

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Abby Holcombe (AH), Kathy (KH), Peter (PH)

Interviewer: Tom Martin(TM)

Subject: Abby Holcombe, her mother Kathy and father Peter recount their self-support kayak trip through Grand Canyon in 2018

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TM: Today is February 3, 2018. This is a Grand Canyon oral history. We're in the home of Tom Martin and Hazel Clark. With us today are the Holcombe family. It's Peter, his wife Kathy and their daughter Abby. We had interviewed together a year ago, after Abby had completed a kayak journey through the Grand Canyon with her mother and father, the youngest female kayaker to go through Grand Canyon. The Holcombe's have just come back from another Grand Canyon river trip, where they did a self-support trip, carrying all their gear in their kayaks. Welcome back.

PH: Thank you. It's great to be here.

TM: I'm kind of curious to know all about this trip from soup to nuts.

PH: Gosh, since last year, you know, obviously I'm always applying for permits and trying to win the lottery and get lucky. I'm usually failing at that, but a leftover lottery came up and I decided let's try it again. We had some time this winter, so it was a good fit. I lost and then we kind of had switched gears. We're like, well, I guess we're not going to the Grand Canyon. So, we kind of had written that off because we had a busy spring planned, so it was our last window. Couple days later, we're sitting in our RV that we live in and I get a phone call. Kathy picks up my phone and she's like, "Oh, you're getting a call, says Grand Canyon National Park." I'm like, "Wow! What could that be, huh? That's kind of weird." So I answered the phone quickly and it's ranger Matt on there. He says, "Hey, we've had some further cancellations. I know you put-in for the date of January 19th. Would you be interested still in doing a trip?" I was like, "Kathy, are we still interested in doing a trip down the Grand Canyon?" She's like, "Uh, yeah." So I was like, "Yeah, give me a couple seconds. Let us talk, I'll call you right back."

TM: What date was that, do you remember?

AH: It was two weeks and two days before the trip.

PH: Two weeks, two days before, yeah.

TM: So, 16 days before launch.

PH: Exactly. We're in Colorado at this point. We'd just come over from the east coast, Paddling Tennessee and North Carolina. So, it was that kind of unexpected, you do the happy dance. We're like blown away and then it's like, "Uh oh, we got a lot to get together in two weeks and two days."

TM: Had you been thinking about doing a self-support trip? Was that your... You were thinking about that when you applied for the lottery? Or were you thinking okay it's going to be raft support, same again.

PH: This is kind of funny, too, I guess. I've had this dream of doing a solo Grand Canyon trip for a long time, so I'm always kind of putting in for that. That was kind of my idea when I entered these lotteries was I'd probably do my solo trip. Then we actually win a permit and the girls are like, well especially Abby, she's like, "There's no way you're going into the Grand Canyon without taking me with you." So I'm like, "Okay, well, if you're going, you wanna go?" Then Kathy was like, "Well yeah, if both of you are going, then I'm going." Quickly my solo trip kind of faded away, it became another family trip. I really like doing the self-support kayak. I think it's a great way to go down the river as a kayaker. I like the light and fast and being able to stay in little out of the way places. It's got its perks. Being a two-week out time frame, that was about all we really had planning to do. Trying to get on with... Get a bunch of rafters involved might've been a little too much.

TM: I'm gonna suggest that the trip last year was in smaller boats. Did you have bigger touring boats already?

PH: We do, yeah. We travel with a lot of kayaks on the back of our trailer. We used the Jackson Kayak Traverse's. Abby was in a 9 and Kathy and I were in the 10 foot. They're great. That was a boat that we're really looking forward to doing other trips with on other rivers in Idaho and Colorado and different places. We had them onboard anyways, so it was easy to... We had that part covered.

TM: Cool.

PH: Yeah. So, we won on our trip. Gosh, I don't know... Then we were talking to our friends Nick Troutman and Emily Jackson. Nick Troutman's a world champion kayaker. He's a Canadian but he's married into the Jackson Kayak family of Emily Jackson. Her father is Erik Jackson, who's a four-time world champion kayaker, previous Olympian, Olympic kayaker, and just kind of the godfather of modern day playboating and creek boating. Just an incredible character. They've become good friends of ours. We've talked for years about it'd be so great to get in the Canyon with them. They did one other trip, gosh, maybe 10/12 years ago when they first got married. It was a wedding gift to go down the Canyon. They had a raft supported trip and had a great time. Nick told me that if he ever got the opportunity to go into the Grand Canyon again, he was gonna drop everything and just go. Now he says this and then last year we invited him on our trip we did last year, and he couldn't go. He had some obligations for some other things that he had going on. He really, I think, kind of wished he could've made it. Then this year when we told him we were going... We kind of just told him we were going and like, "Are you guys inviting us?" We're like, "Yeah, sure, if you guys want to come, that'd be awesome."

TM: Were you thinking initially just the three of you to go?

PH: Yeah, originally we were considering that. I mean, it all happened so fast. Then when they said that they had interest, then it was like, that'd be a really great, strong group, and it'd be awesome. Just group dynamics wise. So that's what we ended up. We kind of settled on that and then we didn't really push to try to complicate it anymore only having two weeks. Well, by then, it was a week and a half out. So, they're scrambling, looking for airfare. Trying to figure out are they gonna come to Flagstaff and

meet us or are we gonna to do this out of Vegas or, you know, all the options. We decided they would fly into Vegas and we would pick them up there. Then we would go onto the Canyon from there.

TM: Cool. So, what were you thinking, Abby, about this journey now in a bigger, heavier boat?

AH: When we first got the permit, I literally sat in the RV and giggled for an hour. I was just so excited. I couldn't stop giggling. It was awesome.

TM: It was more than an hour.

AH: Maybe more than an hour. I was so excited but then I was like, "Oh my gosh, I am not gonna be able to take my other boat." It's a new boat that I hadn't paddled before and it was gonna be a lot of weight. I wasn't sure at first, I was kind of skeptical. I was able to take it down another river to test it out. It felt like a really good boat, I could control it. I was like, "Okay, I totally wanna do this. I love the Canyon, this boat seems great." I was a little hesitant at first, but it turned out really good.

TM: So, you hadn't done a self-support kayak trip before, or had you?

AH: No, this is... Oh, no, no. I'd done one self-support kayak trip before.

TM: But not in such big water then?

AH: Yeah.

KH: So, our self-support trip. She did her first self-support trip when she was 8, but she only had to carry her teddy bear and the first aid kit in her boat.

TM: Those things are important.

KH: Peter and I carried everything else. This one, she was gonna have to paddle a big boat and carry all of her own gear and some of the group gear as well. So this was a little bit different than the other self-support trip she had been on before.

TM: So, you loaded the boat up and got it on the water to see what it would feel like.

AH: Yup. I couldn't decide what I wanted to pack and we were kind of scrambling, so I filled my boat up with water and paddled it down the river with like 3" of water.

TM: What a great idea.

AH: Trying to make the weight.

TM: You mean just like in containers or just filled the boat with water?

AH: I just dumped it in, yeah. [laughing]

TM: And so, that would've been sloshing around. That was a live load versus when you pack things in there, they don't move.

AH: Exactly. And it still felt really easy with all the water in it, so I was like, "It has to be better with all my gear packed in it."

TM: Wow, okay. Kathy, you, what were you thinking, because you hadn't done any...

KH: Yeah. When we did the Canyon last year, I paddled all but thirty miles in a kayak, but I was nervous the entire trip. Every time we dropped into a rapid, I was anxious and afraid. I did fine in it, but it was a little nerve-wracking for me. So, it actually took me a week before I decided that I actually might be able to do a self-support trip, because there's some places that you can't walk around rapids. There's some places where you can't walk around big rapids. I was like, "Oh, I don't know. I don't know if I can do this." I did a little soul searching for about a week and I was like, "I'm not gonna pass up this amazing opportunity. I can totally do this. I'm just gonna go for it. I have a dry suit. I have a great crew going with me. It's safe. I may not do it in the best style, but I can get down here." Then when I found out Emily and Nick were going, we paddled with them so much. I call them, the whole Abby, Peter, Emily, and Nick, my 'force field of awesomeness' because they just make me brave and bold. So I just was like, "I'm gonna go for it, see how it goes." I've done a lot of self-support trips but never on big, pushy water for 15 days.

TM: Okay. Okay. And then what happened?

PH: Well, we made it to Vegas. We met up with the rest of the crew. Nick and Emily flew in.

TM: Did they fly in with their boats? How did that happen? How did they—

PH: I had an extra boat in Colorado. We were in Colorado at the time when we got the news, so once I knew they were coming, I just threw an extra boat on the trailer that a friend of ours was storing at his place. So that worked really good. Emily still needed a boat, so she had her boat shipped from the Jackson Kayak factory to Desert Adventures in Boulder City. We picked it up there once we got in town.

TM: Great.

PH: Then they flew in and we had... Gosh, the timing was so crazy. They'd been up in Canada seeing family. We basically came in and we had an afternoon as a group to do any last-minute things, which was a little tight. We made a trip to REI and bought some last-minute things and then spent, gosh, it was probably till midnight we were out there in this campground right off the side of Lake Mead packing our boats for the first time with everything, food and everything. We'd all been there before and done that before, so it went pretty smooth. But, you know, it's still a... I think it was the longest trip they'd ever done as a continuous self-support. I'd done one other Grand Canyon trip so, we were kinda... It's just like once you're in the Canyon, you know, you pack your boat. Every time you pack it, you get a little more efficient at packing it and things just fit better and you figure out your system. But yeah, we threw it all together and went to bed late that night. Then shuttled up to Lees Ferry the next morning.

TM: Got there mid-afternoon-ish?

PH: It was probably about 3:00 by the time we got there. We made like 5 stops trying to find alum. Amazing how hard it is to find alum in places. Thankfully, we didn't need our alum on the trip, but we were glad to have it. We needed a groover wrench. We do groovers a little differently self-supporting. It's basically a PVC pipe that's got a cap on one end that's sealed and the other end has a screw fitting, a clean-out fitting. Being in the Canyon, if you get sand and grit in those threads, it's really hard to open your groover, and if you gotta go, you gotta go. So it's good to have what we call a groover wrench. A lot of times, we've made them out of a piece of plastic. You cut a square, I think it's 2 x 2 hole in it. We didn't have time to make them, so I ended up going to Harbor Freight and all these places trying to find something that I could use that was light and compact. I didn't wanna carry a huge wrench. We ended up finally finding these strap wrenches. I don't know if you've ever used a strap wrench, but it worked

really good as a groover wrench. So that took us some time driving up there. We kinda had still some errands to sort out. It was probably 3:00 when we got to Lees Ferry.

TM: And your launch date was the next day?

PH: The next morning, yeah. We checked in with ranger Peggy. She was awesome. She remembered Abby from the previous year, and that was really exciting. We all caught up with her. She checked out all of our gear and was nice enough to go ahead and do our orientation that afternoon, so we got that out the way. Then we hung out right there at the boater's beach and went up to the Marble Canyon Lodge and did dinner. Those folks were happy enough, or willing enough, to drive us back down because we didn't have a car at that point. We were dropped off there.

TM: So your shuttle was gone?

PH: Our shuttle was gone, so we were kind of like committed at that point. They gave us a ride back down. Went to sleep and the next morning, we got up and finished packing our boats and off we went.

TM: What were you thinking?

AH: I was really excited. Last time, I was really nervous, on our last trip. I was like really anxious about the big rapids, not knowing what to expect, but this time I went in with so much more confidence. I was just so stoked to get in the Canyon.

PH: When you ran the Paria Riffle, what were you thinking was different about your boat and your placing that boat versus last year?

AH: I paddle a playboat, that's a 5-foot long light boat. It's really easy to maneuver around and you can turn it with like half a paddle stroke. The Traverse, since it was so much heavier and it was a bigger boat than what I'm used to, it took a little more strength and oomph to turn it around. But it was way easier than I expected it would be. It maneuvered really well for what I thought it would be.

TM: Easy like, "Okay, this boat has momentum where my playboat doesn't."

AH: For sure. I had so much more momentum, it was awesome.

TM: Cool. What was in your boat, Abby, what was in your boat?

AH: I had couple different bags. I had my food in the front of my boat. I had 2 bags full of food. It was all dehydrated food, Backpacker's Pantry. I had some cheeses and stuff like that to eat. Then behind my seat, I had a lunch bag. That was all my lunch for the day and my breakfast, typically. Then in the hatch, the back hatch of my boat, I had all my camping gear. I had my Thermarest, my sleeping bag, my pillow, all that stuff. My bivy sack, I didn't bring a tent. I also had my clothes back there and my journal and stuff like that.

TM: Cool.

AH: Yeah.

PH: Then she had some fire pan parts.

AH: Mhmm. Yeah.

TM: Okay Kathy, what were you carrying in your boat? Same everything? Food in the front?

KH: Yes.

TM: Little lunch food right behind your seat?

KH: Yes, exactly, and I had the fire blanket in my boat and I had pieces of the fire pan. We had some collapsible buckets that I was carrying.

AH: I had a collapsible bucket, too.

KH: First aid kit. We distributed the group gear. Everybody had to carry a little bit of the group gear, and then we each had our own personal food and camping. So we had 2 bow bags and then 3 big bags in the back. Then stoves and fuel, all of that.

TM: And Peter, anything different in your boat? I mean, what were you—what did you...

PH: My normal setup is my bow's split into 2 sections. There's 2 bags in the bow. One side is the second half of the trip's food. I don't even dig into that until the first week is over or I'm running out of something. That just stays there. The other half was extra clothes, some repair kit stuff, just kind of like random little things. My raincoat, things I didn't think I'd need but I wanted to have it somewhere. In the bow is the least easy to access. It's a little bit of a pain but you can still get in there in a couple minutes. On the side of my seat, I had a breakdown/a folding chair, kind of like a Helinox chair. Just kind of nice. Under my seat, I had a break down paddle that fit and slid between the foam and the hull, so it rides back there. In my lap, I had a camera bag and batteries and stuff like that. Behind my seat I had a lunch bag, like Abby, that had pretty much all my lunch stuff for the whole trip in one bag. Beside that I had another little smaller Watershed bag that had some—like I keep my stocking cap and a vest and some stuff when we got out for lunch if it's cold and I wanted to throw something on, I had it. I had a throw rope and a whole pin kit, that stuff fit back in there. Trying to think. Seems there's a couple other things. Water bottle, stuff like that, would all go behind my seat. In the rear hatch, I had one big Watershed bag that had all my camp stuff. My puffy jacket, my sleeping bag, my Thermarest. Anything I needed once I got to camp. I could grab that one bag and just walk off in the rocks and set up my little camp. I had a tarp. We had a big first aid kit. Everybody carried a little first aid, but we had the big comprehensive first aid kit in my boat. I had extra groover stuff. I had a couple rolls of toilet paper and some group stuff like that. I had parts of the fire pan. I had the handles to the breakdown paddle. All that stuff was in the back of my boat. That was most of it.

TM: And of course, you had—

PH: A solar panel. I took a solar panel for charging camera gear and keeping our inReach.

TM: You had Nick and Emily along as well, so they would've had a little group gear stuff in their stuff.

PH: Yeah.

TM: So, your boats. Without you in them, how much do you think they weighed?

PH: I would love to know. We talked about that a lot, we wished we had a scale.

KH: I would estimate a hundred pounds.

AH: Yeah.

PH: Hundred... Mine was pretty much heavier than, I think, anybody's.

KH: That's true.

PH: Mine might have been closer to 120. It was pretty heavy. It was hard just to maneuver it on land. Take a couple people just to slide it up on the beach. So, it was pretty heavy.

TM: Alright. So, I get the sense that these are fairly momentum-rich craft.

PH: Yes.

TM: If you're rowing a raft, you have a lot of momentum, especially the big 18-footer with people and all kinds of junk. There's a lot of 'mo' in that machine.

PH: Exactly.

TM: So, you start sacrificing the ability to maneuver for momentum.

PH: That's exactly it. Last year in an empty kayak, we could turn on a dime and put our boat anywhere we wanted to and the big wave might just flip us on our head. But in these big boats, you can't turn as easy, so you paddle them a little more like you would a raft. You're gonna line it up and try to get on your line and just keep that momentum going in one direction. But, when you hit those big waves, it just pushed right through them. We paddled right through some of the bigger holes.

TM: When you roll, and I'm assuming unintended rollage happens, that's gotta be a different boat to roll back up.

PH: Actually, you'd be surprised. They roll quite easily.

AH: Yeah. I was gonna say, it might be easier than my playboat.

PH: Because it's still the same displacement of water and you're rolling it on the long axis so they roll pretty easy. It's surprising. Yeah, you'd think that it would be harder, but it's not really.

TM: Did you find that as well, Kathy? It was just super easy to pop it back up?

KH: Absolutely, yeah. I was pleasantly surprised. I tucked my groover behind my seat in my boat, everybody else had their groovers riding on the back hatch cover, because I thought it offered a little more resistance trying to roll back up.

TM: Oh, interesting.

KH: So, I tucked mine back in behind. That was the big difference between how we all carried the groover. And I didn't have any troubling rolling, it was amazing.

TM: Cool. Cool. Very cool. So then down below the Paria, Cathedral Wash, and then you get, eventually, down to Badger, your first rapid of any size and consequence. Then what happened?

AH: I looked at the rapid and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, this is so much bigger than I remember."

TM: Did you scout it? Did you get out on the shore and walk up or were just paddling in, going, 'Okay, this is a little left of center here and here we go.'

AH: Yup, yup. Kinda just—we'd read and ran. I remember going through the big waves. "Oh my gosh, this is so big," but I loved it. I loved getting back into the big wave trains and all that stuff. It was really cool.

TM: Kathy, you?

KH: It was big. I was hoping it would look smaller the second time around and it definitely didn't. I actually really loved the momentum of the big boat. I felt like I could just charge through anything. Our boats had a skeg on them which helped me hold my line a little bit. We had a little dropdown skeg. You pulled a lever and it dropped a little fin at the backend of our boat. It just helped you hold your line so that if a big wave crashed on top of me, it didn't knock me sideways, I could just kind of punch right through it with the momentum.

TM: Wow.

KH: Once I figured that out and I got used to that, I loved it. In fact, at the end of the trip when our boats were lighter, I was kind of missing the extra weight because I loved just bombing through the rapids and punching through everything. It was interesting, I didn't anticipate that, but that's how it worked out.

TM: So Badger worked well. That was good. Then there's more miles of flat water, and then here comes Soap Creek. Soap Creek's kind of like Badger. Sorta same, similar size, water-wise, but then you head into the Roaring Twenties where—well it's House Rock on top of that. Where you really need to kind of do something, like, you know, move to the right. How did that go?

PH: It went great.

KH: For almost everybody.

PH: Well, no, it went great for you, too. It's funny though, our last trip, we camped at Soap Creek and this year we had lunch at Soap Creek. That gives you a little idea of the different timeline we're on and amount of miles we're covering. That was interesting. That was kind of neat. We got into the Roaring Twenties and it was wonderful and we just are just having a blast, you know. We're just reading and running and just really enjoy being in the Canyon and enjoying the waves. Then we get to House Rock. It's a big one, but it's not hard in a kayak. It's a pretty easy rapid to stay right and avoid that big wave hole. We all did that really well. In fact, Nick, Nick Troutman, he went right through it on purpose. He just gutted the whole thing and just ducked under and just melded with the water and popped up on the back side and just paddled away.

TM: Wow.

PH: Kathy did really great. I don't know if you want to expound.

KH: I was nervous about all the big rapids. Abby and Peter were like, "Oh yeah, you got this! This is easy, just stay right, you'll catch the eddy at the bottom, no problem." We did that and we got down to the bottom and it was great. Then they all peeled out into the big wave train on the side of the eddy and were gone like a rocket. I'm sitting in the eddy like, "Oh my gosh, okay." I kind of wanted to paddle out the back end of the eddy and not pull out into the wave train. I hesitated for a second right on the eddy

line and got flipped right in the big, swirly, boiling water. Couldn't roll there so I swam and everybody is way downstream from me. It was a little intimidating for a minute because I was getting pulled down by the whirlpools right there, but then I was like, "You know what, I'm okay. They're gone. I'm gonna self-rescue." I had ahold of my boat, I had ahold of my paddle, I'm swimming. Once I finally got across the eddy line, I looked down and I see Peter and Emily sprinting, trying to come back up and help me, but they're fighting against the current. Basically, I pretty much self-rescued all the way till about 10 feet from the bank and then Emily was there and she pushed my boat the rest of the way in. It was a funny thing. You would think that would've been kind of demoralizing, but at that moment, I was like, "I got this! I self-rescued in one of the big rapids. I'm fine, everything's good, I got this." After that, I was like, "Okay, I got the swim out of the way, so now let's go kayak," and that's what I did after that. It was kind of a liberating thing for me to get through that and take care of it myself for the most part. I was good after that. That kind of was the end of my nerves on the rest of the trip, really.

PH: It really was.

KH: After that, the rapids, I just charged into them and smiled and laughed and had fun. It was amazing.

TM: What do you do when your boat's full of water? You get to shore, okay you're on shore, okay that's fine, I got a paddle, that's fine, I got a boat full of water that in theory, now, is testing the water resistant-ness of all my bags. Everything in there now is getting really pushed by the water. You gotta get all the water out. How do you do that?

KH: We had a sponge. We dumped out what we could. We kind of lifted either end back and forth like a teeter-totter.

PH: Which is hard do with a 100+ pound boat.

KH: Yeah, so we teeter-tottered most of the water out. I had a sponge and sponged the rest of it. But we have Watershed drybags. They are indestructible, pretty much, so I wasn't worried about my gear being wet. The one thing that did happen was our only bottle of bleach was in the back of my kayak and it was gone, on the very first day. I was like, "Oh no. I hope this turns out okay." That was really the only catastrophe of the whole thing.

TM: So, you get back in your boat and you head out to this... The bottom of House Rock is a hydraulic jet with a very strong return coming in on the right. Dories can flip in that hydraulic jet there just because of what the current is doing.

PH: Friction, yeah.

TM: Absolutely. Back in the boat, you're all set and ready to go, how did you interface with that jet to get back out of there?

KH: I decided to stay away from the jet, cause that's what happened the first time. So I actually attained up the right side, where the water is pushing back up the eddy. I just attained and paddled hard out the bottom on the right-side.

TM: And exited out the bottom. Very cool.

KH: Yeah.

TM: And this was still day 1?

PH: Yeah.

TM: Wow. It was afternoon of day 1?

KH: Yeah.

TM: Wow, great, and then what happened?

AH: We went in to the little ledge camp.

PH: Yeah. I should've done my homework before we talked here, because some of the camps we'd roll in late and leave early and some of them, I'm probably a little rusty without looking in the book to see which ones are where. It was a great little ledge camp on the left.

TM: Nice. This is just down below House, not far.

PH: Yeah, you probably know it well.

TM: There's some nice camps down there on the left, just above Boulder Narrows where the giant rock is in the middle of the river.

AH: Yup.

PH: Yeah, it's actually right upstream from that.

TM: Yeah. That's nice. It's a nice little camp.

PH: So, that worked good. First night, it was getting cold. You know, this is January. We had been really watching the weather, I had been and I was hearing reports of people, "75° in the Canyon. It's like 40-50 at night." I was all ready. We had brand new 0-degree sleeping bags and at the last minute I was like, "Kathy, I'm not bringing this big 0-degree sleeping bag. I'm gonna bring my 20°." It's been so warm, the last thing I want is to be like sweating the whole way through the Canyon. The first night we get there and it literally... We didn't have a thermometer but I'm guessing it was at least 20, it could've been in the teens. I was like "What have I done?" [laughing]

TM: Ice in your water bottles and...

AH: Yeah. My water bottle froze solid.

PH: Yeah. That was the first night. It was like, "Okay, well, this is what we got. We're gonna make the best of it." I'm gonna sleep in both my puffy jacket, my vest. I'm wearing my one-piece drysuit liner, the Kokatat Habanero liner. A wool shirt under that. I'm like fully dressed and in my sleeping bag with a hat, socks, the whole deal. I felt more like I was mountaineering than going down a river. That's how we spent the next week was pretty much just sleeping in everything we had. Abby was smart enough. She did bring her 0-degree sleeping bag, so she was a little better off.

AH: Yeah.

PH: But Kathy and I both opted for our 20's at the last second. Kind of regretted that, but we survived.

KH: We did have a fire that first night. I was pretty cold after a swim. So we did have a fire and warmed up that night. Everything was dry, so that wasn't a big deal. The fire was great, but that was the only fire we had on the whole trip. We found that your front half is warm and your back half is cold when you're sitting around a fire and it was just too cold. It was better to crawl in our sleeping bags and just kind of go to bed...

PH: At 6:30.

KH: ...a little after dark.

TM: Sleeping a lot. So, that's an 18-mile day/19 mile day. The next day is the Roaring Twenties and that will be a hard day. Then a ton of flatwater for day, after day, after day until you get down to the Inner Gorge. How did that day go, Abby? 24 ½, 25 mile? Tiger Wash, you know, and, and, and.

AH: It was really cool to go back. I remember last time on the Roaring Twenties, our first trip, I would fill with anxiety at the top of each rapid. I would see the big splashes coming up and I'd just panic. I got through it, everything was fine. It ended up being my favorite rapids of our trip. This time I went in and I was confident and I was happy. Just relaxed going into them. I just had the time of my life in the Roaring Twenties. It was really cool to see the progress in the past year from when I did it the first time and I was terrified, to the second time when I was really calm and relaxed and in control.

TM: Were you comfortable?

AH: Yes, very much so, yeah.

TM: And Kathy, you?

KH: I was pretty nervous going into them. Basically I followed Abby through the Roaring Twenties this time. She would just... She'd take a look at the top of the rapid, drop down in there on the rollercoaster, and... Last year as a mom, I was a little bit worried about her in that teeny, tiny boat and huge rapids. This year, she was so much better, it was amazing to watch her. That allowed me to focus on me a little bit more. I loved the Roaring Twenties this time. They were big, but I kind of made friends with the fives and sixes this year. They were fun and I was like, "Oh, these aren't anything to be scared of. This is like being on a rollercoaster." You just drop down those huge, green, roly waves. Things would come crashing from the side, but with a good brace, everything was okay. Was just really fun. I made it past some rapids that I had trouble with last year and I didn't have any trouble this year. So it was really confidence inspiring. It was super fun.

PH: Yeah. It was a blast.

AH: I think one of my favorite moments in the Roaring Twenties is when we're running Georgie. I was in the back of the group and I was watching everyone go down. All their boats just went flying on that lateral in the center of the river. It was really cool to watch everyone go flying. It was really cool.

KH: I caught air on Georgie. My 100-pound boat rocketed up in the air. It was fun.

AH: It was really cool.

TM: Then suddenly, you're at South Canyon and it's like a different river now. It's a lots of flatwater, and cruising. Where did you end up that night?

PH: It's in the book.

TM: Eminence, Nankoweap?

PH: I think that was the night we were trying to go to Nautiloid. Is that right?

TM: Yup. So that would've been below South, below Red Wall.

PH: No, am I wrong on that?

KH: We were gonna meet Izzy at Eminence, that's where she was, and we ended up camping like 3 miles upstream from that.

TM: Okay. Tatahatso is in there, but there's a ton of—

KH: That was it.

PH: That was it, Tatahatso.

TM: There's a ton of small little camps in there as well, that a group of 5 could postage into pretty easily.

KH: Yeah.

PH: So we rolled in kind of late, set up camp and...

TM: Well, that's a good day.

PH & KH & AH: Yeah!

PH: It's amazing in a kayak how we could do... A 20-mile day, really wasn't anything. Twenty-five's starting to feel like something. Thirties, feeling like a pretty long day.

TM: Where do you feel that? In your back? In your arms? Is it just..?

KH: All of those.

AH: In my shoulders.

PH: It just depended on how much moving water we had on the various days. But when there was some good rapids, it just kept us moving. Our average was really pretty fast.

TM: Pretty good. Yeah. So Izzy, you had boated with her last year.

KH & PH & AH: Mhmm.

TM: She's on the river ahead of you and you caught up with her there at...

KH: We caught up with her after Eminence. She had done a layover...

AH: At Tanner.

PH: Tanner, that's right. We stayed at Tanner with her.

KH: So on our third day... She launched 4 days before us and then we caught up with her, on our...

PH: I think it's our fourth day we caught up with her.

KH: Okay.

PH: I think so.

TM: Well, you could've gone from Eminence to Tanner in a day if you're...

KH: I think we did.

TM: ...going from Tatahatso to Tanner.

PH: Yeah, I think that's what we did.

TM: Pass Quagunt and Little Colorado River, that's nice, and...

KH & PH: Yup. Yeah.

TM: ...there you go.

PH: Exactly.

TM & PH: Long day.

PH: We caught them and it was awesome because we're only missing one of our team members from last year, Doug Haines from Idaho. It was Izzy and Izzy's uncle Ron. It was like a reunion on the river, it was really neat to be in that same place and run into them again. It's always fun on the river when you see people you know. We knew they were gonna be there, so we were... We kind of had it planned. We didn't know exactly which night we were gonna meet up with them, based off of the other hikes and stuff that we wanted to do. But that was awesome. They had a big group. I don't think they had a full trip, but there were at least...

AH: 14.

P: 14 or so.

TM: Okay. 5 boats, 4 boats, 4-5?

PH: I think it was 5 or 6 boats. All rafts. One guy was in a pack raft.

TM: Wow, great.

PH: Which is kind of cool, yeah. He ended up hiking out mid-way. It was the plan. But, yeah, it was great. So, after being this tight little group of 5 now for 3/4 nights, to come into this camp of 14... At first it was like, "Woah, hold on, there's a lot of people here." But then it was awesome. They started breaking out guitars and drums and banjos. They had some really talented musicians. We just hung out around their campfire and listened to them play music. They ate a really nice... I think they had spaghetti and meatballs or something and we had our little Backpacker Pantry's we're eating out of our bags. But it was awesome, you know. It was really great.

KH: We sent snacks ahead with Izzy. So she actually had ham and sweet potatoes, which was such a luxury for us. And she had Oreos.

AH: Oreos. I was so excited. I was like, "We need to see Izzy and get my birthday cake Oreos."

KH: And Pringles and they had bacon for breakfast. So it was like this just rejuvenating thing to be around all of them and have a regular groover. It was great.

PH: Yeah. It was good.

TM: Cool. A little augmented.

KH: Right.

TM: So you're right on top of the gorge. You're at Tanner. You're gonna run Unkar, warm up a little bit, Nevills, warm up a little bit. Then you're going to run into Hance and Sockdolager and Grapevine and be on your way down towards Horn and et cetera.

PH: A funny thing that happened. We peel out of the campground there at Tanner and there's that first...Tanner Rapid, I guess. I had my book, my Grand Canyon river guide, on the deck of my kayak and it was just under the bungee cords. I kept thinking at some point, maybe I need to either put this under my deck, or whatever. But I was maybe too lazy to mess with that, so I just kind of let it ride under the bungees. It'd been fine all the way through everything so far. I go through one big wave and another, and then I get down to the bottom and we all kind of reconnect. Izzy's group, we're starting to kind of like pull away from them. I looked down and I'm like, "Something's different." I'm like, "My book's gone, my map's gone!" I'm like, "Hey you guys see the map? Look around for the map." It's nowhere to be seen. So Emily and I eddy out. Everybody else, too, to some degree, but we gotta actually attain back upstream. We're just scanning the river. Emily's on one side, I'm on the other. We're looking all around and it's nowhere to be seen. Ten minutes we're looking. Then finally Izzy's group starts coming through and I'm like, "Hey, did you guys see a map?" They're like, "Um, no, no, no, no." Maybe you wanna go from your perspective.

KH: Yeah, so my favorite thing on the river. Every morning, I look at the map. I look at all the things we have to do. I kind of get my head around okay, we're gonna have some big rapids, then we're gonna have some flatwater. That just helps me maintain composure throughout the whole experience. At night I look, "Oh my gosh, where are we gonna camp the next night." It's just kind of a thing that I really enjoy. So when Peter said that he lost the map, I lost it completely. "You lost the map?! How are we gonna know where to go?" [laughing]

PH: "Uhh, it's a river. We go downstream!"

KH: I was like, "Oh my gosh, I'm never gonna know what's coming." Nick paddles up next to me and is doing everything he can to help me regroup, which was quite an undertaking. Meanwhile Emily and Peter are looking for the map and Abby's laughing hysterically at me freaking out about the whole thing. After about a 15-minute ordeal, Emily and Peter returned with the map. Thank goodness they had found it.

PH: The last raft in Izzy's group, they said they were going through the wave trains and they see this white thing float up. They went for it and it went back down deep. They just kind of hung out for a minute and it came back up and they were able to grab it.

TM: Wow.

PH: So, I paddled up to them, was the last raft. I was like, "Gosh, I think we lost our map." They're like, "Oh, does it look like this?" I'm like, "Yeah! It looks just like that. Is that mine?" "Yeah, yeah, we found it back there." So we got it back. That saved the day.

TM: The map is not the territory. The next time, you need to go without a map.

KH: Nick and I talked about that and Nick was like, "You know what, Kathy? You should try to not read the map for the rest of the trip." I was like, "Well, I don't know if I can do that, but I can definitely not read the descriptions of the rapids." So, for the rest of the trip, I didn't read a single description of a rapid, other than just looking at it to see how far we were gonna go and to see if it was gonna be a really big water day or if it was gonna be a flatwater day. I worked really hard on that. I came a long way in that regard.

PH: She did. Yeah. Take it as it comes.

KH: Yeah, I think that actually helped overall in my experience. I was focused more on just taking each step as it occurred.

TM: I can find it helpful in the evening when we're having dinner. Because that's typically when a big group is all together. The only time you're gonna all be there is when you're having dinner. Talk about the next day, what's gonna happen, so that everybody has that least understanding of the day. If they want to listen in, they can. If they don't, they don't have to. That is kind of helpful, so I get that where you're coming from.

KH: Yeah, yeah. It was good. It was a good thing that happened all the way around after the initial panic it all worked out fine.

TM: Cool, very cool. So Tanner, then you're gonna pull ahead of Izzy's group.

PH: Yup.

TM: And there's some big stuff coming up.

PH: Yeah.

TM: Did you scout Hance or did you just run it?

AH: Yeah, we scouted Hance.

TM: So, was that your first scout, then, from the shore?

PH: I think so, yeah.

AH & KH: Yeah.

PH: First one.

KH: We hit Hance close to the end of the day. It was later in the afternoon whenever we hit Hance. When I looked at that one, the water was higher. We saw a line that looked like I thought I could do it, but there was one place where there... We were gonna run the left side. There were some rocks there that I just wasn't quite sure about and it looked like it would be a really long swim from that point. So I let Nick run my boat through Hance. That was the first one that I walked around. I just decided it didn't

really impact my trip either way if I walked or ran it. It was late in the afternoon, it was cold, and I was like, "Okay, just take my boat and then I'll be ready for everything else."

TM: Cool, and that's an easy walk, more or less.

KH: Yeah, exactly, and Nick loved running twice through Hance. So it was good for everybody.

PH: Yeah, definitely.

TM: Cool, cool.

PH: And then I led Abby and Emily brought up the rear through Hance.

TM: And that was good?

AH: Yeah. As we were dropping in, I was excited. It didn't seem that big and scary to me and I felt like really stoked to do it with confidence. Emily's at the lip, I turned around and looked back at her and she's like, "Da dun, da dun, da dun." It was the funniest thing ever. [laughing]

PH: There was more water in Hance than last year. Which was really nice.

AH: The right line was deeper.

PH: Yeah. We ran that left side. It was a little more meaty and a little more covered up. It was good.

TM: Yeah, the history guys are like, "Give me thirty thousand or I'm going home."

PH: Really, yeah, okay.

TM: I mean, the higher it gets, the different it... They don't want to deal with rocks and all kinds of junk. It's just different. So yeah, it's just fascinating. So, it's late in the day, you needed to camp somewhere down below there.

AH: We camped right after Phantom on the right.

TM: Oh, so you guys boogied all the way down Grapevine, Sockdolager.

AH: Mhmm.

TM: Boogied all the way down.

PH: Is that true, yeah? I'm trying to think here.

AH: Because we were gonna do... Because we went to Phantom that day.

TM: That would make sense from Tanner.

AH: We're talking about doing...

PH: That's right. We went to Phantom late. We were hanging out in the little dining hall there and they actually kicked us out. So it must've been almost 6:00. When they're getting ready for dinner like 5:45.

TM: Yeah, they have to get ready for dinner so that...

PH: So yeah, they kicked us out.

AH: And we were at high water.

PH: Honestly, it was really nice going in the little... Normally, every time else I've been to Phantom, we sat out the picnic tables outside, but this time it was so cold. It felt really good to sit inside for a minute and warm up a little bit. Although it was a nicer afternoon, so it wasn't like it was super cold, but it was nice to kind of just be inside and warm up a little bit.

TM: There's a real fascinating topography thing happening for Winslow to the east of us, into the little Colorado River gorge, into the Grand Canyon, that is a cold air trap.

PH: Okay. I believe it.

TM: It might seem sunny and warm in Flagstaff, but you can drive into the fog on your way to Winslow or to Lees Ferry or Page. So some of that's what you're dealing with. It could be this geographical cold air trap where you're like, "Wow, why is it so cold? It's nice and sunny, why is it so cold?"

KH & PH: Yeah.

KH: It felt like that.

TM: Yeah, so that's something people need to be thinking about in the winter. Okay, so then, just below Phantom on the right there's a camp, just below Pipe Creek. Kind of hard pull in there. The water's kind of boogying along the shore, but no big deal.

KH: No big deal.

PH: No big deal. It's right there above where the hiking trail comes on the other side. Was that the Kaibab Trail?

KH: That or Bright Angel.

TM: You might have camped someplace else.

PH: We were just down from Phantom, like you literally...

KH: It was a mile down.

TM: Under the silver bridge?

PH: A mile down, yup.

KH: Yup.

PH: Exactly, and there's like a cobble bar.

TM: Oh yeah, and you can see the trail and people are going up into Pipe Creek there.

PH & KH: Exactly. Yeah.

TM: Across the river and up the way.

PH: Which trail is that?

TM: That's the Bright Angel Trail.

PH: Bright Angel Trail, okay, okay. I know the river better than the trails.

TM: That's good. You got more to do yet. It's a 1.2 million acres, so...

PH: I know.

TM: ...get ready to get into backpacking.

PH: Yeah.

TM: Alright, so camping there. That means that first thing in the morning, you're gonna run Horn Creek.

KH & PH: Yes.

TM: And the water's gonna be a little lower, because the water's gonna drop at night, and it's gonna slowly be coming back up.

KH & PH: Yup. Exactly.

TM: Did you scout that or did you just go?

KH: Nope. Abby and Peter said, "Oh, Horn's super easy."

AH: We scouted Horn.

PH: We kind of do what we call boat scouting. So, we're kind of like at the top, and we'll...

AH: We scouted that. Nick fell down.

KH: Oh yeah, maybe.

PH: So yeah, that was the case. We did. Nick was ahead of us a little bit. He had jumped out of his boat, climbed up on one rock. He didn't really walk down there or anything, but he climbed up on a boulder, got a glimpse of it, then jumped back in his boat about the same time we're all there together, and we're like, "Okay, we'll go. We got it figured out." I remembered it in my head and I think Abby did, too.

AH: That was Grapevine.

PH: Think Abby...

KH: You guys remembered it, and pretty much there's that huge lateral on the right of Horn.

TM: There's a big wall there.

PH & KH: Yeah.

TM: There's all that munchy junk over there.

KH: Yup, and then they're like, "Okay, you're just gonna split the horns. Hammer to the left. No problem, you got this one." That didn't happen that way for me. I went right into that huge lateral on the right. I was paddling and paddling and paddling, trying to get away from it, and finally I was like I'm not gonna miss this, so I just tee'd up to it and it knocked me all the way up and over backwards.

PH: Wow.

KH: I was upside down. I rolled right back up and I was like, "Woohoo, I'm up! Let's go!" Then there's all these big waves coming. I think that was probably the minute on the whole trip where everything changed, where I was like. "Oh, if I can roll in here, I got this." So I paddled through Horn. As soon as I rolled up, I was just yelling and cheering and everybody turned around to look at me like, "Are you okay?" I was just celebrating. I was so excited that I had rolled. That was kind of a game changer for me.

TM: Cool.

KH: Yeah.

PH: That was a big deal. It was good.

TM: So, below there is Granite, maybe?

AH & PH: Yeah.

AH: I was really nervous for Granite because last time... It wasn't a bad run or anything, I just flipped twice, but it really scared me cause I wasn't really used, at the time, to being upside down. So I was a little nervous for that, especially with this new bigger boat. We got out and we scouted. I almost like... I looked... I remember I got up on a rock and I saw the rapid for the first time and I was just shocked. I was like, "This isn't the rapid I remember." I remembered it being huge and scary. This seems little and not that intimidating. So I was like, "Okay, let's go run it." So we ran it and I flipped. I rolled up and it was fine. Maybe one of these days I'll be able to run Granite up-upright, but until then. It was pretty fun.

PH: Yes, she did great.

TM: If you're in your boat and you're upright in the tail waves in Grand Canyon, it's considered a good run. Just so you know.

AH: Yup.

TM: You get thrown out and you get back in and you're in the boat and you're cruising along, you're good. So don't be worried about that. I mean, it's just fine.

AH & PH: Yup, yup.

TM: And boy it's Hermit, which is a fun ride.

AH: It was so big and so fun.

PH: Hermit's amazing.

KH: It was so big.

AH: I think we hit Granite and Hermit at high water, because Granite was pretty washed out from when we were there last time and Hermit was really, really big.

TM: Cool.

PH: Hermit's probably my favorite.

AH: Me too.

PH: Yeah.

AH: So fun.

KH: I didn't paddle any of this last time. I rode in the raft through this on our last trip, because it was just way too much beyond what I was ready for. Everybody has always said Hermit is the most fun rapid in the entire canyon. I went into it and I was like, "Well, it's big, I don't know how I'm gonna do through that. Maybe I'll walk it. Maybe I won't." I got there and I looked at it and it was gigantic. Biggest standing waves ever. I looked at it for a little while and I had such a great run through Horn that I felt super successful on. I was like, "Okay, I'm gonna do this." So I get in my boat and I'm following, I don't even know who, I think I was following Emily.

PH: I think so.

KH: She drops down that huge green wave and vanishes. I can't see anything else ahead of me. I'm like, "Oh no, I'm alone in the land of giants!" I come up the first one and I hit the fifth wave and I flip again. It knocks me all over, crazy. The way it was when we were there—the fifth wave was gigantic, but I think the tenth wave was even bigger. So by the time I rolled up from the fifth wave, I'm backwards in the rapid and the tenth wave is coming up behind me. I look around and when we get to the bottom, Emily was like, "Jeez, I didn't know you were gonna surf all the waves in Hermit." I did the whole bottom part backwards and just rode over these gigantic waves, biggest waves I've ever been in. It was so much fun. I loved every second. That was the best day of the whole trip, for sure, for me.

PH: So, at this point, I started realizing that our previous trip was more about Abby and getting her going down the Canyon for the first time. Kathy was along but she wasn't the focus. This year it was more like Abby was able to hang and do her own thing. We weren't really worried about her. We knew she had it under control. It was more about Kathy and making sure she had a good trip this time and was able to paddle those rapids that she didn't get to last time.

TM: That's what we on the rim got, cause we're all watching your daily releases, putting those up for people to read. That really came through. You stepped up a step.

KH: A huge step, for sure. I've always... If I'm a little nervous I'm like, "Oh, I'm not gonna do that today." In self-support, that's not really an option. It started with Grapevine and all of that that you can't walk around. Those went okay. Then I had a roll in Horn and then I had a roll in Hermit and I was like, "I can do this! I can do the whole thing!" I did walk a couple of rapids, but it just got to be a lot more fun when I was like, "Oh, if I can roll up, then there's nothing really in here that's gonna hurt me." It's not like there's a ton of rocks or anything you're gonna run into. It's big green, beautiful water.

TM: That's right.

KH: After I realized that, then I didn't have to follow anybody through rapids. Abby and Emily would be paddling way ahead and Nick and Peter would be talking way in the back. I'd kind of watch them bob through them and then I picked my own lines. I just wasn't afraid anymore and that was just wonderful. It was so much fun.

PH: Yeah, it was great to see. She really came into her own. Once she got that second roll, her confidence went through the roof. She just relaxed and paddled better because of it. It was awesome.

TM: Excellent. That's very cool and something I don't think we think about. We might be focused on some component of the trip that we're not... Meanwhile there's trouble someplace else that really needs to be addressed. So that's very cool.

KH: Yeah. It was fantastic.

TM: How did you get the blog out every day?

PH: Okay. We had a Garmin inReach Explorer Plus. That's kind of a mouthful. It's basically a GPS device that also has the capability to do satellite messaging. It can send a message through a satellite out and to whoever you want. It kind of comes in as a text message. You can pair that to your phone. I had my iPhone along and I would use my iPhone simply as a keyboard. I'd type everything up on the iPhone. You could only send out 160-character messages at a time. Some of ours were... Gosh, I don't know how many words they were total, they were pretty long. It took 32 160-character messages to get some of them out. We would send those out as... Kind of our mission is we're hoping that out of everything we do, we inspire other families to get out there and go on their own adventures, whatever that is. Doesn't have to be the Grand Canyon, but that's what we chose. We really enjoy sharing that stuff with them. We would write just like we would in a journal, every night on our phone. Then basically whoever had the most interesting story to tell from that day would be the one that would get beamed out. We would then send that as a text message to Kathy's mom and she would take all those 32 messages, put them back into a coherent story and then post those to the internet through Instagram and Facebook.

TM: Cool. Cause people were wondering how are they doing this?

KH: Creative.

PH: It's just kind of a work-around. We just figured out how to do it.

TM: Yeah. What a great way of doing it, though.

PH & KH: Yeah.

PH: And it's been amazing. We weren't really tuned in to it as much as like trying to reply to comments and stuff while we're in the Canyon. We tried to stay in the moment. Getting out of the Canyon, we've got all these messages to go through. A lot of them are really encouraging and fun to read. So that's what we've been doing a lot of the last couple days, is going through all those and trying to reply to people and answer questions.

TM: Cool, very good. So this gets you down through Hermit. Once you're below Crystal, you get the Gems, which are kind of like the Roaring Twenties, by now, looking at the scope of things, but then there's the rest of the flatwater world in front of you.

PH & KH: Yup.

TM: How did that go?

AH: It went pretty good. It was a lot of flatwater.

KH: Yeah. We were fast in kayaks though. We could do... I think we were averaging 7 miles an hour, so we were able to bang out 20 miles in 3 hours. So, that's pretty do-able.

TM: Then go hiking a little bit.

KH: Exactly.

TM: Nice. What were some of your fun hikes?

PH: Let's see...

KH: Deer Creek.

AH: We did Deer Creek and we went up to the Throne Room. That was really cool.

TM: Was there water coming out of the spring there or not?

AH & PH: No. It was dry.

TM: Interesting. A really dry year this winter.

PH: We did Bass Camp. We did the hike up and around, then down the creek.

TM: Down Shinumo Creek?

PH: Shinumo Creek, yeah. That was really fun. What's another one, I'm trying to remember.

KH: We didn't have a ton of daylight and it was cold in the morning. So we were slower to start in the morning waiting for it to warm up and then we'd paddle. So there wasn't a whole lot of time.

PH: Some of our hikes were really short and they were motivated by finding the sun. We would be sitting down there in the shade at camp and we'd see the sun coming down on the wall. We're like, "Hey, let's go up there and eat breakfast." We'd hiked up a ways and find a nice rock in the sun and hang out there a little bit. By the time we hiked back down, it kind of warmed up a little. We'd pack up our boats and get going.

TM: Then there's Lava out there somewhere.

KH: Lava.

TM: Pick up the thread, Abby.

AH: We got to Lava and I wasn't really sure what to think. I don't know how to describe it, but I wasn't set to run Lava. I didn't feel like I had to run Lava. I was just kind of confused. It's a big scary rapid and I didn't really think about what I wanted to do until I got there. We got there and we walked up to the scout rock. It was just as big, if not bigger as how I remembered it.

PH: Was higher water.

AH: Yeah. I was just really confused. I didn't know if I wanted to run it. I really don't like the V-slot. So I sat on the scout rock for a long time. Me and Emily talked trying to figure out lines. I really wanted to run the left line, but dad, again, wouldn't let me do the left line because there's more holes and consequences over there. So I sat and I was just really confused. Emily and Nick went off and ran it and I'd be sitting there. Eventually I started crying, just really confused. I looked across the river and Emily's yelling at me like, "Abby, Abby," and she's pointing, "The waves are only like this big." I was like, "Okay, well they're only that big, I don't know." I'm not really sure. I don't really wanna flip the boat. I was kind

of unsure how it... This is really big white water and I wasn't sure if the boat would act differently than it has the rest of the trip. So I sat there. I walked down to water level and I looked at it. I broke down the rapid. I looked at big Kahoona and I was like, "There's no chance I'm going to Big Kahoona." There's such a big passage down the left. Even if I went into Kahoona, it wasn't a big deal. Then I looked at the V-slot, and I was like, well, the V-slot's really just one wave. Then I looked above that and it's not very much. I was like, "Well, it's stupid to walk around one wave in my opinion. There's no reason to do that." So when I broke it down, it seemed small. So I walked up and I was like, "Okay, let's go run it." It was weird because last time when I was like, "Okay, let's go run it," I was filled with anxiety and I was really stressed and worried and just unsure of what would happen. But this time, I knew exactly what would happen because I'd been in the rapid before. So I was calm and I wasn't worried. I don't think I really got anxious until I was dropping in the rapid, but I was too focused to even acknowledge it. It was really funny, I did the exact same line as I did last time. There's kind of a wave, a breaking wave, to the left of the V-slot. I was lined up for that and then the bubble line kind of spins me out. I get kind of get caught up in that and I go way further right than I intend to. I go to the right side of that breaking wave and I go through backwards through the V-slot. Then I kind of pushed my way through past Kahoona. Then dad and I, just like last time, I was like, "Dad, I ran it backwards!" He's like, "Me too." It was the funniest thing ever, because it was word by word, the exact same thing that happened as the first time I ran it, which is really cool. It just felt really good to challenge myself again, because I hadn't been that challenged on the trip so far. It felt good to overcome fear again.

TM: Do you think that'll help you in your future boating when you're looking at stuff, is to try to break it down into components?

AH: Definitely, yeah. I went to summer camp this summer, it's called Keeners, up in the Ottawa River. That was a big thing they taught us was scouting these huge rapids, just as big as the Grand Canyon. You'd really break it down step-by-step. I think I took that into the Grand Canyon. I broke it down step-by-step and I'm sure I'll use that for the rest of my life and kayaking career.

TM: Very cool. Kathy, how was that for you, because you had gotten on top of your game. You were comfortable and then what happened?

KH: I looked at Lava and I decided I was not on top of that game. [laughing] Nick ran it first and he was like, "Okay, I'm gonna go through everything that everybody's afraid of and we'll just see how it goes." He did that. He disappeared in the V-slot and he rocketed off the top of Kahoona. I was like, "Oh my gosh, I don't want do that." I just wasn't sure I could make that left angle and get past Kahoona. I was like, "You know, Nick would love to run my boat through again. Why don't you just go do that, buddy, and I'll walk around." That was fine and that was good for me, too.

TM: In the 40s and 50s, and into the 60s, a lot of rapids were lined or portaged.

KH: Yeah.

TM: In the Grand Canyon, that was considered fine. So, good for you, awesome.

KH: That was fine with me. I wanted to go have fun with my family and enjoy my time paddling. Whether I ran Lava or not, didn't impact that.

TM: Was there a fight over who got to take your boat?

KH: A little bit, no.

PH: A little bit, we talked about it. Nick and I would take turns. There's one other one I got to run. What was it?

KH: Granite?

PH: Yeah, it was Granite. I did Granite twice. I'd done Granite twice so it was his turn to go.

TM: I think there's a German kayaker who's kayaked Lava 14 times in a day.

KH: Wow.

PH: I believe it.

TM: Just getting it wired in and walk back up and doing it again.

PH & AH: Yeah. Wow. Exactly.

PH: Helps having a light boat.

TM: Yeah, just to get more comfortable with the place. Cause in 20 seconds a year, it's hard to get familiar with that kind of exposure.

KH: Yeah.

PH: That's neat.

TM: So you're below Lava and then there's the lower gorge. The Granite Gorge comes back again. What was that like?

PH: Let's see...

TM: There's a ton of flatwater down there once you actually clear the last rapids.

KH: Yeah, that's all the fives and sixes.

TM: 231, 232.

KH: Loved those. Most fun ever, I think.

PH: We kind of picked up our pace at that point, cause that Lava day we did a lot of scouting and hanging out. Hemming and hawing at that. So that next day, I think that was one of our 30+ mile days.

KH: Yeah.

PH: We just got in and went, it was really fun. We just kept moving. We'd get in conversation and we're like... Nick and I especially, we'd be having these conversations. We're just going through the rapids, not even breaking our stride in our conversation. Just trying to stay close to each other going over the big waves. It was fun, yeah. The miles really flew by. When we weren't talking, we're looking around and taking stuff in as best we could.

TM: Cool. Abby, what were you thinking? Suddenly you're in the flatwater and there's helicopters everywhere and...

AH: I was pretty distracted. Me and Emily were talking and before we know it, we're at Pearce. We just paddled a lot. We talked to one of the jetboats. We tried to convince them into giving us a ride, but they were really confused and that didn't work out. It was pretty funny. It went by pretty fast. The flatwater was a little hard and challenging. My shoulders definitely felt it, but it went by pretty fast.

PH: Well, that day we did 45 miles.

TM: Wow.

PH & AH: Yeah.

PH: We were debating on staying in some of those lower camps down there, with the silt banks and stuff. Finally we just got down there and we're like, "We're so close."

KH: We were planning to stay at a camp about 10 miles from Pearce. We get there, and we're like, well, we could paddle for another hour/hour and a half and be there. Then we didn't have to load and unload our boats one more night. Or we could draw it out. We still had a couple hours of daylight and so we're like, "Ah, just..."

PH: Just keep going, we were feeling good.

KH: ...just keep going."

PH: What's that—there's a camp down there with some springs.

KH: There's a hot spring on the right.

PH: Has hot springs on the right.

AH: There's a cave.

PH: A little archy cave.

TM: I wouldn't say hot, maybe warm water.

KH & PH: Warm water, yeah.

TM: Warm-ish, yeah. That's a drainage that goes to the north that breaks out to the rim. You can climb down to it. There's a travertine wall there. Drainage cuts down through the travertine. There's a debris fan there and there's a spring just upstream of there.

PH: Yeah, that was our last stop. So, the water quality with all the silt gets a little worse. We actually grabbed water there and we talked for a while. We could stay there or we could just go on. I literally, as the TL, I'm just like, "Okay, what does everyone wanna do?" I just kind of went through everybody and everybody was like, "I feel good. Let's just keep paddling." So that's what we ended up doing.

TM: Cool, cool, cool. Very fun. What did you take away from the trip that you will not do next time?

KH: I wouldn't bring a fire pan. We used it one night on the whole entire trip and it weighed 9 pounds. That was a pretty heavy thing to only use once.

PH: The penalty.

KH: Yeah.

PH: I'd bring my 0-degree sleeping bag.

KH: Oh, that too.

AH: I don't know if I'd change anything. I brought a 0-degree sleeping bag. I don't know, I don't think I'd change anything. Our trip was pretty awesome and really amazing.

TM: So then, I'll ask you guys again: what worked well that you will do again?

KH: I'm gonna not worry so much about the rapids, because they're super fun. I think if I had known that the first 2 days, I would've had 2 more days of fun than I did on this one.

PH: I would do the same trip over in a heartbeat. I think with that said, I always like going to different camps. I'd try to mix in some new places. The boats worked great. I liked having a small five-person group. Actually, I've never done the Canyon with more than 6 people, so that was kind of normal. I think that it's just a really nice environment. You get to know everybody. It's just real easy. I don't know, it would've been nice if it'd been a little warmer. But, you know, that's what you get in January, so you just prepare for it. That was great, too. It wasn't a big deal. It was just an awesome trip, really. I mean, how do you go wrong? You're in the Grand Canyon.

TM: That's right, that's right. You just bring enough clothes.

KH: Yeah.

TM: This has been a wonderful interview. Thank you very much. Is there anything else you want to mention, before we wrap it up?

PH: We're just looking forward to the next one. We're gonna...

KH: I hope we get to go again soon!

PH: ...be putting in for next year.

AH: Yes.

TM: The disease is called "Rapid's Rabies."

PH & KH: Nice. I think we've got it. [laughing]

TM: Peter, Kathy, and Abby, thank you so much for this wonderful interview. This is Tom Martin. Today is the 3rd of February in 2018. That concludes this interview. Thank you so much!

PH & KH & AH: Thank you!