

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Peter Brown (PB)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Peter recounts the tenth segment of his tule reed boat trip, travelling from Stone Creek to Ledges camp

Date of Interview: January 14, 2021, Part 10

Method of Interview: In person at Ledges Camp

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Keys: Ledges camp, Stone Creek, Tapeats Creek, Helicopter Eddy, Doris, Kanab Rapid, Upset, tule reed boat, Colorado River

TM: Today is Thursday, January 14th, 2021. This is a possibly Part 9 (actually Part 10) Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Peter Brown. My name is Tom Martin. Good evening, Peter. How are you today?

PB: Pretty good, Tom.

TM: Great. Today we are doing this interview on the cold, cold Muav limestone at Ledges camp, river mile 152 or thereabouts. We haven't talked in the last couple days. Yesterday was a short day. We ran from Stone Creek down to back eddy, and we went through Tapeats Creek Rapid and Helicopter Eddy, and that's about it. Then today we ran Doris early in the morning, and then Kanab Rapid, and then stopped and scouted Upset. And here we are at Ledges. So how is the little tule boat going? How are the rapids going? What's happening?

PB: Oh, not much new to report. It's doing pretty well. The Upset run was ran on the right and it was pretty nice because I could run far right. Worked just fine, no problems at all. Hardly got wet. Otherwise, the one thing I should mention, too, is in terms of a... I realized today that there is a technical note in terms of running riffles. Typically, what I'm doing when I'm running riffles is I have my feet, most of the time just paddling, in between the three bundles just sort of resting there. Resting a little bit, my knees bent so that the heels are in the middle between the three bundles. But I do move my heels/my feet outboard just running the riffles. I find that it is a little bit easier for maintaining balance. It's only when it's big waves that then I have to actually drop my feet into the water and straddle the raft.

TM: So if I get this clear, you have three feet positions. For big rapids, your feet are off the boat, in the water.

PB: Yes.

TM: For smaller rapid riffley things, your feet are on the side bundles. And then for small things, your feet are kind of tucked in, almost cross-legged but not quite.

PB: Not quite. But yeah, moving them outboard for the small riffles does allow me to drop a foot or something to get a little bit of extra balance. So balance is coming from both shifting weight, from using the kayak paddle, and from foot position, basically, ankle position. So just in terms of a technical note on the overall ride.

TM: Okay. Is the boat sinking?

PB: That's a good question. We're dragging it out of the water. It does seem to be every day just a little bit more difficult to get it moving, particularly when it get caught in an eddy or I need to get back into the current, or something like that. I have to dig in just a little bit more, it seems like, to get back into there. So yeah, I think waterlogging is going to be the biggest issue with it. Otherwise, the structural integrity is still pretty sound. There's a few little dings and nicks here and there with the outer portion of the tule that's peeled away or rubbed away or something like that. But yeah, otherwise it's in still good shape and still moving through the water. I'm not saying that it's impossible to move through the water, just getting a little more difficult.

TM: Sluggish.

PB: Sluggish.

TM: Okay. And today, as the 14th of January, this is our sixteenth day on the river. We launched on the 30th so we have 13 days left, or is it 12? Today's the 14th; we take out on the 28th. So two more weeks.

PB: Two more weeks.

TM: Think it'll make it?

PB: I think it will. Of course. For one thing, I do think the layover days really help. If we can get it out of the water, have it for a full day in the sun, it is much lighter and much easier to row down the river. An overnight out of the water, standing straight up, does it wonders as well. It is much lighter the next day. But I think a day of actual sun and drying will be wonderful. One thing is we did have a weather report—and we'll talk about this next week, I'm sure—but it sounds like we might have some rain coming in here next week. So I'm wondering how that's going to affect it as well, if it can't even dry out overnight.

TM: Right. And one would assume it wouldn't be rain as much as it would be water inundation when it's actually in the river. So that would be helpful. But still, rain is rain.

PB: Yeah, and it's mainly just the fact that it won't have as much of a chance to dry out overnight; to drain out.

TM: Right. Okay. And that'll be a good test as well.

PB: Yep.

TM: Okay, well, I don't have anything to add. The boat looks shredded a little bit on the outside (*PB laughs*), but the inside still looks fine when you see it through the shredded outside.

PB: And all the wrapping is still in place. I don't think any of the wrap has come apart.

TM: Right. It's funny, the nose of the boat just reminds me of a hairy brush ox. (*PB laughs*). It just looks cute.

PB: It does, it really does. And it still smells good (*TM laughs*). You've got to come up and smell it.

TM: Not like the rest of us (*laughs*).

PB: Yeah. Well, it gets a bath every day.

TM: It does. Yeah, that's right. Well, with that, this will conclude what we think is Part 9 (actually Part 10) of a Grand Canyon Oral History interview. This interview is conducted at Ledges camp on the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park, 152 miles from where we started (*PB laughs*) with the tule raft. Today is Thursday, January 14th. This interview is conducted with Peter Brown, and my name is Tom Martin. Peter, thank you so very much.

PB: Sure. Thank you, Tom.