having a hard time figuring out what you wanted to do and this kind of said, you can do whatever you want.

JF: That's very true. I'm not stretching the type of art that I do, but it provided me with the, I don't even know if the word is freedom. Just to work on what I work on and do anything I want to do. The only principles that guided me were Abraham Lincoln "malice toward none" or something like that. I've always had an interest since then to just be who I want to be. And then when I get to be older, which I'm getting close to being old, I can look at my life and compare it with what has been in novels, you know, Moby Dick or something, and I can see if I led a good life. But to have that freedom when you're 28/29 years old and know it succinctly, I think is a very valuable thing.

TM: Thank you because oftentimes I'll end these interviews saying, 50 years from now, someone's going to find a transcript of this interview, what do you want to tell them? And I think you just did.

JF: I have no idea.

TM: You know it's seven o'clock. We've been at this now for three hours. How about we break for dinner and then we'll watch the film. That sound good?

NB: Sounds great.

TM: I wanted to thank you all for an incredible interview. It's the 30th of July, 2016. This is Livermore, California. We're at the wonderful home of Nancy and Roger Brown, talking with Wes Hildreth and Jack Fulton about their journey in 1968 hiking in Grand Canyon as part of the Grand Canyon Historical Society Oral History program. Thank you very much.