

Grand Canyon Oral History interview

Interviewee: Clare Donato (CD)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Clare recounts fence building projects at Grand Canyon, her experience with law enforcement, learning to horseshoe, and re-planking Kaibab Suspension Bridge Part 3

Date of Interview: November 29, 2020

Method of Interview: Phone interview

Transcriber: Ashlyn Van Wyk

Date of Transcription: December 11, 2020

Transcription Reviewers: Stacy Birk

Keys: Lake Mead, Meadview, Grand Wash Cliffs, Columbine Falls, Havasupai Reservation, Fred Harvey Mule Barn, Candedo, Ken Keto, Sue Hovey, Stanley, Yosemite, Richard Hanson, Kim Crumbo, mule packing, horseshoeing, farrier, Dave Smith, Kaibab Suspension Bridge, Cremation Canyon, Phantom, Roy's Beach, Linda Knutsen, Tusayan, Eric Gueissaz, Coconino Siding, Rowe Well Road, Dick Marks, Olympic National Park

TM: Today is Sunday, November 29th, 2020. This is a Part 3 Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Clare Donato. My name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon, Clare. How are you today?

CD: I'm fine, thank you, Tom.

TM: Great. May we have your permission to record this interview over the telephone?

CD: You may.

TM: Thank you. We wrapped up Part 2—you had broken your finger, and they had put in an external fixator, which didn't work real well. And you talked about mule accidents, and that you'd gone to horseshoeing school. And could you just sort of pick that up again?

CD: Yeah, well, I'd kind of been browsing through some old pictures to try and get a timeline better in my memory. We had some projects—fencing projects—that we did in 1981, in the spring and the fall. That was before my broken finger.

TM: Okay. Where were they, and what did they involve?

CD: The one in the spring was at Lake Mead, and we were trying to keep the burros from wandering into the Canyon, or the Park Service, from Lake Mead Recreation area. So I don't know how it came about, but there was—I don't know, there was probably a crew of six or something. And we went... I guess we stayed in Meadview, at a trailer. And we had a boat, and we'd go across the lake. And we had barbwire and t-posts, and we were stretching a fence down from—I guess it was some sort of cliff—to the lake. And then we went into the lake.

TM: So this would be the Grand Wash Cliffs there, the—yeah—

CD: I don't remember for sure.

TM: Okay. ... Bound to be up there somewhere...

CD: But I know we were down... We were from Meadview, and we went across the lake. I just, I can't give you the particulars on exactly where that—

TM: So not too terribly far up lake? Like, not up into the Canyon up toward Columbine Falls? Did you go up that far?

CD: No, I don't think so.

TM: Okay. So how did you build fence in the water?

CD: Well, you know, I was trying to think about that, 'cause it got pretty rocky in there. But, I don't know if we drilled and then put the t-posts in there. I'd never built barbwire fence before. But, I remember us pairing off into twos and having contests going on who could pound the most posts—

TM: Oh boy. *(TM and CD laugh)*

CD: —you know—in a certain period of time. So, you know, we were always competitive that way. And then you stretched the wire. And I don't... We went into the lake somewhat, but I learned shortly thereafter that the lake levels had dropped so that the fence was just sticking out in dry land and could easily be walked around.

TM: Right. 'Cause it's way low now, and there's no fence coming down to the river.

CD: Right. It's way low now. I was shocked to see it and Lake Powell in 2015. I was just shocked.

TM: Yeah. So then—

CD: But that was a fun little project, for me anyway.

TM: —Would you set up—every now and then you'd set up a larger post with cross-braces to like anchor, to pull the fence towards—to tighten it up?

CD: Yeah, well, it seemed like this was a pretty straight line. But we were going to have to have those braces every so often, and on any corners. But I don't remember much on corners. But I know we did have to do some bracing. But it was just—

TM: Okay. And did you see a lot of burros out there when you were doing that?

CD: *(laughs)* No, not a one.

TM: *(laughs)* Okay. Any cattle?

CD: Nope, didn't see any cattle.

TM: Okay. 'cause they run cattle out there, too, besides the burros.

CD: Well, that was sort of our job on the fall fence project, was, we went out on the Havasupai Reservation on the Esplanade, and built fence enclosures to determine how much damage grazing was doing to the area.

TM: Tell me about that.

CD: Well, that was a lot of helicopter flying, 'cause they flew everything in. And there was groups of us... There was like three in my group. I think it was Stanley and me and Candedo. And we camped out there. That was kind of really my first camping out there, 'cause every place else we had bunk houses and corrals and stuff. We didn't have any meals with us.

TM: Wow. Nice.

CD: So we would just build these square enclosures to keep the cattle from grazing there, to determine the difference between where they couldn't graze and where they were grazing. So I don't know what they found out about that. But we did helicopters and sling loads. And I remember being in the passenger seat. And we went to pick up, and the sling load was too heavy. And he dropped back down.

And I was thinking, "I didn't think you were supposed to have passengers when you're sling loading." Anyway, they're pulling stuff out. And I remember looking down going, "Don't pull the water out. Don't pull the water out." *(TM and CD laugh)* Which is exactly what they were pulling out. But it eventually came in on a later...

TM: ...a later ship. Oh my gosh. How many days were you out there, then?

CD: I don't remember. It might have been a tour, but I'm kind of not thinking so. I think we built several fence enclosures. And there was different groups of us, so we were in different areas of the reservation. And I don't know what became of that.

TM: So that area had—in the '90's, in the 2000's—had a large population of horses in it. And the excrement from the horses would be top-of-your-boot high, piles of—and this is a real question of, well, how much use is too much out there? Did you see any wild horses? I didn't know they had cattle out there, but—

CD: Well, and I'm not sure it was cattle. Maybe it was horses. Again, I didn't see any wildlife at all.

TM: Okay did you get a chance to walk out to the edge of the Supai and peep over the edge?

CD: Yeah. A little bit. We were kind of camped close to the edge. It was a beautiful place to be, and another great little project that I got in on.

TM: Nice. That sounds like fun.

CD: Getting to see more of the Canyon.

TM: Did Stan and Candedo enjoy it as well?

CD: Yeah. You know, they're more used to it. I can remember my first day, I was like, "How can you all sit there and eat lunch when there's—" *(laughs)* I was like, "This view is magnificent."

TM: It is gorgeous country.

CD: But they were more hardened to it than...

TM: I see. *(laughs)*

CD: ...than a Carolina girl would be.

TM: Cool. Fun. What else?

CD: Well, let's see. The following year—that Christmas, actually, Sue and I decided to travel to San Francisco and have Christmas dinner with a mutual friend of our sister. We had never been to San Francisco. And then one of the trail crew guys, Ken Keto, who was one of the few white guys on the crew—he was headed that way too. And he wanted to come with us and help us drive, 'cause we were just going to drive straight through.

And I should have known it was going to be a bad trip, *(laughs)* 'cause it had a ominous start. But she had a Toyota with a camper on the back. And so we figured two people could be up front, keeping each other awake, and one person could sleep in the back, and we'd just sort of rotate. But we'd stopped at—I don't know where it was. We were still in Arizona, I think. I just remember it being dark. And we stopped to get gas, and filled up. And I went in—I think we were switching drivers; I was going to drive. And I went in the store to get something—coffee or something—and she went into get something. And off we went.

Pretty soon we're getting pulled over 'cause we hadn't paid for our gas. And I thought she had paid, and she thought I had paid. And neither one of us had paid. So we couldn't pay the cop; we had to turn around and go back, and he was going to make sure that we did. So we did, and we paid them and said, "Sorry. We really thought each other had paid."

At that point we had to wake Ken up and say, "It's your turn to drive." And we were in the same place that he had gone to sleep in. But we made it to San Francisco without further ado and had a great Christmas. We walked down to the market and bought all sorts of seafood and had a seafood Christmas dinner.

TM: Oh, you must have liked that.

CD: I loved that. And Ken went—whatever he was going to do. That was as far as he was going with us. And on the way back we decided to stop in Yosemite and check it out. And we were going to just camp there. And so we had parked and went into the General Store to get some groceries for a couple of days. And so we're in the grocery checkout line. I had seen some bandanas. And I wear a lot of bandanas for work and stuff, to keep my hair out of my face. And there was a white one; I didn't have a white one, so I grabbed it.

And we're going through our checkout line, and the clerk says, "Well, you can't buy this bandana here. This is for groceries only. You have to go to the clothing department." And I said, "Okay." Kind of silly, but... So Sue took a bag, and I took a bag. And she was headed out, I presume to wait for me outside or head to the truck; I don't know. I went over to the clothing area to buy this \$1.59 bandana.

And I come around, and there's this line that's going all the way around—I mean, it's just hugely long, and most of these people have all these clothes hanging over their arms that they're going to buy. And I have one \$1.59 bandana. And I'm standing in line for a while, and then I'm going, "I don't know where Sue is." So I just said, "The hell with it," and chunked it in my bag and walked outside. =

So I'm standing outside, looking both ways, trying to find where Sue went. And there's a tap on my shoulder. And I said, "Hi." And he goes, "I need to talk to you about a bandana." And I said, "Oh yeah, this one?" and pulled it out of my bag. And he says, "Yeah, that one." And so he paraded me back into the store and into this little cluttered room. He was a security guard. And he called the rangers. So a ranger comes. And he was actually pretty nice to me. He looked like, "Really? This is what you called me for?" But they were going to press charges, so there was nothing he could do.

So he was arresting me, said he was going to have to handcuff me. And I went, "Really?" and then I said, "Do you have to shove me in the back seat? Can I sit in the front?" And so he let me sit in the front, handcuffed. And as we're driving to the jail I said, "There's Sue's truck. That's her truck." And he drove by, but we had seen Sue. And he goes, "I'll come back and put a note on it for you." And I went, "Okay, thank you, 'cause she's not going to have any idea what's happened."

So they stripped me and put me in a little orange suit and shoved me in a cell, and gave me some magazines. And I'm hanging out there for, I don't know, four hours or more. And here come a bunch of rangers and said, "Okay, we've talked to Grand Canyon. And we will let you out in your recognizance if you sign this piece of paper." And I said, "Well, what is this?" And he goes, "You're just going to help out the law enforcement division over there. Won't be anything against your morals. But if you see somebody stealing a bike from the YCC camp, or this, that, and the other, you just let them know."

And I went, "Well, okay." So I signed it. And the nice ranger took me back. We drove around the campground looking for Sue and found her. And he dropped me off. And that night was real restless for me, and I'm crying, and I don't like it. And I said, "I'm just going to go in and say I'm not doing this. I'm just going to take the consequences." 'Cause I just didn't like the whole sign-the-paper deal.

And my arraignment, or whatever it was, was going to be in one o'clock in the afternoon. So I got up and went over there and told the rangers I didn't want to do this. I'll just take my lumps.. And so they tore it up. So Sue and I ran around just exploring a little bit until it was time for my court appearance. And I'm sitting there waiting to go in, and like five minutes before I'm due to go in, here come the rangers (*laughs*) with papers in their hands. And they said, "Well, you're going to lose your job at Grand Canyon if you don't sign this."

TM: Whoa.

CD: And I said, "I can't lose my job. I love that job. I can't lose my job there. It's the best job I've ever had." (*laughs*) So, I signed the papers. And in I went, and it took five minutes. The judge went blah-blah-blah. I went, "Yeah, I signed the paper," and out I went. And so the ranger told me—and I don't remember any names or anything—he said, "Just give it a couple of—get back to Grand Canyon. Give it a couple of weeks, and then go see the head investigator." And David is all I can remember—was Mr. David somebody; I can't remember his last name.

And so I said okay. Sue knew that now I have this secret—it's all driving me crazy. So I get back to work, and I then I make it—I waited two weeks. I made an appointment with this guy. And I went in, and I said, "Okay, well, I didn't see anybody stealing bicycles this week. So, are we good here?" (*laughs*) And that's not what he wanted to know about... He wanted to know about drugs, and he wanted to know about Richard, in particular, and what his drug use was. And I'm going, "I have no idea."

TM: Okay. This is Richard Hanson, and he is the trail—

CD: Trail foreman.

TM: —Trail crew foreman, yeah, okay.

CD: So I said, "I have no idea. He's my boss. I don't have that kind of connection with him." So I was getting all upset. And I'm going, "This was supposed to be, you know, if I saw somebody doing something wrong." And he goes, "Well... "Like I say, I don't hang out with him. He's my boss." So I'm getting more and more upset, and he's understanding that I really don't have a clue what Richard's drug dealings would be, if any.

So then he started talking about the trail crew. And I said, "Well, what about the trail crew?" And he said, "Well, I want to know their pot smoking habits, and where they get it, and how often they smoke it." And I said, "I don't know any of that stuff. You want somebody who smokes pot? I smoke pot; here, here I am. I'm not telling you any of that stuff." And so I'm crying and hyperventilating. Like, this is my first real law enforcement experience. *(laughs)*

TM: Yeah. Wow.

CD: And he goes, "Okay, just calm down, calm down. I'll take this up in another two weeks." And I bolted right out of there. So then I said, "Okay, well, there's got to be a way to get out of this somehow." And I'm thinking: lawyer... I need a lawyer. And I had been seeing one of the wranglers over at Fred Harvey Mule Barn. And he was actually the assistant manager at the time. And he was a bit of a bad boy, so I thought maybe he knows a lawyer. *(laughs)*

So I went over there and tracked him down. And sure enough, he knew a lawyer in Flagstaff. And he called him and then handed the phone over to me. And I kind of told him the situation. And we made an appointment, and I drove down to Flagstaff to see. And he made two phone calls, one to Yosemite and one to Grand Canyon, and charged me 115 bucks and says, "You're good." 'Cause I was going to have to see this investigator for like six months.

TM: Wow.

CD: That was part of the piece of paper I signed. And he goes, "You're still going to have to fill that out, but they're not going to ask any more about this drug situation." And I went, "Perfect." So the next time I saw him—the investigator—

TM: Did you get back on that two-week frequency, or did you wait six months to go back?

CD: No, I waited—it was the two-week frequency, the next time I went in. And I might have gone one more time. I can't remember. But I didn't make it to six months, 'cause he eventually said, "Go on, get out of here. I don't want to see your face again." And I went, "Done." Gone. *(laughs)* So there's my law enforcement experience. And I didn't get in any more trouble. *(laughs)*

TM: Good for you. Oh my.

CD: But yeah, I can't remember the investigator's name. All I can really remember is David, and I'm not terribly sure that that's correct. And I'm not terribly sure if that was the Christmas of 1980 or 1981. I don't know; it was the next Christmas, I think—Sue gave me a white bandana for Christmas.

TM: Oh. That's touching.

CD: But it had kind of lost its appeal at that time. *(TM and CD laugh)*

TM: She gave it to you as a joke. Oh my gosh. I wonder.

CD: And so I didn't even tell Richard any of this until much later. I mean, it might have been after we moved up here. He didn't know any of that at the time.

TM: Yeah. You know, the trail crew has a reputation, at least on the river, for—how should I say it? —maybe excessive partying?

CD: *(laughs)* Well, it's not just on the river.

TM: Okay. Can you speak to that a little bit?

CD: Well, everybody—it's just sort of a "work hard, play hard" sort of a mentality. And so, like I said, when we brought down the pony kegs—we would work our nine hours very hard, from like 6:00 to 3:30, and then it was time to play. So that's just how it was.

TM: You know, I'm going to ask you a little bit more about this, if you're willing, because that concept seemed to then spill over into the river rangers. And things kind of went south on the river. Do you have any thoughts about that? I mean, I don't know—

CD: With the harassment, the sexual harassment?

TM: Yeah, yeah.

CD: I had read about that. I never ran into that when I was on the river, but yeah. I don't know, I just think it can be a prevalent situation anywhere you are. You know, women's sort of always had to battle that sort of thing.

TM: Did you have anybody—while you were working, or when you were on your off-time when you were working—try to intimidate you into doing something you didn't want to do?

CD: No, not sexually. I mean, the rangers intimidated me into signing this paper, to try and turn somebody in for drugs. And that was the biggest intimidation I had ever gotten. You know, like you said earlier, Kim Crumbo was sort of an intimidating character, but he didn't intimidate me. You know what I mean. It was just to see him being all brusque and serious about his job. But he didn't physically intimidate me in any way, whether it had to do with work or anything. It was just my vision that was, "Yeah, this guy means business."

TM: Yeah, an aura of respect is different from flat-out intimidation.

CD: Right.

TM: And those two things are very different. But yeah, in one of these interviews, that concept of, "Hey, when I clock out—I work a nine- or I work a ten-hour day, and then it's my time." And I should ask you then: in the realm of trail crew, if you wanted happy employees, and you wanted them to be hard-

working and have a good time, how would you, Clare, manage that, based on your experiences, so that things didn't get out of hand on off hours?

CD: Right. Boy, I don't know, because—we were kind of a drinking crowd; I remember that. We would go down, sometimes, on a full moon, down to the corrals and—we called it “yo-bobbing.” And as the mules came around—you'd sit on the fence, and as the mules came around, you'd jump on their back and see how long you could stay on. *(laughs)*

But I guess that kind of got out of hand a little bit. We didn't do it real often, but you certainly could have gotten hurt. I don't know; you just have to lay some ground rules and some boundaries. Like when I got up here, there was a lot of drinking going on, and they wanted—but I only had so many mules, so I would say, “You get one case of beer each.” I'd just set limits, because I didn't have the capacity to take all the beer they wanted to take. So I'd say, “You get a case of beer each, and bring a bottle. That's easier to pack.”

TM: Yeah. So that's a simple way of dealing with it, which is, moderation. Yeah. And that still allows some drinking, but not so much that things—

CD: They could have stopped us from bringing down pony kegs. *(TM and CD: laugh)* But they didn't.

TM: Right, okay. No, thank you. That's certainly, I think, a moderate way of handling something like that, especially looking forward, because Grand Canyon National Park needs a trail crew, and one could argue they need a Navy. And so if that happens again in the future, how are they going to not go back into the problems that they had before?

CD: Right.

TM: What was horseshoeing like?

CD: Well, it's interesting. And at some point Richard sat me down and said, “What is it that you want to do with your Park Service career?” And I went, “Well, I think I'd like to be a packer.” And I wasn't considered a packer; I was considered trail crew at Grand Canyon. And he goes, “Well, you're going to need to learn how to shoe your own stock.” And I went, “Okay, well, maybe Dave Smith could help me learn that.” And so I went and asked Dave Smith if he would. And he said, “No, women aren't built right for that.” So there's some... *(laughs)* Says, “Your hips just aren't built the right way to be under a mule or horse.”

TM: So can you describe what he was thinking when he was saying that? What position do you need to get into, and how do you need to do it, to shoe?

CD: Well, you have to kind of squat. You squat, and the front feet come in between your legs for you to work on them.

TM: So you're facing toward the mule's tail. You're standing—like for its front foot, you're standing to its side. And you get its foot between your legs, squatting, and then you can work on it.

CD: Yep. Then I had my hands free to use both hands to work on it.

TM: So it seems like you need to be strong—but you are. So was that thinking just a prejudice of his, or—

CD: Yeah, I think it was just a prejudice of his. And then on the back foot, you're crouched even lower, 'cause you want the back foot nestled in your lap so that you can use both hands to work on it. So you're crouched even lower.

TM: Wow. Okay.

CD: Yeah, so I had saved some money, and I'd looked up horseshoeing schools. And there was one in Oklahoma City. And they had—I don't know—they had two-week, four-week, eight-week courses. So I signed up for an eight-week course. So that was two months, so Richard had to arrange for me to be laid off for two months, so I could go to the school.

TM: Was he good about that? Was he good, about not just you, but other employees who wanted to sort of further their Park Service goals by training and special things like that?

CD: Yeah, he was very supportive of me going. And I had also my time off. My furlough was usually in the winter, and now I had to do it in the summer. So he arranged my schedule so that I could do that. And I drove down to Oklahoma City and spent two months down there, learning some blacksmithing skills, 'cause you had to learn how to make your own shoes as well. So you made your own shoes out of bar stock, and they wanted you to do different kinds of shoes.

And then you went on field trips. Most people would bring their animals to the school to have them worked on for free, knowing that it was students. But we also would get on a bus and head out to some farms to work out in the field. And I kept asking for mules; "Where are the mules? I need to learn how to do mules." *(laughs)* Never ran into any mules, but I did a couple of donkeys, who have similar feet.

TM: What is the difference between a horse's foot and a mule's foot?

CD: Well, a mule's foot's more like a donkey's, which is more upright. A horse's foot is splayed out a little bit more, like a plate. And a mule's foot kind of goes upright, so they have a more concave feature to the inside of their foot. And they usually have a thicker wall. They usually have better feet, overall, than a—mules are, you know, hybrid vigor. So they end up getting the best qualities, generally, from the horse and the donkey.

TM: Okay. So you would take piece of steel bar, like a round rod, and start getting it red hot, and then beat the daylights out of it with a sledge hammer and bend it around into a U. How would you poke the holes through it for the nails?

CD: We had to make our own tools too. It was called a forepunch and a pritchel. And the forepunch was sort of a blunt—it still had a point, but it was blunt. And you would start the nail hole with that. And then the pritchel was the sharper one that you would actually put the hole through.

TM: So it would be red-hot when you did that?

CD: Mm-hmm.

TM: Okay. Don't mess up. *(CD laughs)* Did you get burned?

CD: Yeah, a time or two. But you need it really hot, and you kind of want it more white to yellow hot in order to have an easier time to bend things. So when it starts red, it's cooling off, and so you're having to hit harder. So that was a good learning experience.

TM: So was that the training that Dave could have given you but didn't?

CD: Yes. Yeah, 'cause there's a beautiful blacksmith's shop there at the Canyon. And all the mules needed to be shod every six weeks, six to eight weeks.

TM: So were the other packers doing it?

CD: Stanley—I think he taught Stanley. Stanley was doing it. I think it was just Dave and Stanley, at that time.

TM: Okay. And why was it important that a packer know this skill? Why didn't a farrier know this skill and the packers pack?

CD: Well, I mean, you find parks that will do that now, contract out the shoeing. But it's just easier if you have that skill, and you're out on the trail and you lose a shoe, or you're—you know, you're not having a contract person come in every six to eight weeks. You can just do it when it's needed to be done. And so it just ends up being part of your so-called down time when you're at the barn. And that's just...

TM: Yeah, it'd be part of your skills resume, is knowing how to keep your animals in shoes. Sounds like a good skill to know.

CD: It's interesting. It can be hard on you. I don't do it too much anymore.

TM: Well, there's a lot of things we don't do anymore, 'cause it's the 1980's we're talking about, after all. *(TM and CD laugh)*

CD: I know. And my guys now are barefoot, so they just needed a little trim here and there.

TM: Yeah, okay. Cool. So did they give you a certificate, a farrier's certificate?

CD: Yes. I did. I got a little diploma thing, yeah. I don't know where that is at the moment. So I came back to Grand Canyon, ready to go to work. And then I was going to be going to the blacksmith's shop whether Dave liked it or not, at this point. And I think that's when I broke my finger. So I had another two months of not getting under an animal with Dave.

But when I was able to—at horseshoeing school, basically you were only doing like two feet a day. So it would be two students on one animal. And so when I healed up and got to go back to shoeing, I went in, and Dave had me do like five animals. It wasn't the whole thing; it wasn't trimming and shoeing. I think he did the trim, and I did the shoe, but still, that was a lot.

TM: That's 20 feet. Yeah.

CD: Yeah, that's four feet per animal. *(laughs)*

TM: Yeah, four times five is twenty. I'm just looking at the math here, going, "Okay, well, I've got ten hours; I've got twenty feet. I've got to do two feet an hour." And that's moving right along.

CD: Yeah, he tried to kill me, I think. *(laughs)* So anyway, I bucked up and said, "Okay, see you tomorrow," and went home and died that night, and then came back the next day ready to do it again. I wasn't going to let him think I couldn't do it. So that was important to me.

TM: At one point he must have said, "Well, I guess that's that."

CD: Yeah. And then I remember Stanley and I being the blacksmith's shop, just the two of us. So he must have relinquished control.

TM: And was Stanley better about it?

CD: Oh yeah. Yeah, Stanley was always good to me, 'cause we did a lot of hauling dirt. At one point Tillman didn't come back, so then it was Stanley and I doing the dirt-hauling. And we actually spent a lot of time together. He's a great guy.

TM: Cool. Nice.

CD: So then we had another project—I think that was in '82—anyway, where we re-planked the Kaibab Suspension Bridge.

TM: Oh boy. So let's see; that suspension bridge is how long?

CD: Oh my. I don't know how long it is. I really don't know. I know it's up there, too, like 150 feet up or something.

TM: Yeah, and it's got—what sized planks—and wait a minute. There's some rubber on top of the planks, is that right?

CD: Well, we didn't have any. There might be now. And it seems to me we just planked over the old planks. But we had to drill—it was either creosoted or treated or something—but we had to climb over the railing. And there's like this angle iron lip underneath there, 'cause we had to put nuts on the bolts from underneath.

TM: Oh, so you couldn't just reach around, do that from the tread surface. You had to get on the outside of the railing and the barricade wall.

CD: Yeah, and actually we were laying down underneath the bridge.

TM: Were you on some sort of little harness and clipped in somewhere in case you sneezed or something and—

CD: Yeah, we were clipped in; the tools were clipped in.

TM: Okay, good.

CD: Yeah, so that was my first sort of climbing harness experience. And I know when Richard had started talking about doing this project I was like, "Oh, I want to be on that crew." And he goes, "I thought you wanted to haul dirt."

TM: *(laughs)* Haul dirt and put shoes on mules, and now you want to go out and work on the bridge.

CD: And I said, "Well, I want to do both." *(laughs)*

TM: Oh, cool. *(laughs)*

CD: So he kind of looked like he was angry at me, but the next thing I knew, I was on that crew. *(laughs)*

TM: Cool.

CD: Yeah, so that was fun.

TM: Did the planks come in by boat, or did you bring them down the trail by mule?

CD: No, they must have been flown in, 'cause I don't remember bringing them down by mule. I'm thinking they were flown.

TM: Did you all have to prep the planks, or did maintenance do that?

CD: I think we drilled them right then and there. And we had to countersink. Couldn't have anything sticking up, so I was going to have to countersink them, as well.

TM: So how many bolts hold a typical plank in?

CD: I don't know. It was probably every foot, 18 inches or so.

TM: Oh, so that's not just like two on either end.

CD: No, they wanted it down. And there was like—I don't know, there was maybe like four planks across; I forget.

TM: And how long were the bolts to get through your wood and the old wood?

CD: Right, 'cause I don't remember taking up the old stuff. So I'm not positive on that, but I don't remember taking that. So I don't know. A foot? And then it didn't matter if they were hanging out below; we just had to make sure there was nothing sticking up above.

TM: Right. Be careful when you crawl out of there, that you don't whack your head on those things. *(CD laughs)* Yeah.

CD: Yeah, so...

TM: Did you drop anything down into the river by mistake, or did that go alright?

CD: Oh, I'm sure I dropped something. *(laughs)* I mean, wrenches and stuff are all tied on, but I imagine that the bolts—there was a bag of them hanging over. You were on belay as well. Yeah, and Sue was on that project; I remember Sue was on that project.

TM: Cool. So that took what? A couple months, a month or so?

CD: I don't know. I don't think it took all that long once the planks were down there. 'Cause we were going to have to stop traffic. At one point, could stock cross the other bridge? I know it can't now.

TM: Boy, I don't know. I mean, it's all mesh, and they don't like that, right, looking through there?

CD: Yeah, no. It's all grated now. Definitely wouldn't have been the case. *(laughs)*

TM: Yeah. So it would make sense that you would stop traffic when you were working on it, but once—you would just gather up your tools and clear away, and the mules would take a step down in the middle of the walk as the old tread to the new tread, or a step up.

CD: Yeah, but we wouldn't have been able—hiking traffic could have come through, but definitely not mules while we were on the bridge. Everything would have had to come completely off the bridge for them to come through.

TM: Right. There's no room.

CD: So I don't remember how that worked. Yeah, they wouldn't have been able to—no stock would have been able to come on while we were on the bridge.

TM: Alright. Did you get into painting that thing at all, or was that to a different crew?

CD: No, I don't remember doing any painting. It was just the planks and the bolts.

TM: And so you'd stay in the bunkhouse for like a nine-day tour as you worked on that? Or would you go out every day?

CD: No, we'd stay at the bunkhouse. We did some helicoptering, but I think at that point they just swung the boards in.

TM: Okay. And then what would you use to drill? An electric drill, a battery-powered? Do you have a generator out there with a power cord?

CD: We might have had a generator. It was probably a gas-powered drill, I would think.

TM: Yeah, just trying to figure out how some of the tools involved would have worked out. Were any boats going by while you were working on that?

CD: Well, there must have been. I kind of don't remember. Everybody stops right there on the other side. And I knew we camped right above it. When we were on the river we could camp right above—

TM: Up at Cremation.

CD: —And then sort of row to Phantom for supply, and then row back up.

TM: Yeah, you can row across to Roy's Beach—or where Roy's Beach used to be before the sand all went away—and then walk down to Phantom, and then walk back and get your boat and go back over to Cremation on the other side. Okay, cool. Well, that's a fun project.

CD: Yeah, it was. And at some point I lived—did you know Linda Kanutsun ?

TM: No, but I know a Dave Kanutsun.

CD: No, I don't think so. Anyway, we became—after Sue left—she went back to Pennsylvania and got married—I became good friends with Linda. And we had this little place; it was out by the railroad tracks out in the woods of Tusayan. Coconino Siding, or something like that.

TM: Was that out by Eric Gueissaz's place?

CD: I don't know. It was just sort of out in the middle of nowhere. I loved it. *(laughs)*

TM: On the Rowe Well Road?

CD: Yeah, off the Rowe Well Road. I always called the Rah-Rah Road, 'cause I had a hard time with the R's and the W's. *(laughs)*

TM: Yeah. Sue Hovey and Eric Gueissaz had a place out there, an old, patented mining claim that had some cabins out there. Do those names ring a bell?

CD: No, not really. There was a gal; her name was Mindy—

TM: Carlsburg.

CD: And she had a couple of kids and her husband died in a—

TM: Helicopter crash. Carlsburger. Yeah, that's the place. Cool.

CD: Okay. We weren't at that place; we were a little further out. But I loved that place that Mindy lived in.

TM: So now you've got your own housing. And so you just drive into work for the day.

CD: Yeah. I'm still gone for the nine days or whatever. And I think we got out of there by wintertime, 'cause I didn't have the rig to get through the—

TM: Oh, the snow.

CD: And the mud. Yeah, I don't know where I went then.

TM: Okay. So, at one point you decided to leave Grand Canyon. How did that come about?

CD: Well, Richard had already left. And it was different after he left. They were kind of changing things up a little bit. And Pete was now in the office, and it was just—I don't know. It wasn't quite the same. And anyway, one day he calls me and says they hadn't had stock up here in ten years... Olympic, because the trail's foreman before him believed everybody should pack everything on their back. And he said he

was going to start the stock program back up, and for me to put in my application. So that's pretty much what I did. And he hired me.

TM: Cool. You know, before we head in that direction, in the 1980's around this time, I know that Curt Sauer had mentioned that Dick Marks—seems like something superintendents like to do is kind of change up the structure of things. And I guess the river crew lost their independence and became a district in the corridor, or in the backcountry, or something like that. And I wonder if there were some changes in trails as well?

CD: Well, I know they eventually went to—after I left, I heard they had started having a lot of accidents with people not really knowing how to ride, yet here they are riding and packing their own gear. So I think they switched it to there was your packers, and then there was your trail crew, which is kind of how it is up here. Your trail crew didn't ride. Your packers packed all your gear in and dropped you off, or bumped you up, or whatever need to happen.

TM: And that kind of makes sense, because packers know large animals, and trail crew people might not. So I'm confused about the accidents. Was that because the trail crew people were packing, and they didn't know large animals?

CD: I think so, yeah. Packing and riding... And the Canyon's not really—of course it isn't up here, either—a good place to have accidents. *(laughs)*

TM: Well, it is. You've got your animal, and its nature, and you've got the terrain. And then you've got the tourists just hiking on day hikes or backpacking in or out. And they don't know how to manage themselves around large animals. So that's a whole 'nother factor.

CD: Yes, for sure. But I think at the Canyon they have things on the bulletin board at the trailheads that tell people how to respond when you meet a mule train.

TM: Right. Did that always happen that way? *(laughs)*

CD: No, but I was not shy about telling them exactly what I wanted them to do.

TM: Go wait. Yeah.

CD: You know, just get off the trail and stand still and that sort of stuff.

TM: Yeah. Get over against the wall and don't move.

CD: That's right.

TM: Cool, okay. Well, I'm wondering if this would be a good place to put a comma here in our discussions. And then next time we would pick up going up to Olympic National Park, and how that worked, unless there's something else you'd like to put in about your time at Grand Canyon.

CD: I can't think of anything at the moment.

TM: Alright, well, with that, we'll go ahead and conclude Part 3 Oral History interview with Clare Donato. Today is Sunday, November 29, 2020. My name is Tom Martin. And Clare, thank you so very much.

CD: You're quite welcome.