

**Transcription:** Grand Canyon Historical Society

**Interviewee:** David Huizingh (DH)

**Interviewer:** Tom Martin (TM)

**Subject:** David recounts childhood and college experiences, early hiking and backpacking, and his introduction to river running. He participated on a Sanderson Brothers River Expeditions trip in 1972 and a Salt River trip in April of 1978.

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TM: Today is Friday, February 21, 2020. This is a Grand Canyon Oral History with David Huizingh and my name is Tom Martin. This interview is conducted at our house in our dining room here. Good morning Dave, how are you?

DH: Good morning, I'm fine.

TM: Good. Thank you so much for your willingness to sit down and recall your river running history and your relationship with Grand Canyon and the other rivers of Arizona. What year were you born?

DH: 1946.

TM: And where was that?

DH: Grand Rapids, Michigan.

TM: What were your folks doing there?

DH: Let's see. I'm not sure. My dad was probably working in his dad's furniture store. They owned a store and I did some custom manufacturing of furniture in Grand Rapids. And moved out here in '53 primarily for my dad's health.

TM: Moved to?

DH: To Phoenix.

TM: Phoenix, okay. So you were 6 years old?

DH: That's correct, turned 7 that year.

TM: Do you have any recollections of the difference from Grand Rapids to Phoenix as a 6 year old?

DH: Just a couple of impressions of coldness from Grand Rapids involving digging a snow tunnel in the front yard and sledding in the backyard. A few little remembrances like that. Sledding down a hill behind our elementary school. Those are the impressions I remember from Grand Rapids at that age.

TM: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

DH: One brother, one sister.

TM: Older/younger?

DH: Both younger.

TM: Okay, and had they come on scene by the time you moved out to Phoenix?

DH: My sister turned 2 when we moved out here. She is 5 years younger than me, roughly. My brother is 13 years younger. He was born here in Phoenix. Well not here, we're in Flagstaff, but in Phoenix.

TM: Where did you go to school in Phoenix?

DH: Oh. I went to a variety of schools. We did move fairly frequently as I was growing up, including periods of about 1 year each in San Gabriel, California and in Tucson. But the rest of the time we were in Phoenix until I graduated high school. So in schools, I started out in Maie Bartlett Heard elementary school in Phoenix and was there for a couple of years. Then we moved to California, San Gabriel, for about a year and attended 4th grade there. Then when we moved back it was to Tucson in about 1956 or '57. Lived there for about a year and then we moved back to the Phoenix area. So another year in an elementary school in Tucson and then 2 years in elementary schools in the Phoenix area after we moved back before I graduated from 8th grade in 1960. Three years at Phoenix Christian High School and my final year I moved over to Cortez High School. Graduated from there in '64.

TM: During this time, it sounds like, as you say, you guys traveled a lot, San Gabriel, Tucson. Did you spend any time outdoors? Did you do the American typical get everybody jammed in the car and go for a little vacation?

DH: We did that on a couple of occasions including one trip I remember to Yellowstone when I was pretty young, car camping type of thing. We had a small cabin up there on that trip but we really didn't do a lot of that kind of travel and "camping" as I recall it. There really wasn't a lot of experience or involvement in my family with outdoor activities during the time I was growing up. That all came later for me pretty much.

TM: So you didn't go into Scouts or you didn't try to break that mold by wandering around in the desert and exploring the country around you up into your high school days?

DH: That's basically true. I was in Cub Scouts for maybe a year but it didn't involve getting out much or anything. It was a very local kind of activity. Didn't involve any kind of camping or anything like that while I was doing it. I mean, at that point, I was only in 3rd grade, I think.

TM: Did you swim a lot as a kid?

DH: Not a lot. I took lessons at the downtown YMCA in Phoenix when I was younger so I was able to stay afloat and thrash around a bit, but not that competent of a swimmer nor did I do it a whole lot.

TM: Alright. Were you in sports in high school?

DH: In high school, yeah. Football. After completion of the football season my senior year at Cortez a teammate... Don't know how much to digress or want to include. His mother worked on the base, Luke Air Force Base, and was friends with the head instructor on the judo club on the Air Force Base. My friend and teammate had gone to classes there and worked out the previous year and was interested in going back and invited me along. So in January '64 after football was over, he and I became fairly regular driving out to Luke Air Force Base once or twice a week to participate in the judo program there.

TM: So, '63/'64, just trying to think about what was happening in the geopolitical situation. Had the draft started for Vietnam yet?

DH: I believe it had. When I graduated high school, I had a couple of options in terms of scholarships. The one that I chose to take was an appointment to the Air Force Academy.

TM: This is in Colorado?

DH: In Colorado Springs. I ended up leaving there before the end of that first summer, before the first academic year. I came back and enrolled at ASU but that put me into the Air Force Reserve. I was active in the reserves, the monthly meetings and the summer camp for about a period of about a year and a half. The group I was in at Luke Air Force Base, the mobile communications squadron, was disbanding. As we were packing up documentation I came across a reference to different categories of classification of work that would qualify one for deferments or reclassification of draft SES or eligibility SES. By then, I was working nights at Motorola while I attended ASU so I was able to get the group commander there at Luke as well as my immediate boss at Motorola to sign off on a letter applying to have me reclassified because of the nature of work at Motorola which involved testing on high reliability transistor components that went into both military and space applications. That was approved. So after a year and a half in the reserves, I was no longer required to attend meetings and I was less likely to be called up based on that reclassification. Which is all to say that I missed Vietnam as an experience in my life as a result of that happenstance, really, is what it came down to. It was never by design, but it worked out that way and it's spared me the need to be involved in that.

TM: Were you interested in electronics in high school?

DH: Not too much. I was interested in general terms in engineering as a career because at that point, given the advent of the space race and the emphasis on technology and engineering, it was represented as something that would not only pay well but be a rewarding career and something was needed. So I enrolled in engineering program at ASU to start with.

TM: Was going to college something that your parents expected of their children?

DH: Oh, I'm sure, yeah. My mother had not graduated from college. My dad had attended, but not graduated. It was kind of the expectation. Both my sister and I and my brother all did pretty well academically through high school, so there was no reason not to have gone on with it and they were supportive of that.

TM: Did you have to work your way through college? You mentioned working for Motorola at nights.

DH: Yeah, I kind of chose to. That was partly for the sake of the economic freedom and personal freedom that that brought with. For my first year and a half at ASU I was living in a dormitory and working part time jobs in the bookstore and the bakery and cafeteria making a whopping dollar and a quarter an hour doing that for a total of 25 hours a week. So it wasn't much of a jump to go to 40 hours a week working nights at Motorola and earning roughly double that. It seemed like a useful move at the time. So I committed to that and started working nights at Motorola halfway through my second year while I still was in the dormitory. Then subsequently got an apartment of my own and lived a little bit more independently after that. Continued to work at Motorola until I graduated from ASU.

TM: What did you graduate in?

DH: I switched from engineering to mathematics. I had taken a lot of math in high school including 13 hours of calculus at Phoenix College during my senior year in high school. Yeah. So, by the time I arrived at ASU and enrolled in engineering and looked at the core requirements for the curriculum and the limited number of electives that were available, I realized that after my first year at ASU I would've satisfied all the math requirements for engineering with the two courses I took that first year, leaving no opportunity to take more math if I was going to limit myself to the basic curriculum, which I kind of had to do because of the availability of time. Since I was working full time, I would have had to take additional hours for the sake of taking more electives and for more math. So to free myself from that constraint and go back to what I actually enjoyed more, I switched over to Bachelor of Science program in math and was able to take all the stuff I wanted to at that point and still complete a degree. It wasn't a degree in engineering, but it was really more aligned with my interests.

TM: Had you been to the Grand Canyon? So, you graduated in '63. This would've been graduated from ASU in '67.

DH: I actually graduated from Cortez High School in '64. Because of the work and the course load limitations that I let myself get by on, it took me 5 years to graduate from ASU. So I graduated in '69.

TM: Okay. Had you been up to Grand Canyon during the 60s, during your college? Did you start getting out and hiking at all into the Superstitions? I'm just thinking about outside of Phoenix there's a lot of recreational opportunities.

DH: Yeah, I really hadn't gotten into that much at all. One of the things that I think was catalytic for me in that respect was during the summer between my junior and senior years in high school I was invited to attend a program at Arizona State College, Flagstaff. That was offered in a five week program and taking two math courses, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. It was this program that at the time was sponsored by the National Science Foundation and involved inviting high school juniors to take these courses. It was great. It was an opportunity to get out and be more independent at that point. Live in the dorm. Associate with some new friends that I met in the class. One of the interesting things...

TM: So, this would've been in the summer of '63?

DH: Summer of '63.

TM: Okay, and one of the interesting things?

DH: One of the interesting things was that one of the two professors teaching the two courses was Harvey Butchart. Harvey, I don't probably need to digress too much on him because there's a very well documented history of his involvement in Grand Canyon.

TM: You know there is, but what are just a couple of your memories of Harvey?

DH: Memories?

TM: Yeah.

DH: Several things. He was just an amazing guy. He was very kind of soft spoken and seemed fairly modest, but, you know, when I found out about his accomplishments in hiking in the Grand Canyon and the way he documented it were really impressive. Every weekend during that five week period we did outings as a class and Harvey always accompanied us. I should say professor Butchart.

TM: Did the students call him Harvey or did they call him professor Butchart?

DH: I don't remember, honestly. I'm sure most of them were a formal address and I don't remember if he encouraged us to refer to him as anything else. At the time, he was head of the math department at Arizona State College, Flagstaff. As I say, he taught one of them, but he led the trips on the weekends and a couple of those involved some hiking. One of them was to Sunset Crater, and this was back in the day when you could climb it. So the group climbed up to the rim and walked around the rim of Sunset Crater, which was pretty cool. First time ever hiking on cinder which was interesting in itself. Now, let's see, there's another where we went to the south rim. I think on that occasion it was a day trip and we hiked down as far as Indian Gardens and then back up.

TM: What were your impressions of that at the time?

DH: Oh, it was just awesome. I mean, I'd been to the canyon south rim I think perhaps once before when I was a lot younger but never below the rim. So that was quite an eye opener to have gone down there and then, of course, especially turning around and coming back out at the switchbacks. That was a little daunting, but we all had a good time. It was really a memorable experience. Yeah, it was great. Then let's see, one of the other... There were a couple other field trips but they involved less hiking. One, I think, was Walnut Canyon and the other was a visit to the Naval Observatory. That was kind of both the time to be able to have a little more independence and to be exposed to some of these opportunities in northern Arizona, the hiking and so forth. That was pretty instrumental in creating interest to get more involved in that later on, I'd say.

TM: Okay. Then throughout your summers when you were at ASU, would you then work for Motorola or were you doing some classwork in summer school as well?

DH: No, I took summer school courses. I pretty much needed to. I didn't take a full course load during the year because of the job. I would take maybe a 12 hour course load versus 18 if I had been full time. Then I would pick up a couple courses in summer to help fill out the program.

TM: What was your first exposure with the rest of the state of Arizona? You'd been in Tucson growing up as a kid, but you were pretty young then.

DH: Yeah.

TM: And then, just understanding the rest of the scope and the breadth of Arizona. In your college years, did you travel any other places?

DH: Yeah. My college years, I started doing a little more hiking and backpacking. One of the things that was instrumental in that, along with the experience at Arizona State College, was... I think it was in my junior year of Phoenix Christian High School, there was a fellow that came through and did a slide presentation and a lecture about his experiences having been, I believe, the first person to hike the Pacific Crest Trail. I believe his name was Eric Ryback. He published a book about it, actually. I don't remember the title. He was not much older than me at that point, a couple years older, but had gone out and just on his own hiked the Pacific Crest Trail. It was just an incredible thing to hear about. That and then it was somewhere along in there that I first read Colin Fletcher's *A Man Who Walked Through Time* and *The Complete Backpacker*, I think that was the title. That along with some friendships I'd made in the meantime motivated me to get a little more involved in more outdoor activities and do some backpacking.

TM: Do you remember some of those early backpacks where you went?

DH: Keet Seel Indian ruins on Navajo National Monument was one. That was really an eye opener, too. I was kind of interested in local prehistory/archeology, you know, the history of the tribes that were here before. The only Indian ruin I had ever visited previously was... What's the one in south Colorado...Verde.

TM: Montezuma Well, Montezuma Castle, Tuzigoot.

DH: Mesa Verde.

TM: Oh, okay.

DH: But not in any other cliff dwellings. So got together with a friend that I was working with at Motorola and we did a hike back up in there. That was really interesting. Then doing some other ones locally. I found out about some drainages in the Sierra Ancha that were side canyons to Cherry Creek. Pueblo Canyon and a couple of others that had the ruins as well. We would do backpacks into there and spend the night sometimes. Let's see, Superstitions not so much. Did a couple hikes into the Grand Canyon, backpacks.

TM: Where?

DH: Just to Phantom Ranch and camping. Did a couple of those. Of course on that occasion, first time I did that, went down to Phantom would've been the first time I would've actually seen boats on the river and people going by. So that was my first contact with any kind of boating on the river down there.

TM: What year would that have been?

DH: First time, most likely about '66, 1966 thereabouts.

TM: What do you remember about that at all?

DH: Envy. [laughs] Cause having hiked in and out a couple times, I knew that it'd been a bit of a slog to hike back out. I kind of envied the folks that were relaxing on the beach taking a break there at Phantom

before continuing downriver on what looked to be a really exciting way to travel anyway, and so yeah. Yeah, that was definitely an impression that was an extra motivation to take advantage of opportunities that came up later.

TM: So, when was your first time doing any boating, per se?

DH: 1972. Was a charter trip involving a group from Motorola on two large boats with Sanderson Brothers.

TM: Okay. So, let's back up a minute, because you graduated in '69.

DH: I did.

TM: Did you then take a job at Motorola?

DH: I did. I had an opportunity. I was working in a manufacturing area and I had an offer to take an engineering job when I graduated. I also had an offer to go to work for a computer group, a management information systems group. Included with that was the opportunity to spend the summer of '69 in Schaumburg, Illinois at the corporate headquarters. It was kind of a management information systems and software boot camp for recent graduates that Motorola ran through the summer. They taught a number of different courses involving computers.

TM: You know, just for fun, before we get to Sanderson, because that's gonna wait a minute.

DH: Sure.

TM: At the time, computer code I seem to remember like punch cards?

DH: Oh yeah.

TM: And you would line each card up with one little change in it and then run them through this machine and then print out great reams of paper...

DH: Yep. Yep, exactly.

TM: ...that might spell Merry Christmas. Or basically learning to do code. Is that it?

DH: Right, right. I hadn't had any coursework in computers during my time at ASU, so this was an opportunity to get into an area that looked interesting that was in kind of high demand and that kind of fit in well with my academic experience. It was a good opportunity for me so I took that. Yeah, it was a memorable summer. It was another memorable summer. Thirteen weeks back there. Especially memorable for one event which is sidebar to the topic of main interest. I remember working on a project with a group in one of the rooms very late. We had to wrap up on our individual projects we were working on. We were together in the control room for the computer area there. They had a TV mounted on the wall and on the TV was playing the moon landing. So that was incredible.

TM: Wow.

DH: That was quite an impression. There we were as a group, craning our necks up to watch something that had never been seen before as we were working on our computer projects. It was kind of cool.

TM: Were you aware of the tiny little computer that was on that moon?

DH: Not so much. No, not really. I only really learned much of anything about the hardware that had been employed in that mission later on.

TM: Which was cutting edge for its day.

DH: Yeah.

TM: Today we laugh at it, but at the time it was a very big deal.

DH: Very primitive comparatively, but yeah, served the purpose.

TM: I'm just curious, again as a sidebar here, what were some of the computer projects people were working on that summer?

DH: Well, the orientation for the whole program was to have people come out of there prepared to work in management and information systems involving the big computers and the programming involved in personnel management and accounting and finance and that kind of thing, which as it turned out I wasn't particularly interested in. But I was fortunate that coming out of that, I had the opportunity to go to work for a manufacturing group with two other people on a small project that involved developing control software for some furnaces in a Motorola plant in Phoenix on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and McDowell. That got me working on systems involving process control and data collection in a manufacturing environment. That's pretty much the kind of thing I worked on for the rest of my career. So, it was a really lucky segue for me to be able to have that opportunity to get into that kind of work because it was so much more in tune with my interests and abilities at that point.

TM: So this is working with making computer programs that are able to sense data in real time and make changes appropriately.

DH: Controlling furnaces, yep. Yeah, it was great. It was just so much more interesting to me than the higher level business management software projects that involve large numbers of people working together as a group. A high proportion of the projects I worked on all through my career were involving at most two other people. Usually it was solo projects so that really suited me well.

TM: Nice, and trying to apply the computer to book keeping is one thing, but applying a computer to actual real time applications is a little different. Interesting.

DH: Yep.

TM: Okay, so Motorola wants to do a company outing. Had they done others of these? Had you taken them and done other stuff?

DH: I think others had been organized in the past. I'm not sure of the history on that. What I don't remember clearly is whether this one was organized under the auspices of the Motorola ski club. That was very active outdoor group that I never got involved with, but which existed and did organize mainly

ski trips on behalf of the members of the club. I think they also had organized river trips as well of this type. I don't remember if they had a role in putting this one together in '72, but it involved some people that I knew including the friend that I occasionally backpacked with, so I was invited to go along on that.

TM: Let's go through the Sanderson trip then. This is 1972.

DH: Yep.

TM: Where did the trip start?

DH: Lees Ferry.

TM: How did you get there?

DH: Good question. I think they took us up in a bus. I don't think we drove individual vehicles. I'm pretty certain I rode with friends on the trip up. I'm certain it must've involved private vehicles. Probably left in Flagstaff and then a bus shuttle up to Lees Ferry, as I recall it.

TM: Okay. Got to Lees Ferry, then what happened?

DH: Ah, we were given black rubber army surplus bags to stash our personal gear in and a basic introduction on how to roll and seal the bag [laughs], which was kind of state of the art, as I recall at the time, in terms of waterproof bags for personal gear. The company supplied the camping gear: the sleeping bags, and cots and tents as needed. We really just brought our personal gear and our clothing. I think we were each given a 50 caliber ammo box as well for use during the day on the river. But yeah, black bags and small ammo boxes were what we had to pack our stuff in.

TM: One boat or two boats?

DH: Two. Two of the...what are they, 33 feet long, I think. They were the big donut boats with the pontoon strapped to the side and a well in the back for the outboard motor where the boatman stood with his associate. And a spare motor strapped across the back of the boat.

TM: Do you remember the names of your boatmen?

DH: I do not, unfortunately. Somewhere I have a couple photos of them, but no, I don't remember the names at the moment.

TM: Okay. What do you remember about that trip?

DH: Ah, lots of impressions. It was great. It was exciting. Less exciting than almost every other trip that followed, of course, in terms of exposure to what the river can do because we were up on the big boats and kind of up and out of most of the turbulence and waves and whatnot. But it was still quite an impression. Camping as well.

TM: What else do you remember? I mean, do you remember where you camped? Maybe any other remembrances of that trip that come to mind?

DH: Deer Creek Falls was quite an impression, hiking up above that. Yeah, just in drawing the time together with the people. It was just quite an impression. And, of course, it's all catered. They did all the cooking. The food was wonderful and the trip was great. This being my first experience on the river it was great. I don't remember big impressions from the rapids other than getting a little wet in a few of them. The boats were so big that you just don't have the same feel as you do in the smaller boats. Actually, having seen other smaller boats on the river, made me think that I would probably want to come back and do that at some point if I could in the small boats. So, it would give me a view of that which was a motivation to do that later.

TM: Do you remember campfires on the beach?

DH: I'm sure we had them. I don't specifically remember them. I don't recall, for instance, whether they were built directly on the beach or on the fire blanket or fire pans. I don't remember how that was done, actually.

TM: Do you remember the bathroom, how that worked?

DH: Yeah, yeah. They had kind of a porta potty type setup with tarps and a frame rigged to provide a little privacy. I don't honestly recall what the nature of the toilets were, whether it was 20 millimeter boxes with seats like we generally used later, or whether they had something more in the way of a commercial kind of toilet arrangement. I don't remember that.

TM: So, this would've been right in the transition time of digging holes in the beach.

DH: Oh yeah. I don't recall that that was done at any point. Not to say that it wasn't, but you know, I didn't see it happen and I didn't do it myself. As far as I knew, everybody was using the toilets that were setup at night.

TM: Okay. The trip ended at Diamond Creek or did it go down to the lake?

DH: No. I remember going all the way to Pierce Ferry and it involved an overnight float on the last night on the river where they tied the two big boats together and just let them drift. Everybody had their sleeping bags laid out on the pontoons and kind of did the best they could to try to nod off and get some rest during the night. Then in the morning, I don't remember if we were motored to Pierce Ferry. I think we must've motored to Pierce Ferry from that point and then derigged. I don't remember specifically whether we were met by a power boat and pulled or if we motored ourselves on out.

TM: Or did you motor to Temple Bar?

DH: Don't think so. I'm sure it was Pierce Ferry. I can't say for sure.

TM: Yeah, yeah, just some options.

DH: Best guess is Pierce Ferry but I don't remember that clearly.

TM: Okay, alright. So that was 1972.

DH: Yep.

TM: Then what happened in the 70s as far as your river running went from there?

DH: Well, I enjoyed that experience a lot. So that was in summer of '72. I got married in December of '72 and had wanted to have an experience on a smaller boat somewhere at some point. I had met a fellow who was a technician working in one of the labs at Motorola who had done a lot of Grand Canyon hiking himself. His first name was Ron, I don't remember his last name. He had made it a project to do hikes of segments of the Grand Canyon with a view towards eventually doing the length of the canyon. Not sure if he ever completed that project, but he also had been on some river trips. I don't remember if they were done on the basis of private or commercial trips. He left Motorola and went to work for Frontier Expeditions in Idaho.

TM: Tell me everything you remember about this man. This is Ron Miller.

DH: I don't know his last name. I don't remember his last name at the moment. First name was Ron. He worked as technician in a lab area there. Got to know him a little bit, well enough to be aware of what his interests were outside of work. He wanted to have a little different lifestyle. To the extent that he had experience on the river, he wanted to segue from that into something more full-time so he took a job working as a boatman for Frontier Expeditions. Frontier at the time was, I believe, a company owned and managed by pilots for Frontier Airlines, both active and retired pilots. There were actually a couple of these guys that accompanied the trip as his swampers or boatmen.

TM: This is in Grand Canyon?

DH: This is now on the Main Salmon up in Idaho in 1976. This was my first opportunity to get my wife on the river. We had done a hike into the Grand Canyon together after we got married, but not had an opportunity to get on a river anywhere. Since I was interested in both exploring a new river and getting on the smaller boats, the oar frame boats, and had this connection of sorts with Ron, who had since gone to work as a... He was actually working as a trip leader for the trips on the Main Salmon for Frontier Expeditions. So I hooked back up with him and we reserved a spot on a trip. Went up and floated the Main Salmon together in '76.

TM: Did Ron ever tell you about his hiking in Marble Canyon?

DH: I don't recall a lot of conversations with him about that. It was more a matter of, you know, being aware of something he did rather than having had particular conversations. I'm sure we must have talked about it at some point. I didn't really have much of a connection or relationship with him outside of work. It was mostly just based on trip conversations at work that I became kind of aware of what he had been involved in and what his interests were.

TM: So that trip on the Main Salmon in 1976, was that your next river trip after your Grand Canyon trip?

DH: It was.

TM: What do you remember about the Main Salmon in '76? Where did you start? Where did you end?

DH: The normal start point I believe was Corn Creek, somewhere around there. Where did we end? I remember in an impression from the takeout... It's I believe a place where there's a suspension bridge that crosses the river. It's one of the principle take-outs, river-left. Derigged and came out and I think

the next town we came to was... I don't remember, Moscow? No, not Moscow. Wherever that town is nearest.

TM: I wanna say Lewiston, but I don't think that's right.

DH: No, it's not. Anyways, so yeah, we floated was probably 80 some miles thereabouts.

TM: Was Ron happy there?

DH: Oh yeah. He was in his element. It was great. It was good to see that and we really enjoyed the trip as well. Great people working both as boatmen and helpers. Some of the other people that worked as crew on the trips were stewardesses or steward, as the case may be. Ladies who would occasionally come along and accompany us and [laughs] bring you coffee in the morning and so forth. [laughs] It was really nice. It was a really nice group. Had a good group feel. All the crew were competent people and really seemed to enjoy what they were doing. It was just a good time. And it was my wife's first opportunity on a river.

TM: Did she enjoy it?

DH: Oh yeah. Had a great time.

TM: What was her name?

DH: Patty, that's my wife. Not completely unrelated to that, on our drive back from there we spent a couple of nights with a cousin of mine who at the time was living in Moab, so we had a little opportunity to see the Colorado again as we drove down through there.

TM: In 1976. What was Moab like in 1976?

DH: Not like it is today. As I recall it, it was kind of an outdoor recreation hub of sorts, but nothing like what it's grown to be at this point. My cousin had a four wheel drive of some sort, I forget, I think it was a Bronco, so we took a little drive up into the La Sal Mountains up above tree line there, and then came back down to an overlook above...I think it's called a Castle Valley. And then followed the roadway down from there back to his place in Moab. Did that loop drive which was an eye opener in terms of getting to see that countryside for the first time.

TM: Were you and your wife doing any backpacking during this time from 1972 to '76, in that four year period?

DH: Yeah. We had done a hike into the Grand Canyon in April one year.

TM: Where did you go?

DH: Camped at Phantom Ranch and then hiked back out. We went down Kaibab and came back out Bright Angel trail.

TM: Was '74/'75ish? Remember roughly what time that was?

DH: Probably '74, actually. Yeah. We were married in late '72.

TM: I think that by 1974, the park had started a permit system for Phantom Ranch, would've been maybe close right in there. Do you remember what camping at Phantom was like back then?

DH: I don't remember needing a permit, but the timing on when we hiked in, there was considerable amount of snow at the top of the trail. And not very many other people hiking in and staying there anyway. I don't recall that we needed a permit, or if we did ignorance was bliss. Probably didn't have one, but camped there one night. There were not many people in the campground.

TM: So, Main Salmon in 1976 with Ron on Frontier Expeditions. Where did you go from there river-wise?

DH: Nothing, until '78.

TM: What happened then?

DH: Well, I was still interested in doing river trips, and at that point opportunities that I was aware of probably would've involved some sort of commercial trip. Hadn't really thought about getting into it as a private boater. But, tying in with an interest in doing some additional hiking and exploring around the state. I was an interested in getting a van that we could use for camping, but one which had a four wheel drive drivetrain. As I recall at the time, none of the American manufacturers were making one as a stock vehicle that you could buy directly from the manufacturer. They were available based on aftermarket kits that people would have installed. The place where I was working out at the time in Tempe, I saw one like that parked out front and the fellow who was leaving the club to get in and drive home. Approached him about the van and he explained to me that he had had that conversion done because he used it for river shuttles, and, oh, by the way, he had a trip going up on the Salt River the following weekend and if I was interested I was invited to tag along.

TM: Do you remember that guy's name?

DH: Randy Chamberlain.

TM: What do you remember about Randy?

DH: Randy. Born and raised in Kanab, Utah. Businessman locally, had a company in Tempe called Habitat. Did a lot of different kinds of interior decoration for businesses. The specialty was furnishing model homes and showrooms for developers that had housing developments and various projects around the Valley.

TM: He was a busy guy.

DH: He was a busy fellow. He had some experience in his younger days, I think, got him started running rivers with...see if I can get the name right...Dick McCallum, Grand Canyon Youth Expeditions. He had the opportunity to go along on one of their trips where he met Dan Dierker who's a local Flagstaff guy and real involved in... I believe he was involved in crewing for Dick McCallum and Grand Canyon Youth. And a couple of other fellows. Scott Yard was the name of one of them that was on that trip with Randy. And one other fellow from California who's name escapes me. But anyway, he was able to hook up with these guys and having the experience of going down through the canyon with them, I think that's what got him started running rivers. But then he also branched out to some other river... I'm not sure what his river running history was aside from the Grand Canyon at that point in time when I met him. He had not been down the Salt before, so this trip that we did in '78 was the first one on the Salt for everyone in our

group. We weren't going down completely blind because there was a group of kayakers from Tucson led by a fellow named Martin Binder who was a pretty experienced kayaker and had been down the Salt. He and his son and some of their friends were kayaking. So on the one hand, they were looking for boat support, and on the other they had the previous experience on the Salt to offer in helping us find our way down the river and know where to scout.

TM: So, in 1978, these kayaks might have been 9 feet long? Do you remember how long they were?

DH: They were long-ish. I think they were probably Perception kayaks. The typical length for those kind of boats at that point in time as I recall it. They were what, fiberglass? Plastic anyway.

TM: Well, plastic was coming online. Fiberglass was still being used but coming out of favor because plastic was so much better strength-wise.

DH: Yeah, yeah I'm not sure exactly which brand of models and what material they were made of, but they were probably what was typical at the time, what was available.

TM: So, your trip with Randy. Did Patty accompany you on that trip?

DH: Oh, no. We were told that this was gonna be an adventure and we needed to be sure and rent wetsuits from the little local dive shop. I went to El Mar dive shop, which is a decades long scuba diving shop and host for clinics of various sorts, and rented a full length wetsuit to use for the weekend.

TM: What month was this, do you remember?

DH: It was the first weekend in April, 1978.

TM: Okay, so it would've been coolish and it would've been snowmelt coming off the mountain.

DH: And it was a fairly gloomy, rainy, cloudy weekend. I do remember, after the fact when I found out what historic flows had been on the river at various points, I checked back to look at what the flows had been on the Salt on that weekend. The flow at the put-in at the Cryotile gage was 4600, and the flow at the Roosevelt gage was 6000 over the course of that weekend that we ran it.

TM: Wow, so it must've been rain on snow up above you guys, maybe.

DH: Could've well been. I remember it being a fairly... I thought of it as kind of a biblical weekend.  
[laughs]

TM: Was this gonna be a 2 night trip?

DH: I think yes. As I recall it, it was intended to be 2 but took 3. As I recall, we spent an extra night on the river. There was an interesting story involving... At the end of the trip, aside from what happened on the trip, when we got off the river at the end we had to skirt around the top of the diversion dam and take out on river-right just below the Sierra Ancha road. We were met at the takeout spot by people from the sheriff's department asking if there was a fellow named Randy Chamberlain that was part of our group. And indeed, folks had expected us to check in a day earlier and we weren't able to so they were out looking for us. It also turned out that part of the reason they were concerned was, I believe it was on that same day, or maybe at night the night before that, there were some other people who had been on

the river, and as I recall it, it was a group of kids from University of Arizona who had gotten off the river late. I think they were running almost in the dark. Hadn't been aware of the diversion dam and the hazard that represented, went over the dam, and I think there were a couple kids that died that night. So there was search and rescue out and as I say, the fellow from the Sheriff's Department who had been alerted to our presence on the river and was looking for us and found us there at the takeout.

TM: So, let's back up a little bit into those three days. The trips starts where?

DH: The usual put-in spot. River-right just below the bridge.

TM: Can you describe the setting and the place?

DH: Yeah.

TM: This is the Salt River bridge. On what highway goes from where to where?

DH: Oh, is it 60? I think it's 60 that goes up and down through Salt River Canyon. Yeah, so we came up through there. Left town really early, got to the river and started rigging the boats. We had a large, I think it was a 16 foot orange Rogue inflatable. I believe it was a neoprene boat. Anyway, a really sturdy boat that one of the fellows in the group had bought. And there was a little 8 to 10 foot raft with an oar frame that was referred to as a Selway. I don't know who the manufacturer was, but it was basically an oval shape. Had a fairly flat back end, no transom but like that, and a little bit of a taper to it with a bow raise, and a small oar frame on it. That's what Randy rowed. That was the only oar frame boat and then the rest of us were in that Rogue.

TM: So the Rogue was going to be run as a paddle boat?

DH: Yeah. There were six of us in the Rogue, six or seven.

TM: So just 2 boats.

DH: Yeah, and then the kayakers as well. As I understood, it was the kayakers who would stay with us and we would look for them and up ahead and see where they pulled over so we would know where to stop and scout. That wasn't always how it worked out. There were times on the river where they were out of sight and down the river. But generally, when we got to some place that it was appropriate to stop and scout, they were there waiting for us and gave us the heads up.

TM: Who was your paddle boat captain?

DH: I'm pretty certain it was Dan, Dan Dierker. Yeah, Dan was along on that trip. Randy had invited him because he wanted some additional experience in the group. The rest of the people in the group really, as far as I recall, aside from Randy and Dan, I don't think anyone else in the group really had much experience. There was another fellow on the paddle boat, the owner of the Rogue was Chris Sheafe. I think he may have been on a river or two in the past prior to that, but not sure. He was working at the time for a developer in Tucson and his connection with Randy was through work. Randy had done some work for them developing showrooms for their company in Tucson. Anyway, Chris provided the boat but didn't have a lot of experience prior. So yeah, we went down as paddle crew on that.

TM: How many people were in the boat?

DH: As I recall, there were six. Either 6 or 7. I'm not sure.

TM: Plus gear. So that was a lot of stuff.

DH: Yeah, it was. Had a lot of weight in the boat. I don't recall that there was a third boat. I have to stop and think about that. Doesn't seem like it would've been feasible for a 16 foot paddled raft to be carrying gear for the whole crew, for 6 or 8 people, although there was some gear on the small raft with Randy as well. I have to say I don't remember whether there was a third raft involved. I don't think there was.

TM: Okay, no worries. So, departed with the kayakers. How long is the run from the put-in to the takeout?

DH: 51 miles, thereabouts. I've seen it listed as 53, but based on the mile points on the river maps, I think it's 51 miles.

TM: You guys got on the water about noon-ish, or what time did you kind of get up and going?

DH: Sounds about right. Yeah, it would've been about noon probably. We were driving out of town early as the sun was coming up.

TM: And then what happened?

DH: Ah, then we learned how to paddle a raft. [laughs] Yeah. Dan basically was just instrumental in helping us get competent to some extent as quickly as possible to where we could respond to his commands and do what we needed to do to work our way through. Fortunately, the progression of rapids and the levels of difficulty as you go downriver are somewhat gradual and progressively more difficult. So by the time we got into the more challenging rapids, we had fairly good teamwork down as a paddle crew, or so we thought. Oh, I do remember. There was another boat. It was an inflatable kayak.

TM: Oh.

DH: Yeah, and it was not a very river-worthy boat. I think it was a Sevylor product and 1 or 2 man, I don't remember. I think it was a 1 man boat. Some of the people in the group would take turns in that. I remember that in particular because the first time we flipped was at the top of The Maze. You know, different rapids have multiple names. This one, I think, has been referred to as other things depending on which river map you're looking at. Whether Pete Warnell's or one of the later ones. It's what we thought of as The Maze. I think it starts below Lower Corral and you go through dodging a series of boulders on a fairly straight segment of river, but then you make a hard right turn. As you come around that turn, there's a very big boulder on the very inside of that turn and then several others below as you go down the river from that. At that level it was a huge hydraulic and we didn't know it was there. The kayakers at this point had gone further downstream and we didn't know that that was coming. So we entered that kind of blind. I remember well, since I was on the front of the boat, coming around that corner and looking in the trough of the reversal and recirculation there and seeing the inflatable kayak unmanned, recirculating, twirling in the base of that recirculation. Then as we came around and went into it... There wasn't much of a frame on the Rogue so it was fairly flexible. The front of the boat came up onto that and proceeded to fold, and the back end came out and under, and we flipped.

TM: End over end.

DH: Yeah, and basically we all ended up having a bit of a swim. Eventually got ourselves over probably, I don't know, a few hundred yards downstream on river-right all except for one person in that crew who happened to have gotten out on river-left. That happened to have been Dan Dierker. We were concerned because by the time we got over and pulled the boat over to the side we didn't see Dan. Then we hear a shout and we looked back and there he was on river-left hiking along the shore. He got up to where we were, a little upstream, and judged the current and swam across. He was real strong. Strong athlete. I believe he was on a ski scholarship at Arizona State College in his early days. Just a really strong guy, really stout fellow, good boatman. But yeah, he swam across and rejoined us and we turned the boat back over and proceeded on downriver.

TM: So, at this point, you turned the boat over. Was your gear still there?

DH: Yeah. We didn't lose gear. That was one thing that, as I recall, was pretty well done on that trip.

TM: Great, nice. Then at this point, Randy Chamberlain with his 10-foot little oar boat, was he with you guys or was he downstream with the kayakers as well?

DH: He came through behind us. He was typically running drag, I believe. And that, of course, was by design in case we had any swimmers. But no, he came along behind us. He did really well. In fact, he ran Quartzite in that thing...

TM: Wow.

DH: ...and came through upright. I found out later that he had spent a period of time in prayer before he ran it. [laughs]

TM: So then, it sounds like everything was going okay the first day.

DH: Yeah. The first day, I don't remember where we camped. It would've been above The Maze. Possibly, oh yeah, I think it was on Gleason. I think we camped at Gleason the first night.

TM: That's Gleason Flats?

DH: Yeah, I believe we did. I did several trips with Randy so to some extent some of those kind of run together in terms of where we camped or what happened in the trips.

TM: Sure.

DH: Yeah, it was great.

TM: So it's on day 2 that you flipped in The Maze.

DH: Would've been, yeah.

TM: And then what happens?

DH: Then, we may have... Let me think about this. It may have been day 3 that we flipped in The Maze. In fact, there's a good chance it was because it wasn't that far downstream till we got to Quartzite Falls and that's where we had our second flip. We got there late in the day and...

TM: Hang on, let's back up a minute because this was intended to be a 2 night trip and it ended up being a 3 night trip, so at what point did you guys.... Was it at Quartzite where you guys got behind and realized this isn't gonna work and it's gonna be longer than we anticipated, or had something happened upstream from there?

DH: I don't recall any kind of an event upstream that would've resulted in the trip taking longer. I think it was partly a matter of we didn't know from experience how to pace ourselves for the sake of being able to do it in 2 nights. And this is all assuming that I'm remembering correctly that it was 3 nights unexpectedly.

TM: Okay.

DH: But I do remember that on the day that we flipped in The Maze, got the boats back over and went on down to Quartzite. Scouting Quartzite involved pulling over river-left well above the rapids. Well, we had stopped at the "Danger Falls" sign, that was already there at that point I believe, and climbed up to have a look downstream. Got back down to river level, went down closer. We didn't go as far as the left side eddy above the falls where folks had portaged in the past, or would typically portage on river-left. We were still on the river above that a little ways but at a point where Randy and Dan climbed up this cleft in the rock to where they could get a better view of the falls to assess what it was going to be like and what we could do. Came back down to the boats saying "Okay, this is gonna be intense, but here's what we need to do." It turns out, and found out after the fact, that when they were talking as they were looking at that from that vantage, that the conversation they had had, because by now I think it was around 4:00 in the afternoon, was that there really wasn't an option to camp right there and if we portaged the boats we'd probably be doing it in the dark. So to the extent that we knew it was feasible to run Quartzite, it seemed like the right thing to do at that point just to run the falls and get on downriver so we could camp below it. So, we ran Quartzite and the boat flipped, but this...

TM: So, wait a second. I'm thinking the flow by this time is over 5000 cubic feet a second.

DH: Yep.

TM: Can you describe for me what Quartzite Falls looks like at 5000 cubic feet a second?

DH: The only look I had at it before it became immediate, upfront, right in front of me, up close and personal and I was in it, was the view I had from having climbed up to the overview at the "Danger Falls" sign. I don't remember the discussion at that point, whether folks were going "Oh my god, look at that," or whether it was just "Oh, wow. That should be challenging," something to that effect. But, the view I had and what I'd heard at that point from the others didn't make me think it was lethal potentially, except for the fact that there was that sign there. I don't think anybody in the group knew the history of the sign at that point. The fact that it had been put up there by a fellow who had lost friends there. I mean, obviously there was concern in the group there was potential for it to be a problem. So Randy and Dan came down and said "Okay, let's do this." I remember Dan saying "Okay, so here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna paddle up to the top of the falls and when we get right up to where the pour-over is, I need 3 strong strokes from everybody, hard as you can go. Then when I say..." whatever the term was... "When I say hang on or get down or whatever, pull in your paddle, grab the rope, and hang on to the boat and duck, and then we'll resume paddling as soon as we get below." As it turned out, we flipped and one of the guys in the group... I think the raft recirculated like one time with one of the guys in the group with it at that point. The rest had been thrown out into the downstream current, fortunately, past the reversal. The best thing the kayakers did for us on the trip was to have been

waiting below the falls there for us on the water above Corkscrew so they were available to do rescues. They got us out of the water pretty quickly and they chased the raft on downstream and brought it over below Corkscrew. So we must've hiked from immediately below Quartzite down to below Corkscrew to get back to the boat. I don't remember the details on that, but I'm pretty certain the Rogue got, the raft, got washed down through Corkscrew.

TM: And what of Randy and his little boat?

DH: Randy... We were kind of in the water and getting out and trying to figure out what was going on. I think by the time... I didn't see him run it, but he came through upright. He didn't flip. I don't know where he ran it exactly. I think he may have gone far right to avoid the main hydraulic as much as he could. I'm pretty sure he did. But no, he came through it okay. And then he was there to help. He ran down... I'm reconstructing this in my own mind. He had to have just run on down through Corkscrew as soon as he saw that we were okay and on the side there and helped in retrieval of the raft once he got below Corkscrew.

TM: So, was it dark by the time you guys all got down though Corkscrew to the paddle raft?

DH: It was getting there as I recall. I don't remember where we camped below that, but it was not far below. The first opportunity we had to get over we camped for the night. I think the original intent had been that on the day that we ran that section, we would stay on the water all the way through to takeout. Because of the way the day had gone with the two flips and the scouting that was involved, we didn't get down below until dark so we really had no choice but to stay over an extra night.

TM: Got it. Okay. So, then the next morning was a typical runout?

DH: Yeah. Everything from there... Aside from that one day with those two flips, it was a fairly uneventful trip. It was a good time. Exciting runs, good experience. And it was a good group, actually, it turned out as well.

TM: Okay, so as you're explaining this, it sounds like it was intended to be a one night trip that ended up being a two night trip?

DH: No, two that ended up being three. I don't remember the two places we camped. I'm pretty certain one of the two on the upper section would've been Gleason.

TM: Okay, and then some place between Gleason and The Maze?

DH: Yeah, it might've been upper Corral or lower Corral. Somewhere in there. I think those are both above The Maze as I recall.

TM: Did you see anybody else out there at the time?

DH: Nope. Saw nobody else on the river the whole way through. Yeah, in fact, I think we were alone at the put-in as well, just in our group with the kayakers.

TM: You know, the reason I kind of want to go back, and I want to do this now, go back to Quartzite, is this was before it was blown up with dynamite.

DH: Right, oh yeah.

TM: So you saw it before that happened. That's why I'd like you to just try to remember what it was like, and how would you describe it to me before that happened.

DH: Yeah, it was very intimidating. I mean, once you have the experience of being in the water in that kind of hydraulic or anything like it, you knew what the potential was. It was such a strikingly uniform hydraulic and wide across the face of the drop. It almost looked like it was a manmade diversion dam it was just so impressive that way. But anyway, it was to be respected.

TM: And the concept at the time was to kind of take your boats down along the left shore and then portage them. Take them out of the water, up and over.

DH: De-rig them.

TM: De-rig them, so take the frames off the boats.

DH: Yep, otherwise you couldn't carry it.

TM: And the oars and all gear that you had.

DH: Yep, and that's the majority of the... Once I started doing other trips on the Salt, that was most often what we did in early trips. We would always portage on river-left through that little defile in the cliff face. There was a little notch with a sandy floor that took you back down to a place where you were maybe three feet above the river. You could lower boats down, tie them off and rig them right there on river-left.

TM: And that put you just below this recirculating, river-wide, sort of weir drop, if you will.

DH: Yeah, and it was always so impressive because as you're in your boat... You're nervous the whole time. Your boat is maybe six feet from the river-left edge of the reversal so you're feeling the current and the tug and your hearing and your seeing. The constant presence is that roar of the rapid as you're nervously bringing your boat down and being sure it's securely tied off. The boat's moving as you're having somebody hand the frame down and you're strapping it in place. And you try not to lean over too far because you don't wanna fall in the water since the reversals right there. [laughs] At the higher levels it was pretty impressive as you did that.

TM: So when you would get your boat rerigged in the water at the reversal, and then somebody would let you go and you were on the oars ready, was this a back-pull out of an eddy to get into a downstream current?

DH: Yeah. As I recall, it was kind of an eddy there, but you didn't have to pull out, as I recall, very far before you caught the downstream current on the left side and would follow that around and then pull yourself into position as you came around the left side of that open area below the falls in order to line up for the entry to Corkscrew.

TM: Okay. So this is the day 4 for you guys that you get to the takeout. This would've been Monday?

DH: I think it was Sunday as I recall. Yeah, I think it was. I think the intent had been to get off on a Saturday, but it might've been Sunday and then Monday, I'm not sure.

TM: So it wasn't a lost time from work for you, unless?

DH: It was. Honestly, I'm not sure. There was a Sunday included. It was a weekend trip. The reason I'm thinking of Sunday may have been that that was the day that the folks from Tucson had their troubles. Or the night before. I'm not sure to be honest. That's a good question. I remember this being a Sunday, but since it entailed the extra day, may have been on a Monday that we got off.

TM: And Patty wasn't on the trip? Was she upset that you were overdue? Was she comfortable with this?

DH: Oh yeah. I'm sure she was.

TM: I'm sure everybody was that was concerned because your group wasn't there.

DH: Right. And, of course, the problems of the Tucson group and the deaths that that group had had. It was in the news and was being covered in the Valley. So the folks that knew we were on the river knew that that had happened. But it was presented, as I recall, on the news as having been the group from Tucson, so they knew it wasn't us.

TM: Okay. So this trip then, your first actually helping to steer a boat through a desert river canyon, did it whet your appetite? Did it leave you with wanting to do nothing to do with this again?

DH: Oh yeah. Yeah.

TM: What attracted you to this after that trip?

DH: It was just a wilderness experience like nothing else I'd ever had. It was just the sense of being out there completely away. Kind of the sense of exploration of something that maybe not a lot of folks had seen or done before. At the same time, we were having a trip that was both kind of scary and exciting. The bonding within the group was really cool the way that worked out. I've always experienced that on my trips, especially involving new folks. I didn't know anybody in the group at that point so these were all new friendships. The way the group bonded together and got to know one another was really a cool part of the experience. Something I've always enjoyed when it works out that way on trips. So that was cool. I think this is an accurate statement that everybody who was involved in that trip either continued running rivers from that point on for a long period or never got on a river again. It was that kind of trip.

TM: Yeah.

DH: It was intense. That was the other thing about the intensity of it. I mean, it was incredible. Here's a sidebar that kind of relates which is at that point I was wearing my hair fairly long to the consternation of my boss at Motorola, but you know, it was the 70s, what can I say. I remember after we flipped in The Maze coming up out of the water with my hair plastered across the front of my face [laughs] and that not being a good situation. It wasn't long after we came back from that trip when I got my hair cut shorter and pretty much kept it that way ever since. It was intense. Very intense trip. A double whammy, the weather, the gloomy weather. The light coming through the clouds. And the approach to Quartzite, oh my god. There was a ray of light that came through the clouds that lit up the rock as we

were approaching it. It was like it had been cloudy and then just as we were approaching the rapids, there was a break in the clouds and this light came down through and just lit up the area right around the falls. It was just awesome looking. That was great.

TM: What else about that trip do you remember?

DH: Obviously being scared. Just enjoying it. I mean, just having the type of experience I had not had before on the river because it was so hands on and it was so intense. And we were out there by ourselves. It was just a great experience. Just had a good time.

TM: Did it make you want to go out and buy a boat?

DH: I did, and yes.

TM: What did you buy?

DH: One of the guys who was in that circle of friends. I don't remember if he was on that trip or not, to be honest, but there was a fellow who was... Again, this is another guy in Randy's circle of friends who worked for a local developer. He had an old Miwok that he had bought used. It was back when Campways was still a company and the Miwok was kind of thought to be, as I understood it, the boat of choice for the Salt or rivers like it, technical rivers and rocky rivers because of the proportionate oversized tubes relative to the length of the boat, length and width of the boat. He happened to have a used Miwok. He was gonna buy a new boat himself and so he offered me a chance to buy that. So I did. That was in '79.

TM: 12 foot, 14 foot?

DH: 14. Nominally 14, I think it was like 13' 6", something like that. As I recall it had 22 inch tubes which for a boat of that length was kind of unusual.

TM: It's not gonna sink. [laughs]

DH: Yeah.

TM: Did it come with a frame and oars or was it just a boat?

DH: No. actually it didn't. It didn't come with much of anything. One of the guys that I met on that trip who I became good friends with and did a lot of subsequent trips with was a fellow named Pat McCormick who worked for Randy. There were two guys in the group who worked for Randy at the time at Habitat, Pat McCormick and Tom Fife. Sidebar, Tom Fife was on the small raft with Randy all through the trip. They actually took turns rowing, as I recall. Tom was quite a good athlete and good boatman later on. So anyway, Pat and Tom both worked for Randy. Pat and I became pretty good friends and did a lot of subsequent trips together. Pat subsequently after he left Randy's employ, has his own cabinet shops. He made a good business out of doing custom cabinetry for various people and companies so we put together some rowing frames in his shop. He, of course, knew some good sources for good quality wood so we put together some fairly heavy but well-made and sturdy rowing frames in his shop for our boats.

TM: Okay, let's open this up a little because at the time in the 70s, boat frames rarely were made out of metal. A few were but most were made of wood. They were a wooden rectangle bolted together at the corners of the rectangle.

DH: That's right.

TM: The variation in design would've been at the oar locks. Do you remember how you guys did your oar locks?

DH: Yeah, they were oar stands that were bolted directly to the frame that had thole pins at the top. They were pins and clips setups. I'm pretty sure we got the components from Northwest River Supply at the time. I think they were in business by then. There is a possibility, I don't remember this part clearly yet, there's this local company that's still in business at that point called Arizona Portaboat. I think that was on 24th Street just south of Thomas in Phoenix. They sold boats and I think they had sold some gear as well, paraphernalia, accessories. I don't remember exactly where we got the hardware, but yeah, they were basically oar stands bolted directly to the wood frame.

TM: And rowing pins and clips?

DH: Pins and clips, yep. And then wooden floors with screw eyes mounted up through the underside of the frame and chains used to suspend the wooden floors from the underside of the frame. We had a square floor in the center of the boat to carry the load and, what would've been the shape, kind of a trapezoidal shaped floor in the rear that would fit inside the taper on the back of the boat that was likewise suspended. That one was suspended by straps, not chains. I think it was suspended by chains toward the front where the boatman sat and then by straps on the backside.

TM: Were there thwarts? Were there air chambers in the boat?

DH: Right, yeah.

TM: Did you remove those or did you leave those in there and put just deck on top of them?

DH: We put them on top. We wanted the extra buoyancy and also the extra water displacement because it was not a self-bailer. We were not using self-bailers yet at that point. So yeah, we left the thwarts in on those early ones.

TM: So this was '78 you purchased, then, your first boat.

DH: '79 was when I bought the boat. In '78, I had that Salt trip in April. Several people from that group along with some others were invited to come together for a trip on the Middle Fork of the Salmon in the summer of '78.

TM: Was that with Ron Miller or was that a different Middle Fork? No, because it was the Main Salmon that you'd done with Ron.

DH: Yeah, this was a private trip. This was organized by Randy. Same fellow who organized the Salt trip in April.

TM: So that Middle Fork trip was in 1978. What month?

DH: I don't remember the month for sure. It was the summer. But yeah, that was just an awesome trip.

TM: So, we've been happily yick-yacking for almost an hour and a half. Not quite. Before we head off for the Middle Fork 1978 trip, maybe this is a good time to wrap this interview up.

DH: Okay, sure.

TM: Do you have anything else you want to add about what we've talked about that you're thinking "I wanted to include X, Y, or Z"?

DH: Up to this point in time in my experience? Nothing comes to mind at the moment. I mean, it was just a sequence of events and opportunities I was lucky enough to have had that really left me motivated to keep doing the activity and expand that circle of friends, which in turn, of course, led to the founding of the Central Arizona Paddlers Club as one of the consequences, or my involvement with it. That's a few years later.

TM: We'll get to that down the road, but just from this point back, I want to make sure we haven't missed anything.

DH: Just it was like, not to be glib or clichéd, but that whole trip was kind of a come-to-Jesus moment for me. I mean, it really made me aware of what an intense, meaningful experience it could be to be on the river like that with a group of friends and have the opportunity to be out and unsupported and on our own and experiencing something like the canyon that we were floating through. It was just incredible. It was a pivotal moment for me.

TM: Nice. Well, with that, let's conclude Part 1 of a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with David Huizingh. My name is Tom Martin. Today is Friday, February 21st, 2020. David, thank you so very much.

DH: Oh, happy to do it.