

Interviewee: Ruth Baker  
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Special Collections

SUBJECTS:

Children's activities  
Civilian Conservation Corps  
Community activities  
Concessionaires  
Dignitaries  
Elzada Clover  
Evening entertainment, such as movies, dances and lectures  
Family life  
Fred Harvey Company  
Growing up at Grand Canyon  
Holidays at the Canyon, including Christmas and Memorial Day  
Houses at the Canyon, including tenthouse and Avenue A house  
Kolbs, including baby-sitting, family, and studio business  
Mary Jane Colter  
National Park Service  
Other activities, such as travel to the reservation  
Resource management, including deer and vegetation around houses  
Santa Fe Railroad  
School  
Shiva Temple Expedition  
Shopping  
Tourists  
Widforss

Underhill: This is Ruth Baker, used to be Stephens, S-T-E-P-H-E-N-S, and I'm Karen Underhill with NAU Cline Library, doing this for the National Park Service at Grand Canyon. Today is May 29th and it's about noon, and you're here for the 75th reunion. So, the first question would be, when did you come to the Canyon?

Baker: 1920.

Underhill: Where were you born?

Baker: I was born in San Diego. My father came up here, he had answered an application because Fred Harvey wanted somebody for about three months in 1920. And so he came up and stayed for forty years.

Underhill: And how old were you when you arrived?

Baker: Two.

Underhill: Do you remember the Canyon at two?

Baker: I remember our tenthouse and Earline Shirley, whose father was head of Fred Harvey at that time, and she had left me this little doll cradle, and that I remember.

Underhill: How long did you live in the tenthouse?

Baker: Until I was ten and then they built the houses on Avenue A [in 1994 referred to as Apache Street]. That's the original name. We had house number five. It's still there.

Underhill: And you went to school up here?

Baker: Oh yeah! In those days we walked to school and we walked home for lunch. We had an hour. We walked home and we walked back. We didn't have any cars. Of course, my kids keep telling me, "Yes Mother, with every year the miles get longer and the snow gets deeper."

Underhill: How many kids were in school when you started?

Baker: Let's see, we had two rooms . . . five of us in first grade . . . I really can't remember. There couldn't have been but about fifteen [actually more], I guess. I remember when I got to second grade I skipped it and went to the third and then they divided the school into three rooms. First, second, third; and then fourth and fifth; and whatever there was [left] - sixth, seventh and eighth. Sometimes there wasn't a sixth, sometimes there wasn't a seventh. When I graduated from eighth grade there were six of us in the eighth grade.

Underhill: And what did the kids do for entertainment?

Baker: We did everything. We made all our own entertainment. We played dolls, the girls. The guys played ranch and they would build these big ranches out front of the houses. And they had big pine cones for cows, the little ones were horses and anything else was a dog. We couldn't have dogs so they were imaginary. The boys also had tree houses out behind the old store that burned [old Babbitts store which was being used as Fred Harvey's recreation center in March 1994 when it burned to the ground -- now there is a parking lot there]. The Nelsons lived not too far from there, the boys had a tree house there. The girls weren't allowed to climb it, weren't allowed to be anywhere near. We played games after school, played kick the can, all kids games. Well now I'm talking about the old school house. You know where the old school is, behind the [Fred Harvey] garage? That's where I went. We just made our own entertainment. We played different kinds of games. Gals played house, played dolls, went to each others' houses. It was like one big family, and I think that's why nobody here ever married anybody else, because it would have been like incest. I mean, our parents all knew each other and we played back and forth just like one family.

Underhill: Who else was in school with you?

Baker: Well, Jean Tillotson, Merlyn Jackson, Tom Jackson, Audrey

Jackson, Hubert Lauzon, Marnette Reed, Mildred Reed, Roy Nelson, Jack Shirley, in the early days, Frances Spencer. I'm leaving out a bunch of them [including my two best friends, Billie Ennis and Peggy Nelson.] Supai Suzie . . . forget it for a minute, it will come back.

Underhill: What were living conditions like in general as you were growing up here?

Baker: Well at first they were very, very primitive. We had a three room tenthouse and an outhouse. And then when we moved up to Avenue A of course we had real houses and real indoor plumbing. Some of the people were living in tents, not tenthouses -- we were elegant, we had a tenthouse. The Clarks lived over behind the old new Babbitts [burned building]. A number of people up here -- in what we called the campground area -- lived in tents, Tent City we called it.

Underhill: Was there a mixture of ethnic groups at the time?

Baker: Yes, I grew up with Supai, Hopi and Navajo Indians. And there were some Mexicans, most of them worked on the railway. [The only blacks were Pullman-car porters and they did not live at the canyon. One Japanese -- Adam -- was a bellhop at El Tovar.]

Underhill: Was it still one large community or were there divisions?

Baker: Uh-huh, well of course there was always the ethnic divisions. But the kids went to school together and that was -- of course they were just kids.

Underhill: And how would you describe the relationship between Fred Harvey and the park at that time?

Baker: Well there was always a little bit of dissension. The families got along together, the kids got along together, and the parents got along together, but there was always this division. The park always thought it was better than anybody else. When you were here in the early days you either worked for Uncle Sam, Uncle Fred or the Santa Fe Railway, or the three independents -- Babbitts, Verkamps or Kolbs, and that was it. The biggest feud was between Emery Kolb and the Park Service and that's what led to Shiva Temple.

Underhill: What did you think of Emery Kolb when you were growing up?

Baker: Well, my first job was baby-sitting their grandson -- they called him Sonny -- Emery Carl Lehnert. [Edith, Carl and Sonny] were staying with the Kolbs who had the most fantastic

collection of Wizard of Oz books. I wanted to read them, so when Sonny got up from his nap, at the age of two, I'd say "Sit there" and I'd read the Wizard of Oz to him! But he got back at me later when I was working up at the studio. When I was talking to the dudes, he would bring in a little creature and put it on my shoulder! There I was trying to be polite and here was this little thing crawling around on me -- like a horny toad! So that was my first job. Then when I was sixteen, I was promoted to the darkroom, washing pictures, and then I was promoted upstairs to washing windows!

Underhill: Which did you prefer?

Baker: Yes or maybe no. But then I started doing sales and I also started running the infernal machine -- the old Peerless, a projector, a carbon arc -- and you had to set the arcs just so. Part of it was for the slide show and part was for the movies. The movies would break down and Mr. Kolb would be down there buzz buzz buzz, "Fix this, fix this, fix this." You're trying to get the thing up, get it spliced, get it put back together again, put on slides, in the meantime, buzz buzz buzz. Sometimes he'd come running up and do it himself and run back down again.

Underhill: And he did the show how many times a day, once?

Baker: Twice a day or for specials -- if there was a special he

would stop everything and give the show. I was also the barker. They had the boat out there with all the statistics. I had to go out there at the age of sixteen and say good morning, explain about the boat and drag them in, by words, to see the telescope and then, by words, to buy a ticket to the show, and then, by words, to buy a book. I was a barker!

Underhill: Do you remember how much you got paid for doing that?

Baker: Sure, twenty-five cents an hour.

Underhill: Did you have a standard spiel that you used?

Baker: When I started out I was scared to death. But I always started out talking about the boat [and] talking about the river trip.

Underhill: Was Edith a contemporary of yours?

Baker: No, she was older. I was baby-sitting her child. No, she was older and she was married to a ranger [Carl Lehnert].

Underhill: The Shiva Temple [expedition], let's talk about that. You mentioned that there was a feud between Kolb and Fred Harvey.

Baker: And the Park Service. Well you see, Emery felt that he



owned the Canyon. He and his brother had done this whole voyage down [the Colorado River in 1911-1912] and they were the only ones who had really been exploring all over the Canyon and this was one area that they had not climbed. When Emery heard somebody was coming to do it, well, he wanted to do it himself first. The feud started because Emery felt he owned the Canyon. He and Fred Harvey had a set-to because he used to walk along the rim at night getting tourists to come down to the show, and they called that solicitation. They didn't like it a lot because they felt they owned the rim from up by Verkamps clear on down to the studio, and they didn't like people being solicited.

Underhill: Did that put your family in a conflict of interest?

Baker: No, we just rode along with it, because my dad was [giving] the Fred Harvey lecture up at the El Tovar Hotel at the same time Emery was giving his down [at the studio]. There wasn't any conflict there, as far as the people were concerned, except for Emery and his own ideas of what he wanted. I'm sure he's spinning now because the Park Service has HIS home and is telling people what they can do with HIS home. But anyway, that's the way it was. He did some remarkable things and he had a right to be proud. He certainly had a feisty temper. He was a little man, he had a big temper, you've heard that.

Underhill: Uh-huh. He had a great deal of courage.

Baker: Yes, a very great deal.

Underhill: So you would have been seventeen [nineteen] when Emery was preparing to climb Shiva Temple [in 1937], how did you get involved in that?

Baker: I don't know, simply because I was working up there. He had heard some woman [Mrs. Walter H. Wood] was going to climb up, so of course, Edith (his daughter and the sweetheart of the Canyon since she had been born) naturally he was going to take her. Gordon [Berger] had been out here working with him and around him taking pictures, and his friend, Ralph [White]. Emery just decided to get us together, and my mother said yes. She would never let me go down the Canyon on the river but she would let me climb Shiva Temple! Surely she didn't know what that was going to be like!

So it was with utmost secrecy -- as a matter of fact, when Mrs. Kolb was making our burlap parachutes [she wouldn't let anyone in the sewing room. It was very hush, hush. Since] we had to have something to eat and we couldn't carry it with us, [the plan was that the pilot] would drop us canned tomatoes and crackers on top of Shiva Temple, after we got up there, [and the parachutes were for this]. The pilot who took us over to the North Rim very very late in the afternoon. We went out to Sublime and camped, and started out very early in the morning. The same pilot was to

come back at noon time and drop the stuff. I was to wear a red shirt so he could see where we were. There was a clearing up there. He saw where the clearing was but he missed [it] and got the tree, so Emery had to climb the tree and pull down our eats. Anyway, when Mrs. Kolb was sewing up these parachutes nobody could go downstairs. She had the room all set out. She was sewing these parachutes out of gunny sacks and because nobody was to know we were to go up there, [everything was] hush, hush.

Underhill: And how long did it take you? You went over to the North Rim . . . .

Baker: Spent the night and we started down in the morning, oh, I reckon about seven o'clock or something like that and got down to the saddle and then got up [on Shiva I would say about noon. They] let me go first, because I was the youngest, so I got on top just as the noon whistle blew, that's where we were! Those were the good old days when all time was set by the [powerhouse] whistle -- eight o'clock go to work, twelve o'clock stop for lunch, one o'clock back from lunch, five o'clock stop. Those were the whistles and everybody lived by those whistles.

Underhill: Those were Fred Harvey whistles?

Baker: It was actually from the Powerhouse owned by Santa Fe. This was for the whole village, everybody kept time by the

whistle.

Underhill: So then when you got up to the top . . . .

Baker: . . . top of Shiva Temple, I breathed a little bit and gave a sigh of relief!

Underhill: Did you have to have ropes to climb?

Baker: A couple of spots we did, but no real rope climbing. Just enough to help us get up and down. We decided to go see what was around. We started taking pictures. We went out to the point and said, "Well, alright, this is what we can see from the studio." We went back and then it was time to have the fly over. We got out in the little clearing. Emery went up and got the burlap sacks and we went out to the point and had our little picnic. When we finished they found an old agave stalk and put the burlap bag on it, and that was our flag. That's where these pictures came from [part of the Emery Kolb Collection at NAU]. I think we buried the cans as I remember but we did leave some Kodak film boxes, just to let somebody know we were there. And because I knew there was a woman coming, I left some Kleenex with some lipstick on it.

Underhill: So how soon thereafter did the other party [Dr. Harold E. Anthony of the American Museum of Natural History] go

up?

Baker: September.

Underhill: And what month did you go?

Baker: August. We had to get it in quickly. It was a pretty hurry-up job.

Underhill: What kind of reaction did you hear about then, in the park, from the other party?

Baker: Nothing. I had to go back to school. I could have been a great Big-Person-on-Campus but I wasn't allowed to speak of it because Emery would have been kicked out of the park. So it wasn't until twenty years later that I got these pictures [from Mr. Kolb].

Underhill: Did you ever go back to Shiva Temple?

Baker: No. I would have liked to, but when I got out of college I taught for two years and then got married to a temporary ranger and moved back East.

Underhill: How did you meet your husband?

Baker: Well, he was up here as what we called in those days a ninety-day wonder. I talked to somebody about that today and she said "WHAT?", and I said, "A ninety-day wonder, a temporary ranger" -- usually college kids who came out three months during the summer. Mr. Albright sent him out here because he was a very good friend of his mother and father. That's who this whole place is named for, Horace Albright. He was my daughter's godfather, because when I went back East he lived back there and I got to meet them. I had known him as a little kid, but now I was grown up. So I said since he was responsible [in a way for the marriage], he could be godfather to one of my kids and he said alright and picked our little girl.

Underhill: What year did you meet your husband?

Baker: This was in 1938.

Underhill: What was his name?

Baker: Albert Brewer Baker Jr. When we had our first child [Albert Brewer Baker III] we called him Tersh because we liked the idea of Verkamp's Tersh. So, there are two Tershs who belong to the Canyon!

Underhill: So, he was a ranger here and you were working that summer.

Baker: Oh I always worked. When you lived here you always worked all summer long, and sometimes in winter when you came home from school. I mean from the time you were old enough to work.

Underhill: What kinds of things did people do in those days for dates? That's the Depression.

Baker: Oh listen! Summers were wonderful. To begin with the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] was here. Now, that was prime! That was wonderful, all the "men" you wanted, and this was in our heyday. We were in high school, college, and the temporary rangers were also very nice to know. They used to have the dances at B.A. [Bright Angel Lodge] and the dudes were available too. After we got off work, about nine o'clock when everybody closed up shop, we'd all -- the indigenous people -- go down to see what was going on. We met some very interesting people, some very nice people. I know that I kept correspondence with a couple of guys I, quote unquote, "dated" just for the couple of days they were here. It was really fun. We had a very good, lively social life. There was a fair amount of rimming that went on, of course.

Underhill: And what is that?

Baker: [simultaneously] Does anybody do that anymore?

Baker: You can guess.

Underhill: Driving out to the rim?

Baker: Walking usually, along the rim. You know these lovely little places along the rim where you can sit and look at the moonlight over the Canyon. It was very, very romantic.

Underhill: There were fewer young women than men at that time, I would imagine.

Baker: Well, no [misunderstood the question]. This was before the war and so there were still quite a number of guys around. As I said, there were CCC, that was good pickings.

Underhill: Were you here during the war years?

Baker: No, I was not. I was married then.

Underhill: What was the best part for you about being here at the Canyon as a child and young woman?

Baker: I guess the closeness of us as a family and especially with people like my mother -- who was born and bred in Philadelphia, very proper -- to have to come out here and live in a tenthouse and have an outhouse. Well a lot of these people had



come from someplace like that and some had not. It was a commingling of people from different backgrounds all together here as real pioneers. We didn't think of ourselves as, well I think our parents thought of themselves as pioneers, but we kids didn't. I mean this was our home, our house. I still think of this as HOME, I never think of any other place but this as home. It was a closeness, and of course the Canyon was such an integral part of us.

I don't think we ever thought of it as anything really special-special. It was just a part of where we grew up. I know, at least for me as I grew older I began to appreciate the fact more. For one thing we met people here that people everywhere else would NEVER meet. The whole world came to us, we met kings and queens and presidents. I remember [the President of Mexico] coming out to our little school and saying hi to us. I mean that's something else! I think in that way, in some ways, maybe we became more sophisticated in knowing how to treat people. You know wrangling the darn dudes, you have to have a certain amount of patience and a certain amount of humor.

Underhill: Who else? You mentioned kings and queens, you mentioned [the President of Mexico]. Who else stands out?

Baker: If this thing weren't on [video camera] I could tell you. I can not remember who it was, but it was an opera star. That

reminds me of another wonderful story when Mary Jane Colter had finished the Bright Angel Lodge. It was absolutely beautiful then, the whole area. We were home for Christmas and she wanted to have an old fashioned Christmas. [She asked] those of us who were home for Christmas [to come to the B.A.] She had us sitting stringing popcorn and cranberries. There was a piano because that's where they used to have the dances. We were singing Christmas carols, and all of a sudden, I can't remember who it was but he was a Metropolitan Opera tenor, came in and joined us. Now, if you don't think that still doesn't give me goosebumps!!

Underhill: What a treat.

Baker: It was. This was the kind of thing that happened to us. It wouldn't happen nowadays.

Underhill: What was Mary Jane Colter like?

Baker: Oh she was something else. She was a delightful person. Of course, she was a very autocratic person, she knew exactly what she wanted and how she wanted it. That's why everything turned out the way it did. She was a wonderful person.

One of my very favorite people was Mr. [Gunnar] Widforss, the painter. He was Swedish and my mother was Norwegian and Danish so they got along very well together. He used to come over to

our house for dinner all the time because he liked Mother's cooking, because she cooked Scandinavian. As a result, I have a couple of his paintings that were given to Mother as thank-yous. I have three strokes in one of his paintings of the Watchtower. I was out there watching him and he said, "Would you like to put some on here?" So, I have three strokes on one of his paintings of the Watchtower.

Underhill: And what was he like?

Baker: He was delightful! Of course he was old! (As I said, I talk about Emery now, there was no way on earth I would have called him Emery in those days! MR. Kolb, MRS. Kolb.) Looking back you're colored by the age that you were then, so [Mr. Widforss] was an older man and a friend of my family. He was very kind and sweet to me.

Underhill: Other people that you knew . . . Eddie McKee.

Baker: Oh yes, Barbara McKee, his wife, and . . . oh gosh, I can't remember her name, and I went out to the Hopi dances a couple of times. One time we went out on part of the Painted Desert and we found, so help me, what looked like remains of a campfire -- petrified wood charcoal. I still have a piece of it. In those days you had to be sure you got on this side of Moenkopi Wash or you might not get back for three days, because when they

had a rain dance, it rained. I mean they knew when to do it, of course.

Underhill: What kind of vehicle were you using?

Baker: I don't know what she was driving, but anyway, that was in the two-rut days to get out there. But it was fabulous and she was a delightful person.

Underhill: What other things did you do to explore the Canyon? You did Shiva Temple.

Baker: Oh well, real exploration -- you wouldn't call it that -- we used to play house down in the cave between Lookout [Studio] and Kolb Studio. There's some caves under there. We used to take our dolls down there and go play house. I wouldn't like to see any of my grandchildren doing that!

Underhill: Doing the same thing, kind of fearless.

Baker: Yeah! What's down there? Nothing [but 500 feet of air]! And then as we grew older -- I don't know whether you know it or not -- do you know where Duck on the Rock is on East Rim Drive?

Underhill: Yes.

Baker: There's a tremendous big cave over there right below the rim. Have you ever been down there?

Underhill: No.

Baker: That's where we used to go have our watermelon feast. I'm sure that way, way, way down there somewhere watermelons are growing about two thousand feet below.

Underhill: What were the watermelon feasts?

Baker: Oh, this was when we were in high school and college and came home for summer and we'd just decide to go out there after work and eat watermelon. The boys drank beer too. But that was part of the growing up, and the dances were part of the growing up.

I mean really early days, in the old community building, we were properly given proper dance lessons. I can remember Hubert Lauzon and me, and Hubert counting 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4. We wore gloves, the girls. Florence Cravey taught us. We'd do the waltz and the foxtrot. That was it until all of a sudden the new young postmaster's wife came along and taught us a new dance.

Underhill: Was that Art Metzger's wife?

Baker: No, that was long before Art Metzger. This was Mr. Kitner's associate . . . I cannot for the life of me think of the name. It will come at two o'clock in the morning. But she was young and she taught us a new dance. I can't remember what the heck it was now but it was the sideways business, 1-2-3, not 1-2-3-4 boxstep and not 1-2-3 waltz. Probably the foxtrot.

Underhill: Slow, slow, quick, quick.

Baker: Yes, and Florence got highly indignant and said we had better stop that! She wasn't going to have anything like that.

Underhill: Did you feel like you were pretty much up on the cultural things that were happening in the country up here? Did you have access to movies?

Baker: Movies yes! My Dad ran the movies. We'd have movies once a week. Well no, from the beginning it was once a month I guess, down at the old community building. At the new community building we started having them once a week. It was a quarter for adults and ten cents for kids. I got in for free because Dad ran the movies.

As far as culture and news from the outside world, I remember the old radios. I remember Roy Nelson and his father building their own little crystal set. I remember, and this is way down in the

tenthouse days, Dad listening to his radio. Ordinarily we always got San Francisco, Denver and Salt Lake. And Dad got Japan once, he said, "Something's going on here, I don't know what it is." Somebody else had heard it and they said yes, it was from Japan. So this night it was clear and they could get it I guess, I don't know, but I remember the old radio days.

Underhill: Were there any practical jokes, anything that stands out in your mind, things that the kids did or things that happened while you were working or when you were older?

Baker: Oh, the only practical jokes that we ever did, it wasn't really a practical joke, it was just because the dudes were so gullible. Gene Morris and I would sit and be coloring something -- because this was before color came out for taking pictures, so Mr. Kolb had the black and white pictures -- and Gene Morris and I would tint these up and sell them as tinted photos. As we were working we'd say, "Hey look, I don't think they colored . . . ." We'd take a look outside [and say], "You know, they colored that wrong this year. We've got to talk to the Park Service about that, they used the wrong color red. Well you know what, the plateau doesn't look quite the right color either. I don't know whether to color it this way or the way they had it last year." And these dudes thought the thing was actually done. So I say gullible! And then of course the old ranger stories and the drivers' stories -- tall tales.

Underhill: Were you aware when Glen and Bessie Hyde came through in 1928? Did you see them at all?

Baker: I didn't see them but I remember hearing about it. Of course Mr. Kolb had them in his lectures all the time. And when, what was her name . . . from Northwestern . . . .

Underhill: Elzada Clover.

Baker: Yes, Elzada. When she and her group and Norm Nevills came down -- that was the year I wanted to go -- they asked if I could go from Lees Ferry down to Phantom and Mother wouldn't let me. She said I was too young. But anyway, they came up [to Kolb's] and I have pictures of them and with them. We were all out in front of the boat. We had a good three or four days with them up on top.

Underhill: Have you ever been on a river trip?

Baker: No, not yet, one of these days I'm going to make it!

Underhill: In terms of the environment up here at the Canyon, did you see, while you were here, any changes in vegetation or animal populations?

Baker: No, while we were here there was no vegetation but



natural indigenous vegetation. You wouldn't even grow a sweet pea, if you please, and nothing but the indigenous animals. Although I will say that when I was very small my Dad brought home a little four-legged something that looked like a dog. We had her, I think, for about two years before she ran away. I hoped somebody had picked her up and taken care of her. Mostly she was very much kept in the house.

Underhill: Were you allowed to have dogs then?

Baker: No dogs, no cats, no nothing. We had pet deer though. Now this was interesting. They were thinning out the population of deer on the North Rim. You heard about this probably, brought them over by plane and we each had a pet deer. Minnie was mine and she had a collar and was tied to the clothesline in back. When finally she was old enough to let go, she came back every single year, had her twins in our backyard and this was even after I left. She came back every year.

Underhill: Do you remember what year they were flying them over from the North Rim?

Baker: Well we were still in school because I remember Smokey (that was the deer that the Shirleys had -- he was wild. He came through and tore down, I think it was Nelsie's laundry one day, it was hanging out on the line. Everyone was scared of him --

don't get near Smokey!) We were still here, so this had to be when we were probably ten, eleven, twelve, something like that.

Underhill: So 1934, something like that. Did you meet Jack Fuss?

Baker: It sounds familiar.

Underhill: He was involved on the North Rim with cutting down the herds.

Baker: Oh -- no.

Underhill: Do you have a favorite spot in the Canyon?

Baker: You mean aside from on top of Shiva?! Well, I'll tell you one favorite is looking out Kolb's windows because in the afternoons I used to stand out there and look. This is when the dudes would be out on the Rim drive. I was standing there by myself and I could imagine myself being on any one of the tops of those [buttes] -- this was before I climbed [Shiva]. In my imagination I could go on top of Zoroaster or I could go any place I wanted, and it was fabulous.

Underhill: Was there anything you didn't like about growing up here at the Canyon?

Baker: No. I can't think that we missed anything.

Underhill: What do you think about the changes that you've seen?

Baker: You mean the mess, the mess of people? The only pollution is people pollution. I was walking the rim yesterday and this one young lad was talking to his mother and said "Mom, I don't like this place. There are too many people." I think people feel suffocated rather than awesome and being able to breathe. I always felt the Canyon was expansive, now it's being pressed in, and it's too bad. I know you can't limit it, but nobody now has a chance to sit, think, expand, and enjoy. It's noise, it's people, and it's a shame. We lived here the best of all times! Now I know you all enjoy it too and I'm glad you do, but we had the perfect time.

Underhill: Can you talk about some of elements that made it so perfect, are there others that come to mind?

Baker: People were of course the integral part of it, as far as our normal living was concerned. Our teachers were fantastic. I got through my freshman year of high school because of my teacher here [Minnie H. Brown] -- Dean Tillotson was the only one who was ready to go for the ninth grade and they didn't want to send him away. So Miss Brown taught him ninth grade here. Well, I auditioned, I learned algebra and I sailed through ninth grade

algebra with no problem at all. It was fun because a three-room and two-room schoolhouse is a great place to grow up because you're always learning something from somebody else. I auditioned every grade that was ahead of me. That's why I skipped the second grade, because I was already reading third grade reading, and I didn't bother going through second grade. It's a cohesiveness that you have.

[As a matter of fact], I got a B.A. in Education at San Diego State University and I went to teach school up in a three-room schoolhouse, outside of San Diego, in Warner Springs with Indian children. I had the first three grades all in one room. Well having experienced that, I kind of knew what to do. I had eight reading groups, seven spelling groups, six math groups, and I taught all of the drama and music for the whole school. But having grown up here -- and you know they're getting back to this now, where older kids help younger ones. It's a great way to teach because when you're teaching you learn something too.

Underhill: Is there anything you can, this is one of those questions that they always ask.

Baker: What would you like to do over again?!

Underhill: You got it!!

Baker: Well goodness, I don't know. I kind of liked it the way it was. It wasn't too big and it wasn't too small. I can't put it in a time capsule but it sure would be fun, I guess this is the nearest thing to it [video recording].

Underhill: Are there other people you associated with that come to mind? People who were your friends?

Baker: Well, for instance, I didn't mention the Clarks. Charles and Carter Clark were also here. Their father, Charlie, was night watchman. They lived across the street from us on Avenue A. Mary Clark made the most delicious donuts you ever tasted in your life. Whenever she was making donuts every kid on the block went down to get them. Mrs. Reed made the best beans that you ever tasted and whenever she was making beans everyone went to her house to have beans.

Christmas time they had a big Christmas-party for all the kids. Now I'm talking about the old community building. I remember Santa Claus one time came down in an airplane. They had the projector room upstairs and they had a little trapeze type thing for Santa Claus to come down on. All the Indians came from everywhere around and they all went home with a little box of candy and an apple and an orange.

I remember the first time that I ever went because when we got

out of there -- we were walking home through the snow -- and I heard bells and I said, "That's Santa Claus," and Dad said, "Yes, you better hurry up and get to bed." Those were the days when they brought the tree in Christmas Eve after you were asleep. So we believed.

Underhill: Are there other holiday celebrations that you remember?

Baker: Oh a very pertinent one right now, Memorial Day. We sold poppies. (I was so glad to see somebody with poppies on last night. They said they got them at Babbitts, kids were selling them I guess.) We kids started selling poppies the week before. We would go down to the depot, we'd go to El Tovar, we'd go to Bright Angel, we'd sell them wherever we could. Everyone wore one then. For Memorial Day itself we'd start at the garage and walk out to the cemetery and the American Legion would do its usual thing, gun salutes and everything, we'd stand like this -- but it was something to remember and it was truly Decoration Day, Memorial Day. It wasn't, "Let's go out and have a barbecue day," it meant something then, graves were all decorated.

Underhill: You mentioned going down and selling these to folks, what were the tourists like?

Baker: Oh pretty much the same as they are now I guess. We had

two categories, the dudes and the sagebrushers. The dudes were the ones who came on the train, dressed properly and went to the El Tovar. Sagebrushers came [in cars, dressed] anyway they wanted and stayed at the B.A. or down at the campground.

Underhill: Was there the same diversity of countries in terms of visitation?

Baker: Oh yes, well not as many [from all the countries as nowadays]. I have been up here for reunions and been up here in October and been out to Hopi Point. You couldn't understand a word anybody said except the bus driver. We didn't have the influx like that. We didn't have things printed in German, French and Japanese. It was just plain old American. But we did have visitors from all over the world. Not the preponderance you have now.

Underhill: How did the Depression affect the village here?

Baker: Well I didn't feel that because I was still pretty young. The only thing I do really remember was Mary Clark coming over to my mother in tears saying, "We don't have any money. Our money is all gone." She was talking with mother [about the stock market crash in October, 1929,] and that's all I can remember because we didn't have that much money anyway.

Underhill: Were there people losing their jobs or was everyone able to keep them?

Baker: No, everybody who was here kept their jobs here, at least from my point of view at that time. All the people I knew.

[There was no reason for fluctuation in jobs. There were basic jobs -- one store, one garage, etc. All economics were based on tourism and that might have dribbled but not to the extent to lose jobs. Also, I was away in high school and not aware of exact events at Grand Canyon.]

Underhill: How common was it for people to go to outlying towns for things? Flagstaff?

Baker: Oh, you'd go down to Williams but it was a long trip. Flagstaff was the city. You could go there maybe for clothes. But some things -- for instance, my mother insisted that I was going to have proper milk. She was the one responsible for getting the milk to come up on the train from Phoenix. She was the one who dispensed the milk from our back porch. She had this five-gallon can, which was scalded six ways from Sunday, every day before the milk came in. I guess it was once a week we had it. All the women would come and bring their bottles and Mother would fill them. Each one had her own bottle. Mother had them labeled and they would come in. I was talking to Pinkie last night, she said she remembered coming down from school up here --



because she got to go to the new school -- and stopping by Mom's house and picking up the milk on her way home. But this started way back in the tenthouse.

Underhill: And that's Pinkie Oesdean?

Baker: Yeah, Pinkie Moore. I have to think of the last name!

Underhill: Where did you get most of your supplies?

Baker: Babbitts. I mean I still love canned peas and canned spinach because we didn't have any fresh and didn't have any frozen. So it was canned goods. I remember the very very first Babbitts was a box car behind the garage. The Storeys had that, they were there before the Shirleys. I remember going in and they had a folding counter, go in behind the counter and pick out whatever cans you wanted and come around and paid for it. That was before the new-new, old-new Babbitts or whatever it was! But the groceries were Williams or Babbitts, but Babbitts was pretty expensive so a lot of times we'd go down to Williams -- go grocery shopping every other month or something like that.

Underhill: Did you use Verkamps?

Baker: Verkamps? Had groceries?

Underhill: No, I mean in terms of getting supplies.

Baker: Oh yeah, well, people would kind of [say], "Are you going to town?" -- which was Williams -- and get stuff.

As far as clothes and things were concerned, my Mom still mail-ordered stuff, very very originally from Altman's because that was the store she used in Philadelphia, and then from Bullock's in Los Angeles because my aunt and uncle lived there. And then we had the wonderful Sears catalog, The Monkey Ward [Montgomery Ward] catalogs -- the wish books, and we would go through the wish books [and order]. I remember wallpaper books were our [the children] favorite because that's what we made paper doll dresses out of.

Underhill: Jean Tillotson said something about using the catalogs to get paper dolls [the models]. You'd cut those out too.

Baker: We used everything. We used our imaginations, as a matter of fact. It was fun. As I said, we didn't have T.V., Nintendo, all that kind of stuff. We enjoyed whatever we did, ourselves.

Underhill: Is there any other story that you want to see recorded, or feel is important to have?

Baker: Oh heavens there are probably zillions but, just more and more people will be coming back to mind because we were all close, close friends. A lot of them are gone now and that's what hurts. We go out to the cemetery and we know more people there than we know elsewhere. Every time we have a reunion we all end up at the cemetery. My Mom's out there.

Underhill: I was going to ask . . . .

Baker: My Mom's out there. As a matter of fact, on my way in [I stopped by there.] She loved roses. She couldn't grow any here, so as soon as they retired and went down to Phoenix she started a rose garden. I had a few roses in my back yard [in Tucson] so I brought one up and put it on her grave yesterday. But I almost got a ticket because of it. There was no place to park out there except one spot (and of course my Dad always parked there because he was the judge -- "No parking," but it was the one place he could always find a place to park. As a judge it didn't matter.) I figured I would just be there for a minute so I parked there and ran down and did that, came back and I saw this Park Service car coming. Oh gosh! So I ran to my car. "Please, I was just here -- I was just putting something on my Mom's grave," and he said, "Yes but don't you know you're supposed to follow these rules too," and I said, "Yes but please just this once," and he said, "Alright if you're going to leave right now," and I said "Yes." And I said, "By the way how do I get up to the Ramada?"

"Oh alright I'll tell you." But it was so crowded there was nothing else I could do. There was NO place to park, period.

Underhill: That probably says it all doesn't it?

Baker: Uh-huh. I don't know what else to say.

Underhill: Sure appreciate your coming and doing this, and the Shiva Temple information and stuff.

Baker: Well more and more will come out, I don't know whether you want to take these pictures?

Underhill: [We'll] hold them up [to the camera].

Baker: Pick up one or two because you don't want anymore than that. You already have the famous one.

Underhill: Let's show this so they know what we are talking about. I don't know if we can focus. It has autofocus. This one you can actually see your gunny sack flag from on Shiva Temple.

Baker: And then there's one more that we'll show. Emery. That one doesn't show Emery.

Underhill: Okay, we'll have Mike come and hold these. This has Ralph White and Ruth when you were Stephens, and Gordon Berger and Edith Kolb Lehnert. [Focus talk] This one has Ralph Gordon, Emery Kolb and Ruth Stephens, now Baker.

Baker: Ralph White, Gordon Berger.

Underhill: Oh I'm sorry, Ralph White and Gordon Berger. Great, and one more here. This is in the saddle, Emery and Ruth at the drinking pool. Thank you very much.

Baker: Oh you're very welcome. When will we get to see these lovely things?

Underhill: They'll be available over in the NPS library here so Sara Stebbins . . . or is it going in the museum?

Kim Besom [Museum Technician for Grand Canyon National Park]:  
Museum.

Underhill: Carolyn Richard at the museum will have video copies and Carolyn is hoping to have them transcribed this year. So you'll have a chance to look at the transcript.

Baker: Oh wonderful.

Underhill: And anything we need to change . . . .

Baker: Yes, that would be good. But knowing my brain the way it is now there might be a lot of things to change.

Underhill: Thanks.

END

Carolyn Richard [Grand Canyon National Park Curator] visited Ruth Baker on August 5, 1995, and received the following information which has been added to the 1994 transcript:

Ruth Baker compiled this list of people she remembers at the Canyon:

Adam - (Fred Harvey, Japanese, El Tovar bellhop)

Jesse Boyce (Fred Harvey) (Ruth dated him)

Dick Bosley (Fred Harvey)

Boyd, wife Charlotte (Fred Harvey, Gift shop at El Tovar and Hopi House)

Sam Bracco, wife Jennie (campground manager)

Art Brown (National Park Service)

**P**erry Brown (National Park Service)

Harold Bryant, wife Amy (National Park Service, superintendent after Tillotson) -- he started a Yule Log ceremony in the late 1930's where they would drag a log around the village and sing.

Ray Burris (Babbitts)

Doctor Carlson

Lester Carr, wife Nellie, child Lester (station master)

Clark Carroll, wife Melba (National Park Service)

Charles P. (Charley) Clark, wife Mary, children Charles and Carter (night watchman - Santa Fe)

Orlo Childs (National Park Service) (Ruth dated him)

Cook, children John and Claude (National Park Service)

Ed Cummings, wife Ida (Babbitts), daughter Weltha Jean (Fred Harvey)

John(ny) Cunningham, wife Alice, child David (Fred Harvey)

Joe Ernst, wife Alberta (Fred Harvey, Hopi House)

R. Emmett (Curley) Ennis, wife Maude, children Margaret Ann (Billie) and Robert Emmett (Bobby) (Fred Harvey)

Bob Francey, child - a son (Fred Harvey)

Gonzales, children Lupe, Raymond, Mike (Santa Fe, Mexican, railroad worker)

*check* <sup>Charlie</sup> Howard Greening, wife Prebble, sons Jackie and Ernie

Guthrie

Hall, wife Maude

C. Harris

Mike Harrison, wife Beth (National Park Service)

Jack Henning (Fred Harvey, Hopi House) (Ruth dated him)

Jackson, children Audrey, Merlyn, Tom

Doctor Jones

Betty Kent

Joe Kleindienst

Emery Kolb, wife Blanche, child Edith

H. (Bert) Lauzon, wife Rose [Rice] -- his second wife -- was a teacher, children Hubert, Muriel "Dolly", Loren "Tiny"

Carl Lehnert (National Park Service), wife Edith Kolb, son Emery  
Carl Lehnert (Sonny)

Lindse(a)y, wife Martha (Fred Harvey, Old B.A.)

Art Metzger, wife Ethel (Post Office)

Sherman Moore, wife Grace, children Eleanor (Pinkie), Ethel, Sherma (Post Office)

Gene Morris

Dick Muller, daughter "Sister", son Dickie (Fred Harvey, blacksmith)

Barney Neal, daughter "Tootsie" (Fred Harvey or Santa Fe, painter)

Elmer Nelson, wife Laura [Scheck] (Nelsie), children Roy and Margaret Ann (Peggy) (Santa Fe)

Pat Patraw, wife Polly (our Girl Scout leader) (National Park Service)



Phil Poquette (Fred Harvey, Phantom Ranch)

Steve Quinn, daughter Colleen (Santa Fe)

Joe Reed, wife Julia, children Marnette and Mildred (Santa Fe)

Ricca: brothers Jim, Joe, John; Esther -- wife? sister? *e*  
 (Joe -- Fred Harvey; John -- National Park Service)

Roy (Santa Fe, conductor)

"Sammy *e* the Indian" (Fred Harvey, El Tovar bellhop)

George Scheck, wife Emily (Santa Fe)

Ray Scheck, wife Lucille

John Schmidke, wife Millie, child Frances (Fred Harvey)

Schmidt, child Laura

Bernie Seeberg, daughters Bernice, Theodosia (Fred Harvey, bus driver)

J.E. (Earl) Shirley, wife Jeanette, children Earleen and Jack (Fred Harvey)

Shirley, children Jim, Joe, Aurelia (Babbitts)

Skoyen (National Park Service -- before Tillotson) (???? Ruth -- in a book I have it says John Ross Eakin was superintendent before Tillotson. Is this who you are referring to?) *That's right - maybe Skoyen was just*

Frank Spencer, wife Mabel, child Frances (Fred Harvey, Hopi a ranger House)

Stanley George Stephens, wife Ragnhilde Anna [Ness] (Lil), children Ruth Esther and Barbara Ann (Fred Harvey)

Sullivan (Santa Fe)

Ray Tankersley (Fred Harvey, cowboy)

Miner Raymond (Tilly) Tillotson, wife Winifred, children Dean and Jean (National Park Service, Superintendent)

Porter Timeche (Fred Harvey, Hopi House)

"Red" Valentine (Santa Fe, powerhouse)

John Verkamp, wife Katherine, children Peg, Jack, Jan, Katie

(????? - Ruth, is this right?) Kirwan Verkamp<sup>worked at</sup>, ~~wife~~ <sup>daughter</sup> Betty

Fred Witteborg, wife Genevieve (Fred Harvey, El Tovar)

"Shorty" Yarberry, daughter Verda Mae (Fred Harvey, cowboy)

Additional information given by Ruth Baker to Carolyn Richard in Tucson, Arizona, on August 5, 1995:

**Other cultural events:**

--Santa Fe held concerts in the El Tovar Music Room and would bring in a pianist, singer, slide show, and other events to bring culture to the Canyon. The performers probably traveled to other Santa Fe areas as well. Programs were produced that had the Santa Fe symbol on them.

--The recreation hall, which was in Shirley Hall (the cowboy dormitory), is where they had the first square dances. Ruth remembers these from when she was a little girl to about 1930's.

**Father's judge work:**

He was the justice of the peace. He did traffic and civil cases, though Ruth doesn't remember any details. Bob Fix was the sheriff. The National Park Service had it's law enforcement staff who did their work separately from her father's work.

**Deaths at the Canyon:**

The first death Ruth remembers was Mrs. Lauzon, though Ruth didn't know why she died. The service was held at the old community building. Then Ruth remembers Glen Sturdevant's death -- he died with Fred Johnson trying to cross the river above Horn Rapids. Deaths were a big deal as there were so few in the community. She doesn't really remember any tourist deaths, perhaps there was one from falling, but she was not sure. People had more respect for the Canyon than now, she thought.

**Old Timers Reunions** were done by Jeanne Cummings Schick, "Pinkie" Moore Oesdean, and Ethel Moore Cole. Ruth thought the one in September 1994 was going to be the last, as so many were not coming.

**Tusayan:**

--The **American Legion** had their hut/building, though it was located out in the forest in that area.

--The "Grand Canyon **Golf Course**" was there, which was prairie dog holes. She thought maybe it was connected with the American Legion but was unsure (see Jack Verkamp's interview of August 20, 1995, for more information on the golf course).

--Residents would **skate** out in Tusayan at the rain tank. She remembers Mr. and Mrs. Kolb and Mr. and Mrs. Spencer skating there. When Ruth was about three or four she fell through the ice into the water. They had a huge bonfire going. They took

-- The rain tank was also the swimming hole in the summer when it had water in it. The rain tank is where the airport is now.

off her clothes, wrapped her in a blanket, and put her near the fire to warm up. Ruth remembers it because she was so embarrassed!

#### **Doctors at the Canyon:**

- Doctor Jones lived and practiced in the box car on the railroad siding across the street in front of the garage.
- Unsure who was next.
- Doctor Carlson lived in the doctor's house [where Deputy Superintendent Gary Cummins lives in 1995] and worked in the hospital [where Grand Canyon Association is in 1995].
- Unsure who was next.

#### **Community Buildings:**

- The old community building had two floors and a projector booth room.
- The new community building had just one large room downstairs with a stage at the end. There was a room upstairs used by the Masons, American Legion, and other community groups. Would set up chairs as needed downstairs.
- Church services were multi-denominational.

#### **Recreational Area near the school:**

The recreational area had a stand for watching rodeos and baseball games, as well as a white clay tennis court.

#### **NPS Dormitory:**

The NPS dormitory for seasonal rangers was near the hospital [where Professional Services Division was in 1994 -- American Youth Hostel was there before that]. This was where Al, Ruth's future husband, lived when he worked at the Canyon. This was when Ruth was in college.

#### **Kolbs:**

- Shiva Temple Expedition: Ruth doesn't know if the NPS directly confronted Emery or not about his role in the Shiva Temple Expedition as Ruth was away at college.
- Colored Postcards: Ruth remembers that Verkamp's postcards had the river tinted green because they were "Made in Japan" and to Japanese a river is green.
- When asked what Sonny [Emery Carl Lehnert] is like, Ruth couldn't say as she hadn't seen him for a long time. Sonny and her sister Barbara are the same age. Barbara married a West

Pointer at Ruth's home in Briarcliffe Manor, New York. Sonny was also in the military at the time, and sang at Barbara's wedding. That was the last time Ruth saw Sonny.

--Kolb's tinted photographs: These were black and white photographs but a light copy so you could color over them with washes. She would work on tinting photographs in the gift shop when business was slow. If tourists were present, she had to push the lecture and sale of the book [about \$5.95] instead of tinting.

--Mule trip photos: Ruth remembers that the prints she washed would almost all be sold. She doesn't really remember if Emery took pre-sale estimates, but perhaps he did ask for a show of hands for who wanted photos. Ruth never took mule trip photographs. Others who did included Emery, Gene Morris, Aurelia Shirley, etc.

--Ruth met Ellsworth only when she was very young. Ruth remembers hearing that Emery and Ellsworth had their first white water adventure riding down the Johnstown Pennsylvania flood.

#### **Holidays:**

--Ruth remembers that the Christmas boxes distributed to the children also had candy canes or hard candy in them. The Christmas Eve "party" was held in the old community building up the hill from the garage.

--Fred Harvey would ask the whole community over to the old mess hall (Shirley Hall/cowboy dormitory) for Thanksgiving. They would serve a typical Thanksgiving dinner family style.

**For additional information,** see Ruth Baker's 1978 oral history interview with Julie Russell.

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