

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Jeff Ingram (JI)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: GRCA Enlargement, Part 3

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Interview note:

TM: Today is the 31st of December, 2014. We are at the home of Jeff Ingram in Tucson, Arizona. This is our third interview with Jeff. Two prior interviews were conducted in November of this year. Jeff can you spell for me your last name?

Jl: Ingram

TM: In our last interviews we had talked about your childhood and your education, the teachers that inspired you. We had talked about your travels to the west looking for a place to stay and anchor in. That turned out to be Santa Fe. We talked about meeting Brower and some information on David Brower. And then Martin Litton and your river trip in 1966. Talked about some of the hiking that you did in the Canyon, being bit by a rattlesnake. Some discussions about Martin Litton in the 60s. Maybe you could pick up the thread with the late 60s into the early 70s.

Jl: OK, the thread that runs from the late 60s through all the 1970s and into the first couple years of the 80s is the political action that was centered around the fight over river traffic management. Which meant river traffic management by the Park Service/Grand Canyon National Park which, in one way or another, exercised control over the river from the Paria to Grand Wash Cliffs. That is to say, through the entire Grand Canyon. Even though there were various jurisdictions before 1975. For instance, there were some Forest Service lands that came down to the river. Some BLM lands came to the river. There were water and power withdrawals which gave the Bureau of Reclamation a say. Down at the far end, Lake Mead National Recreation Area was the presiding Park Service jurisdiction for the last 40 miles. The upper end/the slack water has various designations. That area influenced by Lake Mead/the reservoir behind Hoover Dam. Nevertheless, it was the administration of the Park that really was the major player in how people got to use the river. That had definitely already started in the 50s. Maybe there was something they did. I've seen papers that make the 1960s the time when the Park Service began to gather its bureaucratic wits about it and say, we need to do something about people going down this river because they're all going to die and we'll be responsible.

At the same time, at the end of the 60s, there was a very active effort to implement the Wilderness Act. Which meant, in terms of the parks, each park had to be studied and recommendations made. Then a recommendation by the President sent to Congress to set up wildernesses for the national parks. There weren't any wildernesses in the sense that there had been Forest Service wildernesses from the 1920s. The Park Service had some resistance to what they considered to be a superfluous designation. They thought a national park was the highest designation for a piece of land. I'm not sure they called them wilderness parks back then. I don't think they did. They called them great natural places, maybe.

Conserve the scenic objects. They talked a lot about scenery and archaeological ruins or specimens of things like the Petrified Forest. Those were also something that turned the Park Service on. Preserving a place because it was a great wilderness was not what the Park Service talked about in the 50s and the 60s. The Wilderness Act changed all that in 1964. So the Park Service was faced with a question - what do we mean by wilderness? If we have an area designated as wilderness by Congress, how are we going to manage it? There was a lot of debate, conflict even, over the Park Service's efforts. For instance, the Park Service believed that a wilderness inside the park, no matter what it abutted on, had to be buffered so there would always be at least 1/8 of a mile around a wilderness inside the park. We thought that was silly and ridiculous. Eventually the Park Service dropped that kind of finicky stuff. There were questions about dirt roads. Do they get closed if they're not used? To get to the most important point for the Grand Canyon, there was the question - if there was an established use on a river that used motors, then did a wilderness in the park mean that that use had to be removed? Or did it mean that the use could continue?

The reason that the Wilderness Act was ambiguous had nothing to do with the parks or the Grand Canyon. It had to do with Boundary Waters canoe area where there was a political exception made. The local very important senator Hubert Humphrey was lobbied by the outfitters in that area, who were from Minnesota, many of them, in order to keep on using their motors. So there was an exception written into the Wilderness Act for that. Other people came to understand that as meaning that if you had any existing use of motors, then in order to have a wilderness you either had to do decide to continue the use of motors or you had to ban them. What did that mean in terms of the definition of wilderness? That was an important issue or even THE important issue that was going to be dealt with in the 1960s and 70s because in the 1950s people began using big rafts with motors, Georgie White being the pioneer, to push their rafts through at a higher rate of speed or at least to steer them and control them with the idea being that they could then carry a lot of paying passengers. So it became a proposition which was tainted by commercial considerations. That is, we need motors whether there's a wilderness or not because we have a business and that's most important.

By the time we get to the end of the 1960s, the Park Service is wrestling with these issues which were intensified because putting people through the canyon on the river turned out to be a popular thing to do. It turned out there were 21 different private companies who were running trips of various sizes, various numbers of times. Some of them took thousands of people a year, some of them only took a few dozen. It was by and large not heavily regulated. The Park Service would issue permits but they didn't turn these into a concession until the end of the 60s. Then around 1970 they said, we won't do permits we're going to write contracts. You are going to be a concessionaire of the National Park Service. You'll be bound by the concession rules and the contracts which became very complicated and full of stuff. The main thing in river management at that time was that the Park Service was codifying in regulations what the commercial operators had already done. It's not as if the Park Service said, let's start from the beginning and make sure we do this right. They just looked at what they saw, which was 21 companies. Not sure of the number any more, maybe 10-12 chose motors and the rest of them were rowing. In any case, the number of passengers carried by the motorized rafts, because they were bigger could carry more, was a much larger percentage. All those facts and stuff are contained in my book about the river, *Hijacking a River*. The important point here is that the commercial operators took the view that the Park Service, in working out contracts with them, were going to pretty much allow them to do what they could/wanted to do. It was kind of, look Park Service we've successfully done this service, we're growing, we want to continue to grow and provide this service so you make this easy/convenient.

The problem was that the number of people they were taking down expanded greatly. In 1966 it was 1100. By 1970-71 it was already up to 20,000. Again, the numbers are in my book. The growth was

phenomenal and uncontrolled. They were simply taking down whatever number of people they felt that they could carry given the trips that they/the commercial operators wanted to take down. The very important side effect, which was for many of us was the most important effect, were the huge, negative environmental impacts on the river shore. The Park Service quickly came to believe that it had to do something about how people were using the river. What that means is things like firewood. There was a lot of wood that had floated into the canyon previous years. It was being burned up at a great rate because people like to have big fires. The Park Service said, is that a good thing? What will happen when there's no more wood because the Glen Canyon Dam keeps big floods from coming? What happens to the beaches which get filled with ash and cinders and are starting to look terrible? Another big problem was the disposal of human waste. When I went through in '66 people took toilet paper and went off often around a rock on the beach or maybe up the slope a little bit. When there were 1100 people going down, and we went in September, that was pretty bad. The notion that it could be sustained when you were sending 20,000 through was impossible to believe. So, the Park Service was starting to deal with the demand by commercial operators. It was starting to deal with a growing environmental disaster for the river shore. They tried to do all this within the framework of what existed - existing concession law and existing demand by the commercial operators.

I should say at this point that I had been southwest representative of the Sierra Club up through 1969. And then I spent three years in the eastern part of the country before coming back in 1972. Those three years happened to be the years when everything went, I think, haywire. Not that it had anything to do with me, but when the environmental impacts were intensifying because of the number of people. The number of people were exploding. The Park Service was doing contracts. What kind of contracts would they be? Who was looking at it? What kind of public oversight would there be if this extremely important national park/resource/the river, etc. These questions were all being answered with bad answers. The control of the concessionaires was minimal. The environmental impacts were growing. The number of people who are going down was growing. And the Wilderness Act was not considered to be relevant particularly by the Park Service. This was a time when there was a superintendent who was woefully inexperienced and made some really bad decisions. By inexperienced I mean he had never been a land manager before he was made Superintendent of the park. For a major park like the Canyon that's virtually unheard of. He had been in personnel work. One has to believe that for some reason he impressed somebody important. I do not know but I would suspect it was a friendly appointment or maybe a political appointment. It was not an appointment by somebody who was up to the challenges posed by a major park like the Grand Canyon.

River aside, there were many other issues. Among them was the drawing up of a master plan which was connected into the notion that with dams no longer a possibility, the park would be expanded both upstream and downstream to take in parts of the river that the dams were supposed to inundate. These were issues that everybody could see would be coming in the 1970s.

TM: The Superintendent would've been Lovegren?

Jl: Yes, it was Robert Lovegren. He served for about three years, as I remember, and then moved out of there.

TM: In 1969 you were away for three years. How did that disconnect happen with the Club and where did you go during this key period when Lovegren was not helping things?

Jl: The late 60s were the time when the Club decided that David Brower, whatever his virtues, was too much to handle. He attempted to get elected to the board and maybe become president, a lot of that stuff. That was pretty much resolved in late '68 and early '69 with his "firing" by the board of directors.

The version of the Club that was the Brower Club was very different from the version of the Club that would come into being after he had left. The charisma that he had shown that exemplified his public persona as being a spokesman for the Club and for environmental issues was now removed. I felt it was a removal that would affect the Club's leadership which I felt would be taken over by an ethos that I perhaps pejoratively called bureaucratic. That isn't to say that the new people were not good conservationists/not good environmentalists, but the way they would run the Club would be less exciting I felt, less effective. I made one effort to project a different future by talking to the new executive director, Mike McCloskey, and saying I wanted to be conservation director. That post was vacant because Mike had been conservation director so when he became executive director after Dave left the conservation post was left open. He said to me very transparently, no I want to continue being conservation director myself. Which was foolish except as a matter of protecting his political base and being sure he didn't have any more trouble than he was already faced with - getting the Club to keep on running. So there was really, I felt, no future in staying with the Sierra Club. At that time I happened to get a job offer back at MIT. So I left the Club.

TM: To do what?

Jl: I went to work for the alumni fund. It's not relevant to this story. It was an opportunity. I'd gone to school at MIT and it was an exciting place to go. This was a job offer that was not a prime job offer in any real sense but it gave us a chance to do something else. To see what was going on. To get out of a situation which was probably going to be disappointing and perhaps even sticky.

The one thing I didn't see that it would be good to do would be to have any kind of conflict continue. There'd been enough of that with Brower. That was a genuine issue because had he become president, the Club would have been gradually transmuted into a far more leader oriented club. Because Brower was not an institution builder. He was more of a public... had the ability to reach out and become a person who could enthuse the public. Who could do issues. But that didn't mean that behind him/underneath him in the Club structure itself there was a supporting institution for what he was trying to do. He more than once would hire somebody like me, or Gary Soucie, or Washington Representative Bob Waldrop. Would hire people and tell them to go to work. But it was not work within a structure which he had set, you'll report to... I'm trying to avoid giving the impression that what I wanted was a bureaucratic structure. Because Brower would behave in this way, there was never any institution that he left behind. If he had been in control of the Sierra Club I don't think he would have built one. So the possibility of it dissipating/being challenged by others, all of those what ifs... Its irrelevant because the point is the Sierra Club was a very volunteer oriented... That's what it had grown on. Brower was a volunteer for many years before he became executive director. I suppose in some sense John Muir was a volunteer. The point was that the strength in the Club was in its membership. The big questions then were how do you serve that membership, how does that membership get activated, how does it become effective? Brower's answer to that was, follow my example/follow my vision. He was great at communicating that vision. That wasn't McCloskey's way.

What happened in the years after left I can't tell you because I left. I didn't participate. I do know that there was an effort by a Brower protégé/old friend who I think... I'm getting a little scrambled, but it's written down somewhere else. ...was on the board and either tried to become president or he was president. It was an effort to reestablish a pro-Brower faction in charge of the Club. That's the way I read it. I had some conversations with this person, whose name is slipping my mind. That's what he was talking about. We should do this because the Club is going to become less effective. Who knows whether he was right or wrong. He didn't succeed and McCloskey stayed as executive director for some years.

When I came back in 1972, since I had had very good relations with John McComb who was the southwest representative who succeeded me, we were good working companions and friends as well, it was easy to connect in with Grand Canyon issues because he was very interested and knowledgeable about the Grand Canyon.

TM: Can you tell me something about John McComb?

Jl: He was a graduate student in Water Resources Management at the University of Arizona. An avid outdoors person. He was one of the principles in founding the Southern Arizona Hiking Club along with Eber Glendening. He was married at the time to Joanna McComb who was even more of an outdoors person/advocate. By advocate I mean use of the outdoors. Lots of backpacking and almost anything else they could think of. Some river running and stuff like that. Lots of traveling around the southwest and into Mexico and wherever in order to look at places that had been little explored in this kind of intensive recreational way. I'm sure the Navajo knew a lot about the land that's now reservation but white people didn't. The Southern Arizona Hiking Club, among them the McCombs and others, went up there and explored these canyons and discovered this marvelous world of Navajo Sandstone. He was a graduate student, I can't even tell you if he got his degree before he was hired to replace me as southwest representative. The thing I remember about John and Joanna was that they had a Volkswagen bug. They would keep it packed and every weekend they would take off for someplace or other. I don't know what Joanna did. She may well have been employed. She was an excellent drawer/draftswoman. I have a very nice tribute drawing by her. Through these years they were active in the outdoors but also active in protecting and trying to protect the outdoors. Working within the Southern Arizona Hiking Club and with the local chapter of the Sierra Club, the Grand Canyon Chapter with many others in that chapter, in order to get areas designated as wilderness. That was one of the big issues in the late 60s and 70s both in the Forest Service areas as well as in the Park Service areas. And then just protecting places, too.

He was a natural choice in terms of his knowledge and his experience on the ground to become my successor as southwest representative. How he fared for those first three years I can't really tell you but he seemed to have his feet on the ground when I came back in '72. Except that we have this situation on the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon where there really was no active controversy/no active effort to say the river shore is becoming a mess. Environmentally this is bad. The commercial operators are increasing the numbers of people who are going through without any limit. What is the limit? How many people should be going through here? Can we just let 10-, 100-, 300,000 people go? How do we do this? The Park Service is not exercising its responsibility to regulate activity and protect the park. Or vice versa actually. Protect the environment and regulate the activity.

When I came back in the late summer of '72, September, these were issues which had reached crisis proportions. The crisis was brought to a point because a user of the river named Fred Iseman was a friend of Senator Barry Goldwater. He reached Goldwater and said in essence, Barry this is terrible you've got to tell the Park Service to stop this. Goldwater being the kind of person he was said, yes I agree and wrote letters. But I'm sure he in fact actually talked to people in the Interior Department. Very quickly, days/weeks, this is the kind of thing I cover in my book, the Park Service declared that there would be a limit. There would be no more increases in use and it would now start working on more better environmental protection. An example of what environmental protection had meant was that in '68? the Park Service had said, in order to control human wastes we are going to establish four privies along the river. The river being 280 miles long and trips running anywhere from 10 days to two weeks, this was obviously silly. Some people said that's going to be useless. It's going to become a stinking mess. They installed them anyway and they became stinking messes. It was clearly not a

solution. It was a beautiful example of why you had to really think hard and get some expertise about how to handle the river. If you're worried about the driftwood all being used up, if you're worried about the driftwood being gone and people breaking branches off trees, you've got to do something about saying, you can do this or you can't do this. You're going to have to figure out how you're going to patrol this. And so on and so forth.

Those pressures all became very strong in 1972. The Goldwater intrusion reached, at that time it was a Republican administration, into the Assistant Secretary level, a man named Nathaniel Reed. He was probably talked to by Goldwater. He then turned around and said to the Park Service, you fix this. We're going to make a wilderness here, we're going to get rid of motors, we're going to limit increases, and we're going to fix things up. Go to it. So the Park Service gave a try. The concessionaires resisted tremendously. They did not want to be regulated.

TM: At this time Martin Litton had become a concessionaire.

Jl: Yes

TM: So the journey to wilderness, the journey to control of the river, it seemed like Martin would have been there with you in the trenches in the mid 60s, later into the 60s, into the early 70s. What happened, how did you see that switch?

Jl: I was not here. '69 was the centennial Powell year. There was a to-do made, pseudo Powell trips. If I remember right, Martin participated in this and was instrumental in making the re-creation of the trip. That's such a silly idea. You can't re-create a trip like that because everybody knows too much in 1969 about what the river was like and so on. Yes, Martin was poised because of his extensive knowledge and because he was willing to do this kind of public leadership. He was poised to be in a very influential position as far as river policy and what it should be. So let's go back and look at how Martin had gotten there. Other people can rehearse his early life. He, too, was an avid outdoors person. He also flew his own plane. In the 1950s/60s? he had started going down the river. So far as I know it had always been in wooden boats or fiberglass boats. I don't know if Martin ever rowed a raft through the river but if he did it was a scandal I'm sure. Or it was something that happened later on in life when he was older and it didn't matter anymore. The point was, he was a leader in a particular way of using the river. Namely rowing small wooden dories. No use of motors or equipment of that sort. In that capacity he gained knowledge about the canyon. He gained knowledge about rowing down the canyon. He gained prejudices about what the right way was to go down the canyon which was in these wooden boats. Where you feel the river instead of smooshing it out big rubber rafts.

Therefore, through the 1960s he built himself up. Trips, like the one I took in 1966... The trips through most of the 60s were trips he organized by inviting people along and saying, it'll cost you \$180 or \$200. Not much, just to cover expenses. He had 3-4 boats. He would invite friends who had boats. So you'd see a trip with five boats. They would go down the river. The trip I went on was 19 days. All the way through/all the way down to the Lake Mead part of the canyon where you were met by a motorboat which would tow you through the slack water. It was a trip suited to the rate at which the river moved and gave you lots of time to stop and do hiking and so on. That was a standard of a trip. Including travel time to the canyon and back, three weeks, wooden boats. The whole feel would be leisurely but in the rapids exciting because you were right there confronting the waves/the rapids in boats that were smaller than the rapids themselves. Exciting and leisurely both. Which is how the river is in the canyon. There are flat, serene stretches and there are tumultuous rapids.

In 1969 Martin was poised with his experience and with the kind of attitudes he had - pro wilderness. And I have to add/remind you he had been the person who, with Brower, made the presentation to the

Sierra Club board of directors that instead of just fighting a dam to keep it out of the park, the point was to fight both dams and make sure they didn't get in the canyon. So it was the canyon they were fighting to save. He had that activist credentials. There were many other things. He wanted to protect the places that he went and saw. Which is to me totally admirable. That's what you do. You don't just go use them and then who cares. So he had that behind him, too.

We get to 1969, then there's that period '69 to '70 and the Park Service is saying, we're going to issue contracts and this is going to become an orderly business proposition with concession rules just as in other Parks. But instead of saying, as the park service usually does, AND we're going to select a concessionaire, by bid or however they do it. It just said there are 21 you all want to do it? Go ahead, we'll give contracts to all 21. An amazing decision which I'm sure was because of the weakness of the Superintendent who was there, Lovegren. His lack of experience. His inability to say, good god I've got to do something about this or this is going to be a mess. Which is what you'd expect from the tough old Superintendent who had been at Yellowstone and came to the canyon and said, I'm going to rule this place. That's the attitude of many of them for better or worse. They're not weaklings. Lovegren was basically a pushover. I shouldn't call him that. He would yield. He was very politically minded.

So all 21 people who wanted to be concessionaires were allowed to be concessionaires. Martin must have made the decision, I was not talking to him, this is a worthwhile thing for me to do. I worked for Sunset as travel editor, that was a good job but I had a conflict with the publisher because he didn't want me to be so politically active particularly in the magazine. So I quit that job and maybe I can make a livelihood out of running boats. So he became a commercial operator. That was a crucial moment.

Let me go back and look at what happened, I believe in '69, maybe '68. There were perhaps three or four operators of the large rubber rafts that used motors who were most determined to keep running the river the way they wanted to, with their large boats taking lots of people down in a somewhat shorter trip than you could do using just the current of the river. These people, even before the contracts were being issued, formed a lobbying group. The Colorado River Outfitters Association. In their bylaws they stated we want to keep motors. So even though the Wilderness Act clearly applied to Grand Canyon and even though that question may have been one which should've been settled after debate, these people had already settled in their own minds. We don't want to give up our motors and our profit making privileges. We want motors on the river and we'll fight anybody who does anything else. So here is this group in '69 that's ready to fight for their privileges. And here's Martin who would have been naturally cast at that point as a leader who hated motors, who hated the large rubber rafts, who believed in the wilderness, who had fought for the Grand Canyon to keep dams out of it. Who was ready to launch a little business and therefore be a businessman. He wouldn't be an outsider like me who was coming in and saying, let's be a wilderness. He would be saying, I'm a businessman who runs and I prove that you can run a business using wooden boats instead of big rubber rafts propelled by motors.

He chose not to accept that role. Since I did not talk to Martin ever about that I don't know whether he debated it. I don't know any of the ins and outs of how he came to do that. By the time I became active in 1972-73 on river questions, river issues and going to concessionaires meetings, Martin was solidly in the concessionaire's camp. What this meant was that the concessionaire's saw themselves, regardless of how they conducted their businesses, as having more in common as businessmen confronting the Park Service. than they had differences. The way that they could succeed would be to confront the Park Service working together and not to split up.

There was one small effort which was aborted by some of the non-motorized companies. There was one which was much larger in the sense that they had more boats, more trips, took more passengers.

That was a company called Arizona/American River Travel Adventures [unsure of name] run by the Elliot family. They tried. They thought this was the way to do it, we need to take motors off and we need to have a wilderness. There was another concessionaire, I forget, who made an effort in this same direction at the same time, this 1969-72 period. He was saying to the Park Service, you need to support wilderness here. He was saying to Lovegren, he was getting people excited about doing that. So there were people, that if Martin had taken that leadership position, who would have been there to support him.

But by the time I get to 1973 and I'm active and seeing these people operate in public none of that is evident. There is no organized concessionaire group touting wilderness and the ending of the use of motors to counterbalance the CROA group of motor operators. The choice not to do anything was made easier by the Park Service because the Park Service didn't do anything to encourage the non-motorized wilderness advocates. Had they been a group... the singular example of that is Lovegren saying, in a letter and probably other places too, I don't think we can make a wilderness here. I don't think the river is a wilderness. That was the stance of the Park Service until 1972 when Lovegren was eased out and a new Superintendent was brought in. Barry Goldwater made his noise. The Secretary of the Interior Department said to the Park Service, you fix this. That means no motors. That means wilderness. That means cut the use, fix the environment, and get busy.

That gives us the 1970s which was a fight through that whole period about what kind of rules and regulations would govern the river management, what was called the Colorado River Management Plan for the Grand Canyon. The fight over that lasted until the administration changed in Washington bringing in the Reagan administration and a fellow named Watt. This changed the political balance sufficiently so that there was no political traction for anybody to accomplish a wilderness. That's a more complicated issue. It took me 400 pages in a book to describe all the ins and outs. It was a controversy conducted between a more or less unified group of concessionaire's, all 21 of them working together, against the Park Service, against us. All treating themselves as being attacked by the Park Service. Regulation to them was anathema/telling them how to run their business, you don't do that. These were upstanding businessmen. Of course they knew how to do it.

All that to the contrary, nobody broke ranks. You could go and talk to individuals. People like Ken Slight, who was a fine conservationist, a person who wanted to give his people real trips down the river. Although he hated the notion that he couldn't use driftwood for big fires anymore. There were people that could have politically organized, formed a group and allied themselves with the Sierra Club. Which would have been natural. Martin was not a... he was angry at the Sierra Club for totally different reasons. It had to do with a place called Nipomo Dunes and a nuclear power plant and Diablo Canyon. In one sense it was a Californian issue but it rose right up to the top of the Sierra Club. It was one of the things that helped, in the late 1960s, split the club in the pro- anti-Brower. So it's possible that Martin may have thought the Sierra Club is not my friend anymore. If that's what he thought, that would be too bad. Maybe he's done an oral history and has told about his relations with conservationists and environmentalists. All I know is as far as the river in Grand Canyon, he became indistinguishable from the other commercial operators as a defender of his privilege's and a person who was active in a way that I consider particularly ironic/mean minded. And I do. Martin had been a private river runner for many years. In fact there weren't anything but private river runners for many years until Georgie White came along and wanted to charge people and make a living out of it.

The crucial change came in the end of the 60s when the Park Service said, we're going to have contracts, we're going to regulate this river traffic. The number of people who were doing their own trips was not particularly big compared to the number of people that the commercial outfitters were pushing

through. In addition to that, I think it's fairly clear from the Park Service files that they discriminated against private runners. They made it harder to run as a private river runner than they did as a passenger. Passengers had no trouble getting on the river. If they wanted to go on a commercial trip they just paid money and got on the river. Private river runners doing it on their own had to jump through all kinds of hoops and were discouraged. They were actively discouraged by the Park Service. When we got into that 1972 critical point, the private river runners formed less than one out of 15 of the number of people who went down the river. When the Park Service said, we're not going to allow any more increases, that meant the private river runners weren't going to increase either. That didn't mean that the demand didn't increase. Therefore that became one of the issues. The Park Service was fighting the private river runners. The private river runners were fighting to get a larger share. They were fighting the commercial operators because they didn't operate in the same way. Commercial operators would criticize the private river runners for being irresponsible, even naughty on the river. They would say they embarrass our passengers. Then there were the wilderness advocates like me who were saying we want this river to be free of motors and we need to regulate the environmental impact.

If you're talking specifically about Martin Litton you're talking about a person who's well positioned, given his experience as a private river runner, to reach out to those people and say I sympathize. I know what it was like, what you went through, what you have to do in order to organize a trip. So why don't you ally yourself with my friends who also don't like motors and who want a wilderness. He didn't do that, he did the opposite. He made enemies out of them. He attacked them in public. That's not a pretty part of Martin's career. The result of all that was even after the end of the intense controversy in the early eighties, the private river runners were left at a severe disadvantage which they've never overcome. The Park Service still discriminates against them as compared to commercial passengers and commercial river runners. I guess you could say that's one of Martin's legacies, though it was more of a legacy of inaction on his part.

When we get to the crucial period in November of 1980 there is a concessionaire's meeting to discuss the Colorado River Management Plan which had been produced through the 1970s. It was a decent plan. It wasn't a great plan, it was a decent plan. The Park Service was trying to implement it. It was being resisted particularly by the motor operators. They had a concessionaire's meeting up in Flagstaff. The Park Service wheeled out the Regional Director. There was a brand new Superintendent at that time, the old one having died of a heart attack. Other people from the Park Service attended. They said this is our plan, this is what we're gonna do. The concessionaire's had met the day before and had agreed they would all oppose the implementation of this plan. That included Martin. Martin stood up in that meeting and defended the privileges of the businessmen who ran the river management at that time.

Thinking back over Martin's career, that was a pretty low point. I'm sure if he were here and this were 1985 and we were discussing this he would defend himself tooth and nail. I don't have any doubt that he felt he was doing the right thing. He took lots of people down the river on those wooden boats. Gave them a great trip, a long trip. Charged them an arm and a leg. They were the most expensive trips on the river, not per day but per mile. In that sense he continued to make a contribution. His leadership in that area... Eventually other concessionaire's began running more rowing trips. There was no mass conversion or anything like that. I don't know what the numbers are any more but I suppose most people still the end up on motorized rafts. Which is a shame. That's something I haven't said. It's important to understand that when you go down in a boat controlled by a motor, where the rate of speed is controlled by a motor, so you maybe get four days and four nights, maybe get five, maybe get a week on the river you are being cheated. Even though the Grand Canyon is a wonderful place and everyone says, wow the Canyon, it's not the way to experience the canyon. To use Brower's example

it's about as great as starting to run in the front door of the Sistine chapel with your head tilted back until you run out the other end. It's not the way to see the paintings in the Sistine chapel and that's not the way to enjoy the Grand Canyon. It's a wilderness and ought to be enjoyed at a wilderness pace, which is for boating the pace of the river. That has not happened so it's still an issue that ought to be decided by Congress. Which we fought through the 1970s and which we eventually lost because of changes in the political climate of the whole country.

TM: Thinking about this journey through the 70s into the early 80s, the concept of trying to integrate the park, and then make the park a wilderness and that not happening. But the park managing as if, given that Congress hasn't acted. And the park has land that has wilderness potential so they're holding the resource to be managed as wilderness until Congress decides. Now looking back from the last day in 2014, do you think the park has done a reasonable job at holding the line from degradation or creep of the resource so that wilderness designation is still a potential for the future at this park?

Jl: The quick answer to certainly yes. Wilderness is long term. The national parks are long term. The profits of a particular business are short term. We already know there used to be 21 companies at the beginning of the 1970s and there are now 14. They've combined, they've died off, whatever. Those businesses are trenchants. The way they go through and impact the canyon is a trenchant. That is to say, you do not have to build a highway to get boats through. So let's answer the question which is one of the best things that we ever did for the concessionaires. Which is, by putting pressure on the Park Service about the environmental degradation and by leading into a research program that showed there was degradation and it was in bad shape by the mid-seventies and by some other things such as the invention, not by a commercial river runner but by an outside researcher, the invention of a system for carrying out human waste which containerized it and removed it. Not pee but heavy stuff. By the time we get to 1979 those kinds of things are accepted by the concessionaires. They understand that's the price they have to pay. We can't increase the numbers of people we take through very much, if any. They found little ways to do it. They've certainly not doubled the number of total trips through the canyon, which was certainly threatened 10 years before. I'm certain the river shore is in better shape than it was in 1966 at the end of that trip I took.

We have to parse into that the effects of Glen Canyon Dam, the continued operation of that and what it's done. I'm not competent to say, it's all due to this or it's all due to that. The fact is, there are changes but it's very unlikely that we can say that those changes are due to running river trips. The Park Service has been lax in monitoring environmental effects. Starting in the 1970s, they were supposed to start a monitoring program to show year by year what was happening at various beaches. That program never really got off the ground. Now and again they do something, somebody runs a research trip. We don't even really know how many people could go down the river if you... Let me step back. The great conclusion of research on the river in the mid-seventies, the intensive program that asks the question what is the condition of the river, what should we do in order to make it better. The answer to that question was, it is not a matter of how many people go down it's a matter of what they do when they're down there. So if you regulate the people and their behavior, if you to educate the river travelers and more important, educate the people who take them down, either private boaters or commercial operators, if they are all aware that this is the way they behave on the river to keep their impact minimal then that's the best way to make sure that the environment doesn't degrade. Then you can ask the question, how many people could we send down if we do this? Maybe it is only 5000 a year. Maybe if you say, this is a wilderness/we want it to be designated a wilderness and over the next 500 years if we continue sending 20,000/30000 people a year it's going to degrade. We don't want that to happen so maybe it has to be less. On the other hand maybe it can be more.

The Park Service, having started on an answer in the mid-seventies, gave that up and never has revisited it. I don't know whether that's true. Their standard line is, we have to worry about environmental degradation along the river and therefore we're not going to increase use much/at all. What would the Superintendent's line be today if I asked him? I don't know. He would probably just fudge the answer and say, we'll take a look at that when we get to the next river management plan procedure. I would say, he should live so long. It has not been a happy experience in public involvement. Public involvement was heavily on the side of wilderness, heavily on the side of getting rid of motors, heavily on the side of environmental protections throughout the 1970s and into that political change moment of 1980-81. There would've been plenty of opposition from concessionaires/commercial river operators and the passengers that they would stimulate to write letters. The larger public, both in an environmental sense and in general, would have supported the Park Service had they done it. Had there been a wilderness environmental river plan put into operation in 1980-81 it would be a river far more enjoyed by more people perhaps. But in good condition today. All these issues that we fought about in the 70s were decided wrong as far as the longevity goes.

Take a boatperson/a person who operates a large motor rig and ask them how would you like to go down the river by yourself with your friends? They don't say, I want a big powerful motor, a hard hulled motorboat so I can rip down. What they say is, I'd like to row. That's the cliché and I believe it. That was another ironic twist. The people who had such great experience with these trips, they had a job and they wanted to protect it. So I don't feel as if this is a settled question. I feel in the long run the protection of the canyon would benefit from wilderness designation, the removal of motors and large trips. I believe the experience of being in a national park, which is one of the Park Service's mandates or things they should care about, would be enhanced for every visitor on the river if all the trips were rowing trips. For people on the rowing trips this is obvious because they are in a great situation. For people going through on motors, good question. Instead of degrading other people's experience they would have a better experience themselves.

During most of the 1990s I was completely inactive. This was a period of consolidation of the commercial river runners control over the river to the point where no Superintendent would dare attempt to do what I just suggested was best for the river. It's interesting to look at the Superintendency of Steve Martin who was a river ranger in the mid-1970s. As such he participated in the formulation of the wilderness/anti motor/pro environmental river management plan that was offered by the Park Service in the late 1970s up to 1980. When he became park Superintendent you would never know that. There was nothing left of that enthusiastic ranger who knew the river, who had worked on a decent plan to defend it in public. By the time he comes back as Superintendent... excuse me I have something else to do. Another example, the research program in the 1970s which documented massively the degradation that was being done. One of the principle investigators was Steve Carruthers, a biologist who was working for the Museum of Northern Arizona at the time and was also the one who takes principle credit for the self-contained waste disposal system that was eventually developed. He was all in favor of getting rid of motors, all in favor of environmental protection, in favor of the Park Service river management plan developed at that period. He left the Museum of Northern Arizona and built a business as an environmental consultant. He devised fake rocks/boulders. He became rich and moved to Hawaii. Last time I saw him, probably 2001-02, he was all in favor of the status quo with motors. When you understand people and politics, how they get involved in things, what leads them to change their minds or keep their views the same, that's not surprising. There's a lot of different ways for people to react to issues. That was a disappointment, too. Carruthers in the 70s was fine, unlike Martin. He's different from Martin. But eventually they got to him, too, or the ideas did.

In balance it's a sad episode in environmental history. In the history of the national parks this will not be something that can be celebrated.

TM: It seems as though the national park system as an agency responsible for over 400 different, unique areas is trying to work a balance between preserving these resources and being dictated to by Congress through special interests. Grand Canyon legislation for the river that assisted in the Reagan-Watt transition. The overflights. Recent McCain and Reed, a little bit of legislation to help the overflights companies do more flights in the canyon. What are your thoughts on political special interest manipulation of the agency and its resource?

Jl: Loaded question. Let's take the overflights. Even though there were already attempts by the Park Service to do something about overflights in the 70s, it didn't become a major issue until the 1980s. It became a legislative issue, too. McCain was a central legislator in trying to control air traffic after there were a couple of accidents. Maybe his concern wasn't natural quiet, maybe his concern was more safety. He was a pilot. Today when you talk to McCain he's on the side of not putting pressure on the operators. When you look at the Hualapai situation, the situation down in the western end of the canyon, where land on the south bank is in the Hualapai Reservation. They have built a business. They, too, make choices. Their vision of the canyon is shown by the choices they make. You can ask, are the choices they make their own or are they heavily influenced by commercial interests who come in and say, you can do this, this and this and make money for your tribe. The amount of helicopter traffic in the western end of the canyon in this vicinity/this little area where the Hualapai have established take off points for helicopters. The situation there is so anti any kind of park/wilderness/natural scene experience. This is a mechanized/routinized/mass industrial tourism thing. You put your dollars into the turnstile, you shuttle along, you fly down, you're given a stale sandwich, you get back on, you fly out, you get out and get on a big motorboat that goes up and down the river for a few minutes, and then you get flown back to Las Vegas so you can spend the rest of your money. What can you say about something like that? There's nothing to do except that it is their vision of the Grand Canyon. Anybody who knows about that, anybody who's dealt with the overflight legislation and was involved, as McCain was in the mid-eighties with passing that legislation, trying to bring some balance/quiet back to the parks and now sees what's going on and how it's all turned out, would have to be heavily disappointed.

It's not something that I'm personally involved in so I'm hesitant to say why and how. It looks to me like it's the same kind of thing. The initial instinctive reaction of the river boat operators who ran rafts with motors in the 1968-69 period, their initial reaction was to form a protective organization which explicitly said, keep motors on the river. Politically there's no problem with understanding that. Philosophically it makes you wonder about human beings and their inability to improve the world. Sounds lame, but they were people who had a chance to make a difference. Martin was a person who had a chance to make a difference. McCain was a person who had a chance to make a difference. They don't do it. I don't mean make a difference in the sense that, Oh I don't know anything about this. These are people who knew something about it. Many of them deeply experienced it. They took a position that was a position for change. What is that about? The canyon offers you not just something about the history of parks but the history of how people deal with parks and makes you ask the question, what do they understand a park is? You can ask that question about park service people, superintendents. How many people have we met who are 20 or 30, enthusiastic, protect the parks, make sure that things don't get degraded, let people use the parks so they have a good time. Then when you talk to them 20 years later and they're superintendents, none of that is left. It's all about - we have to protect the concessionaires. We have to do all those rules and regulations which make it hard for people to enjoy their parks. We don't trust people to enjoy the parks. Interpretive services are probably the ones that have suffered the most in the park service over the years. I don't have the figures but we know just from watching, police

services are a boon in the parks. But what they contribute to a person's understanding and appreciation and enjoyment? How many park rangers lead groups of people down into the canyon or are stationed in the canyon to talk to people that come down?

I'm not sure that answered your question. The point was, to me, that the impact of commercial operations is, at least in the case of the canyon, I can document that it is antithetical to the principles of the Park Service Organic Law and the Wilderness Act. The acts/laws which supposedly govern the national park organization. The Grand Canyon and other ones, but particularly the Grand Canyon. It makes it difficult not to come to the conclusion that profit is more important than protection. We don't have to talk just about the Park Service. We see that in this conflict on the eastern end of the Grand Canyon where a developer comes along and says, I wanna do this. It seems like people say, let's consider this seriously. When it's obviously a stupid idea of no merit whatsoever. People should say, you do? and they should lynch him/tar and feather him. That's the proper response to that. But instead the Navajo tribe is "seriously considering it". Maybe they're just stringing them along, the Navajo are extremely clever. They say, let's see what we can get out of this guy.

It's a never ending problem. Parks are just like the whole west, targets. A huge sprawling land with buried riches/minerals with forests, with forage. By and large people came and stripped it. We have a few places left like forest wildernesses, parks. Maybe we can keep them protected.

TM: Is there anything else you'd like to add to this interview? Something else you'd like to make sure you cover?

Jl: The reason that I finally ended up using the blog form to write about the canyon is that I found trying to write a book... I wrote a book about the river controversy. It is over 400 pages long. It's not the time that it took. And I had a fair amount, not all, of the sources to tell the story. That was one small, important but small, issue as far as the Grand Canyon is concerned over, depending on how you count/who you include, the 100-200 years or more of its being something that people have talked about/tried to consider what to do with/tried to dispose of/tried to despoil/tried to protect. The whole point of the blog was, if I try and write a book that includes everything else, it would either be a massive series, which doesn't even interest me, or else it will be a massive book which doesn't interest me either. So the idea of the blog is, OK let's write about mining. There's this whole funny business going on about uranium prospecting because the price of uranium has gone up and that brings out the leeches. There are topics, they may not be connected except for the fact that they take place in and around the canyon. Therefore they contribute to what could be considered a comprehensive political history. How people have treated the canyon. What decisions they've made. What went into their making decisions. I can see that as a continuing project.

The development that's been proposed for the eastern end of the canyon at the confluence with the Little Colorado is a very separable issue from grazing leases on the Shivwitz Plateau which is an equally interesting issue. How come there isn't any grazing anymore? When the park was being expanded in the 1970s, grazing out there was one of the things we had to take into account. Now there isn't any. There's a story there to be told because it's human activity and human decisions. Some are Park Service decisions. It's still a lot of stuff. The reason I would write this is not that it's all one happy story showing how the Grand Canyon is worth protecting and people respond to it. There's a lot of that element in it. Particularly in the story about the dams and in the somewhat less intense story about expanding the park. And negatively in the story about the river and why motors and commercial interests dominate in the management of river traffic.

You asked about long into the future. There are several different landowners – the Federal government with different agencies, Forest Service, Park Service, Bureau of Land Management. And there are private landowners – the Havasupai, the Hualapai, the Navajo, the Hopi. All of them have quite different ideas about what to do with the Grand Canyon. How to relate to the Grand Canyon, what they can take out of the Grand Canyon, what they might do to protect the Grand Canyon, whatever. Those philosophies are all, no matter what the origin of the various owners, are all human beings. They are all different responses of human beings to this place. It is an interesting question and will continue to be. If you can somehow keep looking comprehensively, even though it's one at a time, at all of the issues that are dealt with by these different people at different times, you're going to get an evolving picture of how people react to one world environmental icon. Some place which is known around the world. I exaggerate, but I like to believe that's true. How do they react to it? What does that say about them and what does that say about human beings? What does it say about our ability to protect our environment, the environment that supports us? To me it's not a question of pessimism or optimism it's a continually interesting and evolving question.

TM: That's what you're trying to do with your blog? Explore that continually evolving question?

Jl: Yes, by looking at itsy bitsy pieces. The long section which I've carried up to about 1975 on the history of the park, where the park came from, why it has the boundaries it does, is a response on how the dominant, excuse the expression, 'white folks society'/its political legal structure, how it was used to protect and not quite protect the Grand Canyon. Protect having a certain legal meaning. But beyond that the sense that we all have when we look at it and say, no we don't want to build dams there. That's not right it doesn't belong there. Why does the park have the shape it does? So we can look at some place and know there isn't a highway going to be built through it/along it. Those are the strands I would try and draw out of the story. Like where did the park come from and why were the decisions made? I don't know that that always happens. Sometimes it's so easy to get caught up in telling the story and the details and forget that we have to say, what does this mean, why did these people behave this way, why do the commercial river operators fight wilderness? Is it just money in their pocket or are they afraid? Wilderness is a dangerous place. We don't want to have a wilderness or something might bite our rafts at night. Those questions are ones the canyon poses for us and will continue to pose for us. It's not a victim. It's often thought of as a target but the target is usually other people who have the right or the ability to stop somebody from doing something or encourage somebody from doing it. It's not that the Little Colorado and the Colorado are going to rise up and flak the developers of this terrible idea out in the east end. That's got to be other people. It's a question of people and their visions and what the canyon inspires in them or doesn't inspire in them.

TM: Thank you Jeff.

Jl: My pleasure, it's always fun to talk about the canyon with a knowledgeable person.

TM: I didn't have to say anything. This is good.