

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee(s): Muriel Kanan and Mike Kanan

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Muriel talks about her time as a cabin maid and waitress at the North Rim lodge, Mike discusses his time as an organ player in the dining room at the North Rim lodge; 1959-1963

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TM: Today is Thursday, September 19, 2019. This is a Grand Canyon oral history interview that we are going to call Part 1 with Michael and Muriel Kanan. My name is Tom Martin. Good morning Mike and Muriel, how are you?

Muriel: We're good, thank you.

Mike: Good morning.

TM: Thank you so much for your willingness to be part of this oral history program. I'm gonna ask you one at a time, Mike, may I have your permission to record this interview?

Mike: Yes.

TM: Thank you. And Muriel, may I have your permission to record this interview?

Muriel: Yes.

TM: Thank you. Muriel, we had talked a little bit before turning the tape on here about starting this interview with you simply because you got to the North Rim first. What year were you born?

Muriel: What did you just say?

TM: I'm sorry. What year were you born?

Muriel: 1941.

TM: Where were you born?

Muriel: Ephraim, Utah.

TM: What were your parents doing there at the time?

Muriel: My father was working as a surveyor for the government.

TM: For the USGS?

Muriel: But just for a short time because he then was hired to go help build Geneva the United States Steel Company in Provo, Utah. He helped build it and then he stayed and worked there as a laborer. We moved then to Provo Utah when I was a year old.

TM: This is the big steel works that's just south of Salt Lake City?

Muriel: Yes, although it's now all gone. Everything is gone.

TM: Oh, really?

Muriel: Yes, but it was the main employer next to Brigham Young University in the Utah valley area there for probably, oh gosh, 60 years.

TM: Yes. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Muriel: I did, I had 6 brothers and 1 sister.

TM: Old/younger?

Muriel: I was right in the middle. Two older brothers, 1 older sister, 3 younger brothers. Actually 4 younger brothers, but 1 died very young.

TM: Did you guys camp out much when you were young? On weekends did you go out and around or were you pretty much just in town there?

Muriel: Just in town.

TM: Then, how was it that you ended up heading to the North Rim?

Muriel: We had a cousin and neighbor who went down. She graduated from high school to work at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. Once she got down there she called my brother, my second oldest brother, and said there was an opening if he wanted to come down and work there as well. His name was Richard. So he did. He went down there and worked for 2 or 3 summers.

TM: What year was that that he first went down there? Do you remember?

Muriel: Yes, give me one second. I went in '59... He was there I'm going to say the summer of '55. Interesting point here, he was working there at the North Rim the summer the two United States planes crashed into each other over the North Rim of the Grand Canyon.

TM: 1956.

Muriel: Yes. I think it was either '55 or '56. He would have worked there other years, but he developed a brain tumour and died.

TM: I'm sorry.

Muriel: Yup. He called when my sister graduated from high school and said, "Get on the bus and come down to Cedar City and I'll give you a ride out to the North Rim," and she was hired on.

TM: What year was that?

Muriel: That would have been in '56.

TM: Okay, that same year of the crash.

Muriel: No, she wasn't there for the crash. I guess '57.

TM: Okay, that would make sense.

Muriel: Although I have talked with her and she would be willing to be interviewed if you want to call her sometime.

TM: Oh fun, what's her name?

Muriel: Mariba.

TM: Thank you, okay. So, you had two siblings that were working there. Did they tell you stories of their summer adventures there?

Muriel: Oh yes, they loved it, they both did, yes. Then I had a younger brother after who came down and worked with us also. We can get to that later. His name is Bob.

TM: Okay. Were you thinking in high school that you wanted to go on to college? What were you thinking?

Muriel: College was something my father pretty much talked to us about from the time I can remember. We just lived down the street from Brigham Young University. He did not go to college, had wanted to but money wasn't available for him so he wanted all of his kids to and I think we all did. So yes, I always expected to go to BYU when I graduated from high school.

TM: What were you thinking you wanted to study there?

Muriel: I had thought I wanted to be a social worker. Then my dad sat me down and talked to me and said, "Social work is really hard, why don't you be an elementary school teacher because that means you'll also be a social worker." I really had done lots of childcare growing up and loved my brothers and sisters and thought that would be fun. That is what I became. I became an elementary school teacher and taught for 30 years.

TM: Oh wow, nice.

Muriel: It was, it was wonderful.

TM: Just kind of wanted to touch base and see what people were thinking when they headed out for their work careers, too, especially in the summer. You graduated from high school then in 1959?

Muriel: Correct.

TM: Did you spend any time in Provo before you headed to the North Rim or did you just finish graduation and off you went?

Muriel: Finished graduation and off I went.

TM: Tell me about the travel. What do you remember about that from 1959, getting to the North Rim?

Muriel: My sister called. She said as soon as she got down there she would talk with the manager and see if he could get me on. As soon as she got down there, she did. I was working at the local movie theatre and I'd been out maybe a week or two when they called and said, "Come on down!" So, I got on the Trailways bus there in Provo and took it to Cedar City, Utah and then got on a Parks bus out to the North Rim.

TM: Was that your first time there?

Muriel: No, I had gone down with a neighbor across the street, when my sister got her on as well, when I was a freshman in high school. In those days it was 9th grade in junior high. Her family invited me to ride with them to take her down and they drove her to the North Rim to the campground. She worked in the campground, the Inn as we called it. They invited me to ride with them to drop her off and get her settled and then I rode back home with them.

TM: So that would have been '57?

Muriel: No, that would have been '56.

TM: What do you remember about that first trip there, 1956?

Muriel: Oh, just how gorgeous it was. Big ponderosa pine trees everywhere. Quite isolated. We stopped at Jacob Lake and I thought that was exciting. We went through the tunnel at Zion going back for a little bit of extra trip. Seeing all the young people there working was just exciting to me. Because that's mostly who was there in those days were kids working their way through college.

TM: Working for the summer.

Muriel: Right.

TM: Did you go back again then between '56 and '59?

Muriel: No.

TM: So, you got on the Trailways bus, went down to Cedar City and then got on the Parks bus.

Muriel: The Utah Parks bus take what we call the dudes, the sightseers. Usually they just put you on a seat. I think we stopped in Zion and had lunch and then on to the North Rim, something like that.

TM: You would have been assigned housing. There was a dorm there, wasn't there, a women's dorm?

Muriel: Yeah. There was a girl's dorm and a boy's dorm. My sister made arrangements for me to be in a room with three other girls. We just hit it right off. All four of us worked the rest of the summer together and thought they were wonderful. It was just a wonderful, fun experience.

TM: What did you do that first summer?

Muriel: A cabin maid.

TM: What did that entail?

Muriel: Getting up early each morning.

TM: Like 4:00, 3:00?

Muriel: No. I think we had to be where Mabel was, where we were to meet to get our assignments, by 7:00. Maybe even by 7:30 because we got to get up and be at the kitchen by 6:30 if we wanted breakfast. Meals were provided.

TM: Walk me through your day. What was the kitchen like? What was the food like?

Muriel: It was basically what they fed in the dining room. We also got to eat in the dining room. I think you actually had to be in the dining room by 6:00 if you wanted to eat because you had to be finished by 6:30 because the dining room opened up for guests by 7:00. We ate out in the dining room. Sometimes it'd be pancakes, sometimes it'd be cold cereal, sometimes it'd be hot cereal, eggs, different things each day. The same people who cooked for the guests, what we called the dudes, cooked for us.

TM: That sounds yummy.

Muriel: You know what it was. Everything tasted good because it was such a wonderful setting.

TM: So you got to look out the big windows there?

Muriel: Yes, absolutely. Then your work day started. I think we had to be on task by 7:00. We'd show up at the cabin where Mabel, I can't think of her last name, was the cabin mother, the cabin maids mother in that sense. She would give us a sheet of paper that would show us which cabins we were to clean that day, that morning. Usually we worked until about 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon. All the things you expect to be done in a motel room. Change the bedding, sweep and mop the floors, the floors were all linoleum, and clean the bathrooms, and dust what there was to dust. We had little carts we pushed around that had the clean linens. The linen hutch as we called it, would show up. Then Mabel and assistants to her would come through and check and be sure you had done everything that you were supposed to do. You worked with a friend. You could choose who you worked with of the cabin maids.

TM: Who did you work with?

Muriel: Her name was Kathy Lloyd and she was from Salt Lake City. It was the first time I had met her and we became cabin maid partners.

TM: How many cabins would you typically clean a day, do you remember?

Muriel: I wish I had journaled all of this and kept this all written down. I honestly can't tell you. Probably 12?

TM: Yep, okay. Each cabin had two beds or four beds?

Muriel: They differed. Sometimes you had adjoining cabins, two cabins that share a bathroom in the middle. Actually, Dick has probably told you this, when Mike and I went back married he lived on one side of the bathroom and we lived on the other and the three of us shared the bathroom.

TM: That's right, yeah!

Muriel: We worked our little ways to let each other know who needed it and what time. I never cleaned over in the deluxe cabin side unless I was sent over there in an emergency or something. I always just did the standard cabins because by the end of the summer I got to become a waitress. But I did love the cabin maid, it was fun but there just wasn't as much earnings. Sometimes there was a single bed, sometimes there was a double bed and a single bed, sometimes two single beds. Sometimes a cabin included the bathroom and sometimes it didn't.

TM: So that was a good day's work there.

Muriel: It was, yeah.

TM: And you had to keep moving. Did you get a chance to break for lunch?

Muriel: Yes. Then, I believe we ate in the kitchen because, of course, the guests would be eating lunch in the dining room. And the same thing, it was whatever they were serving for lunch. I think we got to choose, too, but we ate in the kitchen.

TM: Would that be the same then for dinner because they were serving the guests?

Muriel: Golly how did that work? How it worked, unlike the usual restaurant, they were just open for two hours at a time and then we'd clean up between. So yes, we were able to go in and have lunch in the dining room between 11:00 and 12:00 and then they would serve from 12:00 to 2:00. So, we probably could be from 11:00 to a quarter to 12:00, something like that, because we had to be out so the waitresses could set up their tables for the lunch guests. Dinner was the same way. We probably ate dinner from 5:00 to 6:00 and the dining room opened from 6:00 to 8:00.

TM: Alright, that makes sense. I'm curious about the laundry. Was that sent to a larger town for washing and drying and steaming and ironing and all that stuff, or did you guys actually have a laundry onsite? Do you remember?

Muriel: I believe there was a laundry onsite, not that we ever did it. Do you remember that Mike? I don't think the laundry went out, I think there was a laundry onsite.

TM: Dick wasn't sure about that and I didn't know either. That's a lot of laundry.

Muriel: Oh, it's a ton. You know what there must have been laundry trucks, there must have been.

TM: That would make sense.

Muriel: I will check with my sister the next time we talk. I think she was more observant about those kinds of things than I was. She was older.

TM: Were you working 5 days a week or 6 or 7 days a week? How many days a week were you on?

Muriel: I believe 6, you got 1 day off a week.

TM: What did you do on your day off?

Muriel: Oh, you know, you do your laundry, wash your clothes, clean your room, read. Lots of girls would go out and sunbathe by the dorm. I didn't. I had red hair and fair skin and burned easily. Hiking, lots of hiking.

TM: Where did you hike?

Muriel: Everywhere, everywhere. I never went across the canyon, Mike did and he can talk to you about that when he did it. But any trails we could find. Out to Angel Point, hike from the lodge to the Inn on backroads/back trails, and we had a softball team. We played softball and we played each other. The lodge would play the Inn crew and then we'd play the Bryce team and we'd play the Zion team. They would come on a bus and we'd go there. Then there were dances and activities and fire sites and movies. We all were expected to participate in the programs. We'd play the piano, sing songs, dance. Again, you'll find out when you interview Mike. Mike wrote some of the programs that they used for a number of years.

TM: Yeah, Dick mentioned some songs.

Muriel: Yeah, he put together and Old South Show, a Grand Show, and then there was always the Variety show. There was a good relationship between the park rangers and the bus drivers that brought in the guests. Everyone got along. As far as I know there was minimal if ever any trouble.

TM: Do you remember who your dorm mom was? Mabel, I think.

Muriel: Mabel was over the linens and the cabin mother. The dorm mother, I can feature her face perfectly but the name is not there.

TM: What else do you remember about her?

Muriel: She was kind and very uninterested, not bossy. Supportive and always there walking up and down the halls checking and being aware as we came in and out. There were curfew hours, I think we had to be in by 10:30. They inspected the dorms regularly for cleanliness and would award... The manager would come through and pick the room that looked the best and you'd get a free Sunday night dinner. Steak if that's what you wanted, or prime rib. As far as I know everyone seemed to keep their rooms clean. We all shared the bathroom in the dorm and it was always clean and nice. And you know for me, it was my first experience of living with a variety of different people. I grew up in a solid Mormon community. It was just really a wonderful experience to live and work and interact with people of different faiths and from different parts of the country and different expectations, going to different colleges and experiences. It was great.

TM: Oh, wonderful. It kind of got you associated with a more global community?

Muriel: Absolutely. Like Dick, Dick and I became very close friends.

TM: Before we leave this, I want to go back to the hiking. Did you walk down to Roaring Springs and what today is now the Cottonwood Campground?

Mike: Yes.

Muriel: Yes, Mike and I went down. Did we go any farther than Roaring Springs, Mike, or was that it?

Mike: No, I think that was it.

Muriel: After we were married he wanted to see if I could walk across the canyon with him so we just did an experience down at Roaring Springs and we knew that would be as far as I could go. I could walk from here to New York City, Kentucky to New York, but I can't go up and down steep hills. But yes, I did go down to Roaring Springs and loved it.

TM: Did you walk the Widforss Trail there?

Muriel: I think we did, yes.

TM: And you mentioned out to Angels Gate/Angels Landing.

Muriel: Angels Point.

TM: Angel Point, that's Cape Royal.

Muriel: Yes. Angels Point is right just below the lodge there at the North Rim, but we went out to Cape Royal and what's the other one Mike?

Mike: Point Sublime.

Muriel: And Point Sublime.

TM: Now to get to Point Sublime you'd have to drive out there.

Muriel and Mike: Yes.

TM: How did you get out there? Who had a car?

Muriel: Sometimes we took a tour bus. They let us ride with... I think my first summer I did Mike, they let us ride with them. But you would borrow each other's cars.

TM: Were they taking tour buses all the way out to Point Sublime?

Muriel: Yes.

Mike: Really?

Muriel: Out to Point Sublime and out to Cape Royal.

Mike: No, no. Point Sublime is different than the other point that's out by Cape Royal. Point Imperial.

Muriel: Yeah, yeah, forget Sublime it was Point Imperial.

Mike: There were no buses that went to Sublime.

TM: Because it's quite a ways west and it's pretty rugged out there.

Muriel: Yeah, that was my mistake.

TM: But it's a gorgeous place and well worth the trip. So it wouldn't surprise me that you guys went all the way out there to Point Sublime out west. Dirt roads.

Muriel: Did we ever, Mike?

Mike: Yes, you and Dick and I went out. I have pictures of it.

Muriel: Oh, that's right. Yeah, we did, yeah.

TM: Dick also mentioned that you were certainly encouraged, or could, get on the buses, I guess, that would go to the viewpoints out over the House Rock Valley out to the east there.

Muriel: Yes, and you could even ride into Kanab if you wanted to if you wanted to do some shopping or just get away and go to Parry's Lodge for lunch or dinner. Then you'd catch a ride back with the next tour bus coming back.

TM: What do you remember about Parry's Lodge in Kanab?

Muriel: That we all just thought they had wonderful hamburgers, juicy wonderful hamburgers, and it was attractive and fun. I'd get away from kind of the 24/7 experience at the North Rim.

TM: Did you get a chance to visit with your parents that summer or were you writing letters to them?

Muriel: I didn't write letters but my dad and his wife, my mom had died and he'd remarried, came down and visited us at the Grand Canyon each summer that we worked there.

TM: Oh, that's fun. Was that neat to see him there?

Muriel: Say that again, I'm sorry.

TM: I would assume that would have been enjoyable to have your dad there and visiting.

Muriel: He loved it because interestingly enough my father worked at Bryce Canyon as a young man himself before he was married. He was a cook. So to have us work at the Canyon was very meaningful to him. As it turns out, my next to youngest brother didn't work at the North Rim like the rest of us did, but he worked at Bryce.

TM: How old was your father when he worked at Bryce Canyon?

Muriel: He was born in '13, 1913. It was just right out of high school.

TM: Was Utah Parks running Bryce at the time?

Muriel: I don't know.

TM: Well, very fun that he got down there.

Muriel: Would've been in the late 20s.

TM: Were your brothers and sisters working at the North Rim when you were there?

Muriel: My older sister and one of my younger brothers and I. The three of us were there at the same time.

TM: Nice. So no chance for being homesick.

Muriel: No.

TM: Do you remember any unique things that happened while you were cleaning the cabins in any way? I mean, I'm not sure what to ask.

Muriel: That's a good question. If you could know then what you know now, you'd have paid more attention and made better recordings and I could probably tell you dozens of unique things. No, cleaning the cabins was pretty regular for me.

TM: And then you mentioned the end of that summer of '59 you changed jobs. Is that right?

Muriel: Yes, at the end of '59 I was able to become a waitress. My sister always looked out for me and she talked to the maître D' who was Al. I can't think of Al's last name. He was very professional compared to the rest of us. All the rest of us were college kids in the dining room, but he was older. I'd say he was probably in his 50s or 60s, and very efficient and very...

Mike: He has been a steward on the railroads.

Muriel: Okay good, right, right. He ran it all very professionally, Al. Al liked my sister because she was a very good worker. So when she mentioned to him when opening came up could her sister come

and try being a waitress, he let me. So I was able to transfer from being a cabin maid to being a waitress.

TM: What do you remember about that job?

Muriel: Being a waitress? Absolutely loved it.

TM: Why?

Muriel: It's so much fun to meet so many different people and to learn how to serve and interact with people. Not only for the fun of it, not just for the tip but just the wonderful experience. On each of the tables, whichever tables you were assigned, you had cards made up that said Muriel Kanan, I mean Muriel Judd first three years, at your service, Brigham Young University. And on the tables once Mike came were the cards Mike Kanan, requests appreciated at the organ, University of Iowa.

TM: Oh, fun. So the people that were there at the table, they knew who you were.

Muriel: Yes, because of that. So, they were aware that that meant... We all hoped that meant they'd be more inclined to leave a bigger tip knowing you're working your way through college.

TM: You know, I forgot something. Let's go back to the cabin maids again. Dick had mentioned some songs, some sing-aways...

Muriel: Oh, thank you for that, yes.

TM: As cabin maids were you a part of that?

Muriel: Yes.

TM: How did that work?

Muriel: When the buses honked the horns everybody who could, the wood boys, the cooks, the waitresses, the cabin maids, the bellhops, the desks, everybody who could were to come out in front and stand in kind of a semi-circle. A program director had been hired each year we were there and she would stand out in front and lead us in songs that would send the guests off.

TM: What would you sing?

Muriel: Let's see, oh goodness.

Mike: I have it.

Muriel: Mike has that all written down.

TM: Super! I'd love to hear some of the verses.

Muriel: They were all original songs that someone had put together years before and you learned them as soon as you got there. We all put our arms around each other, stood in a half circle arm in arm. [sings] "We're the crew and we work for you and we'll have our fun when the day is done! We all go rimmin'" [spoken] Those kinds of words.

TM: Do you guys have those written down?

Muriel: Yes.

Mike: Yes. Actually, am I turned on here?

TM: Yes, you are.

Mike: We went to a reunion a few years back and they handed out copies of all this music.

TM: Wow, great!

Muriel: Someone had gone to a lot of work.

Mike: So, Dick may have that.

TM: Well maybe next time we talk, if you could find those between now and then and just read them out to me that'd be great.

Muriel: Do you have them there, Mike?

Mike: I have all of the music and the words for the Grand Show but not the sing-aways.

Muriel: We'll get the sing-aways, we'll get all that put together for the next time we talk.

TM: That'd be great! I'd love to hear the words to that, that'd be really fun. Muriel, you mentioned wood boys and a whole list of other people and I'm like wait a minute, what's a wood boy?

Muriel: Well, they were hired to chop wood and have it stacked in the deluxe cabins who had their own fireplaces. They don't have those anymore but they did then. It'd be their job to chop wood and put it in wheelbarrows and take them to the deluxe cabins and stack them on the porch, I think.

TM: That would be nice in the cool of the morning just to cut the chill.

Muriel: And there were kids who worked at... Where did Diana work Mike?

Mike: At the curio shop, or no, at the fountain.

Muriel: There was a soda fountain and a curio shop. Those workers would all come out, the curio girls and the fountain workers, if you possibly could get away from work.

TM: Would the busboys and the front desk clerks, would those people try to get in there as well?

Muriel: Yes, it was expected. The bellhops, everyone was expected. We all became such good friends and became friends with the rangers and the... What were they called Mike that took the donkeys down?

Mike: The wranglers?

Muriel: Yeah, the wranglers.

TM: Do you remember the names of any of those people?

Mike: I don't.

Muriel: No, isn't that sad?

TM: No worries. The sing-away sounds like just such a lot of fun. I definitely would like to get the verses there. Shifting then to waiting tables, those are big trays you got to carry and the plates are really heavy!

Muriel: They were. It was hard work. You loaded entrees maybe for 4 or 5 or 6 people. Loaded them on top of those big silver trays and put them up under your hand and carried them out. Really there were very few accidents. I had one but most people, the busboys and the waitresses, were able to handle it.

TM: I was gonna ask, did you get any practice at handling a tray before you went live?

Muriel: Well, the waitresses helped each other, yes. If you went in new, they helped you. Before people showed up in the morning or between breakfast and lunch you might stay after the guests were all gone and ask for suggestions and they'd show you and help you. Everyone was very cooperative and helpful.

TM: Did you have a tray jack? You'd try to catch the tray in the tray jack and run it out there and put the jack down and then put the tray down? Is that how that would work?

Muriel: The tray jacks would be standing by the setup tables. A busboy would see you coming, might hurry and open one, or you might open one before you left to go in the kitchen to get your tray. People kind of kept an eye on each other and they'd be there for you.

TM: Yeah, it sounded like it was quite a team effort.

Muriel: It was. As I said, it was expected that everybody would come and be a part of the programs. After work we would practice, and then we'd all sing together and dance together and play together. There was a lot of camaraderie.

TM: You mentioned dropping a tray once. Was it loaded with dishes or was it loaded with...?

Muriel: The food, it was the whole works. It was the entrees with the lids. Meat and potatoes and gravy, vegetables. It all went everywhere.

TM: And then it's a quick clean-up and order goes back in again, and apologies to the table because they're gonna have to wait.

Muriel: Right, and everyone was always very nice.

TM: Nice, nice. You minimize that and then life goes on. Was there a change in your status coming from a cabin maid to a waitress? Was that a step up?

Muriel: It was, it was a step up. Not only did you make better money but it meant you probably had been there a year or two so you had seniority.

TM: And I'm assuming there was tips there?

Muriel: Yes, and let me just parenthetically add, most of the waitresses had probably been cabin maids before or had worked at the Inn as cabin maids or waitresses. It was a promotion, if you will, to go to the position of waitress, yes.

Mike: The maître D's last name was Beck.

Muriel: Al Beck. And Tom, Mike showed me a page here of the sing-away lyrics and what we'll do is make a copy and mail it to you.

TM: That'd be great! Would you mind to just sing it right now?

Muriel: The older song was, "We're the crew and we work for you but we have our fun when the day is done. We can't go swimmin' so we all go rimmin' and rimmin' don't mean lookin' at the scenery. So come on dudes, we'll show you our heaven but we gotta be back to the door by 11:30. Hurry along, singin' a song, meet ya at the old grand rim, grand rim!"

TM: Bravo!

Muriel: And then another one was, "All aboard, it's time to go! All aboard, it's time to go! Time to go, time to go, all aboard it's time to go! With a hey and a hi and a ho ho ho, all aboard it's time to go! Suns gonna shine, grand makes it so, with a hey and a hi and a ho ho ho. Singing so long, it's been good to know you. So long, it's been good to know you. So long, it's been good to know you, it's a long time since you've been home," and the boys come in, "since you've been home," And we all go, "and you've gotta be rollin' along! I wanna be a friend of yours mm a little bit more, I wanna be a pal of yours mm a little bit more, I wanna be a bumble bee buzzin' around your door, then I'll have all this comin' to me and mm a little bit mm a little bit mm a little bit more! I wanna have a big red moon mm a little bit more, I wanna have a log on the rim mm a little bit more, I wanna have a handsome dude I won't ask for any more, then I'll have all this comin' to me and mm a little bit mm a little bit mm a little bit more! We'll build a bonfire out on the rim, out in the moonlight sittin' on the old grand rim, grand rim. Don't be afraid, dear, you won't fall in, you're safe with me, dear, out on the old grand rim, grand rim." And then, "When evening shadows fall, we love grand best of all. We love her whispering pines and we wanna be there all the time, and when the pale moon beams somehow it always seems we'll see grand in our dreams when evening shadows fall." That's the ones we did.

TM: Bravo! Oh, that's gorgeous!

Mike: That's about the whole thing, isn't it?

Muriel: Yeah. There was one more here but I don't remember doing it.

Mike: Yeah, I saw that, too.

TM: And that's the sing-away song?

Muriel: Uh huh, yep.

TM: Nice, very fun!

Muriel: It brought us all close together, you know? It was just nice.

TM: So lots of collegiality.

Muriel: Mm hmm.

TM: As a waitress, today at the South Rim and the North Rim those jobs are one of the most lucrative jobs because the tips pay an awful lot. Was that the case then?

Muriel: The tips were good and we always shared with the busboys. You'd count your total up and then I can't remember, give a certain percentage to the busboys. But the tips were good. Very seldom were you what we called flatted. There was no place to spend your money. You could just send it all home from the post office and room and board. It was a good way to work and make money and save.

TM: And save up some money during the summer, nice. So that summer of '59 you would have met Dick, Dick Hingson.

Muriel: Yup, it was the summer we met, yep.

TM: Alright. As you got ready to go at the end of that first year in '59, were you there up to closing?

Muriel: Yes. We didn't help close, others stayed behind and helped close. We rode the buses out back to Cedar City and on the train and back to Salt Lake City where my father picked us up.

TM: Oh, you took the train back, didn't get the Trailways bus?

Muriel: Nope, got to take the train. My sister got to take the train down the first time. The summer she called and got me on she'd taken the train down. The next summer when I went down and my younger brother went with me my father took us to the train in Salt Lake City. We took the train out to Lund, Utah, which is just outside of Cedar, right, and then rode buses to the North Rim.

TM: And that was in 1960?

Muriel: Yes.

TM: Okay. The winter of '59/'60, this is your first year at BYU, is that right?

Muriel: Yes.

TM: How did that go?

Muriel: Very well. I mean, college was a bit of a shock because I didn't ever take studying all that seriously in high school. I wish I had of course. But it went very well, yeah.

TM: Okay, so you actually had to do some studying. Read the books and write the papers.

Muriel: Right, and BYU at that time was on a quarter system so it was fast. It was classes every day and the year just zipped.

TM: So were there two quarters in the fall and two in the spring with summer off? Is that how that would work?

Muriel: Mm hmm.

TM: Okay, wow, alright. When you left in '59 did you talk to the managers there and say, "I'd like to come back next year"?

Muriel: I think that was just kind of an understanding. Everybody thought they would be back the next year, but I think we had to let them know in the spring we were coming back.

TM: Okay, so it would be in a way reapply again.

Muriel: Yeah, and maybe it was just by phone. Maybe you just called Lamar Snyder.

TM: What do you remember about Lamar?

Muriel: We liked him a lot. I remember his wife ran the post office I think, or at least was there a lot.

TM: What was her name?

Mike: Gail.

Muriel: Gail, yeah.

TM: What do you remember about the Snyders?

Muriel: They pretty much let you do what you were supposed to do. You could go to his presence. You'd walk through the kitchen, you'd walk through the dining room, you'd walk through the cabin area and visit. Gail was very friendly. He was your boss and you knew that and you tried to look especially good when he was there. Just very nice, felt good about it. Honestly Mike, was he there all the summers you were there? We he there '60 through...?

Mike: Yes.

Muriel: Yeah, I think he was.

TM: Okay, let's then go into 1960. This is the year you met Mike, is that right?

Muriel: Right, mm hmm. Mike came to play the organ.

TM: Okay, so Mike, I'm gonna spin around and ask you, what year were you born?

Mike: 1939.

TM: Where?

Mike: Washington, DC.

TM: What were your folks doing in Washington DC?

Mike: They both worked for the government.

TM: Doing what?

Mike: My mother was a secretary in the Internal Revenue Service and my father worked for the General Accounting Office.

TM: How long had they been in DC?

Mike: They moved there in the late 20s and I think they were married there in 1930.

TM: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Mike: No.

TM: Did you go to high school there in Washington?

Mike: No, when I was in the 6th grade we moved to Chillicothe, Missouri.

TM: What took your parents there?

Mike: His brother was in the insurance business there and so he joined his brother in insurance and my mother then worked in the office with them.

Muriel: And your grandparents were nearby.

Mike: Yeah, and my father's parents were about 35 miles away in Cameron.

TM: What was growing up in Chillicothe like?

Mike: Oh, a nice small town. A good experience.

Muriel: How big was it, Mike? About 13,000?

Mike: 9,000.

Muriel: 9,000.

TM: Oh my, so that's pretty small compared to Provo.

Mike: Yeah.

TM: Did you get out on weekends? Were you into exploring and hiking and camping kind of thing?

Mike: No. I don't remember anything like that.

Muriel: But I will say, almost since the time he could walk Mikes been very much into musical things. Plays the piano, French horn, played for the Iowa marching band that went to the Rose Bowl.

TM: Wow, what was your instrument of choice?

Mike: Piano.

Muriel: But he also plays the piano, the organ, and plays everywhere. Plays for funerals and weddings. Played at Little America in Flagstaff for Mother's Day and holidays.

TM: So, in the marching band, I'm sorry, what did you play?

Mike: The altonium.

TM: What's that?

Mike: It looks like a very small tuba. About the size, I guess, of a trumpet only it was shaped like a tuba. That's what, this was in the 1950s, what people who played French horn played altonium in the marching band.

TM: Okay, nice. Were you thinking that you were gonna go to college then after high school?

Mike: Yes.

TM: Were you thinking to do that in music?

Mike: No, I didn't really know what I wanted to do.

TM: Okay, normal.

Mike: Yeah.

TM: How was it that you ended up in 1960... Well let's see, what year did you graduate from high school?

Mike: 1957.

TM: Okay, and then what did you do from '57 to '60?

Mike: I went to the University of Iowa.

Muriel: Where'd you work summers?

Mike: Oh, is that what you're asking me?

TM: Yeah.

Mike: I was a lifeguard at the pool in Chillicothe in the summers.

TM: Did you like to swim?

Mike: Yeah.

TM: What were you studying in university? Were you just taking general courses or did something come together?

Mike: Yes. Well, sociology eventually came together and that's what I ended up majoring in.

TM: How did you hear that there was a job way out west?

Muriel: It's a very interesting story.

Mike: We had good friends from Washington DC, one of them was a judge. They would go out west in the summertime and often stop by in Chillicothe on their way out or their way back just to say hello because they had been good friends in Washington. In the summer of 19-, let's see, I guess about '58 or '59, they stopped by on the way back to Washington and said they had just spent a week at the North Rim and that there was an organ in the dining room there. They knew I played around a little. They said, "You know, you ought to apply for that job and get that job." So, I kind of stashed that away in my head. That was at the end of a summer, and the next summer I continued to work at the pool. Then in the middle of the winter, that next winter, I decided I needed to try it, try going out there. So, I just wrote a letter out and said I was interested and they sent me a train ticket back.

TM: Wow. Had you ever been west of the Mississippi?

Mike: Well, while I was in Iowa I was in the marching band and at the season 1958-59, Iowa won the Big 10 championship and so we were going to be playing in the Rose Bowl. Santa Fe was the sponsor of taking the band which at that time was all males. There was an all-female group at the University of Iowa called the Scottish Highlanders. So the band and the Scottish Highlanders, Santa Fe provided

a train with I call them sleepers. What were they? Pullman cars. We had to give up that Christmas vacation. We went down to Fort Madison Iowa; it was where the Santa Fe goes through Iowa. That's the only place they go through Iowa back in those days. The school took us down on buses and put us on the train. We went out then to Pasadena and did all of the things out in Los Angeles. We were out at Disneyland I think only the 3rd year they were open. Then on the way back, let's see, the train stopped and took that trip up from Williams up to the South Rim. We were then at the South Rim just for a couple or three hours that day. That was my first experience to see the Grand Canyon, actually to see a lot of the west, and then came back. So I had been to the South Rim. That was January 4th, I think, of 1959 that the train went up to the South Rim.

TM: What were your thoughts? First time you walk up the edge, you look out there and...

Mike: Oh yeah, it's always awe inspiring. Where the organ sat in the dining room was right at the head of the stairs that goes down into the sunroom. I was either playing for lunch or for dinner. In between songs people would arrive, either on buses or in their own cars, and they'd come in the lodge. You couldn't really see much from the road driving up to the North Rim, but they'd park and then they'd come in to the lodge. When they walked across the lobby you could see that sunroom down there and then those huge windows on the sunroom that opened on to the canyon. Daily, people would just gasp, they would just lose their breath. That was the same kind of feeling I had and I just would hear that over and over again.

Muriel: Can I just parenthetically add at this point that Mike always played Grofe's Grand Canyon Suite at sunset.

TM: I was gonna ask you what you played. What was your favorite piece there by the organ looking down on the sunroom and then out to the Canyon beyond? What really inspired you there?

Mike: Well, I got there in the summer of 1960. I had just taken a bunch of books doing showtunes and things like that. After I was there just a week I realized I needed a copy of the Grand Canyon Suite. I also needed more music. So I wrote back to my folks and had them go to the music store in Chillicothe and get me what are called fake books.

TM: What are those?

Mike: They got me two fake books. Each one has about 1000 songs in it.

TM: Wow!

Mike: Also a copy of the Grand Canyon Suite. When that music arrived I took 2 or 3 hours that day or the next day learning On the Trail, are you familiar with that?

TM: No.

Mike: Are you familiar with Phillip Morris cigarettes?

TM: Well only that they exist.

Mike: There used to be an ad on the radio and television and it showed a kind of a bellhop type character stepping out into the room saying, "Call for Phillip Morris." In the background they played On the Trail from the Grand Canyon Suite there. I figured that was the part of the Grand Canyon Suite that most of the people were familiar with because that was of course in 1960 and everybody was smoking then so that people were familiar with that. As Muriel says, I then got to playing that as the sun would set.

TM: Let's back up a minute, Mike, because I ran ahead a little too fast. You wrote Utah Parks and said, "Hey, I hear you have an organ there at the lodge and I'd like to play it for the summer."

Mike: Yeah.

TM: Did they not have anybody playing it there?

Mike: They did. Actually, it was I think just as well that I didn't write the year that our friends from Washington suggest I write, because that year they had someone.

Muriel: His last name was Kimball I think.

Mike: Yeah, it might've been. Because they had someone they wouldn't have... You know, you only have one organ there so they wouldn't have needed... I happened to write just at a time when that job opened up. I was writing in January so they knew about by then, probably, that they weren't gonna have someone. They, of course, had never heard me play, didn't know whether I could even manage it or not, they asked for no references.

TM: They were trusting.

Mike: Yeah, it impresses me now that I think about it.

TM: You wouldn't have taken the Santa Fe because that would've landed you on the South Rim. How did you get out there?

Mike: They sent me a train ticket. Remember the North Rim and Zion and Bryce and Cedar Breaks were all run out of Cedar City...

Muriel: They were a package.

Mike: ...and the thing was called the Utah Parks Company, and that's UP, Union Pacific. So, what they sent me was a train ticket from Omaha, Nebraska to Lund, Utah, where I would get off the train. I had to take a Wabash train from Chillicothe overnight. I got on about 1 o'clock in the morning and got up to Council Bluffs probably around 5 o'clock in the morning that morning. Took that Wabash train up to Council Bluffs. Had to locate a taxi to take me across the river to the Union Pacific depot and picked up the train there.

TM: So, it sounds like quite the grand adventure.

Mike: It was. As I think back on it, I'm a little amazed.

TM: You must have been put in a dorm kind of like Muriel, sort of the boy's dorm, is that how that worked?

Mike: I was, yes. I think I was there that whole year of 1960. That whole summer, yeah. I think I was in that dorm the whole summer. One of the things about the organ player is that that person was referred to as staff. Staff included the people who worked the registration desk and the managers and the department heads and people like that. So because I was staff, then when I had my meals I just went down into the dining room and one of the waitresses would come out and wait on me just like I was a tourist.

TM: Oh my, so you had a little more flexibility.

Mike: A lot more.

TM: You didn't have to get up super early. When would you start your day? When would you sit down at the organ and start playing?

Mike: Around noon. Lunch ran from 12:00 until 2:00. Then at night I think it began at 5:00, I think. Was it 6:00-8:00? May have been.

TM: Would you play the same favorites for the lunch crowd as the dinner crowd?

Mike: Well, I didn't ever do the Grand Canyon Suite at lunch. I started through my fake books. Oh yeah, and I had that card on the table because after I was there that 2 or 3 weeks when I ordered the music, I also told my mother to hunt up some cards I could put on the table. I've got an organ here and there's a card sitting in it.

TM: Nice! Did people give you tips? Did you have a little tip jar there or how did it work?

Mike: Yes. What I did almost right away because people would try to hand me money as they'd go out and I'm trying to play and that made things a little awkward. I'm totally unexperienced at any of this so I went up into the curio shop and bought kind of a copper looking tray and a little monkey that you could bend in all kinds of positions. I then put that little bowl out on the edge of the organ and had the monkey on the edge of that bowl. In the monkey's hands was a little sign that said thank you and people would then just put money there.

TM: Oh fun, well done.

Mike: Yeah, pretty good. Tips ran anywhere from... My low day would be, and was often typical, was around \$2 or \$3 and good days were around \$9 or \$10.

TM: Were you doing the same thing? Were you sending money home? Were you basically just banking the money away? There's nothing else to do there, like I say, to spend it.

Mike: That's right, there was nothing else to do. Well, except, I don't know that this has much to do with what you're interested in but after I was there in 1960, after I was there about a month, one of the tubes or something went out on the organ so they had to ship the organ up to Salt Lake City to be repaired. This organ was a Hammond, an old one. The original lodge was built in the late 20s and burned in the early 30s. The rebuilt lodge was opened again I think about 1935 or '36 and at that point they put in what was then a state-of-the-art Hammond organ. It was then called a Model A. It's now, if you find Model A's around anywhere, they're antiques. That was put in then in 1936 and it was still there when I was there in 1960. I think maybe that was the first time that they had had any trouble with it. So they sent the organ up to be repaired and that put me out of work doing that.

TM: Right, what did you do?

Mike: One of the things all the employees had to do was be involved in the programs that they did in the evening up in the recreation hall. There was a stage there with a piano on it and a microphone and so on. If you go to the North Rim now that's where you go to hear ranger lectures and things like that. But in the 60s there were programs every night. As Muriel said, one of them was called the Grand Show and one of them that we put together was called the Old South Show. By the way, the Old South Show was put together while that organ was out of commission. I had all this time on my hands and we put together that program and one called a Western Show.

Muriel: And then the Variety Show. And you played every night.

Mike: Yeah. Every night I was involved in those shows.

TM: What would you play there, meaning, what instrument would you play given that the organ was gone?

Mike: The piano was up on the stage.

Muriel: A grand piano.

Mike: A grand piano, yeah.

TM: A small grand, baby grand?

Mike: No, it was bigger than a baby grand. I'd call it probably a standard grand, 5'8".

TM: Did you tune it or did somebody else tune it? Was it in tune? Because I'd imagine that might...

Mike: It was in tune and somebody else must have tuned it. I didn't know anything about tuning. When the organ came back then I went back to playing the organ at lunch and at dinner and still doing those shows every night. It was while I was free from having to worry about playing the organ that I did the hike across the canyon and some other things like that because it kind of freed me up.

TM: Just for clarification here, you would play the organ at noon through the lunch hour and then again in the evening from 6:00 to 8:00 during the dinner meal time. Then, once you were done at 8:00 you would head over to play the piano for the Variety Show or the Western Show or the Old South Show?

Mike: Yes.

TM: Okay, so you had a busy day.

Mike: Yeah, and no days off.

TM: 7 days a week.

Mike: Yeah.

TM: Ah, so no trips to Kanab for you.

Mike: Well actually, there were. First of all, I made a couple of trips to Kanab while the organ was broken those 10 days. Another interesting thing that we did, this was also while the organ was broken, was probably 4 or 5 of us or maybe 6 got into a car... One of the people that worked there, one of the assistant managers, had a car and the manager of the lodge had a...what do you call it? A 38-millimeter camera? Is that what you call those?

TM: A movie camera you mean?

Mike: Yeah, but not 16-millimeter, it was small.

TM: 8-millimeter? Oh, hmm?

Mike: I don't know what they're called. But anyway, I borrowed that camera and 4 or 5 of us went up to a place called Johnson Canyon, which is about 10 miles/15 miles east of Kanab Utah, which was an old movie set. We made a probably 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 minute movie out there. Then the next

week while the organ was still broken, we went up to a movie set which was about 3 miles south of Kanab, an old fort, and we made another movie there and then showed those movies around to the employees because they knew everybody that was in it.

TM: That's fun, okay!

Mike: That was another thing that happened when the organ broke.

TM: Let's talk about your rim to rim. Who did you hike across with, do you remember?

Muriel: You were like the leader.

Mike: Yeah, there were at least 1 or 2 bellhops and I guess a couple cabin maids or maybe waitresses, I can't remember. There were all together probably 4 or 5 of us. We hiked down from the North Rim down to Phantom Ranch and slept on the concrete. There was a pool down there and the concrete, what would call that, around the pool?

TM: An apron?

Mike: Well, yeah, like an apron. We slept there overnight and then got up the next day and hiked up the Bright Angel Trail to get to the top. At that time there was a landing strip on the North Rim, so we got a ride out to the airport at the South Rim and flew back to the North Rim. That all together took probably a little over a day.

TM: And then you'd need to get a ride from the airport back down to the lodge and tie that up.

Mike: Yeah, I guess we did. It must have been done with telephones, although it was hard. The lodge had a phone and there was a pay phone in the lodge but I think none of the rooms had phones. Of course, there were no cell phones or anything like that. So somehow or other we must have communicated for somebody to pick us up.

TM: Was this during the monsoon season or was this before then? Did it rain on you guys as you made your crossing?

Mike: No, it didn't, so it must have been before that. So it must have been in June.

TM: Did you have a good time doing that? Was it hard? Did you get blisters? Was it enjoyable?

Mike: Oh, it was very enjoyable. It was very hard, but you felt like you had done something when you were done with it.

TM: Yeah, yeah, enjoyable and hard. Well, it's nice to go from the North Rim to the South Rim because it's longer downhill than it is uphill.

Mike: That's right, that's right.

TM: And you don't have to hike up as high, so it all worked out.

Mike: That right. You can start out a thousand feet higher and not have to go back a thousand feet up.

TM: Would a lot of the employees make that hike?

Muriel: No.

Mike: I don't know, I guess not. Muriel says no but I don't know either.

Muriel: I don't think so. One thing that did happen to us that was very interesting, our last summer there we'd become good friends with the wranglers and so they said they would take us for free on the donkeys down the canyon and back. The day before we were supposed to go, that afternoon and night, the Grand Canyon received was it 18 inches of rain?

Mike: Something like 17" or 18", yeah.

Muriel: Yeah, the North Rim did and just washed out everything. Trains and everything. I think we just closed down the next day.

Mike: Yeah, that cancelled the mule trips.

TM: Was this '63, '66? I'm trying to remember.

Mike: '63. The storm itself was on the North Rim. I don't know that it was a storm like that on the South Rim.

Muriel: I said south but I meant just north.

Mike: The storm was on the North Rim.

Muriel: And that was our last summer there.

TM: I'm looking at the time here going we've been yakking an hour and 15 minutes. Maybe this is a good time to wrap up this Part 1 interview because I want to pick up again next time with how you two met and then learn a little bit more about the musical performances and that there in 1960. As we wrap this up now, is there anything else that came to mind that you wanted to add about any of the material you've told me already?

Mike: I don't think so. Well, yeah, I will add on one other little thing. After not the first year but the 2nd, 3rd and 4th years that I was there, '61, -2 and -3, I don't know where this came from but they had a very large loudspeaker. The manager suggested that we have that out at the top of the stairs outside the door of the fellowship hall. That could be hooked up to the organ and that would be turned on at the time I was doing the Grand Canyon Suite at sunset. So people who were out on the patio and even probably along the trails there around the cabins or wherever, that speaker could be heard, would be able to hear that there.

TM: I'll probably want you to tell that story again in Part 2. Alright, well, I think in that case let's go ahead and wrap this up. This is gonna conclude Part 1 Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Mike and Muriel Kanan. Today is September 19th, 2019. My name is Tom Martin and Mike and Muriel, thank you so very much.

Mike: You're welcome.

Muriel: You're welcome, it's been a joy.