

**Transcription: Helen Lindeman Grand Canyon Historical Society Oral History**

**Interviewee:** Helen Lindeman (HL)

**Interviewer:** Tom Martin (TM)

**Subject:** South Rim Life

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TM: This will be different. Typically when I'm doing an oral history with people and I want to ask a question, I'll make a little "t" with my fingers and the person I'm chatting with will go, Oh I see you're making a little "t" that means you want to ask a question so I'll pause in my discussion. You won't be able to see that. I don't how we'll work it. We'll just do it. Helen, can you please spell for me your name?

HL: First and last name, both?

TM: Yes, please.

HL: Ok. H-E-L-E-N. Helen is my first name. And last name is Lindeman, L-I-N-D-E-M-A-N.

TM: Do you know Dan Lindeman out of Page?

HL: No, I don't.

TM: Ok, just thought I would check.

TM: And you were born at Grand Canyon, is that correct?

HL: Yes.

TM: What year was that?

HL: 1938.

TM: 1938. What were your parents doing at Grand Canyon in 1938?

HL: Well, that's what everybody asks me. My parents were both from Iowa. My dad was farming with a brother and with his dad. He said, when the price of corn dropped to 10 cents a bushel... He knew that he was single and he was the one who could go out and do something else. So, he made several trips out to Grand Canyon and worked for lengths of time and then moved out there permanently. Of course

he knew my mother and had dated her before he moved out there. They continued to write back and forth to each other and pretty soon he said, why don't you come out here and let's get married? And so she did.

TM: Did your father ever talk to you about his first few trips out to Grand Canyon? What years were those and what did he do?

HL: I think I've got that information in my book. The way that I got that information was through some assignments. I guess they were rated in a certain way. Workers were at that time. His rating, his wages and so forth. He never did talk about it too much. I was thinking that I put that in my book. In March 1929 he was at the Grand Canyon. The first one I found said 1925, from February 1925 until November 1925. It was March 1929 when he returned and was an equipment operator for the National Park Service. And remained in that position until 1950.

TM: The first time your father was there for almost a year, did he work for the Park Service then as well?

HL: Yes he did. He had served in France in World War I. He had a certificate or something that he could use dynamite. They were building trails, like the Bright Angel Trail. He had a crew and they were dynamiting out rocks and so forth. That was when Elmer Watahomigie worked for him.

TM: Ok. Interesting. Do you think your father worked on the construction of the South Kaibab Trail?

HL: I'm not sure. My dad took a lot of pictures. He went down and went fishing at the Bright Angel, what's it called, that stream that runs into the Colorado River? [TM: Yeah, Bright Angel Creek] Yes, he went fishing there often. The Kaibab Trail, I'm trying to think exactly where that goes down.

TM: It starts a ways east of the village and heads on out down to the Black Bridge.

HL: I think that he went down there because I wanted to hike down to Phantom Ranch before we moved away from Grand Canyon. So when I was 12 years old my brother and a cousin and I hiked down the Bright Angel Trail and back up the Kaibab.

TM: Wow, how about that.

HL: It was a shorter distance but steeper.

TM: What are your first recollections of being a small child there at the South Rim?

HL: I have a lot of good memories. When I was little Dr. Harold Bryant was the superintendent. His wife often entertained the ladies in the community. I remember my mother fixing me up real fancy in a new coat and dress and everything so I could go to a tea at the Bryant's house. I was pretty small then. Then sledding. We lived in that duplex right there at Tonto and Navajo, where they break off there in the village. They closed that off, both ends, so kids could go sledding. It was wonderful. Of course we didn't have TV's or anything of this electronic equipment, so we made up our own games. I tell about all of that in my book.

TM: Ok. Can you tell me the title of your book please?

HL: "I Was Born at the Grand Canyon."

TM: Who's the publisher of the book?

HL: A company down south and I did not get their name because I didn't get an ISBN number and so it's not possible to buy it over the internet or anything like that. I did sell it to a salesman and he bought like a 150 copies. So I know there have been copies circulated at the Grand Canyon. I don't know if there are any more of them left or not.

TM: Do you know how many were printed in the print run?

HL: I think probably around 200. I would have to go through my records again.

TM: Ok. I sent you a check. I definitely ordered the book and I look forward to reading that. What were a couple of the highlights in the book that you would want to recount to me about Grand Canyon?

HL: One of my most wonderful memories was going up to the rim of the Grand Canyon for the Easter Sunrise Service. That just was the most marvelous thing on earth I thought. Actually, when we moved back to Iowa we were able to listen to that on the radio for a couple of years. That was pretty amazing. Just to sit there and watch the sun come up and worship the Lord. That was a fantastic time.

TM: Nice. And what else?

HL: I liked to go with my dad in the evenings. We didn't live far from where he walked to work so when he came home I'd like to go with him when he went down to the Babbitt's grocery store. It was down by the post office. We would get the mail. I loved being outside. There were enough kids around that there was always somebody to play a game with or something outside.

TM: Do you remember some of the children that you grew up with?

HL: Yes. Katherine Daisy. Dean and Mary Jane Daisy, her parents, lived in the other side of this duplex. He was a park ranger. She was a lot of fun to play with. Gayle Rondel Slecinek. She lived in California, I think in the San Diego area. She is a wonderful painter. She paints beautiful pictures. If you type in G-A-Y-L-E-S-L-E-C-I-N-E-K it comes up on Google. It comes up her paintings and so forth. Sherma Moore was a friend and lived just across the street and down a couple of houses. The boys were John and Pete Cook, Sam Turner, the Verkamps, especially Susie and Mike and an older one, I'm trying to think of his name. Another thing I really enjoyed was the Hopi Indian dances. When we lived at Grand Canyon we had a lot of company, our family that came from Iowa to visit us. We always took them up to look in the curio shop, the Hopi House. Usually we were around for the Hopi Indian dances. That is a special memory to me.

TM: Did you know Hopi Sammy?

HL: Sammy, yes, I did.

TM: He had a wonderful Hopi last name.

HL: We just called him Sammy. He was wonderful, too. We really enjoyed the Indians out there. There was Supai Mary. She came up from the Havasu Indian Reservation. She would come to our house and my mother would give her material so that she could do sewing and things like that. She made a doll cradle for me before we left. We still have that.

TM: Is this the Mary that worked at the laundry?

HL: No. I have a picture of her. I think you can Google her name, too. She looked like she was 100 years old.

TM: Was she a Watahomigie like Elmer or was she...

HL: Her real name was Mary Wescogame. We know she lived from about 1866 to 1963. She didn't talk much but she and my mother seemed to be able to communicate enough that she would often stop at the door. She would have things to sell. My mother would buy some things. After we moved to Iowa, my first husband and my children hiked out to the Havasu Indian Reservation to Havasu Falls. Then about six years ago I went back down there again with my grandchildren. I hiked down and flew out. My children all met out there and we celebrated my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

TM: That must have been fun. Did you know Elmer Watahomigie? I would assume that your father worked with him.

HL: Yes, I knew him quite well. He was such a faithful employee. He worked hard. My dad raised a garden in the Victory Garden. We would take food and clothes out to what we called the Indian camp. I think they have a different name for it and rebuilt it since I lived there.

TM: Would that have been Supai camp?

HL: Yes. I think they've upgraded it and I think that's wonderful because those people worked real hard. I went out there several times with my dad when he took them something out of the garden or some clothes. When the peaches were ripe down in the canyon, Elmer would bring some up for us. It was wonderful. My mother loved to cook and can. She'd can vegetables that we had from the Victory Garden. My dad like to hunt on his days off. He went deer hunting so we had deer meat, too, and venison.

TM: What else do you remember about Elmer?

HL: He was big. My dad was small, only about 5'3" or 5'4". I'm only about 5' so everybody's taller than we are. Elmer was big and strong and healthy and a hard worker.

TM: He sounds like a wonderful man.

HL: He really was.

TM: Let's think about the Verkamp's a little bit. Did you know Mary, Jack's first wife?

HL: I don't recall her.

TM: I'm thinking of some of the other Verkamp's that you might have known.

HL: I was thinking about him earlier. His picture was in the Ol'Pioneer when they gave out awards. David Cunningham got the award for his father's... David Cunningham was my brother's best friend.

TM: What can you remember about Dave?

HL: He was a real nice kid. My brother enjoyed going over to his house. He came to our house some. He was a couple of years older than I was. Mainly what I remember is that he was a nice kid. I don't know if he has told anybody or not, but his mother was a Harvey Girl. Her picture used to be up at the Bright Angel Lodge. I think that should be known. He told my brother, next time you go to Grand Canyon go in that room right straight across from the front door. It was a museum room. I don't know if it still is or if her picture is still there or not. It was on the left/west wall. Paul Schnur...

TM: And his father Dr. Schnur. What do you remember about Paul?

HL: He was a wonderful kid. The doctor lived in a house just down the street from us so he spent a lot of time at our house. He was about my brother's age, too. I remember him saying he was going to be a doctor like his dad. And sure enough he was. I had the chance to visit with him when we went out to a history symposium. I think we were out there for the first one that they had. Bob Audretsch and Mr. Quinn interviewed my brother and I at that time. So there should be an interview somewhere around there because they said they were going to put it in their files.

TM: If Bob and Mike did that then I'm following along way, way behind the game. That interview will be archived in the museum collection. That's great.

HL: I want to tell you something else about Dr. Schnur. He was a fantastic doctor. It was really nice to have a hospital there in Grand Canyon. I felt bad when it closed. I never was able to find out how many children were actually born at the Grand Canyon. It was such a privilege to be born at the Grand Canyon hospital and it was just down the street from our house. My mother had a lung problem called bronchiectasis. When we lived in the high altitude, she would cough up blood. Dr. Schnur said, I think I can help you but you've got to sign a release so I can try this new medication on you. She did and it worked. She never had the problem again. I think it was streptomycin or something like that that was just out. I had a lot of respect for him and for Paul. Paul's sister Sally was younger than I was so I didn't know her very well. But Paul spent quite a bit of time in our house.

TM: What did you not cover in the book that you wish you had?

HL: I can't really think of anything right now. There were several people who received my book. Biff Kennedy, he worked for the National Park Service. I think his name was William, but as a kid we called him Biff. He lived almost straight across the street from us there.

TM: Have you sent a copy of your book to the museum collection where Mike Quinn still works?

HL: Does he work out at the museum?

TM: He works for the National Park Service at the museum collection/special collections there within the park.

HL: There should be one of my books there.

TM: If it went to Bob Audretsch it probably got there as well. When did your book come out? When did you have it printed?

HL: When my kids took me out there on my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday six years ago they said, you should write a book because I was telling them, you need to remember this, you need to remember this. So they said, you need to write a book. So I wrote what I thought my kids would be interested in. Then I thought my relatives probably would be interested in it too. Then I thought people from Grand Canyon might be too. I have distributed it here in Iowa and to relatives and to the salesman who bought it out at Grand Canyon.

TM: Your father worked for the Park Service. What did he do when you were growing up? Do you remember what he did there?

HL: They called him heavy equipment operator. He plowed snow in the winter and he worked on roads. I have a picture of him on a roller with fresh oil or something down on the road. He was running the roller over it to smooth it out. He was a blue collar worker and had 4 or 5 people who worked under him. Most of them were Indians. There was a Wescogamie, I don't remember his first name. The first time we went back to visit I saw him working by the visitor center. There was a crew working on the sidewalk there and I said, do you remember Shorty Rowan? He said, Oh I sure do those were the good old days. My dad was easy going. I think it worked out perfect for him to work with the Indians. He learned a lot of information from them, too, on different things. Like medicines and things like that.

TM: Did he talk to you about that? What kind of things did he learn?

HL: Yes. We could make tea out of something that grew out there but I can't tell you what the plant was.

TM: There's a green stick-looking brush called Mormon Tea.

HL: That's what I'm thinking. I think that might be it.

TM: You mentioned your mother had tea with Dr. Bryant's wife. What else do you remember about the Bryant's?

HL: They were marvelous people. They were very kind and generous. Their house was always open for company. They lived just down the hill from Verkamp's. I don't know if that's still a house or not. I thought that was the most magnificent house I'd ever seen. We were there on several different occasions. My dad got along well with Harold Bryant. When he retired, Harold presented him with an award for the service he did at Grand Canyon. After we moved to Iowa we exchanged Christmas cards with them. She was very talented at drawing pictures. The Christmas cards that she sent had something

about each one of their children and where they lived. She drew pictures with a pencil or pen. She was very talented.

TM: Remind me again, how old were you when you left Grand Canyon?

HL: I was 12.

TM: Do you have any memories or recollections of Emery Kolb?

HL: Oh yes, yes [laughing]. He was energetic.

TM: How so?

HL: Another thing that we did when we had company from Iowa was to go to the Kolb studio and watch pictures of them going down the Colorado River. He had movies that he showed. He was little, not a very big man, pretty thin but very energetic.

TM: Did you go to Sunday school?

HL: Yes I did, that was one of my favorite things, too.

TM: Do you remember Mary Hoover?

HL: That name sounds familiar.

TM: She was teaching Sunday school. What year did you leave the park?

HL: 1950.

TM: She had just arrived in '46 so you may have just missed her.

HL: Or she may have been one of the last Sunday school teachers that we had. Was her husband a minister?

TM: No, she never married.

HL: We had Sunday school in the top of the community building. We spent a lot of time at the community building. I always enjoyed walking past the mules walking down to the community building.

TM: Where did you go for your school classes?

HL: To what is now probably the elementary school. We didn't have kindergarten, it was just 1-8. That was the main reason that we move back to Iowa. When my brother graduated from the eighth grade my parents were elderly. Most of the kids went up to Wasatch in Utah. My parents said, we're too old to have you go to high school that far away. So that was when we had reason to move back to Iowa.

TM: That must have been a real decision point for a number of employees with families with small children at the park when the kids were ready for high school.

HL: I think the Wasatch high school was a real good high school. I think a lot of them got along well and were well taken care of. I'm in touch with Ethyl Cole. Do you know her?

TM: No

HL: Have you heard of Sherm Moore? He worked with the mules.

TM: No

HL: Ethyl Cole, I don't have her telephone number but I do have her address. I have enjoyed her memory. She's about 91 but has a perfect memory of when they first moved there. She lived out at Rau Well. It wasn't very far from the Indian camp so they played with the Indians. There were 3 girls of them. She and her older sister are still living. Both have such good memories that should be written down. They should write a book. When I was writing mine I contacted her with different questions.

TM: If you have her contact information I'd love to get that.

HL: I will give you her snail mail address. She doesn't have email.

TM: Did you know Ethyl at the time, when you were a girl there?

HL: She and her sister are older sisters of Sherma Moore. They were quite a bit older than Sherma. Sherma is the one that we had in our house and did things together. After I wrote my book I sent one to Sherma. Then she said, my sisters would like one, too. [gives Ethyl's address]

TM: I will try to track her down. We talked about Emery Kolb and Superintendent Bryant. Who was the head of Fred Harvey at the time? Did you know any of the Fred Harvey children? Did you play with them at all?

HL: No. They lived in a different area at Grand Canyon. David Cunningham lived in that area. And that would be over in the area close to the school house. The ones that I knew the best were in the other area. I don't know what it's called. I just know we lived at the corner of Tonto and Navajo Street.

TM: What other interesting memories do you have?

HL: One thing that really impressed me that happened when we were living there - an airplane was flying over the Grand Canyon at night. The pilot had about 3 passengers. He said he thought something was wrong with the plane and they should parachute out. So they did and they saw lights. All of a sudden they didn't see any lights any more. They wondered what happened to the lights. Why'd they go out all of a sudden? Their parachutes caught on the edge of the canyon. They were finally rescued about three days later. When they were rescued they went out on the porch at the El Tovar hotel. About everybody that lived at Grand Canyon went up to hear them. I remember a large crowd and how impressive that was to hear from them how they survived on a ledge in the Grand Canyon until they were rescued.

TM: They came around through the south rim and gave a talk there?



HL: Yes. I think they were rescued from the south rim. Dean Daisy, who lived at the other end of our duplex, was often one that when somebody fell over the edge, he would be one of the rangers that would go down and pick up the pieces. That happened several times when we were there.

TM: What else do you remember about Dean?

HL: Dean was a happy man. Very nice to get along with. Energetic. Not a real tall man. We sure enjoyed having them on the other side of the wall.

TM: He was a very close neighbor then?

HL: Yes he was.

TM: Who else were your close neighbors?

HL: The Kennedy's and the Moore's. On up the hill were the Rondell's and the Cook's. Sam Turner lived down at the train station.

TM: Did he work for the Santa Fe?

HL: His dad was the one that ran the train depot. I am still in touch with him occasionally. Louie Schellbach. I sure enjoy what he wrote in his journal and his granddaughter putting that in the Ol' Pioneer. He had a collection of rocks and butterflies and all kinds of things like that in a building. Our class got to go visit. We were instructed to keep our hands off of everything. [laughing] He did a real good job. Preston was older so I didn't know him very well. I think there was Donny Lou. They were both older than we were so I didn't know them very well.

TM: It sounds like you all spent quite a while as children, maybe after school or certainly during the summers, doing outside play. What kind of games did you play?

HL: We had a croquet set that we set up in our yard. My brother loved to play baseball. So we played baseball. There was a building not too far from where we lived that was quite a long building. We played what we called Annie, Annie over. We'd divide up into 3 or 4 on each side of the building and say Annie, Annie over and throw a ball over. If someone caught the ball they would come around and try to tag us. That was fun. We played kick the can, hide and seek. It was fun to go out at night because bats were usually flying around. We took Popsicle sticks and put them together into a star shape that stuck together. We'd throw them up in the air and bats would be attracted to that. When they dropped they all fell apart and we'd put them together again.

TM: Where did the drinking water come from at that time?

HL: I believe the same place it comes from now, Roaring Springs is it? Over on the north side.

TM: Maybe it came from Indian Gardens at that time. I don't think the Roaring Spring pipeline was put in until the 60s. Was there any thought amongst you children that water was a scarce resource there?

HL: Yes, absolutely.

TM: How so?

HL: We were told, just run the water that you need and that's it. We did irrigate our garden but it was processed water from the sewer. There was a big tank out there where the Victory Gardens were. That's a football field or something now.

TM: You would use reclaimed water for the garden?

HL: Yes.

TM: At that time, the powerhouse was making electricity for the park. Is that right?

HL: Yes. People here in Iowa would say, before we had electricity and running water. I thought I have no idea what that would be like because we always had electricity and indoor plumbing. I think that's why some of our relatives liked to come out and visit us.

TM: Was the powerhouse making electricity for 24 hours a day or was there a down time in the middle of the night when there wouldn't be any power?

HL: I think it was 24 hours a day because I don't remember ever not having electricity. My dad would get called out in the night sometimes to plow snow and I don't remember ever not having electricity.

TM: When you were over at the post office getting mail, do you remember hearing the rumble of the powerhouse or was it pretty quiet?

HL: It was loud. There was a whistle or something down there, too. They would blow the whistle at 5:00 in the afternoon. It seems to me like it was right beside the laundry.

TM: Yes that's right. Did that whistle blow at noon as well and early in the morning? Or was it just once a day?

HL: I think it was at noon and at 1:00 and at 5:00. I can't remember at 8:00, possibly then.

TM: So it was serving as a timepiece?

HL: Yes. I was with my dad in 1945 when World War II ended. It was really chaotic because everybody was celebrating. Everybody was just wild about it.

TM: What else do you remember about that?

HL: They were blowing the whistle. I was asking my dad, what's going on? He said, they just got news that the Japanese had surrendered and the war is over. Having served in World War I, he was thrilled that World War II was over, too. There were a lot of people in the grocery store. They were trying to close. But nobody wanted to close, they just wanted to stand there and talk. Everybody was excited.

TM: I'm going to go back to the powerhouse for a minute. Could you hear that powerhouse from the rim when you were up there?

HL: Yes, I think so.

TM: We were just over there the other day and the big equipment is still inside there. I was thinking, I wonder how loud this stuff was?

HL: It was loud.

TM: There was a smokestack there. Were they burning coal or oil?

HL: I'm not sure. I remember oil tankers coming on the railroad.

TM: That would make sense it was possibly oil-fired fuel-driven that way. The trains were coming and going a few times a day?

HL: Yes. My aunt and uncle came on the train several times. We went down there to get them.

TM: To the station to meet them?

HL: Yes.

TM: Did you ever take the train out to Williams and points beyond to go back and visit family?

HL: One time my grandmother was sick. My mother and brother and I got on the train and came back to Iowa to be with her.

TM: What time of year was that?

HL: Probably in the summer, I don't remember the exact month.

TM: We've been chatting for almost an hour and I think we'll wrap things up. Is there anything else you'd like to mention in this interview before I turn the machine off?

HL: It was a just a wonderful experience growing up at Grand Canyon. There is one more thing about Phantom Ranch. They had a swimming pool down there. That was wonderful. We didn't get to go swimming because my brother... We had carried our lunch down there and we got down there by noon. We ate our sandwich. Dangled our feet in the water. And then my brother said, it's time to start up again. He had been up the Kaibab Trail so he knew that it was going to be difficult. So we didn't spend much time there.

TM: Thank you very much.