

Herm Hoops

This Oral History is composed from an interview with Herm Hoops by Robert Tubbs at Herm's home in Jensen, UT on January 17, 2019. It was a cold and snowy day but that didn't dampen Herm's zest for life and the river. He grew up in Vermont and began making sojourns out west to float rivers while at the University of Vermont. He eventually found his way into the National Park Service where his assignments included Washington DC, Montana, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, the Denver Regional Office, and finally Dinosaur National Monument; all the time continuing to do river trips whenever and wherever he could. In 1996 he decided to leave the NPS and took an early retirement. That is when his second career as all around boating guru took off. He was a regular at River Runner's Transport in Vernal for nearly 20 years and devoted more time to oneway boatworks, his inflatable repair business. Eventually he left River Runners and joined Holiday River Expeditions primarily as a driver. In 2017 he was diagnosed with cancer and has been fighting the good fight while still repairing a few boats and driving when he is able. He knows his time is short but he presses on with river conservation and management issues at an amazing pace.

Herm is a packrat of the digital age. He has collected and cataloged numerous early river trips and personal river trip accounts, historical photos, river management documents, and historical info of the non-commercial and commercial river industry development. His crowning achievement has to be the compilation of detailed histories of nearly every company that ever produced an inflatable boat - most of it in digital format. These histories of inflatable boat manufacturers are now housed at the University of Utah's J. Willard Library Utah River Running Archives. He developed a strong ethos for giving back to the places and sport he loves and he has accomplished this in spades.

Tubby: What's one of your best river stories?

Herm: Actually I wound up getting trapped in the ice down in Labyrinth-Stillwater around the bicentennial year, so it was either '75 or '76. It had to be like November and the only thing that saved me is the White Rim Trail. I got up to the trail and was able to walk back to Mineral Bottom.

Tubby: How far down river were you?

Herm: Oh, maybe twelve miles. I was in no hurry. I had a friend who was going to pick my truck up and I noticed at night there was this weird sound in the river. It

started out really low. I thought it was wind blowing through trees or something.
SHHHHHHHHHH...

Tubby: Slush.

Herm: Yeah. (laughter) But then the big one was in the spring of 1988. There was a maintenance guy working in Dinosaur, Andy. Andy wanted to go down Deso [Desolation and Gray Canyons]. The way I used to do this before the internet is I'd call up a friend, such as Scott Chew or somebody here in Jense that I knew, and ask them if the ice has gone out... most of the time I'd call somebody from the monument. Then I'd call up Ray's down in Green River and say, "Hey is there any ice coming down the river?" If they said no, I'd look what the temperature's been like the last few days. I'd go, "Okay the ice is out. We can go." Then I'd race to Sand Wash from wherever the hell I was; Gateway in New York, Denver, or wherever. For this trip I had to chain up to get into San Wash. Usually I launched at Ouray and that's a really pretty section of the river that's overlooked. We had a hard time getting in there. My ex-wife and kids drove us in, and there were little bit of chunks of ice coming down the river but I didn't pay any attention to it. Andy and I get in the boat and we're firing up, pounding down cookies and fudge and coffee and stuff, and goddamn we get down around Nine Mile - Mini Maude and there's like a little ice shield across the river. So we tried to push... I had a motor... a little two horse motor and I was going to push through it. That didn't work so we de-rigged and carried around. I think there's a photo in there of us carrying the oars or something around - only about fifty yards. We're going down the river and, "Wow, that was like crazy man, let's get stoned." (laughter) And we get down to Sumner's Amphitheater and I'm looking and it's like, "Oh, my god! There's like a lot of ice there!" (more laughter). Like an idiot I tried to ram... I mean, I don't know what was going through my head with that little two-horse powered motor, and we get stuck in the middle of the river. I've got jeans on or something like that and we're just not dressed for that. I mean, we had stuff in the dry bag but now it's like we got a problem we've got to solve here. We were pounding the ice with the oar handles and pushing off the bottom with them. I'd get out and pull and I'd break through the ice, and I learned something in that. I took my shoes off to try

to keep my shoes dry. So I'm standing on what I thought was a sandy bottom and all of the sudden the bottom starts going... tilting. The sand would slide off. So I figured out, I ain't a geologist, what would cause all those sand bars at Sumner's because the channel was pretty straight; it's not braided or anything. The ice jams up and the silt, as it slows down behind the dam, drops out in any underwater ice. And when that ice starts moving and tilting, it drops its load of sand just like a dump truck. Anyhow we get the boat over to river left and we run down for a look; as far as we can see is ice. And now it's building up really big. It's piled up on top of itself. We're like, "Oh my god. We're on the wrong side of the river!" (laughter). So we struggled and got back to the other side, pulled the boat up on the shore, drug it upstream about 100 yards, put it back in the water, motored back up, oh maybe a half or quarter of a mile. It was time to walk so we started going through everything. Everything had to be voted on and approved by both of us. There could be no... so we made piles of definitely going (like our dry bags), maybe, and definitely not. We went through this process. We'd launched very early in the morning. I had no idea; maybe my wife didn't even make it out. The snow was so deep going in. We voted on things and he voted no on cigarettes. But when he wasn't looking, I put two packs of cigarettes in my pocket. But the son of a bitch, I voted no on his camera because I was leaving my camera there and he took his camera. So we get loaded up. We got our dry bags on. We're using wet booties, you know, with the liners in them because we knew we were going... the goal was to climb up to Nine Mile, get to the Wrinkles Road, and go over to Nine Mile, to the road there, and hopefully they kept that open during the winter. You know, run into somebody. Well, by god, we got up about the level of the landing strip[a 700' elevation gain] and the snow was almost waist deep. We just couldn't do it anymore. So we're looking around and I see a pile of stones. Looked like a TV antenna sticking out of it. And a bunch of years ago I'd seen that, so I knew that that was near the airport. So now we drop back down. We cross over... as we're going there I'm like, "Yeah, I think I saw that a bunch of years ago." Who's to say there weren't like two of them or fifty of them or... (laughter). I didn't remember exactly what it looked like and we get over there and sure enough it was the airport, but now it's dark and we got to try and find our way down the airport trail

in the dark in waist deep snow. Right where the sign now says, "Entering the Portal of Desolation Canyon," we made camp. We scrounged up a bunch of grease wood, and my wife had precooked a bunch of stir fry that had pineapple in it and rice so we ate that cold. My first-aid kit had like 24 oxycodone in it. I figured if I get a blister, I'd take lots of codone until I...

Tubby: ...'til it doesn't even matter. (laughter)

Herm: We didn't have sleeping bags. We pulled the dry bags up over our legs and we had space blankets because we were figuring this would be a long haul. I remember, just after we'd gotten our piles separated out, this is what we're taking; this is what we're not taking. We voted on it. There was a huge boom like the ice was going out. I remember Andy turning towards the river and he goes, "Don't change your mind now Herm. Not a good thing to change your mind now. We've made our minds up. Let's stick to the plan."

So I'm laying there like shivering and finally I couldn't hold it anymore and I said to Andy, "Andy, you awake?"

"Yeah."

I said, "You cold?"

He said, "Yeah."

I said, "If we're going to die of hypothermia, we may as well die on the hoof."

So we get up. Well, we'd taken an oxycodone before we went to bed and we had set our socks and gloves and stuff up around the fire to dry them out, but neither one of us remembered to put them away and they were frozen like steel.

(laughter) So we had to get those warm. And finally we hit the road and it was like snowing on us. But it was that river snow from the fog I think. I had noticed when we drove in that there was a Ute sheepherder at that second set of corrals on the way out. But I also noticed that he did not have much wood there which meant he probably wasn't going to be around very much longer. So our goal was to try and

get to there. Sure enough we popped out and could see where we needed to go but you can't go straight across because of...Swoosh, Swoosh, Swoosh.

Tubby: Yeah, it's up and down across the drainages.

Herm: Yeah, so we're going along the road and finally this Ute sheepherder sees us. He looks at us like this is an everyday thing. It's like, these two men look like they're Martians. (laughter) "Yeah, I've seen that before!"

I know a few words of Ute, my mom's on the reservation, so I have inside on some things. I was like, "mikwush, mikwush." He starts babbling to me in Ute and I'm like, "No, no, no. You don't understand. I don't understand everything, man." So we finally get him to understand - he can speak English. "We need a ride. My friend's not feeling good. We'll pay you."

He's like, "I can't do that. I have to take my sheep... but go talk to my Mexican. Maybe he'll do that for you."

So the camp was not very far away, maybe two hundred yards. We're walking over there and I said to Andy, "You speak Spanish, don't you Andy?"

He goes, "Yeah."

I said, "I think you better handle this one and just be aware, this Mexican, he's driving us to Myton or it is going to be homicide and grand theft auto. (laughter) So the Mexican didn't want anything to do with us. So I let up a cigarette and all of the sudden his eyes went up like this. And he's like, "Man, can I have one of your cigarettes?"

And I'm like, "Yeah, sure, you wanna drive us to Myton? I have another pack I'll give you..." I don't know why I took like fifty dollars on that trip. I never take that much money on the river. So the deal was we would give him twenty dollars down, fund him with cigarettes, and when he got us to Myton, we would give him the pack and thirty dollars; I'd also send his Ute Indian another fifty dollars. So that's a pretty good day's work, you know, in '88. God, and we get to the first oil well and he stops the truck. We're like, "What are you doing?"

He's like, "I can't go. I have no gas."

I'm like, "Don't tell me that, man." Now, nobody comes out here without gas especially anybody with half a brain. So he got pissed with me because I gave him two cigarettes and ten dollars. I mean he only took us like maybe ten miles. And there we were. It's still pretty early in the day though. I mean, it's like maybe one o'clock in the afternoon. And here comes this oil worker. He's got a flat tire so we help him change his tire. It's his last spare. And he says, "As soon as I get done checking this well, I'll drive you to Myton." So he drove us to Myton right up to the restaurant. Went to the pay phone, put money in and called my ex-wife up, and she and Andy's wife were just walking out of the house to go down... they were going to go down to Arches to spend the day and the next day they'd pick us up in Green River. She said, "Where are you guys?"

I said, "We're over in Myton."

"Myton? How did you get to Myton?"

I say, "It's a really long story. You don't want to hear it now."

So Andy had like, I don't know, maybe ten dollars left over and I had some money left over from the phone call and the Ute. We bought two milkshakes and two hamburgers and fries and I bet we each used two bottles of ketchup. (laughter) So that's the story of the great... and so that spread throughout the Uinta Basin. I mean, I would see Tom Kleinschnitz, Lynn and Marty down in Westwater weekend after weekend, especially when I was in Denver...so people started saying, "If Hoops tells you a story, you better not bet against him because he has a picture of himself naked under the Lunar Landing Module. Don't bet him on it!" (laughter)

Tubby: So what time of year was that? Was that in March?

Herm: Yeah that was early March. I've been down there every month but December and January. Now that I live here, I mean...

Tubby: How'd you pick the gear up?

Herm: Oh, that's another story in and of itself. Andy had an English outboard motor, and it was a super long shaft. I had a Riken. We'd taken the Selway down, so I had the Riken. Two weeks... I was in fear that someone was going to discover that gear. We kind of hid it but you never know down there. So after two weeks we got packed up. Andy brought food over, brought his motor over. We put the motor on the boat, fired it up, and it worked perfect. I was supposed to leave...

Tubby: Where did Andy live?

Herm: Dinosaur.

Tubby: Andy?

Herm: Amy and Andy... Robertson. He was the maintenance man for the park service. His wife was the administrative officer.

The next day we were going to leave but we weren't going to leave too early. Eleven o'clock the phone rings and it's Andy. He's like, "Herm, I just got a phone call from Iowa. My mom died and I have to go back to Iowa."

I'm like, "Ugh, I'm going to do this stuff all by myself. That Riken, I don't know? Maybe what I should do is see if I can haul it back up to Sand Wash."

And he's like, "Well, I've got a boat that's meant for that motor. It's a Zodiac kind of thing. It's not very big."

So I'm, "Great."

So I meet him part way over there by Escalante [Musket Shot Springs] or somewhere. He gives me the boat. Now I got to figure out how to put the motor on it. The starter thing on it was crazy. So I lightened my gear up. I didn't know if the food we'd left down there had gone bad so I took food, and you know, if someone stole the air pump, I needed it - didn't dare go down there without a pump.

Tubby: Right.

Herm: But I took two park radios. Now the park at that time used Motorolas, so they weren't the best. And you'd of thought Herm would have checked them out but... it's government stuff - got to work. The deal is we'd drive down there and my wife and kids stayed at Sand Wash. I'd get in the Zodiac pretty lightly loaded, go down, and we were going to transmit by radio. Well, number one, her radio could receive but wouldn't send, and my radio sent, but couldn't receive. And, it hit the repeater from Blue Mountain somehow, yeah, Blue Mountain. From all the way down there it would hit the repeater somewhere - cause I could hear it go "Poo...cheeh" - like that, then you know it's hitting the repeater. So apparently there were people listening to my, "Hello. Hey, Val, are you there? Val?" (laughter)

So I get down there and I decide what I'm going to do is I'm going to haul a whole bunch of this stuff up to her, come back down, inflate the Selway, deflate his boat, spend the night there and go down to Cedar Ridge the next day and then out. Well, I put five gallons of gas in the boat and there was still a lot left from coming down river. I was happily going along smoking a cigarette, "Room-room..." All else aside and all the sudden the motor dies. Oh, no problem, I put the gas in there and away it goes, "Room-room-roooooooghhh." Well, this motor apparently uses a lot of gas (laughter) because I hadn't quite made the turn yet where you can see the boat ramp and I had no gas. (laughter) So I get the boat up there, unload the ice chest, and a bunch of the heavy stuff, the duplicate stuff. And now I didn't need two air pumps. I drifted back down stream with a canoe paddle and that's the end of it, you know. I stayed there that night. It was kind of a delightful night to go through the gear and thinking about what had transpired for those two weeks. There's always a lesson in not how you overcome things but how you deal with things. I almost died down there three years ago.

Tubby: In Deso?

Herm: Yeah. First night out I pushed a little bit too far and it was getting dark. I had forgotten binoculars and I really wanted to make camp and I see what looked like a beach. But it wasn't a beach. It was like an eight foot high sand bank. I didn't remember too much down below there at this water level for a ways and it's going

to get dark. So I'm pretty well set with my hip. I have a night box. Has my prescriptions, flashlight, that kind of stuff that's handy for night. I throw it up there and wshhhhh. Throw my dry bag up there. It's got a tarp, sleeping bag and a pillow in it, my thermos and my coffee cup. But going up that sand bank was like climbing up Mt. Everest. I'd get up and slide back down again. I get up there and the stars are out. Man, I lay out there and all the sudden I hear the pitter patter of snow. So I pull the tarp over me, drink a cup of coffee and eat a granola bar. It's really starting to snow and now it's turned to rain. I did not want to go back down to the boat and back up there for my rain coat and stuff like that. And I'd possibly have to do it again in the morning. So I decided to go sleep in the boat. Well, it's an NRS fourteen – a little tight sleeping quarters. I have a heater in there, and I spent the night huddled under a tarp. My heater would go on occasionally so I was pretty good, but I was tired and I was kind of wet.

I rowed down to Sand Wash and I meet Mick. We go up and have a cup of coffee at the ranger cabin. He's got a very soft voice and I can't hear too well. To this day I can't remember if he said, "Herm do you want to stay here tonight? It's supposed to get worse. Or Herm, you want to stay here tonight? It's supposed to get better tomorrow." I heard the latter. (laughter) So I take off and it starts to snow again. I get down to Tusher and there's an island there and I'm like, "This is crazy." I don't take a tent with me, you know. So I get out of the boat on the south side of the island, a nice little beach but very little protection against the wind. And I put an oar in like that... that's my sand stake. Then I strap another oar to it like that... then I put the tarp over it, stake that down, get in there with my night box, got my dry bag in there, everything is cool and the wind changes direction. Now it's coming right out of the north blowing right in at me! So I take my dry bag and I got those cheap little carabineers, you know, that are like toys. I clipped those around the straps and put them in the grommets of the tarp. It worked pretty good. It kept the snow from blowing in on my head, but it was cold, it was cold, it was cold.

I got up the next morning a little later. Normally I like to get up pretty early but it was a little darker than this. I start packing things up. I noticed that there was

some snow in the dry bag. I have like a 1970 Holubar goose down sleeping bag with ten billion holes in it from an artillery shell that went off ten feet above it. (laughter) So I tied it up, get in the boat, and I'm shivering. I'm like, "Gosh I'm..." I made some hot chocolate. I couldn't eat... I didn't feel like eating anything but I knew I had to eat. So I ate some... I used to call it my donut and bacon trip. I ate a piece of bacon and couple donuts, shivering away. Came back again and ate another couple donuts. I'm like, "This is starting to get serious. I've had two nights of rough sleep, my clothes are wet..." I get down to Cedar Ridge. There's that big cottonwood log laying there. I can put my tarp up against it, build a fire, and uh, there's always firewood down there. Now I got a bag of firewood with me. It's an emergency supply.

By the time I got down there the wind was howling. I opened my dry bag up. I got the tarp set up pretty well. And everything in my dry bag was soaked! From that snow and/or my hands were stiff and I didn't seal it down. At that point in time I knew I was going to have to stay awake all night...

Tubby: ...Yeah.

Herm: ...fell asleep in a chair. I had a brand new rescue life jacket... you know, the... can't remember the name of it... just bought it, first trip. At one point in time I either fell asleep or passed out and I fell into the fire pan and melted it. (laughter) I had to take a piss so I'm like, "I'm not going to walk to the river anymore - I can't do it, you know." Then I realized that I was wearing a pair of cotton underpants, for what reason I have no idea. So I took my knife out, and dropped my knife and couldn't find it in the snow. I said, "Screw that." Went back to my night box where I had a steak knife that I use for cutting cheese up, you know. Cut my underwear off. Threw them out in the river and stumbled back to the chair. I did what we call a pooka-pooka chair. Where you take your chair and you put one of Jack's pads on it like that. So at least it will protect your back. I'm trying to dry the sleeping bag out like a hog on a spit. It gets dried out on this side but the snow is blowing on the other side. "Screw it, I got wood!"

I'm just telling you this story; it's an example of how things can go wrong, but you got to have determination because my mind was doing like... I actually talked to my doctor about it. He asked me, "Was it harder dealing with the cold or your mind?"

I said, "Without a doubt my mind." I would find myself getting up and walking and it wasn't until... I figured it out when I got out of the fire light is when things would come back to me. I'm like, "Where the hell are you going? What are you doing man?" Then I'd turn around and go back and sit in the chair. Just crazy things like that, you know. I had a goddamn space blanket and I never even used it. All I had to do was open the night box up. There's a space blanket in there. At least it would have retained some heat, you know.

Tubby: Yeah.

Herm: So I get up the next morning. I feel when the light comes, even on a stormy day, because all the sudden you start seeing branches when the light is coming. I'd been looking at those branches all night waiting for a sign! I get in the boat. Go downstream maybe a mile. I'm like, "Somebody must have cut out something that looks like clothes and painted them white –maybe out of plywood." I went by it, and I realized it was a camp and they'd hung their clothes out and they were frozen hard as steel, just blowing in the wind like this... at least it was a downstream wind. They didn't have any fire so they weren't going to do me any good anyhow. I went past another couple. There was a gal sitting out there and there was a fire and I was like, "Hey, I need some help, man." She didn't even answer me. I was from here to the deck away. Another couple miles and I ran into this nice group of people from Colorado that took me in, gave me dry clothes, fed me, had a nice fire going and I recovered. But it was a struggle. Sometimes I wonder...

Tubby: ...This was spring or fall?

Herm: Uh, spring - early April. You know, my hip was bad and that was part of the problem. Everything I did was painful. Sometimes I wonder if I put myself in these situations to see if I can survive.

Tubby: Subconsciously?

Herm: Yeah, yeah. Like, why don't you just take a tent? Because number one I like to look at the stars but there are no stars when it's a gale blowing 40 miles an hour and snowing like crazy. In the morning it's too hard to put... I hate that about a tent, putting it back together

Tubby: Putting a wet tent away, yeah.

Herm: I have a plethora of excuses. All I can figure out is this wasn't my first rodeo. Renny Russell told me, "Well, you're still alive. You've taken unfastidious outdoorsmanship to another level. Back in the day at least we had tube tents. But then again, who am I do judge, one whose life consists of inspired follies and quixotic enterprises."

Tubby: That was just a couple of years ago huh?

Herm: Yeah, I'll send you that story. You'll get a chuckle out of it.

Tubby: Did you write it up?

Herm: Yeah. I still haven't done last fall's trip. Cody Perry with "Rig to Flip" is doing a fifteen minute video on me. We went down Deso because he knows that I really like Deso. I couldn't make him understand... I was like, "Yes. But I also really like Westwater and I like Cataract and I like the San Juan." I just go down Deso more 'cause it is close by. I can make it a three day trip with a motor or I can make a two week trip. Nobody knows the wiser, you know. So part of the reason for this trip was: what it's like to be on what might be your last river trip. They told me to do McPherson (Three Fords Rapid) and Cow Swim (Joe Hutch) and they'd film it with the drone. It was pretty impressive - about twenty feet behind me and ten feet higher. You know, they asked me a lot of questions like, "What are you thinking right now?"

“I don’t want to share with you what I’m thinking right now.” I’ve gotten, especially in the later years, I’ve gotten so use to being out there alone that I don’t share most stuff with anyone. And how do you do that? In a sense the journal gets to be crazy cause how do you make the journal different on your hundredth trip?

Tubby: Let’s go back to growing up. Where did you grow up? How’d you get on the first river trip - all that kind of stuff?

Herm: I was born in New York State, but I grew up in Vermont. We had farms in both states. We milked between 40 and 60 registered Ayrshire cattle and we had Morgan horses. I had a rowboat on the pond. I just liked to go down there and row around in the rowboat. Then my mom taught me how to canoe. And I did a lot of canoeing back there.

Tubby: Was this just day stuff or did you do some overnighting?

Herm: No, well, on occasion we’d do... like on the Connecticut River one overnight, but back then there were a lot of old wooden dams left from the log drives. So I mean there was a lot of portaging involved. A lot of that’s changed now. I wasn’t really hooked on it. It was just something to do.

Tubby: How’s a wooden dam work for... are they pooling and dropping?

Herm: Yeah, they’re holding the water back, and then they had logs in the river and they’d take dynamite and blow those dams. They leak like shit; I mean there’s water running right through them, but they hold a considerable amount of water back.

Tubby: Okay, so it creates a pool that they can collect their logs in and then when they’re done, they just blow it?

Herm: They blow it and it runs down to the next dam and they blow that and...

Tubby: Huh. I had no idea.

Herm: My great grandfather and my real grandfather that’s what they did. They worked in the woods during the winter time and also drove logs down the Beaver

Kill, East Branch, and Delaware Rivers to Philadelphia. Afterward they'd usually return with no money, maybe a little bit of fabric, game, or something for my great grandmother.

Tubby: Your first trip?

Herm: So in 1965, I was sitting in the fraternity house. I'm at the University of Vermont. I saw this thing on the Grand Canyon. You know, back in the 60's you could do anything. I mean there were very little camping fees. You want to rock climb, you went to REI. I think my REI number is like 5,300 or something in that area. So I thought, "Yeah, I could do that." I went down to the local hardware store and I bought one of those yellow canvas life rafts. Spring of '66, I drove out and put it in on the Snake River through Grand Teton and also down through Lunch Counter. I started coming out every spring and doing trips we didn't need permits for. I did the Main Salmon in the little yellow raft eating beans and sitting on a navy bag...

Tubby: ...just by yourself.

Herm: My wife usually went along with me. We'd hitchhike back to the car which could take a week or more sometimes. I was teaching in northern Vermont. I didn't really have the summers off because I was teaching vocational agriculture and forestry. I started getting hooked on it, you know. One day I stopped in at Sid's Sports in Salt Lake and Sid had a Udisco raft on sale. That was probably around 1971 or so.

Tubby: You were on one of these trips from Vermont.

Herm: Yeah, I would come out from Vermont every spring and do two or three weeks out here and run every river I could find. I was mostly up in Idaho, Oregon and Montana because there were trees there; it felt like home.

Tubby: So you did the Middle Fork...

Herm: Yeah and the Main Salmon...

Tubby: Snake?

Herm: Selway, Snake through Hell's Canyon and, like I said, the other part below Jackson, WY with Lunch Counter on the Snake... I can't even remember the name of the town... American Falls to Minidoka NWR... kind of a spot that... no real rapids in it but a nice little canyon. Interstate 86 crosses it; the Coeur d'Alene River and the Spokane River through Spokane. But yeah, I did a lot of those rivers and a couple in Colorado... err no... in California.

Tubby: Did you do any in Montana like the Smith, or...

Herm: ...I didn't do the Smith... uh I did the Yankee Jim Canyon on the Yellowstone. Oh, the one by the dam... um, the Madison.

Tubby: These were all in your little uh...

Herm: Many of them started out that way - many in the Udisco. It was an eleven footer. After I'd bought it from Sid in Salt Lake, I headed up to Idaho to run um... up by Couer d'Alene, the Couer d'Alene and St Joe Rivers. I didn't like the life jackets I had, so I stopped in and bought PFD's from Bill Parks at Northwest River Supply. I was one of his first customers at NRS. I bought two Mae West life jackets. It was kind of one of those things when I started out it was for the "Yahoo, I'm a big shot. Look at me!" I could go back and sit around at the local store in Cornwall, Vermont and tell stories.

Tubby: About your big adventures out west.

Herm: Yeah, yep, yep.

Tubby: Any harrowing moments out there... by yourself?

Herm: I'll show you some pictures... In Orleans, Vermont, the Willoughby River goes through there and it falls about 55 or 60 feet in maybe an eighth of a mile.

Tubby: That's good gradient.

Herm: I started running that and I was lucky enough or foolish enough to make it the first couple of times. Then one year my friend Scott Warthin... I ended up doing a lot of trips with him and his son Daniel. The ice was going out and we went over the first drop, and we had to make a ninety degree turn. We were using paddles and the boat had filled up above the falls. We hadn't even gone a mile and the boat was full of water. We had all these... I'm dressed in hunting pants and hunting shirt, you know, and that kind of thing. He had a wet suit on. I had never heard of such a thing. We stood in the icy river and tipped the boat to get the water out above the falls because we'd lost our bailing bucket. This was one of the first lessons that Herm Hoops had... I said, "You know, Scott..." There were about a hundred people down at the falls - word spreads real fast. "You know, Scott, we don't have to do this today." I mean I'm like... I could barely stand up.

Scott goes, "What else is there to do on a Saturday afternoon?" (laughter)

So, away we went. When we went over the first fall, I got launched out of the back of the boat and went head first into a whirlpool. There were people on the bank timing me. I was under water well over three minutes fighting a big ole chunk of ice about half of the size of that table. Then I went down a shoot and another fall and by then I was surely hypothermic and I floated by Scott. I was like, "Scott help me." And he jumped back in, pulled me to shore, and the snow was like (gestures) that deep. So now I gotta work my way up to the bank and I collapse on the road. Doc Bonvoular and Doc Gage came down and they put me in the hospital for overnight cause I was on the edge of it. That was my first real taste of hypothermia.

Tubby: So this was in...

Herm: Vermont.

Tubby: ...the Udeathco, your Udisco boat?

Herm: The first couple of times were in the yellow boat, but then it was in the Udisco. Yeah. I've got videos of it. I can't show them to you because I haven't

hooked my video player up yet. Yeah, I did that, but again it was all... let me say, it was all about bragging.

Because I was involved with Save the James Bay, the Connecticut River, and things back east... environmental things... you know, you come out west and you look around and say, "What can the threat be - a few cows? What the hell? It's not a big deal, maybe a couple of oil wells here and there except in Gillette or Sinclair Wyoming."

So one time, I think it was 1972, I decided... they were working on the interstate... to come from Denver over here on US Hwy 40. About 7 o'clock that night I was looking for a free place to camp. I headed in on that road that goes to Echo Park. I get in there and I looked down. I was driving an International Scout, four wheel drive, four cylinder engine, and pulling a farm trailer. We go down there and I met the most incredible ranger ever. Normally I try to stay away from them. His name was Frank Buono and we're friends to this day. We've got involved in litigation that went all the way up to the Supreme Court. {google Mojave Memorial Cross, Salazar v. Buono}

Tubby: Wow!

Herm: So I pulled out into the cheat grass by a picnic table, lit up a joint and here comes this ranger walking towards me. I put the joint behind my back and Frank goes, "Um, I see you're smoking a controlled substance."

I was like, "Yeah."

He says, "Well, now I'm going to tell you that it's illegal in federal lands and it's pretty much not a good place in Colorado or in Utah to be doing that like you are. Don't worry, just be cool about it. But the real reason I came over to talk to you was, you drove out on the cheat grass and now there's a track out there and other people are going to follow that track."

I said, "Oh, I'll drive out."

He says, “No, you’re here now. When we get up in the morning we’ll get some rakes and stuff. You and your wife can help me and we’ll pull a log across where you drove off the road.”

I thought to myself, “I’ve never met a ranger like this.” So I stayed; I actually missed my launch date on the Middle Fork because I stayed and talked to him and began to learn about Echo Park Dam, David Brower, Howard Zahniser, and a lot of those people. I was like, “Oh, wow. I’d have never known about Split Mountain, Glen Canyon, Marble Canyon, on and on and on.”

When I left there, we drove through Vernal and Naples. Naples especially was like a little Vermont town, big old cottonwoods along the two lane road, little sheep farms and stuff like that. It just reminded me of Vermont, and combined with our drive down into Echo Park, the sun was setting, and I’d never seen anything like that. That glow. That light off the rocks bouncing around. When I went home, I told my dad that I was going to quit my teaching job and I was going to be a ranger at Dinosaur National Monument. That’s how stupid I was about the reality of life.

So, I kept coming out. Learning more, learning more. I did my first job with the Park Service as a garbage picker on the Mall in D.C. I was a political appointee. Every chance I got, like when we went to the museums... when I worked down in the Guadalupe Mountains... I mean, we didn’t have a lot of stuff but I’d take my raft with me. Well in 1972, you have to understand, I mean, I may be off a year here and there. It does fade into a blur. I used to keep journals but they were all on Word Star.

Tubby: I remember Word Star.

Herm: Transferred them over... and it’s like all these codes and... I said to hell with it. From there we drove out here and did the Yampa.

Tubby: Did you need a permit?

Herm: Yeah.

Tubby: You just filled it out or...

Herm: ...Yeah, yeah. I had written the park and said I had met Frank the year before... I wrote the park and got this letter back and it's like, "I don't mean to cast dispersions on our Echo Park Ranger who's from the east, but it's a difficult, tricky river to run, dah-du-dah-du-dah-dah". Again, Mr. Buffoon head, you know. So I got this thing in my mind that I could write a book about river running. Still arrogant, you know. Lodore was running about 18 thousand during the peak of the dam - the overrides back then. As I entered Upper Disaster Falls, the downstream oar hit a rock and came off the pipe. At that water level there's a hell of a hole on the right side of Disaster Falls and I got sucked into it. (laughter) Sideways! And over we went! That was my second experience. I had brought everything I could find with me, all kinds of stuff: letters, maps, Red Cross information, REI stuff and I might have worked on this book when I wasn't on the river. So I get down to... I roped every rapid. Put a rope on my boat, pushed it out, went down and pushed it out, even Greasy Pliers. That's how freaked I was. So another lesson; it was a lesson but a lesson in a different kind of way. As I was roping/lining down Greasy Pliers income these three beautiful Avon boats. They looked like a finished carpenter had put them together. I mean they were spar varnished and little compartments, and all kinds of stuff, and I'm roping my boat down the shore and this guy comes up about this far away and started taking pictures of my face - of the guy who was going to be bragging about his summer running rivers. I had quit my job and I came out here to run every river I could find.

Tubby: Your wife was with you?

Herm: Yeah, to this point. And here's this guy taking pictures of me. Whiles we got talking... his name was Bill McGinnis and he was writing a book for his master's thesis out in California. To jump ahead, that winter I had built a cabin in Vermont and was living in it... it was off the grid, propane lights and refrigerator, a big old number 10 station heater, pot bellied stove... And I would send letters out to people and I get this letter, this was during the oil embargo, whatever year that was. I get this letter from Bill McGinnis who wants me to go down and run the New, Cheat, and Gauley Rivers. Each one was a different letter. We're talking about a week or two apart. I mean, Jesus Christ, it took me all day just to fill the

gas tank up on my wife's car, running around five dollars here and five dollars there at gas stations. And you want me to go down to West Virginia and they're going to pay me fifty bucks. Oh, and I don't have to worry about English or grammar cause he'll edit it. Cool! I still got the letters and I'd been sending letters out to Hatch...

Tubby: ...So, he wanted you to go do these trips...

Herm: ...So he could put it in his book.

Tubby: ...Put them in his book and have a write up on all the...

Herm: Yeah, yeah. I'd sent a letter out to Hatch and got a nice letter in reply about different rapids and size of boat they recommend, and stupid stuff... I look back now and I'm embarrassed they answered the questions. Well, I was embarrassed because I got a letter from a fellow named B.A. Hanten [Bernard Albert Hanten] out in...

Tubby: ...from Rogue Inflatables.

Herm: ...Rogue Inflatables. His letter said, "I read the information you sent me and it is garbage. I have to ask you... are you doing this for your own ego or to protect rivers?" Then he kind of went on from there. Oh, I was angry. I wanted to find B. A. Hanten and choke him.

Tubby: Leave it to B. A. to be blunt!

Herm: Yeah, yeah.

Tubby: That's what the B. stands for!

Herm: Yeah, yeah. You know, I got to know him later on, in a different realm, but I was angry at him. But as time went on and I kept getting these letters from McGinnis, White Water Rafting; it struck me he was right. I really needed to learn something about these rivers. I'd been doing this since '66. This was '72, '73, somewhere in there. Like, I mean it was still kind of hard to find maps. The Powell Society books were helpful but you had to know about them.

Tubby: Right.

Herm: What's his name was making the scroll maps, Bucket-head, Bucket-head Jones, but again it was not like they were advertised in magazines. The Bureau of Recreation put out some nice little maps and oddly enough Desolation Canyon had some nice little maps.

Tubby: That the Bureau had done.

Herm: No, no. I've got them downstairs. The BLM had done - little histories of McPherson Ranch and the river. Things like that.

Now from some experiences of getting my comeuppance by the river, I knew this was not me against the river; it needed to be the river and me together. And I learned that pride is not really a great thing to have in some realms of river running? (laughter) I learned that if I enjoyed doing this, I owe something back. So I started reading everything. I started collecting first edition books.

Tubby: Tell me more about the cabin you built and how that came about.

Herm documents everything. To tell this story he referred to a manuscript he'd written thus there is striking detail here.

Herm: In the fall of 1971, disillusioned with people and teaching I gave away or burned all of my belongings except my river and camp gear. I moved into a tent on the woodland of Arland and Janice Butler in West Glover, Vermont about a mile from their house by road and a quarter of a mile into a bowl surrounded by maples and fir, the woodland. There like Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha I searched for meaning, and place. Fall was delightful, with a night campfire and simple living. In the tent was a Sealy Posturepedic mattress, Eddie Bauer down sleeping bag with a fleece liner, pillow, Coleman stove and lantern, cheap ice chest to keep things from freezing solid, limited pots, and pans as well as some possibles. I walked/snowshoed to the Butler house every morning to dress, drive school bus and teach. Every night I went back to Butler's house, changed cloths and walked back to the tent, sometimes in snowshoes. By November my tent was covered with snow. That year was one of the coldest and deepest snowfalls on record, but

I was happy. I had few possessions, owed no one, and depended on no one... although by March I was looking forward to spring. My life was about to change.

On April 26, 1972 I dove into the deep end of a swimming pool in Stowe, Vermont and my head struck bottom. I could not move, and I nearly drowned. After some friends pulled me from the pool I eventually made my way, with some help, to the hospital in Morrisville. I had broken C2-4, although the nerves had not been completely severed I was paralyzed. I had gone from total and complete independence to total and complete dependence in an instant. After two months of stabilization I was moved to the University Hospital in Burlington. In an interesting twist of fate, my old college roommate and fellow collegian athlete Rick Houle was one of the Neurosurgeon interns! After another month the operation to restore my neck & nerves succeeded. By September I was back teaching, with a stern medical warning: no sleeping on the ground and no dangerous activities. I quit my job in May and headed west to run rivers for seven months.

By March 1973 I returned to my folks farm in Cornwall, VT and on my 20 acres built a log cabin completely by hand (except for the chainsaw and tractor!). In December 1973, in the snow I began cutting 25,000 cu/ft of white pine (*Pinus strobes*) and about 100 Tamarack (*Larix laricina*, also known as eastern larch). Larch loses its yellowing needles each fall the wood is durable and reddish in color. We took the pine to Charlie Munger's sawmill by Lake Champlain, and traded him 10% of the lumber for sawing it up. We had 24" floorboards, and door jams 4" x 20" wide - some 20 feet long. In the interim I moved an old cut-stone foundation a half mile to the site. That didn't work out well as the basement was wet and muddy from excessive rain that spring. So I traded another half of the pine to a contractor to pour a cement foundation and put in a septic system. In the meantime Frank Bouno (the Echo Park Ranger) and I worked on his cabin in Leister, Vermont and debarking and using an adze to initially flatten two sides of logs. The old-time local neighbors found it interesting and brought us picnic lunches and gave us some great advice. By May I took off for the west and rafting. Fall of 1974 found us putting in the floor, log walls, homemade windows, roof, a #16 Train Station potbellied stove and an Ashley stove. By December we were chinking with cement, sand and lime - which made one's hands swell up and burned any cuts. The cold caused the chinking to fall out, and depressed I considered burning the whole place down. We changed our approach, with both

stoves and a kerosene heater blazing we started at the top of the structure. The cement began to cure in place, and the building began to hold heat as we went lower.

The cabin had a toilet and sinks, water was gathered by a homemade roof gutter that emptied into milk cans. The cans were brought into the house, thawed and poured into the toilet tank or heated on the pot belly stove. We cooked on a combination wood/propane stove. The cabin had no electricity, but used gas lights and kerosene lanterns, candles, etc. for light. My wife and I tried to live independently with a large garden, livestock, saw timber, pulp and a few Christmas trees. We made enough to cover taxes and basic living... but nothing else, and we both wound up taking jobs.

Tubby: What was that article you had?

Herm: It was in the National Model Railroader's Association - NMRA magazine from 1964. And they did an article on Stanton.

Tubby: Okay, 'cause he was wanting to build a railroad...

Herm: ...wanting to build a railroad and I spent a lot of time studying Powell. I mean I got a lot of his first edition books over there and Joseph C. Ives' up river journals. So I spent a lot of time early on studying that stuff. To my way of thinking Robert Brewster Stanton had one successful thing, and he was only partially involved in that, and that was building the Georgetown Loop Bridge over there in Georgetown, Colorado. Pretty much everything else he did fell apart, or people got killed, or you know.

Tubby: What an interesting life that guy had though.

Herm: Oh, yeah, well those times. I mean you can say "when men were men and had beards to prove it" but, by god, think about what Powell and those guys did... climbing up to take barometer readings and getting pitch from pines trees and continuing on with the survey with... you know. People deride Powell about

people leaving the trip... I ask them, "Have you ever been on a thirty day Grand Canyon trip? Have you ever been out there for thirty days at a time?"

"Uh, no."

Tubby: They'll be like noooooo...

Herm: You'll see personalities come into play. I did a lot of solo boating because I only had one asshole to deal with. Sometimes I couldn't deal with him!

Herm: So, in 1972 I met, by accident, Ron Smith and talked to him about buying a raft, a real raft, a black one, you know. I really wanted a Yampa, but I didn't have enough money for a Yampa so I bought a Selway.

Tubby: That was a little one right?

Herm: Eleven and a half feet long. Something like 16 or 14 inch tubes. We called Udiscos the death boat - Udeathco, but the black Selway was definitely the death boat. With those little tubes, man, you have to be good, or you learn to swim real quick. I was too cheap to pay the shipping. I think it was \$850 for the boat and \$200 for shipping - I got the information downstairs. I went down to Richwood, West Virginia to the Rubber Fabricator Plant to pick it up and that's how I knew when people started talking about Rubber Fab around the boat ramps, most of them didn't know what they were talking about. There's my little twelve foot Selway, living happy, and it was surrounded by four big flotation devices for the landing of the Apollo or whatever it was. I picked my boat up and put it into the farm trailer. Then I drove up to Erie, Pennsylvania... Albion. There I met the Swanson family and bought four oars. At that time their motor running the plant was still steam generated with belts and pulleys. They would make beautiful competition paddles for the European C-1, K-1, C-2 competitions. But they made beautiful, straight, ash oars too. Eleven foot, ten foot, twelve foot... well, they even had a 22 foot one that they made. So not only did I buy the oars but I've been friends of the family ever since. I shot a roll of film at the factory but

unfortunately it got fried in the glove compartment of my Scout before I could get it developed. Soon after my visit their plant burned down.

The river history, the manufacturing history thing, it just kind of came out... I keep everything so I had old catalogs and stuff. Since I'd been to these places I knew that people often didn't know what they're talking about when they were discussing Rubber Fabricators, Rubber Crafters, or even NRS. So I started working on the manufacturer histories as sort of whim and decided to drive back to West Virginia. Before I knew it I think I'd made 6 or 7 trips back there. One night I said to Val, "Man, it's getting a little pricey driving back there."

She said, "Well you've said that Ron Smith, Don and Ted Hatch, and Kenny Ross helped you out when you were starting out so why don't you use the money you make repairing boats?"

And I'm thinking, "Perfect, if you want me to fix your boat, your money is not going for me to buy a new truck, it's going for me to drive back to West Virginia, or California, or NRS up in Moscow, Idaho, or Maravia in Boise, and I'll be going down to Jackson, Wyoming. I finished a few binders this spring so... it seems like a nice way to pay back. I don't know if it will ever amount to anything, but it seems like a nice way to pay back what people have done for me, and that's important.

Tubby: Tell me about your Yampa trips; in those early days were you coming from back east?

Herm: Yeah, I did. I don't know, one, two... it's probably one of the rivers I have the fewest trips on. Let me think, first one in 1972, one with Hatch, one with Golden High School, another one with my son, the one with Dave Hansen, and probably five trips with the park service that were official, I think ten trips actually. I always loved it too. It's such a bucolic river, you know, the water changes so much.

Tubby: Do you have children?

Herm: Yeah I have two. I have a daughter, Gillian Echo, who still lives in Vermont. My son – Hatteras... Val and I pulled into Phantom Ranch at nine a.m. mountain standard time on September 9-2011. I thought the attacks were a joke. But it affected my son so much he joined the army. He's in Special Forces and he's overseas.

Tubby: How did you hear about it at Phantom Ranch? Were people on the beach talking about it?

Herm: Actually there was a boatman who'd gone up to mail postcards and stuff. He heard about it up there. It was just on the news.

Tubby: Did you take your children down the river quite a bit when they were young?

Herm: Yeah. I used to do what was called a birthday trip. First of all, my first trip would be the donut and bacon trip where my primary food would be jelly donuts, pre-fried bacon, Dinty Moore Beef Stew, Chef Boyardee Meatballs and Spaghetti, Ravioli, or something like that. They were both born close together in March and April so a lot of times I'd do a couple Westwater trips with them, but they would plan their birthday trip. Sometimes I'd take them both. Sometimes I'd take them individually. They both have pretty good attitudes.

Tubby: How old were they when you started their birthday trips?

Herm: Hatt's first trip down Desolation was late July – so he was three months old. The way I know this is I was on a Grand Canyon trip and there was a river ranger there, Dave Desrosiers - ex BLM Deso ranger. He looked vaguely familiar to me. There was kind of a serious discussion going on about something; I don't know. I wasn't involved. This river ranger goes, "And who are you?"

And I said, "I'm Denny Huffman from Dinosaur National Monument."

He was thinking about it. "You're Herm Hoops. You took your kid down Desolation... actually it was five months... You took your kid down Desolation

when he was five months old. I was the river ranger there. I remember your voice." (laughter)

So that was his first trip and Gill was born. Let's see... January, February, March, April, May, June, July... So Gill was five months old too on her first trip. But every year... like I said sometimes we'd do it - the three of us and sometimes Hatt and I'd do a trip. I'd come home and Gill and I would do a trip. But they got to plan the food, man. If they wanted to have S'mores for four days straight, that's what we had, man, S'mores for four days straight. (laughter)

Tubby: You're a good dad!

Herm: It kind of got to the point where I'd take them over and put them in at Split Mountain when I was monitoring campfires and stuff. My wife Valerie would pick them up at Placer Point. I got two Sea Eagle inflatable kayaks from ARTA when they were over here at Felliniville. You remember that - when they were across the river?

Tubby: Yes it is across the river and out in the bushes.

Herm: A shithole of a place man.

Tubby: Felliniville? Where's that name come from?

Herm: I have no idea. I don't know. That's what the locals call it. When Outward Bound got out of the sportyak business, Austin Streetman over there gave me two sportyaks. So the kids could have their choice. They kind of liked the inflatable kayaks. So they'd go run that over and over again probably four or five times while I'm auditing a campfire. Val would pick them up and drive them back to the boat ramp and pick them up again. Then it kind of got like we would do a dam trip or the White River or something like that. Then Hatt and I did a White River trip down to Green River. He was so very young then. When he was about twelve, I hadn't been down the White River for a long time but I decided we were going to do the White River. The Ute tribe had built a really nice take-out down at Ouray. Now I was unaware of what had been going down between the tribe and locals.

So without any map, I was just running it from memory. As you approach the Green River confluence you can almost see the Green River from the Ute Ouray boat ramp. We launched out of Bonanza, Utah instead of Rangely, Colorado. First night we camped on this island. Well, it started raining. The water is coming higher and higher and higher. So we wound up getting in the boat – the Selway. It's worse the next day. All of the sudden out of the mist here comes this bridge and it's like way high. I'm thinking, "The Ouray Bridge is low." I'm like, "Where in the hell are we? If this is the Ouray Bridge and we go under it, we're on our way to Sand Wash with zero days supply of food. There's a little bit extra but..." We got up and walked up and down the road, tried to look over there, mud all over our feet. Turns out that was the Mountain Fuel Bridge which had been built between my last time down there and this trip. It was an interesting decision to make. When we got down to the take out the tribe was giving my wife a ticket for... "Why is your husband on the river? What is he doing on the river? Is he fishing? Does he have a fishing license?"

She's like, "No they're just running the river." They couldn't understand that people would just come out and run the river. You must be hunting or fishing or something. So she got a ticket for using the boat ramp without a tribal permit. Back then that was a hundred and some bucks. It's probably a thousand now. But yeah, the White River and then it kind of got to the point where I would put them in... the BLM built that other take out there and I'd put them in at Bonanza and pick them up down at... I can't remember what the name of the take out is but they'd go overnight. Launch at Ouray - pick them up the next day down at Sand Wash. By then they were ten or twelve or so.

Tubby: They'd just go on their own?

Herm: Yeah. My son has done really well. He brought his family over from Germany. We did the San Juan. You know it's really hard when you don't row... if you've rowed a lot; it is like getting back on a bicycle. Takes you a little bit to clean the cobwebs out, but if your boat's balanced and everything is set up right, it comes back pretty quick. But I've noticed that when you don't row a lot, an

intermittent boater... say somebody who would go down with me every few years they can be almost dyslexic when they get back in the boat again.

Tubby: They have to relearn.

Herm: Yeah.

Tubby: Do you have any trips planned now?

Herm: Uh, my doctor invited me to go on two trips. There's the adolescent side of me that says, "Yeah, I'm going to try a trip just to see how it works out." And there's the other side of it that says, "You're crazy man. The party's over. You're at your own wake."

I came back after Deso thinking, "I have to get an oar protector for my oar." My stuff is still all painted up down in the garage. Ready to go! Then I go down there and sit and... so I don't... honestly, I don't know. My suspicion is that I won't be going on anymore river trips. It's no... when you hurt and people have to wait on you and you can't contribute... It's not that I... I can still run rapids but so what? It feels like going to somebody's house, eating all their candy, and then have them wipe your ass for you.

Tubby: It's not the same.

Herm: It's not the same. You have to earn it in some way or other. So my goal now is, if I can, is to finish this history project off. I don't know. I'm burned out from fighting the fat heads. It doesn't do any good now anyhow. But, I tell people 'cause I still go over to Holiday... Last year was the first year of my life that I was unemployed other than preparing a few boats. I tell people, "When you get off this river trip, the fact that you can go on this river is an absolute miracle thanks to the people who had the foresight to protect it for you."

Tubby: Let's go through your National Park Service career. How did you get hired by the Park Service, because without a veteran's preference that was almost impossible?

Herm: Being a white male, yeah. This was the beginning of the time when minorities were emphasized. My first job was a garbage picker on the Mall, right on the National Mall from the Washington Monument up to the Capital.

Tubby: That was some sort of seasonal job?

Herm: Yep. I was a laborer - WG3. George Aiken was the senator from Vermont. In my travels west... so one of the things I would do is, if I was going to just run a shorter section of river like through Grand Tetons, I would kind of make friends with someone in the campgrounds and say, "Hey, wanna to go on a river trip? Can we leave your car down at the take out?" (laughter) And so this gal, Julie, kept walking by going to her campsite. My wife and I started talking with her saying, "Hey you want to take the kids on a river trip?" (laughter) So to me she was some farm girl from Ohio. Well, it turns out her dad was Bill Saxbe who was the attorney general after the Saturday night massacre - the senator from Ohio. [The Saturday night massacre refers to President Nixon firing the two top officials in the Justice Department late on a Saturday night because they both refused to fire special prosecutor Archibald Cox at the height of the Watergate inquiry] So I'm sitting around with him, getting drunk with him and stuff like that. So between Saxbe and Aiken they got me my political appointee job as a garbage picker. I was like the only white guy on the crew. (laughter) That was a big life lesson for me working there. That winter Frank came back and we were building our cabins in Vermont. We'd take off and go down to Boston to meet people in the regional Park Service office down there. Next spring I applied to like, I don't know, there are probably 200 National Park Service areas and I probably applied to 450 of them! (laughter) I got an offer from Cape Hatteras National Seashore, and they liked me real well down there. So I became a seasonal ranger for two years. The environmental education specialist there was a black gal, Cominda, and she transferred to

National Capital Parks. That's where she was from. So there was an intake position open.

I applied for the intake position. That was kind of funny too. I probably had the lowest score ever on the ranger intake exam. People told me, "You know, be honest when they're asking these questions because they'll know if you're lying." (laughter) So one of the questions was, "How do you feel about minorities?" I was like, "Well, I don't think the park service hires enough minorities. I mean if you go down to Cape Hatteras there's a lot of old people there fishing and the park service doesn't hire any seasonal older people." I just went on telling the truth about things, you know, that "it's as unfair to hire somebody because of their race or religion, or creed, whatever, as it is to not hire someone when the audience... so if there are a lot of black people, maybe you should hire blacks. But how come if there's a lot of old people you don't hire old people?" You know I'm just talking like that. I don't know, I think my score was like 25 or something. (laughter) The average score was something like 70 or 80.

So this position came open and anybody could apply for it. The superintendent was Jim Dunning who was once superintendent here in Dinosaur. Now my goal for joining the park service was not to be at Cape Hatteras. My goal was to come to Dinosaur National Monument. This job came open at Hatteras and I was really well liked by everyone there - administrative people, maintenance people, and interpretive people so I applied for the job. Well, they lost my application - the OPM, Office of Personnel Management. I can't remember who the congressman/senator was; the real bigot from North Carolina.

Tubby: Jesse Helms?

Herm: Jesse Helms, yeah. I contacted Jesse Helms' office and he put a hold on it, and they gave me two weeks to reapply. By then some other people had gotten jobs in other places. And Nancy Cass who was also to be an administrative officer here in Dinosaur was on the selection committee and I got selected. So it was just stuff falling into place by accident. So that was it. I had now gotten a job with the park service full time and I transferred to the Charlie Russell Wildlife Refuge up in

Montana, and that's when I did run the Smith and a couple of those other rivers. There's another section of the Madison. The Madison was fun. The first time I ran it, I met this guy Gary Hushley from Idaho. He'd run a lot of rivers in Idaho, and we're like, "Why are people talking about the bear trap? How could that be a big deal? I mean the river is only flowing 800 CFS - maximum flow."

So we haul our boats down there just below Ennis Dam, and put them in. It's like a rocky little river, sliding off rocks, and I was like, "Hell you could do this back in Vermont, you know." Eventually there was a guy fishing. He sees us coming, throws his fishing rod down and runs like an antelope down over the rocks. We were kind of, "What the hell is he doing?" You know, "Is there a bear out there or something?" Then we went around the corner and... Oh, my god! Big giant boulders in the middle of the river and one on each side of it, and the water smashing up against those boulders. Yeah, okay. So it wasn't Disaster Falls! It wasn't Warm Springs but it was still there. The lesson I took from that is, you know what, if you can't run the small rapids right, you certainly can't run the big rapids right. That lesson paid off, but anyhow... that's kind of how I got started. I got the Selway, bought a used Avon and a Rogue and then a Riken. Now I have basically the NRS boat left. It's about ten years old. Well, about 15 years old. That's how I got started. And I got more and more involved with trying to protect places.

To be honest with you, I enjoyed working for the Fish and Wildlife, but the job that was the most creative, seeing people work together towards common goals, was at Cape Hatteras. My mistake was that I thought every National Park Service area was like Hatteras but it was an anomaly. I think it was an anomaly. (laughter) So I worked for the Fish and Wildlife service and I could see Reagan was going to get elected but I was hired on bicentennial money. I wound up taking a job with the park service again back at Gateway National Recreation Center in New York City and then Denver Regional Office and here. I also worked at Carlsbad and Guadalupe Mountains; that was seasonal. Yeah those were good times. I enjoyed my time with the park service. I really did.

Tubby: So that took you well into the 80's. You bought this house in '82?

Herm: No, 1986, right after I moved here - yeah the oil price crash. At that time in Vernal there were 800... we're talking about Vernal not this house, just the city of Vernal... 800 HUD, repossessed homes. That was what this was - thirty-five thousand dollars for the house and a half an acre. So, when I came here, it was kind of difficult because I was doing some commercial trips on and off but I had to be careful I couldn't do them in Dinosaur. The superintendent of Canyonlands called the superintendent of Dinosaur and said, "This Hoops guy is like a ranger. What's he doing doin' river trips?" So we went through that.

Tubby: Who were you doing commercial trips for?

Herm: I was doing Outward Bound and NOLS and Dinosaur River Expeditions... Wild Rivers Expeditions not all of them... over time, you know what I'm saying. I was like a rent a guide pretty much.

Something about Adrift: while I was working here at the park, they had an airhead in charge of their operation. They'd call me up and say, "She's gone to Salt Lake City and nobody told us anything about it. Can you do our day trip for us?"

I'm like, "I can't do Dinosaur National Monument." (Although I did a couple of times!)

I did a Holiday trip...

Tubby: So you made those connections through your boat repair?

Herm: No, everybody knew me because I was involved in the NPS regional office before coming to Dinosaur. I was in Denver putting together a lot of the spring training trips for Dinosaur and Canyonlands. So I got to know Dee Holladay, Bob Jones, Richard Jones, and the whole bunch of them.

Tubby: Most of those trips have been discontinued haven't they?

Herm: Yeah. That's the craziest thing. You know, one of the... I brought this up... I just got a big award by the river management society, a lifetime achievement for

the protection of rivers and history and stuff like that. I pointed out to those people that one of the best educational events that went on occurred the night before those trips in Dinosaur National Monument. People would come up here in their campers and stuff and Denny Huffman, the superintendent, and the rangers, we'd all go over there and sit around the fire and talk about what regulations they were going to impose and why and what they were looking at down the road. It was non-confrontational. It was... they understood it and it has always kind of bothered me... I mean the agencies have all the names of the people who are private river runners, send out a newsletter, and say, "Here's what we're thinking of doing and we'd love to hear from you. And by the way, February 29th if you want to come down to Moab, we're going to spend the whole day talking about this stuff if you want to get involved." So that's always bothered me. So one of my things is when I go to the Utah Guides and Outfitters I copy down the pertinent stuff for privates and send it out to people. Also when I was in the regional office, things would come up and the owners and managers found out that they could trust me but I had to be really careful. The superintendent is still the superintendent no matter how nice he is. For me it wasn't quite that way, you know.

One time Bob Jones had this plan, I can't even remember what it was; he called me up and he said, "How can I go about doing this? Who should I ask?"

I was like, "Wow, that's a pretty creative thing but it might lead to a bunch of other stuff. Let me nose around a little bit and see what I can find out."

A week or so later I called Bob back and said, "Look uh, man, if you do that I can tell you what's going to happen and it's not going to be good. Here's what they're gonna..." So they learned that if I went into the Hatch boathouse, I wasn't there as a ranger. I was there to toss down a beer and play ping pong. So that was how I got to know the outfitters and I mean it makes you feel pretty good that three years ago UGO voted me their first honorary lifetime member. There are a lot of really fine people in the outfitting business.

But, yeah, I made a lot of friends at Dinosaur. Noel Crown was the seasonal ranger at Deerlodge. Glade was the permanent ranger at Lodore. Tobe Wilkins was one of the preparers. So I knew these people and they knew I was interested in coming to Dinosaur. If there was a party or something, I knew about it and I'd show up. Joe Kennedy was the superintendant. We called him the Arkansas pig poker. [in Herm's best southern drawl], "Well, now I wouldn't be hiring nobody with a dick on his head there Mr. Hoops," he told me. [referring to the toucan hat Herm was famous for wearing] He couldn't figure out how I knew when all these parties were. The reason I don't feel bad talking about this is because you have to put it in perspective. One day in the regional office I... every time a document came through from Dinosaur I'd review it. In comes this proposal to build five of these vault outhouses. I knew that using outfitter money Dinosaur had already replaced all of them - including the one up at Harper's Corner which... tell me what that has to do with the river? So I was really curious about that. Nancy Cass was the administrative officer here and she was leaving. I go over and down to Echo Park, this would have been 1986 for sure, and here is a palatial cabin of turned logs and lights, and... I'm like, "Wait a minute, man... I didn't see any EIS for this thing. I didn't see any plans for it."

Everybody in the region knew... there were people that would come to me because I knew so much about Dinosaur. They would be, "What do you think about this, or what do you...?"

I went back to the regional office and I told the regional director. I said, "They didn't need that money for outhouses, the outhouses were already built. They got something nefarious... something is up that they're going to use that money for cause they're juggling money around like you wouldn't believe." A couple weeks later there's another party and I come over here.

Joe Kennedy says, [southern drawl again] "Now Herm, I guess you've been down to Echo Park and seen the cabin we built there.

I said, "Yeah Joe, I have."

He says, "Now I sure hope that when you go back to the regional office you won't spread that around very much."

I said, "Joe, I have no intention of spreading that around because tonight after the party I'm gonna go down and burn the damn thing to the ground." (laughter)

So that's why I retired early, for that kind of stuff.

Tubby: He was misappropriating funds.

Herm: Oh yeah, well the old building... which was just a plywood cabin maybe from the wall to here. There was a little kitchen area in it. It had a propane refrigerator with stove and lights and a bed. But now the rangers are like some kind of palace guards. They don't even want to stay down there. On their days off they don't want to stay down there, so they have to keep apartments other seasonals could use up in headquarters for the Deerlodge and Echo Park rangers on their day off. It's the craziest thing. Why do you want to be a ranger?

Tubby: Did you end your NPS career here at Dinosaur?

Herm: Yeah, that was for eight years.

Tubby: So your last eight years were at Dinosaur?

Herm: Yeah, yeah.

Tubby: What were you doing for the park?

Herm: I was the Green River District interpreter for this whole side of the park. It was fun! I tried to put back in... what I saw at Cape Hatteras. But I also knew from being in the regional office that there was a lot of anger at Dinosaur. There were like two gangs. If you didn't join one gang, then they thought you were on the other gang. We got calls in the regional office from the people here like every week.

So anyhow I got this job, I knew about the tension but I was oblivious to it. At Hatteras the attitude was: try something and even if it doesn't work try a couple

more times. So the chief of interpretation at Cape Hatteras was a master boat builder and back in one of the old Coast Guard lifesaving service houses he finds a Lyle Gun - which is a brass cannon that fires a metal thing out over the ship with a rope on it. And then it pulls a bigger rope out with a pulley. So we get to firing this Lyle Gun and we say, "Well, let's do a demonstration of the drill." It took us two years before we could get wheels for the cart. We had the Yosemite bike shop make our wheels so we would do this demonstration. There'd be 500-600 people out there. I mean, it was like a big draw. Then the Washington office found out. Number one, we were firing an historic gun which probably was good for it because it was brass and it got cleaned every day. Well, two times a week. And two, we were firing a live projectile out of this cannon and not one of us had any black powder training. (laughter)

Tubby: On the job training!

Herm: Yeah, so they put a halt to it. Well, the human cry from the community from visitors and businesses was so great they didn't know what to do so they made us trainers. I tell you if you go to Sleeping Bear Dunes in Michigan or any other parks on the coast that does this, we were the ones that trained them. (laughter)

So when I came here I was... so, you know, when you want to teach somebody about ocean dynamics, you put them on a boogie board, you know. We tried all kinds of stuff. I had an 80 some year old woman standing up on a surfboard. The next day she was limping to the Hatteras Sound Island Shop and she bought a surfboard. Now she just mostly paddled it around but every now and then when a little wave comes, she'd stand up on it and go 10, 15, 20 feet. So I was always looking to come up with things that addressed an audience. One of the things that always bothered me with the park service is they do kids' stuff but they never involve kids in designing it. They maybe add a psychologist or somebody that has babies or some damn thing, but they don't say, "Hey, let's get a bunch of kids together and find out what they want to do."

One of the great things about the park service is... while I was teaching you've got to give the kids grades. They pass or they fail. I didn't like that because as I got to know these kids, I found out that some of my value judgments were wrong and many of the other teachers' value judgments were wrong depending on what family they came from or if they were going to college. I hated giving grades. In the park service I didn't have to give grades. I'd put it out there and if people liked it, they took it. If they didn't like it, they left.

So one of my goals here was down at Split Mountain there was a nature trail and it had leaflets. Every day we had to go and replace leaflets which took a lot of time because people would hide. (laughter) So I got money through the Nature Association every year and put up several interpretive signs and once we reached a certain point, it no longer was the Red Rock Trail; it was the Desert Voices Trail. So when doing this I hired two seasonals. One to come up with a new, not a trail, but a route to help people find their way without a trail and the other person was working on the Desert Voices. We were having some difficulties trying to figure out what to name the now "Desert Voices Trail". So I just walked out into the quarry and said to the 60 visitors out there, "Hey a bunch of us are meeting in the library. We're talking about trails at Dinosaur and if you want to be involved come on in, sit down and talk with us; share your ideas with us." Some people would. They were impressed that somebody would like do this. So I knew that people learned things by doing them. You learn very little by listening. You learn a lot by doing things. You learn a lot by doing things wrong too. I'm the quintessential example of that. (laughter) So as we're sitting here talking, you know, the trail is really hot during the afternoon hours, and at that time there wasn't a lot for kids to do here... I floated the idea to my staff (I never got approval from my supervisor, and that's one of the reasons I'm retired) of doing this thing called the Kids Hut. The Kids Hut was an all-day program for fourth, fifth and sixth graders. In the morning we'd do a little introduction and then before it started getting hot, we'd take them out on this Sound of Silence trail or Desert Voices trail and leave them out of sight of each other and give them a clipboard with a piece of paper and a couple crayons and have them write Haiku or poetry or anything they

wanted and draw something that they were interested in. Then in the afternoon, (Oh, god we had such a hard time getting this approved that we just went ahead and did it. I got a letter of reprimand for that too.) we put life jackets on them... I got donations of lifejackets... put them in the inner tubes and put them in the water at Split Mountain and floated down to Green River Campground. You could tell that back then dinosaur bones wound up in eddies. So would the kids in tubes wind up in eddies. There was an environmental aspect of it too, but immediately it was to teach water safety and how dinosaur bones got to where they were. The afternoon was more devoted to that. Then what I would do, somewhere before school started, I'd get in touch with a couple of teachers and we would select a third, fourth and fifth grade kid and a teacher and myself... there was one other person... now I can't remember what that person was. These were actual kids and we would select the drawing and the best poem and or description. Sometimes you were really lucky and the same kid did both or sometimes in June the kid will write a good poem about layered rock and then later on some kids would draw a nice picture of it. But sometimes you had to wait two or three years to find one. So we actually had a kid's interpretive sign done by kids for kids. The only adults involved were... we just kind of guided them.

Yeah, Dinosaur was a trip - a lot of unhappy people there that are in paradise.

Tubby: Do they feel like they're in the back water?

Herm: Most local people don't hold Dinosaur in very high esteem. When it started out there were a lot of local people. Tobe Wilkens was a fossil preparer, but generally the rangers, the interpreters, and law enforcement were not locals. Two years, three years at the most and they were gone. It just affected people's spirit. I always got a kick going through these training sessions and being introduced to someone and saying, "Well, what do you do?"

They are like, "Well, I'm the chief ranger in Grand Teton."

I said, "Yeah, but what do you do?"

"Well, I'm the chief ranger."

“Okay, so what does a chief ranger at Grand Teton do?”

Tubby: Right.

Herm: People weren't able to answer that question because to them it was a paperwork exercise, whatever. I don't know what the hell it was.

Tubby: It was a title.

Herm: It was a title, a step in their career. And for me the steps went WG-3, GS-4, GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-11...

Tubby: ...It was all about being where you wanted to be.

Herm: I'm paying for it now. You know, all my buddies that took the other route, you know, they're getting like \$2000 a month or something like that - \$3000 a month, and I'm getting \$1,400. (laughter) Yeah, I retired in 1996. I took an early retirement because I'd gotten involved in some things - the park service was kind of pissed off about it and the boot was coming my way. I had hired a \$700 an hour attorney. I wasn't a team player. I did stuff independently, and frankly I did some stupid stuff!

Tubby: How many years with the NPS then altogether?

Herm: Twenty-three years. Another Dinosaur story, Don Hatch, before he passed away with cancer, he brought me a box of material up at the quarry. I went through it all. We forget that the 1950s was the McCarthy era and if you opposed hydro, which is the basis for the aircraft industry of the Pacific Northwest, you're going to get...

Tubby: You're Red.

Herm: You're Red. John Coso came through. We were working on the park book and I shared with him something in there that was like nobody knew about, nobody thought about. Here was a memo; here's a letter calling Don Hatch to appear before a congressional committee. So when I left the park, it was pretty abrupt. Managers don't like people that give depositions to somebody who

opposes them. (laughter) I heard that the person who replaced me wanted to clean the place up and put that box of papers in the trash. It was like a Campbell soup box. So all that stuff...

Tubby: He gave that to the park not necessarily you.

Herm: He gave it to me. So I told John and Barry and those guys that I feel really bad 'cause his exact words were, "I'm giving this to you because you'll know how to take care of it." And my goal was... I had planned on being here forever... was to eventually integrate it into the park files or at least put copies of it into the park files. Glade Ross did the same thing. Part of this river history manufacturing thing is due to Glade. He gave me all those river files. Now there's not a lot there. Most of it is xeroxes of Utah Historical Quarterlies that I don't have, but there was stuff in there about Ft. Davey Crockett, a lot of the things that Glade did.

Tubby: You know, I contacted the Dinosaur River Unit, probably around 2005... 2010 somewhere in there and I was asking for river use data going back...

Herm: I remember that.

Tubby: ...and they didn't have it. They never ended up giving it to me because they said the person who was in this position before left, and "we couldn't get onto her computer" so private use numbers for most of the nineties, they didn't have.

Herm: I have it. I don't have it for every year, but I've got a lot of it.

Tubby: 'Cause they used to send out a little end of the year summary each season and I'd saved a lot of those.

Herm: That's when Mary Risser was the superintendent. 'Cause I remember you...

Tubby: Yeah. I was blown away, "What do you mean you don't have that data?"

Herm: You put in a Freedom of Information Act request and they just put you off. I remember it. I can't believe that they don't have that information. I think they have it somewhere. I saw them do the same goddamn thing with the Mantles. The Mantles heard that they have a file on them and asked for it.

“Nope, we don’t have any file on you.”

Well, I saw the goddamn file. That’s why I’m sitting here and not still working for the park service. Sometimes in life a person has to make their mind up whether they’re doing something that’s good or bad. Going down, parking a goddamn truck half mile from the entrance to Castle Park with night vision camera’s on it is not good - trying to get somebody to touch it. I mean I sat across the room listening to them trying to convince the sheriff to go down there and arrest a man. So I can’t help but believe they have it.

Tubby: How’d you get into the boat repair business and connecting with all the outfitters up here?

Herm: Well, I had a Udisco. (laughter) So that’s how I learned how to repair boats. Like you said, when I started doing it for a real business, like around ’76... I don’t know if you’d call it a business or not; it was kind of a joke business at first. I could repair boats, so I would repair boats and people would pay me for the supplies.

Tubby: Where were you living then?

Herm: I was back in Gateway in New York. I’d go down and do the Cheat and Gauley... Meadow... the Hudson... that’s the only river I ever ran... not the Hudson but the Delaware... the only river I ran where we were camped in this beautiful trout pool and there was a highway across the way. These people stopped while we were eating dinner and they yelled, “Hey, Nigger!” Okay I know I used to get really tan, but you know... “This is what you guys do eh?”

I’d say when I moved to Denver, you know, there were a lot of boats getting ripped up on the Arkansas. It wasn’t really until I moved here ’86 or ’87... I don’t remember what year it was now. I think it was ’86... that I started repairing the boats. You know, by the time I moved here to Jensen I was certified by Demaree, Aire, Maravia, NRS, Hyside, and 3-4 other companies to repair their boats.

Tubby: You were the warranty repair guy?

Herm: I was the only warranty repair guy between Salt Lake and Denver. Actually there wasn't anybody in Salt Lake. I was getting boats in here from British Columbia, Alberta and as far south as New Mexico.

Tubby: Did you know Tex McClatchy?

Herm: Yeah.

Tubby: Tex and Millie? They're good folks.

Herm: Yep. There's a shame. There's a guy who ought to get some recognition. Anyhow UGO and CROA, Colorado Rivers Outfitters Association, used to get together and have a convention in Grand Junction, which is great because you can attract more vendors and things like that, with the double thing. Well, one of the problems they had is that the Utah outfitters wanted to get like a cooler full of beer and a keg and roll it into where the boats are, sit around and get drunk and bullshit, and the Colorado guides wanted to go bowling. (laughter) Now I have nothing against bowling. One year we played war ball down at the new Civic Center. That was one of the best things; we really pounded their ass. But now I'm noticing Utah Guides and Outfitters have changed. The couple that bought Wild West Outfitters down there in Moab, they're kind of funky. What's his name that bought Don and Denise Oblak's thing - Canyon Voyages. I can't remember his name now.

Tubby: Brian Roe?

Herm: He volunteered to be president of UGO. Now I've been going to UGO for a long time. Noobody volunteers to be president of UGO - nobody. Even if you're Jose and you have an agenda, you don't volunteer to be president. You find another way to get your agenda. It's just a lot of work and very little support. You're basically it, you know. But every year they manage to draft somebody, but this kid was like, "Yeah, I'll do that."

I'm going, "I mean you haven't even been here for a year, running this company for a year and president of UGO?" What's going on with that?

Tubby: Word on the street down there is that they're kind of a mess. It's a pretty disorganized set up. A lot of their old timers have left. They're like, "We're not dealing with this anymore." You know, that's what Adrift was like when I was working up here back in the 70's when Marshall Shield had just taken them over. They were just a mess. I came from World Wide which wasn't the best, but it was a hell of a lot better than what was going on there until they finally got it straightened out.

Herm: I think Western... I've always been impressed with Western River Expeditions. I mean you got to admit when they pull up in one of their semis and start unloading shit... it's like whoa!

Before I left the park service I started working for River Runners Transport in Vernal. They shuttled cars and rented boats and gear to people. They had slowly accumulated a nice sized stable of first aid kits, repair kits, throw bags... the whole deal. Eventually you'd just show up for your trip and your food would be there and your boat would be rigged and away you go. I really enjoyed that. And then they also shuttled your vehicles around so that your vehicle would be at the take out. I actually helped them quite a bit finding their space in the business and introducing them to other outfitters that always turned out to help us when we needed an extra vehicle or a hand with a boat here and there. It was a fun job. When they built their store in Vernal, I designed the store. I built the store, did the drywall and the lights, everything about it. I made them a nightlight with a timer and their window display. It was a pretty robust job. The pay wasn't that good, but eventually Ed and Mel paid me three percent of gross. That was a great incentive. But after 18 or 19 years I really wanted to get back into where I'd be on the rivers a little more. Kerry Jones, with Holiday, had been pestering me for some time to go to work for them, but I had some hip issues. I think three or four years I drove for them and did some warehouse work. So that was another part of my introduction to a different aspect of the river running business.

Tubby: During that time you still had oneway boatworks...

Herm: Yeah, I was still workin' on boats.

Tubby: That was your night job.

Herm: Yeah. I was basically working seven days a week in there at River Runners.

Tubby: Sure you were.

Herm: So usually at night when I came home, I'd work on repairing boats. I think the biggest year I had, I did 45... somewhere just below 50 boats. Some of them were inflatable kayaks. Some of them were small jobs putting foot cups in or something like that. But there were some big jobs. There was a fence post in the river down there at Little Professor Valley in Moab, and I got like 4 or 5 huge tears out of that one fence post. (laughter)

Tubby: When did "you" put that in? (more laughter)

Herm: It was actually Carla with uh... Ah man, I can't believe I'm going numb like this. It was one of the other outfitters had a camp up there. They had a fence along the creek and it was... must have been 2011 because that got washed out down the creek, all the way down the creek and into this eddy at the mouth of the creek. There were two Fish and Wildlife boats, one Canyon Voyages boat, and then somebody else. I can't remember. One other outfitter and a private Avon all got ripped apart on that fence post. That was the money... that and the cave here in Split Mountain were money makers for me. I told Bruce Lavoie with Hatch...

Tubby: People would row...

Herm: ...rowed into the cave there.

Tubby: The one just above School Boy?

Herm: Yeah. That's like really, really sharp limestone. Is it limestone - I don't know? It's like a cheese grater.

Tubby: Wow.

Herm: OK, so if you run in there and the bow of your boat hits that thing, it's going to tear it like knives. I told Bruce, "Man, the next time one of your guides runs in

there... (I used to be with Hatch. When I did trips with them if you broke an oar, the first one's on the company; You broke two - you were buying the second oar.) (laughter)...I said, "You tell those people they row into the cave and they tear the boat apart, they get to pay for the repair!" (laughter)

Yeah, the repair thing was... I had my garage full but a lot of times in the winter I couldn't put cars in because it was full of rubber. But there's nothing more satisfying than doing a really complex job and then having the thing hold air. It's like some great mystery has just occurred and you've been part of it. You sit back and look at it and you're like, "Wow, it's a miracle. It's another baby Jesus!" (laughter) The parent thing, you know.

I worked with Austin Streetman down at Outward Bound. Sometimes your jobs are just two people jobs. To me the whole thing was in repairing a boat. You just look at it and learn. Valves on most boats have a big rubber boot, and using the contact cement, that rubber boot is really hard to get on right because the minute it touches something, that's where it's got to be or you take it out and start all over again. Austin and I, we'd go down there and spend hours and hours trying to somehow hold that boot in the hole and the other guy paints the glue on. You know, squeezing that... get in there... I just got tired of that. I'd gone to a workshop that Hyside put on. Then I talked to Jack from Jack's Plastic and started using Stabond glue and heat reactivating it. That permitted us to put it in there dry. Then you take heat to reactivate it. Instead of a roller, you use a putty knife and push it down, let it dry and you're good to go. So I actually stopped using boots and I wound up putting a piece of fabric on the inside of the hole cut in the tube and then a piece of fabric on the outside with a hole cut in it. Then I gum it up around the edge just to give it a little extra strength. I could do that for half the price rather than replacing the boot. The only thing that you have to remember, time after time after time, is that you need to put the knot for your valve in the boat before you glue the first piece on. (laughter) Or you get to start over again. (more laughter)

Stitching is out. So many people, “Oh you’re going to have to stitch that.” No, not with today’s adhesives. You don’t stitch anything. There is a place for stitching. You know, if you’ve torn a boat, a floor in a bucket boat that has to hold the load; there are a few times and places for stitching but not very many.

Tubby: Did you ever work on a lot of pontoons?

Herm: Yeah and I learned a little lesson there working for Oars down in Moab. They had a frame on one that was on a trailer. I got the bright idea... I mean, when you’re working alone you got to look for things, you know... I got the bright idea that I could strap the pontoon up to the frame. Then I could cut the hole and prep my valve and do it all right there and not have to take the pontoon off the Waterman frame. Gosh, that worked really well. I did it on the bow and the stern. It worked really well because I could tie that up to the boat... you know, there’s a loop on it that you can tie the boat both ends up. So then it came to doing the two middle parts. The first thing I did was I dropped the valve and the nut in the chamber which required Manny and I about three hours to fish it out. (laughter) It wasn’t quite as easy to do those middle chambers with the frame on. So on the other ones we de-rigged them all. My god those things are heavy. There’s nothing like being down at Hite –late afternoon at 400 degrees knowing the customers are all back in a bar in Grand Junction sipping pina coladas, and you’re sitting there with a goddamn gigantic pontoon you have to get on the truck.

Tubby: Did you do any motor boating?

Herm: Yeah I did. I mean, most of it was private stuff. Wild Rivers used motors a lot down on the San Juan.

Tubby: Okay. Whose outfit is Wild Rivers?

Herm: Kenny Ross bought the company from Ansel Hall in 1957 and changed the name to Wild Rivers. He ran it until he died and then Charlie DeLorme took it over. Charlie sold it to Kristen McKinnon who recently sold it again. I can’t remember their name. It’s changed completely. It used to be a... I don’t want to say a hand to mouth... it was a very good geology, educational oriented company. That’s still

there, but the way that Kenny went about it was, just real. Now it's... I mean, the company has built a 40 room hotel in Bluff. Have you been at Bluff lately?

Tubby: Uh huh. Is it the one on the south end of town?

Herm: North end right as you come down Cow Canyon.

Tubby: Oh, to the left.

Herm: Yeah. It used to be... Kenny called 'em Boat Camps. I think Boat Camp Number 5 was where that old gas station was on the right of Cow Canyon. Boat Camp Number 6 was when Kristen bought it and Charlie Delorme had it. That was down by the Recapture Lodge.

Tubby: On the left.

Herm: Yeah, on the left. When Kristen sold out, this LDS couple bought it and changed a lot of the policies. They're just as you come down the mouth of Cow Canyon where you turn to St. Christopher's Mission. They're settling in there. They're going to learn a lesson about the drainage that comes out of Cow Canyon. That's quite a long drainage and they've got a bridge there but... we'll see, we'll see.

Tubby: That drainage has a lot of fetch.

Herm: I used to really love Bluff. There was an old couple down there, the Hoopers. They were LDS, and I don't know, because of our last names we got along really really well. Opal was popular with the Navajo people because she would show them how to get food stamps. She did something really unusual selling pawn. When you pawn a bracelet that you have, somebody who is a rival or enemy, the first thing they do is they try to buy that pawn. Then they flash it all around the Res [Reservation] like, "Look, I got Tubby's pawn. I got his bracelet." The Hoopers would not sell pawn until they'd had it for two or three years, so it wouldn't immediately go into sale. It would sit back in the safe for a couple of years. The Apaches, the Southern Utes, and the Navajo people really appreciated that consideration.

Tubby: This was the Hoopers that did that?

Herm: Yeah. Their place is a steakhouse now. I used to walk in there. They'd take us back into their trailer and they had... the Navajo's made incredible rugs for them. I had baskets and pottery made by tribal members. We got a pretty good deal there. It was a way to get to know the people and the place. My ex-wife and I actually thought about buying it because when her husband Harley died, there was nobody in her family that was interested in it.

Tubby: How did you first get involved in the conservation part? I mean, you came to the realization that you needed to give back... it looks like early in the game that was all about preservation?

Herm: Yeah. I'd say until '72, first 6 years, I was only marginally involved. Though when I met that ranger and he told me about Echo Park and I started reading up on Echo Park and learning a little bit about history and water rights, ownership of the sub river bed, I realized that if you're going to comment on an environmental action by an agency, you needed to know the law and important decisions a lot more than the average person is going to get into. So I tried to fill in that void by letting people know like, "You might want to know that this is a navigable river. It's been that way since US district court 1964." But it all stemmed from Frank Buono and him teaching me about Echo Park.

Tubby: Is he a local here?

Herm: No, Frank grew up in Staten Island and our careers with the park service have crisscrossed a lot. He's living down in Arizona now. He's pretty much the one that got the Mojave National Preserve created. He and I were involved in a little escapade there, wound up going to the Supreme Court.

Tubby: There are a lot of good people in the Park Service and the outfitting business.

Herm: Yeah there are. The only thing that bothers me with the river running business... I said this when Cody was asking me questions on that river trip last October... I'm bothered by the younger private boaters today, who generally comply with the regulations, but they go out there and get their go-pro pictures and then they're not involved. I get letters or emails from them and they're like, "You know, well I'm not going to fight the oil and gas industry on this because they paved the roads in Desolation Canyon." I'm not opposed to oil and gas drilling - I use it. So when people bring it up I'm like look, my question is do we need that little amount of oil and gas that is in these special places where people can go camping, cleanse their soul, and enjoy being out in the quiet? Do we need that now? And by the way, we are doing this for our grandkids. How do we know what our grandkids will want, number one, and number two, why don't we let the grandkids decide? Because that oil and gas that we're leaving under the White River, it's not going to go away. So if in 2085 there's a crisis, it would make sense that the United States government would say, "Guys, I hate to tell you this but we need that oil and gas now." We don't have to rip open every square inch. I feel pretty strongly about that. So you have a lot of boaters that could care less one way or the other. And then you have boaters that are just against things. They're against the cattle. Well, I grew up on a farm. My question is: would you rather see an area that is properly managed for grazing with maybe a hundred cows out there or would you rather see 20 oil wells? We have some natural allies that we could work together with but we're alienating them because, "I don't like cows." Well, you know, I don't like ATVs, so what the hell. I call them "incredible environmentalists" because they're incredible in their lack of knowledge.

Just like this whole Tusher thing. [The Tusher diversion dam is on the Green River 3 miles below Swaseys take-out and about 9 miles above the town of Green River, UT. It had fallen into disrepair and the local irrigation company recently rebuilt it. The company wanted to do the project as cheaply as possible and was moving forward with a plan that didn't include a boat passage. Herm got involved to make sure the new structure would be navigable for river boaters; just like the old one was.]The one thing I knew the whole time was that section of river was

determined in 1964 to be a navigable waterway from the confluence to the Colorado and the reason was the annual friendship cruise. So they could not do anything to obstruct navigation from Swasey's down to the confluence. I mean, I've been running that thing since '74 or something. I told them I had pictures of it which was a lie because I'd thrown them away long ago! The ditch company hadn't maintained that thing for years. It wasn't the flood of 2011 that caused the destruction, it had happened years ago, but they were getting in on the flood money. They don't want that to come out. Plus, are you familiar with it down there, the power plant? So the power plant... it got to the end of its life and they didn't know what to do about it. This was the irrigation - the cow company. So there's this guy that pretty much salvages stuff, so they signed the power plant over to him thinking that he was going to salvage the motors and the pumps and all that stuff. Instead what he did was he upgraded it and produced power taking their water away from them, and they couldn't stop him because he had senior rights. (laughter)

Tubby: They'd sold the rights to him with the power plant?

Herm: The power plant had prior rights. So they were in like a four year battle over water rights. Of course Bob Quist at Moki Mac and Dave McKay at Colorado River and Trail told me the only people that won that were the lawyers. And their feelings were such that they didn't want to get into another legal battle. So I came charging in there with my lance, a scalp of a federal court decision, and alleged photos - which was a lie. I said, "I'll tie your construction up forever and you'll have no water." I was working with Nathan Fey at American Whitewater. I was like... I could get information because I knew people who were on the canal company and they would feed me information. I used to go hang out with Fish and Wildlife every morning and they would tell me everything that was going on with their fish ladder, so I had a lot of information coming in. I'd pass it on to Nate. So they laid out this line that they couldn't... they had no money to engineer/construct the boat passage, so I talked to Nate and American Whitewater engineered the boat passage. Unfortunately the contractor did not quite follow it when he built it but it's there. And then Brody Young, who's with the state of Utah

law enforcement down in Moab, got money... so when you buy gas there's a gas tax. All that is reallocated to things like boat ramps and that kind of stuff. He got the money to build it. So, all in all, I'm just amazed. I mean, down there they suddenly realized there may be something to this. There are about 40 people who run that on Powell type trips where they launched up here or launch in Deso and go on down to Hite; you know, go on long trips. Plus people that like to take-out at a Green River State Park. Oh, and the irrigation company pulled the: "Well, you know in the fall, in August, the river is so low you can't get a boat down there." No, don't tell me that 'cause Moki Mac, Colorado River and Trail, and the BLM had pontoons... they took pontoons down there in August and September. So don't tell me there's not enough water in the river to float a boat. If there's enough water to get one of those pricey pontoons over it, there's enough. So, yeah.

I want to tell you a little bit about some of my illegal trips. Cause I've made plenty of them. I'm not embarrassed about them. Besides statute of limitations are up. It was a hard transition from... if I remember right when I first started out here in Colorado and Utah, the only place that required a permit was Dinosaur and at Ruby/Horsethief you had to pay the landowners to launch and take out, if I remember that right. So it was hard to transition from being free, to having big brother looking over your shoulder, collecting the money, and having somebody... that influx of management and law enforcement - that sort of thing. Given how I was doing these river trips, I worked for the park service so I had to save up my leave. I'd check the weather out and go. It made no sense to me applying in December for a trip in April if I don't have my staff hired. I can't just take off, you know. So that's always been an issue with me. I started really falling in love with Desolation because I could row it pretty much in three days if I wanted to from Ouray down, or I could spend two weeks out there. Back then in March, April, early May there was nobody on the San Juan or Desolation, so I'd just come out and start running Desolation without a permit. Somewhere around '76 or so, they instituted a permit system. I just kept running the river. Terry Humphrey was the BLM ranger then and he found out that I would just go on down there and put my

boat in the water. From Ouray it was really easy to go by Sand Wash at night. He came up with this idea of signing me up as a volunteer. After every trip I would tell them how many hours and what I saw. So that was cool. It was kind of not illegal anymore. But then there were changes in management. I remember when Dennis Willis first went in down there. I said, "So Dennis my name is Herm Hoops and I was wondering if anything was going to change in my relationship with the BLM and going down Deso?" And those trips were mostly solo. Sometimes there would be four or five but mostly solo. So that was Desolation - that wasn't a real problem. And then, I worked at Dinosaur, you know. I knew when everybody was on duty, off duty. What they do on weekends - if they watch football or whatever. It was pretty easy for me to have my wife drive me into Echo Park, put the boat on the water, come down and take out at Placer Point or Jensen. My favorite one was, I did it with my kids, we'd put in at Rainbow Park at night. Nobody's on the river then. Go down, there's a really nice campsite there at School Boy or down at Inglesby. So we'd camp and get up pretty early the next morning before the ranger would go down to the boat ramp to check things out. We'd be by it and down at Placer Point loading the boat on the trailer saying, "We just put in up there at Split Mountain."

When NPS discovered the locals were carrying kayaks up to run that little rapid just above the Split Mountain boat ramp and that Hoops seemed to be doing a lot of trips taking out at Placer Point, that's when they put the play permit system in there, which is total bullshit because the park service has no land ownership from about 400 feet below the Split Mountain boat ramp.

The really classic one would be 1978. That was in Montana. I was working for Fish and Wildlife Service but a friend of mine was working at Brown's Park. He says, "Herm there's a bighorn sheep survey every September - it's a real drunk. You ought to come down and go on it."

I said, "Yeah, can I just come?"

"Well, you need to get this from the park service."

So I call up Steve Petersburg. I said, "I have two friends. Is there any way I could bring them?"

"I think that, yeah, I think... just two? You have your own boat?"

"Yeah."

"Okay."

So about three or four weeks before the trip, I hadn't heard from them... like am I supposed to bring food or, you know? So I call up Steve and he's like... he asked who these people were and they both worked for the park service. One was Galen Stark and the other was Frank Buono. Steve did not like Frank Buono at all. "Well, I don't know if we're going to have room, or not, for you. I'll get back to you."

Well another week goes by and I don't hear from him, so I called him up again.

"Well, you know, the trip is really crowded. We got a lot of work to do - probably not."

Well now we've got a problem 'cause these guys have plane tickets. What am I going to do? Do the section below the dam? First thing I did was I called up Don Hatch and he tried to get me on as a commercial because I had my guide license and the whole thing. But I would have to use his boat and they were obviously obstructing getting down the river at that time. So I called up Frank and said, "I don't know what to do man, and Galen is such a straight shooter. If he finds out that we were doing something illegal, he would really be upset."

Frank said, "Well, let's not tell him." (laughter)

I said, "Okay."

So we launched up at Flaming Gorge, which was part of the plan, and I took all my cheapest, broken down, rusted gear along because I knew that they could confiscate it, you know. Hell, I'd help them load the Udisco in their friggin' boat. (laughter) So we knew what day they were going to launch. We knew what campsites there were using, and both Frank and I had a friend that used to have a

trailer out there at Rainbow Park. He told us that about three days before we were going to be there that that position was done for the year; it was a seasonal position. So nobody was going to be there. We knew when people were going to be at the boat ramp because he was the patrol ranger. So he had the date. We figured we would launch up there and try to stay two days ahead of them. We came down... Fish and Wildlife Service, they were having a big picnic there so we slipped out at sunset. Anybody on the river at that time of day, there has to be some questionable motives. (laughter) But they didn't do anything. We went down, waited 'til it was dark to pass the Lodore ranger station. I still have a hatred for geese... (laughter)... because it got dark and we would get stuck on a sandbar and the geese would be honking and flying around. They wouldn't fly behind us; they would fly down river ahead. We got stuck on one right out in front of Glade's house by the put-in ramp. We finally get down into the Gates (there was supposed to be a three quarter moon but it was cloudy). The next morning we got up and ate a quick meal of cold cereal and milk, jumped in the boat. We'd already run... I can never remember... we'd run through Disaster Falls somehow that night... what's the next campground? Pot Creek? Rippling Brook? I can never remember those.

Tubby: The Pot camps are below Disaster.

Herm: Yeah, okay. We were just basically camped along the ground. We get up the next morning; it's fairly early and we wanted to hit the road because they're supposed to launch this day.

Tubby: They're launching at the Gates?

Herm: Yeah. And we come around the corner and there's a bunch of people standing down there eating breakfast on four or five boats. On one boat it says? "Huh, must be some kind of commercial outfit or something - it starts with a P. What outfitter starts with a P? I see PA...? PA?..." And we all have Park Service raincoats on, you know. (laughter) "Park... Park Ran... Park Ranger! It's the goddamn sheep thing! Oh, my god!" So we quick take our raincoats off and God palsied my arms - my arms would just not move. And they're all sitting eating

oatmeal and biscuits and... There's a big flat rock out there and I put the boat on the flat rock. It would spin around and we'd all lean this way and then it would spin that way. I don't know how long we were there, but we were right in front of them and they knew every... certainly Steve Petersburg knew us three by sight. You know our heads are down like this, we got our hats all pulled down as far as we can. And they didn't say a thing! It probably wasn't as long as it was in my mind but it feels like it was a really long time we were stuck on that rock. I probably won't tell the rest of the story on tape (laughter) but they were not able to radio out at Echo Park even if they'd gotten there and realized we were illegal. The other thing is... I mean, we were tryin' to be... this is September... I don't know when it starts getting light but it definitely was light... and they see three people on a single boat... at Pot Creek...

Tubby: Nefarious.

Herm: Yeah, something wrong there man. So they were probably all sobering... or drunk out of their minds.

I've done some other trips. Do you know Glade Ross?

Tubby: Uh-huh.

Herm: I'd go up there at Crook Campground and launch by myself. I took my dad's ashes one time. I'd put in down below where the nature trail is at Lodore. Climb back up and wait for it to get really dark and I'd go back up and leave a bottle of Yukon Jack on Glade's doorstep. It wasn't until Glade got inducted into the Hall of Fame that I told him that. "You son-of-a-bitch!" he says

Herm: Did I ever send you the thing I did on the run of the Niagara Gorge with...

Tubby: ...you did.

Herm: That was really interesting because Lew Steiger did that story of what's his name... crazy Al Wilson. And they kind of claimed that he was the boatman. I

knew from talking with Terry Collier... we'd meet... every weekend we seemed to meet at the Lowes parking lot... he lives up at the dam at Greendale. He's been a boater since way way back, you know, 60's, a commercial guide. We were standing up there one day and he started talking about the Niagara Gorge, and I said, "My god, you ran the Niagara Gorge?"

"Yeah, American Sportsman."

And I'm like, "Yeah, well, tell me about it." So I interviewed him and uh...

Tubby: You know I saw that on TV as a kid.

Herm: Oh, yeah. That was a big deal.

Tubby: If I recall, wasn't Mike Hipsher...

Herm: Yes.

Tubby: He was one of the kayakers right?

Herm: Yeah. I think so, yeah.

Tubby: And then years later I met Mike Hipsher in Green River.

Herm: Uh huh.

Tubby: He used to do trips for Outlaw Trails from time to time.

Herm: Outlaw Trails, yeah.

Tubby: And uh, I was like, "My god, I saw you on TV when I was like, you know, in junior high."

Herm: That was some mighty big water. Risa Shimoda, who was the executive regional director of River Management Society, ran it illegally twice, in a kayak.

Tubby: I went there for the first time just a couple years ago. We spent the day going here... looking there. I'm like, "Yeah, okay here's all the falls, but we gotta go see the gorge. I want to go see where those guys went."

Herm: Depending on how much water they let out, it's impressive.

One of the interesting little things, I used to like to put together theme trips. I didn't plan them that way. Something would come and I'd go, "I'm going to learn more about these buildings down in Desolation. It just so happened I was in the regional office in Denver. A friend of mine, Carol Lively... 'cause I was in the Fish and Wildlife Service... was the great educator and studied a lot of things. She knew a lot about architecture. She went over to India; I think for that purpose. Her significant other, Carlos, was from Columbia and he was a historical architect and a stone mason. We went down there and looked at the buildings there at King's Bottom, Rock House Bottom, Chandler Creek, Stone House, and all the... you get down there towards the end. They were pretty much of the opinion that those buildings were built in a cut that you saw a lot of in northeast Italy. They concluded that Italian stone masons very likely built those houses.

I will tell you the rest of the story of how I'm pretty sure there were Italian stone masons in this area. I was looking at this spot down in Moab, north of Moab, when you enter Moab on the left - the "king of the world" rock. Have you seen that? I don't know if you can get to it now. It's where the water slide was for a while. They've moved it maybe, I don't know.

Tubby: Yeah, I vaguely remember that.

Herm: I looked at that and I looked at that. There was something familiar about it but I couldn't put my finger on it. So one time I was down at Bluff talking to the Hoopers. I said, "Hey Opal, were there ever any Italians come through here?"

She says, "Oh, the fascists in the 1930s. They come through here working for nothing on your farm - for food, lodging, just work for nothing and they'd build you beautiful stone houses." She said that one of the houses at St. Christopher's Mission was built of that - a couple of houses at Bluff. She told me which ones they are but... I was like, "Wow, okay. Obviously she knew they were the fascists. They were from Italy and they built houses. So on the way home we stopped and

looked at the “king of the world” rock again and it’s frigging Benito Mussolini. There’s no doubt about it. It’s got the Benito Mussolini nose. Obviously there was a huge Italian influence that moved through Utah. I mean, who were the miners in Price? They were all Italians.

[As it turns out the “king of the world” carving is a self portrait done by an Armenian immigrant named Aharon Andrikian. Jennifer Spears bought the property it was on and had the boulder with the carving moved next to the Moab convention center about 10 years ago. Recent research on his life by Jen Jackson Quintano published in the Canyon Country Zephyr can be found here: <https://www.canyoncountryzephyr.com/2020/03/31/from-genocide-survivor-to-king-of-the-world-an-update-on-the-aharon-andrew-mystery-part-2-by-jen-jackson-quintano/>]

Tubby: Tell me about your relationship with Kenny Ross.

Herm: Even then, when I first met Kenny Ross I had no idea who the hell he was. All I know was we got along. He was another one like B. A. - he could be very blunt. Somebody said down there, “Oh I bet he was such a kind and gentle soul,” and I was thinking to myself, “Well, he was to me, but I’d seen him not be so kind and gentle to people. (laughter) He would tell you right where the bear went through the buckwheat.”

I got to be really close to Kenny in a different kind of way than father/son, employee/employer. I would always look forward to after my trips on the San Juan to go on up to his trailer there. It actually started out like this... I didn’t know him at all. He ran a shuttle for me for forty dollars to Clay Hills. I’d never been down the lower part before and he said, “Stop by after the trip. Tell me how your trip was, where you camped and stuff.” So I did.

I went in and I said, “Oh we camped at the Pontiac Canyon.” (It’s that first bend there where somebody pushed a Pontiac car over the thing.) I said, “And then we camped at John’s Canyon. It had been a really long day.”

“Oh, you probably didn’t camp at John’s Canyon. You probably camped at False John’s Canyon.”

I said, “Well, I was watching the guide book pretty close. I’m pretty sure it was John’s Canyon.”

And he said, “Well, did you see the banded chert around the lip of the canyon?”

I said, “No.”

He said, “Well, you know, Herm, a good naturalist ought to notice those things.”

So I came back that fall and ran the San Juan and son of a gun, yep, there’s a banded chert there. So I go back to Kenny’s all proud and he says to me, “Now, did you see the crinoids in the rock there?”

I was like, “No. I didn’t see the crinoids.”

He says, “Herm, a good naturalist ought to notice those kinds of things.”

So this would go on and on and on - John’s Canyon was probably a four year adventure. He never told me what... he led me to a place, but let me discover it on my own and it reaffirmed to me... I’ve helped a lot of people with river guides but I don’t like to because, to me, a river guide takes away a person’s right to discovery of things, of places, and of one’s self. The first time you discover on your own a ruin or a pot the mental battle you go through, you want that. “If I don’t take it the government will put it in a store room or somebody else will take it. It will get broken.” To do the right thing really adds to your appreciation of that item. When you put everything in a guidebook, it takes away people’s right to discover. How can you tell, your first time down a river, if there’s been a flash flood. You look at the bank and see if the banks been freshly scoured or... those kinds of things are things you learn that the guidebook can tell you, but until you have experienced them... very meaningless, kind of trite.

So I used to stop in at Kenny’s and I knew... it didn’t take very long to know that he liked Pabst Blue Ribbon beer and Paul Mall unfiltered cigarettes. So I would buy a

couple packs of Pall Malls and a couple six packs of beer and he always had tequila. He had a table there right by the window, and a lot of times he'd be frying chicken or making something on the stove. I was in there one time and we were talking about something; I don't know what it was. All the sudden I realized, man, our heads are getting lower and lower. I looked and I had smoked the whole pack of Pall Malls. I looked up and there was like a cloud of smoke that was in the whole trailer like the thing was on fire or something. I looked over at the stove where he was cooking the chicken and the smoke was just pouring out of that pan. I was like, "Hey, Kenny, I think you might need to go over there and turn that stove off. The chicken's probably pretty well done now."(laughter)

He goes, "Oh, oh, oh, oh." He hobbles over there and he says, "Well, I guess I've burned the chicken."

And I said, "You know what, Kenny? A good cook ought to be aware of those things!" (laughter)

He was kind of grumpy about it. He looked at me and he had a little smile like, "Okay, you got me."

So that was the kind of relationship I had with him. You just don't find that any more. You don't find, like him or not... You don't find the Dee Holladays, the Don Hatches, or the Bob Jones anymore. The beginning and the end; we're sort of the last classes of that period of time where people were real.

I'm sure I got more lies I can tell you, but I can't think them up right now.

Tubby: Well, I think we recorded a few for posterity today.

