

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: John Parsons (JP) and Susun McCulla (SM)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: John recounts making the book *Where Do I Look?* and contracting with the Grand Canyon Natural History Association and various river trips; Susun recounts her 1989 Grand Canyon trip

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TM: Good morning. Today is January 16, 2019. This is part three of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with John Parsons and my name is Tom Martin. We are at the home of John and Susun here in the wonderful Verde Valley. Good morning, John. How are you?

JP: Well, thank you so much for being here Tom, Susun and I both appreciate it.

TM: Thanks John. We had talked in part two, sort of wrapping that up...thinking about one more river trip that you did going from Tanner to Hermit and then getting a job for the Natural History Association Grand Canyon, at the time called Grand Canyon Natural History Association. Then eventually that name would change to the Grand Canyon Association and now it's the Grand Canyon Conservancy just as the names go along. Maybe we could start with the Tanner to Hermit river trip.

JP: Right. At some time in 1981, yeah it would've been 1981, I went back to Indiana to visit my parents in Lafayette and we did a road trip over into the river country of Tennessee and the Carolinas. I met some river runners on the Gauley River there who wanted to raft the Grand Canyon. I told them that they could use my home in Flagstaff as a base to get their stuff together when they came out. The typical big group: trucks, gear, trailers, all of that. They owned an outfitting business back there so they were well equipped. But you know how it takes a few days to get your stuff together. While they were there, they said, "Well, hey, why don't you come down and float a little bit of the river with us on this trip?" I said, "Sure, I'd love to do that." We worked it out to where it would be Tanner to Hermit would make the most sense. So then I contacted a friend of mine in Tucson and asked her if she'd like to be on that part of the river, too. She said, sure. We sent some letters back and forth about the idea so that wasn't on a phone conversation. It was back when people used letters with real stamps and envelopes. Novel idea. So anyway, she came up. We parked near the Tanner trailhead, hiked down, met the trip, went down to Hermit, got out, hiked up and out. It was a slow, slow hike. She had sprained her ankle on the trip and we had to spend the night in one of those shelters on the Hermit trail. We hitchhiked to the village and found a friend, sort of a homeless guy, that was in the train station at the time. It wasn't open or maintained, but you could get in there and throw down on the floor and fall asleep. Nobody'd bother you. Woke him up and he gave us a ride out to the Tanner trailhead. We got in the car and started to go out the west entrance exit there by Desert View. As we were approaching the station suddenly I think there was maybe three different NPS vehicles kind of boxed us in and stopped us with... At least one of them had flashing lights and one of the law enforcement officers with a very stern and un-user friendly attitude got us out of our car and took us in for interrogation. It turns out that he had seen our car parked at the Tanner trailhead and without any probable cause or anything, he used one of those slim jims to slide it down and then pop the lock on the car and get inside and rifle through the contents of the car. Well, in the center console he found one of our letters that we had exchanged

about going on this Tanner trip and the details and timing. So he used that as his impetus to stop us. He had evidence, of course, that we had been on the river illegally. I don't remember exactly what I said or whatever, but I was able to talk my way out of it and use the time honored rule 'it's easier to ask for forgiveness than it is to ask for permission'. Apparently that worked because we weren't cited and nothing was confiscated.

TM: Did you have... Well, I was thinking about group size and back in 1981 the maximum trip group size at any one time was 16 people. So when you join that group at Tanner, was that group still under 16 or did it go over 16 to 17/18?

JP: I'm pretty sure we put it over 16.

TM: Okay. So that would have been a cause for trouble there.

JP: Right. And just being a free radical, you know. An undocumented alien or whatever you want to call us for being down there.

TM: Well, it's interesting because at the time of '81, I'm not sure that you had to say who was coming and going and where they were coming and going.

JP: Mmm hmm. I think, hasn't that had always been pretty much the case?

TM: That might've been. So I could be wrong. Absolutely wrong.

JP: Right. So in other words, by definition we were deceiving the authorities.

TM: Cause you hadn't let them know you were coming in and going out and you were over.

JP: Right.

TM: How did you talk your way out of that?

JP: I wish I could remember. I remember the episode at Tanner with the Little Colorado. In fact, I checked that with Jennifer Burns the other day and she verified that. I don't remember what I said to get out of that. But they let us go with a very stern, don't do it again, blah, blah, blah. It was one of those strange life experiences that can possibly only happen at Grand Canyon where you get in trouble for having fun. It's easy to get in trouble for violating lots of laws elsewhere in the world, especially in America. But that's one of the few places where you can genuinely get in trouble for actually having fun. [laughs]

TM: So with that kind of background, how was it that you were willing to take a job with the Natural History Association?

JP: Right. Well, it was a consulting position so it wasn't a full time job. That needs to be clarified. Basically, as you know, I have a background in writing and journalism, and I had those newspapers in Indiana. I've always had the attitude that I can create work. I can make something out of nothing whereas most people wait for someone to post a notice and say we need someone to do this. Forever and ever and ever, I've had the attitude that I can see a need and then I can figure out a way to fill it. So that's what I did. I went out there on my own and I simply stood very quietly in the little array of things for sale. I'm not sure that they had much stuff at that time, but I just wanted to see what was there and if there was anything that might be missing. It only took probably less than 15 minutes to realize that there was no children's books. So I decided that that was going to be my foot in the door, so to speak. So I went back to Flagstaff and thought quite a bit about it and I wrote out a presentation and a solicitation and created my own contractor consultant opportunity, so to speak. Then I made an appointment with the woman that turned out to be Sandra Scott. I took that up and

had a meeting and made my presentation, as opposed to just walking through the door saying, "Hey, you need a kids book." I had some documentation of other parks that had children's books and natural resource type children's books, as much as I could find at the Flagstaff library and before the internet of course.

TM: So Grand Canyon had *Brighty of the Canyon* as a children's book.

JP: Had what?

TM: Brighty?

JP: Yeah, what's her name.

TM: But that's it. I mean, I'm trying to think of other... Were there any other children's books that you were aware of?

JP: No. In other words, *Brighty of the Grand Canyon* was an accidental kind of a children's book. She wrote that without having in mind that the Grand Canyon needed a children's book to interpret the resource. She wrote a story about an iconic animal and the people that surrounded that circumstance and embellished it in a way that fiction writers love to do. Fabulous story. And in fact, we go to the North Rim, we make it a point to always rub Brighty's nose. [laughs] It's a cherished tradition. And it's worth the trip just to do that.

TM: And Brighty's nose is really shiny at the North Rim there.

JP: Oh yeah. As well as should be, because it brings good luck and your travels will be safe and happy if you rub his nose. That's the way it is. And I believe it 100%. So anyway, nothing back then, I can't vouch for now, but nothing back then happened instantly. There were no snap decisions. There were no, yes, let's do this. Everything was a very measured slow kind of waltz you might call it. If someone had an idea, the idea had to be very slowly taken through the channels to see how it kind of behaved. By and by it might come back through the channels with a green line attached to it of some sort or possibly a green light with several little yellow caution lights, you know, things to look out for. Everything was very well measured. The functions of the park that I was fortunate enough to see in the early 80s were a classic slow moving supertanker style bureaucracy that plodded along on a steady course. And that if there was ever going to be a slight change in course, it was a major operation of the crew and engine room of the supertanker to begin to change the propulsion and the rudders and slowly turn in a new direction. And this was part and parcel of the culture of the bureaucracy at that time. It was a given that by interacting with it that you fully understood that and fully bought into it and weren't going to make any waves as a result of that type of a system. In other words, if you chapped against that slow moving supertanker-ish method of management, you were unwelcome to be there. No one really wanted to work with someone who couldn't accept the way things were. This is just the way things are and that's it. There's no thought of changing the way things are because that's just the way they are. [laughs] Yeah.

I think it's probably somewhat different now, but it probably has some vestiges of holdover from those old days. I think in catching a glimpse of that in the early 80s I was seeing what the park service had been like from the dawn of its existence a 100 years ago...103 years ago and from the dawn of Grand Canyon's existence almost a 100 years ago. I'm sure that's the way it worked in everything. Everyone realized their place in the system. It was clearly understood where they stood and they didn't step out of line. In that sense, it was very militaristic and people obeyed whatever inherent orders they thought they were operating. It wasn't necessarily that someone had to tell them, "Private, you're out of line. I gave you an order to do this." No, people just...they did their job very carefully and judiciously and they were very circumspect about taking any risks with an idea or a concept, or even sometimes the spoken word. Can't remember who told me this, but I remember

it distinctly, someone there had told me it's important that you watch what you say here. I just understood what that meant and it meant that I had to think through what I might want to say before I said it. [laughs] It wasn't a good idea to just blurt out an idea and be exuberant. No, it's good to just be mostly quiet and follow the rule to be better seen than heard. From growing up in the 50s that's what I was taught. Children are best seen and not heard.

TM: And yet you've got a good idea. Clearly, you went to the store, you looked around, you said, "Hey, there's a big hole here." Which is a new idea. I mean, people just missed it. So there are ways to bring in new concepts and new ideas just to the supertanker. Okay, we're going to bring in a new menu or we're going to bring in a new paint color for the logo on the front or...

JP: Right. Well, those are huge issues too, by the way.

TM: Yes, of course.

JP: [laughter] Nothing is too small that it can't be huge.

TM: Well, thinking about Mission 66, some of the other changes that the park service has embraced in its last 100 years, thinking about the next 100 years, and trying to see what a non-impairment mandate for the enjoyment of future generations. We've gotta be very careful with the supertanker because we don't want to run it onto the ground, right? We want to keep it going for a long time. So some of what you say would kind of make sense in the next 100 year generation journey. And yet, new ideas are all around us. So how do we balance that?

JP: Well, it's been fun to see how new ideas and concepts have become more commonly accepted at the Grand Canyon than they were in the early 80s. Lots of fabulous and wonderful, innovative, exciting, educational, downright inspirational projects and things have occurred there in the past 20 years and seem to be much more common than they were back then. Things didn't change much back then. The status quo was very highly valued, very highly valued. So Sandra Scott had to take my idea and discuss it with her assistant. I can't remember her name at the moment. I had it the other day and I should have written it down. Both of them had to agree that it was a good idea. And the way things seemed to work then, they would sort of lightly discuss something in a way that could be picked up on by other people and become part of the subterranean kind of gossip that underlies every cultural system. Somebody might say, "I hear the NHA is thinking about a kid's book" or something like that without any details. It wouldn't be part of a formal conversation. It might just be mentioned in passing, even possibly off the clock. Then that would just kind of plant the seeds that maybe something was coming through the pipeline. So after an interval, a very polite interval, then Sandra could go to the chief of interpretation, Jack O'Brien, and have a formal meeting with Jack and make a presentation about the idea. Well, of course, Jack couldn't make any decision, nor could he give any encouragement or commentary. He had a sphinx like way of sitting with his hands quietly crossed on his desk and looking right at you while you talk to him about something in a way that is like a poker face. There wouldn't be any way to tell what he was thinking behind that visage because he was supremely excellent at concealing any kind of emotions or reactions that he might have, even if it was a nod of a head or a movement of an eyebrow. He didn't do that. He could at the end of a conversation. He had a sort of a repertoire of quasi smiles. If he began to smile in a certain way with maybe just part of an eye and a half of a smile, you might be encouraged to think that was a positive signal. But if he smiled in another way with his head cocked to the left looking down, you would know that idea would never fly. [laughs] It was a really fun. At the time it seemed so constrictive, but looking back on it, that was just truly delightful. So anyway, then Jack would have to sort of let it sit for a while and then begin to talk lightly and gently with his peers, a deputy superintendent, then work it on up to King Richard, chief director of the park or whatever you call him. Park superintendent. And then he'd have to think about it. It was lots and lots of deliberate thought going

on in those days. I often wonder how much money it costs to process those thoughts in terms of salaries and benefits.

TM: So between your first meeting with Sandra Scott to then her talking to Jack, and then Jack talking to the deputy, and then eventually getting to superintendent Dick Marks. How much time do you think elapsed?

JP: I'm thinking two to three months. Yeah. You know, in hindsight, that's actually fairly fast. Of course, I didn't think so at the time. [both laugh] But I do remember that they had agreed to pay me a consultant's fee. We worked out a contract that I had to sign that spelled out the deliverables that they expected out of me and what my services would lead to. So there was a series of contracts in that children's book and that way they weren't boxed in. They had exit ramps that they could get out of dealing... If they didn't like dealing with me, they could wait until the end at one of those little mini contracts and then just not give another one and say that they had enough and that they were going to take it under advisement and continue to think about it. Continuing to think is a positive sign of life in the bureaucracy.

I've always had so much fun with bureaucracies going way back. In fact, I often say that I got a degree in bureaucracy from Purdue because that was my favorite thing to do was to mess with the Purdue bureaucracy. I met a fellow in my summer in Arizona at Happy Jack who was a national level auditor that they had sent to the field just so he'd know what the field was. We got along well so he invited me to come to Washington often in the winter of '67/'68 and stay at his apartment. Just do whatever I wanted to do. Since I love messing with the bureaucracy so much, each day I would dream up an esoteric question and then I would go out into the massive Washington bureaucracy and attempt to get it answered. It was so much fun. It took me so many different places.

You got to see how this giant thing actually functions and the different little rabbit tunnels that you had to go through to get from one component to the next appendage or whatever. I've always enjoyed that. In fact, I still do. But at the Grand Canyon, it was kind of different because it just was so quasi military and everybody was wearing a uniform. They had those straight brim hats. They just loved those straight brimmed hats. I've often thought that the straightness of that brim affects the efficiency of the bureaucracy actually. [laughs] Anyway, so they let me go along my way and they would pay me, and then they'd put out another little contract and it just kind of progressed through the process. They got themselves a children's book and it won them a national award. It was a happy little thing while it was in print.

TM: You mentioned a step you had to go through to figure out...first of all, how to get permission from the superintendent to do what you wanted to do.

JP: Right.

TM: Can you talk about that?

JP: Right. Well, you know, it's against either policy or possibly even regulation to confront visitors and ask them questions and conduct polls and things like that. I don't know what section of their policy or regs deals with that, but that's what I was told. You can't do that. You just can't go out with a clipboard and just start asking them questions. That wasn't possible in the 80s. So I had to kind of figure out a way to get around that. The method that I came up with was a photo preference test and I just shortened it to a photo preference. I had asked permission from parents to have their children look at four sets of pictures. Each was a topical group. There was rocks, plants, people and the big vistas of the canyon. I'd just say, "Which one do you all like the best?" They could only pick one. They didn't have say anything, they just point to it. Well, underneath that picture then, I would spread out four more examples from that topical grouping. I would say, "Which one of those do you like?" They'd point to one. I'm just making hash marks here for what these kids are pointing. I'm not

asking the age of the child. I'm not doing gender. I'm not doing anything like that. And they're not having to say anything. They're just pointing to stuff. I can't remember how many kids I did that with, but it was a lot. Mostly at Yavapai Point and some over there by El Tovar. You couldn't argue with the results. They were massively telltale and unequivocal. Kids don't see the canyon. They don't see distant vistas. They have no idea what they're looking at when they look out across that abyss. It doesn't register with them and they're not interested in it. They see things in their own scale and their own ability to imagine that they could actually reach out and touch something, whether it's the infamous ground squirrel or a deer or a raven, a person with a straight hat, a very beautiful yucca, a very iconic rock.

You know how the Orientals and the Japanese in particular have little Zen gardens where they rake the little stones and they put incredibly unique rocks in the middle that have a lot of characteristics and they meditate on those things. It was almost like those children could see things in a rock that we wouldn't see because we're out there to see the grand vista. Why do we want to be staring at one little piece of Kaibab limestone. We wouldn't be doing that. That's just not what adults do. But that's what kids do. They see the raven's eyes and they see their beaks. They see their feet. They see stuff we don't take time to look at it. When they look at another human being like a ranger, well, right away they see that shield and they see that hat. A lot of them just see the belt buckle. They don't necessarily see that person's face the way you and I would see it and evaluate it. But they see uniform components. They're capable of seeing a distant deer easier than they are a distant vista. They just gravitate toward those things and that's what they want to look at. In the cases where I could just surreptitiously talk to the parents without making notes or anything, that was what they all said. My kids, they don't know if the canyon's 10 yards wide or 10 miles wide. They don't have developed depth perception to know that stuff. They don't know if they're looking into a hole they could fall to the bottom of there a few feet away or if it's a mile deep. [laughs]

TM: But it's the squirrel that captures their attention.

JP: Right. Right. Or the point on some of the agaves or yuccas or the delicacy of a pinyon pine cone, or just even a juniper berry. There's just tiny little things.

TM: Did you have an idea that this was going to be where this would go when you started this?

JP: [laughs] No. I had never even once thought that kids couldn't see the canyon. That was not only huge to me, it was earth shaking news to the administration. They didn't know that either. None of us knew it. But I mean, you could look at the results and they were overwhelming. Hardly any of those kids ever pointed to the group of pictures with the canyon. It was such a small sample that it was irrelevant.

TM: So between plants and rocks.

JP: And people. Plants, animals and people.

TM: Okay.

JP: We decided on a title for the book called *Where Do I Look?* Where do you look to see the canyon, you know. Then I had to find a writer and develop some criteria for a photographer. We got that figured out and then Sandra worked with them to get the final book. But they did put my credit on the back of the book, which I appreciated. You can still find it on the used book market. It's just called *Where Do I Look?* Its thin cause kids don't... And it's a picture book with minimal words and large type. It proved to be very popular.

TM: It's a great title.

JP: Yeah. But where do they look? [laughs] That was a real big success. Everybody was real happy with that because I behaved. I didn't make any waves. I always did what I was told and I was always very conscientious around the chain of command. I never circumvented or tried to go around anybody. I never said anything derogatory or even questionably derogatory about anybody. I was always complimentary and appreciative. I was a good boy. Yeah, it was really fun. So I got future jobs from them and lasted I think about two/three years I was doing various stuff and helped them get the early stuff going for their first video on the river.

TM: So you were still contracting then?

JP: Yeah. I never had like a week-to-week salaried paycheck job. It was always a contract consultant. One time they decided they wanted to help some other group do a guide to the Paria so they actually paid me to go hike the Paria and run my shuttle for me. That was really fun. There was always something that they needed a consultant for and I was there to fill that role. Finally I kind of outlived my usefulness and moved on. I think what helped me outlive my usefulness was that I became too familiar with their system and I tried to game their system late in my career with them. I don't remember how it worked out per se, but they became very wary of me because they realized that I understood their system in ways that they might not. After that point in time, they didn't give me any more contracts. But I had a good run with them and always think fond thoughts of all of them, including Jack. Like I mentioned to you the other day, I would call him an affable authoritarian. He ran that place with an iron fist, but he did it in a gentlemanly way that... He was a good guy. He was like Colonel Potter on M*A*S*H with just a little bit more salt and pepper.

TM: It seemed like there was a planned and greatly thought out message that he was trying to carry.

JP: Well, he had the best interest of the Canyon at heart. In fact, I think of course they all did. How they executed their quote 'best interests of the Grand Canyon' will always be debatable. Some people say gee, some of the things that person did were really not right or could have been better. Well, hey, its human beings managing a resource and people are going to make mistakes. You got to cut them some slack. They're not infallible and they don't know everything. But they're trying to do the best they can with what they have. I really do believe that all those people out there then were trying to do the best that they could with what they had. We probably would have done it different. But hey, it was their job. They did okay. I have nothing but good things to say about the organization and the people. It was a delightful glimpse into the equivalent of a good-old-boy country club. It was definitely a male operation and women definitely knew their place. And everybody behaved.

TM: And yet, Sandra, Sandra Scott, as the director of the Grand Canyon Natural History Association was a woman in charge of that entire fundraising arm and educational arm of the park.

JP: Well, she was a godsend to the national park at that time period because she was innovative. She was willing to work within the system to step out and propose new ideas. And actually managed to execute them in a coherent, efficient, and productive process. They were blessed to have her beyond all doubt. She was always looking for creative stuff to do. That was just her nature.

TM: Right. Which was great cause that's exactly what you would think that an organization like that would be doing.

JP: Right. Prior to her showing up there, they were just a sleepy little adjunct to the park. They started out in the 30s I think as Nature Notes, as I recall. They had just made a predictably feeble attempt to meet the interpretive needs of the park. They collected some table crumbs of money that they passed back to the park in whatever manner they could assist the park. It was just a tiny, tiny gesture sort of an organization rather than the robust powerhouse that it is today. Sandra took that and essentially turned it around to put it on the course that brought it to what it is today. Without her innovative thinking and ability to deal with the bureaucracy, I don't know that they

would be where they are today. She really created that momentum and that trend and that force. And she kept it going until such time as she left. The people that followed her just enhanced it and carried it on and kept building on that paradigm. That's why they're such a powerhouse today.

TM: Right.

JP: It was awesome. You look at what they've done. The park service certainly wouldn't have done what they did. I mean all the building restorations and [laughs] the educational programs and the trips and gosh, you know, it's phenomenal.

TM: Yeah, well, the saving of the Kolb studio.

JP: Right.

TM: A number of different things.

JP: Well, you know, back when I was there in the 80s, people hated that Kolb studio. They wanted nothing whatsoever to do with it. If you brought up any idea that that was a worthwhile thing to try and save, that alone gets you booted out of there. [laughs] Saving historic buildings was at that time not what you would call a politically correct thing to discuss.

TM: Well, the relationship... It's fascinating thinking about the long term, you know, a 100 years of history or the next 100 years of history. And the niggling relationships or the issues that nobody wants to look at or they don't like because of the baggage of the past and yet going forward enough turns all that around. Now that building is a showcase. The VIP...the senators stay there, the ambassadors from foreign countries stay there. It's a wonderful building. Eventually somebody had the idea to say, wait a minute that's a treasure over there that's in the rough.

JP: Right. Well, you well know the story about how the park wanted to tear it down while Emery was still alive.

TM: Tell us again.

JP: Well, it's best described in Roger Naylor's recent book on the Kolb brothers. That's the most succinct explanation of it that I know. If Emery hadn't lived as long as he did, it'd be long gone just like a lot of other buildings that we know. It's just incredible. I mean, you know the story that I accidentally stumbled into the other day about how they wanted to move the Bucky O'Neil cabin off the rim and put it in some historic village where you can't see it. That's nuts. That's just insane. But that was the attitude then. Fixing up stuff like the train station. Jeez. I even heard people back in the early 80s say that eyesore ought to be torn down. I can't even begin to tell you how many times I heard that. I saw that Kolb studio and I just asked an innocent question, well, what's going on with that building? I don't know if it was Sandra or her assistant, they said, you shouldn't bring that up. [laughs] That was just not a thing to talk about. So, people didn't like it. They didn't like it when he was alive. They didn't like it after he was dead. They didn't like the fact they couldn't do anything about it. It just sat there and they was hoping maybe the rats would chew it off the edge of the rim and it would fall down of its own accord and then they could clean it up. Seriously. I don't know by what miracle they were able to take control and restore it, but that's an outright abject miracle of the highest order because of the enmity that was directed toward that structure for pretty much its whole life.

TM: It is interesting to look at the 50-year timeline. If something's in the park over 50 years, then it becomes part of this non-impairment to protect for future generations. But the 49th year, 11th month, it's not. That's an interesting issue because then the park has to realize if we carry this

through another month, we have to take care of it and that's funding and that space and it's... We can't just let it get all dusty, we have to take care of these things.

JP: Well, the taking care part wasn't part of the program back then, as you know. That thing fell into serious disrepair over the years before it somehow got saved. But apparently, as I can recall from Naylor's report, Emery understood that 50 year situation and he was determined to live past it and he did by two months. It was just his dogged weirdness that caused it to be saved.

TM: Right. Well, to put his...this is how I'm going to stay into this system for the next 100 years is by making sure that I survive so that this building gets incorporated into that.

JP: Yeah. But when you're talking to a geezer in their nineties making decisions like that, that's pretty out there. Anyway, that's... People don't... They look at the canyon now... Anybody can go up there and look at that place and see the Verkamps turned into a beautiful facility and see the Kolb studio lovingly restored and see all of these great historical assets. They don't have a clue what kind of trials and tribulations those structures had to go through to survive or the bullets that they dodged that the park was firing at them over their lifespan.

TM: Well, it's fascinating just to think about the Lookout Studio which had a boat in front of it trying to steer the tourists into another Fred Harvey establishment and not further down the trail to the Kolb establishment. And that went on for decades.

JP: You know the vignette about how they put the mule stables and corral right next to Kolb so that it would stink to high heaven there. Anything that they could do to aggravate and intimidate those people, they did it. I mean, from day one when I think it was still forest service and they wanted to build their studio and the forest service wouldn't let them. They just had to fight the bureaucracy for their entire life there. And it won somehow. I mean, how wild is that? [laughs] They go up against the juggernaut and survive. It goes against all of my imagination.

TM: Well, Kolb out-survived Tillotson and Bryant, the two longest standing superintendents. You just outlive these people. The place stays the same, the people come and go, but you're still there.

JP: Yeah. And they can't do anything about you. That had to drive them nuts. I'm sure you've found references to that in your research. It was just a thorn in their side, you know.

TM: Yeah. But those people come and go and the place stays on. And the issues that people are dealing with stay on as well. So it's curious. At what point did you then say, "Okay, I can see the writing on the wall here now with the Association, let's..."

JP: I think it was '84, maybe, '84 or '5. Somewhere in that neck of the woods.

TM: Okay. What did you do then?

JP: Well I was working as a river guide, that helped a lot.

TM: Who were you working for?

JP: I worked for...did some trips for Canyoneers and Azra primarily. I worked a lot for an outfitter that did trips on the Verde and Salt, long defunct, called Worldwide Explorations. There is people who would know that name. I can't remember the company that Pat Conley owned but I did some work for him on the San Juan, but I don't remember his company name. Pat's a mover and shaker in Grand Canyon Youth now and doing really good things. Do you know about his brother by any chance, Cort Conley? He's the most preeminent Idaho historian.

TM: Oh, very interesting. Okay. Hmm.

JP: Pat's brother, Cort is... To call him a walking encyclopedia of Idaho history is an understatement. He has one of those types of memories kind of like a savant that can recall every detail of anything that ever happened. And he knows that about the entire history of the state. He's written all kinds of books up there. I mean, we're talking books this thick. And then he apologizes for being so skimpy on the details. [laughs] He's really something. He doesn't miss anything. So there's a lot of that that runs in the Conley family and Pat's doing a great job up there for Grand Canyon Youth. So anyway... You know, I just basically worked odd jobs until I got into the Verde thing and got a focus on the Verde thing. And now you want to make that part four, though, right?

TM: You know, I do, but we're 46 minutes in. If you want to go another...

JP: Well, it goes back to what started this series of interviews in the first place. It was that cliquy, 'I'm better than you and I don't need to talk with you and you're nothing because you're not a Grand Canyon River guide.' It goes into that.

TM: But you were a Grand Canyon river guide. You were running for Azra and Canyoneers in '84.

JP: Right. Right. But I mean, to start with when I first moved there. I kinda gradually endeared myself to some members of that group and to some, I never did. But you know, I had a lot of friends in the industry and everything. But because I started the Northern Arizona Paddlers Club in 1981, March of '81, and tried to be really inclusive to all the other river runners besides the Grand Canyon elite, well, that's what carried me to my future. That's how the... I've given you this tagline, the Grand Canyon saved the Verde River. And that's how it did it. Cause it got me out of the Grand Canyon mentality and into the Verde River mentality. Then I spent the better part of my adult life working to save that river. Grand Canyon was what brought me to Northern Arizona but it didn't keep me here. I had a few trips each summer as a guide and everything, but my main emphasis was the Verde River and to anyone that would care about it or work on its behalf. So I spent all my time doing that. My main focus was not the Grand Canyon. But the Grand Canyon got me to the Verde River. That's a big distinction.

TM: Yeah. So when you were doing the kids' books for the Association, were you interactive with the Verde? Then I guess I should ask, when was your first journey onto the Verde?

JP: Well, the first actual run was in 1981, in March of 81. At that point then, it was the same month I started the club, I just became an evangelist for the Verde River.

TM: Had you run the San Juan, or Cataract canyon, or Labyrinth, or Stillwater, Desolation-Gray? Any of the other...

JP: No.

TM: Okay. So it was just here's the Verde, let's go do that.

JP: Well, the Salt.

TM: Wow, the Salt. Okay.

JP: Right.

TM: Alright. That was in '81 as well?

JP: No, I started running the Salt in 1980.

TM: Ah, okay.

JP: I got involved with the Whitewater Explorer's Club down there at the University of Arizona when I had that job as night production manager for the Arizona Daily Wildcat. I was kind of like their comic relief. They'd take me up there to the Salt and I'd swim every rapid and drown. Sometimes I'd just crawl ashore and think that I was dead. They'd laugh. They got the biggest kick out of the fact that I couldn't paddle and I couldn't roll a kayak. It was pretty embarrassing for me. But I realized I was serving a function somehow.

TM: Well the Salt had killed a number of University of Arizona people in the late 70s.

JP: Yeah, at Quartzite.

TM: Was it at Quartzite? Maybe.

JP: Yeah.

TM: So it had a reputation as being a place you didn't want to mess with.

JP: [laughs] Yeah, it did definitely had a reputation. But you know, there's a day stretch right there by the Highway 60 bridge. It goes down to Cibecue Creek or one of those creeks down there where the takeout is. I think it's what, six miles, something like that at the most. That's what we would run. I didn't do that long stretch until later in 1980. Each weekend we'd go up there... '80 was a big water year and each weekend we'd go up there and watch John swim. [both laugh] And then they'd tell stories about, "Oh, you should've seen him swim that one!" It was really bad. So anyway, but you know, it was a good thing for me because it literally taught me that if you're gonna succeed in the kayaking trade, you'd have to become a proficient paddler and you must be able to roll your boat under any circumstances. But it took a long time to learn that lesson.

TM: But then you got good at it and it became easier.

JP: Oh yeah. It became part of instinct. And that's how come I wasn't afraid of anything else. It's like when you swam like a 100 times in bad rapids and high water on the Salt, you're not afraid of that.

TM: Maybe I should ask you now about your river guiding career in '84. '83/'84 that time. Any stories from that time?

JP: Well, the one that I'm most proud of is getting that kayak support trip organized through Canyoneers because people weren't doing that. That's common now. And according to you, it had been done once by Hatch long ago with some people in either Folbots or canoes. But I didn't know that and in my frame of reference, it hadn't been done. There was no one interested in it. It was a slow year for selling trips, and that's back when trips cost hardly anything. Lots of outfitters hadn't used up their user day allocations. At that time, there was a lot of paranoia that if you didn't use it, you were going to lose it. I don't know if that is now, but it sure was then. So I knew that Canyoneers had a lot of leftover user days. I don't know how I knew that, but someone had tipped me off that they had a big pool and they were worried about it. And time was running out late in the season. So I went to Gaylord Staveley and I said, "Look, I understand you've got a lot of leftover user days and I have an idea how to use up some of them anyway." And I said, "At this point in your season, I think you should be more concerned about using those days than getting the money because there's money in the future for you if you can use them." In that way I was able to get him to agree to a \$500 per person price for a motor supported kayak trip. Well, 500 bucks back then was... I mean, shoot, I filled that trip up in less than two weeks before the internet, just getting on the phone and calling up people and saying, hey, I got a deal for you. And of course then they'd get on the phone and call somebody else [snap fingers] boom like that. We had the typical Canyoneers rig with the motor guide and his swamper and the rest of us were in kayaks. There was no people riding on the raft. Might've been one person riding the raft, the wife of one of the guys. I think there might've

been one person. I'm not sure about that. But as a result of not having any human beings on that gigantic Canyoners rig, I think we took a 100 cases of beer. [laughs] I think that's what it... It was such a ludicrous amount of beer that it was a point of gossip at that time in Flagstaff. "Did you hear they took XYZ beer on that trip down?" And we took a hundred pound bag of potatoes. I kept telling everybody, I says, "You gotta pack carbs for these boys cause they don't want foo foo food, man. They want like meat and potatoes." We made it clear before the trip that this was a trip where you were gonna learn how to paddle big water and have a really fun time doing it. And you were not going to be afraid of any of the biggest rapids on the river. You were gonna run the worst parts of them on purpose. And if we could figure it out, you're gonna run them again and again.

TM: And did you do that? Did you run some rapids again and which ones did you do?

JP: Oh, yeah. Whenever we could situate the motor rig properly down below safely so that it wasn't banging rocks or finding the eddy line or whatever. And if there was a feature of some sort the people were interested in, we'd just park and just run them and run them until they were all tired out and then we'd move on.

TM: So I'm thinking of places like Upset maybe, Lava?

JP: Yeah, we did that and even President Harding. President Harding...

TM: Yeah, big eddy at the bottom there, easy to stop.

JP: Well, and there's the cushion on that rock. The cushion is pretty much there at any level. It gets better at bigger levels but it's still workable at the lower levels. Most people look at that and they go, "Oh my God, a rock and a cushion." [laughs] Don't go anywhere near the rock. Who would do that? I told these guys, I said, "That's one of the damn best surfing waves that you're going to find on this part of the river. And you're going to learn how to surf the President Harding cushion." You go in there and just before you get to the cushion, you do kind of a diagonal so that the cushion is going to catch your nose. And then you put the power right into the top of the cushion. Sometimes you can even tip into the rock. Well, then what it does, it keeps you in that cushion and you just sit there and the water is kind of coming over your helmet and your shoulder. You're looking at your boat and you're just riding this cushion. At some point in time we'd have to wave people out. [both laugh] so the next person could get in cause they were getting impatient for their turn. A couple times two guys in particular they wouldn't wait. They just like draw a bead on you and you'd see them coming. You go I guess I better get out. Then they'd come in one at a time and then the second one would come straight for the first one and he'd go, "Huh, I guess I better get out." That is just one of the most truly delightful play spots on the river and has zero reputation for that. Who knows that, you know? So that's what we did.

Hermit was the best. We spent pretty much most of the day there. It was at that level where the waves have their iconic little pointy peaks and they keep them. It's tough for those waves to do that because the water goes up or down, or sometimes they'll curl. We just happened to get lucky so that if you got it right...cause we'd carry the boats back up. There was a steady stream of kayakers just walking up to boat it again and again and again. And there's a nice eddy for the raft down there. I kept saying, "You did great on one, two and three, but you sure blew out four. Now you got to get back there and get the tip of all of them." They'd go, okay, okay. When they did it right, they'd just go up in that face and the tip of the boat would just come right out on the top of the wave. They'd hold their paddle up for the zero shot, and then whoosh, then go up the next one. And we'd all be [clapping], "Yeah!" [laughs] The whole river we did that. Nobody wanted to go home. It was like, "Oh geez." Sometimes they'd be at a rapid and they'd say, "Can't we just stay here? Why do we have to go?" [laughs]

TM: Did you take out at Diamond Creek?

JP: Mmm hmm. Well, I think we did. No, not with that rig. That was Pierce because Canyoneers can't do Diamond Creek. They got a boat up onto the truck, back when you could.

TM: Piled your kayaks on the boat and motored out.

JP: Right. Cause by that time all the food and beer was mostly gone. So it was... [laughs]

TM: There was room.

JP: Right. You know how river runners are, they all stand around at camp and rehash their stories of the day. There were skeptics, of course, at the beginning of the trip that just really didn't believe that it was going to work out right as far as playing in big water. But there weren't any skeptics at the end of the trip. It was like they didn't realize how much fun it was. And you know, in a low water river that has a lot of rocks, you can get really, really hurt in a really bad way. You can have leg and trauma. You can get a concussion. You can hit your face, your boat can get pinned. All kinds of terrible things can happen. But the flow of the Colorado is so enormous and so many thousands of CFS in most cases, with a few exceptions, you couldn't touch a rock if you tried. [laughs]

TM: It seemed like Walt Blackadar, Walter Blackadar, had figured that out in the late 60s/early 70s and was out there in the middle of big stuff.

JP: Well, you know, he was on that trip with Rob Elliot that it was filmed by Wide World of Sports. You've seen the footage of that, right?

TM: '72-ish?

JP: Something like that. When we started the club, we got connected with ABC Wild World of Sports Film Library somehow. That's back when they'd send you reel films in canisters and you'd have to get a projector to run them. We found a place to show them with big seating capacity and stuff like that. So we brought in that film of Blackadar's run of the Grand Canyon and it just got burned in everybody's mind. He's looking at Lava Falls completely different than everybody else looks at Lava Falls. He's just slowly backing into the deepest, baddest hole he can find. That kind of helps you get a different idea. It's like well, he's a normal mortal, he's a human being. What's going on there that I can't do? So that's really what planted the seed with that Walt Blackadar trip. I saw that before I'd done my sneak trip. And that's one of the reasons that I carried the boat back up and ran Lava Falls more than...I think I ran it three times. But, you just look at that and you go, oh, how come I can't do that? [laughs]

TM: Right. That's how it's done. Okay.

JP: Once people understood that, once people knew that you really could go through the Crystal hole... What it always seemed to do to me anyway and what I told them, was if you're positioned alright, you're just going to go inside that and it's going to be kind of like a big frothy elevator and then it's just going to sort of pull you to the top and let you go again. It's not going to keep you down there cause it's too much flow and you're too small. They were, "I don't know if this is going to work, John." "Just give it a try. What do you got to loose? Bad swim. Who cares? We'll be down there in big boats down there for you. You're not going to go far. They'll get you." "Okay, we'll try it." And then they go, "God, I want to do that again." [both laugh] Well, word got out about that trip and now kayak support trips are just part of the bread and butter of the Grand Canyon. But back then they weren't and the outfitters didn't really want anything to do with those dirt bags. So that was my big contribution to the commercial outfitter industry. And I'm proud of that one.

TM: Nice.

JP: And the other trips are just guiding trips. They all kind of run into a blur. I did do several other kayak trips on my own with other people. They'd say, "Hey, I've got a permit. You want to just go with the two of us?" And I go, "Sure." And we'd just go.

TM: These were kayak self-support trips?

JP: Mmm hmm.

TM: And that would have been '82-ish?

JP: I believe the Canyoneers trip was the fall of '82, I think it was. Yeah.

TM: So that kayak self-support...cause that...

JP: No, I mean the trip that we sold for \$500 a person.

TM: Right. No, I was thinking about the small trip that you did, just you and a couple others.

JP: Oh, I think I did probably three or four more, beginning probably '83, '84, '85, somewhere in that neck of the woods. Probably the most fun single trip we ever did was in 1989. The rap that the Grand Canyon has, right or wrong, for river runners is that it's a massive mind boggling amount of logistics. And that somehow everybody gets like hung up on food and you can't just go down there without having this intergalactic meal every morning and evening and lunch and everything. And you know, you wind up packing enough food to feed a third world nation. The whole kitchen scene becomes an obsession. And the logistics of it are in excess of any of the other logistics of the trip. It's insane. People get more tied up in their food than they do any of the other parts of the trip. You've seen it a bazillion times. [laughs]

I had a permit and at the time I told Susun, I said, I've got this permit but I'm going to give it back cause I just don't want the hassle of all the logistics. She said, "No, don't give it back. I want to go." I said, "Well, alright, but if I do it it's going to be on my terms and everybody's going to have to obey." She said, "All right, all right." So I got this trip together. It was one raft and four kayakers and Susun right there in an inflatable Riken. I said, "Each and every one of you is going to have to carry your own food. There's no communal kitchen. You're going to eat out of cans like on Georgie trips. And that's it. If you can figure out how to do that and fit your stuff on the one support raft, then you can come." Well, they all went, "Hmm, I can probably do that." What was it you took?

SM: Canned tuna, V8 juice and green beans. And a flask of vodka.

JP: Yeah. God was so fun. She paddled the entire way. She swam Soap and portaged four rapids. She'd never done anything like that in her life. We just had more fun on the beaches because it was [laughs] no logistics. Yeah, that's her boat. [shows photo]

TM: There's a picture here of a very leggy blonde very comfortably resting in a Riken. Red Riken with little blue tips and blue stripe down the side and the location looks like it's somewhere near the Little Colorado River. Possibly on river left on a nice sandy beach.

JP: Yeah.

TM: The back of the photograph doesn't say who or where or when. So that'll change later today. It's a gorgeous picture.

JP: [laughs] As far as like having just pure unadulterated yee-haw fun without having to worry like is everybody okay and what about this and what about that?

TM: The job of the journey.

JP: Right. It's great to be down there but let's be frank with one another, there's a lot of worries involved when you're responsible for other people and that weighs heavily on your mind 24-7. Whereas on something like that, everybody was on their own and we all just had this fabulous wonderful time. It was just pure joy. I have to tell you one other fun vignette. When I first started getting trips down there... When you first start you're low on the totem pole and you get the toilet job or whatever the case may be. The jobs that the other guides don't want to do they give to the new guy, have him do that. I don't remember which company this was, I think it was a motor trip, but maybe not. I can't remember the details. So this one guy showed up at Lees Ferry and he was... You know how the passengers kind of fall into categories. Some of them are quiet and self-contained and others are very boisterous and vocal. If it's possible to characterize them, there's various categories. Well, he was in the boisterous category. So he comes up and he says, "Any snakes down there?" We all kind of look at him like, well yeah there is. "I'm deathly afraid of snakes. I don't think I can go." "It's a little too late for that, sir. We really appreciate your concern, but I'm sure you'll be okay." "I hate snakes. I just hate snakes." "Okay. We got that. We got that." So every camp, same routine. "Snakes around here?" This goes on and it was the hot part of summer when the rocks bake and put the heat out like that. Snakes love it of course. So we get down there on the lower end somewhere and everything's going fine. He goes to sleep, but it's too hot to sleep in a sleeping bag so he's lying on top of it like everybody else. My job at the time was to deal with any snakes that came into camp and to move them out. That was what the new guy did. So in the middle of the night comes this ungodly scream, like out of a Stephen King horror movie. Woke us all up and it was like somehow the camp had descended into the pits of hell and the devil was screaming loud enough to make the canyon walls vibrate. Because of his snake paranoia, this lovely little Grand Canyon, I think it was a Pink Rattlesnake, nice little thing, had seen this guy there his nice warm body on his sleeping bag and he crawled up on his chest and he curled up right in that part of his sternum. When he put his little snake head down, I just kinda like looked at the face of... [laughs] So when the guy opened his eyes and saw the snake crawl on his chest staring at him, he let out a scream that humans rarely are capable of doing. And his body convulsed in such a way that it shot the snake into the air, poor little thing, and it fell down a few feet way. Then the trip leader goes, Parsons get that snake out here. So I looked at the little snake and I says, "You really did good dude. [both laugh] Every snake in this canyon is proud of you. You know that?" A little snake. They're actually really nice snakes are. I like them. I had a pet snake as a kid.

TM: Susun, would you mind to join this conversation for just a minute?

SM: Not at all.

TM: Thank you. I'm going to have you sign this when we're done and that'll be fine. But I am curious about this river trip here. I'm curious about this trip now. Do you remember what year this was?

JP: 1989. August.

TM: Okay. And did you go to Diamond Creek or to the lake?

SM: Diamond Creek.

TM: To Diamond. Okay. And you were piloting the Riken. Did you get on the raft at all or did you take the Riken all the way through?

SM: I did not get on the raft, but I walked some of the big rapids.

TM: What's your last name?

SM: McCulla.

JP: First name is spelled differently. It's Susun.

TM: Thank you. So 1989, had you been in an inflatable before?

SM: Yes. My first river was the Salt River and I had done the Yampa, San Juan. That's about it I think.

JP: The Verde.

SM: Oh, the Verde a bunch. Yeah.

TM: Okay. So an inflatable was your boat of choice?

SM: Yes. And the Salt River was my first river.

TM: Okay. And what year was that?

SM: '90...season... '85? No, '80?

JP: Earlier than that.

SM: Yeah, it was the early 80s.

TM: Okay. And were you with a group of people?

SM: Mmm hmm. My river rafting buddies from Cottonwood area.

TM: From here in Verde Valley area. Alright. What do you remember about that trip? That 1989...

SM: My first swim. [laughs] Having done the Salt, I thought I could do bigger water but I really didn't know how to brace on five foot waves above me. So I quickly learned how to do that.

TM: Like in Badger or...?

SM: Soap was my first and only swim other than the Jewels that I chose to swim just because they were so beautiful. The sheer beauty of the canyon was inspiring beyond my imagination.

TM: When I look at this picture, that's what I think of is what you just said.

SM: Mmm hmm. And the hikes, the side canyon hikes, fabulous. Getting to feel my own power was pretty exhilarating. Knowing that I could actually do the Grand Canyon Colorado River in my own boat made me feel pretty empowered. Just the sheer fun of being with [laughs] John and his crew was extremely entertaining and enlightening.

TM: What time of year was this?

SM: August.

TM: August. So it was hot. Okay.

SM: Well, it was actually the trip of a lifetime.

TM: How so?

SM: Well, just the sheer challenges, the joy, the beauty, the company. Everything about it was mind expanding.

TM: What were you doing at the time?

SM: Raising two daughters. [laughs] Living in Cottonwood.

TM: Okay.

SM: Uh-huh. And I had a home maintenance management/real estate management business.

TM: Okay. So you had to leave a lot to go on this journey.

SM: Well, the girls knew that the motto at home was 'if the water's up, mom's out.' [both laugh] And that was pretty true.

TM: That's true. The family adapted to that. That's what they had to do.

SM: They all learned how to live with it. [laughs]

JP: She just said, "Hey, I'm going down the Grand Canyon. I'll see you later." [laughter]

TM: How old were they?

SM: 10 and 17.

TM: Okay. So the 17 year old could kind of keep an eye out for the 10 year old.

SM: Right.

JP: Theoretically.

SM: And we had a lot of friends that looked out after the girls, too.

TM: Nice.

SM: Yeah, it was fun.

TM: Of course, today you'd be arrested by Child Protective Services. [laughter]

SM: Yes, exactly. I like to say that my daughters survived me. [laughter] And they are beautiful women.

TM: That's great, I bet. Nice. What else do you remember about that journey?

SM: Well, like I said, my first swim [laughs] and all the campsites. When I did my first river trip, when I realized... I was born in Yuma, so I have river water in my blood. When I did the Salt River for the first time, I was instantly hooked. Getting to do the Colorado River was a combination and more of all the other rivers I had done. So it was just a fabulous experience in every way.

TM: How did you two meet?

SM: Because of rivers. John gave a talk building up a constituent for the Verde River in Clarkdale.

JP: It was at an intergovernmental meeting in the old 1912 Clark Memorial Hall. So there was all the mayors and managers and department heads and everything. Her husband at the time was the parks and rec director for Cottonwood so he would have been there. She found out it was going to be on the Verde River. What'd you tell Rick to get there?

SM: We're going to hear you talk on the Verde River. And then I went to a River Runners Rendezvous in Telluride. John was there and I got to ride back with him.

JP: Well, anyway, I finished my slide show on the Verde and everyone's milling around talking and everything. This woman comes up to the... I'm seated at a table like you are and she comes up and leans across the table says, "Can you take me there?" [laughter]

SM: To be more precise, I said, "I've done the Verde River quite a few times, but I haven't seen those places, would you show me?" [laugh]

TM: What year was that?

JP: That would've been probably '86, somewhere.

SM: Mmm hmm.

JP: We met again up at... Have you heard stories about the Telluride River Runner Rendezvous? I'm sure you have. No, really? Well, they used to be a really big thing. Some guy in Telluride got them going in the early 80s and they went pretty much through the 80s. I don't think it continued much into the 90s but it was a really big thing.

SM: Mostly western rivers. Washington, California, Oregon.

JP: Guides and people, passengers and fun boaters came from all over the West to attend them. It was before Telluride got blown up into what it is now. It was just so fun. It was just so delightful. It was fabulous. The whole town was overtaken by dirt bags. It was wonderful. [laughs]

TM: But there's not much of a river in town there in Telluride.

JP: No, but that kind of...it was Telluride. It has its cache. So it was just a really fun thing in the fall to go there when the aspens are turning and just hang out and drink mass quantities of beer and look at films and tell outlandish exaggerated stories.

SM: Make connections, too, for other river trips in the West was a fun part about it.

TM: Makes me think of the FIBArk starting in '49 or the Glenwood races of '51 or so. I mean, just this stuff that...

JP: It's kind of in that tradition because when those types of events get a life of their own, they're somewhere to go. In this case, this was '87, and they were always in September because October can get really iffy up there. I was really good friends with Mark Thatcher, the guy that invented the Texas. He was just coming in to some of the money that he made off the Texas and he got himself a brand new BMW. I've told this story to Mark and he knows this story well so it's okay to put it on tape. He said, "Hey, you want to go up to the River Rendezvous with me?" I said, "Sure, that'd be fun to ride in your new car." So rocketed up there to Telluride in his new car and everything. They let us camp then in the city park with our tents. It's a big party, you party the whole time. Toward the end of it, Mark was like this [gestures]. He knows he did this and we appreciate it so much, Mark. He came up to me, he says, "Well, I just bought a new kayak here and I'm going to go play with it. You're on your own to back to Flagstaff. Sorry. Bye." Took off and left me stranded there in Telluride. Well, you know, first off that didn't surprise me because I like Mark and I like the way he is and you got to kind of accept the way he is sometimes and that's the way it was. So then I started looking for a ride. I found this ride from this one guy, but he said, "No, there's not enough room in the cab of our truck, so you're going to have to ride all the way home in the back of my open pickup with my dog, Griz." Brian had never given Griz a bath and it was just the most disgusting smelling dog of all time. I just thought I can't do that, now what am I gonna do? So I started looking around. I saw her and I said, "Hey, you're going home to the Verde aren't ya?" She said, "Yeah." "How about a ride, please?" She likes to say she won out over the dog. [laughs]

SM: [laughs] And we owe it all really to Mark Thatcher for making John need a ride.

JP: I have thanked Mark many a time for getting us together because we'd of never got together if Mark had driven home in his BMW.

SM: Serendipity at its most supreme.

TM: Well, that sounds like a wonderful place to maybe wrap up the part three interview and then we will delve into the Verde for part four.

JP: Okay. Thank you.

TM: Alright. Thank you. So this will conclude part three. This is January 16th, 2019. This is a Grand Canyon oral history interview today with Susun McCulla and John Parsons. Thank you so much.

SM: Thank you.