

**Transcription:** Grand Canyon Historical Society

**Interviewee:** Dick Hingson (DH)

**Interviewer:** Tom Martin (TM)

**Subject:** Dick recounts the years 1969-1987

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TM: Today is Thursday, September 5th, 2019. This is a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Dickson "Dick" Hingson. My name is Tom Martin. This interview is being conducted at the kitchen table in our house here in Flagstaff, Arizona. Good afternoon, Dick. How are you today?

DH: I'm doing very good. Glad to be here.

TM: Thank you again for your willingness to talk about your connections to Grand Canyon. This is a Part 5 interview and at the end of Part 4, you had recounted your year in Zion and leaving Zion and going through another year of college and then off to Australia. When was the next time you were back at Grand Canyon?

DH: I got back to Grand Canyon in early 1970 during Easter week, it was probably into March, for a four night backpack along the Hermit Trail to Tonto Trail to I think Bright Angel Trail loop with a friend that I'd known from Harvard, a fellow graduate student. His name was Bob Jeanne and his brother Richard Jeanne in the same week was to be married to a Hopi girl out on the Second Mesa. And Hopi dances would conclude that week. Jeanne was my companion, but the brother was Richard Jeanne, who married a Hopi woman named Laverne. I can't remember the last name, but anyway, that was Easter week. By then I'd learned how to do backpacking because I'd had a ten night backpack in the North Cascades four years earlier with a different Harvard graduate student, Ron Capen. The whole thing there was up at the end of Lake Chelan. That started at the north end of Lake Chelan and went up into the newly formed national park, North Cascades. That was, of course, the real eye opener that this kind of rugged, self-sufficient backpacking could be done. [laughs]

TM: What kind of backpack did you have? Do you remember?

DH: Kelty. Without him, I probably would never have been able to do more because I had to learn all that. So I came down having my eyes opened from that to the idea that this ought to happen at the Grand Canyon in connection with Bob Jeanne. We went down to...we didn't go to the river.

TM: Hang on a second, Dick. I'm going to fill in some gaps here.

DH: All right. That's fine.

TM: One of the questions I had as you were talking here is, had you read *The Man Who Walked Through Time* by Colin Fletcher by then?

DH: No, I don't remember reading it. I can't remember having read it then. It came later but not then.

TM: Did you graduate from Harvard?

DH: I did graduate from Harvard just to make it clear. That's right. That graduation was at the end of '69. Well, actually I finished the work at the end of '69 and moved cross country to California by way of Flagstaff, actually and arrived in Los Angeles in November of 1969 and started a postdoctoral fellowship at UCLA with Dr. Jared Diamond in the Department of Physiology.

TM: What was your graduate degree in at Harvard?

DH: Anatomy.

TM: So how were you then tied in with Dr. Diamond? This is Jared Diamond who writes amazingly well books on the disasters that we as a species have done in certain areas. Some sustainable, but a lot of unsustainable growth and development?

DH: Easter Island. That's right. That was the classic book. Came out much later. The connection with Diamond was that I had taken his course on membrane physiology as a graduate student at Harvard and done surprisingly well. I was identified to Diamond who had two sides to him. He had the theoretical biophysics side, which had to do with membrane transport, and he had this other side that had to do with bird ecology in New Guinea in which he was world renowned. So he was split, two sides to Dr. Diamond, but I didn't know that side. I just knew the membrane transport. He took me on as his graduate student in UCLA, which triggered the move across country through Flagstaff to California. Then there I was set up for this experience in early 1970 while doing that with another Harvard graduate student, Bob Jeanne. Then out of that came the idea of the Grand Canyon backpack and the wedding and so on.

TM: So what can you tell me about Jared Diamond?

DH: Diamond was obviously a brilliant man. He was a five-star sort of individual as a communicator and thinker. He's a master teacher. He had come from Harvard to UCLA, I think, with some special category [laugh] of level of salary and grade because of his genius. Nothing short of that genius nature. In spite of the fact that he crossed both of these things, he was in physiology. He was in the Department of Physiology at UCLA. I couldn't figure a way, though, to bridge to that part of him at that time. I wasn't enough into birds as he was. I'd been trained in anatomy and physiology, but his work at that time... He kept all of his membrane transport work going. His own evolution continued later to where he actually left physiology and became a professor of geography in Southern California. But that hadn't happened yet.

TM: What was he like as a person?

DH: As a person, he was a little bit of an odd one as you might imagine. He was highly intellectual and brilliant. But he had to have had some problems here and there with some social circles cause he was a little odd, you know, brainy. Sometimes a little imposing because of that. I'm not certain, I have a feeling some of his early social life must have been kind of difficult. I'd seen this before, you know, the

intellectual genius sort of person. But that's going to be recognized by the university and so he gets to do all of that.

TM: Okay. And what was your postdoc work on? Permeable barriers is still a big deal today as we look at wastewater out of municipal...where water is a real precious commodity...using permeable barriers to clean up water for reuse.

DH: Well, that's right. I mean, you've got all kind of analogies about permeability, impermeability. This is still a very active field today with ion transport across cell membranes, active transport channels that are now finally being able to be deciphered through the sub-microscopic cell membrane. I mean, this is cutting frontier stuff. But it's at the far edge actually of my training as an electron microscopist because at that time all you could see barely were the two parallel inside and the outside of the membranes and they would stain. It took more decades before we got into the microtubules and other... I mean that field has advanced immeasurably since then but remains very hot.

TM: Yeah, absolutely. Okay. What got you interested in that first backpack there up in North Cascades?

DH: That had to do with the friendship with Ron Capen which had started while fellow graduate students over on the Cambridge side. So we had the friendship and then he wanted a partner during that summer. I actually sort of truncated or somehow left a Woods Hole appointment to go on that backpack with him. There was quite a draw towards both him and the idea of the backpack and learning car camping, too, on the trip. So the car camping, it was important because if you're going to a lot of places, you're going to wind up having to learn how to do that, too, and be comfortable with it. So I would just say it was definitely the friendship pull was very strong but also the idea of [laughs] learning how to do backpacking. So we wound up planning. He led it. I mean, he knew what to do. So I had a guide.

TM: Well, so for being out for 10 nights, that's a lot of food to carry.

DH: Yes. It was hard [laughs] getting up that first hill. That's right, it was hard, hard work. But somehow we did get up there and I was blown away. Just blown away by the wilderness. And that was the wilderness, yes. In a way that maybe exceeded what I had done at Grand Canyon. Oh yes, that was another planet up there.

TM: Did it rain on you guys?

DH: We did have one day where it rained. But fortunately, unfortunately maybe, it was a stationary day. I was the one stationary day and that was the one where we had the most rain. So we did have that experience at some lake. I remember that. But anyway, there's not much more to say on that one, except it just set me up for how this was done, you know, and that it could be done and backpacking.

TM: Yeah. I'm trying to think about what things you might've carried with you on the Cascades backpack that you didn't need in Grand Canyon.

DH: Mhm. Well, you would have had to have more rain gear, I mean, probably.

TM: Okay. That makes sense.

DH: It was a summer trip in the Cascades so in that way it was like Grand Canyon in the spring, I think. So it wasn't different except for you did have to be prepared for wet weather. It wasn't freezing. There wasn't anything remarkable that you wouldn't use in the canyon, too.

TM: Okay. And certainly the backpack, was it an external frame? I'm assuming aluminum.

DH: That's right. That's correct. Lightweight, aluminum. That's right.

TM: For the Grand Canyon backpack then at Easter, down the Hermit and across the Tonto and up the Bright Angel, I think by 1969 you would've needed to get a permit for that backpack.

DH: Yes, but I can't remember all the circumstances of getting it. Yes, we probably had the park service permit. But I can't...

TM: Did Bob get that then you think?

DH: No. Let's see. Probably. It may have been gotten sort of on spur of the moment. I don't think we had the capacity problems at that point.

TM: That's right. They would've asked though for your skills at the time. Had Bob had prior experience backpacking in Grand Canyon?

DH: Elsewhere. I don't know that he'd had it in the Grand Canyon. I was the one who knew the Grand Canyon better. But this certainly was a different route. No question about that.

TM: Oh, that would make sense. You had multiple rim to rims.

DH: That's correct.

TM: And so that would've gotten you... That permit would have been easier to get with that.

DH: Oh yeah. There wouldn't have been a question of competence for it, for getting the permit, I just don't remember. Yeah. But it was now a completely other level of exposure and with much more time on the Tonto Plateau. In fact, it was almost all on the Tonto Plateau. What comes back to mind were the long ins and outs of all those side canyons. The exotic formations, you know, inside of each one. The silence at night was quite obvious and I think Bob was particularly struck at it. I've learned that later, actually. Sometimes it doesn't sink in quite at first what you got going and he had never been in there. He wrote me only a couple of months ago where that, unprovoked, that that was one of the core dimensions of that experience. Almost like a suffocating silence where you heard nothing all night long in the darkness. I don't know how much we talked about that but the Tonto is the quietest zone of the canyon. So that was informing the experience. Yes.

TM: 1970, was there signs of a lot of other people there? Was there an easy trail to follow? Did you have to do some route finding?

DH: No, we did not have a lot of trouble with that trail. We were blessed by the weather. So I think the Tonto Trail was a very... I just remember it as very doable except for the [laughs] endless back and forth, in and out of the canyons that's what stood out.

TM: Did you see any burros at the time?

DH: No, we didn't. It didn't stick in mind, the wild burros.

TM: Okay. And did you run into any other people?

DH: This is 50 years ago. No one stands out. I'm sure we did. I can't believe we didn't. I think we did but there's no memorable encounter that stands out with that.

TM: Okay. All right. As you came around into the Bright Angel bay, you would've passed the spur trail going off to Plateau Point.

DH: That's correct.

TM: Did you drop your packs and walk out there?

DH: That's a good question but I had done that, as I said, in the final '62 summer. I can't remember how much time we had. We still have this other event coming. We might have but it doesn't stand out. I'm pretty sure we didn't do it at sunset like I had with that other one. That's the one that stands out was that sunset. But we might've done it.

TM: Did you hike down to the river at Hermit or Monument Creek?

DH: Not on that trip. No, we didn't go, not on that trip. It was to come, but not on that trip.

TM: Okay. All right. Anything else about that hike that you remember?

DH: No, not really. We got on well. No injuries, no frustrations. I had had some in the Cascades with Ron over just fatigue and blisters and complaining. There were certain things that we had to work through [laughs] but I don't remember it with Bob, anything like that. And I don't remember any other interpersonal thing one way or another about the trip. It concluded the way it was supposed to. It's just a wonderful, wonderful exposure which I then was able to carry on in some other trips later, forward from there on the other side of the Bright Angel Trail. So I knew that trail was there and that was a jumpoff point then from Indian Garden for a subsequent exploration.

TM: Heading further east on the Tonto?

DH: Heading further east towards the Kaibab Trail and all that's in there. So I have actually over time wound up hiking that entire stretch of the Tonto Trail between Hermit and the South Kaibab.

TM: On that Easter hike in 1970, did you hear any planes during the day?

DH: Nothing that stuck out at the time. I'm sure you had to have heard some here and there, but would have been very few. Nothing stuck out at that time so it didn't trigger anything. So it was obviously less than [laughs] what was coming and [laughs] that's the answer.

TM: Yeah. Okay. Was that backpack instrumental to you in any way or was it just the first of many hikes in the Grand Canyon? It wasn't the first, actually...

DH: No, it really wasn't the first, but I think it was instrumental in that it exposed me to the richness and magic of the Tonto zone of the canyon and in that way it was very instrumental. And then some of the monuments. Some of this monumental architecture vertical stuff that comes out of those creek beds, you know, is wonderful. It just enlarged my imagination and sense of the power of place, but nothing strikingly here's this one moment or this one sight. Not in that one, that was to come later but not that one.

TM: All right.

DH: Other than things like Monument Creek and there's a monument, you know, and yes.

TM: The monument in Monument Creek.

DH: Yeah. There was something. You got the idea of these isolated pillars that are in there which are definitely a go-to kind of thing.

TM: Yeah. Amazing geology. So back to the rim then and back to Diamond's laboratory.

DH: That was back to Diamond's laboratory, yes. And then what happened after that was that it was the beginning of the new Dick Hingson here because I was beginning to break out of the membrane physiologist and microanatomist business as a person. I was getting larger and needed more. Getting much more politicized. I had already become somewhat politically... Yes, the politicization had begun strongly at Harvard. I mean, all the business with the Vietnam War coming to a head in the final Harvard anatomy days and strongly politicized me. I was getting to see how history had been suppressed and how it got revealed and how the American people were deceived by their political system. So I had the unexpected thing happen after we got back from the canyon was that a strong early friend from the Harvard graduate days, especially the first year in that dorm in the Cambridge side, it turned out he was out in California in Santa Barbara and running a... He had entered the Democratic and then general election, he won the primary, against Charles Teague, T-E-A-G-U-E, who was one of those entrenched Republicans [laughs] in Southern California in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. Gary had to organize a primary campaign there and he wondered if I would help him with canvassing and other kinds of related grass-roots canvassing and organization that had to do with the LA County part of that district.

TM: This is the Gary Hart that's going to run for president eventually?

DH: No, it's a different Gary Hart. There was another one but this is a different Gary Hart. Gary was all into this grass-roots. He learned that at Harvard. He knew all about that. That was his style. He was a school teacher, became very liberal, very effective with the...very personable and a very good role model for me. So he wondered if I would organize the LA County part of the 13th...I think it was the 13th congressional district, I think that number is right. But anyway, it was the part of LA that's scenic actually. It included the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area down to Woodland Hills and Agoura Hills. So working that part of the district for me was an exotic way to get out of LA. I had a car. I found myself fascinated with that. And I realized in doing that maybe I was not that long for the membrane physiology world. I was more interested in what was going on with being able to roam around in the country and that geography and, you know, work on that campaign. So this was the

beginning clearly of a... Campaigns are exciting. I mean, they've got drama that I didn't have in the lab with those membranes. That drama was Jared's. Going through the membrane data I was collecting, but I didn't... So I wound up getting all sucked into both of those campaigns in the spring and then again in the fall. Of course he lost to Charles Teague eventually.

By this point I was getting kind of stranded in terms of feeling like I was in a dead end on this membrane physiology stuff with Diamond. It wasn't working out. I mean, I could get the data like a lab technician for him. And, you know, you're not paid that much as a postdoc. But I decided that I had gotten into a tunnel and I had to break out of it. So I completed the postdoc experience. The university accepted the fact that I was going to make a transition. I even got to make one final lecture at UC Berkeley on the work I had done at Harvard. Nice lecture, too. It was a good lecture, well received. I was going to take a chance and leave the field.

So then I was on my own after June of 1971. Now what happened? I guess you're probably wondering where did I go. Where I went was onto a bunch of summer backpacks cause I had a car. Then this opens up some pretty good car camping in the west. I'm pretty sure in that car camping, I did do the first of two backpacking trips through the Havasu reservation/Havasu Canyon.

TM: Mhm. So down to the falls there?

DH: I went all the way to the river. That first trip was by myself in a lovely set of September days. I had the whole thing to myself.

TM: Wow.

DH: Amazing, amazing peace and tranquility, loveliness. Had to climb up one...there's one cliff in there you got to get over. That was tricky but I did it.

TM: The little chains connected up through the little travertine passageways?

DH: I think they were some kind of chains. Well, there's one you got to get up out of that lovely valley, up over one particular slope and that's a little scary by yourself. You have to be careful, very careful. But I went all the way down to the river and back. That was a great individual backpacking success John Muir style. Now there was to be another one 10 years later. But I shouldn't maybe jump ahead except to benchmark it.

But this was also setting up the fact that maybe I wanted to go on a Sierra Club Grand Canyon rafting trip. I had learned about it and that was set for the last week of September of 1971. A 10 day trip. So I got onto that trip and ran the whole thing from Lees Ferry down to Temple Bar. That of course had its own revelation. I suppose I should say something about the most memorable or two episodes of that.

TM: Oh, absolutely. I have a lot of questions for you about that, so yeah, you bet.

DH: Yeah. Well, you had to pay a couple thousand dollars for that trip. It wasn't cheap. You had maybe 20/30 people. I thought all the boatmen knew what they were doing and they had all the different kinds of supplies, including port-a-potties and other things that you could be reasonably comfortable with. A lot of single individuals as I remember on that trip. Kind of brainy ones some of them. [laughs] One big moment does stand out because we had a crash where they lost control of the boat and it slammed into

the south side of the Granite Gorge appropriately enough at Sockdolager rapid [laughs]. Sockdolager rapid really through the boatmen and that punctured the pontoon on which I... I'd been sitting on the pontoon towards the back, or part way back, but right in the front it was punctured and they had to spend some hours repairing the boat at Sockdolager rapid. Of course I learned all that geography down there. The other place that struck me and had meaning for much of the rest of many years was the long triumphant trip up Conquistador Isle, which is that long peaceful straight stretch south to north. Very majestic parade up that. That really stuck in my mind. Of course I got to see Havasu Creek again where I had been. That was a major thing. I don't remember having a river book but I had the rough map of how we were going and we just wound up... The weather held very good. It was hot, a hundred degrees almost, 95 or something in the days and there was no rain until 30 minutes after we got out at Temple Bar and all hell broke loose. Storm front coming in from the west. Cold storm. We beat it by 30 minutes. [laughs] You remember things like that. [laughs]

TM: Do you remember the name of the company? This was a motor boat, I'm assuming.

DH: Yes, but I'd have to rethink about that or go into a record. I don't remember the name of the outfitter.

TM: Do you remember the name of the guides at all?

DH: No, I don't. There are no names that stick in my mind.

TM: Do you remember the names of anyone else on the trip?

DH: I'd have to research the... Not out of my head. I'd have to find a trip list to do that. There was no one that... I could have hoped for maybe a little more of somebody that you would have had further communication with. But it just didn't happen out of that trip. Some of those people were unique, very unique. But there wasn't anyone like that so there wasn't anything to carry away like that.

TM: Okay. What happened at Sockdolager? How did you end up having a tangle with the wall there?

DH: Somehow the boatman had lost control in the rapid. I mean, I guess that's possible. That was not planned. They had lost control [laughs] and the boat slammed into it. I was on the forward end of the boat not right at the place that was the impacted. That was a dramatic moment, you know. Yes, you would have to say that was the boatman's mistake probably. But there were no injuries from it fortunately. So you just had the adventure [laughs] of the power.

There were some hikes. Of course, I remember the hikes. We got to hike up in those side canyons. I mean, I can't remember. We had a book with the miles and all this but it's a standard trip. Certainly Deer Creek Falls. There was a guano canyon I remember vaguely. Just names, free association, but I haven't studied it lately. They were just all very exotic kinds of places. But we knew where we were each time, what river mile and so on. Beyond that there were no accidents, no interpersonal conflicts of the sort that do arise sometimes. We didn't have that. It was just a successful, barely escaping the storm at the end.

TM: Do you remember, this is getting some detail you may not remember, since the dam was in place upstream and the water would have been going up and down quite a bit every day. Do you remember being aware of that at all? That would have been the boatmen's problem, but not necessarily aware...



DH: Not aware at my particular level. Not much. I mean I had nothing to compare with from it. I remember the water was different than when I first hiked through there. It was taking silt out. We hadn't had rain so I'm assuming it was colder. That's right. I can add to what I've said so far is that the way you would get back was supposed to be a flight over the Grand Canyon, or over part of it anyway, because they would've taken us back to the landing strip near Lees Ferry and that was one of my big disappointments. Because of the weather, they had to reroute that. They could not go over the canyon. They had to take us way north somewhere much closer to Kanab and didn't get to see what otherwise I would have seen. I remember the disappointment of it. But you take your chances. At least that didn't happen on the river.

TM: Yeah. Yeah. Do you remember was the river clear or was it red?

DH: No. I'd have to go into pictures probably which I haven't got. There's not a very good memory of the... I have seen it blue-green and all these things, but I cannot remember the color right now.

TM: Then the last day would have been a long day motoring across the reservoir from the end of the Grand Wash Cliffs, past Pierce Ferry, all the way to Temple Bar. That's a long way down Gregg Basin. It's just a long day sitting on the boats and...

DH: Yeah, it is true that that was, and yes, you knew your environment has definitely changed once you got past the Grand Wash Cliffs. That is correct. Seemed to me we got out at midday. Whatever had happened there, we got out at... Cause that storm broke and there was supposed to be the airplane ride soon after. So that storm broke in late morning, which is when they break. I mean, you know, often. Well, that's when the front came through. And that's all I remember about that. [laughs] 50 years of just memory. If I research photos they might trigger some more things.

TM: Yeah. So did you do any more hiking the next year? How does your line of progress then go forward with the canyon? Yeah.

DH: I would say that there wasn't much more until 1978, right after the 1978 general election.

TM: So jump us from 1970 here...sorry, from September of 1971 to 1978. Can you name a couple of important things that happened during that time?

DH: Right. Where was I based? You mean just in my other life?

TM: Yeah, in general.

DH: The other things that were driving my geography and life and so on were that right after the rafting trip through the Grand Canyon I had an invitation to...or the possibility... I arranged it with a friend who had been very close to me in Johns Hopkins medical school named Ray Adelman. He was on some kind of residency in San Francisco and he offered me a place to stay in actually a very large closet in his apartment in San Francisco. So I went up and took advantage of that. Now we have to get into personal motivations about why San Francisco, what you would do in San Francisco. And this will figure down the road with the Sierra Club, too. But it's starting there because it's a part of my personal liberation. I needed to find out about the gay movement that was breaking out for my own sense of inner salvation cause that's what I was. All this suppressed, all this held back, all this breaking loose with the social

revolution that started with the Stonewall Riots in New York City in June of '69. So San Francisco was alive with all of that by the time I got up there. I knew I liked politics, you know. I knew I had the skills that I developed with Gary Hart. So those skills were transferable into things that were in people but I needed to connect with all that history up there, and San Francisco being the core of all of that.

And also on a personal level. So there were just tremendous experience and personal liberation that had to do with rap groups, had to do with individuals, and people you met and all this. And you learn everything in the world that had been suppressed. That was a major, major thing for me. I carried all that through the fall of 1971 and into early '72 with all these connections made there. But I could only stay with Ray so long, who was supportive of that.

A Jewish boy who was supportive of all that. Straight, not a gay one, but he was supportive. Then I got my own apartment with roommates for a few weeks. Then came another opportunity in early '72 to move to Santa Barbara because Gary Hart, having lost to Charles Teague, now was involved with trying to run for the State Assembly. I happened to call him up at just the right moment in March and see what was happening and was there any way I could... Boy, did he need me right there to help organize. It was lucky. A lucky strike in Santa Barbara yet. So he invited me to come down and help him run his primary run for the State Assembly. And again, it's all the grassroots canvassing. I mean, you know the geography, you're working precinct by precinct by precinct, you're plugging people in. I stayed with a supporter there in a beautiful canyon behind Santa Barbara. Lovely house. Lovely views. One of the loveliest cities in America. So another stroke of luck I thought. We had a successful... He won his primary and then, of course, that means you did it all over again for the summer and kept going. Organizing Santa Barbara, organizing all the liberals and the social activists, people wanted change. So we ran through that and had the great disappointment of his loss on election day by 600 votes out of 120,000. Very depressing night. I wound up supervising the recount, being the spokesperson for the campaign during the recount which went on in the great courthouse of Santa Barbara. County Courthouse that was a medieval castle [laughs] during the Thanksgiving week in Santa Barbara. But it confirmed that he had lost. So I made the final statement to the press about that. He was away by then. But now what to do?

Well, I was connected to Santa Barbara so I stayed in Santa Barbara. I was in Santa Barbara then from the fall of '72. I think maybe in the summer of '72 I might've gotten very cheap lodging in Isla Vista which is a well-known hippie hangout and all that. So I was exposed to all that starting with the summer of '72. Yeah, that's right. It was so cheap that the campaign was willing to pay for that in the summer of '72. So now I was oriented to UC Santa Barbara and there's where I wound up living on unemployment insurance. I had that, but I got back into UCSB into a master's program in public and social affairs. So I had a two year thing there which was actually going to reconnect to the Bay Area when it came time for the field work part of it. That would get me back up into Palo Alto and the gay movement again. Well, it was going on in both cities. I mean, this was pretty hot in California.

TM: Was this a thesis master?

DH: Yeah. Master's thesis which...

TM: What was your thesis on?

DH: The thesis was a field survey, well, an opinion survey among mental health professionals throughout Palo Alto, that county, Santa Clara County, about all kinds of attitudes concerning the gay population.

How to help them out and what to do. It was a very fertile time. I mean, one has to remember that the big referendum within the American Psychological Association, which took it off the sick list, only came about in 1973. So I was there on the cusp of that. Also a huge fight broke out within Palo Alto and the school board over a gay nondiscrimination policy. A very dramatic fight that the gays won three to two.

TM: How were you managing your finances at the time?

DH: It was close. Unemployment insurance had somehow worked here. I mean it was pretty liberal on savings. I mean, it was pretty liberal unemployment insurance rules at the time although I had close calls with them, too.

TM: Did you work as a teaching assistant?

DH: There was something like that.

TM: Did US San Bernardino help a little bit?

DH: Yeah. When I finished that MA, I came back to Santa Barbara and then I got a job for the student association. Paid job doing a survey. It was a very successful survey on the use of the recreation fees. I had a great job. So that kept me right there on the campus. Then I got another job at a place called Lawrence University in Isla Vista, which was a startup private school for people in education. Whether it was the right choice or not, I don't know. But it got me money and it got me right down from where I lived in Isla Vista and all that was going on there. So it stabilized me in Santa Barbara while I continued to work all that issues. It was social activism both paid and unpaid. I mean social now is a whole different thing than anatomy, you know, histology. It wasn't that anymore. It was just getting by and getting into all the loveliness of Santa Barbara with every kind of hike and outdoor and things. So that went on and...

TM: Did you maintain your relationship with the Sierra Club during that time? You still a member or...

DH: No, I was a member, but it was just sort of incidental on the side. I wasn't really doing that much with Sierra Club at that point, although I was seeing the people. I knew who they were. That's all I can say about it. It came later, the reentry into Sierra Club, but it wasn't quite to be yet. Then I'm done with Santa Barbara suddenly and unexpectedly in the spring of 1977 because one of the ladies that was so impressed with me during the Gary Hart campaign knew about me and recommended me for a job in LA. Surprise out of the blue which pulled me to LA. So I got pulled out of Santa Barbara along about June of 1977 and now I'm winding up in Hollywood.

TM: What's the work that brought you there?

DH: The work was that she, this Jewish lady who had helped me organize Gary Hart, had recommended me. She was wired to some other people and they needed pretty badly a director for the Gay Community Services Center in Los Angeles, in Hollywood, and would I do that? Of course their salary with that... I wound up with a place to stay in the Hollywood Hills, too, with that with low rent and a view house. Two years in LA, in Hollywood.

TM: Is that working for the city?

DH: The work was for the Community Services Center. In other words, this was private money. I was the second director or third of the Gay Community Services Center in LA. And just as an aside here, it just is the irony of the timing here, in two weeks I will be recognized as one of their chain of the executive directors of the past 50 years in LA in Greek theater in a gala 50th anniversary event. So it's quite a circle closing in two weeks. And they're bringing me back and putting me up in a hotel. So that was the basis for being in LA for the two years. This is going to have meaning, though, with the Sierra Club going down the road, but...

TM: That brings you to 1978, too.

DH: '77 to '79. The thing that's probably as singular as anything there was that I was there for the one that welcomed Mayor Tom Bradley, the first black mayor of LA to the Center when he did his first visit. There's a photograph of me, which I have. It's online. It'll be shown at the event in the program. That was just a big event, you know. This covered the period through, in California, huge events. I mean, this is one battle royal, you know. The slaying of Harvey Milk and Mayor Moscone, the assassinations, and then the Briggs Initiative which was to forbid any hiring of gay teachers in the whole state. I mean this was part of that two years. That initiative was won, however, by the gay community. That was major victory for civil rights. So, I stayed on for another few months after that and then my time was up at the Center and I was on my own again. So that's kind of like the way that was.

TM: I got to ask you, we're getting way off topic here, but...

DH: I know, but it just fills in the gap.

TM: Where your parents supportive of this, you know, cause they had this vision of firstborn, our son's going to be a doctor. And you got a PhD and...

DH: It's all that. That's correct. Yes. That's correct.

TM: ...you got a postdoc...

DH: Yes.

TM: ...and you got another master's degree.

DH: That's right. That's correct. That's all correct. You've raised the right question. And the answer, this changed later, but during the 70s, oh, you know, I actually wrote down notes. There was one just terribly frustrated long distance call because they'd found out about what I was doing and they're still at Georgia, heart of the deep south. And my father coming out of the Baptist tradition. So you can imagine that all of this... Oh, yes, there were charges of defaming the family.

TM: Did they eventually reconcile with you?

DH: Oh, yes, they did reconcile because my father...especially my father. There's a very dramatic final conversation with my father. I don't know whether you want that in the history or not, but I'm willing to talk at the right time about it. But it didn't come until when I was working on the overflights in the mid-90s for the Sierra Club. There was a very dramatic reversal by my father at that point.

TM: It's funny because I'm curious to know why it took him so long. Somebody who was a world traveler, who clearly saw a lot of things around the world and yet was still in that southern mindset. And so we're kind of off in the weeds here.

DH: Well, you've named it the way you feel. I'm willing to answer the question briefly. It's an interesting point, you know.

TM: It's not a question, it's an observation. It seems like somebody who was not just from the south, stuck in the south. Somebody who traveled the world.

DH: Oh, and was a scientist as well. He was a research scientist who was well-published on epidural anesthesia and all the things that went with that. He's an inventor and so on. And yes, there was a very poignant final conversation where he's hardly able to talk at this point. He only could talk for maybe two minutes at a time. He had this little thing he must've rehearsed. But he got it out that he finally had to decide that in the end he was a scientist, not a religionist. Based on that... And he was close to animals. He understood about animals and animal behavior. So he made it very clear to me at the end that he understood that wildlife was not all one thing. He had figured that out and pointed it out to me actually from a wheelchair. Two geese, males, both males, pointing it out.

So yes, that was a complete reversal. The mother was too reticent to talk about it. She was harder. That doesn't mean that she wasn't moving some philosophical. I'm just saying, before they died, clearly we were not in the place we were in when I first came out in 1960 in Cleveland. This was different, especially the father. So yes, that's the answer to the question.

TM: Yeah. It took a long time.

DH: It took that long though. Change is hard. Not just on that. [laughs]

TM: Cool. Thank you. So 1978 does that get you back to Grand Canyon again?

DH: Yeah, it does because... And there was one of the dramatic reconnection, which ought to be just noted, which was right after the Briggs Initiative I had already scheduled a trip for Veteran's Day to hike down to the bottom and back. It started in warm weather, went down to Phantom Ranch, I must've stayed there that night, and came out into a snow storm that ended in sunset glory on the new fallen snow. Utter triumph. And the triumph of having just won the Briggs Initiative in California. That's one of those transcendent... That's transcendence. It does turn out sometimes for the better. That was a very memorable hike because I'd never seen it snow like that and then clear at the end. You know how sunsets can be in the last half hour on a newly snow covered trail. Oh, it's glorious. I've got pictures of that. It's glorious, you know. So I did have that reconnection right at that triumphant psychological moment. Then came back to finish the... Well, I came back to the Center but I was not the person to stay in that job either. They needed another kind of personality. Nothing I did wrong, but they needed another kind of personality than the anatomist and the scientist. They needed somebody that connected better to the average Joe that's going to be there. I had stabilized it so they let me go. But the very day after they let me go I had another transcendent, natural world experience that softened it and that was the total eclipse of the sun over western Oregon that I got to see and the whole dramatic story about that. Another triumph. Two minutes of glory but paired with a difficult moment. But it was a great salve. Like it didn't matter anymore because of the glory. The sun only came out during the...you could only see it about 10 minutes. It clouded over and then it broke free 10 minutes before the total eclipse

out over the Deschutes in northern Oregon and then closed up again for the rest of the day. But we saw it. It wasn't supposed to be seen from there but we saw it from the hilltop. So it was a great moment with nature and that's important because where we're coming back to is my connection to these kinds of transcendences of light and shadow and glory that are the Grand Canyon. So it goes in that stream of consciousness. So then you're out of there and exiting the Center in LA. This is just so you can see the chronology, June '79. Oh, but there were trips to the California desert starting up. I was beginning to discover that. Well after all, the Grand Canyon has got that desert. It's a great desert park really and I was getting involved with the California desert for the first time.

TM: So this is the Mojave?

DH: Yeah. Mojave Preserve area, Joshua Tree, Death Valley.

TM: The Panamints.

DH: There's a lot of stuff you could do from LA and I was doing it during the spring of '79. So this is reconnecting me back to desert. Silence, desert parks, and beginning to elevate that. So you've got that going on in '79 and then I'm finished with the Center there and then comes a trip to Europe. But I will say on Grand Canyon, it did feature a July 4th window table at the North Rim lodge. First time I'd been back there in 14 years. With a hitchhiker that I'd picked up. An interesting young man who actually shared a cabin and a window table at the North Rim lodge on the night of July 4th. So we had that. I'm trying to keep it to canyon and not...

TM: That was 1979?

DH: That's '79.

TM: Was there anyone there that you recognized from your...

DH: No, no, not at Grand Canyon lodge. There was nobody there then. It was completely turned over and the management was different now. I just remember the window table and sleeping in a cabin. That was just a great short but important reunion there. Then followed the three month trip to Europe with a backpack. It was backpacking. I mean, that's how I got around, with a backpack on a Eurail pass. And then coming back to the US to end up with a family in the end of the 70s, which was in Pittsburgh. Then a few weeks paid work at the beginning of 1980 with family members in South Carolina picking apples, that's one of the things they did, my sister and her husband. And the New Orleans Mardi Gras. And then I returned to California to Santa Barbara. So you had to figure out what next and I went back to Santa Barbara. So Santa Barbara riveted me once again for a few years. All kinds of good things happen there that would... Eventually it would return to the canyon but I went through more campaign organizing for a UCSB professor of history who ran for Congress in 1982. Made me his campaign manager by July.

TM: Did he win?

DH: Lost. Tough politics there. This is Reagan now.

TM: Okay.

DH: Reagan's in, bad times. They were bad times for Grand Canyon, too. It was bad news. James Watt and the succession of Interior secretaries beginning under Reagan that were wise use people. So it was bad news but I was doing other things there that were still important for my self-development and the movement. That was the motivation, mostly the gay movement still, not Sierra Club yet. I mean it was CALPIRG which was somewhat interested public interest research groups in California. There's door to door canvassing. Very successful, very supportive friend running that. It brought me obviously money. And then came in 1984 another sudden call to LA out of the blue. Just like the thing that had happened with the Center in '77. It was a sudden call to work for the ACLU as the assistant to the executive director of the Southern California ACLU. So that's going to pull me back into LA and I'm going to be there for 16 years.

TM: Okay. Working for the ACLU?

DH: The first part of it from '84 to the end of the 80s, I'm the assistant to the executive director of the ACLU of Southern California. But the only thing I can say about the canyon in there is that halfway through that period is the Grand Canyon air crash first of all, which was in 1986 off Point Sublime, followed by Reagan signing the Overflights Act on August 18th of 1987.

TM: And you had yet to start working on overflights. These are just...

DH: Well, that's right. Although my first letter on the subject... I was interested enough to look at the Federal Register or something like that in that period because I knew of the airplane crash and then that they were going to do something. I think it was right after '87. My first letter on overflights to Congress was somewhere in '88, I think, regarding a Federal Register notice by the FAA. They had published an inaccurate map of the new SFAR they were creating with the flight line shown on the map as being right over the top of Point Sublime. Right over the top and it was inaccurate.

TM: And you spotted that?

DH: I spotted it and I wrote a letter, a long letter. I wrote a letter on that one to Congress. They found out about it and expressed displeasure to the FAA about that notice. FAA didn't have a clue what these points meant.

TM: Oh, interesting.

DH: Not a clue. Point Sublime, though as I've understood this, I don't know what I understood then or understood later, they had to have this dragon corridor because that's where Elling Halvorson had found these Indian ruins back behind Point Sublime. So you're leading up to a showdown between the Sierra Club and Earth First! and NPCA and other environmental activists that I found out later about. But it was at Point Sublime in the late 80s. I mean there was a demonstration out there. So yes, this matters, but my letter complained about the whole thing. I mean, I was opposed to all of it. I just simply objected. I get one more backpack in those years, which was in the late 80s, around 1989 maybe. It gets set up, a 10-day...maybe it was '87...I'll get the date, but it was a 10-day Grand Canyon backpack. So I had one more really solid Grand Canyon backpack in the late 80s which involved Hermit and Boucher trails down to Boucher rapids. Camping two nights at Boucher rapids and then coming back up out of the Boucher Trail across the Tonto past Yuma Point and out at Hermit Trail. So I had a 10-day Grand Canyon backpack in there and I was exposed to the overflights ramping up over Hermit and Boucher. So there was annoyance about that in the late 1980s.

TM: Maybe, Dick I'm going to jump in here. We've been yick yacking about an hour and 10 minutes.

DH: No, that's the right place. That's fine.

TM: Maybe this is a good place to wrap up Part 5 and we can pick up Part 6 with more details of this backpack.

DH: Okay. That would be good because there were some things that went on there. That would be good. I would happily talk about the backpack.

TM: So as we wrap this Part 5 interview up, is there anything else in this section that you want to bring in?

DH: Well, I would just say as a little side note as a result of something, partly as a result of a lucky event under the ACLU, I got a return to Australia for a month for Haley's comet, Cape Tribulation and the Barrier Reef. I'll just put that in as an important side trip. [laughs] I have to say I got back there. But that doesn't have to do with keeping this fairly close to the Grand Canyon and environmental thing. I don't think I would say much more about that stretch.

TM: I was just going to ask you about Australia. Were you able to connect up with people that you knew when you were there in that summer?

DH: Yes. The interesting thing was that I had a dinner in Melbourne with the professor's children. A reunion dinner. Wonderful. You can't do better than that to have found them and had a dinner with them. He was a city planner in Melbourne by that time, the son. I do not believe I saw Dr. Milton. He had died by that time. I've outlived him by quite some time. But the son, John Milton, yes, and his wife.

TM: Nice.

DH: I did see, though, my first couple of Australian national parks, though, at Cape Tribulation and the Warrumbungles, which was to be tied with the comet, Haley's comet. That's right beneath the Siding Springs Observatory. So this is getting to my cosmic senses, you know, the canyon... I'm a cosmic astronomy oriented person. And this is perfect, you get Haley's comet over the Warrumbungles National Park and the silence of that with a good friend, an Australian friend. We had this trip out there. We had that. So those were just major benchmarks for my return to Australia. That's all I need to say cause I wasn't doing Grand Canyon then. But that happened.

TM: All right. Well that sounds like a good period there on what will be the conclusion of Part 5 Grand Canyon oral history interview with Dick Hingson. Today is September 5th, 2019. My name is Tom Martin. And Dick, Thank you very much.

DH: Okay. You're welcome.