

Transcription: Chuck Zemach Grand Canyon Historical Society Oral History

Interviewee: Chuck Zemach (CZ)
Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)
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TM: Today is January 13, 2015, and with me on the phone today is Charles "Chuck" Zemach. We're interviewing Chuck today about his experiences in Grand Canyon. Chuck, what year were you born?

CZ: I was born 1930, September 15th. That makes me 84 currently.

TM: Okay, where were you born?

CZ: I was born in Los Angeles, and my family moved to New York City when I was three years old and then I grew up there. Do you want me to continue with this?

TM: Yea. What did your parents do?

CZ: Well, my parents, they both came from Russia. They were in a theatrical troupe, which was founded by my father in Moscow in the turbulent times during the Bolshevik Revolution. And they, then in the 1920s, had permission from the Soviet government to tour throughout Europe, and when they got to Paris, finally, they decided not to go back. And then they eventually made their way to America.

TM: Wow.

CZ: I remember one story told by my mother. My father had written to a friend in Moscow, this was in 1926, and he asked them, "How are things going in Russia?" and would the friend advise them to return? And the friend wrote back in a letter, "If you think it's a good idea to go to hell to light a cigarette, then, by all means, come back."

TM: Wow.

CZ: So, those were turbulent times. Actually, my father spent some time in jail for being... This was a Hebrew theater group and emphasizing the Hebrew language, and that wasn't politically correct in the early days of the Soviet regime. And, he eventually got out and then made his way to America.

TM: So you grew up in New York City, then?

CZ: I grew up in New York City and I went to high school there. I was in Stuyvesant high school and after that I went to college. Let's see, went to college in 1947, which was Harvard College, so then I was living in Cambridge, Mass. for a while, and I never came back to New York.

TM: Ok. Did you any outing activities away from the city when you were growing up?

CZ: Well, yes. I mean, on the one hand, you could say that New York City is a pretty urban area and one can wonder whether one has any wilderness experiences or natural environment experiences. But, in fact, all the people who could, would go off for a vacation of some sort. I went to summer camp in the Catskills in lower New York and I also, for some reason, I had asthma when I was a child, and I was parked on a farm in the Catskill Mountains for several years, in 1935 or 6, and so forth. So, the Catskill's are pretty tame compared to western mountains. There's rolling hills and beautiful country and I had a little buddy of my own age, we were about 6 or 7 at the time, 5 or 6, and we used to run around and we just enjoyed the wild countryside. It wasn't wild, but it was countryside. We had a favorite sport, we would go tree climbing. And, in the area around the farmhouse where we lived, we knew all the trees that were climbable, and we'd make a round of them and climb them. And then, later on during high school, my father died when I was 9, so 1939, so I was living with my mother after that, and we would go to Lake Placid for summers. She would leave me at Lake Placid when she would have to return home for work. And, this was in the summer, and there's Lake Placid, and Mirror Lake, and canoeing, and the Adirondack Mountains, and I remember once climbing Mt. McIntyre, which is the second highest mountain in New York State, and I can still remember the experience. This was a one day trip, and Mt. McIntyre is 5,112 feet high, not too much by western standards, but it was pretty good for a kid.

TM: Did you swim? Did you learn how to swim there on Lake Placid?

CZ: I learned how to swim in this summer camp and I certainly spent an awful lot of time in the water. The daily activity was going to Mirror Lake, it was a better lake for swimming, and we'd swim there almost every day. And then there was a canoe in this motel that we were staying in on Lake Placid, so I did a lot of canoeing on the lake.

TM: Nice. So, could I say that water was not something to fear, but water was fun?

CZ: Yeah, water was fun.

TM: Ok

CZ: And, even from the urban depths of New York City, one gets out into the Adirondacks, that's beautiful country. So, I learned a little bit about that. And then, later on, we moved, after school, eventually, I had a job in the University of California, Berkeley, in the physics department.

TM: Ok, so slow down a minute. Back up. You went to college in 1947, which was before you got to California, is that right?

CZ: That's right. '47 to '51 for college.

TM: What did you study?

CZ: I spent a year bumming around Europe. I got a college fellowship, a so called travelling fellowship, which I spent on my own in Europe, visiting as many countries as I could, including some of north Africa.

TM: What year was that?

CZ: That was '51 to '52.

TM: Ok.

CZ: Summer of '51 to summer of '52.

TM: What was your degree in? Your undergrad?

CZ: I majored in physics and then I got a PhD at Harvard in theoretical physics. I was in particle physics.

TM: Ok

CZ: And, just to continue the biography, I spent what was a year, '56, '57, maybe two years at the University of Pennsylvania as an instructor, in those days they still had that lowly rank. After that, I spent a summer between those two years in California. I had driven out there with a friend of mine from Cambridge. And, this friend had actually done his undergraduate training at Cal Tech and he really knew the west. So we drove across the country and he introduced me to all of, well not all, but many of the western national parks. So, that was my introduction to the west. It was a pretty good one. I sort of had a private guide to all sorts of national parks. I remember, in particular, Yosemite, and the Tetons. My friend was a mountain climber and he had climbed the Grand Teton and he talked to me about that. He gave me a climbing lesson once. I never followed that up too far.

TM: I'm curious to go back to the year that you spent in Europe, all the way down to northern Africa. Traveling on your own, I'm assuming you stayed in hostels? Or, what was, back in the early '50s?

CZ: Oh, things were cheaper in those days.

TM: Ok

CZ: I had a \$2,500 scholarship.

TM: Ok

CZ: It was called a Shaw travelling fellowship, from Harvard College, because I did pretty well at Harvard. So, \$2,500, and I spent a year on that, and that wasn't too bad. I concentrated on the cheap hotels.

TM: Ok

CZ: And there were a lot of cheap, rundown hotels available. And before I had done that, I had written to the consulates of all the countries that I thought of visiting, which was most of Western Europe, but I had got as far as Turkey and Greece. They were all interested in American tourism at that time, so they would get lists of hotels, so I could pick out the cheapest one. I remember I had a principle, or a goal, that I could

spend no more than one dollar a night for a hotel and not more than one dollar a meal for a restaurant. And, some countries were a little more expensive and some for a little less. Those were in the days when there was a flourishing black market in American money. For example, in Austria, oh gosh, I think, maybe I shouldn't have picked that example. Something like, the official rate was 15 shillings to a dollar and then the black market rate was 26 shillings to a dollar. And you had people... I bought a guide book in America, which recommended a bank in New York City which would sell money, so I bought a lot of money. I remember French francs were 300, I think, to a dollar, but the black market rate was 500. I'm not sure I'm accurate about those numbers, but that's how it goes.

TM: What did you take away from that year travelling?

CZ: What did I take away? Well, I spent a very intense amount of time trying to learn languages.

TM: Ok

CZ: The language I had taken up in college was German. That had given me an excellent reading ability in German. I remember I had something like 4,000 word cards, so I had a vocabulary of at least 4,000 words. Then I got to Germany and I found that I couldn't speak the common words. For example, I bought a motorcycle. Well, if you buy a motorcycle, then there are a lot of words about travelling like, tires, and brakes, and carburetor, and steering wheel, and seats, and, and gas stations, and highways, and I didn't know any of those words, but I learned them pretty quickly. By the time I was finished, I could, on short conversations, pass myself off as German.

TM: Nice.

CZ: And then I spent another intense amount of time studying Italian and French.

TM: Ok

CZ: And in later years, I spent a number of years in Italy, so I got to be pretty good at speaking Italian and sort of halfway good at speaking French, and quarter way at Spanish. I remember, I did make a point of learning how to count to 100 in every country's language, in the language of each country that I visited. So, I don't remember, I can't summarize, but most of Western Europe and also, but extending to Austria, which was then occupied by the French, the Americans, the British, and the Russians. That was before the peace agreement for Austria, and Yugoslavia, and Greece, and Turkey. And then Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, which is where I had practice speaking French. So, I could sort of mumble along in French, I never got terribly good at that.

TM: So, how did that experience in Europe, now it's 1955-ish and you're in California. You're touring, you're in Yosemite, the Tetons, did you see any similarities there, or was it just, 'this is the American west and I've never seen anything like it.' And, I guess I'm trying to see if there's a tie over here, knowing that now you live in Santa Fe, which I should have mentioned at the start of this interview. So, it does seem as though, eventually, having travelled a good chunk of the world here, you've settled in the American west.

CZ: Yes, well, the Rockies and the Sierra's are beautiful mountains. There's nothing to beat the Alps, though. I had a motorcycle and I spent a lot of time just driving backwards and forwards on all the small Austrian roads up the Austrian Alps and taking all the cable cars up the tops of the mountains, and things

like that. And, that's pretty gorgeous stuff. The Tetons are the closest thing that comes to looking like Alps in this country.

TM: Yea. And so, to the Tetons, that was, and Yosemite, your first introduction. What year was that? Was that 1955?

CZ: That would be, let's see. When did he come? '56. It was '56 when my friend and I took this automobile drive. We spent, this is after we both spent a year as post-docs at MIT, and then we spent a summer visiting the Stanford physics department. We drove out there and then I flew back. That was '56.

TM: And did you see the Grand Canyon on that national parks tour?

CZ: We passed by the north rim of the Grand Canyon and we looked out at it, and I think we hiked a little bit down, that was my first view of the Grand Canyon, but a day or so, not much.

TM: Ok. From the north rim?

CZ: Yes, from the north rim.

TM: Ok, 1956. And so then where did you go?

CZ: You mean in this car trip across the country?

TM: No, I'm sort of thinking, you've done your post-doc at MIT in '55.

CZ: Alright. Then I had a job at, maybe it was only one year, at the University of Pennsylvania. That's right. It was one year the University of Pennsylvania, but previous to that year, I had spent the summer driving out into the west and seeing California. I was just, I had fell in love with the west. I was determined not to stay in dismal Philadelphia too long. And then I got a post-doc at the University of California, Berkeley, in theoretical physics.

TM: Ok

CZ: So, in a way, that was one of the first times that I sort of had tenure at a job or a promise of tenure, and I walked away from it because I wanted something better. They wanted to keep me at the University of Pennsylvania, so, basically, they offered me the assistant professorship with pretty much a promise of eventual associate and full professorship there, but I turned that down in order to get a post-doc at UC Berkeley because I decided that Berkeley was really the land of enchantment.

TM: Was it Berkeley or was it the school because of theoretical physics?

CZ: It was all of it.

TM: There was a lot going on in Berkeley at the time.

CZ: Yes, I was in love with California at that time. And then I got married about the same time that I arrived, shortly after I arrived California.

TM: Where did you meet Mary, your wife?

CZ: In Philadelphia.

TM: Ok

CZ: We met in Philadelphia toward the end of May or so of '57, and then I went off to my job and she followed me a few months later, and then we got married in California.

TM: Nice.

CZ: So our married life begins in California.

TM: And that would be 1958-ish.

CZ: Yes, yes. '58 and thereabouts. And, so, of course, we had a car and we did a lot of travelling.

TM: What was Mary doing in Philadelphia at the time?

CZ: She was, she had a job as a technician in a medical lab, doing medical experiments.

TM: Ok

CZ: She was actually a vivisectionist. They did experiments on mice, and rats and, small animals. So, they were studying. What were you studying again? Mice and dogs. She got to be pretty good as an animal surgeon. And then when we came out to Berkeley, she then found a job in the Donnor laboratory over the University of California, Berkeley, which did medical research, and she worked on how the liver works as studied in dogs.

TM: Ok. How long did you guys end up staying there in Berkeley?

CZ: How long? We stayed there thirteen years and we left. When did we leave now? We left in the summer of 1970.

TM: Ok

CZ: By that time I was a full professor at Berkeley and I was pretty well established there, and, in the beginning, I thought that that was just wonderful. But then along 19, when was it, 1960, it was the Goldwater-Johnson election, when did that take place? I think 1968. And then there was this student revolution at the university, which convulsed the university, and the town, and eventually spread to other universities across the country. And, now that's a long subject in itself that I don't think is an appropriate topic.

TM: Yea, that's a whole nother interview.

CZ: That's a whole other topic. But, there was a great deal of unpleasantness. All the sort of hippies and drug addicts, and so forth, across the country got the word that Berkeley was the place to be. They started infesting it, Berkeley became the bad check cashing capital of the United States, and there was a general decline in the whole quality of life.

TM: In those thirteen years that you were at Berkeley, did you spend time in the Sierras?

CZ: Very often. We would often go to Yosemite and do hiking and things. The closest connection I got to river running is that we once spent a summer at the Jenny Lake campground at the Teton national park. The Jenny Lake campground doesn't exist anymore. They closed it. They decided it was imposing on the environment. But, Jenny Lake is a beautiful place. We spent time there. We met some people from Salt Lake City, one of whom had bought, he was something of an entrepreneur, he had bought fifty fold boats from a Japanese supplier, and he was selling them. So we bought two \$50 fold boats from him. Do you know what a fold boat is?

TM: Yes, absolutely.

CZ: It sort of had a wooden frame, and then you had a canvas cover over it, and everything folded down into a compact suitcase of about thirty pounds.

TM: And you bought two of these?

CZ: But we bought two of these because by that time we had two children.

TM: And what year was this?

CZ: This was... Well, I can tell you if I look at... I've got this list of my river trips, and if I look back at that... That was in 1967.

TM: Ok. And so in '67 you had a lot of canoeing experience. And a fold boat...

CZ: The fold boat is something entirely different of course.

TM: Right

CZ: It's a one person boat.

TM: Not too dissimilar.

CZ: In 1967, I met these friendly people from Salt Lake City, and I went down the Snake River past the Tetons, and he had his own fold boat. That was my first sort of...

TM: Did Mary have any canoeing or swimming experience as a child?

CZ: Yes, she did, she was always an outdoor person. She was born and grew up in Honolulu, Hawaii and her father was a botany professor. And, her father always took his students and some members of the family on botany collecting trips on weekends. So she did a lot of hiking and so forth. And, I don't know if

she ever had any canoeing experience in Hawaii, probably not, but she had a lot of hiking. She used to go hiking. She would hike barefoot because she didn't start wearing shoes 'til she got to high school, actually. A lot of kids in Hawaii were like that.

TM: And did she swim?

CZ: Oh, she corrected me. She says she didn't start wearing shoes 'til the eighth grade.

TM: Ok. Ok, and did she swim in the ocean a lot?

CZ: Oh yes, yes. There was a lot of ocean swimming. Their favorite beach was Makapu'u, which had enormous waves.

TM: Wow

CZ: In Hawaii. The Waikiki beach was considered pretty tame by those people.

TM: Ok, so you bought these two fold boats, you went down the Snake River by the Tetons there in '67. And then where did you go from there with those boats?

CZ: Well, we had them in, brought them back to California. And then we did them in a number of lakes. There are various lakes around California. And we once spent the summer in Colorado at Aspen, and from Aspen there's some nice lakes. I forget exactly what they were called. Twin Lakes, or something like that, and we took the boat on them. But, the idea of river running did not really occur to us seriously until then. It was true that when we were, well, after we left California, we moved to Washington, D.C., and then there were a couple of canoeing experiences. My son joined the Boy Scouts, a local Boy Scout group, which was run by a leader that believed that his group should take some sort of wilderness trip every weekend, and we more or less did that. And one of them was a trip down to Cacapon River, which you may not have heard of.

TM: No

CZ: In West Virginia and we had canoes for that. Now, my oldest son, Art, and I went down to Cacapon, and that was about a two or three day trip. And that had, oh I would say, class two and an occasional class three rapid.

TM: And did you take the fold boats for that?

CZ: No, we had the canoes for that. Which we had rented from somewhere.

TM: Ok. And what were you doing in D.C. then?

CZ: I was, first of all in the... Well, you see, I had decided that I was fed up with Berkeley. I decided to quit. That was the second time I had tenure and I walked away from it. And, at the same time, I spent a year at the Stanford physics department, which had a couple of physicists I was friendly with. They were Sid Drell [Sidney D. Drell] and, well he was the main one. And he was on the president's scientific advisory commission committee, at the time. He was connected with the Washington scene. And he persuaded. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do at that time, so he told me that the U.S. government was about to

commence the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks with the Soviet Union. And that actually began to take place in late 1969. And I joined the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, which was an agency housed in the State Department building, under Sid Drell's advice and recommendation. And I was involved in the SALT negotiations for the next number of years, until 1976. So, I was in Washington from '70 to '76, and I was working first in the Arms Control Agency and then I graduated to the State Department. I was on the policy planning staff of the State Department, which is sort of the elite group in the State Department. That was a very enjoyable experience.

TM: What years were you working there?

CZ: That was... The whole period was from 1970 to '76, it was the last two years in the State Department. This was under Kissinger and Nixon, and we lived through Watergate, and then the coming of President Ford as the successor to Nixon. And these were the years that the SALT 1 negotiations were concluded and then the SALT 2 period negotiations were continued. And then I left in 1976 and I came to Los Alamos to work at the Los Alamos laboratory. By that time, that was a fascinating experience. I was a bit disenchanted with good old Washington politics by that time. I wanted to get back. So I came back to physics. And I had had an offer some years earlier from the Los Alamos laboratory.

TM: Can you just recap for me the SALT 1 and SALT 2?

CZ: Well, SALT 1 consisted of two agreements. First of all, there's the Anti-Ballistic Missile... Let's see what they were called, now. It was the ABM Treaty. The ABM. The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which I would call a good treaty. Which settled the question of whether the two rivals, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., would continue building anti-ballistic missile facilities to counter the nuclear ballistic missiles. There's an awful lot of lore connected with all of that. And then, along with that, was the so-called interim agreement on offensive missiles, which was a temporary sort of thing with a promise that we would get together after the SALT 1 agreements were signed to have a definitive set of limitations on offensive nuclear ballistic missiles and the nuclear weapons. And there were three components to that. There were the land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, the submarine-based ballistic missiles, and there were the bombs carried by intercontinental bombers. And, so, SALT 1 came to what was a more or less successful, but incompletely successful end in 1972, the agreements were signed, and, oh, about August of '72. And then the SALT 2 process began after that, and that wasn't completed until the Ford administration was finished and the Carter administration. President Carter had come in and he completed, under his administration, the SALT 2 agreements were eventually solved and signed. And, on the one hand, they were fairly successful in several ways. They did set limits on both sides to the arms race, as it was called. On the other hand, there are all sorts of ups and downs and blunders on our side and on the Soviet side. And they weren't quite as good as they could have been, from the point of view of a mid-level technician. That was the years when Kissinger was running U.S. arm policy.

TM: Ok. So, there's a whole nother interview right there.

CZ: Oh, yes.

TM: Yea, yea. So, in this time period, from leaving Berkeley in 1970 and then working through, well, into the Carter administration in '76-ish.

CZ: I left before the Carter administration. I left in September of 1976. Carter was elected in '76 and took office in '77.

TM: I'm assuming, in that six-year period, a lot of international travel, negotiations.

CZ: Yes, I was on the SALT delegation in, first of all, in Helsinki, and quite a bit of time in Geneva, where most of the negotiations took place. And there was one six-month period when I had my family with me. We had three children by that time. And, so that was an interesting time. And we would go skiing on the weekends. Lots of skiing in France, from Geneva. It was a nice area for skiing. And then we had some... We traveled a lot around Switzerland. We and our kids got a good dose of the Swiss mountains and Swiss, well, mostly French, skiing.

TM: I'm assuming, correct me out here, please, that in that six-year period, 1970, 1976, you weren't doing a lot of fold boat work, not a lot of canoeing or river running. More international.

CZ: In those days, let's see. In Washington, what did we have? Well, we did this... My oldest son, Art, and I did this canoe trip on the Cacapon. My wife, on the other hand, was running a Girl Scout troop, and she organized quite an expedition. She got her Girl Scout troop together, and the parents cooperated, and she had rented a bus and a bus driver. And the bus made it, during the summer, the bus, during the school vacations, the bus made a trip out west. And, let's see, there were 47 teenage girl scouts...

TM: 47?

CZ: Girls scouts, yes, on this bus.

TM: That's huge! That's a lot of kids.

CZ: This is a three-week camping trip. Where are you? You did get as far as the... Alright, she says Washington, D.C. to Ten Sleep, Wyoming and back, seeing a lot of the sites. Did you get to the Tetons? I think you did. Oh yes, the Girl Scouts had also the restrictive, protected regulations, so they had to stay at approved campgrounds, and approved churches, and a synagogue, state parks, national parks, but they had a three-week outing. And also, while she was running this Girl Scout troop, they too rented canoes. And you had outings from Washington, D.C. with canoes, so we did have that experience.

TM: Ok. So, still doing, actually, quite a bit of outings, either in the Alps or, you know, canoeing and exploring.

CZ: Yea. It was always vacation trips while we were working in one way or another.

TM: So, in 1977, in Los Alamos?

CZ: We came to Los Alamos in the end of August, 1976 and so we had our fold boats. And, so, I had thought of doing rivers with the fold boats. We did spend this summer in Aspen, Colorado, and that's near the Roaring Fork River, which is quite a kayaking stream. I remember talking to some kayaker and telling him about these fold boats, and he sort of threw up his hands, and he said, "What you want to do is go to some of these kayak training sessions that people visit and that'll open your eyes to what it's like." And I'm very glad we didn't try to use the fold boats down the Roaring Fork River, which is really quite a serious class 3 or 4 river.

TM: So, Los Alamos had a core group of people like James [Stretch] Fretwell, I'm thinking, a number of other people, the Cernicek's, the Masland's, the Yeamens's...

CZ: That's right, you know a number of the leaders.

TM: Well, just their names, but, there was a big push to explore rivers there. Did you land into that group? How did that work?

CZ: Yes, that was... Los Alamos was a hotbed of river running. On the one hand, there was the so-called Explorer Post 20, which had been founded by Fretwell and Bob Emigh, that was another name, and then there was Dave Yeamens, who also was important in Grand Canyon activities later on. And there was a core of maybe half a dozen very active river runners, rafters, or kayakers, or both, and they founded this Explorer Post 20 for high school boys. And, at a certain point, they did admit girls, too. So, currently the post still exists and it's a boys and girls group, and they did river running. And they had some large number of, I think fifteen, let's see, Elan boats, which they bought from, what's the name of this big river company? Oh, I'm having a senior moment. Mary, what was our brand name? The Maravia Company had made these twelve-foot Elan boats. And the explorer post had a fleet of them and every summer, they would do a major trip, so-called, and they had a bus. And, so, the first year, I joined them. The major trip was on the Main Salmon River. So we went off on the bus. That was, that was quite educational for me. That was my first real river, and it was a real river under serious conditions.

TM: That was 1977 then?

CZ: Let me look at my table here. That was 19-. No, the Main Salmon, we did in 1980. Oh, excuse me. That was not my first main river. Something else happened earlier. I had gotten to... We had arrived in Los Alamos at the end of the last half of '76. And then, it was one of these fluke incidents occurred. Well, no. I was already interested in rivers, as I see from my record here. And, I didn't have the fold boats anymore because I stored the fold boats in my backyard, and out in the open, and one day they got stolen.

TM: Oh

CZ: Well, but that wasn't so bad because they weren't appropriate, in any case. They were too flimsy for class III or IV rivers. But I had some neighbor who was active in using inflatable kayaks, and he told me about Sea Eagles. So, the first boat I bought in Los Alamos was a Sea Eagle 300, which was a one-person inflatable kayak made out of this incredibly strong, but not heavy, material. I don't remember what the technical name was for it. And then, in the Sea Eagle, I started joining various active boaters in Los Alamos who were very friendly and took me on and started teaching me what rivers were all about. And, in the beginning, we did the Chama, which is a tributary of the Rio Grande. And then one day, one time, we took an ambitious trip down the Dolores, which is a serious class three, but we did that in 1980. And, I had a Sea Eagle. There was one, there was one raft, and then one canoe, and, I guess, two kayaks.

TM: So did Mary and the kids go with you?

CZ: She didn't. No. I was alone on that trip. But, on the various other trips.

TM: What about the Salmon? When you went up to do the Main Salmon?

CZ: No, no. That was in the days when the explorer post was all boys.

TM: Oh, ok.

CZ: Or men. That was the change. It didn't change until the 1980s.

TM: Did you bring your sons for that?

CZ: Yes. My son, Art was on. He joined the explorer post. And then, so he did that consistently. And, so he was on all their major trips. And that's where he learned boating. Now I learned boating as an associate of him. But, then there is also this incident, in 1970, when was it? 1978. That was an election year, and Senator Pete Domenici was running for re-election, of New Mexico. What this got to do with boating is the following. That the SALT negotiations were in progress, after I had left, and Senator Domenici wanted to build up his status, or his appearance, of awareness of foreign policy and with SALT. And, he formed a SALT advisory group to advise him. And he picked, for the membership of this, a couple of people from Los Alamos who were familiar with the weapons program, and a couple of people from Kirtland Air Force Base who also worked on nuclear weapons, and a professor from the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque called Jay Sorenson, who, he was a political science professor who was also very involved in foreign policy politics. And I got on to this committee. The way I got onto the committee is that Senator Domenici, who is instinctively against SALT, he was against negotiating with the Russians. But, he wanted some credibility in this area, since he was running for senator again. And he had a legislative assistant, whose name I don't quite remember at the moment. But this guy was more broad-minded, he was familiar with activities in Washington and the State Department, with the SALT negotiations. So, he knew about me, even though I left a couple, a year or two earlier. So, he got me onto this committee. So, we were there and we advised Senator Domenici on SALT. Which was an uphill battle because he was always against it. What he wanted the committee to do was tell him why he was against it. And, but trouble was that Sorenson and I did not go along with that. We were for SALT, and the other people were sort of careful and moderate about that. So, he got elected, and then he forgot about the committee. So, that was the end of that. However, I had met Jay Sorenson. He was an active river runner. He had a group of river runner friends in Albuquerque. And, he also had some sort of contact with the Campways rafting company. Campways built a set of very good rafts. They had a twelve-foot rubber raft called a Hopi, then they had a fourteen-foot Miwok, and a sixteen-foot Shoshone. And, Jay had a Shoshone. And, he had done a fair number of rivers. And he had a buddy, a set of buddies, in Albuquerque who were with him. And then I met him, and I told him I was interested in river running. So, he invited me along, and then he gave me a deal. The Campways Company had offered this sort of deal. They were phasing out their particular Hopi model and they offered Jay four of their Hopis for \$600 each. So, I bought one of them. And Jay bought one, and his son bought one, and then there was a fourth one that we sold to my friend at that time, a guy named Pat Blumm, who was a, who had just come to New Mexico from Arizona. And he had founded a river running outfitter company called the Rio Grande Rapid Transit. Yea, I should have mentioned him before. He was another key entity in the formation of my river running development. What had happened was this. Stretch Fretwell was a promoter and a very serious outdoorsy guy. He was a mountain climber and a river runner, and he flew his own private plane. And he had been all over. And he went helicopter skiing in Canada. He was very, a bunch of really outdoorsy people, which he was one of the major ones in Los Alamos. It was a wonderful environment to get interested in the outdoors. Anyway, so another one of his feats was to found the Pilar Mother's Day Races on the Rio Grande. Pilar is a small town on the Rio Grande River at the head of a certain course of Class III to Class IV rapids, which is about, what, about, let me see, oh, about twelve to fifteen miles in length. So it's a short trip. But, he organized the Mother's Day Races. What that meant was that, for the most part rafters, but also kayakers and canoeists, would gather together at Pilar for a weekend of racing. There was a raft race, there was a kayak slalom race, and there was a canoe race. And, this became quite an event in New Mexico. Some of those days, some

of those years, there were 120 rafts which showed up for the raft race. And, so, it's hard to get 120 rafts to launch on this small river at one time, so they had it staggered, and then they counted the times, and so forth.

TM: It turned into quite a big deal.

CZ: It was a big event, it still is. And, at a certain point. Oh, ok, so there's a certain amount of history to river running in New Mexico which you may get out of me.

TM: That may be another interview here. It's our third interview now of side-tracks.

CZ: Ok, yea. There's the question of river running in New Mexico. But, there was, at a certain point, a group of river runners in New Mexico founded, in Albuquerque, founded the Adobe Whitewater Club. Which became, and still is, the whitewater club for all of New Mexico, but with most of its members in Albuquerque, and some others in Los Alamos and Santa Fe, and a few others in other parts of New Mexico. And, at a certain point, the stewardship of the Pilar races was turned over to the Adobe club. Let me see. So I was, oh, I was trying to explain the various ways in which I got introduced to the river. And, there was Stretch Fretwell and there was the explorer post. And then, the first time that I went to watch the Pilar river races I met Pat Blumm, who had just come to New Mexico from a career in advertising in Arkansas, but he decided that what he really wanted to do was run rivers professionally. And he founded this Rio Grande Rapid Transit company which then ran river trips for tourists down the Pilar section of the Rio Grande, and also the Taos Box section, and also on the Chama. And, so I met him very early, and he gave me a lot of advice on river running. And he also used his river runner, his outfitter status to buy me my first big boat, which is the Maravia Williwaw 2, which I got from Maravia at the wholesale price because of Pat's help. And then I bought some other river boats later on. More Sea Eagles, which I got at outfitter price through Pat. So, he did me a lot of favors then, and he showed me something about, we went down rivers together.

TM: Was that, like, '81, '82-ish? Because you'd done the Chama and the Dolores in 1980.

CZ: Yes, in the '80s. Now, you may have heard about Pat Blumm, even though you don't particularly know his, recognize his name. He was the guy who eventually moved his river running outfit back to Arizona, and he was doing the Salt River. And, it was employees of his which blew up the Quartzite rapids. And, I remember, Pat Blumm was a colorful type of entrepreneur. He denied all responsibility for that, but nobody around New Mexico who knew him even believed it. But, and then there were some other people who were caught. And, so that's another story.

TM: And, as you say, Pat was never indicted in any of that activity, but...

CZ: Well, he was certainly under suspicion for that activity. He told people back in New Mexico that he had been polygraphed and he passed the polygraph of the authorities with flying colors. He denied all knowledge of that. So, that was another interesting and colorful aspect to river running around here. I remember, maybe this was not directly due to account of my book biography, but, I remember, I was sitting in my living room listening to the radio one afternoon, and there was a news broadcast. The news broadcast announced that Quartzite Rapid of the Salt River had been blown up by dynamite. And, so there I was, I thought instantly, "God, this must be Pat Blumm!" So I called up the Tonto National Forest River Office, because I wanted them to tell me who was the river rafting outfitter that was involved in this. They refused to give me any information at all. But, in due course, it did turn out that it was his company and it

was one of his guides. And then there was one of his guides, his guide apparently had a friend, who was not a river runner, but was an expert in explosives. And, the guide and the friend hiked into Quartzite Rapid carrying some dynamite. And, they did what, in my opinion, what the forest service should have done many years ago. Is that they converted the Quartzite Rapid, which is really a killer rapid, and people had died on it, into a nice, Class III + rapid. But, the appropriate environmental authorities and the national forest was outraged at this event and so forth. And then there was a trial and a judicial process and so forth. And Pat was not implicated at all in that.

TM: That's right. Let's go back to your boating record, which we kind of left off at the Chama, and the Main Salmon, and the Dolores in 1980. Where did you boat from there?

CZ: Well, I was now buddies with Jay Sorenson and his group of people from Albuquerque, and we had an attitude of doing something every week during the boating season. Every weekend. And, sometimes we would do the Pilar section of the Rio Grande, sometimes we would do the Taos Box. The Taos Box is a Class IV, and, depending on the flow, veering on Class V. That's the best stretch of river running from the Albuquerque and the, close enough to the Albuquerque and Los Alamos areas. And, so I did the Taos Box once with Jay Sorenson on his Shoshone, and he let me do some of the rowing. And, so, I got some flavor for what the Box was like. And then I did the Box all on my own. I took one of my adventurous Los Alamos friends along with me, and we actually succeeded. We did it without, by this time I had the Hopi, and this was one of the high water years. The Box was at, had gone up to 8,000 cubic feet per second, which was enormous for that narrow canyon. And then, so I did it at 8,000. And a week later it was at 7,000. And, I might mention, since I'm including my family in this, my son, who had learned rafting with the explorer post, he then went to work for an outfitter company called Rio Bravo, which was doing river running on the Taos Box. And he used our Hopi. So, that was pretty adventurous. The manager of the Rio Bravo thing, not the owner, but the guy that was actually on the river, first wanted to test out Art's river running abilities by having Art accompany the trip, a commercial trip, with the Rio Bravo. So, he did that, Art did that. And, I was his companion on that trip.

TM: And this was 1981-ish?

CZ: This was, let's see, it was certainly '81-ish. Let me think, it might have been, yea, I think it was about '81. It might have been '80 or '81. Those were high water years. The Box was running about 8,000, and that was a ferocious thing. I remember, I was sitting in front of this Hopi, and I would get completely covered with water, and then I kept turning around and asking Art, "Are you still there?" Well, he was still there. Anyway, he got the job, and then he had a very successful season with Rio Bravo, but he didn't like their management, really. And, so the next year, he switched to Pat Blumm's Rio Grande Rapid Transit and he did the Box for them for several years. He was in high school during this time. And, it was slightly illegal. He was underage for the insurance of the, that the boater outfitters had for their casualty insurance. But, that was alright, nothing, it worked out ok.

TM: Yea. So, you guys had not done Grand Canyon up to this time?

CZ: No, the first time on the Grand Canyon was 1981.

TM: Ok. And how did that trip come together and who was on it?

CZ: Let's see. It worked out like this, there was, and I can mention some names, but you're probably not going to know these names. There was one river runner who I did know, who was on the, whose name

was Jim Fuge, and I had met him the previous year because I had done, with my Sea Eagle, and with the Sorenson group, and with Jim Fuge, I had done Westwater Canyon. Oh yes, and Art was also on that in his Hopi. I did it in the Sea Eagle and Art did it in his Hopi.

TM: This Jim Fuge, is this the Jim that would later fall in Grand Canyon and helivaced out, or is this his father we're talking about? Is his father named Jim?

CZ: I'm talking about a Jim Fuge who was sort of, somewhat young in his twenties in 1979.

TM: That's his son. Ok, got it.

CZ: How does that compare with?

TM: That's the son, sure.

CZ: Yea, ok. So, he was an active river runner, and he... So, one day I got a phone call from another guy named Jim Beard, who was living in Colorado at that time, and who I had not known before. But, he was a friend of Jim Fuge. And, Jim Beard was a colorful character on his own right, and as I was eventually to learn. He had called me up, and this was in 1981, spring of 19, yes, '81, because Jim Fuge had recommended me. And, what happened was that Jim Beard had gotten a permit to do the Grand Canyon. Fuge, for some reason, was not able to go at that particular time, and Jim Beard was completely new to river running. He had bought a Udisco from some friend, a used Udisco. Udiscos were rafts which were fairly common in the 1980s. They were made of some sort of neoprene rubber and they were not very good. They had a reputation of tearing very easily. Anyway, he had gotten one and he was determined to do the Grand Canyon. He had never done any river at all before that. However, he did know the Grand Canyon. The reason that he knew the Grand Canyon is that he was living in Colorado. Let's see, what was he doing in those days? I think he was a truck driver, and he had a job driving a water tank truck for some of the oil and gas companies who needed an awful lot of water to run their gas and oil wells for some reason. And he would take this huge truck, which carried a huge amount of water, and filled it up somewhere and delivered it to the gas and oil sites. Anyway, but he was a hiker, and he had done a lot of hiking in the Grand Canyon. And, among other things, he would hike in this way, he would hike from some rim down to the river. He would the hitch-hike. He would hitch-hike with some commercial trip, which would take him some miles down the river, and then he'd get off, and he'd hike back. And he had a number of years of doing this. And, he didn't have much money, and so he didn't pay the commercials anything, but they would give him chores. He would do the porta potties. And he would do the simple chores. He was very helpful for that. So, he knew a fair amount of the Grand Canyon. He had hiked all of Nankoweap, for example, from the rim down to the water. And, well, I'm not sure. Is this right? Can you get down from the rim to the water easily?

TM: Yea, Nankoweap? Well, not easily, I mean, it's a long walk, but you can absolutely do it.

CZ: Yes, it is long. Ok, so, he did multi-week trips hiking with his backpack. And hitch-hiking there. So, then he applied for a Grand Canyon river trip permit. And, as you recall, the questionnaire requires that the applicant list his previous river experience on rivers comparable to the Grand Canyon. Because they didn't want any amateurs going down. They didn't want that. Well, he had never done anything, but what he did was wrote down that he had worked as an assistant boatman on the Grand Canyon. Because he had done some assistant boating on some pieces of the Grand. Anyway, he turned out to be a very tough guy, and he did alright on the Grand Canyon.

TM: Is he still alive?

CZ: And, so, let's see, on this trip...

TM: Hey, Chuck?

CZ: I'm sorry?

TM: Hey, Chuck, is Jim still alive?

CZ: He's still alive. I haven't talked with him for a number of years. There was a certain point where he moved from Colorado to near Monticello in Utah, and he built his own house there, and then he had bought a series of sixteen-foot boats, or fifteen-foot, nine-inch boats. There's a difference for Arizona, you know, because on a sixteen-foot boat you have to carry a class-four, a type IV, throwable cushion, and that's a pain in the neck. Well, alright, so, he became my buddy. And most of my Grand Canyon river trips were done with him. And on most of my Grand Canyon river trips, Mary, my wife, came along also. And, Jim had a collection of friends. And, for this trip, let's see, there were, it was quite a crowd. It was, Mary and I, that was two of us, then it was Jim and his friend, Dave Ridell, and then there was my friend, Dick Slansky, and then there was Pete Beard, who was Jim Beard's brother, and then there was another guy from Flagstaff, who was a friend of Jim's, and then there were two other people who I recruited, and a whole list of other people. He had a bunch of friends who did not do the whole trip. Some of them left at the Tanner Wash hike out. Others joined there at Tanner, and then some came in at the Phantom Ranch, and others left at Phantom Ranch. And we sort of tooled along that way, with some coming and going. And we eventually got down to Pearce Ferry.

TM: Oh, you took out at Pearce, ok.

CZ: Some of us took out at Pearce. And so forth. And that was an interesting trip. I did have one real problem, Mary and I had one real problem in our Maravia at Hance Rapid. This is 1981, it was before the '83 flood, and Hance Rapid was different from it was after the flood. And, at the time we were going, at the flow we were doing it, the river, I would say, was looking very fierce. And, it was not particularly clear that there was any good way to do it. The best entrance seemed to be on river right, but there was a huge hole if you just follow down on river right. And on river left there was some rocks and other problems on early entrance, yea, something like that. So I remember, I remember what my plan was, which was to enter on river left. And then, when we got halfway down, to ferry like mad, to river, I'm sorry, to enter on river right, which wasn't so bad and then to ferry like mad to river left. And, there was some noticeable rock, sort of center left. That was our objective. If I could ferry over to river left above that rock, then I had clear boating down the rest of the rapid. So, that was my plan, and it didn't work. What happened was, that I, with enormous effort, ferried over and did make it, and did make the turn around the rock, at which point, I was pretty tired. And, somehow the river took over and the river brought me back to square one. It brought me right above the huge hole. So, we entered the hole with no forward momentum, so that was a problem. We got stuck in the hole. And, so we were stuck in the hole, and then the boat turned sideways. So, Mary and I both leaned forward toward the downriver side, trying to keep the balance of the rapid, of the raft. And then, the rapid kept jostling us about. And then, somehow the rapid turned us around so that the other side was facing downstream. So, we moved to the other side, face downstream. And, while this was happening, the river, the water was pouring over us, it was tearing various things apart. It ripped... I had two spare oars, and I had, what I thought, was a clever way of attaching them to the boat so I could get at

them instantly. This is going to be a bit of a tedious story, perhaps. It's going to take a couple more minutes. So, it was sort of, it was a bad experience. But, I gave some thought, before the trip, as to how I should attach my spare oars to the side of the boat, so that, if I lost one of the main oars, I could grab the spare oar very quickly. And, my scheme was to attach some tension cord, in a certain way, to the d-rings on the side of the boat, wrap the tension cord a number of times around the spare oar, and then with a clip to attach it to the center d-ring. So, the oars were there, held onto the boat by tension cord. And, I practiced releasing the clip and grabbing the oar, and I could do that very quickly, so, I thought that was a good idea. It wasn't a good idea, because tension cord is pretty weak compared with the force of the water. But, both, while we were in trapped in this whole, for a significant amount of time, the boat turning itself around, different sides at different times facing down river, the river tore both spare oars off the boat and downstream. Then, another thing the river did was bend the upstream oar, which was in an oarlock, this was, yes it was an oar, it bent it at right angles.

Then, the next thing that happened is that Mary wasn't in the boat anymore. So, that really worried me. She had apparently been grabbed by the river and pulled over the side of the boat on the upstream side. Because it wasn't all that upstream. The boat was tilted. And, ok, so shortly after that, and what happened was that Mary was pulled underneath the boat. Well, she's sort of a calm, non-excitabile person fortunately. But, she was under the boat, and what she did was sort of palm her way downstream and, eventually, I sighted her downstream of the hole. And about this time, the boat itself was pretty well filled with water. And, the rapid decided to release the boat. So, both Mary and I were sort of released from the rapid at about the same time, and we were floating down. And, the boat was full of water and it had only one oar. And, so, I got Mary back in the boat and then we just floated down. And, well, there was an eddy on the right side, and we somehow floated into this eddy. And, so, that part was ok. And then, one of the oars that we had lost was floating in the same eddy. So, we got back one oar. And, then the boat was full of water, so we had to bail. This was in the pre-...

TM: Couple hundred gallons there, maybe.

CZ: I estimated at two tons of water.

TM: Ok, sure. And, we just lost the call here with Chuck Zemach. Today is the thirteenth of January, Tuesday morning, 2015. And, so, I'm going to terminate this and we'll call Chuck back.

End of Part I