

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Keturah Pennington (KP)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

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TM: Today is Thursday, April 25, 2019. This is Part 5 of a Grand Canyon Oral History Interview with Keturah Pennington. My name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon, Keturah, how are you today?

KP: Pretty good, and you?

TM: I'm very good, thank you very much. May we have your permission to record this interview over the phone?

KP: Absolutely.

TM: Thank you. What was so wonderful yesterday having you take us through Glen Canyon and we left off having just explored Moqui Canyon, and we talked about the derivation of the word "MOH-kee" or "MOH-kwee". Then below Moqui Canyon is a little canyon just called "A Canyon" just near New Year Bar at Mile 122.

KP: Yeah, it was one of those that... Wasn't even run-of-the-mill Glen Canyon—spectacular. But Phil used it as an example of the difference in water levels between June of '62 and September of '62.

He also did this with many places, not just on the Glen Canyon, but a lot of other hiking and boating places, too. He'd take a picture and then come back later and line them up. And on this, if you can get both pictures onto the same computer screen, you can see just exactly how far down the water had gotten by September. If you look at the upper picture on the left margin, there's a dark shadowy area that is cut off by the margin, and to the right of it, there's three fairly good-sized roundish holes.

If you look down in the lower picture, that cut-off part is in the sunlight in that one. But if you look to the right of the lightest part of that cliff above, you can see two roundish holes there also in sunlight and not looking so dark. Then, look down at the greenery below them and down to the water level and you can see it dropped quite a bit during the summer.

TM: It did, and the other thing that I look at when I see that is looking up instead of down to where the high water would be that would make the vegetated bench on the left – where the water ends and there's a silt cliff. I would think that during peak flood, the water would be up to the top of that silt cliff.

KP: I'm sure it was.

TM: Okay, so that makes the rise and fall even more stunning.

KP: It may not have been that high for several years, though.

TM: Oh no, that would be a hundred-year or a hundred and fifty or two-hundred-year flood event that would overtop that high bench. What do you think the distance is, there's no person there for scale, and Phil's usually really good about that. What do you think the height is there from the September '62 photo? It says, "Note the water level difference", from the river level there, up to the top of that sediment bench. How high would you guess that to be?

KP: Measured in... several feet...Maybe 12?

TM: Yeah! I was gonna say at least 10. So that's a pretty good swing.

KP: Well, think about how tall the brightest green vegetation in the upper one is tamarisks. And they're probably 10, or 12, maybe even 15 feet tall.

TM: Yeah, so that would make sense. And of course, the river's fairly wide here, so that means that's gonna impact the rise and fall as well, just looking at the width. The photograph below there, so there's three photographs on this page for Mile 122, shows the mouth of the same canyon, except that it shows what's called a primitive construction on New Year Bar.

KP: Yeah, and if you look at the primitive construction, at the rear right of the construction, you can see a post that's sticking up. And its pointing right to the rightmost of those holes that we were looking at before.

TM: That's right. So we are across the river...

KP: So all of this has been not flooded for long enough for the vegetation to have grown—no. No, this is right—it's up on that bar. You can see the canyon mouth behind it.

TM: Right. I'm assuming that between this primitive construction and that side canyon is the river. Because when I look at the mouth of the canyon...You see what I'm getting at?

KP: I suppose it might have been across. I could easily believe, though, that we're on the top of that sandbar.

TM: Okay. It sure looks like, though, the river's across the way. Given that bench and the vegetation that's on it and the steep cliff there, there's not a lot of room there for this primitive construction and you guys were on river-left when September '62 "Note the water level difference" photo was taken. So I'm just curious to know if that was indeed the case or not.

KP: Well, let's see. Since I wasn't on either of those trips I really don't know.

TM: Have any idea what this construction is? Is that like a little corral or something?

KP: We stopped at that on a different trip, and I just can't remember whether it was left bank or right bank. And we looked at it. And it's jolly little. If you fed your burro, it'd be big enough to keep him contained for the night, but he wouldn't be able to do any grazing.

TM: But you could just as easily tie him to a post.

KP: Yeah. I don't think we ever did figure out what that might be. It's quite small.

TM: Yeah. I suppose it could've been a sheep dip arrangement where you'd run your sheep through and they would jump in a little thing and get dipped for something.

KP: Have you ever dipped sheep?

TM: I have never dipped sheep, so I'm...

KP: That is not a sheep dip construction!

TM: Okay. I'm in deep sheep here. So...

KP: No, we discussed this and we never did figure out what it probably was. But when you think about it, it must have been to contain something for some reason. It's not sturdy enough to protect anything from any predators that might have somehow strolled down the canyon or anything. Besides, I don't think there were any. So it was a real mystery, but it wasn't the only mystery we encountered there. I don't think we wasted much time on guessing it.

TM: Yeah, no. It's very curious.

KP: Well, Phil put it in more to show the history later than the Native American occupation of the area. There were a lot of interesting things that we're probably never gonna know about, which is kind of interesting too.

TM: Yeah, yeah, very many things which we won't figure out, absolutely. Okay, so that's the three pictures on this page, we're now gonna go on to Stanton Canyon. I'm gonna click there. Then I'm going to go to the map, to the middle map, to see where Stanton's Canyon is. Let's see... there's New Year Bar, there's Stanton Canyon, so it's on the north side of the river or river-right. And it's just below this canyon at 122, 121.4, so about half-mile downstream. Did your recollections—did New Year Bar extend all the way down to across from Stanton Canyon, do you remember?

KP: No, Phil was always the mapmaker in addition to being the surveyor. I'm afraid I didn't pay an awful lot of attention to things like how far they extended. The topographic maps—USGS topographic maps will tell you.

TM: Absolutely they will.

KP: If you get the old maps, they'll tell you what it was like then, in addition to what it's like now.

TM: I've got a series of those, actually. I haven't dug them out for this interview. But that's a good question, 'cause that's where the answer will be. So Stanton Canyon, I'm assuming this is named after Robert Brewster Stanton, the engineer?

KP: I presumed so, I never questioned it. One of the Stanton would be down there.

TM: Yeah. I, well, I don't know.

KP: Well these are mostly Katie Lee's names for things.

TM: Okay. Katie did this naming in the 50s.

KP: And where she got the names is shrouded in long, past history. I mean, we're never find out where she got the names, because she's gone.

TM: That's right. That's right. So the first picture here shows what looks to be either a granary or a habitation dwelling.

KP: Yeah, it's very small. The white mark in the middle is my sailor hat.

TM: All right. So you're able to get inside this so it could clearly hold a person.

KP: What you can see is the door's two and half times, maybe three times, the width of my head. That's inside... use those measurements. It would be possible for two people to lie down inside it, but it wouldn't be all that comfortable and why would two people want to lie down inside a dwelling-type thing there, so we figured it was a storage pit, a storage container. There wasn't anything left in it; the mice had taken care of that.

TM: Okay, was this near the mouth of Stanton Canyon or quite a ways upstream?

KP: No, quite near the mouth.

TM: Okay. And then the next picture shows someone in a green shirt with black pants, black shorts.

KP: That's Helen McGinnis.

TM: Okay. And there's a very tight little slot canyon there. It says "narrow slots get more and more common as we go downriver."

KP: We looked into almost all of them.

TM: So, the canyon would have been fairly wide and then right away neck down into this slot like this? Is that how it works?

KP: I think this slot is a side branch off of it.

TM: Okay. Off the main canyon.

KP: Some of them went quite a ways, but most of them didn't.

TM: All right. And then the picture below that, there looks like there's three people working their way through a little chimney here in this little—tight little slot—in the sandstone. Really pretty. It's got to be two or three feet, four feet wide, then it opens up a little wider after that, but people are stemming with their backs on one wall and their feet on the other. Who's in that picture?

KP: The nearest one is Helen. The one in the middle is Steve Kafirana. And I don't recognize—I can't see enough to tell—who is beyond that.

TM: Would you spend, you know, basically all day in trying to get through something like this, or how long would you spend in a side canyon like this, roughly?

KP: That depended on an awful lot of things. Most of them very quickly came to what we called "jump-ups" which meant something so high that we couldn't get over it. Where there would be a waterfall during a flash flood. And usually waterfalls undercut themselves at the bottom if they were very high. There are not an awful lot of them that we managed to get over. But if we did, we'd go up a canyon until it became uninteresting or we couldn't go any farther.

TM: Okay. Would occasionally you'd actually be able to chimney up something like this, and get to the top of the slick rock, to get all the way out. Did that happen on occasion?

KP: No. Always you'd get up to where it widened out and you couldn't chimney anymore, and it was usually overhanging, so you couldn't climb it anymore. In one place we found Moqui steps that somehow, for some reason, were important enough to them that they went through the work of cutting the steps. The steps were so badly worn, we couldn't get up them. When we get down to Labyrinth Canyon, there's an interesting story about getting up over one of those jump-ups. But mostly, we'd, as I say, go until it either widened out and we lost interest, or we couldn't go any farther.

TM: All right. This slot here is a branch off of the main Stanton Canyon, is that how that's working?

KP: I'm pretty sure that would be one of—there were many, many of them. Not just the Stanton Canyon. Almost all the lower canyons had those, and sometimes they'd go back for maybe a dozen feet, or a little more, and sometimes they'd go back for a quarter-mile or more, before we couldn't go any farther.

TM: Okay, 'cause the reason I'm asking is it the third picture—sorry the fourth picture, or last picture in this series, that must be Helen there, coming down.

KP: That's Helen coming—yeah

TM: It looks like she's gonna get wet. She's gonna have to drop into what may be the main canyon proper after exploring this side slot. Is that—my thinking correct there?

KP: That's what happened. More than once.

TM: All right. It's really pretty. The sandstone looks like the water has really washed it smooth.

KP: In many places, it was wonderfully smooth. You'd run your nails along it; it was like running them along a nail file, that smooth. You could file your nails down. Very slick. Of course, if it had the black manganese color over it, why that was also quite smooth.

TM: Yes. Yeah, that's really gorgeous. That's very fun. Okay, so I'm gonna click, then, on the link here to the Stanton Dredge. And the dredge had a way of collecting—

KP: [Laughing] Driftwood!

TM: Driftwood that people would light on fire.

KP: I didn't know that.

TM: But what's amazing here, absolutely amazing, I have a number of photographs of flames jetting up from the buckets here—But your picture from the 1962 time period shows that the actual construction—the wooden construction, the bottom of the dredge—had not burned and was still there. That's amazing to see. I've never seen that. That's very fun. And of course, by 1915, the dredge was—had been clearly abandoned—and had sunken, was listing on its side.

KP: Now by 1915 or 2015?

TM: By 1915. The dredge only ran for one, or a year and a half.

KP: Oh okay. I'm sorry. Yeah, no. I thought you were talking about the ruins of the dredge.

TM: No, this is 1899 to 1900. It was an absolute failure. It was really expensive.

KP: Yeah. Well the gold was too fine.

TM: Right. There were mechanical problems as well. And so they gave up on it. They kept it going for a while, had a caretaker. Then about 1915, the thing was in really bad shape, started tilting to the side. It was a huge, floating boat with this big dredge on it. Lots of equipment on shore there. So this was in the middle of the river, mostly, or off to the side?

KP: It was well off of either shore. I don't think it was quite as far out as the middle, but—

TM: Okay. Those are great shots of, you know, this equipment that would have been manufactured back East somewhere, and loaded on a train, and taken to Green River, Utah, and then wagoned out there to the middle of nowhere. A huge amount of work and tons of expense.

KP: Yes! We thought so.

TM: Yeah. Yeah. Really, really amazing. The Hoskininni Dredge.

KP: That was the spelling Phil got out of whatever literature he was consulting.

TM: I think that's right. No mining, no dredging, no railroad. Yep, only ruins and wishful thinking. Then below there, it's the wall near Bullfrog Creek.

KP: Yeah, Phil likes those big walls.

TM: Yeah, this big wall comes right down to the river. Is that you in your kayak at 119.7?

KP: Yeah.

TM: Okay, and that same 119.5. Is that you in your kayak there in the bottom center of the picture?

KP: I'm sure it was, yeah. Let's see.

TM: And a little yellow raft on the left. So really pretty now. In this section of Glen Canyon, there's rolling hills maybe, again, eight-, nine-hundred feet overhead. Basically, a straight drop from the rolling hill country right down to river level.

KP: Yes, it was wonderful!

TM: Oh my gosh, it just looks absolutely stunning! At 119.5. Really pretty.

KP: And during flash floods, of course, water would run off those rolling hills, run together and eventually pour over those great tall walls. Ephemeral, but really interesting waterfalls. Well, of course, that's what made the black stripes like the one near the left edge of the photo there. That would've been where a waterfall ran during the wet hours. And sometimes they only ran for a few hours.

TM: Out of the year, or during the storm.

KP: Well, I don't know about out of the year, but per storm. Depends on how big the storm was. You know, how much area up in the higher country it covered.

TM: So, I'm gonna go back to Stanton Canyon, and I'm gonna then click on—go across river to mining equipment. So some of this, I assume, would've been from actually building the Stanton Dredge.

KP: I'd imagine.

TM: Oh yeah, certainly. Near the edge of the river, they had removed some of the motors and pumps off the dredge to shore, and there they sat. And there's a great picture. That must be Helen then at the very bottom.

KP: Yeah.

TM: There's a great big sandbar behind her out in the river. Would that picture of her on those wheels, the cast-iron engine wheels, would that be September '62?

KP: Yeah, I think that's the only trip she and I were—no. Is that what I think? '62, yes. I was back by then. That was—she and I were—I think, as I recall—on only one trip together. So that would be '62 September. Well I think if you look out in the river, closer to the other bank, is that the dredge I see sitting there on the—near the right?

TM: It might be. It looks—'cause the—Phil's description here says that's "Stanton Canyon across the river. Note the yellow rafts landed there, the rest of our party." Boy, you can hardly make the rafts out over there. So that could be a chunk of the dredge out there. I'm not sure. Just the work to take that stuff in there. Then I think that area might have been reworked by the New Year Bar. Some of that area might've gotten reworked some years before, during the uranium craze of the early 1950s. There's a bulldozer down in there somewhere, so some of that might've been...

KP: Yeah, I think there's a picture—I think it's of me sitting on the bulldozer.

TM: Okay. So some of this stuff, you know, could be from the Stanton works of 1890s/early 1900s, but some of this looks much more recent. The little green folding chair and things there. That's just really neat. Okay so that's the mining equipment across from Stanton Canyon. Then, I guess do we go down to Halls Creek, crossing from there, right? 'Cause we went to New Year Bar, that's right. So I guess it's Hall's Creek "question mark" crossing.

KP: Okay. Yeah, I think that's when Phil and Katie may have had somewhat different names for it. The mile number will tell you exactly which canyon it is if you get hold of a topographic map.

TM: Okay. It says, "We will add pictures of Halls Creek, Mile 119.2 in the surrounding country." So, this picture...June 1964. So the reservoirs come up. This is Halls Crossing. Frank Wright is running that operation I think, with some other folks. That's fascinating to see that photograph there. "Left bank." So that picture is looking upstream, is that right?

KP: Well, if you think of yourself floating on the river, the left bank is off your left hand, and the right bank is off your right hand.

TM: Right, okay. So we're looking downstream, then?

KP: Yes.

TM: Okay. There's a power boat there. Were you on that trip in '64 in June?

KP: Yeah, just Phil and I were.

TM: Did you use a little motorboat there?

KP: I think. If you look at the 55-gallon oil drum and—I think a solar panel there—parked at the edge of the river behind it, are two kayaks. Those are our kayaks that are bolted together to make a catamaran.

TM: Oh, what a neat idea!

KP: And we had a two-horsepower motor. Because we had just done some other flat-water boating, and we weren't keen on paddling on the lake.

TM: Right, right. And there's no current now. So it would be really, really...

KP: But I'm pretty sure that's our catamaran parked behind the solar panel.

TM: All right, so I'm gonna click "Go Downriver". Before I do that, there's a person sitting there on a boat off on the right side. Do you know who that might be?

KP: No, tourist. I mean, it was obviously being used at that time. There's another boat on a trailer up on the left corner, upper left.

TM: Right. Kind of a mess looking at this.

KP: That was our opinion, yes. Phil had some even more colorful words to use.

TM: Well let's go downriver. I see there's a link that says, "Go Downriver." I'm gonna click that and run away. Below Hall's Crossing. Mile 118. So again, here the Glen Canyon is an entrenched, cliffed on both sides, river, with some sediment banks, highly vegetated, either side. But there's no rolling country—it's not like you could walk out of here. It's just cliffs straight down.

KP: One couldn't. Yeah.

TM: So I'm gonna read this:

"Mile 118.6, September of '62, floating downstream, just past Halls Crossing. Floating this river is an idyllic experience. In the upper part of Glen, the side canyons are mostly not even run-of-the-mill Grand Canyon spectacular. A few, like Moqui Canyon, are very spectacular and very interesting because of the archaeology. Those canyons occupied a lot of the time. Most of the trips that floated from height down to Lee's Ferry are Crossing of the Fathers after the dam construction began. Most of the organized trips didn't much explore these intriguing gaps in the sandstone walls. The trip down this flatwater, watching this spectacular scenery moving past you, overwhelm the senses. That seemed enough. What more could be there? What more could there be?"

Really gorgeous. So there's a series of photographs here. The first two are of the same section of the river as one floats along, which is really kind of neat, 'cause you can make out the skyline.

KP: Yeah, near the center of the picture, you can see sort of a flattish slab with couple of little bumps on the top, in those pictures you can orient yourself by that.

TM: Yeah, that's pretty neat. And you can see the conchoidal fracturing on the big sandstone wall on the right, matches up and—Wow, just kind of makes you want to pull to shore and set up my lawn chair and get out the paints and start painting a picture.

KP: Oh, you're a painter!

TM: Oh no, I didn't say I was a painter. I just said it made me think about doing that. So the text here reads, "118.3, September '62. So very little of Glen Canyon attracted the attention of the few thousand people who fell in love with it. Moqui Canyon, Lake Canyon, Hole in the Rock, Hidden Passage, Music Temple, Rainbow Bridge, and perhaps, Dungeon Canyon, one or two of the others. What more could there be? After an exquisite bunch of superb places, what more might one do, if the time were unlimited?" Yeah, no kidding. Okay, so it says, "Ask Katie Lee. We acquired her list of side canyons from

the Bureau of Reclamation's PR person at the dam, Rusho, who dug it out of a dusty file cabinet and made a copy for us. There were about a hundred: Little Dungeon, Happy, Dove, Grotto, Catfish, Corner, False Entrance, Little Arch, Lost Eden, Annie, Wilson, Forgotten, Forbidding, Dangling Rope, Ticaboo, Beaver, Twilight, Wishbone, Driftwood, Spring Pool, Corner, Cathedral, Mystery, Cottonwood, Llewellyn, Face, Labyrinth... The list goes on and on. And we had discovered the wonders of the Escalante river: Cathedral in the Desert, Davis Gulch, Soda Gulch, Coyote Gulch, Harris Wash, Long Canyon..." This list, too, is long. Wow.

KP: Yeah, and I had no idea if she named those canyons, or if she got the names from somebody or a combination.

TM: Combination? No, she was down there with Tad Nichols and Frank Wright on what they called the "We Three" trips in the fall. Just the three of them.

KP: Yeah. She was there a lot. Once she discovered it, she's like "I'll spend a lot of time there."

TM: Yeah, yeah. So here's a fascinating little picture. It's Mile 118.2 from June of 1962. It says, "There's one of those intriguing gaps in the wall ahead. What is it?" And I can imagine that, you know, Katie and other river owners—Harry Aleson was another river owner who just explored and explored and explored this area. And so it says, "118.0. Inside, it's a major canyon not on our provisional map (Lost Eden?)." Oh my gosh, I bet it is. And you can't tell, looking at the mouth of this canyon that it's as big as it is in there.

KP: No. That's why I still had the topographic maps. But I don't know why it didn't show in more of that one. The picture below that is one of the places that we called "jump-ups."

TM: Okay, so that jump-up—looks like it's a—what, a 10-foot drop there maybe?

KP: I think if it had been only a 10, we would have made it. Phil and I can get over a 10-foot jump. He is very, very strong. He was very, very strong. We would do two-man shoulder stand.

TM: All right. Made sense. So maybe it's 15 feet or certainly, or maybe 20, but basically you can't get up there without some serious climbing. If it stopped you, then you couldn't explore further up the canyon.

KP: That's right. We had a lot of those too! Sometimes, we'd hit one of these down low, but managed to get over it, and not too far along, we'd hit another one.

TM: There's a really nice picture below that in the sequence, where there's five pictures on this page, titled "Below Halls Crossing." The last photograph is a view out of the slot canyon, from heavy shade into a sunlit area, where the person's standing there. Is that you standing there, do you know who's there?

KP: Sailor hat, yeah.

TM: I can't tell...wearing the hat or not, but it's—

KP: Well, let's see what year it was.

TM: It says "June '64", so that'd be you.

KP: It was I.

TM: Okay. All right. So then the next one says, "Go down to the Heron Rookery." I'm so glad it says that, 'cause I haven't asked you about Great Blue Herons. Did you see a lot of them on the river?

KP: Where one saw them, one saw a lot of them, but no. And the first boating trip in June of '62, nobody on the trip recognized the footprints of Great Blue Heron in the mud. And I guess they had a few hours of discussion on what on earth that whopping big print might be. But this was a rookery that was being flooded, and there were a lot of nests in those trees. But down at the bottom, the water was creeping up, and we all hoped the babies got out before it got as high as the nests.

TM: No kidding. Was this '64?

KP: Oh, this must have been April of '63.

TM: Okay, all right. In this picture, I see like three or four herons.

KP: Well, let's see. In the upper picture, there's one flying near the middle.

TM: Right, and the picture just below it is a long rectangular shot.

KP: Yeah, there's one landing on the far right.

TM: There's one standing up above in the center.

KP: Yeah. Over to the left silhouetted against the white is a heron that's standing and you can see its beak pointing off to the left.

TM: And it looks like maybe it's on a nest, possibly.

KP: Yes, I'm sure it was.

TM: So that's three right there.

KP: There were probably eight or nine in there in that group of trees.

TM: It's interesting how they cluster like that for child bearing.

KP: Well, no. They clustered in the big trees.

TM: Yeah, even today, we will see clusters of heron nests. Two, three, or four, or five, together. And it's interesting that they do that, for protection or—

KP: Oh, you mean that they're nice enough to let their neighbors live near them, huh? Yeah, that's true. But in Glen Canyon, they needed big trees. And the big trees were few and far between.

TM: Okay. Were these hackberry they were in?

KP: No, cottonwood.

TM: Cottonwoods, okay.

KP: The hackberries never—scratch that. I have never known hackberries to get to be big trees.

TM: Really, really neat to see them. That's a great—

KP: And one silhouetted against the red down below.

TM: Yeah, that's a really nice picture of a heron flying with the cliff right behind it, silhouetted there. The last picture of this series of four is a photograph of the river and it's very tranquil-looking. There's a kayak and a kayak paddle.

KP: I expect we camped on that sandbar that night, and Phil just liked, as you point out, the tranquility of the scene.

TM: What a great camp, my. Is this looking downstream, do you think?

KP: All things considered, the way the boat's angled, I would say yes. The river's flowing from left to right.

TM: That's really gorgeous.

KP: Because I would have pulled up and then not pulled far enough and the boat swung around.

TM: The sun is getting lower in the sky and one side of the canyon is all in shadow, and the other side is still in sunlight. And the camp where the boat's pulled up in shadow. It looks like a great place to spend the—

KP: Yeah, actually now that I think about it, we probably wouldn't have camped that early. So maybe we just pulled up and he just liked—

TM: Got out and took a wonderful picture. Very nice. Okay, go down to Lake Canyon. So we'll—

KP: Lake Canyon. Right. That one is Sam Green breaking camp in early morning.

TM: Okay. And so this is a—the river's incredibly wide there.

KP: No...

TM: Or this may be looking downstream? Is that what makes it launch straight away looking downstream? So it's not that wide, but it's just a view shot looking way down the canyon?

KP: Well Phil's down low. He might even be kneeling. So, you know, it's a low-angled shot across the river. But yeah, it was a wide river.

TM: I'm gonna run away to the map, the middle map, for a minute. There's Annie's Canyon, there's Lake Canyon. Lake Canyon comes in from the south. It's on river left. Oh, yeah. So there's a—gosh, it's almost a two-mile long straightaway here, from the mouth of Lake Canyon on this wonderful map that Phil has made. So, so that makes sense that photograph taken from the mouth of Lake Canyon.

KP: Yeah, that's true. You're looking at an angle across the river, so that tends to elongate your perspective.

TM: Yeah, wow. That's just really pretty there. So Lake Canyon had this wonderful building in it.

KP: Oh, it had a lot—well, yeah. Yeah, this one was the best known. It was very close to the river.

TM: So it says that "Lake Canyon has 36 Anasazi sites in its first five miles from the river. This one is Wasp House." So I'm assuming that one could walk out Lake Canyon to the high country, to the slick rock country up above, in the main Glen Canyon proper.

KP: It wasn't. Surprised me we never did. It got wide after a while. And when it got wide, we figured it was gonna be left and we could come back some other year if we wanted to. We had to hurry. But that 36 Anasazi sites from the first five miles was taken from the salvage operations where they went in to collect as much history as they could.

TM: There's a really nice photo. It's titled "The walls of Wasp House have embedded decorations and presented imprints of corn." Really neat.

KP: Yeah. Apparently, you know, they were artists. They enjoyed decorating things. Yeah, you can see a line of smallish white rocks above the center. Down below, just barely center-left, near the lower margin, you can see where they had pressed a corn cob into the wet clay. In one place, we found people's fingerprints there. They had pressed their fingers into the walls. So this one was really nice. When we were there, even the last time we were there. No. That's not true. When we were there next to the last time, we were there. The place looked like the Anasazi had just moved out and it'd rained a couple or three times, and the mice had cleaned things up. I mean it was clean. It was pristine. The very last time we were there, and I know Phil has a picture of it somewhere, but I'd suspect he would not put it in here. The water was up, in the upper picture, you can see bits of greenery at the bottom margin, and the water was up just about that high. There was toilet paper and droppings inside the house. People couldn't find a secluded spot to stop, so they climbed up and did their business in the house. And Phil was livid. But it went under very shortly after that, so— Notice the black stripes on the walls there. You can see that the house probably never got wet. It was tucked into that alcove. Water ran down the wall and then dripped off.

TM: What a great location to build a mud house.

KP: Yeah! It was quite a large house too, had two rooms. So yeah, that was one of our favorite places. It had charcoal pictographs; it had loom holes. Yeah, there they are. It had loom holes. It was a nice canyon.

TM: How do you think the looms worked? So they would use a framework, and they would attach the framework in there, and then they could work on weaving?

KP: I presumed that they stuck poles into those holes. You can tell by the diameter of the cans behind it how big around the holes were. And then strung there, their threads on the loom and sat there and weaved with a back strap, much the way that many of the Navajo do today.

TM: And then there's some pictographs in charcoal. Really delicate little drawings there. Very neat. People with tall—long, skinny bodies and long arms.

KP: Well...Have you ever seen a three-year-old draw people, though? Down at the bottom, there's metates. We never found the manos, I don't know if they got picked up by people who visited before we did, or if the users took them home with them and left them in their houses and they somehow got dispersed, or whatever.

TM: And these are real classic sandstone grinding-mark kind of rockers that are in many prevalent locations throughout the Four Corner area. Cedar Mesa comes to mind, a lot of that. Even in Grand Canyon, there's some of these like this. It's pretty fun.

KP: Okay. "More Lake Canyon"?

TM: All right. So "More Lake Canyon," let's go there. So this is a site with a view. Alcoves like this, deeply set in and surrounded by rock on three sides, are generally cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Wow. This one you had to scramble up to a little bit, it looks like.

KP: Yeah, I guess we did. You can see that I'm peering into what may have been sleeping quarters. Considering that the door goes all the way down to the floor, we suspected they probably were. Starting at lower-center and running back to near where I'm standing, you can see a small wall that we felt was probably built to keep creeping and toddling children from falling over the cliff.

TM: Right, which would make sense.

KP: I don't know if this is the one that had a log with steps on it, cut out, or not. But one of them did. But yeah, it was a nifty place. There was a bigger village. It had more rooms to it.

TM: It says "One of the larger Anasazi structures in Lake Canyon. Sites in Glen Canyon were respected by most of their visitors and remained largely undisturbed. Of course, the sites were extremely numerous and visitors were rather rare." That looks like a fairly large structure with multiple rooms, is that what we're looking at there?

KP: Yeah.

TM: Up under an overhang and nicely protected. And high enough above the floor of Lake Canyon to be free of flooding during flash floods. Great place to build a home. And there was water in Lake Canyon, I see this—was that a rare event after a rain or was there permanent water there in Lake Canyon?

KP: No, Lake Canyon had water in it.

TM: Okay. So, a waterfall.

KP: Which is one of the reasons why they lived there so much, I expect.

TM: Yeah, yeah absolutely. There'd be clear water and protection from the elements—great. Would make a lot of sense. This is curious. There's a photograph here of a couple people standing in a big sediment pile, and it says, "This overhanging sand dune is actually part of a lake of Lake Canyon. It had been a natural lake until the early part of the 20th century, when its natural dam broke out. The water drained, leaving a thick layer of silt, which dried out and began to erode. The deposit seen here are that silt." Oh, fascinating.

KP: Yeah. It was a lot of silt. But if I'm reasonably certain, made good farm country for them.

TM: Sure. This is fascinating. So here we've climbed out of Lake Canyon's side canyons. Today, there's a well-traveled road here. The one to Hall's Crossing Marina. How often did you actually get up on the slick rock country, get out a canyon, and up high like this?

KP: Not very often. So Lake Canyon was an anomaly, which was why they used it, I presume.

TM: Sure, it would make sense. If you got into it and was straightforward to get down to the river, it would make a great little highway of, you know, foot traffic to get to the river and then up to the high country.

KP: Right.

TM: Wow. Really, really fascinating slick rock country. You could really tell that when it rained, it was coming your way. The waterfall's—

KP: Yep. Pay attention to the sky and take shelter.

TM: Interesting side canyons. Okay, so these interesting side canyons, were these off of Lake Canyon, then? Yeah, it is Lake Canyon. 113.2. Bell-shaped—

KP: Yeah. Look at that top picture and you can see a slit that comes all the way from the top of the picture down to the bottom. Sort of somewhat obscured. That's what was in that slit. The next picture is what was in that slit.

TM: Wow. "Stepped into the pool and we looked to the left—"

KP: So, we stepped in and looked back, and it was a wonderful little canyon.

TM: Oh my god. We see the canyon continues. As a slot so narrow, we had to go through parts of it sideways. Holy my gosh. Look at—it's gorgeous purple light, sculptured sandstone. It says, "Wall patterns." Absolutely beautiful. "It just kept going, but does require occasional climbing."

KP: The purple light was more a failure of the film than the light. It never really looked that color.

TM: Okay, so the one below it, then, is more sandstone-toned.

KP: Yeah. That's more like the natural color was.

TM: Still gorgeous.

KP: Ansel Adams criticized Phil's blue pictures. But Phil liked them, and so we kept them.

TM: I wouldn't get rid of them at all. They look really neat. So I'm gonna go back. This is in Lake Canyon. You're in a side tributary. It looks like it ends, but when you walk to the very end, it actually turns into this magical slot canyon. That's amazing!

KP: Right! You go back through the really cruddy-looking water there, and step up on that flat, funny-shaped rock, and extend your left hand into this slot that you can see down below.

TM: Gosh. That must have been wonderful. You were like, "Hey, it keeps going!"

KP: Yes it was! Oh, everybody came in. Everybody looked at the cruddy-looking water. Eventually, they all stepped into it and went back and turned left.

TM: I bet. "Here, the walls joined to form a small, natural bridge. And demand a bit of climbing skills." So is that you, then, in the white hat? Looks like Helen or someone next to you?

KP: Oh! Yeah, that's how we got up. I got up there and Phil had this quarter-inch nylon rope. I believe that is Helen standing beside me. We have tied knots in the ropes, so there's a bunch of loops hanging down. Everybody climbed up by putting their feet in the loops and hauling themselves up.

TM: Nice, yeah. Just as a handle there. So did you actually get out on that one, or did you again get cliffed out, do you remember?

KP: This is Lake Canyon. No, I don't think we ever went far enough to get out. Oh we must have, because he has pictures from up above.

TM: You got out somewhere. You wouldn't necessarily have gotten out of this slot.

KP: Yeah, I think that we just went up Lake Canyon. No, I can't imagine the Native Americans came down this, so we must have gotten out the way they did.

TM: Absolutely gorgeous. It's just really beautiful in there.

KP: Yeah, it is! That's a great canyon. I mean, if it were restored, one could spend many, many weeks in there exploring things, just in Lake Canyon, never mind the rest of it.

TM: It's funny, 'cause it just kind of reminds me a little bit of some of the slots that are still in the Navajo sandstone today, making their way down to the reservoir. It's just absolutely gorgeous. Wow. Very nice.

Well, then the next one, down to Mile 111, Hanging Anasazi Site. So click on that. So here is it. At Mile 113.0 is a—I see the kayak there, in the water, and there's a giant wall coming right down to the river.

KP: Yeah, you know, this doesn't ring any bells for me. Obviously, I didn't—it wasn't spectacular enough to be that great. Let's see what's down below. Oh, oh yeah.

TM: Hanging Anasazi Site. How did you get up there? So it says, "Very difficult to climb into. When Lake Powell reached the level of this site, we were here to watch the rising waters. We found corn, with kernels and hackberry fruits in the storage pits." Wow.

KP: Yeah, I don't know they got up. I think maybe there were some Moqui steps over here. But they had been worn so much that we couldn't use them. But it's a tribute to Phil's memory and his map reading skills that when the water got up there, up just below that alcove that you can see to the right of center, upper corner. He knew it was there, and we paddled over, and we were able to get into then. That's when we found the corn and the hackberry.

TM: Gosh. Makes me think what people didn't find, didn't know that was lost as well. The next picture down is pretty stunning. It's titled "Mile 110.7", and it's a view taken almost from the top of the cliffs, up on the slick rock.

KP: I would guess that was probably an aerial. And that he then went back when we were on the river to get a picture of that wall.

TM: It really looks like you can walk up the rolling hillsides from the river. It looks like this is a place where you could hike up. You can see the river. There's a huge island of—there's a finger coming off the river to make a big island, and along the shore there, it looks like you might be able to just walk right up to where the picture was taken. I don't know. It's really pretty. Did you guys keep journals? Did you or Phil keep journals?

KP: No. Phil never had and I hadn't started at that time. Which was a mistake, of course.

TM: Well, just what it is. This looks like an afternoon shot. Sun is a little lower in the sky, and there's cliffs.

KP: Phil would be able to look at the skyline on the far side of the bend, and with the map, figure out exactly where he was, but I can't. Although we did meet somebody who was too young to have ever been down there, and he was doing exactly that. Yeah, I can't even remember his name, but he was good. Yeah, I'm trying to look at the water stripes and see if I can do anything with them. But no, I can't.

TM: No worries. It's really pretty. There's a nice shot of the river with some riverside vegetation and cliffs coming down to a broken slope at Mile 109.3. I'm going to go back to the middle map for a minute. There's Annie Canyon right there. So that was Shock Bar on Lake Canyon, okay. As you go around there, Iron Top Mesa. Annie Canyon comes in from river right, and it's not too far above Wilson Canyon. The rincon at Oil Seep Bar, that's a long straightaway there, from Wilson Canyon down to Long Canyon. Okay, so I'm gonna jump back and then I'm gonna click on "Annie Canyon." Ah, the tractor. Okay, so

“across from Annie Canyon and a mile upstream, there’s a collection of mining equipment. We believe this is probably Schock Bar at the bottom of Schock Trail. One of the sources of information places these features on the right bank.” Okay. Again, this is uranium, most likely uranium boom stuff. That tractor was from the late 40s, early 50s. But then there’s a wagon there, rickety cart looking downstream. There’s the tractor or that’s a compressor. Yeah, that’s the tractor, isn’t it? Okay.

KP: Yeah, you know more about the mining equipment than any of us ever did.

TM: Well, let’s see. “Annie Canyon, the southern tip of the water pocket fold. Nice canyon, but full of poison oak.”

KP: That’s true!

TM: Oh my. How did you learn that? I mean, didn’t you guys—well, you’re a botanist, so you ever say “Hey, don’t touch that. It’s poison oak.” I hope everybody else got that too.

KP: Well, no. We passed the word real quick.

TM: Of course, you know, you look at that side canyon, you say, “gee, I wonder what’s up there.” So clearly, there must’ve been road or a trail to get this equipment in here.

KP: Either that or it was floated down the river at a high water level.

TM: I suppose it could’ve been. Be curious to cruise around and see whether there was a way in there or not. Okay, down to Wilson Canyon.

KP: Phil loved that wall in Wilson Canyon.

TM: Is that you in the white hat with the kayak at the base of that wall?

KP: That’s right.

TM: Now this wall is interesting, because it’s very regular. It’s not as smooth the way sandstone can be very smooth. It’s got a lot of irregularities to it. It’s really interesting.

KP: It was very nicely striped.

TM: Oh, yeah. Very fun. So then there’s a picture that looks like might be you in the white hat—sailor’s hat.

KP: Right.

TM: “Wilson Canyon spring. Superb drinking water—all times of the year.”

KP: Yeah, somebody had even put a can there to funnel it, so that it was easier to catch.

TM: Looks like you got an aluminum water bottle there that you’re filling up?

KP: Yeah. Everybody had whatever water bottles and we usually kept at least a day's supply with us, because we had learned very early that drinking the river water was a no-no.

TM: What would happen if you drank the river water?

KP: You've heard of giardia now?

TM: Yeah.

KP: That was before giardia was well-known. That's what it was. Also, during flood times, why you might see the carcass of a cow or something else floating down. But no, the river was not good drinking water.

TM: All right. So yeah, clearly side canyons with spring water would have been very attractive. Then there's three pictures on this page. The bottom picture shows the rear end of somebody as they're crawling into a dwelling.

KP: That is I.

TM: Okay. Was this '64 or '62, do you recall?

KP: Looking at this shirt, I would say September of '62.

TM: Okay. That dwelling appears to be about 10 feet in diameter. A flat roof. Looks like the roof, of course, is still intact.

KP: Yeah, I sort of labeled them as "dwelling" or "storage" by how close to the floor the door came. This one came close enough to the floor that I figured they used it as shelter from cold weather. As a sleeping shelter.

TM: It says "house in high alcove in Wilson Canyon." Wow.

KP: Yeah, obviously used the word "house" there, and so Phil thought that too.

TM: Yeah, okay. So go down canyon to Oil Seep Bar. This is a, you know, looking at the map, this is this long straightaway. Okay. It's fascinating. There's a series of photographs here: one, two, three, four, five. Suddenly, the solid cliffs down to the river are really broken down now. It looks like when looked at it, one might be able to find a route to the rim.

KP: Wouldn't be surprised, but we didn't even think about wanting to. Obviously, a lot of big boulders have tumbled down that slope behind. And one of them had tumbled into the river, and you could boat around it.

TM: Is that the one that you're sitting on there?

KP: Yeah.

TM: Okay. That's a very substantial chunk of sandstone.

KP: Yes. I intended to climb it. That's the highest I got.

TM: So it looks like you've climbed out of your kayak and scrambled up this thing, and there's somebody in a raft in the shade there, to the left of your kayak.

KP: The raft in the shade is Helen. We were both going to climb up, but it proved a lot more difficult than we thought. If Helen hadn't been there, I would've been wet before I got back into that kayak. Because I needed to get it under me, and then reverse-mantle down off of the tiny ledge there and get my feet into it, climb down into it. The water was actually quite deep and quite steep, going around that rock. But anyway, Helen saved me on that one.

TM: But again, it looks like a great place to camp there. Some nice sandy beaches right behind there with some sheltered vegetation.

KP: Getting up the nice sandy beaches with your gear out of a little yellow raft would have been not convenient. But there was never any shortage of campsites.

TM: Wow. Gosh. Lucky—and then there's a little shelter there, at the rincón. So again, I'm assuming there was a way to actually get down to the river here. Again, it looks fairly broken down in the background countryside.

KP: Well, the little shelter was roofed with a tarp, so you could tell how old it probably was. I don't know if it was a miner who built it for his own use while he was trying tanning, or what it was for. But, you know, we went up and looked at it.

TM: So then there's a picture of—looks like you and your kayak, heading downstream on that long straightaway.

KP: Yeah.

TM: With the big thunderheads off in the distance there. Just gorgeous, gorgeous picture of canyon walls, cliffs coming down. Red canyons and a brown river. Green vegetation on the sides of the river. Just a gorgeous picture. Wow.

KP: Let's see what year that was. Yeah...no...another year. Never mind, I was gonna rattle off on another story, but we'll save it 'til we get there.

TM: Okay. I'm assuming that's 1962.

KP: Yeah, I would guess so.

TM: By '63, the water would've been coming up. This looks like it's on the river. That's such a pretty picture. Gosh.

KP: That was September of '62, not June.

TM: Right, I'm gonna go to the middle map. There's Oil Seep Bar, so there's a long straightaway there, which has got to be—gosh, a couple miles long. Long Canyon and Brown's Canyon coming on the right. Then Escalante is about 10 miles downstream, looks like Mile 88, roughly, from—what's this? Wilson Canyon's at 101, where the water was. Lake Canyon's at 113. So it's about 20 miles down from Lake Canyon down to the Escalante. The Escalante, of course, is a huge drainage, and the Escalante is what started this whole exploration off. That was the first trip that the hiking club got into this country, is that where—

KP: They hiked in, yeah. They came down Davis Gulch.

TM: Davis Gulch, okay. All right.

KP: You know, we've run for more than an hour now, if you're wanting to cut off and do it logically, maybe we should stop before we start on the Escalante.

TM: Let's do that. That's very good thinking. I was like time? What time is— Time? What? Sorry. That's a great idea. Is there anything else you'd like to add about this photograph here on Oil Seep Bar or anything else on that area before we wrap today's interview up?

KP: Oh, no. I can't think of anything in particular about that. I mean, I don't know about Phil, but I'm pretty sure he agrees with me that the miners and more recent history were of less interest than the Native American history. But it's also interesting to know what went on after the Europeans got here too. So yeah, we enjoyed it.

TM: Wonderful. Okay, well with that this will conclude Part 5 Oral History Interview with Keturah Pennington. My name is Tom Martin. Today is Thursday, April 25, 2019, and Keturah, thank you very much.

KP: My pleasure.