

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Jim Corson (JC)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: In this 8 part interview, 96-year-old James W. "Jim" Corson was born in rural New Jersey. His B-24 was shot down over Germany in 1944 and his POW camp was liberated by General Patton in 1945. After graduating with a degree in archeology from the University of New Mexico, in 1950 Jim and his very pregnant wife Barbara moved to a woodstove heated cabin where he worked as a Seasonal Interpretive Ranger at the Wayside Museum of Archeology at Grand Canyon National Park, today's Tusayan Museum, the start to his 30-year career with the National Park Service.

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TM: Today is Friday, February 5, 2021. This is a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with James Corson. My name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon Jim, how are you today?

JC: I'm pretty good for a guy who's 96.

TM: Listen, if you can't hear me, please just speak up and say, "I can't hear you."

JC: Well, I can hear you if you're slow and easy.

TM: Okay, thank you. My name is Tom Martin. Jim, I'm going to start this by asking you, what year you were born?

JC: 1924.

TM: Where?

JC: In Cape May County, New Jersey. I was out in the country.

TM: What were your folks doing there?

JC: Farming.

TM: What were they farming?

JC: They were poor farmers.

TM: What were they trying to farm?

JC: They didn't try. They joined ranks with his brother, uncle Frank, to be dairy farmers. And my father had a better personality than my uncle, so he was the milkman and the two of them produced milk, and corn, and a little home gardening.

TM: What was your father's name?

JC: Earnest H. Corson.

TM: And what was your mom's name?

JC: Marion.

TM: Do you know how they met?

JC: How they met? No, but there is a story that is very early in their meetings. My father decided to go West and be a tree surgeon. A nice decision, one that he was very pleased about. Except that he fell out of a tree and broke both wrists. And they don't need tree surgeons with no wrists. So, his friends took up a collection and bought him a ticket home. And he claims that my mother took advantage of him in that weakened condition, and that's how they had come to get married.

TM: That's cute.

JC: Well, it's a nice story.

TM: Do you have brothers and sisters?

JC: I did have three brothers. One died at age seven. Then, I had two brothers: an older and a younger. No, that's not right, I had three brothers: an older and a younger not counting the one that had died.

TM: Did you grow up there in New Jersey?

JC: I did. I spent all my life up until age 18. I became the chief helper on the farm when I was 14 and continued that until I was 18 and went into the Air Force.

TM: Let me just back up a minute. You're the chief helper on the farm at 14. Did you quit school to do that?

JC: No, I only had to be the chief helper in the Summer. And my father did appreciate an education.

TM: What were you interested in in school?

JC: I was very interested in science and everything actually. I didn't like mathematics. I did like being in school. In fact, when school started in the Fall, that's when I went on vacation you might say. I didn't have to work so hard.

TM: Right, and I imagine that there was no such thing as a real vacation for you.

JC: I was so pleased to go back to school. Some people hated it, but I loved it.

TM: When you were in school, were you thinking that, before you went into the service, were you thinking you might go to college?

JC: I was hoping I could.

TM: But then, we're talking about World War II coming on here.

JC: Right. Before World War II however, I took a competitive exam in the state of New Jersey and was number one in that exam. And that was 200 of the best kids in New Jersey, so I felt kind of good about that.

TM: Who put that exam up? Did your school do that?

JC: I had one teacher who was better than all the others. He took a carload of kids over for that examination. And I don't think anybody else even paid any attention to it, but I'm not sure about that. He was the "Ag" teacher, the agriculture teacher.

TM: Do you remember his name?

JC: Yes, Lee Courter.

TM: Did he inspire you?

JC: Oh, he was wonderful. He was one of the best teachers.

TM: How?

JC: How? Oh Christ, that's a hard question. But he enjoyed teaching. He enjoyed his subject, and he was a very distinguished gentleman. He was different than most of the teachers.

TM: Nice, that's fun.

JC: Yeah, I hope some of his relatives are listening, but I'm not sure he had any children.

TM: Well, it's always important to recognize good teachers.

JC: You bet.

TM: At what point did you think you might go into the Service?

JC: Pearl Harbor changed me instantly from a pacifist to an angry militant. I was too young to volunteer at that point, but after a year passed, I was 18 and going to college on a scholarship. And signed up for the Air Force.

TM: Let's back up a bit. When did you graduate from high school?

JC: 1942.

TM: The Spring of '42. Had your older brother preceded in you into the Service?

JC: No, my older brother by then was a telephone repairman in Washington, DC.

TM: Had you been outside of New Jersey up to that point?

JC: Very little. The college was in New Jersey: New Jersey State. And I had been to New Brunswick, New Jersey where the college was. And I had spent some time in summers with my aunt in Collingswood.

TM: Where's that?

JC: Collingswood is a suburb of Philadelphia.

TM: So, out to Pennsylvania.

JC: Philadelphia is in Pennsylvania, but Collingswood is in New Jersey.

TM: Oh, it is! I'm very illiterate about that geography. So, traveled a little bit.

JC: A little. And I certainly wanted to travel more. I planned to travel more, and I think, probably I joined the Air Force so that I could travel.

TM: When did you sign up?

JC: I signed up in college and was accepted, but at that time they decided they would change recruiting because they wanted to tell people where they could go. So, I had to go in through the draft which is interesting. I went in through the draft alright, but they didn't catch up with me for about three months. And that three months was as miserable a Godd*mn three months as you could have. I went through basic training twice. There was nothing good about basic training. Basic training at that time was the same as Cornwallis when he came over to win the Revolution and lost, and he deserved to lose.

TM: Where did you go through basic?

JC: I did basic at three places actually. I was in Fort Dix when I was inducted. And Fort Dix basic training was run by an immigrant who should have been turned down. He was not my idea of a leader, anyway. He had very poor English, and from Poland or somewhere difficult. Anyway, his language was atrocious, his manners were atrocious, and he told us that his job was to make us hate everybody. If you're going to be a good fighter, it does help to hate. But I still wish him dead. And he is by now.

TM: So, from Fort Dix where did they send you then?

JC: From Fort Dix I went out to Jefferson Barracks in Missouri. And we merely started over. It was basic training all over again except that I had pneumonia the whole time I was there. And I could never get my temperature up above 101 and that wouldn't get you in the hospital. You had to have a 102 to get into the hospital. So, I spent the whole d*mn time, more than half sick. And, hating it just as bad. The man in charge of our training there was some sort of a serious misfit also. He had a broken arm that was fixed by the army and they did it wrong and sent him home with a crippled arm. And I don't know any facts to go with his arm, but my own created story is that he was drunk and thrown out of a bar and broke his arm in that way. I enjoyed making that story up.

TM: What sort of drills were you going through?

JC: Like I say, it was Cornwallis basic training. We did nothing but close to a hundred drills and marching and taking hikes. And one of our hikes was with six inches of snow and sleet frozen on the ground so that you were very likely to fall down at any instant. And I don't know if you've ever heard of Jefferson Barracks, but it was the same as for the GI's, everybody had the ships at Jefferson Barracks and if you slipped on the ice and fell down, the results were catastrophic. You couldn't escape going home full of it and it had to be cleaned up. Anyway, Jefferson Barracks. I had a temperature of 101 the whole d*mn time and the word came through after I had been there for three weeks, that the Air Force wanted us, and we were going to troop train to California. But I couldn't have a temperature. So, I went to the doctor and he gave me some pills, and my temperature went away long enough to get on the troop train and ride out to California where I had thought I had died and gone to heaven. The oranges were in

bloom and they treated me like a decent human being, which was a total novelty. And I thought, like I said, that I'd died and gone to heaven. The air was full of orange blossoms, and you had to be there to even believe what was going on. Never got my fever back, never was sick again for a year.

TM: What do you remember about the train ride over? Was it a pretty full train?

JC: It was a troop train, and it was full. But it was not, you know, we didn't have a lot of niceties, we were just driving on a standard train in those days.

TM: Right. Was it standing room only? Or was it that packed because at one point, heading West, those trains were standing room only.

JC: It was not that bad. We had about 25 troops on there, but it was not a troop train.

TM: What was your impression of America as you rode that train and crossed it?

JC: Well, I don't have a great deal of impression. Don't forget, I had been sick for three weeks. So, I slept a lot. And, as I say, we were not a troop train, so there were a lot of other people on it. And my impressions going across the country were biggest and best when we went up the Rocky Mountains and across Colorado and down the other side. I resolved to come back and see it again sometime. And that's why I'm living here now.

TM: So, you woke up in heaven.

JC: Just about.

TM: Where did you go in California?

JC: Santa Ana. Santa Ana is south of Los Angeles far enough so that it is not smoggy all the time.

TM: Okay, and this is the Air Force. Did they put you through a battery of tests to figure out what –

JC: Christ, no. Well, yes, they did. Glad you asked that question. But what they did was run us into basic training for the third time. And it was very d*mn hard to appreciate that. But they also did test us. And they were testing us for pilot, and navigator, and bombardier. And I came out just in the middle of pilot training. In other words, above average. And for bombardier and navigator those were second prize. Everybody wanted to be a pilot. Before the Board were questioning my motives, I said I wanted to be whatever said I would be best at. Fairly good philosophy and I still think that way. Anyway, they sent me to navigation training at, oh dear, Hondo, Texas. And there I washed out. I was one of the smartest kids in the class and I did something seriously stupid. And washed out because I had done so badly on the first exam. They gave us graph paper to do some navigating on and I, I can't explain even now, how I decided that graph squares were a different weight, or size, than I should have. So, my navigation on paper, failed the test completely. I got a 52 or something like that. And they said that I could go back and start over or I could go someplace else. But it so happened that I hated Hondo, Texas. It was a really rotten management. And just sitting around waiting for another assignment, I had a little vacation. They weren't demanding anything of these guys who were waiting around. We were just waiting around. And the next assignment that came up was to go to Midland, Texas and become a bombardier. That was at the bottom of the list of things you could become, and nobody really wanted to be a bombardier. But I turned out to have hit the jackpot. Because Midland, Texas was the headquarters for all bombardier training and instead of a bunch of a**holes, I was being run by a group of carefully selected officers. And

I can give an example of this: on Sunday, if you had failed something, or mismanaged something, you were restricted to the base and assigned to the library to study. And at that library, there was a colonel, on Sunday, sitting there and coming by every once in a while to be sure you didn't have a comic book in your study book. And to my mind, if you could get a colonel to work on Sunday, you had a pretty darn good school. I loved it. And did quite well. And there was no baloney. We might have had some basic training, but it wasn't the main thing. They weren't torturing us.

TM: What kind of aircraft were you training in?

JC: Oh, we trained in BT-7s maybe. I don't really know, but they had two engines and they were Beechcraft. And five people could sit in, there was a little cabin. And five people were taking the training at the same time in the same place. And we only had one negative in that operation. We had a pilot who was home from the war and wanted to be back fighting. And so, he did what he could do to make life difficult for the cadets. Gave him something to entertain himself. Even now I wish him to drop dead. I can't really explain how he tried to make it difficult, but if you're learning to navigate it helps a h*ll of a lot if you're flying straight and level and everything is going the way it's supposed to be. And he felt that we needed more than that, so he was adding things to the flight that didn't belong there.

TM: That sounds like a great way to get sick.

JC: Actually, he didn't do us any harm. We all wish him dead, but he didn't die a violent death as we wished, he just kept on tormenting. What he wanted to be was reassigned to combat. And I don't know why because I've been there. Anyway, I graduated, and they gave us the cigar. And my first cigar, and I was twenty, and I didn't smoke it all the way, but I did light it up and try it. I didn't like it. Never had a cigar since. Anyway, what happened next, we were assigned to a crew. So, we went back to Savannah, Georgia where we joined a crew made up of people from all over the country and all the different schools for whatever they were special in. I had to be the navigator because we didn't get one. Even though I was a bombardier, I had some navigation training. And I enjoyed that quite much. Anyway, later in the game, I became a navigator. They discovered that navigators were important, and bombardiers weren't very. And so, they sent some of us anyway to become both and I had no trouble at all with navigation school. I was smart enough; I just really had blown that first exam.

TM: Right, because I'm assuming that there is a lot of work with graph paper.

JC: It's true and I knew what it represented the second time around.

TM: So, you got introduced to a crew. And then did you spend some time training actually in the air?

JC: We did. We spent months training. And my good fortune was to be with one of the smartest guys in the Air Force. He was a five-star athlete at Ole Miss and I think, in fact I'll swear he was playing, he might have had a scholarship, that might explain it, but he was enjoying himself as a five-star athlete and as one of the smartest kids in the school. So, he made a great pilot. In fact, he flew twenty-nine missions, I believe, without anybody getting really injured. There was a little damage one time, and a crash landing one time. But he flew it all and came home.

TM: Wow, what was his name?

JC: Everett Harper. He died at age 56, but by that time he was the Air Force representative to Congress just to keep track of what was going on.

TM: Did you fly with him? Was he your crew leader?

JC: No, all through training but over in England: first of all, we had too godd*mn many airplanes there to make sense of it. Everywhere you looked there was an airbase. We called England a land-based carrier. And I was assigned to the, well I guess it was the 707-bomb group. But I was only assigned there a few days because I got sent out on a mission where I was a substitute. Leave out the d*mn plane and everybody was a substitute. Nobody had really flown together. And that was a mistake, and it was even a contradiction of our rules. But we had a brand-new airplane that had never flown in combat. We had a brand-new pilot who was flying his first first-pilot. He had twenty missions as a co-pilot, but that's slightly different. Anyway, we went out and got shot down. And we were in formation with 27 planes, and we were the only plane shot down that day in the whole European theater.

TM: Wait, so back up a bit. What kind of plane?

JC: B-24. This was known by the folks who flew in the thing as a consolidated mess.

TM: Talk to me about the plane.

JC: Well, it was a four-engine heavy bomber. And at that time, it would carry bombs, more bombs further than any other airplane. And so, we were in big demand for heavy bombing. And everyday since, possibly a thousand of them, over Germany. The Germans taught us saturation bombing. All of us went into the service thinking there were some rules for decency and there was none. Saturation bombing means that if you know there is a target in a town, you go beat the h*ll out of the whole town and you're bound to hit the target. And we did. Except for one thing, I was on my second mission as I told you and that was the end for me. Out of all those planes, a thousand in the sky, only one was shot down, and it was mine.

TM: So, where were you guys when you got hit? And can you tell me about that?

JC: Well, a little, but not much. We were flying over Hannover to destroy an oil refinery if we could. And we flew in formation so that you didn't have a lot of room to maneuver, but our plane was the last plane filled up and ready to go. So, we got the last position, which was known as "dead-end Charlie." And we were clearly visible. There were some clouds, but it wasn't overcast like it usually was. And I could see them shooting at us when we got hit in the right wing and caught fire immediately. The B-24 was a good one for that. And there certainly was a chance that we had a leaky gas tank because it was the third gas tank in that position. The two others had been leaky in places where you could catch it and change it. Anyway, we caught fire and the pilot asked me to navigate back to England, but we weren't going anywhere near that far. And it seemed to me that he was waiting forever and waiting forever and waiting forever. I wanted to jump out. But I waited until he gave the order and the other two who got out and got away, jumped right out. They didn't wait for the order. So, everybody else stayed in the d*mn plane and tried to crash land it, and B-24s don't crash land. They crash and burn. And that's what happened. Five people went in and crashed and burned. And it was pretty godd*mn stupid because we all knew you couldn't crash land a B-24. I don't know how they decided but remember, this pilot was on his first flight as first-pilot and sort-of outnumbered. He was also the youngest pilot on the airbase so that he was only nineteen or twenty and I don't know how that was. So, here I am, farm boy from New Jersey, a prisoner of war, and would you believe it was better than flying? A lot better, because nobody

was shooting at you. And so, in spite of what I expected and what was reasonable to expect, I was better off in prison camp.

TM: How did you get captured? I mean, I'm assuming you're floating to the ground. Were they on you right when you landed?

JC: I didn't have any trouble at all getting captured. I landed in town surrounded by twenty to thirty civilians. And that was a big favor, turns out, because you don't shoot across the circle, if it's your friends on the other side. The first guy out was carrying a big stick, a much heavier than usual walking stick, and he applied it to my head vigorously. He split my scalp and made me bleed a little bit but what his intention was, I think, was to beat me to death. But another old guy came out, carrying a rifle, and said knock it off. If anyone in the Air Force wants to talk to this guy, can't talk if he's dead. So, the guy unwillingly quit beating me, and the man with the rifle took over. And stayed with me all day, and looking backward, I realize it was to protect me from the Germans, not because he wanted the honor of staying with me all day. His daughter was one of the three hundred people who came to see me, and even possibly finger my jacket and things like that. I was fortunate in my location. I was in the side yard of a convalescent home for German soldiers in the Eastern Front. So, all of them were mad at the Russians, and nobody was mad at the Americans, especially. But it was pretty hard to appreciate being bombed every day. Anyway, I do fault the old guy who was going to beat me to death with a stick. But I went back 52 years later. Took me that long to get back. And there were a number of people that I almost knew. The man who came out and saved me would have been 103 or something, but his daughter came in among the people who came through to have a look. And she was there and by now had three grandchildren and they welcomed me like a member of the family. Had me over to dinner and talked about the good old days. And I hit town when they were having their first wine and beer festival. So, the town was having a big party, and I was invited and treated absolutely wonderful. The guy who was beating on me, either had died, or didn't come to the party. Anyway, I didn't meet him again. But the guy who came out and saved me, he would have been over 100. Anyway, that was an actually happy reunion. The family that saved my life were still there and still felt the same way about me.

TM: What was the name of the town you landed in? Do you remember?

JC: Well, I do remember but give me a moment here. Hildesheim.

TM: Where is that near? What major cities?

JC: Near Hannover. And when I was being interrogated, the interrogator said, "what was your target?" And I said, "for God's sake what's missing." He was more American than most Americans. He had spent seven years in the United States, graduated from college over here. Went back to Germany when the Reich was rising and everything in Germany looked good. And I guess nobody knew how things were going to go because they thought they could fight us and win. In fact, they weren't planning to fight us, they were just going to fight England and pay them back. So, when we came in, that spoiled things. Anyway, we were bombing, like I say, with thousands of planes in the air every d*mn day and dropping thousands of tons of bombs. And prison camp didn't take me long because I had only been overseas two weeks and I didn't know any military secrets and I kind of convinced the fellow with my attitude that I didn't know any secrets and went right along to prison camp.

TM: Where was that?

JC: Well, prison camp, if I've already mentioned I guess, was pleasanter than the base I was flying from. It was a brand-new prison camp, built for the Air Force. And everybody in the Air Force had a very clear vision of being in the same shape I was in. If you were flying, you were likely to get shot down and killed. And so, everybody was more or less compatible. They certainly had a feeling for air prisoners. And there was a problem we didn't recognize at the time. We were only 15 miles from the Russian border. That was at, oh dear, Sagan, which is in upper side Silesia. Anyway, the Russians came. They didn't come until January. And it was 26 below zero the night that we marched out, just to keep us prisoners because we were a valuable bargaining chip.

TM: Right, what year?

JC: What year. Glad you asked that question. It was January, it was after Christmas. We just marched out; we didn't know where we were going.

TM: Is that 1944 or 1945?

JC: 45. Anyway, we marched out. Two thousand of us. And they marched us through every little town, down the main street to show how many prisoners they had. And instead of rejoicing and looking happy, everybody along the street was looking unhappy and the women were weeping. And one old guy came out with a big old picnic coffee pot and the officers made him quit going down the street. So, he came down the middle of the road where the pile of highest snow was, hopping in two feet of snow to finish pouring his coffee into one cup and handing it to any prisoners that were asking. And like I say, the women were standing by the highway crying because they had people in prison camp elsewhere. The war was winding down and they were losing, so it didn't make a triumphal march by any d*mn means. It made it a pretty sad one.

TM: And where were they trying to walk you?

JC: Where we going? We still didn't know, but they wanted to find some room for us somewhere. And they finally did by doubling and tripling. The rooms that they had in Munich had a place called, oh dear, it'll come. Anyway, it was an old prison camp. It was actually built in 1939 for 900 people. And when the war ended, we had thousands of people there from all over the world. Everybody who was fighting Germany was getting shot down or captured. So, we had 500 men in each end of a double barracks building. And one water spigot. And an outdoor latrine with concrete vaults. And we filled those up faster than they could haul that away. And they were not going to haul them anymore because anything that moved got shot up by the Air Force, our Air Force. So, they said they couldn't transport the sh*t anymore. We had to live with it. And they did call a meeting to tell us this. And fortunately, Americans were more thoughtful, not smarter but, had some better ideas than they did. And somebody pointed out that Schutzenpanzer was tank car that just pumped the water out of the tanks under the toilets and took it out and spread it on the fields. And an American suggested, "why don't you paint the godd*mn thing white and put a red cross on the top and maybe they won't shoot it up." And that proved to be true. Representing the red cross was a good thing in those days. So, we went back to going outside only when the All Clear had blown. Otherwise, we stood in line and pooped in our pants because we all had the GIs. And we didn't have any indoor plumbing. Alright, so, how did we get out of that fix. Patton came. And he had quite a reputation as a fast moving general. And he only had a small force, but it was big enough. So, he came in and liberated us April the 29th. And the Germans moved away from camp fairly rapidly. Every one of them wanted to get home to the farm and become a farmer as soon as

possible. So, we were taken over by the U.S. army and they managed our camp for a little while, but they wanted to get rid of us, of course. And they had to find a lot of trucks and get some ships and move us out through France. We stayed in tent camps and they fed us 24 hours a day if we wanted it. We could have milk, what am I thinking, anyway, we had hot milk. Bowls on the table in the mess hall all 24 hours a day, I guess you could go and get a cup of milk anytime you wanted. They didn't want us going home at 127 pounds. They wanted us to go home at 165. And we did gain rapidly, but all of us had ruined digestive systems. And we didn't go home healthy. We went home a mess. However, going home was kind of fun. We were in camps, tents on the French coast waiting for boats to pick us up. And I for one, didn't want to be in France and see nothing. So, I was AWOL twice. They told us that if we went AWOL, we would go to the back of the line and start over. And they didn't do that. The man in charge of my group, when we showed up said, "Oh h*ll, they're still loading down at the dock. Just go on down and get on." And the man in charge of my group sitting there had said that if we weren't there when we were loading, we were going to go back and start over. Anyway, that guy when he did see me finally, and he didn't see me until we were five days out at sea. I didn't think I wanted to talk with him about this. Because he was a, what kind of colonel, a bird sh*t colonel. He graduated from West Point and believed that if they told us to do something, that that was the only choice we had. And I didn't see much of France, but I saw some. I saw the results of the war where everybody had nothing. I saw the results of the war where many many buildings, public building were destroyed. And I saw what Germany could do when they were at their worst. And I met a few people in France that were mainly admirable but had lost the war. Alright, so, I'm home. On the farm and sent to recuperative camp to get better. There was a little problem in the planning. The moment I arrived home, my brother, who was the chief farmer at that point, fell and damaged a knee and couldn't walk well. And so, they had a vacancy and nobody to hire. So, Jimmy went back to work on the farm even though I was assigned to recuperation camp and could do absolutely nothing all day. Instead, I was hitchhiking 35 miles and working all day. And our workday on the farm was 16 hours. So, I had gone up from probably 125 or 30 to 145 and went right back down just as fast because I was working all day on the farm. Anyway, I was also staying out all night because I did have a girlfriend back home. And I managed to go down to 127 pounds and stayed that way for years. But that's a complicated story. Anyway, I went off to college and that got me away from the farm. Big step in the right direction. The brother's knee got better, and he went back to work on the farm. I went out to Fort Collins, Colorado. I wanted to be, I thought I might want to be, a veterinarian. My father had always wanted to be a veterinarian and was a practicing veterinarian but on the farm at home with no training. He trained himself.

TM: Why did you think you wanted to go to Fort Collins, Colorado?

JC: I'd been on the train, remember? And crossing Colorado, we were also crossing the Rocky Mountains, and that was what made me think I needed to see a lot more of Colorado.

TM: Was that 1945, in the Fall?

JC: That would have been '45 in the Fall. And I had persuaded my girlfriend to marry me. So, we went out with an antique automobile that had been three years in the junk yard and an antique trailer that had been built as a camping trailer with no bathrooms, no heater, and was built in Pennsylvania so they used 2 by 6 beams under the floor and this trailer empty weighed 4000 pounds. So, here I am with a car that had no reason to go an inch further and a trailer that had been in a garage that didn't cover it, so the end had melted off and I replaced it and recovered it. And we went to Fort Collins, and they clearly

were not going to accept anybody into the vet school from New Jersey. There was a rumor around that they had made a decision on this. If they did, that was discrimination and wouldn't be too agreeable now. But that was back when we were getting started on such things. Anyway, I decided after two years that I would go to my first choice and become an anthropologist and that meant moving down to Albuquerque to the University of New Mexico, which I did. And I liked it enormously. I liked Fort Collins, enormously, but it was a whole different ballgame.

TM: Okay, so that would have been '47. What was your bride's name?

JC: Well, we made it to '47. My bride was Barbara Hand, one of three girls. And she wasn't exactly my classmate, she was a year behind and graduated during the war as I had, but a year earlier. And she wanted to go West also. Both our families had been in Cape May for 200 years, which seemed long enough. And so, we went joyfully off to Colorado and made it. We had no serious car trouble anywhere. And no flat tires, you couldn't get tires. And Fort Collins was all that it was supposed to be. It was an agricultural college, and I was after all, fresh from the farm. And I loved Fort Collins. It was really, really neat. But it was a small, agricultural school. And when I went down to the University of New Mexico, it turns out, it was internationally known and I feel more cosmopolitan.

TM: Hey Jim, this sounds like a good place to wrap up this first part one. And when we pick it up again, we will land you back at Fort Collins going off to UNM.

JC: And you're going to call me again.

TM: And so, I'm going to wrap up this interview, but stay on the phone, okay? Hang on a second, this is going to conclude part one of a Grand Canyon Oral History Interview with Jim Corson. My name is Tom Martin. Today is February 5th, 2021 and Jim, thank you so very much.

JC: I thought this was about Grand Canyon, but it's good.

TM: Hang on.