

Transcription: Grand Canyon Oral History

Interviewees: Micayla (MH) and Dana Hurndon (DH)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Micayla (age 11) kayaks the Grand Canyon with her family

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TM: Today is Friday, July 17, 2020. This is a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Micayla and Dana Hurndon. My name is Tom Martin. Good morning, Micayla and Dana! How are you today?

MH: We're good. How are you? And this is Micayla.

TM: Good! Good, good. Thank you so much for your willingness to chat with us today. This is really great. Micayla, how old are you?

MH: I am 11 years old.

TM: How many months in 11 years old?

DH: Your birthday's November... June, July.

MH: So, eight months.

TM: Cool! 11 years, eight months. All right, all right. People are keeping tabs on the numbers here. How did you get into kayaking?

MH: I got into kayaking mainly because my dad really got in, kind of got into it, and he wanted us to start at a younger age. So we could, you know, progress and be more comfortable with it when we got older. So that's when I started, when I was about five years old.

TM: Okay. And do you like water?

MH: I do! I love swimming, I love kayaking, and just doing all kinds of water sports.

TM: Wonderful. And you've got an older brother, right?

MH: Yes, Mr. Tom. He is 15 years old.

TM: Okay. And your brother Max, there, shares your love of water as well. Is that right?

MH: Yes, Mr. Tom. He likes kayaking as well, very much, and he likes to swim, and do all kinds of stuff.

TM: Oh, fun; very, very good. And Dana, are you as one-with-the-water as your children?

DH: I am not quite on their level; I do kayak, paddleboard, raft. My skill set is not quite where theirs is. I wish it was. I guess I got started much later. And maybe I'm as comfortable on the water, I guess, rolling, as they are. I can roll; Mike taught me how to roll. And yeah, I like it; but they're, like I said, they just got started so much younger than I did. You know, they're just so much more comfortable on it than I am.

TM: Understood. Yeah, understood. And of course, Mike is your husband, and Max is your son. So make sure that everybody knows what names relate to who. Now you all just got off a Grand Canyon river trip, which is not, you know, earth shattering. It's a wonderful, incredible experience that a lot of people do. But something a little different happened on that river trip. And in that trip, Micayla, you kayaked the entire 200 and -- what is it? -- 77? Or 280 miles through the Grand Canyon -- is that right?

MH: Yes, Mr. Tom, that is correct.

TM: What were your thoughts when you left Georgia? You all live in Georgia, is that right?

MH: Yes, Mr. Tom. My thoughts were, when I was on the plane and just getting there, like, I wasn't really thinking about it too much. I didn't realize, like, I was gonna kayak the whole 200 -- or, 280 -- miles of the Grand Canyon. And that didn't really register in my mind, until I got there. Like, the night before we left, I was like, oh my God! I'm actually doing this. So that's when it suddenly hit me.

TM: Fun, fun. Did you get a chance to look out the window as you were flying along, and look at the desert out there? I mean, let me restate this question: Was this your first time out West, from Georgia?

MH: I've been out West a few times. I've been to Colorado, Utah, California. But I did get to look out the plane, and it was really pretty.

TM: Cool; oh, very fun. And Dana, you've been out West before?

DH: Yes, correct; I have.

TM: But, if I get this right, neither one of you had been down the Grand Canyon. Is that right?

DH: That is correct. Neither one of us had been to the Grand Canyon before.

TM: So Dana, it sounds like Micayla wasn't too concerned until she showed up. What about you? What were your thoughts, back in Georgia, before you got on the plane and headed west?

DH: Well you know, it was a bit of a whirlwind, as you know. The NPS had shut down the Park services, and we really weren't a 100 percent sure that we were gonna be able to go on the trip. What, until about a week and a half, or two weeks, before we needed to leave. So, it was kind of stressful, getting everything packed and ready, for all of us, you know, in that short of a time frame. Because all of a sudden our trip was on. And we had quite a few last-minute preparations to make. So it was kind of a whirlwind, and my mind was really busy. So I didn't have a whole lot of time to focus on the emotion of the actual trip itself, if that makes sense. And then -- yeah -- finally, like, when we got on the plane, Micayla and I, it was like, Wow! We're doing this; this is really happening. You know, it was so... It hit me. Yeah. And, of course, it was exciting; I was nervous; I had a lot of different emotions. I guess I was lucky in the sense that Mike, my husband, and Max, my son, have been down previously. You know, so I've gotten to see their pictures, and hear their stories. So I guess I'm lucky in the fact that I had a little bit of insight, or information. But again, I've never been on an expedition or a trip like this myself; and then also, my 11-year-old daughter. So it was, you know, it was a little nerve wracking; but exciting as well. So there was a lot of emotion going on.

TM: And I should add that this is July of 2020, during a global pandemic, where simple travel can put people at risk for contracting a very dangerous virus, and it can hurt people. So that kinda adds to the overall nervousness of a trip that -- again, if you've never done before, it's intimidating; it can be, to some. So put that in background. Also for background, can you tell me about the other people on the trip? Now, Max, your son, and Mike, your husband, were there; and they're kayaking. Who else was kayaking on the trip?

DH: So we had, I mean, like you said, the do-it-yourself permit; which we had a total of 16 participants. There were eight total kayakers, and eight people on rafts. And we had a total of four rafts. So kayaking was Micayla; well, I'll start with my family: Micayla, my daughter, Mike, my husband, and Max. I was on a raft. The other kayakers, there was a 25-year-old named Aidan; and he is a raft guide from Durango. So he was in a kayak. We had another friend of ours, that lived here in Georgia; his name is Eric. And he was 17-years-old. So one... We had a father and daughter that live here in Georgia, as well, that we knew. The father's name is Justin, and the daughter was also 17. Her name is Delia. And the last kayaker is a professor from Washington State; his name was Alex. And I believe he was 39, maybe 40-years-old. I'm not a 100 percent sure of his age. So there should be, yeah, should be eight kayakers.

TM: Nice. And Max is 15.

DH: Max is 15, correct. And this was his third trip down.

TM: So that's one, two, three, four kayakers under the age of 20. That's wonderful!

DH: Yes, yes. And they all did really well, exceptionally well.

TM: Very fun. So got to Lees Ferry, you've got four rafts and a group of people. Then what happened?

DH: Then it was really hot, Tom! It was quite a shock. I'm from Georgia, and the climate is obviously much different here than there. And Mike had, you know, forewarned, and informed us, you know, stay hydrated; make sure you're hydrated before we get there. So we get there and there's our four empty rafts, and a pile of stuff -- a lot of stuff -- that we had to load the rafts with. And we had all met in Flagstaff, like the day or two prior, at our river house. So we got the entire group together. You know, the people from Georgia already knew each other. And then there was the other half, didn't really know

each other. So we all met at their river house, that we rented from Moenkopi. And so we got to kind of get our initial introductions, and kind of get a feel for each other. So then we all head to the put in, and we all start loading gear, and getting our rafts geared out. And I was learning how to tie some knots, and do cam straps that I had never done before. So it was exciting, it was busy. Like I said, a lot of it was whirlwind, and then finally when you hit the water, it was like, Wow! You know, it's kind of a big relief, when you finally hit the water. But then, you have no idea what to expect either, so.

TM: Right. Micayla, I'm assuming that you were kayaking earlier this summer before the trip. Can you tell me about, sort of, the hardest kayaking you did, this year before the trip?

MH: Yes, Mr. Tom. We started kayaking this summer, maybe around late February and early March. Like before we knew we were even going on the trip. And once we knew that we were on the trip -- not for sure that we were going, because of the virus -- but, my dad had a benchmark what to do on the Upper Ocoee, which is like a Class IV river. And whitewater is divided into five classes: Class I, Class II, Class III, and Class IV, and Class V. So I had never really done any Class IV before, but he wanted me to do that before I got on the trip. So we hit the benchmark pretty early, for the Upper Ocoee, which is a Class IV river. And it was my first ever experience with, like, a little bigger and Class IV water, so it was definitely good for me to get the experience before I went on the Grand Canyon. That, and we hit that benchmark early, so I actually did the Upper Ocoee three times before I actually got on the Grand Canyon. And that was really good for me because I feel like it prepared me a little more for the actual trip.

TM: What were you thinking, Micayla? You pushed away from shore, there's seven other kayaks with you. And your mom's in one of the rafts -- there's four rafts. Right away you go into the Paria Riffle. What were you thinking right then?

MH: I was thinking right then, I was like, oh my gosh. Cause it was so much bigger than like... Like the Paria Riffle, it wasn't like too, too big, cause it's a 1. But it was definitely something for a 1. Like, my eyes were kind of wide, and I was like, oh my God -- I can't imagine what a 6 looks like. And it was like, really just a little overwhelming for me to; like, I was going into the Grand Canyon; it was so just, it was such a weird and cool experience at the same time.

TM: Why was it weird and cool?

MH: It was just like, because, like, it was a lot different from, like, the water back East; because the water back here, it's more like technical and you have to make more moves, and it's not really like big. And so, it was so weird just going in there. And, like, you would see the kayaks just go up and like just disappear, and then come back up. And it was just so, like, eye widening; like, oh my gosh.

TM: You mean like they'd be in front of you, and they'd would go like down in a trough between the wave crests, and just disappear; and then they would pop back up again?

MH: Yes, Mr. Tom; it was just like, oh my gosh; like, cool.

TM: Wow. Fun. I say fun, but...

MH: Yeah, that's; really, really fun.

TM: And of course, did you realize that everybody else on the trip was thinking the same thing?

MH: Um, that kind of didn't register in my mind at first; but then once we got to the actual little riffle, everyone was just kind of like, oh my gosh. Like we're actually going into the Grand Canyon. So like my dad and my brother were just kind of like, eh; because like, you know, they kinda, had experienced it. It was, it was -- I could definitely see how some people's faces they were kind of a little surprised.

TM: Fun. Oh, very fun. So the first day -- do you remember where you camped? The first night?

MH: We camped at Hotnanah.

TM: Okay, so that's a ways. That means there's some rapids you had to run, like Badger and Soap, and North Canyon. Wait a minute -- Badger and Soap -- you ended up on top of House Rock, at Hotnanah. So what were Badger and Soap like?

MH: Badger was probably like one of the most unique experiences I've ever had in my life. So, we were going in, and you could just see all these big waves just coming at you. And you would, like, kind of slowly go in and it'd get progressively get faster with you starting going into the waves. And when I looked to my right, at the big hole that you're not supposed to go into, it was ginormous! The hole was absolutely, just like, ferocious. And we went into these waves, and it was so big, we'd see them disappear, just like Paria Ripple, except for longer, then they'd go back up higher. And it was so fun; like, the water, it actually wasn't a muddy brown; it was like a really clear green. And so the water was absolutely beautiful. And the waves were just so much fun; you'd like go up, and then you'd just drop down and go back up again. And it was just amazing. And once we stopped, my dad -- I asked my dad what category it was, and he said a 5. And I was just like, that's a 5?! Like, I did not want to see what Lava looked like at that time.

TM: Yeah, well so, did your dad or your brother tell you that it's a building experience? It starts off with the Paria, and then it's the Badger... And you won't get to the big stuff, for a little bit; you've got some time to kind of settle in. Did they help you with that some?

MH: Yes, Mr. Tom; they told me that, you know, where it's gonna kind of progressively get harder. And you're gonna get used to it more as the days go on. And they kind of got me prepared for that, so I'm really thankful for them showing me that.

TM: Nice, and people tell me that, too. But I always look at them askance, sideways, and go, Yeah, okay. But seeing is believing. Dana, what were you thinking on Badger, that first rapid there?

DH: Well, Tom, I had an interesting experience on Badger. Yes, that was the first, the biggest - probably - water I've ever done. And I was on the raft, and that day the raft and my captain, we were in the lead. And I know the captain -- we had done the Green River with him previously, last September. So his name is Russ. And, so we were in the lead that day, the lead raft, behind the kayaks; and we -- and by the way, I had your map next to me, your map book, the whole entire time. It is so inciteful, and wonderful, and it helped me so much kind of know what to expect; and it's a wonderfully written book. thank you for that. It really helped us a lot on the trip.

TM: You're very kind.

DH: So I did have your book, and I had read, you know, about the rapid. And Mike also, having done it

before, kind of gave each of us a little spiel on the beginning about how we needed to run it. Well, somehow our raft got pulled way left. And the kayakers were down at the bottom watching us, to make sure we had good lines, and also to make sure they didn't need to collect any carnage or any people out of the water. But they were down there watching us, at the bottom, and I was looking at them. You know, we're coming up to the rapid, and all of a sudden, our raft goes to the left. I'm not sure what exactly happened. But we did not hit it correctly, and almost went into the rock garden; or, I'm not sure if it was a debris fan there. And there's a lot of rocks over there, and all of a sudden, the kayakers went out of sight. And I could no longer see them; and I thought we were about to get pinned to a rock. And it was a little scary at first, I'm not going to sugarcoat that. But luckily Russ was able to correct, and we were able to get back into the flow, and not hit the big rocks, and go down the rapid. So it was a little excitement, there on the very first big one for me. Yeah.

TM: And had Russ rowed the Canyon before?

DH: He did. He was on the trip in 2017, with Max and Mike. Yes, he's been down the Canyon before.

TM: And it's tough, though, because you don't get a lot of practice. And you got one shot on each trip. And so it's, you know, you have to learn where too far right is, and there's a big, big hole over there, as Micayla said. And ya gotta figure out where too far left is, cause there's a bunch of rocks over there. It's a...

DH: Yes. And you know, too, those rafts are, the raft we were in was 18-1/2 foot long, and I don't know how many hundreds of pounds of gear were on it. So I'm sure it's not as quite as easy to maneuver as a kayak would be, you know.

TM: That's right, that's right; big and heavy.

DH: I think Micayla wanted to... You want to add something?

MH: This is Micayla and I just wanted to add, speaking of the 2017 trip, my dad actually went into the right hole over at Badger, because he didn't think it would be too bad. He went in and got into a little bit of a bar fight there. And he didn't swim, but he had a -- he was kind of stuck in there for a minute and got worked for, like, a couple seconds and it just wore him out.

TM: Yeah, that's... And did you guys scout that rapid or not? Did you just run it? You know, a lot of people do; they just run it right up and they don't scout it.

MH: No, Mr. Tom, we actually -- and this is Micayla -- we just ran it cause, you know, some people had done it before, and they knew what to do and everything, so we just thought we'd just run it.

TM: Yeah, which makes sense. I mean, especially cause you have quite the powerhouse team of kayakers to run safety for the rafts. That makes perfect sense. Yeah, okay. And then -- so that's Badger, and Badger's way bigger than the Paria, but it's still only a 5 on the ten scale. Next up is Soap, after a couple of miles of flat water. So, before you get to Soap, you pass a rock called Ten Mile Rock, just sitting there in the middle of the river. Micayla, do you remember, do you have any thoughts about that, when you were paddling along through just miles of flat water, that first day? I just wonder if you had any thoughts before you hit the second big rapid, Soap Creek. There's a lot of flat water there, between these rapids; were you starting to kinda get the picture?

MH: A little bit. So, in the flat water, there were some little boils and swirly parts that I didn't expect, because, you know, we don't have that back here, a lot. So it was kinda weird and, so, for the next rapid I knew I had to kind of expect that. And so, once I hit the Ten Mile Rock it was kind of weird because I don't usually paddle that many miles that quick. And I saw Ten Mile Rock and it was really strange to me, looking at it, cause it was just so weird sitting in the middle of the river. And you know as some rocks do, it was just kinda cool how it was a mile marker and everything. And I knew that I would be going into Soap soon, so, like, it was just, really just -- it was really cool. I got to talk to a lot of people about Badger and everything, and about Soap, which was coming up; and it was just, it was really, really cool.

TM: Nice, good. And then, how was Soap?

MH: Soap was really fun. I really enjoyed it, just the big waves and everything. And I saw some kayakers doing tricks, and whatnot. And it was really cool just the big waves and everything; kind of go up and then fall back down; and then, you know, in the waves, and then keep going. It was really cool.

TM: Fun. And so now, you know, toward the end of Day 1, you've still got a ways to go to get to camp. More flat water. Kind of settling in, it sounds like, a little bit.

MH: Yeah, the flat water, I knew that, like, most of it would be flat water, as my dad and my brother had told me before. But the flat water was, it was really nice to chill. Sometimes, you know, you just have that craving for just another rapid and whatnot. But it was, it was really cool, just, like, the whole rapid; but the flat water, it was, just, it was really serene and beautiful. You could see, you know, the sky was really pretty; the walls and the scenery. And, just, some wildlife; so it was really good.

TM: And then, of course, below Soap Creek, you go into a little section of the river called the Supai Gorge. Named after a different rock formation, and the Canyon get pretty narrow suddenly, with wonderful sandstone walls either side of the river. And kind of swirly little currents in there. Do you remember that?

MH: I do, actually. Yeah, the swirly currents definitely, like, kind of surprised me on some parts; cause, you know, it's definitely different and you kinda have to, have to put a little effort in to get out of there, and to get through it. And yeah, that canyon -- the walls are really pretty; I could tell it was getting kind of narrow, and it was really pretty. There were some overhangs that looked pretty cool, and, like, some little caves that I really liked. And, yeah, it was just serene and beautiful.

TM: And there's a little riffle at Shear Wall, which kind of reminds you, I guess, of the Paria, by now, after running Soap and Badger. And camp at Hotnanah is right on top of a fairly-large rapid. First night camp, anything remarkable to mention about that?

MH: The sky, definitely, like all the stars; it was so, so pretty. Just to look at all them. And I remember I woke up in the middle of the night, and I just saw the Milky Way. And it was just so pretty.

TM: Wow, wow. Very fun. And Dana, what were you thinking?

DH: A few things. I was excited, and relieved, you know, to have Day 1 behind us. Like I said, we'd had a little bit of excitement, there at Badger. And, I think, it was helping my confidence, though, at the same time; like, okay, I'm doing this, I can do this, you know. Like I said, I've never been on an adventure quite

like this; and I'm very lucky to have been able to go. But, yes, the night sky was truly amazing. I swear there was a minute where I closed my eyes, and there was a few stars; and I opened my eyes again, and there was a million stars. I've never seen a sky like I was able to see out there. So that was pretty amazing in itself.

TM: Fun; very fun. So the next morning, all that stuff that got taken off the boats that night for camp has to get loaded back on the boats again. And there's a rapid like right down stream. Did you stop and scout House Rock there?

MH: Yes, Mr. Tom, we did. And, honestly, just looking at it, it was very big. And of course I knew that it'd be bigger once I actually got into it, but it was just, like, so weird looking at it. And it was just like these big waves, and this big hole at the end, and this big rock. And it was, it was just huge. And just, I was looking at it, and I was like, oh my Gosh; like, I thought the water back here was big, and I was like, wow!

TM: And what was the intended route that you wanted to take?

MH: The intended route that we were supposed to take, at least for the kayakers, was we were gonna, kind of float for a little bit, because there was a debris fan off to the right, which we were supposed to cut right in. So we kind of drifted for a minute, and then we actually got into it and started working right, because we didn't want to go into the hole and the left at the end, obviously. So, it was my dad, me, and, I think, Max and then one of our friends, Delia, the 17-year-old. And so we were going down, and my dad was, obviously in the lead, and so; and we were going down. And so, I saw the hole and I was like, yeah, I'm going to start working right now. And so I started paddling a little hard, you know, right, cause I didn't want to get stuck in that hole or anything. So I made it through fine, all the kayakers made it through fine. And then we watched the rafts, and I'll let my mom talk about that.

TM: Okay. Dana, how did it go?

DH: So I think it went pretty well. We changed the line-up of our rafts that day, my raft was not in the lead. We put another rafter in the lead; he's a 25-year-old raft guide from -- another one -- from Durango. So we put him in the lead, and I think we had a pretty good line on House. It was a little nerve-racking, you know, whenever you scout them, and then you hear the roar of the rapids, the water -- it can be very intimidating. So, but yeah, I think we ran a pretty good line on House. I'm glad we scouted that one first, and kind of give me a better idea of what to expect.

TM: Nice, nice. And that was a long first day, going from Lees Ferry to Hotnanah; that's a ways to go. Micayla, I don't know if you remember this, but there's a -- at the bottom of House Rock, on the right at the base of the debris fan, there's a little shore there, and there's an eddy there. And then when you have to take off to head on downstream, there is a strong jet of water, focused at the bottom of that rapid, moving across the river from river-left to river-right. Did you get in there and play with that at all? Did you mess with that?

MH: No, Mr. Tom, I did not. Once we were peeling out, I never really got into that at all. My boat was really big, so I, I probably could have done some things in there; but I couldn't have, like, done any turns like my dad and my brother could, cause they have like little slicey sterns in the back, which are kind of smaller, and you can do some tricks in those. But no, I did not really play.

TM: Yeah, no, I wasn't thinking about doing tricks, I was thinking about surviving! Meaning that jet of

water has flipped dories who have come into it sideways. It's a really sharp hydraulic, you know, and it has no waves! I mean, it's just a sharp hydraulic, so I just kind of wondered if that had sort of... It can be very surprising when you kind of wander into it.

MH: No, I don't think I really noticed that too much as I was peeling out. I didn't really get flipped or anything, but I was pretty okay, but, no, I didn't really mess with that very much.

TM: Okay, so down below House is a little more flat-water, and then North Canyon and the Roaring Twenties. Where did you end up, do you remember where you camped the second night?

MH: We camped at Shinumo Wash, I think it's called, right after all the Roaring Twenties and everything. And that was a really, really cool camp because, you know, you can go to Silver Grotto, which was a really neat place to go check out, and it was really pretty.

TM: Nice. So we're going to back up a little bit -- the Roaring Twenties, between House Rock and Shinumo Wash, certainly that's, they're done by then. Was running House, did that help build your confidence, as well?

MH: Yes, I think it did. Just because it kind of gave me, like one of those experiences; like, this is how some of the rapids are gonna be like. And it was pretty big; it was a 7, out of the 1 to 10 rating. But, and it was obviously one of the bigger rapids. So it definitely boosted my confidence a little to do, cause going into the Roaring Twenties, and just all the other rapids from then on.

TM: And how did you find the Twenties? I mean, there's 24 Mile, 24-1/2 Mile, 25 Mile; you know, Tiger Wash, and Cave Springs, and there's some punchy little drops in there. So how did that work out?

MH: Yeah, I didn't really pay attention to, like, which rapid was which. I didn't kind of ask, oh, do we have a rapid coming up, or whatever. And so, yeah, like it was definitely -- it was really fun; it was a really good and fun experience for me. And there were definitely some bigger holes and drops in there. And I remember, just, there were three 6's in a row that I was just kind of, like they were all in my head; and those were the ones I kind of paid attention to. I think one of them was called "Georgie;" and I forget the other two names of them. But it was -- the Roaring Twenties were definitely a really fun and just cool experiences.

TM: Great, excellent. And Dana, how did you manage?

DH: We did, yeah, good; and I was a little nervous because as people were referring to them as the Roaring Twenties, I was like, oh, no! What is this gonna be like? But they were actually really fun. I think I had heard about Georgie before, and I had read about that one, and I was, again, a little nervous. But they were so fun; and it was, I got to tell you -- several times, throughout the trip, I would be nervous, and then we would go through the rapid, and I'd say, let's do that again! That was so great!

TM: Fun, very fun. Oh, that's the trouble. You get the rapids rabies disease, and there's no cure except to do it again. And, yeah, yeah. So that night in Shinumo, and now it's miles and miles of flat water; just suddenly a different river. How did the next few days go, getting down, oh, to the Little Colorado River, and down toward Hance?

DH: So this is Dana. And I would go back to one of the comments Micayla made, about the boils and the

eddies. I've never seen water do what this water does, whatever it is. Especially in a raft. There was a couple times those eddies would get us and not want to let us go. And I had my little paddle in the front, that I would try to help, and, you know, pull us out of some eddies, and the swirlies. And then there was one day, Tom, I don't remember exactly what mile we were at, we -- and it had gotten pretty narrow -- and we got hit by some kind of wind storm. And we had had winds, you know, a few times before; these gusts had to have been 40 plus miles an hour. And Russ, the raft captain, would keep his oars in the water, just to try to keep us from rolling backwards. And I think, and it did get cloudy, so it must've been some kind of storm cell; it never rained that day, but it was a little spooky, just how quick the wind picked up and changed on us that day. And it lasted 10, 15 minutes, or so; and obviously the kayaks were able to get through it much easier than the rafts. But that was, you know, Mother Nature is definitely a fine art, and that was definitely a neat -- like I said, it was a little spooky at first, cause I didn't know what was coming or happening. But it was definitely kind of neat to experience, as well. And again, I wish I could remember what mile marker where that was. But that was during one of those days, because I remember it was very flat, and we were trying to get around this bend, and we couldn't. It was like, it was like the stretch of water that lasted half the day, because we, through the wind, we couldn't get anywhere it seemed like.

TM: And that's very common in the spring; we get this high pressure building out, and the desert's to the west and it just sends this funnel of wind up canyon. And 40 miles an hour is not uncommon; and it just stops water traffic that is not motorized. You know, the kayaks can kind of hunker down and paddle on, but bigger rafts, it's just a wind, a big sail, and the wind wants to push you the wrong way, you know? And you weren't the only trips on the water struggling that day!

DH: Probably not, no.

TM: So you finally worked your way down. Where did you camp down below the Little Colorado River, do you remember?

DH: Um... Micayla is looking. You know, one of the things I wished I had done, Tom, was I did not keep a journal or write down all of our camp spots, and I wish I had. But I would tell you, though, when we got to the Little Colorado, that was amazing. The water -- and Mike and Max several times commented about the water being clear; because when they have done their trips in the past, the water was muddy and had much more silt in it. And we were truly blessed; we had pretty clear water the entire trip, on our... But then when we got to the LCR, Little Colorado, just seeing the blue of that water was amazing. I mean I've never seen anything like that before; that was truly amazing.

TM: It really is a blessing. Yeah, it's an incredible place.

DH: Yes! I mean, it was almost magical, or didn't seem real, you know. It's like, wow! Did somebody color this? This is so crazy. But that was really neat to see. So I wanted to touch on the Little Colorado really quick. And then, where did we camp? Oh, Tanner; yes, Tanner. Sorry.

TM: All right. Okay. So I also just want to put in a little note here that, if anybody else did keep a journal on the trip, and they're willing to copy it, and let you have it, that'll be helpful as well, just for the next, you know, many decades that are ahead of us. You know, those journals, the river journals, are really good things to have; for the future, writing your own, and for others to know where you've been and what you did. So, just a thought there.

DH: Yes, that's one thing I would change about the trip, is I didn't, I did not write down, or keep a journal like I wish I had.

TM: What to do for next time. Yeah. So at Tanner, the Colorado River's making a big turn, from heading south southwest to much more west, and then north. And it opens up really wide! Micayla, what were you thinking? You got big rapids ahead, and you're in what's called the Eastern Heart of Grand Canyon, right there at Tanner.

MH: At Tanner, the morning that we were leaving it, it was -- I was pretty nervous, because I knew there were some bigger rapids that day. Like, for example, like Hance, Basalt. And so, it was -- cause my dad had talked about Hance a lot, and so did my brother, and I had never seen Hance before; and it was definitely, just like, I was really nervous that morning. And going into Basalt and Tanner, it was really fun. They were definitely a little bigger than some of the Roaring Twenties, but they were mostly the same as that. And they were just pretty fun, and I was a little nervous going through them, but after I did it, it was just, like, really fun and I wanted to do it again.

TM: Cool. And then 75 Mile, some rocks there; Nevills Rapid -- just some big, big holes there, in the middle of the river. You dodged those just fine?

MH: Yes, sir. Actually, I really liked Nevills, or however you pronounce it. But it was, that was probably one of my favorite rapids because the line was to go left, but my brother and Eric were going right. So I kinda wanted to check it out, and kinda go just in some of the holes. And it was, it was really, it was kind of rowdy, but it was really interesting and fun.

TM: Fun. Very fun. And then did you all stop and scout Hance on the right, or the left?

MH: We stopped and scouted Hance on the right, and we went up that little cliff area and it was really just a lot. Like there was a lot of holes, a lot of waves; and you just kinda -- and I didn't really want to go in to the land of the giants, cause, you know, there were really, really huge holes and everything. And we all scouted it, and it was kind of a longer rapid. And we, and going in, like, to the rapid, it was definitely like, kind of nerve-wracking, because I'd heard a lot about it before.

TM: And what -- you'd heard some things, and at the bottom of the rapid, what were you thinking after you ran it?

MH: After I ran it, it was a really, really fun rapid. We got to the eddy and by the shore; and it was pretty fun, and I wanted to go do it again. It was, the waves were really fun. And it was, it was kinda like, my heart was beating really fast as I was going through it, just cause I was so nervous and excited at the same time. And it was really fun and everyone did great as a kayaker, and then we were watching the rafts and everything. And my dad kind of got -- as we were going through and so my dad was leading me, and so we were going down, and my dad kind of got wheelied, and he drifted off to the right, near the Land of the Giants. So I just kind of looked over, and I was like, oh, crap, cause now I have to kind of lead everyone else down. So I just did that.

TM: Good for you!

MH: I just had to kinda stay to the left, cause I didn't want to go into the big holes and everything. And so, we all made it through fine; my dad made it through fine. And it was a really good experience.

TM: Excellent. Very good. Oh, so it sounds like, by the time you ran Hance, you'd pretty much settled in, you could see the routes, as you were heading along. It's like, well, if I'm over here, it looks a little better; if I'm over there, it looks a little worse; or vice versa. Did it feel like, okay, I'm kind of settled in this now, I've kind of got this kinda, sorta figured out?

MH: Yes, Mr. Tom, there was definitely like a sense of, like, I'm kind of getting used to it. And that, it was an 8, so Hance was probably, was one of the bigger rapids cause you know it was 8. And you know, it can kinda mess people up if you don't get the right line. And, like, for me, after I did it, I was like, wow! I'm kind of getting used to it here. And I really liked it, it was very cool. It was really big, and fun water.

TM: Fun, very fun. And Dana, how was your journey through Hance?

DH: It was good. Like I said, we did scout, so it kinda helped the rafts figure out the better line to take. I think we did end up in the Land of Giants, and...

TM: It's kinda hard not to! The bottom down there; gee.

DH: But, it was good! And I probably was a little bit more nervous about Hance, maybe even more so than Lava. You know, I'd heard a few things about Hance, and, you know, the technicality of it. But yeah, we didn't flip, so that's always good.

TM: Yeah, good! And then, below Hance is ... Sockdolager and Grapevine. And they can be kind of punchy, a little bit there. They run all right?

MH: This is Micayla, and actually we stayed at the Grapevine Camp.

TM: Oh, yeah, Grapevine Camp; sure, right on top of Grapevine. that's a nice camp.

MH: We punctured a raft, so we kinda needed to stop, and, you know, do repairs. And it was kinda getting late, so -- and we couldn't really go, cause, you know, the raft was punctured and everything. So we kinda had a little quote unquote emergency stop, and so...

TM: Oh wait, back up a bit. How did that happen? How'd you put a hole in a raft?

MH: So we stopped like, maybe, a little before Grapevine, to have lunch; and, actually my mom's raft, accidentally ran into a rock. They didn't mean to, and they didn't even realize they had punctured it; and then one of the raft guides, that was one of the 25-year-olds, he heard it and, like, he knew that it was punctured. So, we tried repairs then, but we obviously needed to stop, and didn't really want to run Grapevine, because we didn't want anything bad to happen.

TM: Yeah, sure; sure. Okay, so that's good; so did you have to like de-rig the entire boat? Take it all apart, put it all up on the beach and drag it up there and fix it?

MH: No, sir, we did not. We just had to kinda push it up on the beach a little bit, and we looked at the actual hole and everything. And we put a patch on and it took a while to set it.

DH: Luckily, and it was above the water, yeah.

TM: Yeah, good. Well, that's the way to do it, is, hey, if something breaks, you fix it. that's good, nice. Okay, so then the next day is Phantom Ranch, and then Horn Creek. Is that -- or did you all have an exchange at Phantom? People hiking in and hiking out? Or we gonna head right on through?

MH: No, Mr. Tom, we did not. But actually, before we got to Phantom, there was the Zoroaster Rapid. And, you know, it was a 5, and I was kinda getting used to it, so I really just let my guard down. And so, I was like, there was a hole in the middle, so I was like, yeah, I'm gonna punch that. So, and so, I was going into it, and then it was a lot bigger than I thought, so I was like, oh, no. So then I went into it, and so I got stopped, and then I got flipped, and then I rolled up in it, and it was -- and then, I rolled up like face, like facing upstream, so I kinda had to surf it for a little bit. And then I got out of it, and it was just like, why did I just do that way? It was kind of like a little rodeo, and it was -- I got worked for a minute and then I got out.

TM: Well, and you also did just what you should, which is roll up -- hey, I'm facing upstream, great. Let's surf this a little bit, let's figure out an exit strategy, and then do that. Ah, that's great!

MH: Thank you, I appreciate that.

TM: I mean, no, it's just, I think you did good. It's, you know, without going, hey, I'm in here and I'm -- I don't like this, so I'm gonna just bail. No, it's -- you did really well. That's a punchy little rapid.

MH: Thank you. Yeah, and it was just, it was really fun, but it was also, like, kind of just crazy, everything going on. But then I got out, and a lot of people saw it, and they were just kind of just laughing at me. And I was laughing at myself. And they were just kind of cheering me on and everything, so it was very cool.

TM: So it sounds like you had a pretty supportive team with you. That sounds like it would be very helpful.

MH: Oh, yeah. Like the team was absolutely just so positive, and like they were really supportive. And someone was like surfing a hole, or just, you know, doing something like cool, like a trick; everyone was cheering them on. And if someone was upset, they'd cheer them up. And it was a really, really good group.

TM: Nice. That is really just, for mental kind of relaxing, or just, it's okay, we're having fun. That can be really helpful.

MH: Absolutely.

TM: Dana, was that happening on the rafts, as well?

DH: Oh, yes, it was. Yes, I couldn't say enough about the crew that we had, and I think it really helped me tremendously. You know, from being nervous, and busy, and everyone pitched in and helped. Everyone was great towards both Max and Micayla; and especially the -- so we had a total of three 25-year-olds; and they, I think, they're used to being around younger kids. And they, you know, would play games; one of them had brought Cans Am, and some cards; and so, you know, the afternoons and evenings, they would spend time with them, or taking them on hikes. And it was great; it was a great trip

all around, and I think we got truly lucky in that regard, you know, definitely.

TM: Nice. Yeah. So were you gonna stop at Phantom, or were you gonna head on through and drop down through Horn Creek? Was that the plan for the day?

DH: No, we did stop at Phantom. And that was really neat. We filled up water jugs, we did go up to the ranch area itself. We sent some postcards to people. The concessions are -- I don't know you want to call it -- they did not allow people to come inside due to Covid. So they had a window open; you could walk up to the window, and order some lemonade, or a little snack. And we did that, and we hung out there probably for about an hour and a half. It was the middle of the day, and it was rather warm; and we knew we still needed to make up, or, you know, get on the water. And I'm trying to think of where we were trying to get to, that day... But no, it was really neat to see, and we saw -- are they mules?

TM: Mules. Yeah.

DH: Yes. We saw some people arrive on the mules, and, yeah -- so that was pretty neat to see.

TM: So let's start with Micayla here: at Phantom Ranch you've gone not quite 90 miles, but maybe a third of the way, through the trip, here. Up to Phantom Ranch, what was the coolest thing you think you saw?

MH: Up to Phantom Ranch, probably the coolest thing I saw was probably Silver Grotto. It was really cool to go in there, see all like the rock formations and everything. And do a little climbing, cause, you know, you had to climb up a little rock and whatever. But, yeah, that was really cool.

TM: Great. And Dana, you?

DH: Oh, we haven't told you. We were following; well, we kind of, well, we saw a group, and there was a four-string quartet playing. So, amazing. And you may have heard of this group; I don't know if they go out there annually, or what. But we initially saw them at North Canyon. And they weren't playing there, but then we were rafting down, or going down the river a little further, Little Redwall, and they were set up and they were playing their instruments. And it was absolutely amazing. As if the Grand Canyon isn't amazing enough, now we get to watch a four-string quartet concert, in the Grand Canyon. it was like, is this real?

TM: Oh, my gosh. Wonderful.

DH: That was pretty neat.

TM: Okay. And then there's Horn Creek: how'd that go?

MH: The Horn Creek Rapid, it was pretty different from the other ones I did. It was very explosive, I would say. And actually, my dad and my brother, the last two trips, they were on, the water was actually a lot higher than when we went, so Horn Creek was pretty much not in play. So it was kind of a new experience for most of us, or pretty much all of us. And so, going into Horn Creek, I'm pretty sure I went in between the horns, and it was, the waves were just really explosive. It was really fun; they were really big and explosive, and it was kinda like another eye-widening experience. And, but it was still really fun. And we did have, unfortunately, a kayaker swim there. And it was a little chaotic, and you kinda had to --

my brother was on them really quickly and got them to shore. But we got the boat and everything, and it was fine. But it was just a little crazy, but overall a good rapid.

TM: Not bad. You know, to take a swim in Horn; you know, welcome to the rest of us! Yeah, and, but it sounds like, you know, you had swimmer in the water, and a boat and paddle, and got it all collected, and took off again.

MH: Yeah.

TM: And the rafts did all right?

DH: We did do pretty well; and this is Dana. We did do well that day; again, so Horn was a little bit more in play, I think, than in the past trips. But we did good. Yeah, I was a little nervous about that one. I think the day before, my raft -- my raft had all the excitement. We got the hole in the raft, and then we had gotten stuck on a rock, I think the day before Horn. For about a good 30, 45 minutes, we were stuck, and the raft captain and myself high-raised to try to keep the raft from taking on water, or going under. And the kayakers, and everyone, as soon as they could, pulled over. And they kinda had to hike back up, pretty much. They made a few attempts to get us a throw rope, but we were a little farther away from the shore than, you know -- they couldn't get the rope to us. And we ended up being able to -- the raft captain ended up being able to -- put the one oar in the water, I mean, it was almost bending; it was curving because the pressure. And I was on the back of the raft, jumping up and down with all my might, to try to get us off this rock. And finally, yeah, we were able to budge, and get off. And I don't think it was at any rapid, or any named place in the water; it kind of, I guess it kind of snuck up on us a little bit. And, as those rocks like to do.

TM: Uh-huh, that's exactly what you're supposed to do, is shift your weight around, try to get the weight off the rock; and then use an oar to pivot back and forth in the current.

DH: Yep. So it worked out, luckily, because that could, you know, take up quite a bit of time; you know, having a raft get stuck like that. It was right below Pipe Creek.

TM: Okay, Pipe Creek. Kinda, yeah, but not too close to the shore. What day -- do you remember the day of the week that was? I'm just trying to tie it to the flows; the weekend flows were kind of low. And low and steady, so if it was a Monday or a Tuesday, you woulda kind of got wrapped up in some of that. But...

DH: Yes. I feel it was the day that we were at Phantom. And I can definitely get back to you with exactly what day it was.

TM: No worries. I was just seeing if there was a correlation there. Yeah. Okay, so below Horn Creek a little excitement, but not too bad. And below there is Granite and Hermit. Are you going to run those rapids that day, or did you camp above them?

MH: So this is Micayla and we were actually planning, optimistically, to get to, I think, the Upper Crystal Camp. But since we were at Phantom, and we had that swimmer, and a lot of wind, we actually decided to camp right above Granite. And actually, we had our layover day the next day, so. And it was a very, very beautiful camp. It was a big camp, there was a lot of shade, because of the trees. And it was probably one of my favorite camps. So no, we did not get to Hermit or Granite that day; but we did --

not the next day -- but the day after.

TM: So on your layover day, did you take the kayaks and go play in Granite at all?

MH: We didn't take the kayaks. My dad and one of the kayakers, Alex, they waited at the bottom, for safety. But we actually had a Mini-Mee, or a Maxi-Mee raft -- it's a lot smaller than the 18-foot rafts -- that we took down and did two laps in, and that was really fun. And we also had a Ducky, which is like an inflatable kayak; and my brother and the kayaker who was Delia, they went down and had a little swim. And it was a little bit tough trying to get them back, and everything, but they did. And they ferried over and it was really fun.

TM: Fun! Oh, that's a good place to do a layover, then, to play in the rapid for the day.

MH: Yes.

TM: Very fun. So did that help you for the next day, you were gonna run it, you had a much better idea of the rapid, and what you were gonna do?

MH: It did. In the Maxy Mee it was really good to, you know, feel the waves already; and so I had a kind of an idea of what I had to do going down, and a line and everything. And when we went down, all the kayakers and everyone did pretty well. And so, overall Granite was a pretty fun rapid; there were a few laterals and big waves and there was a hole at the end, which I didn't hit. But overall Granite went pretty well.

TM: Fun. And Dana, that went all right for you as well?

DH: It did. I did not run the lap during the layover day, but, you know, obviously I watched everyone go through. And I have a few videos of that I'll be glad to share with you, if you are interested. But it -- yeah, the campsite was great; it was nice to have a layover day. We had been, you know, hustling, and like you mentioned earlier, you know, the loading and unloading of the boats, day after day; so it was nice to have a layover day. And this campsite was pretty top notch. But it was fun to watch somebody run Granite, and it did help me for the next day, kind of, probably relax a little bit more, you know, seeing them go through it in the smaller raft, and they made it. It gave me pretty good hopes that my chances of making it were pretty good.

TM: Good! All right, so the next day is gonna be a fun day. You're gonna run -- you've got Hermit; so you're doing Granite, Hermit, Crystal, and heading on further downstream. How was Hermit? Micayla, how was that?

MH: This is Micayla. And Hermit, actually -- I had never run the Grand Canyon before, so I wouldn't know -- but my dad and my brother said it was a lot smaller than they had remembered it. Cause they had done it at really higher water, so they said it wasn't really as big or as fun. It was still pretty fun, all the waves and everything. And it was really fun for me, until I got tested; and the hole actually wasn't in play at Hermit, so we didn't have to worry about that. And I think I went through, maybe the fifth or sixth wave, and some water actually -- so, I can't see with my left eye, like my dad; it shot into my good eye, so like, I couldn't see, for like most of the rapid. And it was a little spooky cause I couldn't really do anything; so I was trying to rub my eye with one hand, and keep paddling with the other. So it was really, it was pretty weird, and just odd. But I got through it fine, and my eye just kind of hurt a little bit,

so that was a little...

TM: Okay. All right. And then after that's Crystal.

MH: Yeah, Crystal Rapid, we scouted that; and it was, I didn't really... So, there was a little trail you had to take, to get to the, like, down to the beach with, where we wanted to scout at that. And so, actually I got lost, from like my dad and all the other people, so I didn't really get to see the actual hole until we were kayaking down it. And so my dad didn't, obviously didn't want me to hit the hole, and so he led me to the right of it. And we caught the eddy, right -- or he caught the eddy just parallel to the hole -- and I caught, a little further down. So my brother and the kayaker who was Eric, they were gonna punch the hole, and, you know, do some little tricks in it. So my brother went first, or Max, and he went through the hole and he got stopped, and flipped, and he kind of rolled up in it, and just was surfing it, and getting kind of worked. And then he got out of it after a few seconds, and we actually have video of that, if you are interested in that.

TM: That was posted online, I think, a day or two ago. That's a wonderful little rapid sequence, of dropping into the Crystal hole and doing a little surfing in there, and then rolling out. It's pretty neat.

MH: Yeah. And actually, it was really scary for me because I couldn't see what was going on in the hole, cause I was in an eddy a little further down.

TM: Oh, right!

MH: I was really scared. So I was actually crying because I was just so worried about him, cause I didn't want anything to happen. And he was just fine; he was just, you know, having a blast like he usually does in a hole. And I was just really scared, and, like, he got out and I was like, thank God, like. It was just one of those, like, I was just so relieved that he was fine and everything.

TM: Good. Yeah. No, you should be concerned. Absolutely.

MH: Yeah. But it was probably, probably my most nervous moment of the entire trip.

TM: Oh, it's good to get that behind you!

MH: Yeah, hopefully.

TM: Good. And then from there, you start a long section where the rapids are nothing like the big ones; but they're there: Walthenberg and the Jewels. Serpentine and, Sapphire, and such. Did those guys run okay?

MH: Yeah; actually, I really, really enjoyed Sapphire. It was a really fun rapid, and we actually mistook it for a 3 at first. So I didn't really think anything of it, going in to it, but then we got in and I let my guard down so much, cause, you know, I just thought it was a 3. And actually, it kind of gave me a run for my money. So, I flipped at one of the rapids, and I rolled up and my dad was just watching, just laughing at me. And how we usually do, when we're just looking at each other, just, you know, like just kind of slippin' and everything; just not, just like, you know, playing around or whatever. And I rolled up and then I went into this little whirlpool at the end, and I flipped again. And so I just rolled up and I was just laughing so hard at myself. And me and my dad were both just laughing, having a good time, and

whatever. And, but yeah, overall, Sapphire was really fun and I enjoyed it.

TM: Fun. Very cool. Did you all stop at Shinumo Creek, a little clear side stream? Or Tapeats Creek or Deer Creek, the big waterfall that comes in there? Did y'all stop there?

DH: We did stop at Shinumo. This is Dana; sorry. We did stop at Shinumo Creek. And then we jumped off -- well, I didn't. The kids and some of the other people jumped out of the little waterfall there.

TM: Climb up through that little hole in the boulders there, and then jump down. Yep, yep; fun.

DH: Yes. Yes, they did. And there was another group there; I think it was a commercial group. And they, they kind of had like a rope and were kinda rappelling; but it was just that one boulder. It was a little bit strange; and, like it wasn't much to rappel off of, but they did. So they were there as well. I guess I kinda didn't expect to see that.

TM: Huh; okay. I guess, what I'm kinda asking is, did -- tell me a little bit, not about the water, but about the canyon. Because now the, kind of the big water, you're getting kinda used to, but there's just, there's some really beautiful spot in there, and I just kinda wonder what you're thinking.

DH: Yeah, you're right. So the walls are definitely huge now; I can't remember the tallest they get. Is it 2000? 5000 feet? Definitely beautiful in, you know, I tried to take pictures, and maybe have a raft in the background, to try to show people when I got home, the size, or the enormity of the canyon. And it really, it's really hard to explain to people, or get the point across of the depth of, you know. But it was absolutely magnificent. And I kept just staring up; you know, it was definitely breathtaking, the different colors of the wall, you know; and then the schist. And I don't know if we'd reached the Mauve Canyon at this point; I'm trying to remember when the Mauve came in.

TM: Not quite yet.

DH: Not quite; okay. So, but yeah; definitely the different colors of the rock formations, and the layers. And even at some of the campsites; you know; I would be in the shallow water, and the rocks, just all so different, you know. And amazing, all the different rocks in the canyon. And I don't know, I know they're all made of different materials, and I don't know the names of all of them. But, yeah, it was definitely interesting and neat to experience all of that.

TM: And Micayla, what were you -- were you kind of able to appreciate, you know, your surroundings? Obviously you're kayaking, you're really focused on the water, but what else were you seeing?

MH: As I said earlier, like, all the walls and rock formations, and all the wildlife there; it was absolutely stunning and just breathtaking, all the views that you could see and everything. And all the, all, like, the bighorns, those were really cool to see; we saw some of those. And some of the plants were really cool; and all the colors of the rocks would be, and like, sometimes the sky would kinda shine on them with different colors -- really cool -- and it would be absolutely stunning. And it was really, really cool just to see all, you know, the rock formations and everything. So yeah, I did have a little special appreciation for all of those rocks that are in the canyon.

TM: Oh, very fun. But the river is still there, and lots of flat water is calling, punctuated by an occasional rapid, like Upset. What was kind of happening in that area? So you do enter the Mauve Gorge, where

there's almost a 1000 foot sheer cliff, from the river to the esplanade bench, up through the Redwall and the Supai rock units; Havasu is in there; it comes in on river left, and just a really spectacular little bit of gorge area there. How'd that all work out?

MH: So, like, the days leading up to Lava, like, you know, like Upset and all those other creeks and everything, the creeks like Havasu, Elves Chasm, stuff like that, those were really beautiful to see and everything. And it was really nice to actually be able to swim in water a little warmer than the Colorado. And all, like Havasu, the water was absolutely beautiful there; getting to see, like, that teal, like, it was just absolutely breathtaking for me. And getting to jump from, like, Elves Chasm, that rock and everything, that was really cool. And Upset was definitely a notable rapid; there was like a hole in the middle, and we went far, pretty far right, to miss it. And we took a pretty good line, and all the kayakers were good. And my brother and Eric hit the hole in the middle, and that was, that was kinda worrying for me, again, cause, you know, I couldn't see him. Matkatamiba, if I'm saying it right, was really cool, to see that really big opening; just was all, like, it was sort of like an arena, how I saw it. And it was just absolutely beautiful, for the days leading up to Lava, and just the Ledges Camp, where we stayed at, that was really pretty and everything.

TM: Fun; oh, that's fun. Yeah, those are, Matkat and Ledges, those are very neat. Okay. So, if I was going to nickname you at this point, I'd call you the voice of reason. For sort of looking at these people going into these big holes, going, that doesn't look like fun! (If that makes sense.) And so here comes Lava. Did you scout on the right or the left side?

MH: Um, Lava we scouted on the right side. It was July 4th, actually. And so that was a really neat experience to get to do Lava on the 4th of July.

TM: So you walk up that trail, it's hot; it's lava rock; it's black; there's this kind of light gray trail. You go up to this high bluff, you stand on this big chunk of rock, and you look down at the rapid, and what did you think?

MH: Well, first of all, going up there to the, all this hot black rock, I saw it and I was like, wow, that looks hot. And, actually, I did the trail with my booties and my water shoes; I could, so, the top of them was wet, obviously, because I'd just gotten out of the water, and it wasn't touching the ground. But when I looked on the bottom, they were completely dry because of how hot the ground was. So actually, looking at Lava, I just looked at it, and I was like, that's a lot of, just, so much going on there. And like, there's just so much waves and just, it looked, it was, looked really fun, but it also, I knew, like, wow, this is pretty big. So it was definitely cool scouting it, and just looking at it and everything, but I was really excited to do it, and I was just so pumped cause, you know, it was July 4th and everything. And, don't get me wrong, I was a little nervous cause you know it's the biggest rapid on the entire canyon. So I think I scouted it for about five or ten minutes, and I went back down to where we, where the boats were, and I just waited for everyone else to get back. And I was just thinking to myself, like, you got this, you can do it, and everything. And it was just, it was really cool getting to scout it.

TM: Cool. And then how was your run?

MH: So kind of the same thing happened at Hance with my dad; so he went into the edge of the, actually, the Ledge Hole, because he wanted us to start going left pretty early, to miss V Wave and the Cheese Grater Rock. so he kinda got a little messed up, and started going right and kinda got wheelied, and he flipped. So, again, I had to lead everyone else down Lava. So I was trying to work left to miss, you

know, Cheese Grater Rock and everything. And so, I made it through fine; everyone else made it through fine. And my dad was fine, thank God.

TM: You know, I saw your run on the videos I think your mom posted. That was really good! It was just a nice, just past the Ledge Hole on the right, moving to the left, pass the V-way, just in some nice water there. I thought, wow, that's just a textbook run.

MH: Thank you, I really appreciate that. I knew if my dad got pushed right, I had to start working left; because we had talked about if he had got, kinda gotten messed up or whatever, that I'd start working left to miss the V Wave and the Cheese Grater Rock. And Lava was honestly one of my favorite rapids of the entire trip. It was really fun, big waves to go through, and it was really, really cool and fun, and I really enjoyed it.

TM: Nice! Very, very good. No, you did a really, I have to say, a really, a really nice, nice, nice job.

MH: Thank you.

TM: No, thank you. Then below there, there are still some rapids; you know, Lava's at 179, 180; there's another, well, to get to 280, is another 100 miles yet to go. And a lot of that's going to be laminar, flat water, and the lake effect of Lake Mead from Mile 240 forward, for the last 40 miles. But I'm thinking about rapids like 217 and 205. When you did those rapids, I mean, were they -- in and of themselves, if you started with a rapid like that, it would be a different deal. But by now, how did you think about the rapids below Lava?

MH: Well actually, we had twice, or a little bit of carnage at the 205 Rapid. Not with really so much the kayakers, per se, but really the rafts. But, however, me and, I think, like two or three other kayakers went through 205 Rapid just fine. And so my dad went in, and it just exploded on him. And he kinda, he got flipped and was kept there for a minute, but he got out and was fine. But actually, when the, my dad and two other kayakers stayed near the rapids just to watch the rafts; well, me and, well, I was down near Beacon. Some of the kayakers were in the raft, so it was really only like three or four kayakers actually paddling at this point. So the raft came down -- and I didn't see any of this; I'm just telling from the other peoples' perspective. And so one of the rafts, their oar accidentally snapped. So they had to come, like, to the beach where I was at, and we had to, you know, change oars and everything. And one of the rafts, it only had the captain on it; he went through 205 Rapid, and he went through it, and my dad was up there and he couldn't really see anyone on it. So he thought, like, maybe the captain was bumped over or something; but the oars weren't moving. And then the other kayakers saw what happened, and he was trying to get to the raft. But the raft captain actually got ejected from the raft, so one of the kayakers actually got the raft captain -- while my dad went to the raft, he actually jumped out of his kayak, got on the raft, and pulled his kayak up on the raft. Which is really cool. Yeah, like...

DH: But then -- it was crazy.

MH: Like within, like, ten seconds, and my dad had to, like, row the raft to shore and everything. And it was a little crazy, but I didn't even see or hear what happened until my dad was already in the raft, almost getting to shore and everything. And it was just, like, like, oh my God, what just happened?

TM: And how was the captain?

MH: The captain, he was fine. He just got thrown out of the raft; and he was okay. And he just got back in and kept rowing.

TM: Well, you lucky, lucky kayakers! you get to use your legs to brace yourself in the boat, and those poor, poor raft captains, they're just hanging on these pieces of oars that flail around. And when they get catapulted, they get catapulted -- and it's off they go! Yeah.

DH: I thought it was such a weird situation. This is Dana. Like Micayla said, several of the kayakers went through, and I was the first, or second, raft, and I just happened... Usually anytime we went through a raft, or I mean a rapid, I would usually turn around and look behind me, just to keep an eye on things, is how I... And I saw the raft behind us, it had the permit holder, and her boyfriend, on it, and a captain. And I immediately -- somehow I saw that their oar was just hanging -- like the blade was just hanging -- and said, their oar broke! And so I immediately yelled in front of me, to everyone, "Eddy Out" because we obviously needed to, we were gonna have to wait for them and try to see what happened. And in the meantime, I looked to the left of me, and I see Mike is eddied out, and another kayaker. So at this rapid, we make it through the rapid, I pulled everyone to eddy ell. Everyone is kind of on the beach, to the right, and then my raft is over to the left, in an eddy. So we're waiting on the raft, you know, to pull over, over to the beach, and fix their oar. Well, next thing I know, I'm waiting for the last raft and Mike, my husband, and the last kayaker to come around the corner -- all of a sudden, and only like eight to ten seconds, seems like, have passed -- all of a sudden, I see now the last raft coming; Mike, my husband, is rowing it. His kayak is thrown on the front of this raft, sticking out, and I'm like, where's the guy that was rafting -- or oaring -- this raft? And why is Mike on this raft now? Like what just happened? It was so, such a strange situation. And then we see the raft captain, over on the beach, and we kind of put two and two together, but we still, in such a short amount of time, had no idea what really had transpired. And how did this all happen?

TM: And, yeah, it...very fast.

DH: It only takes a second for something to happen on the river; so.

TM; Yeah, you know, Dana, I didn't ask you about your run through Lava. How did it, you know, you got all your family there, and sort of, and all in kayaks, and you're in a raft, and how did it go?

DH: Yeah. It... So, as Micayla said, we had gotten out on river right and scouted. And it was July 4th, so we took some selfies; we had some face paint on -- red, white, and blue. And the rafters stayed at the top, and we watched the kayakers go through. And that involved my husband, son, and daughter; so that's a little nerve-wracking, you know, all in itself. But I have to say, once I saw -- and I got to see Mike go through his little battle there, and Micayla, Max make it -- so I think once I saw them make it successfully, that really helped me relax a bit. And, you know, it was great -- I could do a little sigh of relief seeing them make it through okay. And then, maybe for a split second, I thought about walking -- or not going through it. But that quickly dissipated, and I got on my raft, with our raft captain, and I held on tight, and we made it through. And I think there's a picture of me, because we had a photographer on the trip that went down and took pictures and video as people went through. And in the middle of the rapid, I see him and I give him, like, this surfer sign in the middle of the rapid. I don't have the picture, but once I get it, I'll send it to you. But again, it was one of those things when we got to the bottom, I said, I would really love to do that again!

TM: I keep hearing this a lot from you two!

DH: It was fun. And there was -- I don't know if you saw it in my video or pictures, there were two motor rigs. I don't know if they were an S-boat... (Is it an S boat or a J boat?) They actually came through while we were up there scouting it. So you can actually see them at the bottom. So maybe having them there, maybe, helped me relax, too, because if anything really happened badly, maybe they could help us? I don't know?

TM: Sure, sure. Well, it sounds like you had a pretty helpful team, just in your own group there.

DH: Oh, absolutely we did, yeah, and so much experience, yeah.

TM: Yeah. So, below 205 and 217 and Diamond Creek, there's one more rapid down there that I always kind of sit up and pay attention to, called 232, Killer Fang Falls. And these river runners love to give rapids names like Skull, and Room of Doom, and Satan's Gut. And Killer Fang Falls. All these names that kind of put the, terrify, terrify people like me. That rapid at low water is kind of tough because it pushes a jet of water right into the schist, this very strong granite -- just a metamorphic rock that's very strong. And these little fins of rock kind of stick up at lower water. Did you stop and scout that? Or did you guys just run it?

MH: Killer Fang we did not scout. However, the kayakers that were in the boats, we got there a lot earlier than the rafts did; so we were kind of waiting in our boats. So...

TM: Okay. Were the "fangs" out of the water?

MH: They were. And actually my dad was talking to me about it some, and I was actually starting to get pretty nervous for myself about Killer Fangs. And he told me the line, we were just going to make a ferry, and just go down, like, the center. A little bit, like, a little right of center. And then cut back left, obviously cause, you know, we don't want to hit the Fangs either. So we went through fine, and the raft came down, and they -- some of them, they got pushed towards the Fangs, they did, and so some of them hit the Fangs -- no one got pinned, thankfully. But the rafts did pretty well, and we made it through Killer Fangs fine. And we all -- as I said, the rafts hit, some of the rafts hit the Fangs.

TM: Good. Yeah, a hit's okay, but a hit and move around is all right, but a hit and go over is a little more difficult. So, yeah; yeah. All right, so from here, then you come down to Separation Canyon, around River Mile 240, and the river changes -- turns into a sort of laminar flow and the reservoir affects, so the river bottom has been filled for decades on decades with a cemented cobble, and makes this just a pretty laminar journey. How did the run out go? How'd that work? Like 40 miles of flat water.

MH: So we did get to Separation Canyon, and we stopped and had lunch there. So we were gonna finish the river that entire day. We didn't actually camp there, we camped a few miles above there. But, so we were planning to do the rest of the 40 miles in that day, and do a night float and paddle. So, I was kinda just kinda getting mentally prepared for that, as we were eating lunch and everything -- just kind of thinking about it. And yeah, you're right, the river does change, and it is just, like, mainly just all flat water. And it's, and what I noticed, like at the end of the river, were these, like, silt walls come up and everything. So, it was definitely different.

TM: Yeah, and how'd that go? Did you guys go into the night then?

MH: Actually, we did. I think we stopped and ate lunch at... Or dinner, we ate dinner at Mile 255, and, which was about six o'clock. And we were all just, you know, eating dinner, some of the rafters were, you know, putting p.j.'s on; you know, just getting ready. So actually, four of the paddlers -- there's me, my dad, and two other kayakers -- were planning to paddle through the entire night. All the rafts stayed behind and just floated. We left a little ahead of them, and we didn't see 'em again until we got to Pearce. But...

TM: Did you have a moon?

MH: We did!

DH: Oh, yes!

MH: And it was actually the full moon, so it took...

TM: Oh, wow!

MH: An hour, or an hour and a half, for it to actually come up, and it was very bright. Like I could see almost everything. And it was -- yeah, it was pretty dark before then, and I couldn't really see my dad that well. But once the moon came up, like, I could see, like, a lot of things, and it was absolutely beautiful. But the night paddle was definitely very exhausting, cause we had been paddling that whole day and everything. And so, what really kind of scared me the whole time was these silt walls, the banks just caving into the water. And it was kinda scary, because they were just like, I didn't see it at first, but I heard it, and then it took me a while to actually spot it, and I didn't know if it was like right by me or not. So it was just kinda odd. But there was one occasion, actually; so, and it got shallow a few times because it was just the silt and everything. But me, my dad, and one of the other kayakers, were a little ahead of the other one, and actually, a big part of the shore caved in, and he was really close to it. So you could just, you heard him yelling, and the bank falling. So, and my dad started asking me if he was okay and everything; and it was pretty freaky, just cause we could all see this big dust cloud, but we couldn't see the other kayaker. He was fine, but it was just, it kinda shook me up because, like, we didn't know if anything had happened or not. But we got to Pearce Ferry about two a.m., and I was absolutely just completely wiped. From that day and everything, and just the entire trip. And my dad had brought like a little blanket to lay on, and we had another blanket, just to use as a covering. And it was a little cold, plus we were wet and everything. So me and my dad, we went to sleep pretty quick, because we were just so tired and everything. And I didn't get really, I didn't really sleep well; I don't think, really, anyone did. But it was, I did feel a sense of relief after I was done; like, it was really cool, to just, like, don't get me wrong, I love the canyon, and it was absolutely beautiful. But it was really cool just to be like, Wow! I paddled the entire Grand Canyon. And that was a really cool experience for me. So, and, it was just pretty awesome.

TM: Nice; very nice. So, from Phantom down, Phantom to Pearce Ferry, the ramp, the takeout there. What were some of the highlights you remember, some of the neater things that you saw?

MH: Definitely, like, Havasu and Elves Chasm; probably July 4th, like, the atmosphere, running Lava, and at Tequila Beach, where we camped, was really good. Everyone was so positive and just, that was really good. Um, probably the night float, seeing the moon and the stars and everything, that was really, really cool. And actually paddling through the night, that was definitely a cool experience for me. And, I guess, just, you know, just the, all the rapids and everything, they were really cool. After Phantom, they got

pretty, a lot, or pretty bigger, like, right after Phantom and everything, so that was really cool.

TM: Nice. What would be one thing you would do differently next time?

MH: One thing I would definitely do differently is pack a journal, as my mom said. And not let my guard down, just going into smaller rapids cause they can mess you up if you don't hit 'em right.

TM: Nice. Okay. And Dana, how was your run out that last night, boating in the dark? Ah, boating in the moonlight, I should say.

DH: Yeah, um... It was good. I was a little nervous; remember, it got completely dark, as Micayla said. We had a, I guess because the walls are so tall, we didn't see the moon for a little while. And so it was completely dark. And we had, the rafts were tied together, and I was gonna try to sleep. But then I would look out, and I would like maybe see a shadow, or I was like, I think we're really close to a wall, guys! Shine the light! They would shine the light and, sure enough, there'd be a wall right there. I'd feel like, brace for impact! So that was neat. Then when the moon came up, it was, it was absolutely breathtaking. And it looked neat on, you know, the water, and everything. I'd never seen so many shooting stars in my whole life. In that one night, I think I've seen more shooting stars than I've ever seen; it was pretty spectacular. And I think I did eventually drift off to sleep, and I think I woke up around one a.m., and we were stuck on a sandbar. So we had to get off the raft and actually push it off and, like, we absolutely were not moving any more. So, it did make for an interesting night -- it was a long night, but it was, it was good. I'm glad that we decided to do the, the night float, you know, and then see the sunrise. And I think we got to the take-out a little after six a.m.; so, I think the kayakers finished a little after two a.m., and we finished about four hours later.

TM: All right. And then, what was the neatest thing you saw from Phantom out to the ramp, to the take-out?

DH: Um, let's see. The neatest thing I saw? There was a lot of neat things; um, I'm not sure the neatest thing I saw -- I will tell you I finally did jump, when we were in Elves Chasm. I wasn't going to, and I went up there, and -- cause I really wanted to climb up and see what it was like. And then when I got to the top, I looked down and I was like, gosh, this is a lot further down than I thought! Like I said, I'm not as -- quite as -- adventurous as my family, but I think after standing there for a minute, trying to jump, I finally did jump. So I was, I was pretty proud of myself for that. I think the greatest thing I, just being with my family, on the Grand Canyon; it's not something I ever thought I would get the chance to do. And just being in that environment, and enjoying it with them; seeing them grow, and face the challenges, and myself face the challenges. I think all of that, you know, was just kind of an internal thing that was neat to feel. But obviously the scenery, and never having even been to the Grand Canyon, even by foot, before; you know, it was all a lot to experience, and to take in.

TM: Yeah, yeah. I want to ask you your thoughts that you might want to share with other parents raising children, and who might look at, you know, allowing an 11-year-old, heaven forbid, to paddle her own kayak through Grand Canyon. You know, from talking to Micayla, this is -- you know, she clearly spent a considerable amount of time; she'd been paddling for six years, running the Ocoee ahead of time, and traveling with experienced people. As a historian, children, by the time they're ten, a hundred years ago were doing some amazing things, and no one thought a thing about it. So, do you have some thoughts to share for other parents, about parenting and allowing children to -- young adults, I should say -- to do things like this?

DH: Um, yeah; so, and I think, you know, from some of my comments you can tell, we definitely took great care in preparing Micayla, and Max for when he did the trip at 12. I definitely don't think it's for anyone to just jump in a kayak and do; it definitely would take a lot of preparation. And I think, also, the person, or the child, would need to mentally be prepared for the trip, not just physically. You know, obviously, we know our kids, and we know they were up for the challenge. Definitely it was nerve-racking as a parent, but at the same time, as you said, years ago or, you know, generations ago, things like this were part of daily life; or more dangerous activities were part of everyday life. So while I believe in, yes, protecting your child, I also believe in letting them explore and grow, safe challenges; not live quite so sheltered, maybe. And, yeah, definitely, as Micayla said, they were both kayaking at what?, five years old, so they had very early exposure. And, you know, there is no pressure to do this. You know, while I think Mike learned about the Grand Canyon, and brought it up, there was definitely never any pressure; I don't think anything to be gained by pressuring a child into doing something that they're not ready for. So I think, you know, exposing them; Mike has obviously spent a lot of time kayaking with them. It's not something that you could just jump into overnight; you would definitely have to take the time and teach them, and let them experience things, you know, as it comes up in life. Within reason, you know.

TM: Nice, nice. So Micayla, would you do it again?

MH: I would definitely do it again if I had the chance. And honestly? The entire trip, I'm just so grateful for the opportunity to have something like this, cause you know, barely any kids have the chance or the opportunities like this, to do something like this. And I really wanted so other people, and especially kids, that kayaking is, I would say, probably a great thing to do, and just the outdoors is so amazing in itself. Like, going on the Grand Canyon, or even just going for a walk in the park, is just very beautiful and I hope to inspire other people to get out there.

TM: Nice. That's really wonderful. Well, I certainly want to congratulate all of you, the Hurndon family. Certainly Micayla and Dana, and Mike and Max, for, as a team, getting out there and exploring your world. I just think it's, you know, what Dana touched upon is, just, really, parenting is a responsibility, and it's a journey, and it needs a lot of thought, and you guys seem to be doing all that. It's really, really wonderful. So I just, I want to thank you for spending the time with me today, to talk about this river trip you just completed in the Grand Canyon. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this interview before we wrap it up?

DH: I think Max wanted to say hello to you.

MaxH: Hey, Mr. Tom.

TM: Hey, Max, how are you? Well, hang on a second; we'll wrap up the interview and then we'll yik-yak - it'll be fun. Hang on. And so I guess -- just double check -- anything else, Dana and Micayla, you want to add?

DH: Micayla, anything?

MH: No, Mr. Tom. Thank you for asking.

TM: All right. Well, thank you.

DH: Your time is also important to us; to take down all of our information and ask these great questions, and thank you for everything that you do.

TM: Gosh, well, thank you. With that, this will end an oral history interview with Micayla and Dana Hurndon. And my name is Tom Martin. Today is Friday, July 17th, 2020, and thank you both so very much.

MH: Thank you.

DH: Thank you.