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Interviewee: Ann Hopkinson (Ann)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (Tom)

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Tom: Today is Friday, April 12, 2019, this is a Part 2 interview, Grand Canyon Oral History interview, with Ann Hopkinson and my name is Tom Martin. Good morning Ann, how are you today?

Ann: Fine, how are you?

Tom: Good. Ann may we have your permission to record this conversation over the telephone?

Ann: Yes.

Tom: Thank you very much. Thank you again for your time yesterday in Part 1. One of the things that I wanted to know a little bit more about was Roger Paris. You'd mentioned that he was a thrifty guy and made his own boats. Can you talk about that some?

Ann: Yeah. Well, everybody made their own boats back then. Well, there were a few people that did it commercially, but he always made his. He was a racer at heart, very competitive, so he always made his extra light.

Tom: How would he do that? I mean, not being a boat builder myself, certainly kayaks. How do you do that?

Ann: Just fewer layers of fiberglass. Every time you put another layer on, you have to use more resin and that weighs more.

Tom: So, the boat gets...

Ann: You need a certain number of layers with the fibers going different directions and so forth for the strength. And you wrapped them around a mold.

Tom: How would you make the mold?

Ann: You build a negative around an existing boat. I mean, the first boat you'd have to carve it out of something. I'm not sure how they do that. Most people that I knew used an existing boat and sometimes they'd modify it. So, it's a two-step process. You make the negative shape and then you make two shells, an upper and out, and a lower hull and deck of the existing boat. So, you make it in two

parts. Then you have to seam it. Fit it together and seam it both inside and out. You had to reach way up into the bow, back then they were long. It's a very long, difficult process.

Tom: I'm assuming the more fiberglass, the more resin, the boat gets stronger, but it gets heavier.

Ann: Right.

Tom: So, there was a tradeoff between strength and speed.

Ann: Exactly. Actually, Fletcher's father was one of the first people – apparently two people did it in parallel, but they didn't know about each other – to make fiberglass boats. 'Cause they had paddled in fold boats. And that's how Fletcher grew up, being taken up with fold boats. Most of them were double, that was another source of humor that they often joked about, because they were double and they were called divorce boats. They were so fragile and as soon as you hit a rock there's a hole in the boat and you had to stop. 'Course you'd blame your partner. [both laugh] Anyway, it was a lengthy process to make these. The first one he made was like 80 pounds cause it was hard to suck out the resin. Now, they set up a vacuum so they can vacuum out/suck out the extra resin to make the boat lighter and still be strong. So anyway, Roger would just do a couple layers, I don't know how many. I didn't build boats because I was highly allergic to the resin so I stayed away from it.

Tom: That explains something for me. The Kirschbaum kayak at Grand Canyon, the bottom is much stronger than the top.

Ann: Yeah, and the other thing they used to do is make a weak place around the cockpit so that it would break if you wrapped.

Tom: Oh, okay. Sort of a safety feature, to kind of even just break out of the thing if you were stuck in the boat somehow.

Ann: Yeah, if you wrapped on a rock so it wouldn't pinch you closed.

Tom: What a great idea.

Ann: You can see why the advent of the plastic boat was welcomed cause it's a big deal to make one. And then you had to make the cockpit, too. Did that, and a seat and all that. It took forever.

Tom: How were you making your seats then?

Ann: There was a seat mold also. But some people just put foam in the bottom. Well, a lot of those foams came in later but the seats were made out of fiberglass, too.

Tom: Okay. Then you'd glass the top to the bottom and were ready to go.

Ann: Yeah.

Tom: Did you all make your own skirts, your old spray skirts?

Ann: Yeah.

Tom: How did you do that?

Ann: Neoprene. Trace the cockpit sides, stuck the elastic in to go under, just glued it. And the elastic was inside a channel that went under the cockpit rim. Pretty much how they make them now, just they were funky because they were homemade. But for a while, they just had waterproof material, it wasn't neoprene. Same idea just put a piece of elastic cord for fit under the cock pit.

Tom: Like a duck canvas or some sort of water-impervious cloth?

Ann: Yeah. They leaked a lot more back then than they do now, just cause the cockpits were homemade. And your spray jacket leaked, too. Your splash jacket leaked, too, 'cause that was homemade. So, basically you were sitting in a pool of cold water all the time. I still remember I took several years off of not paddling, and during that time all the equipment evolved. I got back in my modern equipment when my son was starting to kayak, I was just like, "Wow, my butts dry! This is amazing! I could see doing this again." [both laugh]

Tom: And the boats were getting shorter.

Ann: Yeah, and they were making small ones to fit people that were smaller. I mean, when I started, I was just in this gigantic boat with a...sloshing around in the seat. It was really hard to control the boat. Fletcher was great about customizing it. He'd made your own thigh braces, too. He'd wrap the fiberglass around some coke cans to grab your thigh kind of thing.

Tom: And sort of glue them up there?

Ann: Yeah, so that was very individual cause everybody's thighs were different lengths and different angles, and so forth. Everyone would customize their boat to fit their thighs, make it so they could roll the boat alone.

Tom: Let's go back to fold boats. You mentioned that Fletcher's father got into fold boating. Do you know any of that story? What was Fletcher's father's name?

Ann: Keith Anderson. He was in the 10th Mountain Division, as were many of the people who started the ski areas in Colorado. Larry Jump, Max Dercum, I think. I can't think of any of the other ones right now. He was Keystone, Larry was A. Basin. Willy Schaeffler was in there. I don't know if he was a 10th Mountain but he was in their group. He was big in the U.S. ski team, U.S.S.A, and all that. He's very well known; he was in ski racing.

Tom: So, your dad knew Larry and Max and Willy during training, the 10th Mountain Division, during World War II?

Ann: Yes, Fletcher's dad.

Tom: Yes, Fletcher's dad. I'm sorry.

Ann: But they all kayaked together after the war in the 50s.

Tom: In fold boats?

Ann: In fold boats, yeah. I think they skied together, too, quite a bit.

Tom: Okay. Did Keith run through Glen Canyon or Cataract Canyon, even Lodore in the 50s in the fold boat? Did they get out and do those places do you know?

Ann: Yes. I don't know if they did the Lodore, but I know they did Hells Half Mile. Is that below the confluence?

Tom: Hells Half Mile is up in Lodore, it's above the...

Ann: Yeah, I know they did that. Another person I know who did Lodore with Hatch on a surfboard.

Tom: Wow! When was that?

Ann: I don't know when it was, but it was John Fetcher, he lived in Steamboat on a ranch. He was actually the best man at my parent's wedding. He was from Philadelphia, too.

Tom: Wait, hang on a second, stop. This is great!

Ann: I know, because he doesn't get credit for being the first SUP guy to do Dinosaur.

Tom: That's what I'm thinking. So, was this like in the 50s or the 60s, when are we talking here?

Ann: When did Hatch start commercials?

Tom: '52/'53 in Dinosaur.

Ann: I don't know when it was. I just know when I went to see him one time, he showed me the surfboard and he told me about it but I don't know if he told me the date. But he has a son and a daughter who might know something about it.

Tom: Do you know how to get in touch with them? I'd love to talk to them.

Ann: His son ran for office...he ran for state rep, I think. Jay is his name, Jay Fetcher, and I think he is a veterinarian. That's all I know. You probably could track him down through that.

Tom: I will try. Thank you. Did John have a paddle? I mean, how do you steer it?

Ann: I don't know, he might have just laid on it. [both laugh] I don't know. I thought it was so out there when I heard it [laughs] I wasn't smart enough to ask him.

Tom: Nobody could see the future, going, "Dude, that's going to be the stand-up paddle board of the future. This is great!" [laughing] He was like, "You're crazy" and walked away.

Ann: And now that's all I do is stand-up paddling.

Tom: Is that right. Good for you!

Ann: I have done Lodore at 9,000 on a stand-up paddle board.

Tom: Wow! I am so impressed. I'm like if I got on those things I'd fall over! That's really neat. I'll try to find that story, I'd love to see a picture of that.

Ann: Well, he went with Hatch. I remember that.

Tom: Well, I'll certainly make some inquiries there. So, Keith and Willy and John Fetcher and Larry and Max, they were all sort of water people for paddling in the summer and skiing in the winter.

Ann: Yes. Well John Fetcher wasn't in that group, that was a separate connection. That was through my side of the family actually.

Tom: He was on a surfboard, so he wasn't in the club. [laughs]. So, if they're doing Lodore in a fold boat they are pushing the envelope for what the boat can do. It's a pretty fragile craft, so it would make sense that when fiberglass came along, they said, "Hmm, this looks stronger and lightweight and let's try that".

Ann: Yeah. Well, that's the kind of mind Keith had. He was always just super smart guy, creative thinker, so he would experiment with it. Keith did FIBArk, too. Actually we have: Keith, Fletcher, and my son – our son – have all done FIBArk race, the long one.

Tom: Your son's name is?

Ann: Leis.

Tom: Okay, great. So, that's three generations of FIBArkners?

Ann: And so do the Lacy family have that. Gary's dad did it and Gary and his brother. I don't remember which one did it. Gary did it the most seriously. And then their son Spencer was really big into... He's one of the best SUPers in the world and he's done the Grand.

Tom: On a stand-up paddleboard?

Ann: Yeah, there are amazing videos of him running Lava.

Tom: Nice, and that's the Lacy family?

Ann: Yeah.

Tom: And who was the first of the Lacy's to run FIBArk?

Ann: Their father, I can't remember his name right now. A nice guy, he's a big guy in Grand Junction.

Tom: Okay, then his son?

Ann: His son Gary. There are three sons, I think they've all done it: Tom, Gary, and one other who still lives in Grand Junction, I can't remember his first name right now.

Tom: And then Gary's son is Spencer?

Ann: Yeah. He also has one named Mason who's probably done it, too.

Tom: Wow. And what about the women? Do you ever remember meeting Carol Kane?

Ann: No.

Tom: Okay, Carol was really early on in FIBArk and a very good kayaker. Do you remember any other of the strong women kayakers at the time?

Ann: Just Laurie Walters is the main one I remember when I was racing. And Liz Hayman, I think of her more as a slalom paddler. I'm not sure she did the long one.

Tom: And Liz worked as a Grand Canyon river guide, is that right?

Ann: I don't think so, but I could be wrong. I lost touch with her. Her nickname was Boo. I did think of some other names of the people that were in that racing circle back in the 70s.

Tom: Like who?

Ann: Al... Liz was one of them, Liz Hayman. Darn it, should have written them down.

Tom: No worries.

Ann: He died anyway, Al did. He was a great guy. Ben Harding, Ben would be a great resource; he's got that kind of mind that remembers details. He's in Boulder and he knows a lot of the history stuff I think. He's married to a Udall.

Tom: Going back to Keith Anderson. Keith's wife's name was?

Ann: Kat/Katherine Huber.

Tom: How do you spell her last name?

Ann: Her maiden name was Huber, H-U-B-E-R. Well, no that wasn't her maiden names she was married before, actually. I think she uses Kat Anderson.

Tom: Do you know how Kat met Keith?

Ann: Her first husband and she were in that group that did outdoor things. It was a little switcheroo with husbands. Like I said they all got divorced, I guess.

Tom: Do you remember the year Fletcher was born?

Ann: '48.

Tom: So, 1958 when he was 10, Glen Canyon dam was under construction. By the time he was 20 in '68, Glen Canyon was down, Flaming Gorge was down, so a lot of the big dams were certainly in place, Hells Canyon, in that time period. I'm thinking about the changes to the rivers that people were boating on.

Ann: Yeah, I know they went and did the Main Salmon when he was 13. I saw a picture of that. I'm pretty sure he was in a fold boat for that.

Tom: So that certainly started his early love of river running right there.

Ann: Well, he started younger than that, just locally, too. I think it was the first time, maybe, he went by himself, I don't know.

Tom: Where were they living, where did Fletcher grow up?

Ann: Denver. They spent time in Georgetown, too, they had another house up there.

Tom: And what did Keith do?

Ann: He was an attorney. He was the attorney for A. Basin so they had free lifetime passes there and spent a lot of time there growing up.

Tom: So he would have known the Dines's from their attorney work, and maybe Gary Hart. There were a number of doctors and lawyers out of Denver that were really powerful river runners, just doing the...

Ann: Gary Hart was?

Tom: Wait, no, sorry. Different Gary Hart, sorry, this is Jerry Geronimo Hart back to the 50s and 60s.

Ann: I never heard of them but doesn't mean that they didn't know them.

Tom: Interesting, just putting those connections together for the river.

Ann: Basically, and they talked about this a lot, his mom did, that you basically knew everyone who kayaked back then. His mom was named Grace Anderson and she would always say, "Oh, every time I see a car, I think I should know them with a kayak on top. I can't get used to the fact that so many people kayak now!" [laughs]

Tom: Nice, the early days. So, eventually you met Eric Leaper?

Ann: Yeah, Eric and Fletcher were already friends. They knew each other from Colorado Rocky Mountain School when I met him.

Tom: Maybe this is a good time to talk about Colorado Rocky Mountain School. What do you recall about the school?

Ann: Beautiful campus, great program. Back then the kayak program was a center for producing the best kayakers and best racers cause they had such a good program. They were right on the Crystal River. And they still do this, during the season they go out several times a week. Have top-notch teachers. The other thing about the school I admire is they teach independence. They have to do jobs and work/contribute to the school. They all have jobs like vacuuming or turning over the mulch pile or whatever. Helping to build the buildings and things like that. I just was always impressed. My son went there, too. I was resistant at first because it seemed pretty elitist. There was a time when everyone I knew that had gone there just was kinda lost when they got out because it's such a special environment where everyone's nurturing and cares. Like thinking and liberal ways. They got out in the world and they were pretty lost, you know. They all wanted to be potters or weavers and stuff. Couldn't really find their way. I think that's probably changed. And I was really glad my son ended up going there, it really made him blossom. It was a great choice.

That's where Roger taught for a long time. Then in the summers he had a kayak school which was based there and Fletcher worked there. When he taught he'd use his fragile boats. If somebody swam... Normally people when they're in a class and they've tipped over and swum they hold on to the teacher's boat and get towed to shore. He was famous for paddling right up near them saying, "Swim to the shore, swim to the shore. Don't touch my boat, don't touch my boat." He never wore a helmet and that was a big issue for the kids to have that role model because the kids had to wear helmets.

Tom: Oh, interesting.

Ann: But somehow he got away with it.

Tom: It is fascinating to think about the changes in technology and the changes in safety and safety awareness over time that the pioneers weren't thinking about and struggled with accidents.

Ann: Charlie Walbridge was huge in introducing a lot of the safety measures.

Tom: He still is today.

Ann: Yeah, he's done a lot. I just remember Fletcher was kind of resistant, thinking they were overkill and stuff like that. In retrospect, I think he's done a great deal for the sport for sure.

Tom: What do you remember about Charlie in his early days?

Ann: I didn't ever meet him, I just knew about him. He's from the East. He actually designed a lifejacket that you could make as a kit...I still have mine...that floated you high enough so your head floated upright instead of face down, things like that. The throw rope, he invented that. He taught people to use it. He just badgered people endlessly about our basic safety concepts now. He's still hugely instrumental. Every year in the ACA magazine he compiles all the deaths, why they happened, and analyzes them.

Tom: And what to learn from them.

Ann: Yeah, exactly.

Tom: I think that's very wise. It's difficult, it's very difficult, but there's much to be learned when we mess up about how not to do that.

Ann: I'm pretty sure he's done a lot to make municipalities and governments aware of the dangers of dams that have keeper holes at the bottom.

Tom: Yes, especially when those dams have outlived their usefulness. What other memories do you have about the Colorado Rocky Mountain School?

Ann: Nat Cooper he's another guy that raced, he was from there. I think he might have been on the team for a while. But, they would put on a slalom race very year. They had their own slalom course right there at the school that they would hang every year. I mean, the Crystal River doesn't have a hugely long season, but some years it does. And some years it's too high, but they'd always have their race and that was fun. It just has a long history.

Tom: Did you ever compete in any of these races? In FIBArk and...

Ann: Oh yeah.

Tom: When was your first FIBArk race?

Ann: Maybe '76, I'm not sure. Something like that. I also did the Pole Pedal Paddle in Jackson, individually, many years.

Tom: What was the Jackson race called?

Ann: Pole Pedal Paddle. You'd ski the mountain in a downhill course, ungroomed, then you'd run a 10K cross country, and a 19-mile bike ride, and a 12-mile on the Snake River. They still have it.

Tom: What do you remember about the first FIBArk race you were in, back in '76?

Ann: Being exciting. Wildwater boats are tippy and hard to steer. I guess the first year I probably did it in a touring boat, yeah I did, that's right. But, the first year in a wildwater boat...whatever it was... I just remember that they used to have frog men for safety. [laughs] They'd be coming to some little drop off and all of a sudden you looked to your side and some guy looked like he was going to grab you in a wet suit. It was quite disconcerting. [laughs] There was another story about...this was before my time...but two women, very beautiful French women, were brought over in a canoe to do the race. It was when bikinis were new, they had bikinis. They tipped over, maybe if was Cottonwood, I forget, and all these men jumped in the river to try and save them. [laughs] If you get help then you're disqualified, and they were like beating them off. [both laugh]

Tom: We're good, leave us alone.

Ann: They did rescue themselves and finish. But anyway, Cottonwood was really exciting and big. There's a big rock, its right near the end of the race, like mile 23 out of 26. There's this huge granite bolder toward the bottom of the rapid just covered with people screaming at you. It's real easy to peak on that rock, the rapid takes you right toward it. Big waves.

Tom: On river-right there?

Ann: Yeah, yeah. It's quite exciting, but I made it. Fletcher's mom used to tell us about how back in the 50s when they did the race there was a train that went along. The spectators could ride in the train and watch the race. It just pattered along watching the racers. It was so popular.

Tom: That's right. It was a big deal.

Ann: It was cool, that race is really fun.

Tom: And so, how did you place?

Ann: I won.

Tom: You won!

Ann: Yeah, I won many times.

Tom: Congrats. That's wonderful.

Ann: There weren't that many women that did it.

Tom: But for those that did, you were competing against some other very good boaters.

Ann: I don't remember that well. I know I won at least once cause I remember getting interviewed on the radio. But I'm pretty sure I won several times. Yeah, we got big mugs and stuff. It was more about doing it and doing your best.

Tom: Nice, very fun. Well, congratulations. You're the first female that I've talked to that has won those events so this is a lot of fun for me. Oh my gosh, you won FIBArk. That's great. Do you remember any of the other runners? I bet that Danny Makris probably would have been there.

Ann: Oh yeah, I remember him.

Tom: And the Camptoms, Chuck and Benny?

Ann: I don't remember Camptoms. Gary Lacy was always in it, Scott Randolph, Andy Corra. In fact, I was going to mention that there's a really neat tribute to Roger on Andy's Facebook.

Tom: I'd love to see that.

Ann: Andy won it many, many times. He's a little younger so he was a little past us. Oh, Jeff Parker, Scott Randolph, Fletcher. I think Matt used to do it, Matt Cooper. I imagine you can look those results up.

Tom: Yeah, but I can't talk to somebody who knew these people just directly. So that's a lot of fun just hearing you remember these people. Yeah, Scott Randolph and...

Ann: I see him now and then. I see Gary more. And Mike Crenshaw. Mike doesn't do the long one. Mike has one leg amputated. We did a lot of river trips. He's a great guy.

Tom: Let's go back to Eric then. What were your early recollections of Eric?

Ann: He's an extremely elegant boater, very skilled, very smart and unusual guy. Speaks slowly.

Tom: How so?

Ann: He just has a very strange manner. Very thoughtful and smart, different. You'll find out when you meet him. He's always been interested in river politics and working towards that. Bettering river access.

Tom: Can you talk to that some, the river access politics back in the day?

Ann: Back in the day they were still hashing out a lot of the permit systems and allocations so it seemed like there was more chance for shaping policy but didn't turn out that way. Although Eric's done a huge amount of lobbying, maybe he has had some influence, I don't know. I haven't followed it all that closely lately. But he and Fletcher talked about it at length. He got Fletcher on the board of NORS from the very beginning. Fletcher was good at writing letters and testifying and things like that, brainstorming.

Tom: Do you remember who else was on the board there?

Ann: No.

Tom: And NORS is the National Outdoor River Sports?

Ann: Yeah. No, National Organization for River Sports. I think it's still in existence.

Tom: There was an attempt in the 1970s to seek legislation in congress for do-it-yourselfers to make sure that they actually would get a chance to get on the water before the commercial people. Do you remember that legislative attempt at all?

Ann: No, not precisely. To tell you the truth, I didn't pay a lot of attention to it. I went on the protest paddles though Dinosaur and I showed up in court and stuff. I wrote a few letters. I was for it in principle but I did not apply myself to all the particulars of it.

Tom: No worries. What do you remember of the protest paddle? Do you know who participated in it in? What do you recall about that?

Ann: It was just the three of us, Fletcher, Eric, and I in April and it snowed, that's the main thing I remember. [both laugh] We took out at Echo Park, and had arranged for... At the time it was Perry Will? Was that the superintendent?

Tom: Or Will Perry?

Ann: It was the opposite I thought. I forget his name now. Anyway, he was the superintendent, was a friend-ish, so he arranged to us have us arrested. The sheriff met us at the takeout, it was cold and rainy. We were prepared to hike out, actually. Actually, I don't remember Eric being there, maybe I'm

conflating two stories. I don't think so though. Anyway, everyone was friendly. It turned out the road was so muddy that the sheriff got the car slipped halfway off the road, it was teetering over the edge. We all had to lean on the upper side of the car and get out. It was quite exciting. I guess somebody came and rescued us after that. Not clear. That's right, he picked us up cause we were dragging our boats up the road before he picked us up, so he was nice enough to give us a ride. And then he just went through the paperwork, it's not like we were put in jail or anything. Everyone was cooperating. And then we went to court. We had Tom Lamb as our lawyer. But Judge Match threw it out of court cause it was not a criminal matter. He didn't want it in Federal court. Then we went a second time, but maybe that wasn't a protest. I can't remember. I know after us, some people went and they got treated quite badly and put in jail. Some of them were sort of traumatized. And none of it came to do any good.

Tom: You mentioned in Part 1, talking about your first Grand Canyon river trip where you were kayaking. I wanted to know because you might have been within the first 10 women to kayak though Grand Canyon.

Ann: Really?

Tom: Well, this is 1975 wasn't it?

Ann: Yeah.

Tom: So first 10 to 20 for your gender. Did you come back again the next year and run Grand Canyon again?

Ann: I think so.

Tom: Did you have any other Grand Canyon paddling stories? And then we sort of go from Grand Canyon maybe to Cataract Canyon and then to Lodore, just thinking about different rivers and different paddling stories.

Ann: Well that first trip down the Grand I really was a beginner and I swam a lot but I had a good rescuer. Actually I think that was a bad part of my experience because I didn't learn to force myself to stay in the boat and try to roll more. But I was totally excited and thought it was fun. Nothing too bad happened. It was a May trip. It was 21 day because of the movie that they had a long permit a commercial. We got lots of time to hike because they were... I didn't have to hang around for the filming a lot of the times so I could go wander around. Boatmen were great. It was really fun. And of course, your first time down there is mind-blowing as are all your trips, but the first time is...

Tom: When was the first time you paddled all the way through the Canyon all the way out to Lake Mead? Do you remember that?

Ann: I've just done it once or twice actually. It wasn't till '98 or something like that. Oh no, we did it once, that's right, with a Texas group, that was probably in the 80s. But even then, I rowed the raft on the lake part, helped row the raft.

Tom: Any other Grand Canyon stories you were thinking about that were...?

Ann: No, nothing really comes to mind.

Tom: Did you get a chance to run Cataract Canyon?

Ann: I've only done it once, in the fall and never seen it big.

Tom: No, no, no. Cataract in the fall can be really nice. [laughs]

Ann: Yeah, it was very nice. Beautiful.

Tom: When was that, do you remember?

Ann: Probably in the late 80s early 90s, something like that. Maybe it was later 90s, I don't know. I do remember I had a lot of shoulder issues so I ended up rowing a lot.

Tom: Yes, it seems like a number of kayakers end up with rotator cuff issues and turn into rafters. That's an understandable progression. Then it sounds like you were in Lodore in the 70s?

Ann: Yep, we did it in wildwater boats several times, too. That was really fun. We did Deso, too, in wildwater boats in the early spring or late fall.

Tom: The wildwater boats are longer, is that right?

Ann: Yeah, they're longer and have a U-shaped hull. Quite tippy, fast.

Tom: Where those self-support trips or did you have a raft to bring gear?

Ann: Self-support. Sometimes we'd have a raft. I guess for the Deso we'd have a raft. A group of us racers did Lodore a couple times in the fall. Just 3-day weekend kind of thing. That was really fun.

Tom: Would you take out at Echo Park or would you go down through Split Mountain?

Ann: Go down.

Tom: Those were hard boats to steer through places like Hells Half Mile where there are some rocks you need to miss. Would you portage those or just cruise on through as best that you could?

Ann: No, you learned how to steer them.

Tom: I wanted to ask you about the Biobío and the rivers in South America. When did the Bio come to your attention as a river in South America that was something you guys should investigate?

Ann: I guess it was shortly before we ran it. We ran it in 1979 and one other group from Idaho had ran it. There was a whole bunch of big-water boaters up in Idaho, I forget their names now. They had left their boats back then down there, and we contacted them and they let us use them. But they were Holoforms, the first generation. They were made out of the same plastic and rigidity of trashcans. So what would happen is you'd go through a big wave and it would collapse the deck and then your spray skirt would pop off. [laughs] It was terrifying.

Tom: No wonder they left their boats!

Ann: They were bigger guys, too. They were way too big for me, too. It turned out we ran it the wrong time of year, too. It was just Eric, Fletcher, and me. Eric had contacted the Chilean kayak club which they were basically at the stage of kayaking development that the U.S. was in in the 50s. They were making their own boats with fabric and wood. There was a father and he didn't go but the son went and he was fairly young. Ricardo was his name. He wouldn't listen to any suggestions we made, although Eric is one of the most tactful people I know and Eric is fluent in Spain Spanish. What's that called?

Tom: Castilian?

Ann: Castilian, yeah. ...and would go into these long explanations of why he should do this and that, which he refused to do. One of the things he insisted on was only bringing for supplies a frying pan and an oatmeal in a paper bag. "Oh yeah, we'll get food from the locals as we go through." We're all just like I don't think there are that many locals around, but whatever. Before we even got to the difficult rapids he kept tipping over and swimming and he'd drop all of his gear and it took all three of us to collect it. Then each time he swam, he'd climb farther and farther up the shore and we'd have to talk him back down to come back. [laughs]

Then when we got to the first big rapids, called Lava South now, on your right is an amazingly beautiful waterfall coming into the river and above that you see the volcano Villarrica, which is snowcapped. It's so picturesque. It's right by a big calm eddy and then around the corner is this humungous rapid. All you see is a big drop horizon line and you just see some splashes just coming up from the waves. Ricardo had just gone ahead floating her down and he never pulled over. Fletcher and I eddied out, went to scout the rapid, and no sign of him. It was really awful. We quickly portaged the top part, Eric was there, too, and found a place where we could ferry across to an island and found him. He was okay. He had his life jacked sucked off and his shoes sucked off, but he'd survived. His boat was gone. By then the canyon was quite deep. It was a big wall of columnar basalt on the right and very difficult to access on the left. He just said, "Call the helicopters!" Of course we had no way to do that. But up above the river there is a road because they were already making preparations for the dam. So he got up there somehow. Fletcher gave him his shoes and he found a ride into the next town on a horse or something. We didn't see him anymore, but he was okay.

So, meanwhile, we had a still had a major part of the rapid left. The river was super high. No one had ever run it so high. Well, only one group had run it. They'd run it in February, that's when the commercials run it now, and we were in December so we were in spring. I just looked at it and I said, "I'm not running this, I'm gonna walk around." So Fletcher ran my boat through and walked back through the sharp basalt in bare feet and went to run his boat through. He flipped and swam and he almost never swam. By then, I was sitting down with my boat on this little outcropping, a rock... It was also getting late in the day. It was our first day of actually sunshine, it had been raining a lot. So we were all exhausted. I saw Fletcher get out just exhausted, really looked awful, on the other bank. The river was so loud and wide all we could do was do sign language. We couldn't hear each other. I saw him start heading downstream to walk to find his boat. Meanwhile, Eric had paddled by. So everyone was gone their separate ways, we were all completely separated.

I was totally exhausted. There was enough space on this little rock outcropping that I could lie down. I said, "I'm just going to sleep here." I had my boat, I could make some tea. I just like, "I can't do anything." It looked like there was no way I could get out of the canyon except to paddle. I didn't know

what I was going to do but I was just so tired and just like, "I can't think now, so I'm just gonna sleep." I lay down... So everyone had disappeared and after a while I'm looking around going, "I wonder if there's a route up out of this place." Cause it just looked like solid wall of rock. I look up on the rim there were these guys on horses pointing at me way off in the distance. I was just like, "Wow." Then I see they're starting to pick their way down. They're coming down with their horses. They worked their way down and they picked me up. [laughs] They came and they got me and they carried me on a horse back up there. They took me to the house of a young woman who was a widow. She fed me dinner. I still remember we had eggs. She had this little windowless room, it was like a closet that I could sleep in that had a bed.

That night after dinner we were sitting around in her living room sort of thing and all these men from the village started trickling in very respectfully and politely. She had a TV hooked to a car battery and there was some world soccer game on and they all sat and watched it. It was exciting. [laughs] Then when it was over they all left and I went to bed. In the morning... And my Spanish wasn't that good, I was pretty bad but I knew a little. I kind of got the gist that everybody was okay and I'd see them the next day. Everyone in the camp seemed to know what was going on with me. [both laugh] Finally I saw Eric and Fletcher the next day. Everyone had said, "Oh yeah, all the stuff will end up in this eddy and we're gonna go get it." Sure enough everything was there and everyone got their boats back.

We got on a bus after that to get past the rest of the rapids because it was just too high. So we didn't really run it, the hard part.

Tom: You had an adventure.

Ann: Yeah, it was a great adventure and I met all kinds of cool people. It started raining again. We stayed with some other campesino for a while. The houses they don't have chimneys, but they heat with wood so they're all full of smoke. They're supposed to escape under the eaves, they had some little gaps, but it was just too smokey for me, I couldn't handle it. And it was pouring rain and I had to keep going out to get some air. Eric just had these long interesting conversations about politics with them cause the whole thing with Allende and Pinochet was all new. So many people we met had just thought Allende was so great, it was really interesting. Cause we from the U.S. had been getting all this bad information from the government.

Finally, we took a bus to below the bad rapids. We were out of food cause all the contents of our boat was soaked, even our passports, cause none of the dry bags were very good back then. We were on the bus and a lot of the ladies had bread. They were going to market to sell their bread or something. I politely asked, "Do you think we could buy some bread?" All of a sudden like ten of them rush up, "Take mine, take mine." It was so nice. They did throw our kayaks on top with the chickens and all that stuff. It was a really fun bus ride. Eric was sitting next to a gentleman. He wanted to find out where we should get off to put in again. So he described what a good put in was, sloping gently and a place to stage and packed your boat and everything. The guy goes, "Oh, yeah. I got the perfect place." It was getting to be 5:00 at night or something so we knew we had to get put in and find a campsite still before dark. Eric had explained all that. We get there and it's just a drop off to the river, like 25 feet cliff and there's a bridge over it. Eric goes, "Why exactly is this such a great place?" He goes, "Because now you can come to my house for coffee before you go." [both laugh] We're just politely saying we gotta get going.

Actually, it turned out to be fine because we could do a seal entrance. We'd load our boats up top and seal entered in there. It was a really fun couple...I forget how many days...paddle after that. We were

towing Ricardo's boat. I forget what he did. I guess he took the bus the whole way, he was done with kayaking. [both laugh] We were towing his boat. The waves were still huge. We're doing endos sometimes just from the waves. It was amazing to see this big river and a temperate climate, and no houses, nothing, no development. It was just reassuring to see this much arable temperate climate land that hadn't been touched. There was an occasional big farm, but mostly it was just wild. It was really amazing. Then when we got to the town, it was called Rincos or something like that, where the train would take us... When we got out it was in a city park and there was a big wedding there. They all came running over and tapped on our boats. That's what everyone would do cause they'd never seen plastic before. They'd just tap on the boats, cause all their clothes were handmade out of natural fibers and they just rode horses mostly. They all invited us to the wedding. We really had fun. Then we took the train back to our next stop.

Tom: Wow, very cool. Well maybe this is a good place to wrap up Part 2. What do you think?

Ann: Yeah.

Tom: Well Ann Hopkinson, thank you very much for another really wonderful interview. This is the end of Part 2. Today is Friday, April 12th, 2019. My name is Tom Martin, and Ann thank you so very much.

Ann: You're welcome.