

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Keturah Pennington (KP)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Recounting 1960s Berkeley hiking club, Phil's schooling, and trips before Glen Canyon dam was closed

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TM: Today is Monday, April 15th, 2019. This is a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Keturah Pennington. My name is Tom Martin. Good morning, Keturah. How are you today?

KP: Great, thank you. And you?

TM: Very good, thank you. Keturah, may we have your permission to record this interview over the telephone today?

KP: Certainly.

TM: Thank you very much. We left off, you were recounting this amazing trip into Mexico, into the rainforests down near Vera Cruz. Was that the biggest trip that you took during that time out of Berkeley?

KP: Yeah, probably, I guess, except for the Glen Canyon trips.

TM: Okay.

KP: It was probably the biggest one. It was a private trip arranged between me and another student, who was going to be working down there all summer, and his family, and he just agreed to take me along. He'd been there before and he would introduce me to some of the places that he had seen, and whatnot. He thought I would be interested and he was absolutely right. (TM laughs) It was fascinating.

TM: Was that part of the University of California Berkeley hiking club? Was that one of the hiking club outings or was that just an independent outing?

KP: No, that was just between me, as a botanist, and this other graduate student as an etymologist. He felt that our two interests would support and enhance each other. I was learning to climb and he was wanting to learn to climb, so we shared a lot of interests. He and his wife and I hit it off really well. It just worked out that that was where I chose to go during the same time that the hiking club was going on their first boat trip down Glen Canyon. Sometimes I think I made the wrong choice to spend time in Mexico, and I had other chances at the Glen Canyon.

TM: You mentioned climbing. Where would you go climbing there out of Berkeley?

KP: I almost hate to say in something that's going to be public. The truth is the hiking club started climbing right outside the hiking club office and extended their climbing over everything around the

campus. The rocks in the parks in Berkeley, and then anything we could reach by car in a reasonable amount of time. We climbed everything. They went into the Sierra, they went to all the parks around. They climbed everything.

TM: So, I'm assuming the rope was Goldline?

KP: When I first got there, Goldline had just come in. Most of them, the ropes that the club owned, were Columbia.

TM: What kind of rope was that?

KP: It was nylon, but it was constructed differently. It was twined, rather than... Goldline was considered far superior: stronger, more durable, and less subject to abrasion. I gather you've climbed since you ask about Goldline.

TM: Yes. Well, you very wonderfully took me into fiberglass canoes and how to make them. And now I'm realizing, oh my gosh, as a climber, what kind of gear were you using? (KP laughs) So my next question is, did you even have harnesses? Had that concept of a harness got into the club yet?

KP: No. It was brought in by some of the people that our better climbers climbed with just a little bit later than that.

TM: All right.

KP: Where did you climb?

TM: Oh, but I'm probably 20 years your junior. So, by the time we got into it, Goldline was phasing out for Perlon. So I'm like, wait a minute, let's go back because I have no clue what was before Goldline.

KP: Well, Columbia.

TM: Wow. Okay.

KP: It was a white—well, dirty white, grayish.

TM: (laughs) Didn't stay white long.

KP: And it was twisted. Its surface had... You could see the coils of rope wrapping around each other, so that made a more readily abraded surface. Goldline was around, but the club didn't own any yet when I got there.

TM: So, the Columbia rope, was that a half-inch or three-eighths? Do you remember its diameter?

KP: I think it was probably three-eighths.

TM: Okay. And so the...

KP: No. It was certainly bigger than half-inch. I really don't remember. I still have my first rope somewhere in the house.

TM: Oh, it would be interesting to see what the diameter is because Goldline definitely was far superior with regards to abrasion resistance and fall tolerance.

KP: Yeah.

TM: It's way better stuff. Was anybody using hammers and pitons, or was it simply the rope was there to assist people up areas that you could free climb, but it would be good to have a rope tied to you just in case.

KP: No, they were doing 6th-class climbing with fixed points on it. I was lucky enough to be there the day El Capitan was first climbed in Yosemite.

TM: Wow.

KP: People I was with knew the climbers on that climb. I didn't know them yet then. That was my first trip to Yosemite Valley, actually, and I was very impressed.

TM: I bet, yeah. Still today.

KP: Well, yeah. I guess they have now free climbed El Capitan.

TM: Yes. Isn't that amazing? A free solo. Stunning physical achievements, along with gear and advances in micro-aids. Really amazing what we as a species can do. I want to go back to the hiking club for a minute because you mentioned caving, and I wanted to just peep into that for a minute. Where would the club go caving?

KP: Places that they would never tell you about until you'd gone on at least one or two trips and they were sure that you knew how to keep your mouth shut.

TM: Yes. Let me rephrase this.

KP: Essentially, most of the trips were into the Sierra.

TM: Okay. I'm thinking of more rock type. The rock type on the coastal range is mostly really mushed-up...

KP: No, these were limestone caves in the Sierra.

TM: Got it. Okay. Great.

KP: Some of them were beautifully decorated. The water had made stalactites and stalagmites and flows, all the fine features.

TM: I'm assuming you were using carbide lanterns for that?

KP: We were. We had, at the time I guess he was a semi-professional caver, in the club and he bought carbide, I don't think it was by the ton, but it was probably by the 100 pounds,...

TM: In a big can, yeah. (laughs)

KP: ...and sold it to the rest of us. We'd bring our little containers and he'd sell us whatever we wanted for a very reasonable price. So, yes, we used carbide lamps.

TM: Did you have helmets at that time, or was it just holding the lamp in your hand and off you went?

KP: Almost all the cavers had helmets, mainly to hold their lamps.

TM: Yep. Okay.

KP: A lot of them wore them, but I put my lamp on my helmet and pushed it in front of me because I hated the feel of the thing on my head. So, yeah, but helmets were common caving gear at that time, yes.

TM: Yeah. Yeah, just to protect your head.

KP: Right.

TM: Tell me more about the hiking club. What do you remember about...how many outings was it doing? What was it doing?

KP: Well, a lot of things. I don't think that I... Once I got into the hiking club, I don't think there was ever a weekend that at least trip wasn't going somewhere. Often there would be many trips: a caving trip, a hiking trip, other kinds of trips. Boating trips once we got the boats. Sometimes more than one hiking trip: a strenuous hiking trip and a gentle hiking trip. So they did all sorts of things for all sorts of abilities. And, also, all sorts of time. Some people had more time than others. There was also a group, a flexible group, that had their lunches in the hiking club office essentially every noon hour. It was an informal gathering. During the noon hour, there might be as many as 20 people in the office and during the rest of the day, nobody there at all. It was a very social thing. And then, after dark, there would be the informal sewer explorations and what they called, if there were others present, "Are you going bad tonight?" (TM laughs) "Are you going to climb buildings after dark?"

TM: Wow.

KP: Those excursions would get arranged. They had routes into a great many of the buildings including the women's gym, so we could go swimming.

TM: Oh my gosh.

KP: The archaeology department got some totem poles once, and they erected them outside their departmental offices. That night, a bunch of us strolled past them, looking them over (TM laughs) and assessing how high they were and how hard it would be to the top. Then one of the archaeologists came along and said, "Don't even think about it. They just put a finish on there and if you mar it up the wood will rot." So we walked on and never thought about it again because if we were going to damage things, we wouldn't do it.

TM: Right.

KP: It so happened that the police drove down the street as we were walking up, having just learned that the totem poles were now off limits to us forever, and he said, "I've been watching you guys, and you've been past those totem poles three times (TM laughs) and I don't want to catch you on them." We assured him that we were never, ever going to touch them. That we had been warned by someone. We didn't say, "...whose authority we respect more than yours." But I'm sure he understood that, too. We said we'd been warned by someone to leave them alone, and we would. The police had a really good relationship with the hiking club.

TM: Nice.

KP: They didn't bust us for a lot of things that they might have. They knew that if we said we're leaving the totem poles alone, that the totem poles were perfectly safe from us. There was one night that we had explored the sewers. We got in at the campus and worked our way all the way down to the Bay. We ended up smelling like what was coming out of the Bay.

TM: Sure!

KP: We had to swim the last part of it. No, not like dirt. These were the sewers, after all and we had swum so we were soaking. And it was cool, chilly. So when we got out and back on shore and started looking for a bus to get ourselves back up to campus (TM laughs), it was about a mile or so, the guys had all stripped their shirts off and the rest of us had wrung as much water out of our clothes as we could. We got on the bus, reeking and people were talking and sort of looking at us. One of our more lively fellows said, "Oh, haven't you heard? A Japanese fishing boat sunk out in the Bay, and we all had to swim ashore, and that's why we're wet." We heard that being passed up and down, in whispers, up and down the sides of the bus. "Did you hear that a Japanese fishing boat...?" (TM laughs) Never mind that we were all college-age white Americans.

TM: Right, right.

KP: That story got around. Somebody called the police...

TM: Oh, no!

KP: ...and we got out and went running across the street, heading for the hiking club where we had warmer clothes, you know, jackets and sweaters and things. (laughs) We were freezing. When we got over there we were just coming up to the building and deciding who was going to go climb in the window because the building was locked, it was late at night, but we always had a way in. Just as we got into the courtyard of the building, car headlights came on and caught us right in the middle of them. The cops stepped out and walked over and said, "I figured you be here sooner or later." (laughs) We asked him how he knew and he said, "Somebody called and said there were a bunch of half-naked people running across the street so I just came over here and waited for you." He was right. Actually, we hadn't done anything wrong that night. So (laughs) he said, "Just checking," and got in his car and drove off.

TM: I mean, I can't but think that the police would have realized that you were learning such valuable skills, that this was akin to SEAL training or some fairly challenging skills and they would have supported that.

KP: I don't how much the supported it, particularly, because I'm sure that we were a pain in the bottom to them, sometimes. But they were never unreasonable to us at all. I really have to commend the Berkeley police that had anything to do with the campus patrolling, and streets around the campus. They were very good, reasonable and understanding, and, in return, we respected their requests.

TM: Nice.

KP: Mostly. I mean, they knew better than to ask us to never climb the buildings again (laughs) because they also knew it wouldn't happen. But when they asked up not to climb the totem poles, they knew it *would* happen. So, we had a great relationship back then. I don't know how it is now. Once again, I've been really lucky in my life, in being the places I was, at the time I was.

TM: Had you met Phil by that time? By the time the sewer adventure was happening?

KP: I can't really remember. Well, no, that's not true. I do remember the first time he and I crossed paths. I'm sure he wouldn't remember it. The hiking club also had the habit of once a week at noon, people who had been on trips the previous weekend and had their slides back, would get together and have a slide show. I went to the slide show and I don't even remember what trip he was showing slides of. It certainly wasn't the Glen Canyon area. But, he was showing slides and I noticed then that he was a bit older and more mature than most of the kids. But I'm sure he didn't notice me because climbing was

the only thing I had done with the club, really, besides the sewer trip. No, I hadn't done the sewer trip yet. Anyway... I spent a lot of time with the hiking club, probably time I should have spent studying.

TM: Let's talk a little bit about Phil, if you don't mind. What year was he born?

KP: He was born in 1931.

TM: Okay. So he was 8 years older than you?

KP: Yeah. That's why he looked older and more mature at the slide show that he was doing. (laughs)

TM: Yeah. All right, that makes sense. Where was he born?

KP: In Children's Hospital in Denver. His parents ran the little store in Kittredge, Colorado, just outside—well, not just outside—but near Denver. I should look up on the map just where that is. It may have disappeared by now, because I think it was his family's store building and their living quarters behind it and another couple houses, even then.

TM: So, very, very rural.

KP: Yeah. I didn't see Kittredge until after we were married a few years. So it may have reduced in size. But I thought (laughs) it was like the towns—well, no, it was smaller even than the towns that I grew up in, and I grew up in a bunch of little towns. Yeah, his parents were running a store there. They lived there for the whole five years after he was born, that they were married. Then his father and mother split about the time his baby brother was born and Phil moved into Denver and lived with various family members. His mother moved around a lot, and she often... I guess, mostly she sent Phil to either one of her sisters or her mother. Mostly her mother, Phil's grandmother, I guess, and she and the baby moved around a bit. But he had an unstable childhood so far as living quarters were going. Sort of like mine, we moved every few years. He lived with various relatives.

TM: In Denver?

KP: In Denver. Yeah. They all lived in Denver. I don't... Well, I suppose I do know why they all lived there.

TM: So was his school an anchor point or did he move enough that he had to change schools?

KP: Oh, I'm quite sure that his grade school wasn't all that stable. At the time, Denver had two high schools: East and West. Phil lived where he attended West High and his brother lived where he attended East High. So his family life was very shifty and ephemeral, and so forth.

TM: Hmm. What was he interested in as a child? Do you remember? Did he tell you about that?

KP: Oh, he (laughs) was interested in everything. When he was in fifth in grade, he took... Have I told you about the field trip to find tourmaline crystals in ant hills?

TM: Tell me.

KP: Well, he explored the hills. He was almost never at home, especially when he was living with his grandparents. He was almost never in the house except to sleep and sometimes to eat. But he found that the ants were bringing up tourmaline crystals and he thought this was pretty interesting, so he told his teacher and arranged to take the whole class for a field trip to find the tourmaline crystals.

TM: Nice.

KP: And that was in fifth grade. He taught himself photography and made himself a home developing lab and did a lot of that. There wasn't very much that he wasn't interested in except possibly... If it had anything at all to do with science, he was probably interested in it. And he was a good musician. He played the clarinet in the high school and also the college, and then the National Guard bands. He and some friends had a klezmer band that played at Jewish weddings and other Jewish events. Made a little bit of money that way. He was quite well rounded.

TM: Which is really absolutely amazing, given his home situation.

KP: That's absolutely true. If his grandmother had known what he was doing, she probably would have done her best to forbid it. But she wouldn't have succeeded. His mother, more or less, supported what he was doing, but didn't understand it, ever. And his aunts and uncles, when he was living with them (laughs), saw he was having a great time and wished they were. So, you know, he didn't have terrible opposition, but he didn't have any support at home for any of his interests. But he was clearly interested in everything. The last present his father ever gave him—his father left when Phil was about 5—was a set of encyclopedias, and he really treasured those. He learned a lot from them and kept them with him for a long while.

TM: Nice. That's sort of like giving a small child a computer these days. It was the computer of the day.

KP: Yes. Yeah, it really was. And at 5, most children wouldn't be reading the words that are in an encyclopedia, but Phil did. I think he also had a dictionary.

TM: (laughs) Okay. Figure things out. Oh, nice.

KP: Yeah.

TM: So then, after high school, let's see, '31, '41, would have been just at the end of the war that he would have graduated from high school, roughly?

KP: He graduated just in time to be eligible for the draft. So he and a good many of his high school band joined the National Guard and the National Guard band so that they could probably stay together as a musical group if they got drafted. Then the war ended. He got drafted for the Korean War, but not for... Now, maybe I'm wrong about that. Maybe they joined the National Guard so that they could stay together during the Korean War. But, anyway, he did eventually get drafted. That's a story, too.

TM: How's that?

KP: He got drafted and sent to boot camp. Phil was short, but very, very strong and they worked them very hard. Somehow he got pneumonia and ended up in the hospital just before his group was sent out, so he had to do boot camp over and never got sent overseas. He got sent to the East Coast and trained to be a radio man. But when he was in boot camp, he got pneumonia, and was really very sick the last day before he reported to the hospital. They were doing self-defense training at the time, and one of the instructors picked him because he looked short and did not look as strong as he really is. The instructor thought he'd be an easy one to show the moves on. What he didn't know was that Phil had studied judo for a number of years at a Japanese dojo that was very, very good.

TM: Wow.

KP: Once the classes started, they spoke only Japanese and did all the polite forms, the bowing and so forth, that the Japanese do. He knew judo excellently. He was fairly sick—he says, “only half there”—and the instructor was going to show the class the dangers of being attacked by a knife and how to defend yourself. So he attacked Phil with a knife and Phil flipped him in the air and down on his back on

the ground, and the knife flew up and just about landed on the head of another one of the trainees. After that, at boot camp, a group of them arranged to use the boxing ring for judo practice every so often, and Phil taught the rest of them who were interested judo at boot camp.

TM: Nice.

KP: Yeah. He did very well for himself, too, when you get right down to it. But that was because he always went full out at whatever he was doing and became excellent at whatever he decided to do. He was stationed at Fort Ord and did a lot of desert exploring while he was there. They could get passes to go out onto the Fort.

TM: That would have been '51-ish time frame?

KP: Yeah. Probably, yeah. I don't know. I didn't keep track of the times of his early years, except for...

TM: Was he in college when he was drafted?

KP: Let me think. He must have been.

TM: It seems like that timeline would fit. Let's say he graduated from high school in '50—I'm sorry, in '46, maybe '47—he would have then gone to college and then have been drafted into the Korean Conflict in '51-ish. That timeline would have kind of all matched up.

KP: Yeah, I don't know. I could possibly try to remember his various stories and sort the times out.

TM: After high school where did he go?

KP: Colorado School of Mines.

TM: Did he want to be a mining engineer, or a geologist?

KP: No, he didn't. He went there because he knew he had to go in-state because he couldn't afford any out-state tuition. And of the various Colorado schools, he said that was considered to be the toughest one to get through and he figured he'd get the best education there. Once he had his good education basics then he could go to graduate school wherever he wanted.

TM: Did he have an idea of what he wanted to study in graduate school?

KP: He didn't settle very well on anything. In fact, he changed his mind after he got his degree and decided he should have gone into education.

TM: What did he get his degree in?

KP: Materials science, if you will. And, of course, physics was very close to materials science. He sort of settled on that, but he had decided that he wanted to teach and not do research, particularly. So he settled on Portland State, not...uhhh...I'm going to say it, anyway, not because he thought it was the best school, but because they would offer him the opportunity to teach physics.

TM: Oh, wow.

KP: They didn't have a materials science department at Portland State at the time. But the physics department was interested in him because he was very good and his thesis had been on the nucleation of gallium crystals, which added significantly to the world's knowledge of gallium at the time. But, no, I guess af... Yeah, that's right. He worked for Hughes Aircraft for a while before he went to graduate school. I didn't know him then.

TM: This was in San Francisco? Or where was...?

KP: No, in, I don't know, one of the suburbs of Los Angeles. Wherever they're located down there. They recognized his talent. Ahh! That's right. He was in on the ground floor of computers, because they were making computer chips and he discovered the way to align the computer chips. He had been growing... Yeah, these are stories that I had just about forgotten. (laughs) I'm sitting where there's a picture of Phil looking at me, and I can just see him scolding me. (TM laughs) Yeah. He worked down there growing gallium crystals. He grew some very big, long ones. They looked sort of like crinkled-up sausages. I saw some of them, eventually. At the time, they were the biggest crystals anyone had ever grown, but they couldn't get them aligned and cut properly. He had a bunch of them lying around and he let the secretaries use them to decorate the Christmas tree. They're kind of shiny and grayish and sparkly and so forth. The secretaries threw them out afterwards.

TM: Ooo!

KP: They thought everybody was done with them. Phil said that if he had cut those, that his company down there would have been the first to make the computer chips. Secretaries tossed them out. You know, now they're growing them inches in diameter. His were maybe an inch in diameter and the biggest that anyone had ever grown before, anyone in the world. I did his literature search for this thesis eventually, so I know how much research was going on in the world back then.

TM: For gallium. Wow.

KP: Yeah. But, anyway, the company recognized his talents and gave him, essentially, free rein to do any research that he wanted. He came up with a couple or three patents for them and so forth. So they said, "Well, we're going to give you a sabbatical to go to graduate school." They tried to get him back after graduate school, but he'd already decided he wanted to do teaching not research, so he took a job at Portland State because they would let him teach physics. He didn't have to stick to materials science. I don't know where this was leading.

TM: Well, I'm curious to know how he got from Portland State to Berkeley.

KP: Portland State... I may have let my tongue run away with me. His company sent him to graduate school at Berkeley and that's where he and I met. After Berkeley, he had offers for interviews all the way from the East Coast to the West Coast, when you get right down to it. One at University of Washington and one at Princeton, and ones in between. You know, they were good schools. Portland State was not one of the top-rated schools. It's higher rated now than it was then. It was just getting started when we came for the interview. His interview was in a building that looked like an old high school building, which it was. And there were four buildings downtown, and that was it. But that's the one he chose because he could teach physics. Berkeley came in between them. His company sent him to Berkeley. He had been there for, I don't know, a couple years, maybe three years, before I got there, and that's where he and I met.

TM: So, please excuse my ignorance. Portland State, I'm assuming, is in Portland, Oregon?

KP: It is. Downtown Portland, Oregon.

TM: Did he career there? Did you guys then move there and spend a lot of time there?

KP: We moved there and we rented a house thinking we would stay for two years, maybe three years, and then try for a position somewhere else, maybe not even in this country. At the end of our first year, a little round guy in a little round derby hat and a black suit knocked on our door and said, "I wonder if

anyone has told you the bank is foreclosing on this house at the end of the month?" It seems our landlord had not been paying his rent, his mortgage.

TM: Wow.

KP: So we bought the house and that held us for another year. By then, we had gotten into the Keller Plan phase of our joint lives, which is a very long story that you may want to just skip over, and we have been here ever since. The Keller Plan was what made Phil decide that teaching wasn't his bag so much as the dynamics of learning was.

TM: Oh, wow.

KP: So we looked at our finances and decided that, with five thousand dollars in the bank, we could probably afford to quit for at least a year while he tried this out. We were very good at living as students do so we made our five thousand last for two years. Then we decided we had to have some money, so I took a job. And Phil... I was about to say he never worked for pay again, and that's essentially true. He did a lot of work that I *wanted* him to get paid for, and he'd say, "Oh, well, that's not much. I'll just do that for ya." (laughs) But my job supported us for a while. Then the economic situation eliminated my job, and we decided to see how long we could go before either of us had to get paid again. By that time, Phil was into investing as well and he had essentially retired by then. Neither of us have worked at a steady job since.

TM: Wow.

KP: It's been an interesting existence. I was once writing about another event, said if it had been any but the three of us who were in that position at the time, the event never would have happened. Well, I think if it had been anybody but the two of us trying to live this way and doing as well as we have, it never would have happened. We just really complemented each other's strengths and weaknesses. He was very, very good at almost everything. And the few things he wasn't very, very good at, I was pretty good at. So we managed.

TM: Nice. Very nice.

KP: Yes, it was.

TM: Okay, so let's go back to, that, basically, was a fairly small amount of time at Berkeley.

KP: At Berkeley? Yeah, he'd been there at least two years, maybe three, before I came. He had just finished his master's degree and he wasn't really in any hurry about finishing his Ph.D. He was having a great time. So we were there for four years together. Two of them, I was working on a master's degree. Then we got married and I took a job so that we could afford to live not quite the way we had been while he finished his degree.

TM: When did you get married?

KP: '64.

TM: What was that ceremony like?

KP: Very simple. Most of our friends wondered if we were going to get married or just live together. That wasn't done quite so much then, but, no, we decided to get married.

TM: Why did you do that? Because, like you say, it wasn't outside the concept of life to just live with someone you were very comfortable with.

KP: I think... Oh, he and I would have been very comfortable. I don't think either of our families would have. And we figured, "What's a day? We'll do it." We invited the families. My roommate was bridesmaid and his best friend from college—not Berkeley... Well, yeah, I guess they were together. I can't remember if the other one was also from Mines or not, but anyway, he had a best friend that was groomsman. I don't think there was anybody else at the wedding. It was in the patio of our house that we were living in at the time. And, afterwards, we had a barbecue. So that was it. The minister who married us... At the time, there was a lot of unrest in the South. Three ministers had gone south and one of them had gotten killed in some of the riots down there. The guy who married us was one of the other two. It was a very liberal ceremony. (laughs) But, um...

TM: Nice. Glen Canyon is coming, but before we get to Glen Canyon, this is Berkeley in the early 60s.

KP: Right.

TM: Can you tell me a little bit... At this time, I wasn't even 6 or 7. Can you tell a little bit about what was happening in the mindset of Berkeley at the time?

KP: Probably a little bit of anything you wanted to look for. Berkeley was very liberal. The free speech movement got started there, as I'm sure you're aware. What the public outside of the San Francisco Bay area knew about it, or at least the public that our respective families who were... His were in Denver and mine, at the time, was either in North Dakota or in eastern Oregon. The news they got didn't resemble anything at all that we on campus were aware of.

TM: Oh, interesting.

KP: I mean, all the really eye-catching things that happened got blown up and imagined way out of proportion in the newspapers around my family's parts of the world. I don't know what it was like, say, in New York or Houston or some of those big cities. They may have had more of the truth. There were a lot of demonstrations. In fact, for a while, essentially every day the main plaza on campus was full of protesters. Joan Baez lived nearby and she came up. The protesters trapped a police car in the plaza and, you know, just surrounded it and wouldn't move. If the police car wasn't going to run over several dozen people, it couldn't move either. So she came up and sat on top of the police car and sang to the group. Before she climbed up on the police car, she took off her shoes so she wouldn't scratch the car finish at all. One of the nights we were down there, the plaza was once again full, and they had some of the protesters trapped in Sproul Hall and had put paper over the windows because people were peeking in and seeing that they were not following the Geneva Convention rules for treating prisoners. The plaza was full. You could barely walk through. You had to "Excuse me. Pardon me. Can I get around." But after the protest decided to move to San Francisco, they announced, "Please, don't go and protest if you're a foreign student because it's going to be too hard for the police to get you out of jail. We can contact the families of American citizens and get things arranged much more easily, so please do everybody a favor and don't go if you're a foreign citizen." And they arranged, here's the number of pro bono attorneys to call and so forth. All very well organized. Then somebody stepped up and says, "We have four trucks here. We have a hundred garbage cans, 200 brooms and we'd like 200 people to volunteer to put anything in the plaza into the garbage cans and into the trucks." Phil and I had been sort of at the edge, and we started across the plaza to take a broom. By the time we got there, most of the garbage cans were already half-full and the brooms were all in use so we didn't do any sweeping up. But that plaza was spotless when we left. The students were not trashing the campus. They were not damaging anything. They were just sitting in Sproul Hall, the administration building. So, you know, a lot went on on campus, including a lot of studying and good research and wonderful things. And a lot of great hikes and caving trips, and so forth.

TM: Nice. That puts it in such a fascinating light.

KS: Yes.

TM: Again, as growing up, thinking about, oh, the California, the Berkeley riots, the Summer of Love, you know, LSD, all that sort of stuff. You don't realize that, you know, good research was happening, good education was happening, good political discourse.

KS: One the other hand, anybody on campus could get pot and LSD and peyote and whatever. I never had any. I never tried any. But if I had wanted to, I know where I could have acquired some. So there was that side of the campus, too.

TM: Right, right. Yeah.

KP: And there were... Oh, are you interested in the hiking club's extracurricular activities?

TM: Of course. (laughs)

KP: There were two that I feel are worth possibly telling about now because it's been, what, 40-50 years. I won't name any names, so I don't really think that any of these people can be identified.

TM: Mmm-hmm. Good.

KP: Shortly before I got there, the spring before I got there, I believe, the wheels... I don't know who in the university had decided on some regulations the students were really opposing. For almost two months, they very carefully planned a (laughs) retaliation. For example, one person in the club worked in the cafeteria at the dining hall there, and for a month someone else who had a large van would park in the parking spaces behind there. He'd come in fairly late at night, after the cafeteria was closed, and park his truck there overnight, and then get it out early in the morning. I'm sure the campus police watched him very carefully for a week or two or three. He did it for a month, give or take a day. I mean, don't take this too literally.

TM: Yeah.

KP: Someone had gotten copy of a speech that one of the university officials, one of the deans or somebody, had written, and made up copies of them. On the night they decided on, the group got into the library, and I'm not even sure nor do I really want to know how, I don't think there was a building on campus that the hiking club couldn't get into if they wanted to. In the big reading room hall, which had a lot of big, heavy tables with big impressive chairs, they arranged it as a dining hall. The guy who worked in the cafeteria took plates and silverware and glasses and so forth, passed them out the dining hall bottom door into the truck that had been parking there every day for a month and continued to do so again every day for a week after the event, so that the police wouldn't connect that truck with this event in the library. But they got dishes from the dining hall and the group had purchased food and mixed up salads and some sort of food, and chopped it in little pieces as if though it had been mostly eaten and smeared it all over the plates. Stuffed the reading room tables and the library with plates, napkins, a copy of the speech, and so forth and a rebuttal (laughs) from the hiking club, although they weren't identified as the hiking club, who was rebutting. In the morning, when the librarians arrived, here was what obviously had been an evening dinner, and the plates hadn't been cleared. So the library opened two hours late that day. I think the word of that never really got out. But it got out to the administration.

TM: I bet.

KP: That was one of their better ones. Another one was that somebody was, during the war, and I can't remember who was to be on campus speaking on I believe it was Easter Sunday. But, anyhow, a bunny appeared (laughs) on the tower, the top of the tower of the campanile. Unfortunately, the bunny didn't get organized as well as the other one had. It hadn't had a huge planning and so forth, so he came a day after the speaker had come and I don't think a connection was ever made there.

TM: Huh. So this was a pretty fascinating time it seems like to be on campus.

KP: It was.

TM: So, by this time, you had met Phil. Phil had been out to the Glen Canyon country. You know what? Can you talk about the first time Phil went out to Glen Canyon? When was that, and how did all that happen?

KP: It was their first long trip of the summer for the summer of '61. Just as soon as school was out, the hiking club usually organized something on the order of a two-week trip somewhere. And that one was a hiking trip. They were going to get into the Escalante River canyon and hike the various side canyons there.

TM: That area is known as The Maze. Is that right?

KP: No. The Maze is elsewhere.

TM: Over to Canyonlands side?

KP: Yeah.

TM: So further north, then. A little north and east. Okay.

KP: Yeah. No, it's quite different. Well, I guess at the time, they sort of knew that area was going to be flooded and wanted to get in. They knew a hiking route into the Escalante River, down a sloping slab of rock that was easy enough to take, that pack trains had been taken down it. They were positive of that because at the bottom of this sloping slab was the remains of a mule who hadn't been quite sure-footed enough.

TM: Oops.

KP: But it was a very wide area and easy enough to get into. Then there were what seemed to be interesting side canyons off of the Escalante. I believe the Sierra Club at the time knew about Cathedral in the Desert, and so the hiking club probably did, too. I mean, some of the hiking club members were also Sierra Club members.

TM: So the Cathedral in the Desert was a side canyon joining the Colorado River in Glen Canyon.

KP: Right.

TM: So they were hiking in that area.

KP: Yeah.

TM: Okay.

KP: So they were having, you know, just their usual exploratory hike in interesting country.

TM: Okay. Had any of them been there before?

KP: No. Well, if any of them had been there before (laughs), everybody would have been there by that time. I mean, it didn't take very long after they got there for them to know that it was terrific country. But they didn't yet know how terrific.

TM: Right. I mean, no one had been there before with the club, coming out from Berkeley.

KP: Yeah, that's what I mean.

TM: Okay. Yeah.

KP: If any of the hiking club had been there, they'd of all...

TM: They have been out there earlier. Sure.

KP: Right. I guess one of the reasons they decided to do that one that spring was because they knew that Glen Canyon Dam was going to be built and it was going to be flooded, and if they wanted to see it, they had to see it before it was flooded. So they got themselves down there and hiked in. I think that I have said...because my mind is getting old and it's a long time ago—that they parked on an airstrip at Crossing of the Fathers. But it wasn't at Crossing of the Fathers, it was Hole in the Rock. Which makes it really easy to get over to Davis Gulch. Well, the group had gotten so they sort of depended on Phil for route finding. He's an excellent route finder. There are stories about that, too. None of them took a map except Phil. Phil always took a map everywhere he went. But, at a lunch stop, he laid it down and asked somebody else... He didn't want to walk back for it, he said, "Will you bring my map? It's over there by the rock." So one of them picked up the map and came back. After they were hiking for the rest of the afternoon and got themselves back up to the cars, two people weren't there. The one with the map and his girlfriend. They didn't show up. They didn't show up for supper, and they didn't show up at bedtime. So, Phil disconnected, I guess, all the electricity to the headlights, except for, I don't know what lights they had, parking lights or something. Anyway, one that was bright enough to be seen down into the canyon, but not drain the car battery. So they left one car light on all night.

They had discussed at great length, apparently, on the way down and everywhere else, that there were absolutely no villages, farms, anything out here. Nothing with electricity. They figured they'll see this light and come up to it. They'll know it has to be us. And they didn't show up. Eventually a plane flew over and (laughs) apparently yelled at them, I think maybe even through a megaphone, "Get the hell off the runway!" (TM laughs) So, realizing what their nice parking spot had been they ran over and got the car off the runway. The plane got them help from the town of Escalante, got the sheriffs in the town of Escalante to come out and they started a search for the two missing people. The plane volunteered to help. And, of course, the group sent Phil up with the plane because he would be the one who could find what was on the ground and compare it to what was on the map and pinpoint it if they found the two missing people. So he got to fly all over that country.

TM: Wow.

KP: (laughs) Before they found the people, he knew he was coming back. But eventually... Have I told any of this to you before?

TM: No. Keep going.

KP: Okay. Eventually the guy showed up by himself. And the sheriff's party, the deputies, went and fetched him. When Phil and the pilot landed, one of them said to Phil, "You know, he's kind of flaky. We wonder if he may have fell and hit his head or be dehydrated or something." And Phil said, "He's always kind of flaky." (TM laughs) He wasn't anymore flaky than average, and he managed to tell them where

he had left the girl in the shade while he climbed up to try to find a way out. He was able to describe the place he'd left her well enough that the sheriff's deputies, who really did know that country fairly well, surprisingly, because almost never did we encounter anybody who did. Even the pilot who was flying over it didn't know it as well as they did. They went and fetched her, and all was well.

But Phil was hooked on this country and, you know, so were the others. They'd hiked down Davis Gulch, which was the way in. They'd been down to Clear Creek and seen Cathedral in the Desert, which the Sierra Club either learned about then or knew about already because they made it one of their regular stops. It is really something, or was. I think, actually, it's coming back. I think it's high enough up the Escalante that it wasn't too bad. They did Davis and they did Soda Gulch. They didn't do Willow Creek.

TM: I was thinking that in the spring of 1961, the Glen Canyon Dam was constructed enough that the bypass tubes were slowly closed and there was 1,000, I think, 1,000 cubic feet a second, which was allowed to continue to run, but everything else was retained. The impoundment behind the dam started then in that spring of '61. So there would have been a real push, I can see this kind of forming here, between anybody who suddenly realized, wow, we should check that out, to actually get out there and do it before, well, as the water was coming up.

KP: Yeah, and there's more to even that story.

TM: How's that?

KP: They started closing the tunnels slowly and they started experiencing serious cavitation. No, I better make this in order. They started closing the tunnels and the water started rising. And in the lower canyons, when we were there that autumn, we could see a large strip of silt along the edges of the river, down lower. So we knew how high the water had been rising. But then it stopped because the tunnels started experiencing cavitation, which was knocking them apart and they had to stop the flow through until they could get that sorted. So the water had come up, dropped silt, lots of silt, thick, gooey, terrible stuff, and then they had lowered the lake level again. We got down there while it was lower than it had been, but still coming up. So, they got down. No, that was still in spring of '62 they were still down.

TM: Yes. So that would make sense in that, not only was the dam choking off the river, but the river was going up for its normal spring runoff, and then drop back down again. So the rise in the river would have backed the reservoir back up a ways, but then the river would have dropped back down and the discharge kept happening. So that first impoundment and drop back down again, and you guys would have seen that in the spring of '62.

KP: I'm sure you're right, yeah. Because I was on the trip that we first saw the mud down there.

TM: I've seen some photographs of that. There's a picture of a fella named John Franklin Wright, and he's walking in this canyon with his shoestrings tied together and his shoes are draped around his chest there (KP laughs) and there's a silt pile behind him from that rise in '61, and then it dropped down again.

KP: Ah ha.

TM: So he and others, as well and you and Phil, were out there, saying goodbye. Looking, looking, trying to watch this incredible place and trying to document it as it was going through some major changes.

KP: Yeah. That's right. Absolutely. My memory has holes in it.

TM: No worries. No, you're doing great. So when you and Phil decided to go back to Glen Canyon and spend a considerable amount of time there, how did that discussion go? What were you guys thinking?

KP: Well, see as much of it as we could. The whole hiking club felt we should get down there and see as much of it as we could. So they planned a trip in, let's see, that would have been spring of '62, but I chose to go to Mexico, which was a bad choice. I could have gone—well, I probably couldn't have. I wouldn't have had someone who spoke Spanish, knew a station to go down there and spend a little time, and so forth. But I missed the first Glen Canyon boat trip. The club as a unit, were determined to get down there as much as they could. So they went every chance. Let's see, they went spring of '62, autumn of '62. Did we go on Thanksgiving? I can't remember. But Christmas of '62, we went for a two-week trip. (laughs) We left the minute classes were out and we could get in the cars, and we didn't get back until late the night before we had to go to our next class. The river froze while we were there. The big ice pads. We'll get along to that.

TM: Okay.

KP: We knew that Labyrinth was about to be flooded. With a name like Labyrinth, we had to see it. So we went down early '63. I can't remember what the holiday... Oh, it was just a weekend. We had a long weekend for some reason, probably in February, and we went down for just that one canyon. We hiked in and came back. So that was '63, spring of '63 after school was out. Phil and I...let's see, did we have anybody else with us?...went in '64. I think that was the Catamaran trip. I can't remember if we made one in...yeah, I guess we did...in '65. Somebody from the hiking club was down there a great deal of the time. There was also one other hiking trip, out of Hole-in-the-Rock that explored some of those canyons. Oh, and there was another Christmas trip that went to a different part of Glen Canyon. So the hiking club slides in general really covered that area.

TM: Yeah.

KP: And we had what were laughingly termed "slide orgies." (TM laughs) Anybody who had slides would come and bring them to wherever there was a projector and enough space for a lot of people to sit down. Some of them would last for more than 24 hours. Most people didn't stay for the whole thing. But the hiking club, if anybody could ever collect them, probably has a whopping good slide coverage of that area.

TM: You know, I realize I made a terrible mistake here because it was 1963 that the dam took over the river, not '61. That's my mistake. I'm sorry.

KP: Okay, well, I can remember seeing silt. Maybe it was when they had to start letting...

TM: They built a coffer dam upstream of the base of the construction site for the dam, and that started flooding back up into Glen Canyon, just that simple coffer dam. Then they sort of siphoned off the water from the bypass tubes. So there would have been some funky water management happening at the dam site that would have caused upstream inundation and then resurfacing up and down. And that would explain that, I think.

KP: Yeah, well, maybe we can figure it out by the time we've walked our way through the whole of Glen.

TM: Yes, yes. Okay.

KP: Where are we going next?

TM: Does this set the stage to wrap up Part 2 of this interview series, and then next time we will get our computers and we'll start going through the photographs. Because what it sounds like is your first time there would have been in...

KP: Fall of '62.

TM: But not the spring because you were down in Mexico.

KP: Right.

TM: But in the summer, autumn, Christmas...

KP: Yeah.

TM: Okay. So we could start looking at the pictures and you could say, "Well, this was the Christmas trip or this was the '63 trip or maybe the '64 trip, and we are in this canyon and this is what we saw." Does that sound like a plan?

KP: Sure.

TM: Okay. Before I turn off the machine here, is there anything else about this time period that you want to bring into this part of the interview?

KP: Boy. I can't think right offhand of anything. Most of what I chatter about probably isn't all that valuable, when you get right down to it, so...

TM: Well, I don't think that's for us to judge. (laughs) I'm always amazed at the things I learn. Thinking about Berkeley at the time, in the 1960s, and Glen Canyon. It's funny, on a 30,000-foot kind of level, the Glen Canyon Dam could be looked at as a byproduct of the concept of dominating nature. What was happening on the Berkeley campus was a struggle against that, was an awareness that the planet actually is more...first, if you will, global warning, or larger environmental consciousness that needed to be raised. Does that fit in the model here or am I being too simple?

KP: Oh, no! I think you're right on. Which is reminding me of various other things that were going on around, especially the Bay Area. The Sierra Club, you know, was headquartered there. Dave Brower lived not very far from Phil, and they knew each other well. When we first got married, Phil and I couldn't afford a whole house, but we had rented a big house and rented a room out to one of our friends. He worked a lot with a guy who was putting out an entirely different story on the water resources that were available and likely to remain available down there. That guy was spot on. There were so many misconceptions and just plain ignoring the facts that went into getting that dam approved, I'm surprised that it managed to do as well as it did.

TM: Well, the jury's still out. (laughs)

KP: Well, the jury's still out on what? The idea?

TM: Glen Canyon dam has made it this far, but its engineered life and its actual life may yet prove to be two different numbers.

KP: Well, as Phil was fond of saying, "There is she who must be obeyed."

TM: (laughs) That's right.

KP: Her name is Mother Nature and no matter what you do, you're going to go her way sooner or later.

TM: That's right.

KP: If you do it the way she directs you, you'll probably have a fairly easy time of it. And if you try to buck her, you'll regret it. Our roommate's friend knew that there wasn't enough water down there for what they were planning. And the economists knew that there wasn't enough demand for electricity for

what they were hoping for. It seemed that there was a strong push to build a dam, partly because Arizona needed an economic boost and this would bring a lot of jobs, at least temporarily.

TM: Right.

KP: At least for as long as the politicians were in office there. And it all was a miserable failure. Well, you need to get moving, I suspect.

TM: I do, and as do you. Well, okay, let's hold the line for a minute. This is going to conclude Part 2 of a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Keturah Pennington. My name is Tom Martin. Today is Monday, April 15th, 2019. Keturah, thank you very much.

KP: You bet.