

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Esther Litton (EL)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Esther recounts her life with Martin between 1944 and 1954: WWII, trips into the Sierra Nevada and Navajoland, building their house in California, birth of 2 of their children, trips to Dinosaur National Monument, early Sierra Club river trips

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TM: Today is Sunday, May 24, 2020. This is a Part 3 Grand Canyon oral history interview with Esther Litton. My name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon, Esther. How are you?

EL: Good afternoon. I'm just fine.

TM: Wonderful. May I have your permission to record this interview?

EL: Yes you do.

TM: Thank you. You know, you told us some really great stories from the fall, winter and spring of 1944 or 1943...1944 in Florida. Is there anything else you'd like to recount about that time?

EL: Yes, at that time I met a young woman who lived in the same apartment building and we decided to go to an afternoon movie. They were showing *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. It was not a very fancy theater, it was a neighborhood theater. As we approached it, we saw that the sidewall was painted white. And there was a stairway going up to the second floor. In bright letters above the stairway it said, "Colored only." And that was a shock for me. I'd never seen that particular thing happen. As we approached to get our tickets, there was a drinking fountain which said, "Whites only." So, anyway, that was an occurrence that was very unusual and a teaching moment for me.

TM: Right, coming from California I would imagine. I had a question for you. You mentioned in the last interview a couple of times about some rowboats on a river.

EL: Yes, yes. Flowing into Tampa Bay was the Hillsborough River. We had enough gas to wander up the river to a place where there were a couple of rowboats tied up. They didn't seem to belong to anybody, and there was no dock. They were just tied up on the edge of the bank. It had the oars in it so we borrowed the boat and rowed down the river, the Hillsborough River. Not just once, but we did it a couple of times. It was a lovely pastoral kind of scene. In the water, I noticed a fish I'd never seen before and never seen since. It was a gar. It was a long-nosed gar. It was a long fish maybe it could be two or three feet long and it swam close to the surface. But also, I noticed trees that were unusual for me and they were growing wild. There was the liquid amber and there were willows. The thing with the liquid

amber, I had never noticed a tree whose leaves would turn from green to yellow to purple. And also, on some of the logs in the river were turtles that would jump off as we approached.

TM: I was curious, was this your first experience with a rowboat? You had mentioned a canoe on the Russian River.

EL: Yes, it was my first experience with the rowboat. I'd only done the canoe on the Russian River. But Martin was very adept with a rowboat.

TM: Had he rowed in a boat before?

EL: Oh yes. He was on the varsity crew. He was on the crew at UCLA from the time he was a freshman to the time he graduated. When he was a senior and at the end he was the stroke on the varsity crew.

TM: You had mentioned that, and I had of course... I was curious, though, before college had he spent time swimming and boating?

EL: I don't know anything about that. I just know that he'd done a lot of hiking in the Sierra Nevada, but I wasn't aware of any rowboat experience.

TM: Were there any other things that you can remember from Florida, cultural differences that really took you aback?

EL: I think I had mentioned before, yesterday, other events and things that surprised me about Florida. [When I did some substitute teaching, the school day always started with a Bible verse. That was very unusual for me 9/17/20.] There was one thing in hiking I had to be careful because there was a poison sumac. We didn't come in contact with poison ivy, but I did come in contact with poison sumac which acts very much like poison ivy and it was very uncomfortable.

TM: I bet. You mentioned in the spring of 1944, the glider pilots got called out.

EL: Yes, they were all called in to report to Bowman Field in Kentucky. So, in March we packed up our suitcase and put it in the back seat. That was all we had, very little, and we made our way from Florida up through Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, and up to Bowman Field where Martin reported in and requested time to drive his wife to a point to where she could go back to California. So he was granted I think it was 10 days. Anyway, it was enough that we drove down to Albuquerque and my aunt came on the train to join me to drive the car back to California because Martin wouldn't have any use for the car after that. I assume that he took the train to go back to Bowman Field, Kentucky.

TM: Okay. Can you follow his story forward until you saw him again?

EL: Yes. The glider pilots were shipped out almost immediately. They went on the Louis Pasteur ship which the stabilizer had been removed so that submarines wouldn't spot it. In the rough sea, he said that in the dining room the chairs and tables would fly from one side to the other. When they reached Great Britain, he was assigned to Cottesmore Airfield which was in the state or province of England called Rutland which is the smallest... I'm not sure how they designate the areas, whether they're provinces or states or what, but it was the smallest one. It was near the village of Cottesmore. While they were there, they prepared... This was April, maybe, of '44 and I think the invasion took place in

June. They didn't use the gliders to go in for the invasion for D-Day, but they did schedule them for September for the Market Garden invasion which was to be the invasion of Holland which was in German hands at that time. It was dramatized in a book by Cornelius Ryan called *A Bridge Too Far* [and later made into a movie which, interestingly, the former glider pilots got to see in a special showing before its general release 9/17/20]. Anyway, the aim was to capture the three bridges, the Eindhoven, the Nijmegen and the Arnhem, before the Germans could destroy them. The gliders were used to bring in the troops to various fields in Holland to bring in infantry. Each glider would hold about twenty troops with their backpacks.

Martin took a lot of pictures at the time of getting the tow-planes together and the ropes. Each tow-plane, I don't remember if it was a B-17 or what denomination the plane was, but each plane would tow two gliders. They had these long, long ropes going from the plane to the glider. They took off, I don't remember what day it was, but it was early September. These hundreds and hundreds of gliders, not just from Cottesmore but I think other fields that had gliders because they had hundreds and hundreds of gliders stationed in England.

When they took off, the directions were to detach your glider when you see the pink smoke. Martin realized he was in trouble because not only when they got over the Channel was it a very foggy day, but also he couldn't tell if it was pink smoke or grey smoke or what because of his colorblindness. He realized that where he was to land he'd be in trouble if he landed in the wrong place. The only way to get word to the glider beside him was to radio. There was a radio line to the pilot of the airplane, of the B-17, so Martin told him to communicate with the pilot of the other glider and tell him to be the first to cut off because Martin was supposed to be the first to cut off. The other glider pilot didn't like that very much and [also, Martin's glider nicked the other glider's wing and so the glider pilot 9/17/20] cursed Martin for that. At least when they got over Holland, they cut off at the right place. He landed safely with an open field which my younger son visited many years later. It's still there and there's a small museum dedicated to the gliders who landed in that particular field.

They were fortunate in the field where they landed because aerial photography was not very good at the time. Whatever aerial photography they had of Holland fields didn't give much in the way of details of what was on the ground. Some of the fields that the gliders landed in had been vineyards. The vineyards were very old and they just showed up as dark spots on the photograph. So many of the gliders were damaged and smashed to smithereens when they landed on the field with the vineyards. But Martin was very fortunate and they landed. He took pictures where they landed and then the infantry went marching off. Then he was to get back to Brussels. He was to make his way from there to Brussels. He hitched a ride with a truck that was passing by. It was a Negro driver who was lost. He was supposed to go to Chartres, France, but he didn't know where he was. So, Martin said, "Well, you're going to Belgium now," and he got in the truck and they drove. But they had to stop frequently because the radiator had been pierced by bullets and it kept leaking so they had to stop every once in a while. There was a ditch where Martin said he got the water. Anyway, he got to Brussels and from Brussels at an airfield he got transportation back to England.

His next assignment was in December during the Battle of the Bulge when the troops were caught in the Ardennes Forest. They used the gliders to come into an airfield and pick up the wounded. In the meantime, they had figured out a way to pick up the gliders. It involved like a goalpost in football when you have the two posts and a post in-between. I won't try to explain it because I don't understand it myself. But they had figured out a way to pick up the gliders. Martin made one trip across the Channel

to this airfield to pick up the wounded who could be saved at that time. The glider contained a doctor and a nurse and they loaded the wounded and returned them to England.

After that I don't remember that he had any glider assignment because we did get out of the Battle of the Bulge and gradually the Germans were defeated. I forget when in '45 the war was over in Europe, but I think it was in April or May that the war was over. So Martin made his way home, flew home, and he arrived around September. Oh, wait a minute. Wait a minute. No, wait a minute, I'm all wrong here. No, he was dismissed for a month and only a month because the invasion of Japan was planned. I don't know why they were thinking of using gliders, I can't imagine, but anyway as a glider pilot he was told to report for duty again in a month.

So when he came home, he had that time off and he wanted to go on a pack trip into the Sierra, which we did. He had brought home a mummy bag from the army and a pup tent and he knew what to do as far as camping. At that time the freeze-dried foods were beginning to be available so he had done the packing for the food and sleeping bags. We went into the Sierra on the east side to a place called North Lake. From there we went over [Piute Pass] down into Humphreys Basin at the foot of Mount Humphreys. Now, I had never done anything like that. I had never been in a sleeping bag, I had never slept on the ground. This was all completely new territory for me but it turned out beautifully. I really enjoyed it. I actually enjoyed sleeping on the ground. I didn't necessarily enjoy washing clothes in the cold stream. But Martin had the itinerary all worked out. We went over the John Muir Pass into Evolution Valley. For a long time I could remember almost every step we took, but I can't now. But we did make our way into Evolution Valley and we were camped at a place called [McClure Meadow].

The only other people we had come in contact with in the mountains was a lady who looked like she was a grandma. She had a burro and two little kids with her. She was obviously taking them up there into the mountains for the summer for vacation. But along with her, not the same day, a pack train came by where the packer was taking his horses up to the meadow for the summer. He stopped to say hello and he said, "You know the war is over. They dropped the atom bomb." Well the atom bomb didn't mean much, and visually we couldn't see it. We couldn't imagine what it looked like or what harm it did, you know, but the war was over. So, we finished our trip and of course then we didn't need the gas coupons or anything. The big shock of the trip was we hadn't seen any people except this packer and the other lady and as we came down into South Lake there was noise because there were people camped there. It was a shock to hear all these people talking. Anyway, we made it home and he reported to Santa Ana Base in Santa Ana which is in Southern California. I went with him and I stayed in the barracks with other ladies. He was dismissed from the Air Corps and this was September of 1945. Then of course we learned of the chaos that had happened in Japan, the atom bomb and the effect of the atom bomb. But at the time, we had no impression of the devastation and how it had ended.

TM: Esther, can you now back up to when Martin left you in Albuquerque and you had the car and your aunt and then tell what happened while Martin was doing all that, what did you do?

EL: Well, my aunt and I drove home to Los Angeles, to California. I didn't want to drive alone. She came out on the train to Albuquerque and joined me and we drove the car, the Chevrolet, back to California.

TM: Did you look for work or what did you do?

EL: Oh, well, no. Wait a minute, no. When I got home, nobody had told me how ill my grandmother was. She had breast cancer and it had metastasized. My aunt and her son years before had come to live with

us when her marriage failed. She lived right next door, just a driveway away next door. When she came to live with us, my mother incorporated her into the work at the studio because she knew how to do the work that was required. So she had a little income and she lived in this duplex next door. But she had taken time off now because my grandmother was so ill. She was taking care of my grandmother. So when I got home, I was essentially there helping take care of my grandmother. She passed away soon after that. I don't remember if it was '44 or '45, but she passed away at that time.

And then afterwards, before Martin came home, during the time that he was away, I was just keeping the house for my mother, and my aunt was working with my mother, and I was taking care of my grandfather who was quite frail. So that was how I spent my time until Martin came back. And of course, at that time we thought the war was still going to go on in Japan as I described.

TM: Okay, so what gave Martin, or you and Martin, the idea to take the pack trip into the Sierras?

EL: Well, that was his idea because he loved the Sierra. He had that whole month off so he planned to go back to places he had enjoyed and introduce me to the Sierra. So that was his idea. But then when we got out the war was over. In September, when he was released from the Service, we went to live with my mother. But before we settled down with my mother, we drove back to Monument Valley. At that time Monument Valley had changed as far as people were concerned because when we got to Gouldings there were other guests there and they were mostly men who were geologists. They had discovered uranium somewhere in the area. They were there prospecting for the uranium. We stayed in Gouldings I think just one night or two nights and then we took off to some of the other Navajo villages/areas. I can remember Ganado, the town of Ganado, which has a hospital. Outside the door of the hospital was a sign that said, "Tradition is the enemy of progress."

There was a Navajo woman in her Navajo clothes pushing a stroller with a baby that was holding an Evenflo bottle. At that time Evenflo was the bottle that held milk at the time. So, anyway, I was always impressed by that sign because many of the traditions of the Navajo were hard on their health, especially childbearing. It was very primitive. And, of course, there could be much infection and the children didn't live. Many didn't survive the first year. So, it was a difficult time for them.

We went on to Window Rock and then I think that was when we went to Canyon de Chelly. Have you ever been to Canyon de Chelly?

TM: Yes, gorgeous.

EL: Well, at that time there was nobody around. There were no regulations. I think there was some building that was the headquarters of Canyon de Chelly but nobody stopped us or prevented us from driving into the canyon. Martin had his camera and I think one of the first things we came to was the White House ruin in Canyon de Chelly and he took a picture of that. I don't know whether Mummy Cave is before the Canyon of the Dead, but we did get as far as we could. It was either Mummy Cave or the Canyon of the Dead, because we went into both of those canyons. Martin took some pictures in Mummy Cave. Have you been to Mummy Cave?

TM: I haven't.

EL: Well, it's like two caves with a solid piece in between and that solid piece is the remnant of an ancient village, an ancient village or place to live anyway. Very large. It's a beautiful, beautiful place and

very, very big right in between. I remember I climbed up to it and Martin took a picture, but you can hardly find me because (laughs) to get the whole building in... Anyway, I'm in it, a little black shape.

TM: (laughs) Okay.

EL: Canyon del Muerto was a very sad area. It's a V-shaped canyon with one wall facing the other wall. The Spaniards had chased the Navajo up on top on the mesa to the point where the Navajo, the men and the women, old men and women, made their way in. They had a way to get into the cave from above. Opposite that cave was the mesa where the Spaniards from that point could shoot them. And they did. They shot them all, killed them all. All the people who were in the opposite cave. So, it's called the Canyon del Muerto, the Canyon of the Dead. That was the last place we reached, that was as far as we went because we did just go to those two places. We almost got stuck in the sand because it was just a sandy bottom of the canyon. I remember that Martin took some other pictures along the way, but then we came home.

Martin at that time when we got back, it might not have been December, I don't know whether he started back at the Los Angeles Times in December, but when he did go back they were very good about making room for the veterans who had worked there. They wanted to find a place for them so they offered him a job in the color lab, but he told them that he wouldn't be any use there because he was colorblind. So, they put him in the circulation department. But coming back to the colorblindness thing, because when we were dating we were in the mountains and he wanted to get a picture of the snow plant. I don't know if you're familiar with a snow plant?

TM: No.

EL: It's a saprophytic flower. It has no chlorophyll and it's one of the first things that comes up in the snow. It's bright red and it comes up to about twelve inches and it has a fleshy stalk from which there are little red bells. It's all really flashy and Martin wanted to get a picture of the snow plant when it came up. So he said, "Tell me when you see one." Well, he had just gone past one that was bright red and he hadn't noticed it. I told him it was there and he took a picture of it.

But, anyway, to come back to the Times. In the circulation department he was what was called a roadman. He would be assigned one week to the city circulation where he would meet with the dealers and the paper boys to be sure they were getting their papers on time. Then he would be shipped into suburban circulation, which was out in our areas and he would do the same thing. Sometimes he had to start early in the morning, about three in the morning, to be sure that they got their papers on time. Then he was assigned to the country. The country involved going into Owens Valley, north, and then on the coast side to Santa Barbara. It was quite a large area.

TM: Huge.

EL: He would be gone for about a week. He wouldn't cover it all at one time because the assignments were... You did this particular group of the city, suburban, and country, and then you'd come back to city, suburban, and country. So, at different times he was in these different areas. As he wandered around... Well, I should explain that when we were living with my mother in '46, in June of '46 I had my son and we were still living with my mother.

While we were living with my mother, we also went to a night class in Los Angeles which offered the ability to design your home. An architect was teaching this class and he could help you design your home if you wanted. There was a lot of remodeling of garages at the time, turning them into apartments and that, so it was a well-attended class. While my mother took care of John the baby, we would go. I don't know if it was once a week or how many times we went. But Martin had had drafting in high school and we had the property. We had purchased the property in Brentwood so we had a location for a house. During the war, Martin had sent home sketches of what he thought the house should look like. We took this class and the architect, Frederick Monhoff, helped Martin and the rest of the students design whatever they wanted. A house, an apartment, or whatever. So Martin designed the house, made the plans for the house, and the architect drew the picture of how the house would look because we had to have a picture for the real estate company and for the loan. I think we may have been the only ones in the class who actually built the house that we designed because while Martin was in the circulation department with these changes of area, he often had time in the afternoon. We got a contractor who was willing to have Martin come and help whenever he could. At one point, we were on the roof nailing the shingles in. We got the GI loan which was two percent. We had saved \$5,000 before the loan which was for \$10,000. So, with the \$15,000 we built the house. It was an ample house, but what was finished was two bedrooms, one bath, a large living room and dining room area, and a nice kitchen. In the service porch which was quite large, Martin had his dark room. He designed his dark room. There was a slightly lower level to the garage and over the garage, which was attached to the house, we put in just the bare minimum of space for two more bedrooms and one bath. None of that area was finished. That was left for the future. With his dark room, he was able to print and work on the photography he was doing because as he roamed around these different areas in Los Angeles and outside, he saw chances for stories. He loved steam engines and every once in a while there would be a rail fan trip which we would go on. He would photograph it and write about it and it would be printed. He'd get a few dollars for the story and he'd get credit. At the same time in October of 1951... I have to go back because my daughter was born in February of '49.

TM: Okay, so hang on a second. Let's go back to June of 1946 when your son John was born. Is that right?

EL: Yes.

TM: Where did you pick the name John?

EL: I don't remember (laughs). I think maybe it was a family name of his. I don't know. But it would be Juan in Spanish, although my grandfather was Jose, so it wasn't a family name. I don't know. It was John Christopher Litton (laughs). Christopher was his grandfather's name, but I don't know where we got the John.

TM: Alright. You know, your mom had had such a difficult pregnancy. Were you worried with your firstborn about how that would go?

EL: Well, that was interesting because the doctor that I had was fairly far into Los Angeles. So the hospital I was to go to was quite a distance from our home in Culver City. When I was ready to deliver, there was no room at the big hospital so I was told to report to a small neighborhood hospital which was down in Washington Boulevard. It was called the Washington Hospital. It was just a one-story building limited in its facilities. That was where I went to have John. I did not, fortunately, have the problem my mother had so the birth was okay. But there was no room in any of the areas where the beds were. I

was out in the hall with a curtain around me. At that time, which was 1946, childbirth required you to stay in the hospital for at least ten days and you were not to get up all those ten days. You did not walk around at all which at the end of the time when you finally got up, you were very weak. It took longer to get over the childbirth than today. But at that time that was what was done. It turned out I did not have the experience my mother had.

TM: Great, great. So just trying to watch the timeline here, in the fall of '46, Martin's working for the Times.

EL: Yes.

TM: When did you guys start building, actual building, on the house?

EL: Well, we started building soon after we had the plans. It was finished in 1948 because that was when we moved into the house. Kathleen was born in '49 when we were actually in the house that we built. We lived in that house from '48 to 1954.

TM: Okay, alright. You took a pretty big trip to Monument Valley and over to Canyon de Chelly. Did you take any other big trips like that in '49 or '48?

EL: No, no we didn't. We actually didn't go anywhere until... Martin was doing quite a few little articles about different things. One of the articles that he did because he heard about Dinosaur National Monument through the National Parks Association. I think he saw it in a brochure in 1950. In October of 1951, Kathleen was just two, or she would be almost three in the next year, but she was two and John was five. For his vacation, which he took that year in October, we drove to Utah and stopped in at the headquarters of Dinosaur National Monument which is in Vernal, Utah. That's the place where they had the walls of dirt where they were digging. The Monument itself has thousands of acres of wild country canyons. The Green and the Yampa come together at the Echo Park. We found out how to get into the Mantle ranch which we had seen photographs. Phil Hyde, the photographer, had been there the year before and had taken pictures. We wandered down these sandy roads into Echo Park. It was fall color and the huge cottonwoods were yellow, they were just beautiful. Martin had a color camera then and he took some color pictures which were used later. Then from Echo Park we had to go back out. It was up and down, up high and then down low.

We found our way down to the Mantle ranch which was on the Yampa River. It was completely isolated all by itself. They were cut off during the wintertime. They had no way out. The Mantle family lived in a log house which was quite spacious and very, very nice. We approached it to get permission to camp on the property. Mrs. Mantle was alone at the time. She said her menfolk were away doing something and we didn't need to camp, just come on in and stay with her. So, we did. She was cooking on a woodstove. She gave us our dinner. She had just baked a pear pie. She had venison, she had potatoes, she had tomatoes. She had all kinds of vegetables from her garden and she fed us. From there, Martin took some pictures. We wandered up on top on the plateau where she said there was a former sheepherder's cabin. No, it was a... Well anyways, it was just a one-room cabin. Just very small and just one bed where we stayed for the night. From there, Martin took some pictures down into the canyon. There were different areas on a higher elevation that we wandered around and Martin could take pictures looking down into the canyon.

On our way out we went through Split Mountain to another ranch that was there more in the flat country, not cut off the way the Mantle ranch was on the Yampa River. That was Mr. Evans who had a home there. I don't know what he raised. The Mantle people and the Evans people were not looking forward to the dams but they figured it was a foregone conclusion that it was going to happen. They were amused that we were fighting it and they wondered how successful that would be.

Before WWII there had been a lot of building of dams. There were two big dams built in Washington state and Hoover, during his administration, had started in Boulder Canyon what was called the Hoover Dam which is now called Boulder Dam. After the war, the Department of the Interior was gung-ho to build more dams. They looked at a lot of rivers and they figured they could dam them here and dam them there. They had plans for the two dams in the Grand Canyon and the two dams in Dinosaur and the Grand Canyon dam. They were just having a great time planning on all these dams. The reason that we went was because Martin had made some contact at that time with the Sierra Club and David Brower. So we got pictures of what there was there and what would be destroyed.

In 1953 Martin had persuaded the Sierra Club to schedule a river trip. By that time, I think they had defeated the idea of the dams in Dinosaur, but they did want to introduce members of the Sierra Club and the Board of Directors to what it was they had tried to save. So this first river trip of many that the Sierra Club later scheduled on different rivers, not just Dinosaur but they started on Dinosaur. They had gotten a bridge pontoon, for one thing, which held about ten people and they had another smaller, rubber raft. A raft from army surplus that they used. Martin had been asked to pick up a raft from somebody in Tucson who wanted to send it to Bus Hatch in Vernal. So we took along this raft that joined the pontoon and the other raft and went along with a Sierra Club trip in 1953.

TM: Let's back up a little bit to the first time you were there in I think '50 or '51. October of '51 maybe.

EL: October '51, yes.

TM: Do you remember the superintendent there, a guy named Jess Lombard?

EL: Yes, yes.

TM: What can you tell me about Jess?

EL: Well, just that we met him. He said, "We've got room in the hospital if you want to stay there tonight instead of camping out or a motel." He gave us some food. Yes, we did meet him. I think we met him later at another park. I had forgotten his name until you just said it. Yes, Jess Lombard.

TM: Yeah. Kind of tall, thin guy, good-natured. There was a really nice article that came out of that October trip that you were on. I was really curious, Martin seemed very eloquent and very well-versed in the...

EL: Oh, you read that article in the Times?

TM: Yeah. He was very well-versed and articulate in describing the qualities of wilderness. And I wondered, how did he get to that realization? Do you know?

EL: Well, as a teenager he was always conservation-minded. He was always afraid roads were going to be built here and there. He was an English major in college. That was his major. He knew enough about geology because one of his very good friends in college was a geology major and took Martin along when he had to do his senior thesis of the geology of Newport Bay, California So Martin was aware of a bunch of geology, but he knew how to write very well.

TM: It's interesting you've mentioned the sign there at Ganado about tradition and progress. And yet wilderness is about preserving landscapes. I mean large areas.

EL: Well, he didn't care about the people. (laughs)

TM: Right. But, you know, a sort of progress would be we want to go into these big landscapes and build dams and all kinds of...log and mine and things. I just think it's really, really neat that even with progress you and Martin had a vision of...

EL: When he was a teenager, when he was about seventeen or eighteen, he used to write letters to the newspaper because there was a road that was planned over the mountains from Los Angeles over to the other side which would be pretty close to where I live now. There was this tremendous project. He objected to that because on their family Sunday drives he always enjoyed the fact that they went out into the countryside. So he wanted to keep the things the way they were as he was seeing them. He objected to the idea of roads going into the wilderness. He wrote letters to the Los Angeles papers objecting and voicing his objections of what the road would destroy. So, he'd been doing that since he was a teenager.

TM: Okay, alright. The Echo Park Dam fight was amazing because it brought people, conservation community all across the country. You mention the National Parks Association, Sierra Club, the Isaac Walton League, the Wilderness Society and all kinds of church groups and garden clubs across the country really, really becoming aware of wanting to preserve our national parks. At the same time...

EL: The only hope they had to fight it was that it was a national monument. That was the only hope they had. With Glen Canyon they had no hope. It was lost and David Brower always lamented that. But, of course, when you get to Glen Canyon, that was approaching... I'm getting off the track.

TM: We're jumping ahead a little bit and we'll get there, but let's explore this just a little bit because it seems that you're exactly right. The National Park Service with its parks and monuments could be at risk by the Bureau of Reclamation. But, the Reclamation service had fought the Park Service tooth and nail to keep the Park Service out of Glen Canyon. And that happened in the '30s. Was there a sense in the early '50s that that fight had happened and Glen Canyon just had to be sacrificed or did nobody realize quite yet that Glen Canyon was amazing and needed to be preserved, but there wasn't a hook to preserve it yet?

EL: Right. No, it wasn't known because there was a man named Doc Holiday in either Salt Lake City or somewhere up there who fought hard to keep it free of the dam. Dave Brower also fought hard to keep the dam out, but as you say, there was no official designation of Glen Canyon. There were river trips going down Glen Canyon.

TM: Oh yeah. Lots.

EL: They were taking pictures. But there was no official designation so there was nothing to hang on to. So they sacrificed Glen Canyon and had to let the Glen Canyon dam go in.

TM: Well it's funny because the Wilderness Act by Senator John Saylor, I don't know if that name rings a bell, basically said 5,000 acres, doesn't matter who the overseeing agency is, if it has wilderness qualities it can go into this preservation system. I wondered, trying to research this out, whether the Wilderness Act itself was an offshoot of the realization that Glen Canyon needed to be protected.

EL: Well, I don't remember the dates. I don't remember the sequence. I've forgotten a lot I knew at the time it was happening. I've lost track of the years and the sequence of these events. I'm sorry about that.

TM: No worries. Well, alright, so this is October of '51. You guys went out to Dinosaur. Was that a fun trip? Did you enjoy that?

EL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, very much. Yeah, it was beautiful country and meeting Mrs. Mantle, her hospitality and the area was so beautiful and so dramatic. It was kind of up and down one sandy road to another. It was difficult country to get over, but it was really very exciting and very beautiful. We were very fortunate in the weather. We didn't have any storms. We had no rain. No problems as far as that was concerned. But the hospitality of this woman all by herself (laughs) taking us in and feeding us and sending us on our way.

TM: Nice. Then you came back and were you on that river trip in 1953?

EL: Yes, yes, we were. We stopped at the Mantle ranch at that time. Charlie Mantle was home at that time. We were camped under the orchard trees. They had an apple orchard. We were all camped under the trees and he came out to greet us. He said, "Don't throw away your tin cans. We use those for cups." (laughs) And at that time he and his sons were harvesting the hay and digging up the potatoes. I don't know what all they were doing. But we did meet Charlie Mantle at that time and we also met one of the sons I believe. Because Martin took some more pictures up on top and along the river.

TM: Do you remember who else was on that river trip?

EL: Oh, yes, I do. Francis Farquhar, who was President of the Sierra Club at the time, and Marjory Farquhar, his wife...

TM: Wait, wait. Stop right there. Can you tell me about Francis and Marjory and how you first met them?

EL: Well, we first met them on the river. We were right there getting ready to start the trip. Martin blew up the rubber raft and said we have our own food. Marjory came over and said, "Well that's silly." She said, "We've got a cook here. We've got food. If you don't mind joining your food with ours, come on over and eat with us."

TM: Well that's nice.

EL: So we camped together. She was very, very kind about that. In addition, Bestor Robinson was along, he was on the Board of Directors, and his wife was along. They had brought some of what they called

fold boats. They were kind of pre-kayaks. They were just cloth. They used their little fold boats at times. I can't remember the names, but there were board members at that time on that year who were along. At the end of the trip, two of the board members wanted to run the Green because Powell had come through on the Green and had some trouble in one of the rapids. Two of the board members wanted to run the Green. So Martin left the kids and me at a motel in Vernal and then he and these two other board members ran the Green.

TM: Oh, down through Lodore?

EL: Yeah.

TM: Okay, so you guys had gone down the Yampa and down through Split Mountain...

EL: Yeah. These people wanted to reproduce where Powell had gone. And so, Martin... I don't know where they got the boat. Anyway, they had a small raft and they made it through the Green. And then he came and picked us up.

TM: So, Esther, Francis and Marjory Farquhar had boated Grand Canyon from Lees Ferry to Phantom Ranch in 1948.

EL: Oh, really? I didn't know that. They must have gone with Norman Nevills.

TM: Exactly, and Bestor Robinson was on that trip as well. Then in '49, Robinson ran with Ed Hudson through the Grand Canyon. So they had already done some boating. Can you tell me a little bit more about Francis and about Marjory and Bestor?

EL: Well, I'm afraid that Martin was in contention with Bestor Robinson later on when Martin was on the board. So, he didn't have a very good opinion of Bestor Robinson because Bestor Robinson was the one who when he was discussing the possibility of dams in the Grand Canyon said he couldn't see how it was too bad because it would be a nice lake where they could take their boats and do water skiing and there could be a tramway or something to get back up on the plateau. He had no big objections to the fact that these two dams were planned in the Grand Canyon.

TM: That was true for, I think, Echo Park. There were two dams there proposed and he thought one of those dams would be okay.

EL: Oh, yes. No, there was no objection with a lot of people. It was hard to convince... But anyway, Martin's opinion of Bestor Robinson was very low.

TM: Understood. The Farquhars, what else do you remember about them?

EL: That was the only time I met them. Martin, of course, was in contact with Francis Farquhar later on when he was on the board. I don't remember that he had any objections to Farquhar and I never saw Margory again. They had two teenagers who came along on that trip. I think the Robinsons had their kids on that trip, too, on the Yampa. I'm afraid I didn't have any more association with Marjory Farquhar except that very delightful time when she was so gracious saying you don't have to camp by yourselves come along with us.[there was no 'Barry' at that time. Mom got Barry, Don Hatch's son, confused with Don, his father]

TM: Do you remember Bus Hatch?

EL: Oh, yes, very well.

TM: What do you remember about Bus?

EL: Don Hatch was just a teenager at that time. But I remember Bus because we brought that raft for him. Martin had more association with Bus Hatch than I did, but I remember he was a very pleasant man. He lived in Vernal and he ran the Yampa for people. You know he had a commercial thing. I think he also ran the Grand Canyon. I'm not sure.

TM: He did run the Grand Canyon some. That's right. Anybody else on that trip that rings a bell?

EL: I can't remember the names. I'd have to look on an old Sierra Club bulletin to see the names of the board members because, as I say, there were a lot of the board members. There were two brothers who were along. There was one man who was a physics professor at UC Cal. Some of the wives came along. But, the Farquhar's stand out and Bestor Robinson especially.

TM: Alright. Well, once again we've been yik-yaking here for about an hour. This is great.

EL: Nobody's come to take my temperature (laughs).

TM: Good. (laughs)

EL: There were quite a few things that were going along. Martin was building up practically a catalog of small, one-page or two-page articles that were printed in the Los Angeles Times usually on a Sunday. Many of his articles had to do with the Grand Canyon and Dinosaur and other conservation issues in addition to things about the steam engines and the power plant. He did all kinds of assorted articles for which he did the photography and the text. He was paid a few dollars for the text and the pictures which helped a lot.

TM: All the while he was still working in the circulation department.

EL: Yes, absolutely. He never got out of it. Maybe I'm going too far, but anyway, when he was approached by Sunset he went to the managing editor and said, "I have a proposition of another job but I'd like to stay here. I'd like to be your conservation editor." The managing editor turned him down completely and said, "No, we don't want that." So that was a turning point there and that was in 1954. Do you want me to go on with how he got the interview at Sunset?

TM: I do, but let's do it on the next interview.

EL: Oh, okay. I don't know if you've read any of the other articles Martin did at the Times.

TM: Tell me about them.

EL: Well, he did one about the Grand Canyon because we hiked down at Toroweap. We went out to the Grand Canyon Monument and hiked...

TM: Esther, I'll want to know a lot about that so maybe now is a...

EL: That was horrible. (laughter) We did meet John Riffey who was the superintendent stuck out there.

TM: I'll want to know about Riffey and Lefty Bryant and all of that. But we've been at this an hour. Let's wrap up this Part 3 and we will pick up 1954 with Sunset and the Grand Canyon.

EL: (laughs) We aren't getting very far. This is 2020.

TM: I know, but we started in 1919 and it's 1954. We're zipping right along. (laughter)

EL: Well, as it gets closer to 2020, I lose track of the years. So you might as well ask me while I still remember something.

TM: This is great because what I'm really interested in is just what you're going over. So this is perfect. With that, I think we'll call it a close to Part 3 Oral History interview with Esther Litton. Today is Sunday. It's May 24, 2020, and my name is Tom Martin. Esther, thank you so very much.

EL: You're very welcome. I hope I'm not stringing it out too long.