

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society Oral History

Interviewee: Gene Sopko (GS)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Gene recounts time working for the Park Service river unit at Grand Canyon

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Method of Interview: In person at Tom Martin's house

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TM: This is a Grand Canyon oral history interview. Today is November 13th, 2017. This is an interview with Eugene "Gene" Sopko, and Tom Martin. This interview is in Flagstaff, Arizona at Tom Martin's house and this is Part 2 of the oral interviews with Gene. The first interview we did the first of September and we talked about how it was that Gene and his dad and mom and sister came to Grand Canyon. We talked about Gene up through high school days and having a band and touring around northern Arizona and playing in the band. We almost got to you graduating. Can you pick up the story, Gene, of graduating from Grand Canyon High School in 1967?

GS: Okay. Yeah. During my final senior year I didn't complete a whole year because I already had the credits to graduate so I went ahead and I would... Okay, back up a little bit. I had met my first wife, her name was Pamela Bucy. She worked at the curio shop in the Bright Angel Lodge in them days. She used to come to our dances all the time and everything. We met up and ended up getting married.

TM: I'm gonna slide in here and say can you tell me a little bit more about how Pam came to the Canyon?

GS: Yeah, she just came for a summer job. She had graduated from high school and she came...

TM: Where?

GS: From Globe, Arizona. She went to Globe, Arizona and she graduated from high school. She came up for that summer job up there. We met up and then we started getting pretty serious about stuff and then we got married. A year later, well, it was like nine months later, we had my first son, Sean. But anyway, I was married to Pam and we had Sean and then a year later we had Crystal while I was working for the Park Service. Sean lives in Tucson these days and Crystal, my daughter, lives down in Chandler, Arizona. I started working for the Park Service and the first thing I did is I got on with the trail crew. My boss was...

TM: So this is 1967 that you not only started working for the trail crew, but you got married as well?

GS: Right. Yeah, I started working for the trail crew. They put me on there when I got hired by the Park Service. I worked for Jack Watson. It was kind of nice. I lived up on the hill where the old mule... I don't know whether that Park Service mule barn is still there and the corrals, but I lived in the house straight through the trees from there. So I could get up every morning, go right over. I was always the first guy to

the corral in the morning (laughs) and started getting everything done. Did a lot while I was still working for the trails. They flew us in one time, me and Candido Apodaca, A-p-o-d-a-c-a, that's Candido Apodaca, and another worker, Fred Carter. One of the big things we did was they flew us in to Thunder River and we worked down there ten days on and four days off restoring the trail all the way back up to the top from Thunder River. That was one of my fun things.

TM: So that trail to Thunder River, there were two trails. One was a very long stock trail that was like ten miles just getting across the Esplanade from a road head. The other was what was later called the Bill Hall Trail, which is a pretty short direct not stock trail.

GS: That was the one we...

TM: You were working on the Bill Hall Trail?

GS: Yeah.

TM: So you were making a new trail?

GS: Exactly. In fact, my niece had told me just recently, her and her husband are like real outdoor hikers and she said they go to Thunder River all the time. I'm like, "Thunder River? We used to work down there." I said, "You see all those rock walls on that trail? Your uncle built them." So the next time she went down she took a bunch of pictures of those walls and sent them to me (laughs) and said, "My uncle built these." So that was pretty cool. But, yeah, we worked down there for quite a while, almost all summer working and repairing that trail all the way to the top, just three of us. Yeah, and the bad part about it was we didn't have any mules, we had to walk all the whole time. Walking and carrying our tools with us and everything. It was me and Fred. But we had a real neat thing. One of the things I always remember about Thunder River is I always wondered why it was called that. When you're sleeping in a nice lush grass bank alongside the river at nighttime you can hear those rocks rolling down that river and it sounds like thunder. It is so cool. I really liked working over there. It was some hard work, though, getting that done.

TM: Was your spike camp at Thunder River where there was water or were you spiking up on the rim?

GS: We were right at the river, right next to the river.

TM: At the spring there?

GS: Yeah. And it was great. We drank water out of there and everything. That was pretty cool. Another thing I remember about the trail is after that rainstorm in '66 that washed out the pipeline, washed out the Transcanyon Pipeline, they sent us up to Roaring Springs. It was me and Fred Carter and Candido again, so it was the same three guys. They sent us up and we stayed at Roaring Springs for a while and then we moved down to Cottonwood cause they wanted us... We repaired the North Rim Trail because it got washed out so much. It was the three of us. There was a lot of adventure there that I think are pretty neat little stories. I'm trying to remember the guy that lived down there. I think his name was Herman Mineer, that worked down there. Him and his wife lived at Roaring Springs in a house. We set up a camp next to his house and worked. One of the things I always remember is we were drinking the water right out of the springs. One day I was walking around up there... There had been a fire right where the water comes out of the wall, all them bushes were on fire, and we had to go put them out.

Later on I was over there and I found a dead deer laying where the water comes out and starts going down. It was in the water, no fur left on it. Well, by the time I got done there was eight dead deer in that Roaring Springs, in that springs where the water comes out of the wall. I'll never forget this cause I'm a joker. I told everybody maybe Santa Claus's sled crashed cause we couldn't figure out why all these deer were laying in that water dead. Now, Fred or Candy, one of them told me maybe there was some rat poisoning and they got into it, ate the rat poisoning and drank the water and it killed them. Cause all of them were laying in that water. I remember we called back to the South Rim and Everett, they sent a helicopter over to take a water sample. We were getting ready to go back to the South Rim for our four days off, by the time we got back there he had sent the sample to Phoenix and they said we'd all be fine. But it was curious about these deer. What we ended up doing was pulling them all out. When we went back we pulled them all out of there and covered them over with lime and did that. So that was a pretty interesting deal there. Then we moved further on down to Cottonwood and repaired that trail between Cottonwood and Phantom Ranch.

TM: How much did Halverson get back in there and rework that pipeline?

GS: They did quite a bit, but I don't really know because it was repaired quickly. It did a lot of damage. I couldn't believe the damage. I mean, it was just wiped out. I could not believe all the damage of all the pipe just laying around all twisted and bent and stuff and everything. But before you know it, I don't know, it wasn't very long later when I heard they'd started putting water through that pipeline. But it took them a long time to build it. We'd seen a lot of the destruction of it as we worked along the trail because it kind of followed that trail from Roaring Springs over to the Colorado and then across and then on up. So we saw a lot of that damage. It was unreal how much, I couldn't believe it myself. But we had that big rainstorm in '66, I guess it was.

In '67 we had the huge snowstorm, which I loved, and that was great, too. '67 I was still working for the Park Service and I was on the trail crew. It snowed for ten days straight at Grand Canyon. I mean, it was unreal. Jack Watson, he always used to send me more or less on my own. We had to keep the village sidewalks and stairways and stuff clean. What he would do is he would send three guys out in a truck and they'd try to keep all the stairways and some of the little sidewalks clean. First we started out with, it looked like at one time it was a rotor tiller but some guy put a little plow on the front. Well, then this other guy later on put a little tractor seat with wheels behind it and you could ride on it. What I would do, I would start at the maintenance yard over there in Grand Canyon, I'm pretty sure it's still in the same place up behind the high school, and I'd start coming down all that trail. I'd go all through the village all the way out to Mather Point and all the way up toward like Hermit's, not as far as Hermit's Rest. I think I used to go up to where the Powell Memorial is. With that thing, I'd have to keep it clean. Pretty soon it started getting really, really deep. We had a Melroe bobcat. I used to use it all the time to clean the corrals and he knew I was good with it so he told me, "Go put the plow on the Melroe bobcat and do that and go through it all." Well, that was really nice cause it was really blizzard conditions the whole time and cold, but I could sit in there cause it had a cab on that bobcat with a front door. I could sit in there in my t-shirt and go through the village all over the place. One of the days, I remember, I was working down by Babbitt's, down by the old post office, and Jay Goza started pounding on the back of it and said, "Come on, shut it down, I'll take you in and buy you some hot chocolate inside," which he did. It was cool.

But eventually toward the end of that ten days I couldn't even use the plow on the bobcat anymore. I had to put the scoop on it because the banks were so high to get it. I went all the way out to Mather, all up around the Bright Angel. I had to work all over the place with that thing. When I'd get done I'd just

come back and start all over again. Made a lot of overtime because also at that time, believe it or not, I was working 12 hours doing that. Well, let's see, yeah, 6:00 to 5:00 or 6:00 to 6:00, something like that. Larry Waymire ran the maintenance and sanitation crew. He was the sanitation man. At that time they had a giant backup during the middle of that storm at the El Tovar. All their sewers backed up and all the sewer lines run down underneath the railroad tracks. Well, Larry's crew was getting pretty wore out because we had to go down with the backhoe and then dig into the pipes. It was cold and we're doing this in the storm with klieg lights. So Larry got me, he came and asked Jack Watson, he said, "Do you think Gene could work with me?" He knew me pretty good and everything. I said, "Yeah, as long as I got some sleep every night." I was getting like six hours sleep. I'd get done doing all the sidewalks in the whole village with the bobcat and I'd go get on my rubber boots and everything and go over and work for Larry because his guys were just wore out (laughs). I remember digging in there and everything. I was amazed at the stuff that was in that pipeline. There was towels, Fred Harvey towels, but the thing that freaked me out is how do you flush a big flashlight down a toilet. It was one of the main blockages that we found was a big flashlight in there, in that sewer line. But it was all underneath that railroad. When we finally got it open... I was working that night for Larry and we finally got that thing open. It was great. But it was so cold. What was really neat is we were coming up on the holidays and I already had tickets to go see Steppenwolf in Phoenix on New Year's Eve (laughs). Steppenwolf and Blood, Sweat and Tears and Three Dog Night who had just come out.

TM: You and Pam?

GS: Yeah. Me and Pam. So we went down. We had a hard time getting out of the... I might take this away from Grand Canyon, but all the buildings were caving in in Flagstaff. They got 105 inches. The roofs were caving in. We took the bus, the Fred Harvey bus, from Grand Canyon to Flagstaff and we were sitting in a Denny's there right next to a motel. That motel's still there. I think it was a Hyatt or something at that time. They had snow piled up and they were working around the clock putting it on trains and trucks and dumping it in canyons, getting rid of the snow. This is really great and this is the truth, I swear to God (laughs), we're sitting there and I'm watching this guy. Right where the big sign came up there was a huge pile of snow, almost went up to the top of the sign. I thought, boy, they really piled that deep. Well, this guy comes in, he had a big front end loader and he backed off and went into that thing and you could hear the most screeching and crunch. They started wiping it off, there was a brand-new black Camaro in there. He cut it into three chunks. Somebody played a trick on somebody, buried this Camaro in that big snow bank and that guy hit that with that front end loader and it just cut it in (laughs). He took the...

TM: The bucket, just sliced it.

GS: Yeah, the passenger compartment, and then you had the trunk and the motor. There was three parts. It was funnier than heck. I'm like, man, I don't believe what I just saw here (laughs). But it wasn't his fault. Somebody played a trick and buried 'em.

TM: Did any of the roofs collapse up at the South Rim, North Rim, any of the...?

GS: Oh, the North Rim I don't know, but in Flagstaff they did. There used to be, right now it's kind of like a mall down on East Flag, Route 66, there's an old mall up there. That used to be an El Rancho supermarket and a Super-X Drugstore, kind of like a Walmart, a pre-Walmart thing. Those roofs collapsed. They were hiring kids to go up and shovel the roofs off all the time. There used to be a roller skating rink in Flagstaff that I used to go to also and its roof collapsed, but a lot of them did. Now, up

there at Grand Canyon we didn't have that problem. What I remember about that, there was so much snow that they brought in those big snow blowers from Yellowstone or Yosemite, one of them, with the big square box in the front that blows it out. It was breaking more limbs off the trees that were... I mean, limbs were already breaking cause it was so much snow on them and that even made it worse as they were blowing more snow up on those trees (laughs). That was something else.

But, yeah, I really enjoyed working there. I can name all the mules to this day that we had. I think we had like twenty mules and two horses when I worked for Park Service. The one I used to ride the majority of the time, his name was Eagle. Was kind of a cinnamon colored mule but he had like zebra stripes on his legs and right across his withers was this black, it looked like wings with a little white thing up, a tuft on there. So when you were riding him, if you look down, it looked like a bald eagle flying in front of you. That's why they called him Eagle.

TM: So at this time period there was a ranger named Ken Hulick and Ken loved horses.

GS: Yeah.

TM: You mentioned there were a bunch of mules and a couple horses. Ken would take that horse, a Tennessee Walker, and take that down to Phantom Ranch.

GS: Right.

TM: Got any stories about that horse?

GS: Yeah. They didn't ride him. Jack Watson, my boss, was upset because they wouldn't use them enough. We always fed them hay and grain. Well, them horses started getting froggy after a while. I remember one morning, it was kind of cold, and Jack told me... He had a horse named Duke, that was the one Ken used to ride all the time. It was really funny because Jack... None of us wanted to ride those horses because we knew they were wired, you know, and we were all mule guys. That horse was kind of crazy (laughs).

TM: So what do you mean by wired? I know nothing about mules or horses so help me.

GS: They'd been eating all them oats and stuff and that's where the old thing comes, 'feeling your oats', they were like that. I mean, those horses were... They started like kind of getting a little bit out of control because they had so much energy and stuff. They weren't working like the mules did (laughs). One morning, it was really funny because it was about a hundred yards, no about seventy-five yards, down to where... When we came out of the mule corrals, we went down the road and you went down into these trees, went down a little ten-foot hill there and went down to the trees. As soon as we got down there that horse started bucking with me (laughs). I didn't stand a chance, man. I hit way up on the side of this Ponderosa pine and just started breaking the branches off as I came down. Jack told me, he said, "Go take Duke back and turn him loose in the corral and go get your mule Eagle." (laughing) But I'll tell you what, that hurt, man. I was really dinged up because that old horse, he just didn't want to go. He didn't want go down in the Canyon, I guess. That was something else. I don't know whether you want me to talk about this but to me it's interesting. Jack Watson developed a thing, we called it the ditcher that made a bar ditch along the side of the trail. You pulled it with the mules and we had two good work mules. One of them was Jack, he was a white mule, had U.S. branded on his neck and everything, great mule. We had a singletree, we'd hook it up to him, he had the harness and everything, and we'd pull this

ditcher down. It was really a dangerous thing cause... And, Jack always made sure that you were careful with it and you kind of had to like get licensed on it cause... Jack, he got an award from the government for designing this thing. It was kind of like the front of a blade on a snowplow and it was angled at 45 degrees to go down in that ditch. It had a long metal runner underneath that held the blade and you had a pipe that was almost a Z or an S that you held onto. What was neat is at the end of the blade he put a little piece of metal there, heavy steel, that when you came up... We used to put them cedar water breaks in there. I don't know whether they do that anymore. I'm telling you this cause I got really working in the old days here. You could come up with that mule and you'd come up to that cedar water break, you could push down on that handle and the front end of the ditcher would go up and you could jump it right over to go over the next thing. That was pretty cool. But that ditcher, it was something else. I was really good with it. That's why Jack used to let me go. He'd send me and Jack, the white mule, and we'd just go and do them all the time. I don't have any pic..., nah, I wish I did.

Another thing we worked down there, when I told my wife's stepdad, he was an older guy, I told him, that Fresno used to kill me. He said, "You know what a Fresno is?" I found some pictures on the internet of these. It looks like a wheelbarrow without a wheel on the front or anything. It's just like the bucket and it's got a scoop on the front. Some people call them a scoop. Their real name is Fresno. What we would do, we had a Homelite generator and we had a jackhammer with a spade on it. After the rains that mud and dirt would build up behind these water breaks. We'd go in with that jackhammer, loosen all that up, and then with the mule pulling the Fresno you could come down that trail and when you got to where you spaded it and loosened all the dirt, you lift up on the end on your handles and it would dig in and scoop that dirt right out. When you hit the water break you let go of the handles and it flips it right onto the other side and fills the hole that builds up over there.

TM: Question. Did you guys bring in decent dirt? Were you bringing in dirt or were you mining dirt from nearby?

GS: We were getting dirt from nearby. I got a story about that one. Oh, man, this was great. I was up there, we used to have to get dirt like from the sides of the trail or move it from up above by putting it on the Fresno and moving it. Like the Devil's Backyard from the North Rim. That's what they call that steep place where you go along and it's kind of built into the wall and it's all rock. We called it the Devil's Backyard. What we would have to do is go get dirt. We also had two wooden boxes that we'd put on the backs of the mules. So we'd either bring it down with the Fresno or we would bring it down on these mules. We'd have extra mules, we'd have three or four extra ones. We'd put these boxes one on each side and it had a lever on the bottom, you could pull it loose and just drop... It was kind of like a dump truck. We'd just do that. We had to do that during that storm. After that rainstorm, we had to do it over there on the North Rim Trail, that whole section, cause it was nothing but solid rock where they had dug the trail into the side of the wall and it was all rock underneath there. We had to fill all that up. We also used a rock crusher a lot and that was something else. It was about the size of a Volkswagen, had four wheels on it. What you do is put the rocks in there and it kind of like vibrate, break them and chunk them up into little chunks. A lot of times we used that to fill in spaces where we needed stuff also.

TM: And would you fly that jaw crusher in?

GS: It kind of stayed somewhere along the trail and we would just move it to where we were gonna use it. We used to use it about... There's a white sandstone place down there, I remember, cause we'd come out of the canyon, we'd be totally white from all that all day (laughs) in the heat. But, yeah, we would use it down there on the Kaibab Trail down there a lot. I don't know whether we ever used it on the

Bright Angel Trail but Kaibab Trail we had to do that a lot in that area there because that was... We'd just have it off to the side of the trail and nobody messed with it. We covered it over with a canvas tarp and stuff, and we'd use that. We'd do a lot of drilling on them in the spring when the ice started melting and the snow, these big rocks would fall down on the trail. We used to use what they called a Cobra. It was a drill. It was a big, heavy drill. You had to drill in there. We'd drill in and make a hole in there and then take dynamite out of the paper and just stuff it in there, cover it over with mud. Then a couple of us would go this way to stop hikers and a couple would go that way and we'd holler "Fire in the hole" and blow those big rocks. But we used to do that a lot, too.

TM: The Cobra was a gas powered drill?

GS: Yes, it was gas powered, as was the Homelite that we used to make electricity for that spade that I said. That spade, what it basically was was a jackhammer with a spade on the front instead of like a straight thing there.

TM: And the jaw crusher was gas powered?

GS: Yes. And we brought gas down for that, too. We'd carry it down.

TM: Would you guys spike camp down there overnight or did you hike out every night?

GS: It depended on where we were working. Sometimes we might even stay down at Phantom Ranch or we'd stay at Indian Gardens. If we were gonna work from Indian Gardens down and along the River Trail, we'd stay at Phantom. From Phantom down to the River Trail we'd stay at Indian Gardens. It depended on where we were working. Or we would stay up at Cottonwood and do stuff up there. But we'd just work on there. If we were working... Like we never slept anywhere... If we were working on the bottom half of the Kaibab Trail we'd stay at Phantom, otherwise we'd just work down from the top. So sometimes it took a while to get down there cause we had to saddle the mules and then ride them all the way down and get as much work done as we could and then come out again. So it was pretty interesting.

TM: You mentioned working on the Bill Hall, the Thunder River Trail, and it got me to thinking. When you were working on the Thunder River Trail building those walls, had that route already been discovered by people? Was there some sort of semblance of people going up and down there?

GS: Yeah. You could tell where the trail was. But I don't know whether... If there was people using it, that was very few because like we never found no trash down there or nothing. To me it was like pristine, a pristine wilderness. In fact, I was wondering what's this trail doing here and why do they want to repair it. Well, now that my niece goes down there and she says a lot of people go down there, I'm like, wow, man, I really broke some ground when I was doing that because nobody knew that trail existed.

TM: Well, that begs the question, did you guys then get out and do any other trails besides North Rim, the Bright Angel North and South, and the Kaibab, and you mentioned the Thunder River Trail. Did you do any other...

GS: That was the only one. What's the one, Tonto Trail, that was there but we never did nothing to it. The Park Service was really strict in those days. You better stay on a trail that's designated. You couldn't get... One night me and my friend, he was one of our drummers for a while, and another guy, we were

down there camping, Joe Quiyo and us. We were camping down at Indian Gardens. His name's Joseph Q-u-i-y-o, Hopi guy, great guy. We were real close friends. I remember when we were doing this we were singing Beatles songs cause the Beatles were real big. But anyway, we went down to Indian Gardens and we couldn't sleep at night so we got up and took off and we wandered. We got lost trying to find the River Trail and ended up on the Tonto Plateau out there on the Tonto Trail. It was pretty scary because in them days we knew, uh oh, we're in trouble. When the sun came up we were like, oh, man, we're in the wrong place, we ain't supposed to be out here. I was having one of those moments and I thought, you know what, I'm standing here and I'll bet nobody's ever stood here before on this piece of ground, till I looked down and there was a cigarette butt. I'm not lying, a cigarette butt right there where I was standing. I was like are you kidding me (laughs). But anyway, we went back and got on the right trail and went on down. But mainly it was, like the Hermit Trail, everybody uses that now. That was off limits in those days. You couldn't use the Hermit Trail. It had to be the Bright Angel, the Kaibab Trail, the River Trail, the North Rim Trail. Then I guess after we repaired the Thunder River Trail they started letting people go down there. I never could figure out where it was at, why would anybody want to go down this trail (laughs) except maybe to see Thunder River.

TM: That's right.

GS: That's such a neat place.

TM: Did you guys ever hike over to Deer Creek Falls, did you hike over there at all?

GS: No.

TM: No? Okay. Cause that's a really gorgeous place as well.

GS: Well, was Deer Creek, is that the same one that's on the river?

TM: Yeah, river people are coming up to it and the rim people are coming down to it.

GS: Oh, really?

TM: Yeah.

GS: No, we never did that. We just worked every day over there. I really liked working there. It was some hard work cause we had so much to do to make something that looked like a trail. I really enjoyed that work there. I enjoyed working on the trail all the time anyway. To this day I still love mules. I think mules are the greatest thing.

TM: So your son, Sean, was born then in the spring of '68?

GS: '67, '67.

TM: In the fall of '67 then?

GS: Yeah.

TM: Okay. You're still working trails then in the spring of '68?

GS: Yes, cause I didn't leave trails until May of '68. That was when Everett Robertson offered me the job to go run the river.

TM: How did that happen?

GS: What happened with me, Woody Hathaway and I had been both working at the gas station at one time for Fred Harvey, that gas station there. So we're real good friends. He was a lot older than me. Nice guy, I mean, really good guy. Me and him got along great. He came up to me one day, I was still working the trails and he said, "Gene, they're gonna offer you a job. I can't say anything else about it." I don't really know what Woody knew at that time but he said, "You tell them you want it." Then he explained to me... I can't remember the older guy's name, but I was the third on the hire list there for different jobs and stuff, just because you took the tests and your experience and stuff. This other guy was first and he was a disabled veteran, that's why he had so many points. Woody was a veteran, he was second, and I was third. He said the other guy didn't want the job, the first guy, he said, "I'm taking it and I want you." I'm telling you the honest truth, I didn't have a clue. I was only 19. I didn't know. He says, "Take that job, make sure you take that job."

TM: Can you tell me a little bit more about Woody? Did he serve in World War II or World War I?

GS: I think he was a Korean veteran, a Korea or Vietnam might even be. He was 80-something. God, it...

TM: Cause Vietnam would have still been hap-, this was '67, '68.

GS: You're right, he had to have been either in Korea or World War II. He could have been in World War II.

TM: What do you remember about him? What did you like about him?

GS: He was just the friendliest guy in the world. Him and I, both of us had the same work ethic. We liked to work, we liked to work hard, and we liked to make money. That was the way that went (laughs). When we were working out at the gas station we always covered for each other. We helped one another if somebody... If one of us needed to go somewhere, well, I'll work your shift, you know. We were really close. We'd sit in there in the gas station when it wasn't busy and would just always just yak and talk and everything. He came to work and he went to work for sanitation. Both of us got on the Park Service about the same time. I went to trails and he went to sanitation. He was working over there. I think he was driving the garbage truck. In fact, I'm almost positive he was and, like I say, one day he come up to me and he said, "They're gonna offer you this job and take it. No matter what just say yes I'll take it." You're gonna work ten days on, four days off, it's all summer. You're not gonna be around here. You're gonna be away." I said, "Okay, I'll take it."

TM: Did you have any consideration what Pam might have thought about that?

GS: No, I didn't (both laugh). I think that was when my marriage started going downhill.

TM: I see. Okay. Thank you.

GS: Cause she was working at Valley National Bank at that time, out there at Grand Canyon. I could cover more with Valley, I love Valley National Bank.

TM: Where was the bank at the time?

GS: It was out on that road across from the old visitor center. There was a road that went back in there. I think it went out to where the Grand Canyon trailer park was. Kolb had a house back there.

TM: So the bank is still in the same place it is today?

GS: It is. Wow.

TM: You bet.

GS: Yeah, she worked there.

TM: Okay. And there was a store there, that's where the store went... (? , both talking)

GS: Yeah.

TM: So Babbitt's store was there and Yavapai Lodge is right there across the parking lot.

GS: In fact, I was reading about Eagle Smith in this book here. My wife worked with Eagle. She was there at the same time. I knew Eagle and John Smith real good, too. John was like Jay Goza's second guy, like the vice president of the mules or something (laughs). But, yeah. So hmm, lost my train of thought there.

TM: Well, we were talking about Woody Hathaway...

GS: Oh, yeah, Woody. That's who we wanted to talk...

TM: ...was gonna offer you a job and said, "Take it."

GS: But anyway, Woody was the kind of guy that you just liked, everybody liked. I never heard a bad word about that guy, not one word. He was just a nice guy. He was a quiet guy and he just kind of, just was there and he was a real good guy. Since we were friends he did come up and tell me... Like I said, I went in... Everett was there, I think Noel Pacht was there. Noel was the head of the roads and trails at that time. I was basically working for him with Jack Watson underneath him. I went in there, Otis Hicks was the head of everybody.

TM: Kind of head of maintenance, if you will?

GS: Yeah.

TM: Which would have been wastewater.

GS: Sanitation.

TM: Sanitation.

GS: Maintenance.

TM: Maintenance, trails.

GS: Trails, roads. Otis Hicks was the guy in charge of them.

TM: What can you tell me about Otis?

GS: I didn't know a bunch about him. He was a older guy, real nice guy, kind of quiet, but he would kind of just... He wasn't like pushy or he wasn't a micromanager. He would get them guys, like Noel, Everett Robertson, Larry Waymire in the mornings, and Jack Watson, and then, "Here's what we gotta do." Otis, he was a really nice guy, really squared away. I liked him. In fact, I liked all those guys. In them days everybody seemed to be nice. But, yeah, Otis was the head of it and then Noel and Larry Waymire was maintenance and then Jack Watson and Everett Robertson, they were the four guys that were the big guys.

TM: So this job that they're offering you, was it under the auspices of Otis Hicks then? This is a maintenance, which includes all these other sanitation and all those other sections?

GS: Right.

TM: So here's a job within the umbrella of Maintenance?

GS: Yep. He talked to me, him and Everett, and they asked me do you want the job. It didn't take me a minute to say, "Yeah, I'll take it," because I knew one thing, I was gonna work with Woody. Woody said this is gonna be a good job and that's all I needed. I said, "Hey, I'm ready." Been working the trails real hard (laughs) and everything and we'll go see something new for a change, something different. I'm always into that. Like I said once before, it was about a week later, or maybe two weeks, I was still working on trails, when Woody told me come on over to the maintenance shed, the big maintenance office. I think that might still be the big maintenance building. I walked in there and there was a bunch of stuff and I seen this big rubber burrito laying in the middle of the floor painted silver and I'm like, "What is that?" He said, "That's what you're gonna be doing all summer. That's a rubber raft and you're gonna be running the Colorado River." I'm like, "What...?" I was shocked. Glade Ross was there, that was when I got to meet Glade Ross. He had another guy, Rick Petrillo, which I never could figure out what happened to him. He made one trip through with us, well two trips, the upper half and the lower half. That was two trips, but it was one complete trip broken down into two trips. Glade told me that John Philip Souza is Rick Petrillo's grandfather (laughs).

TM: Oh, is that right?

GS: I was like, "Wow, that's..." Cause I was a musician, I knew who that was and everything. That was pretty cool. But anyway, I got to meet Glade that day and Rick and that was all part of that to get into that. Then they moved me over. I think we set up the boat once inside so we could get to know what we're looking at and what we're doing. We had a little generator with a vacuum cleaner, it was kind of like a little vacuum cleaner thing. You could reverse it and that's the way we'd fill all the things. We did

that every morning on the river. First thing we'd do is somebody get the generator and go down and pump them all up.

TM: So what were your thoughts when you built that boat there in the big maintenance building when you looked at that thing? It would have taken up a ton of room. It was a big boat.

GS: It did, it did.

TM: What were your thoughts at the time?

GS: I was just flabbergast, like I said, I was 19. I'm always into new stuff. Hey, this is cool whatever this is. I don't know. I really wasn't that familiar with the river. I knew about the rapids because I had seen Kolb's movie so many times and all that stuff, but I was just like, oh, man, this is gonna be great. That was when Woody was telling me, "Well, we're getting ready to do our first trip on this day and you and I are gonna go down to, we gotta go down to the..." It's called now the Market over there on 4th Street, it's some kind of like farmer's market there on the corner. That was where we went and bought all our Dutch ovens, our griddles. We even had some butane, two little two-burner ones. We had a couple of them if we needed something like that. But we bought all the camping stuff, the heavy duty stuff, we bought it out of there. A few days before we'd get ready to leave for a new trip that's where we went and bought our groceries there, Woody and I.

TM: Did Glade give you a shopping list of camping gear or did he just say, "We're gonna be camping, go get stuff," or did he give you a list?

GS: We had a list. We actually had a list. In fact, every time for every trip we always got together and made a list of what we were gonna have for meals each day and each night, you know.

TM: So he would have given you a list of stuff to purchase for cooking and all that?

GS: Yeah, right. He knew what he wanted because he'd been running the river for so long. We need this, we need this, we need this. So he knew what we needed. We never longed for anything. We had everything we needed when we went, which was really nice. We never said, "Well, we should get this or we should get that," cause we already had it. We had everything because of Glade, his experience. That's why they hired him. But, yeah, he'd been running it so long he knew. Woody and I, we went down and bought all that stuff, we got all that stuff together and everything. Woody and I would always be the ones that would go buy the groceries for each trip all the time and we'd go to the same place. We'd go in there and pick everything up, get some dry ice and stuff and everything else.

TM: So you were staging out of maintenance on the South Rim...

GS: Yeah.

TM: ...and the trip was gonna start at?

GS: Okay, the first trip we would start up at Lees Ferry.

TM: How would you get over there?

GS: We had a big stake-bed truck and we put all the boat and everything right on there.

TM: By hand or did you get a forklift to get that stuff in there?

GS: This had a lift on the back of it, believe it or not, and then it would close right up. That was pretty neat, too. We'd push the boat up on to it, the lift would pull it up and then we'd just push it right up in the front of the truck and then start loading all the boxes and stuff.

TM: Cool.

GS: It was a pretty neat truck. We always had somebody with us to bring the truck back to the South Rim. Then when we got down to Phantom Ranch, we would tie the boat up there and leave it and we'd come out. Then we'd have our four days off and then we'd go buy our groceries and take them over there. They would fly the groceries in by helicopter and all our stuff. We'd either walk down or ride down on the mules and that's how we'd get in there. Sometimes one or two of us would ride down in the helicopter so we could help them unload the stuff and start putting it in the boxes and everything, get it stored away. So it was either way, it broke down either way. Then we would go on to Lake Mead.

TM: So let's talk about the helipad, where you parked the boat, and where the helipad was. There's a boat beach at Phantom just below the Black Bridge but above the mouth of Bright Angel Creek. On river right there's a big crescent shaped sandbar. Is that where you guys would park the boat, leave it tied up there?

GS: That was it, right. Yeah.

TM: Okay. So, the helipad today is across Bright Angel Creek over by the... There's a mule corral over there and the solid waste water plant is over there, where they deal with all the solid waste coming out of Phantom Ranch.

GS: That's the old Park Service mule corral. Do they still use that?

TM: Yeah.

GS: Yeah, and there was three houses there?

TM: Yeah.

GS: We used to live in one of those, the first one as you came across that little bridge. When we were working down there that's where we lived.

TM: Where was the heliport? Did the helicopter land over there or did it land by the boat beach?

GS: There wasn't really a heliport. He just landed wherever. I'm trying to remember exactly, I know we didn't have to carry the stuff very far so I think he landed kind of right near the beach. Cause that's where we used to pick it up all the time and take it over there. I'm trying to remember exactly where he used to drop it off, but I know we didn't have to move it that far. I think he used to land right in that sand there in that beach and stuff and that's where we'd take it and put it on the boat and start loading it up, packing the boat ready to go.

TM: Okay. So the deal was you would load up there at the South Rim on a stake-bed truck, drive to Lees Ferry, put the boat all together, load it up, somebody would drive the stake-bed back, you guys would go to Phantom, hike out, four days off. So would you basically run ten days to get the boat up together to Phantom?

GS: Right. We'd just slow it down or speed it up, or take our time. But we would hit every place where boats would stop and we'd pick up garbage or burn trash or pick up toilet paper that was laying around all over the place and burn it. Any place where there was boats or any stuff like that. We'd just take our time. We might stay at one beach all day, just stay there all day and not move and then go the next day. That was on the top part. Now, on the bottom part it was a longer leg and it was quite (laughs) a thing to go across Lake Mead in that big boat. You didn't make very much headway because of the wind and stuff.

TM: You were going all the way to Temple Bar?

GS: Yeah. We would come out, go all the way to Temple Bar in that thing, and it took forever going across that lake in that thing (laughs).

TM: Yeah, yeah. So what were you thinking? Okay, we got the boat all together, it must have taken quite a bit to rig that boat there in the maintenance building. And then you had to take it all apart.

GS: Yeah. Take it back and put...

TM: Put it in the truck.

GS: Yeah. We had to tighten it up, make sure it was real good, get all the air out of it and put it on the truck. In them days I was all in for everything. To me it was just, I thought, man, this is really gonna be fun.

TM: Had you been to Lees Ferry before?

GS: Fishing. Yes, I had. We used to go up there fishing and stuff.

TM: So you had seen some river trips launching up there?

GS: I'd never seen any so I didn't really know. I never saw anyone. We'd go up there, we'd get a boat and we'd go up below the dam, Glen Canyon Dam, and go fishing right there at the base of the dam.

TM: Did you have a boat or did you rent it?

GS: We'd rent one.

TM: From Fort Lee, right there at the Ferry?

GS: Yeah.

TM: What do you remember about their operation?

GS: All there was was a little house, a little wooden like a cabin thing. I remember he had a radio satellite telephone there. It was a big, huge thing that we could make calls. In fact, he had that still in '68 (laughs). If we had to make a call we could go use his radio telephone. He had one of them there in that thing. All's I remember, is just it wasn't even painted or nothing. It was just like a wooden, like a log house there that was there. That was the main place. There wasn't nothing hardly at Lees Ferry.

TM: And they would rent the...

GS: Rent boats.

TM: ...aluminum hull outboard motor?

GS: Exactly. With a outboard motor. What we'd do is we'd just get there and go the other way. Go up fishing, catch a lot of trout below the dam.

TM: Into Glen Canyon?

GS: Yeah.

TM: So what do you remember about that first rig-out day, or days, at Lees Ferry at the start of your first trip?

GS: Yeah. It went pretty smooth. We got everything done. Glade was supervising. He told us... One of the things that got me in trouble almost was we were putting the boat together and I was hustling around. Glade said, "Go get that, go do this, go do that." I remember looking over, there was a rock on the side of the water there. I see this really neat, I thought it was black and white nylon rope, piece of nylon rope. I thought, oh, man, I wonder what that is. So I went over to pick it up and it was a snake. Black and white, just little square, black/white, black/white, black/white. I don't know what kind of snake it was (laughs), but I thought it was a piece of rope and I almost picked it up and I'm like, oh, man, that's a snake. (laughs) It was funny. That was one of the things I remember. It wasn't too bad as far as putting the boat, getting ready for our first trip. We had everything, everything was planned to the T. It was perfect. Glade showed us how to roll the boat out and get it all squared away and put it up, make sure this is done. We had these chains that held that big metal frame that the blocks sat on. Had to get them in there, make sure it was blown up and everything. Blown up just right in the box and in the right place.

TM: So there's a couple different types of river boats. One is a big oval and some companies just ran that oval. Some companies ran the oval with tubes on either side of the oval. There's another type...

GS: Yeah. That was Grand Canyon Expeditions did that. Ron Smith had the two on the side. Hatch had just the oval.

TM: Then there was another which had just a series of tubes and you could play with the tube lengths to make a motor well in the back.

GS: Exactly, and that's what they did. That was the boat we had, that Western Rivers J-Rig. They would cut them, in fact, they would sew... So you had points coming up on each end, they would sew two

together like this even though the normal tube when they bought them only had a point on one end. What they would do is they'd hook two of them together. One would point south, one would point north, so you had that until the one in the middle. Then we had a short one where they had a steel cage, like to build with plywood, where we'd hook the motor on for the transom and where the guy that was driving the boat would stand in that. You had like two and they would... The front was more or less even along there but you had the outside tubes. When you went back to the back it only went so far. The next two inward went a little bit further to cover where the transom and the boatman's place was gonna be. Then you had one in the front with the little short one where you could set that boat box right down in there for the driver.

TM: Put the motor well in there.

GS: Correct.

TM: Did your motor have a jackass? Do you know what that is? It's a mechanical deal with a big pipe where you can actually pull the pipe up and it lifts the whole outboard up out of the water and then you can drop it back down again. If there's a rocky area you're gonna drive over with your boat, you can pick the motor up. It may not have had that.

GS: No, we didn't. We'd just pull it up.

TM: Just rock it?

GS: In fact, I think, if I remember correctly, right up on the front, it was white, they were Johnson 20 horsepowers, we had a thing that we could pull it up. There was a handle there to pull it up, and that's how we did that. Yeah. And we had two motors with us when we went.

TM: Okay. Two Johnson 20 horse?

GS: Right. We took them so we could rotate them or if one of them broke, we broke a propeller or anything.

TM: How much gasoline did you have?

GS: I think we took like, was it six cans, which they're five gallon cans so that would be thirty gallons.

TM: Would you refuel at Phantom?

GS: Yeah. Yeah. We started all over fresh again with more gas at Phantom Ranch. I'm trying to think of anything else about that that I remember. I really liked that boat. It was cool. In fact, Western Rivers... A few times we encountered them so I got to see them using that same boat. We mainly hung with the Hatch guys cause Glade was friends with so many of them.

TM: Did your boat have a name?

GS: Nah, it didn't. No.

TM: Okay. How was it identified that it was a National Park Service boat?

GS: Okay, along the side... When we first went it had National Park Service painted on in black letters. They weren't very big. But then one time we came up and somebody said... We put a orange strip, you can see that in them movies, too. The first time we went through, it just had U.S. National Park Service. Next time there's a orange strip and we had the same thing wrote on there. That was how they identified us.

TM: So tell me about Glade.

GS: Okay. I really admired Glade, he was a nice guy, a really nice guy. One of the things while he was with us... Here he was he was 20 years old, he met a girl at Grand Canyon and they got married that summer while we were running the river. He was really knowledgeable. He had a lot of stories to tell about the Shorty Burton incident and... One of the stories he told me one time I thought was so funny, is Hatch had hired this new guy and their Dutch ovens, they loaded them on the boat and they said, "Well, you gotta tie them down." Well, the lids were on there with the steel handle and he run the rope through the steel handle across the top. They flipped the boat and he got hit right in the head with one of the bottom parts of it, it came off (laughing). He was telling me about this, that guy was still working for Hatch. But they lost all their Dutch ovens cause... They had all the lids.

TM: Did he say where that flip was?

GS: No. I can't remember.

TM: Did he ever tell you about his flip in Killer Fang Falls in I think 1959 or '58?

GS: Never talked to me about that, no.

TM: Okay, okay. What else do you remember about him? What other stories do you remember about him?

GS: Shoot, I'm trying to remember and I know there's a lot. I know it was him and I that came up with the idea to try to use that body board to ski behind the boat (laughs). He was kind of that guy... Oh, he really liked rock and roll music like from the '50s and '60s, too. He was a big guy for that.

TM: Did you bring a guitar? Did you play in the evenings?

GS: Never did, no, because I was afraid I'd break something or something down there. I was really worried about my movie camera that way, but I had an ammunition box that were waterproof so I kept that camera in there all the time cause I had just got that. We was newly married young couple and stuff and we don't have any money. (laughs). But that was neat that I had that. But, yeah, we had a radio and then I had like a little battery-powered eight-track player that I took and I brought some eight-tracks. Sometimes we'd be sitting around listening to that. I had a bunch of eight-tracks and that battery player. It was really funny because it was about this big and like that and it had a little handle on top. We went to Flo's biological dad during the fall here, we went up to his house. He lives in Pennsylvania and I'll be dang if he don't have that same exact eight-track player that I had. He had one sitting there, and I'm like are you kidding me. The same exact one that I used to take. I used to take it when I worked for the trails and then on the river I'd take it down in the canyon. You could plug it in or put batteries in it.

TM: I've got a question for you about on-time and off-time. If I'm working maintenance and I work an eight-hour shift or a twelve-hour shift I basically clock out and I go home and suddenly I'm back on *my time*. It's not like I'm at a duty station where I might have lodging there sort of 24 hour ranger at Indian Gardens, let's say, where you could get a knock on the door at the middle of the night, somebody's got some problems, you were there. When you guys were on the river did you get a sense that that was your duty station or was it, okay, its camp time and now it's our time to kind of chill out. How did that work?

GS: I never thought of that. That never dawned on me because we would work into the evenings or we'd get up early and start working. It was like, well, it's a new day. If we weren't sleeping we were doing something. The reason I say that is somebody had to get up early... A lot of the times we'd have to leave a guy like on guard because they'd close the dam and the river would drop down and the boat would get stuck. There was a few times it was completely out of the water up on the bank. (laughs)

TM: And there were only two or three of you, that's a heavy boat.

GS: There was no way we could move it. We had to wait. There was a suction built up there, too, so you couldn't push the boat (laughs). What we'd do is we'd take turns at night letting the boat out, but sometimes it just didn't work out. Everybody fell asleep and nobody did it. So that's a good point. I never thought about that. It was kind of like you were camping and you were just doing whatever has to be done all the time. Work hours didn't... I guess it was like being on a salary or something because we were getting paid for a certain amount of hours but we were working really all the time because we'd land and start making supper. It was in the evenings and we'd do that. Then we'd set up our camp. In the morning we'd get up and cook breakfast and take down the camp and we'd be pumping up the boat or doing whatever we had to do to the boat, just loading stuff up and unloading stuff. But I think all three of us... I know Glade did, Glade loved what he was doing. Woody loved it and I loved it cause we felt really fortunate. I felt like, man, this is one of the... I still tell people to this day. I can't win a raffle, I don't win nothing. I'm a lousy gambler, I don't play slot machines, I don't buy scratch tickets or play the lottery, but I have a different kind of luck I always tell people. It's like with my family, my boys, my wife, my kids and my grandkids, they were all born healthy, they're all still healthy. That's the kind of luck I got and I think that comes from the Man Upstairs and it's just the way I am. I'm blessed more than I'm lucky. Believe it or not, when I was in the Army we'd have pools for football games, I used to run them a lot. You have a hundred squares. Sometimes I couldn't get enough guys to do it, I'd buy most of the... I still couldn't hit it. If there was one square somebody else bought that's the one that won cause I have no luck like that. Raffle tickets or anything like that, nope. But I fall into good jobs, and that's been my life like that. I don't know why but I'm really lucky. I mean, like going to Grand Canyon, then I'm hired by Babbitt's, and then I work for the Park Service, then they get me to run the Grand Canyon. Then I go to college. Well I'm taking a full load but I get word about the Valley National Bank down in Phoenix, the Operation Center. That's why I love Valley Bank. On the west side of I-17 between Indian School and Camelback, they had the Operations Center. Valley Bank had a policy that you had to be a college student carrying a full load to work their third shift. They would pay you a salary so there was nights we'd only have two or three hours work. Now, like on Friday night we might work ten hours. But I fell into that job. I don't even know how I knew about it. It's always been that way. I was going to college and then went in the military. I got into some good stuff there. I was in the artillery at first as an enlisted man. Well, while I was there at Fort Sill, I was a drill sergeant, they come out and they said, "We want E7, sergeant first class, preferably drill sergeants, to go to flight school and become warrant officers and fly helicopters." I went, hey, that's just down my alley. So I did that. I went and graduated, hard school but I got through, and I flew them. It just seems like I've always been in the right place at the right time.

TM: Why was being on the river the right place and the right time?

GS: It was, I don't know, just because it was a different kind of a job. Nobody else had this kind of a job, to me. Except the guys running the river, there was just a few. I was like, man, this is so historical what I'm doing and I'm getting... I love scenery. I'm a real nut for scenery of any kind. When I retired from the Army, I was a guard at the power plant for a while. I wasn't really serious cause I was retired. Well, I got this job working for the county for indigent medicine. This led me to... When they passed that proposition that the state/Access was gonna cover all the indigents and everything, they had to hire me in the state, it was part of the big thing that people voted on. I was working for Apache County. They said, "You're gonna go to the state." Well, my wife was already running the welfare office there in St. John's, I can't work for her. They're like, "Well, what do you want to do?" I said, "Well, I know about OSI," it's Office of Special Investigations that investigate welfare fraud. The lady said, "Would you want to do that?" I said, "You dang right I would." They gave me the whole northeast corner of Arizona. From I-40 all the way up. And I'd go into Utah, Colorado, New Mexico. I love, I really love the Native Americans and the Navajos, especially up there because there's two types. You can see a distinct difference between the Navajos and the Hopis, they're two different kinds of people. Navajo will tell you, he'll say, "Will you give me a ride to my house?" "Well, where do you live?" "I just live right over there." Well, that's thirty miles down the road. A Hopi will say, "Well, you know where that little mesa is, see that mesa? I live right there." (laughs) The Navajos, they kind of play with you, and they used to play a lot of tricks with me. Especially the older men. They were pretty funny what they would do.

TM: Let's do this back to the river cause you've got us all wound up about the river. So let's come running back to there. That first trip, you mentioned Glade knew the Hatch people because he had run with Hatch. Did you camp with other river trips?

GS: The only ones we ever stayed with was the Hatch guys and we really liked them. That one I was telling you about that one time it was on the first trip, me and Rick Petrillo, I happened to be standing there when Glade was talking to some of the boat guys and Glade said, "How many boats do you have?" He said four and I went, "Glade, there's three here, but there's one getting ready to enter them rapids down there, exploring down the river by itself." The guy's going, "Oh, no!" Nobody knew what to do, and Glade says, "Rick, you and Gene go get that boat." That's just what we did. It was going, in the next rapid after Deer Creek Falls it was almost in the tongue. What Rick did is we went up beside it, I jumped on the boat and threw the rope to him and he tied it off and kind of just pattered us up over to get it away from there. What was really odd was that was the boat with the generator on it. If that had gone in them rapids and took off and flipped and stuff they would have been in a hurt.

TM: Cause they couldn't have pumped their boats up then?

GS: Yeah.

TM: Yeah, they'd had to borrow one or something from someone else.

GS: But that was pretty cool. They were pretty happy, so they never had a problem with the Grand Canyon boat patrol after that, Hatch. We'd always talk and we'd always meet up, Lees Ferry. Sometimes we'd go together.

TM: Let's back up a bit because the river... Did the river have a reputation amongst the Park Service people that you were aware of as being a place you wanted to stay away from or was the river a friendly place where... Was the Park Service culture or people friendly with the river, did they know about the river?

GS: I think it would be more of what Powell did. We don't know what to expect. I never heard bad stuff about it or I never heard you could get killed or you could fall in and drown or anything. Nobody knew what to expect that first year.

TM: Did you wear life jackets?

GS: Yes, we did. We wore life jackets and helmets. Now, sometimes in my movies you might see one off but we were in a calm place. But when we were in rapids we wore our helmets. We were serious about it, Glade was serious about it. We always had our life jackets on. That was more or less the way it was gonna be. Everybody had their own and we kept them. But if it was calm and it was hot and we knew there ain't no rapids coming up we might take them off. A lot of times one of us... Woody would be funny, sometimes it'd be so hot (laughs) he'd just stand up and walk over to the side of the boat. We'd be cruising on down the river, he'd just pile off in (both laugh) without saying anything.

TM: Just walk off?

GS: He'd be so hot. And old Glade stopped the boat and slow it back and everything, pick Woody up. One of the things I remember all the time, he would either do it on purpose or sometimes... We had one, it was on the right side, this one center thing on the outside, it would get softer than all the rest of them (laughs). It never failed, Woody would go walking around and he'd hit that soft one (both laugh) and fall in the river. It never failed. I bet he did that every day. Woody spent a lot of time in the river either on purpose or whatever.

TM: So you guys were wearing your NPS issued green pants and gray shirts or white t-shirts?

GS: Right. Gray, they were gray. We had the patch sewed on. They had a little pocket on them. They were gray t-shirts.

TM: Were the other Hatch river guides, what were they wearing?

GS: They would just wear their regular clothes.

TM: Were they just wearing cutoffs or what?

GS: Yeah, cutoffs or whatever, most of the time they were in cutoffs and shorts and stuff.

TM: So you guys must have been cooking.

GS: Yeah. The thing is they made it good enough where it was okay. In fact, we had some short, they were fire hose they called them, that stuff. We had to buy them in Penney's. We had the long ones, the green pants, and then the short ones. We had the regular Park Service shirts and then we had these gray ones that we had a patch, gray t-shirt with one pocket that had the patch on it. That's what we wore most of the time.

TM: Were the green shorts and a gray t-shirt?

GS: Yeah, and we wore that the most of the time.

TM: I remember Glade telling a story about, I believe it was Superintendent Strickland, I could be wrong, walking down the hall and Glade was there and the Superintendent said, "You've got moxie," as a term for having courage or guts to be on the river. Can you speak to that at all? I mean, was being on the river, did the other NPS employees look at you with respect or like you were crazy or did any of your peers say anything about that?

GS: Well, you know, I think everybody was like shocked that we were doing that. Nobody could believe it. When I'd tell somebody that I run the Colorado River all the time, they'd just kind of look at you like... Yeah, I can see where somebody would say that because they didn't know. A lot of people don't understand it, they just know what they hear or what they see. They knew that the river was there and that there was rapids and stuff and everything but, yeah, I think now that you mention it, there was a lot of people flabbergast.

TM: You mean Park Service people?

GS: Yeah. I know there was a lot of people wished they had got that job but a lot of people were like, we became all of a sudden like nobody... It's like what are you guys, what do you do, you guys are like aliens to us (laughs), what are you doing down there? I'd just tell them. But what was neat is I started taking them movies. The Lions Club called me in, Rotary Club, and I would show those films to them and I'd talk to them.

TM: Right there at the South Rim?

GS: At the South Rim. I made a lot of presentations that people asked me... They found out I had these movies. I think I did it for the Lions Club first because Everett Robinson was big in the Lions Club. They knew I had the movies and he said, "Would you come show them and maybe talk a little bit?" I said, "Yeah, I'd be glad to." So I'd go in there and show all those movies that I got made on DVD and stuff. Those people, it was like, wow, this is awesome that you guys are doing this. I got a lot of that. I mean, people really liked seeing those movies, I know that, they really did.

TM: So you mentioned you guys spent a lot of time picking up trash.

GS: Yeah.

TM: Were you surprised to see all that there, coming from the rim where things are pretty clean? There's not a lot of trash and the Park Service really works hard to keep things clean.

GS: Yes. I was. There was a lot of beaches where there was a lot of trash. A lot of people would have a lot of campfires. Before they left they'd just start throwing cans and stuff in there, in the fire, and it ain't burning. It's still there. There's paper there. One time I remember I was looking at one and I found that senator from Illinois, Percy was his name. I found his *Time Magazine* with the sticker on it there. I gave it to Glade and Glade went and turned it in to the Park Service (laughs).

TM: For littering?

GS: Charles, Charles Percy. Yeah, he had gone through and his *Time Magazine* was laying in one of them campfires. (laughs) I gave it to Glade, Glade loved it and he said, "I went and gave it to the Superintendent." (laughs). Yeah, it kind of makes you mad, but I felt good about what I was doing when we'd go around. Especially like you wonder how many times do you think people go behind these rocks and do their thing and throw toilet paper? We had those little pickers, like you picked up that snake in the movies, and we'd pick that stuff up and we'd burn it and get rid of it and stuff. Cans, we had burlap sacks. We put a lot of cans and trash like that in there to bring out. We had quite a few bags of garbage when we got to Temple Bar.

TM: How many trips did it take you before you got a sense that you were starting to make a headway in on the trash situation?

GS: Probably like third or fourth trip. Complete trip, both ends.

TM: That summer of '68?

GS: Yeah. Yeah. I felt good after what we did that summer. When we were all done and it was all over, I thought, man, we really did some good stuff. One of the things I'm wondering about, I was reading in, you had one of the logs, is we picked up some buoys. I don't know what he was talking about in that log. I wish I could remember.

TM: They probably broke loose from up Lees Ferry or up in Glen Canyon up by the dam.

GS: Oh, maybe that's, I think I remember now. We found one down by where there was this boat, there was a cabin cruiser, it was submerged halfway (laughs). Glade said you couldn't see it when the river was high. I think, yeah, that's right, we did find one there. But then you reminded me with that log about going up to that... That was a pretty neat climb up to that Nankoweap ruins. Went up there with that guy Kim. I can picture him but I don't have a whole bunch to remember about him. I remember he said, "I've gotta go up there," and Glade said, "Gene, why don't you go with him because we don't want him going by himself and falling down, hurting himself or something." So I went up with him and I enjoyed it. In them days I could climb and do whatever. I was the youngest (laughs) on the boat crew. So I went up there with him. That made me feel good reading that, what we were doing up there and stuff.

TM: Yeah. Did Glade then train you and Woody on how to run the boat?

GS: He sure did. Yeah, he let us run them. I never ran any of the major rapids like Lava or Crystal or something, but some of the other rapids he'd let me. He would actually give us like a ground school first. He would say, "Okay, here's how this rapid works. Here's the tongue and there's a hole here and there's a hole over here and if you go over here..." and that. He actually told us about the rapids and how to run them and then he would let us run them. I thought that was neat cause it was fun to do. I mean, I was so proud. You could even tell in that movie, I'm kind of like (sound effect), the first time I ever... That was the first one I ever ran (laughs). I was really tickled because I had my little briefing and here's how to run this rapid. That was pretty cool. I was really good. After that was all over I think Woody and I could have been boatmen on there if we wanted to because we knew enough about the whole operation and running the Colorado. Setting up camp, what to cook, what you needed, how to drive the boat, what to look for. I think we could have did it, both of us. That's how much Glade trained us.

TM: Wow, that's great.

GS: And it was good, cause he wanted to. I don't know, you know.

TM: Yeah, and he didn't spend but a couple seasons at Grand Canyon and then went back up to Dinosaur. Then other people were picking that up to go for it. You mentioned that the Hatch people, they knew Glade and you would camp with them. Were the other commercial companies down there as embracing, "Come on in, camp with us," or not?

GS: Not so much. I'd say the next one was Ron Smith's outfit. It was Hatch, Ron Smith's guys, they were friendly, but we didn't do a whole bunch with them. Western Rivers, I'd only seen them a couple times. Far as Georgie White, I don't think Glade wanted any part of her (laughs), man, because Glade didn't really appreciate the way she did things. Glade said she'd get up in Lava Falls, she'd line the boat up, shut the motor off and dive in and hold on with everybody else. She had that big, it was three of them connected together. Glade just didn't appreciate the way she operated. Okay, it's lunchtime, she'd put a plastic swimming pool out there and throw food in it and say have at it. Where Hatch and them guys were like us. Woody and Glade and I cooked for the guys that we took down there. We would cook their dinners. All they had to do was give us their TDY check to go down there. I think they called it per diem or whatever then. They would give us that and they didn't have to worry about cooking or buying any food or nothing. Everything was there for them and it was all they wanted to eat.

We even laughed about Lloyd Horner, he was a big old tall ranger. Glade was telling me, he said, "Dang, Old Lloyd really gained a lot of weight down here." (both laugh) Cause he was a big, tall, skinny guy, but he would eat, too. He'd put away some groceries. Nobody was ever starving. I mean, we brought so much and it was really good. We used to make what we called Forty Mile Stew and, boy, that was one of the things that everybody loved. We bought these beautiful chunks of meat there at Farmer's Market, square cubes. There was not a piece of fat on them and we'd cook them up in that Worcestershire sauce and stuff and everything. Fry them first and throw them in there and then we had this brown gravy stuff, and we'd throw carrots and potatoes in there. We'd buy the little cans of the little potatoes, throw them in there, and we'd finish it off with two big chunks of Monterrey Jack cheese. It was pretty good. They loved that. That was one of our popular meals there was that Forty Mile Stew we used to call it. Fact, we'd have it twice every trip because everybody loved it so much. It was good. But as far as anything else...

TM: You ate better than Georgie?

GS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. We had all fresh food, vegetables and stuff.

TM: So Sanderson would have been down there then.

GS: Yeah. I saw Sanderson once or twice.

TM: Okay. Martin Litton would have been down there with dories but he would have been doing do-it-yourself trips then. He hadn't started his dory company.

GS: I hadn't seen any. I never saw any dories or any of that.

TM: Did you see any do-it-yourself trips down there, any non-commercial people?

GS: The guys that Glade arrested that time.

TM: Tell me.

GS: One time, even though we had Park Service written on the side of the boat... These guys were down there in this little boat. It was down somewhere near Phantom Ranch, I can't remember. What I remember is they were waving at us (laughs) as we were coming over to them. Glade knew they were down there illegally, they didn't have a permit. It was funny, as we got closer and closer, and Glade had this baseball hat on with the arrowhead thing, you could just see these guys' eyes get bigger and bigger and bigger (laughs). They called in a helicopter and got them out cause they were down there without a permit. That was a big fine in them days, they had to pay big bucks. That was the only ones that we ever got where Glade pulled his badge and stuff and said that's it.

TM: No commercial companies got ticketed for anything?

GS: Nah, we never... Sometimes we'd write them up or we might mention, "Were you guys there, were you guys at that beach last? Well, you left a mess." That was why we always had a good repertoire with them because we wouldn't really get ugly with them, we'd just say, "You guys need to be a little bit more careful. We're following you through and we stopped at the last place you guys were at and it was a mess." They were all like, hey, they were all cool with it. I think it was because of our personality. None of us were idiots, we didn't break bad on anybody. We were their friends and that's what we wanted to be cause we wanted to make them start cleaning up their act a little bit and keep the river nice. I think we were good, I don't know, like representatives of the Park Service. The Park Service would have been proud of the way we acted with the public. We didn't try to be a mean guy or nothing. We just went and did our job and we would more or less tell them you might want to clean this part of your act up. They were always receptive to us. I think Glade was a big part of that because they all knew Glade. Everybody had a lot of respect for him. They knew he'd been doing that a long time. For that reason they knew, hey, the Park Service is down here now. I think I got a feeling that there's a new sheriff in town on the river. The Park Service is down here, they're watching what we do. I think that's why we did see a lot of change in the beaches. There wasn't as much garbage, there wasn't as much trash. In fact, I said maybe three trips, it might have been the second trip through. All of a sudden we started seeing cleaner beaches and no campfires that were still going or anything. There was a change right away when everybody realized the Park Service is in town. I think that was a good deal. I really do. It was a good thing for everybody involved. I can honestly say, with the exception of one time (laughs), we were good representatives of the Park Service. It was a really muddy trip and we hit that clear water at Lake Mead. We were all naked and we were all having a good time and hollering. We had the boat shut down and we're diving in and having a good time and I heard this thunk, thunk, like you hear on the water sometime. I looked and there's an old man and an old lady sitting in a canoe (laughs) about fifty yards from us.

TM: Oh, no. (both laugh)

GS: I'm staying in the water and I'm holding onto the side of the boat (laughs). We never knew they were there and they were right even with us. They were up against the, well, it was kind of like a wall, a rock wall (laughing), and they were right there. We all swam around the back side and we're all reaching up to try to grab our clothes. They never said nothing. I think they were kind of like... But we never even

knew they were there. That was really funny, but we all got dressed and pattered along back down through the lake. That wasn't really nice but like I said, if we had known it... It was the noise I heard, a boating noise of wood and water and stuff. I'm like what is that and I looked over there.

TM: Paddle on the gunnel of a canoe.

GS: (laughing) They were over there in a canoe up beside. That was so funny, but man, it was a rough trip that time because it was so muddy. The river was like... When you get hit with a wave it'd be like somebody threw a mud pie at you (laughs). We were so happy to get to Lake Mead and as soon as where the water went from brown to green, we all stripped down. Our clothes were all full of sand and stuff and we were swimming. I'll never forget that. That was so embarrassing. (both laugh) We all got on the other side of the boat and put it between us. Oh, man, that was funny.

TM: You had mentioned that you were surprised that it had taken so long for the Park to get to the river.

GS: Yeah.

TM: Can you speak to that a little bit?

GS: Yeah, I would have thought when I was up there, that the Park Service did control the whole river. If you came in to Grand Canyon National Park you were under the... I didn't know it was just out of control until I started reading something. Not out of control, but not being controlled. The Park Service wasn't in control of the river. They weren't doing things. Yeah, they were selling permits to go through and stuff, but nobody was down there enforcing anything, nobody was making sure that it was remaining clean and the things on the river were being done that needed to be done to keep it nice for the next guy who's up there a little ways up the river coming down. That did surprise me. When you told me that it was kind of a neat deal that I was on the first one I was like, wow, I never thought of that that way. You were saying that the guys back in the 20s, or whenever it was, went through and stuff. I would have thought that Park Service had always controlled that cause that's a big deal, that's a river. It's a big deal. You want to keep it clean, you want to keep it nice. That's the way I feel about every place, not only just the national parks.

TM: Yeah. It was a big deal cause the park would take care of the trails, they would lead trail hikes, they would watch and walk the trails and Phantom Ranch and be there. The river growth kind of happened and the park was kind of removed from that for some reasons. Some good reasons. They needed to get back on the river and they did and you were there.

GS: That really surprised... When you told me that stuff it really made me think. That really surprised me. Another lucky thing that happened to me. Hey, they're getting ready to do something and you kind of made me think that was a big deal and I'm like, wow, I never thought about it that way but now that I've done it and I'm this old, I guess it was a big deal. I'm really proud that I was able to be one of those guys. But I think the Park Service, I don't know whose idea it was, I don't know who picked... Somebody did a lot of research. Getting Glade Ross was the best thing they could have done. That was perfect. That was the right guy at the right time because he had the personality. He's a friendly guy and he was a young guy but he had a lot of common sense, unlike me at that time. I was a young guy that was a little out of control. Glade was a natural, he was a natural supervisor, somebody to take control. He was 28 years old, I was 19. Woody was, God, I don't know, man, I guess he was like 40-something or something. That

really makes me think if he was in World War II. But anyway, I think whoever set that up did a outstanding job, outstanding job.

TM: Do you remember George Von der Lippe?

GS: Yes.

TM: What can you tell me about George?

GS: Yeah. I just knew him as a ranger, a Park Service ranger. I never had no many dealings with... I don't even know whether he came through with us, whether he was one of the guys that came through with us. I know he was a nice guy. I think his daughter was in school around my time. Yeah. I never had a lot of personal dealings with him though.

TM: Because he was the guy that realized that the park needed to get on the river...

GS: Really?

TM: ...and had worked with, I believe, Secretary of Interior's office cause Interior had done a river trip and he had said, "Hey, we'd like to get a presence on the river," and they just said make it happen. They saw at that time there was a need for that.

GS: That was an outstanding... I didn't know he did that. If I could see him today, if he's still alive, I'd like to say thank you. I mean, that's awesome because that was a big deal. I think a lot of people knew it was a big deal, the river runners and the people on top because nobody had ever heard of this. It was kind of like we're different. The Park Service were actually controlling the river. I had people sometimes talk to me, "You mean they've got a boat on that river now?" I said, "Yeah, we patrol the river now," that's what it was. Like I said, I guess I was too young to understand the significance of everything that was going on.

TM: Of course. Sure. There were lots of moving parts and not everybody understood everything.

GS: Exactly. Since we've been talking/doing this I was always thinking, boy, whoever did that really was on the ball. So it was George Von der Lippe? I'll be danged. Cause he did good. He got the right boat, he got the right boatman, head boatman, Glade Ross. He did everything right as far as I'm concerned because it went smooth. There was never any hang-ups, never any hang-ups.

TM: I was thinking about how that went. There was a river trip, I believe in '67, Von der Lippe was on with Ken Hulick, they were looking at pit privies to build on the river. Jack Curry drove one of the two motor boats on that trip. I think that's how they decided to buy one of Curry's boats.

GS: Really?

TM: Don't quote me yet on this.

GS: That's probably correct because we set up four privies. They brought them in by helicopter. We dug the holes and stuff and everything to set them up. There was two above Phantom, two below. Somehow Glade and them guys up with the South Rim decided which beaches they were gonna put them on.

TM: They had done that in '67. They had taken steel rods and tried to figure out how deep the soil was.

GS: Yeah. And we did that.

TM: Figured out the locations.

GS: Yeah.

TM: Okay. So you guys built those privies?

GS: Yeah. We did, we put them up. They brought them in by helicopter, we dug the holes and stuff and everything for them. In fact, we put them fifty-five gallon drums in there. That's what that was.

TM: Okay. So we had talked about that before we started this recording. That makes sense cause there are some photographs in the Park archives about that.

GS: Yeah, with the drums, cause that's what we did. We dug these deep holes, put them drums in there, and then they had them... They were the Park Service brown privies (laughs). They brought them in and they put them at the beach and we went and installed and set them up, put them all up and everything real neat and every... I thought that was a great idea when we were doing it. You know, it takes away from the wilderness thing and everything but you don't have toilet paper and stuff all over the place. It's all in one spot. So I think that was a good idea in the long run, personally, my thing. I was glad to be doing it.

TM: And now, of course, everybody packs it in, packs it out.

GS: Oh, really?

TM: That solid waste goes floating out with everything else.

GS: Really?

TM: That was a short-lived journey but I digress.

GS: Well, the technology they've got nowadays, I imagine they can do a lot of things that we couldn't do, like the commo. You probably can't use a cell phone down there unless you got a satellite one. But trying to have commo down there we had a hard time.

TM: Tell me.

GS: The one time I remember is when... In my movies you see that airplane flying over. I was standing beside Glade when he was trying to make that radio contact. He could never establish it, but he told me, he said, "Yeah, that's John Riffey, he's supposed to call us but I can't get contact with him." Glade just gave up on it. But he flew over us a couple times.

TM: Did you ever have any connection with the rim then? I mean, you get it at Phantom with a phone, I suppose, but...

GS: Yeah. Yeah. We never really did. We never really had good communications. Now, one time he talked to an airplane or a helicopter to get them guys. Somehow we established contact to send in a helicopter and get those three guys out.

TM: Down at Phantom you would run down to Phantom. I think that's how that worked, cause Hulick, I talked with him about that and came back and, yeah, yeah.

GS: Yeah, that was pretty neat. I'm trying to remember some more neat stuff. So much good stuff happened. I really liked doing what I was doing because I felt I was doing something good. Course, every time I worked, everything I did for the Park Service I was doing something, like repairing the trails and keeping them safe and stuff. Even driving a garbage truck, when I was doing that before I went to college, I thought, you know I'm doing good stuff. It made me happy. I have a lot of respect for the Park Service. I was reading something the other day...

TM: As you should.

GS: I was reading something, I think it was in Jean Luttrell's book where they were talking (laughs), they came out in the '60s with this creepy look and new insignia for the Park Service. It was like three triangles. I remember everybody at Grand Canyon Village was blowing their top. No, you're not taking the arrowhead with the buffalo. This is creepy, we don't want it. Everybody in that town, in Grand Canyon Village, was going crazy over that. "We're not gonna do that." It was a new modernized... I don't know whether you ever seen it, but it was like three green triangles like this and it was a new. I think it's in Jean Luttrell's book, she talks about it and she more or less says the same thing. People like John Riffey, he wouldn't trade off. They gave him a new badge, that's what it is, and he said he continued to wear his old badge. When they told them guys, when they said, "We're not gonna do this," his was still in the box (laughs). It'd never been out of the box. Old John Riffey (both laugh) he just gave it back to them. He'd always wore that same badge and that's the way everybody felt. Everybody loves that arrowhead. That was a brilliant...and I do, too. When I see it I just, I kind of (sound effect, sounds like clapping) get proud cause I worked for them.

TM: We've been at this now about an hour, forty minutes. We should probably start thinking about tying this one up. Is there anything else about the river that you want to mention, because we probably won't come back to it again.

GS: Okay. Well, there was two guys that worked for Hatch, real quick, that parents ran the hotel and the restaurant at Temple Bar. So we always got a good deal about this. I don't know what their names were. I remember I went back one day with... It was on the first trip... One of them, I think he came out with a aluminum boat. He picked me up and Glade made me go back to Temple Bar with him to set up for some rooms and everything to set up the arrangements. Well, okay, we're gonna bring our trash in, where will we put it, and we're gonna do the boat. I set up to rent some rooms for us and then for meals and stuff and everything, with his parents who ran that thing, and that was pretty interesting. I got some real interesting stories about stuff there. What we'd do is when we'd come off the river, everybody'd go to Las Vegas. We had a car that we would take and go to Las Vegas. So all these guys that we brought down with us, we'd go over to Las Vegas. I went sometimes and sometimes I didn't. A couple of quick stories. One of them that I think it was so weird to me. I didn't go to Vegas with Woody that night and them guys, they went in and they said they were gonna hit some certain place and I didn't want to go so I said, "I'm gonna stay here." I was sleeping and they came in in the morning. Woody comes in, and this

is 1968. I can remember in a real soft voice, like he always talked, he said, "They killed Kennedy." I said, "I know." He said, "No, they killed the other Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy." I was like, "What?" It was when Sirhan shot Bobby Kennedy, but it was so weird cause he said, "They killed Kennedy," and I'm like, "Yeah, I know" (laughs). I remember that. Then I remember one of Glade's friends. I don't know whether he worked for the Park Service or what, but sometimes he'd drive that truck, a big, old, tall skinny guy, cowboy. I think he used to be a river...well, he was a river man. That's one thing Glade told me about. He'd help us put the boat together, get everything ready to go or take it down and stuff when he'd come there. I thought he was just normal as heck. One day I go in there and he's in the bed and I see his boot. One boot's laying sideways and one's standing up and it's going up all this way. This guy didn't have a leg from the knee down and you could not tell it. He could lift anything. He had a wooden leg. (laughs) He told me one time he fell off the boat and he was in a rapid and Glade was hollering at him, "You okay, you okay?" Said, "I broke my leg," and Glade said I was going, oh, God, he's only got one leg. It was his wooden leg had busted on the rapid. (laughing) But I thought that was a funny story Glade used to tell. I told him, I said, "Glade, I didn't know the guy did that." I don't know whether you want me to, I can make it short. What happened was... Glade tells the story like this, he was working underneath his car. It slipped off the blocks and it started down here and it was rolling and pushing him up and he told Glade, he said, "Man, when my ribs punctured my lungs it felt so good, I thought I was gonna explode, my head was gonna pop off. They took me to the hospital and the doctors were all looking at me. I was really a mess." He said there was two new residence guys, like interns, just came there, they said, "Well, let us work on him." (both laughing) They saved his life. All he lost is his leg and that was all. Everything else was okay. But that guy, I can't even remember his name. He was a nice guy but he never ran with us. He helped a lot set up the boat.

TM: So he was maintenance with NPS and he was your shuttle driver or...

GS: He must have been.

TM: ...did you just hire him on to do shuttle?

GS: I don't know how they did that. He might have been working for the Park Service and they were... He would drive the truck back and forth for us. I don't know what his status was. All's I knew was he'd show up and we'd... Sometimes we'd drive the truck up and he'd pick it up and take it back or he'd drive it down. Just seemed like he was there when we were getting ready to get on the river and we're getting ready to get off the river. Real nice guy, big, tall, blond-headed guy, but the stories about him were funny. But, yeah, we used to go to Temple Bar and we'd go in. When I would go into Vegas with them I'd hang out at the Golden Nugget all the time cause they had a lounge back there and they always had this band there called "The Dave Bunker Show". It was a guy and two sisters and their mother in this band and they were awesome (laughs). I'd sit there all night, drink a beer, drink a coke, drink a beer, drink a coke. They'd come and get me cause they all wanted to go around but, like I said, I don't gamble because I don't win so I don't ever do that (laughs), I just watch bands.

TM: Anything else about the river and river stories that you can remember?

GS: I don't know whether they still do this anymore, but we had a thing that Glade had us do. We'd always have a pocketful of change when we went under that bridge, I guess Navajo Bridge. When you got in the shadow you had to throw it to the river gods.

TM: Really?

GS: The whole handful of change. (laughs) So there's a lot of... I don't know where it is now but (both laugh) we'd all stand there and once we were in the shadow we'd throw it to the river gods, the pocketful of change. That was one of the things that was kind of a little deal that was real fun.

TM: Back up a minute. Your drinking water, did you just drink out of the river?

GS: A lot of times we did. In the winter. We had them metal igloo things. They were still aluminum or something in them days that we would use, but the rest of the time we'd drink out of the river. Like in the spring. But when it was muddy we'd fill them up, like when we got to Deer Creek Falls and stuff.

TM: And settle it out?

GS: Yeah. We would do that.

TM: When you guys went to the bathroom, did you bury your toilet paper better? I mean, how was that...?

GS: We had little Army shovels and trenching tools that we had to use and that's what we would do.

TM: Bury deep.

GS: Yep. Another thing I remember about Lees Ferry. (laughs) I caught a big lizard about that big and I threw him in the cooler where the dry ice was. We went and took it out, me and Glade, and it was frozen hard as a rock this big lizard about that big.

TM: Like a chuckwalla?

GS: Kind of like that. It wasn't a Gila monster but it was orange and black. We put it on this rock and a little bit later we looked over there and he was gone. That thing thawed out and took off. I it was really funny (laughs), I was learning a lot when I was 19. I was like, man, that guy was froze. It was froze like a popsicle when we put it on that rock. It was a hot rock, a hot day, and he just thawed out and took off, man. (both laugh). That was another funny thing that I had seen down there. Trying to think of anything else that would be pretty cool. (pause) Oh, man, I don't know. That one time we caught all those catfish that are in that movie, that was dinner. Oh, man, they were so good, too. Used to watch those humpback suckers in there. We used to make some with mushroom soup and noodles and hamburger. I forget what they call that stuff. I remember one time when had a bunch of noodles left and we threw them over the, all them suckers came up to the beach. That was where the big cave is you hit when you first go in. It's a big, huge long, long cave. You could see those suckers down in there just sucking this stuff up.

TM: Did you camp there at that cave.

GS: We did once, once or twice, yeah. It was pretty interesting.

TM: Which reminds me then, did you just throw your trash out the back of the boat?

GS: Nah, we always carried everything. What do you mean, like garbage or something?

TM: Yeah, like noodles and that kind of stuff.

GS: We just put that in the water for the fish. Cause there were so many carp and so many of those suckers. Those humpback suckers, I guess they're protected or something. We never messed with them, but catfish, now, we caught. We caught some trout and stuff and everything. We did do a little fishing down there. We all had our fishing licenses and stuff and everything. That was kind of cool.

TM: Well, that was dinner, it was fresh food.

GS: Yeah, especially those catfish. Oh, man, they taste so good when you're out camping like that or you're down there like that. They were really good. That was some excellent stuff. Trying to see if there's anything I didn't cover.

TM: Whose idea was it to put that backboard off the back of the boat and use it to...

GS: Glade.

TM: Was that his idea?

GS: Glade came up with that idea.

TM: Did he come up with fun things like that? Was that...

GS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We did a lot of stuff. He was kind of a real '60-ish, '50-ish kind of guy. He'd say things that I thought were really cool. Like if he grabbed something like a sausage link he'd go, "These are really good little nuggets." (both laugh) He always used different terminology the way he talked. It was '50ish, but he was a real good guy. One of the things that cracked me up one time was him and Rick, they made some pancakes and there was a bunch left over when we got done. They were putting peanut butter on them, slamming them together and just putting them in their pockets (laughs). Kind of wrapped them and then they'd be eating them the rest of the day. (both laugh) I'm like, "You guys are crazy, man." Rick, now I didn't finish up on him. I don't know what ever happened to him. He went through one trip with us. He went through the top and the bottom and then he never... I don't push things, you know. I said to Glade, "Where's Rick?" He said, "Well, he's not working with us anymore." I don't know what happened on that. I don't know whether it was maybe supposed to be a one-time thing. I didn't think it was when I started so I don't know what happened to him, where he went. What had happened that maybe... I don't know, I just don't know. He was a good guy. I liked him. He was kind of quiet and stuff but I don't know whatever happened on that deal cause there was originally gonna be four of us. I asked Glade, I says, "Are they gonna get somebody else?" He said, "No, it's just gonna be me and you and Woody." That was good because that was all we really needed. I think it was because Woody and I, we didn't stand around waiting to be told what to do, we'd just do it. If somebody did say, "Hey, go over there and do..." we were gone, we were over there. Woody was the same way. He was just an all-around good guy and a good hard worker. Just good guy.

TM: It sounds like you guys were a good team.

GS: Yeah. It was. I think in the long run they did pick... Maybe that had something to do with them moving me on that list or something. I don't know. Maybe they said, "Well, he's a hard worker." They

knew Woody was a hard worker. We didn't need no supervision, we just did what needed to be done. Every time we got to Lees Ferry or down to Temple Bar, we knew what had to be done. We'd just start doing it automatically, not wait to be told anything. I know Glade appreciated that.

TM: He would very much appreciate that. That would have been very... It makes river trips work.

GS: Oh, yeah, yeah. We always, when we pulled in, would set up camp real quick and we'd start making dinner, dinner or lunch, whatever we were going have. He knew that he could count on us, things would be done. A lot of times I'd be the first guy out there blowing up the boat every morning, cause at nighttime it loses their air. Them things lose and they get soft and you just go around do all of them.

TM: Yeah, yeah. Blow them up.

GS: It was just something that had to be done. So it was kind of neat. Good job.

TM: Well, Gene, thank you very much for the... Let's call this a wrap, the end of Part 2. Today, again, is the 13th of November, 2017. This is a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Gene Sopko and my name is Tom Martin. Gene, thank you very much.

GS: Okay. Thank you.