

11/23 Aerial Photos L.G.

Side A

L - The title is "Collecting Photographs" or something like that. It's probably over there somewhere...

E - These are the air shots.

L - Yes. This is the great arroyo that leads down to the Canyon.

E - When did you first start photographing ^{from} the air?

How did that happen to come about?

L - Well, probably because I just wanted to see ^{what} how it looked ^{like} from the air.

E - Is that how you used to get over to the canyon? Or did you drive?

L - I've driven ~~there~~ a number of times, but I know I've made two flights over it.

E - Oh, I'll bet you've made more than two, because you have quite a few photographs. You've got it in summer and winter and flying down in the canyons.

L - Well, that's the point of what I'm trying to get put together in the book.

E - Well, this is one that you took in the wintertime.

L - Yes, definitely.

E - And this is the river that leads...

L - This is the big deep arroyo which is all full of snow here, but you see it leads right into the canyon. I have a color shot of this which is one we should use, really, because when you bring up the color of the canyon, why it makes a tremendous difference. I've got a framed print of that in the other room.

E - These are two more in color.

L - Well, this one shows this even better, in the upright I think it's better, because you get the depth of this more than ~~on~~ we get the other one. But of course, without the color, you lose the canyon.

E - That beautiful pink color.

L - Yes.

E - What is this one?

L - That looks like it was the Valle Grande. No, because there's the canyon. It was just another one as I was flying over, I guess. You know, I just stick them all together.

E - And this is all from that same winter trip.

L - Yes.

E - Who was the pilot when you flew over?

L - John McKeel ((?)).

E - Is he the one who took you over most of the time?

L - Yes.

E - And this is getting right up much closer to it.

L - Much closer to the canyon, yes.

E - This is the dummy that you put together some time ago. What was the whole idea? Did you want to show the approach to the canyon?

L - Yes, I wanted to get it from every possible angle for communication. Of course you see the terrific distance here because that's the Black Mesa. It had snow on it, but that's what that is. So there must be forty or fifty miles there.

E - This is coming at it, it look like, from a slightly different angle.

L - Well, that's what you do when you're flying.

E - It seems like less snow. It might even be a different trip.

L - It could have been a different trip.

E - Did you ever fly over there and land near the canyon, then take off again?

L - No, there wasn't an airstrip unless you went into Gallup.

E - So you would just leave from Santa Fe and fly over there?

L - Yes, that's all. It only takes a couple of hours, you know.

E - Oh really? What kind of a little plane were you flying in?

L - We were in a little Cessna. I remember Phil used to have to lean over and hold the window open for me to shoot out of.

E - It's a good thing you weren't dangling out the window.

L - (laughs) well, you wouldn't dangle very long. I did lose a...one time, it wasn't on that, I was doing something for Marjorie Lambert((?)) on Pa'ako, this ruin down here that's the old ruin of Cochiti, I think, and I my 4 x 5 camera and I pulled a slide out and I got it just a couple inches too near the window and I didn't have any slide left.

E - Did you do these with the Medallist?

L - Probably, yes. Well, there's Spider Rock. This is some of that new agricultural thing they're doing. Taking up trees and trying to get different growth into that area. It's much too dark a print.

E - Okay. That's where you switched into the mouth of the canyon, the approach, while looking down.

L - Well, I'm glad I've got these in here. I know I've got another print of this, but I've been looking for one of this. I didn't realize it was in this folder thing. Yes, there was a lot of water running down that day. You couldn't possibly have gotten up.

E - What do the Navajo do when there's a great deal of water running down the canyon?

L - Well, they either wait or ^{else} they know ways they can get across on horseback. They know where all the possible trails are. And now that's the first overlook. When you come up from the Thunderbird Lodge, that's the first place that you can look down.

E - Here's a lot of stuff from the rim. And here's a whole pile of black and whites that were taken from the air.

L - Oh mercy.

E - Dozens and dozens and dozens from the air and from the rim. I think this is an air shot, yes.

L - Long ago, I was over at the fair and it suddenly occurred to me that I could fly over the canyon.

E - A Navajo fair?

L - Yes, where was it? Gallup? Must have been somewhere like that. And I realized by air it would be just a short flight, you know. But this is an early one. It's underexposed, I'm sorry to say but I can still print it.

E - oh, sure. It looks like you were flying quite close down in the canyon that day.

L - Quite close. The canyon here must be five ^{or} six hundred feet deep and it's not the full shadow of that.

E - What is it about the air photographs that intrigue you? I know you like Bill Curren's things very much.

L - I just love to photograph from the air, that's all. I love to see the country from the air. It's so different.

L - It's wonderful. At that fair they were taking up some of the Navajo. They were barnstorming. So I decided to do a little barnstorming myself.

E - This is another winter shot from the air. The canyon does wind along...

L - Yes, it certainly does wind. And it's so precipitous, that's the chief characteristic ^{of it, different from} ~~just not like~~ any other canyon. You know the Grand Canyon terraces and this doesn't. It's just abrupt.

E - Do they know how the canyon was formed? It's hard to tell, looking at these air photographs.

L - It's probably all erosion.

E - From some large old river that used to flow through it?

L - Well, ^{I suppose} it started small and grew.

Spider Rock is one of these spires here.

E - oh yes, yes it is.

L - You know when you're up in an airplane and you're properly set to photograph adequately, why you just do a great many and choose out of it what you want. ...I don't know what other canyon there is that's so precipitous as De Chelly.

E - This is a colored one in the wintertime, again a little bit closer up.

L - Yes, and it shows it up much better of course.

You see how perfectly straight up and down that is? All the major formations are. ...and that's clear across the valley over beyond where you turn down from the highway and across that highway.

E - What's all this way beyond the canyon? Where does the canyon go?

L - Well, the canyon just goes down off into this. It gets shorter and shorter. It might be a couple of hundred feet here and it would be eighty feet, well I mean more than that, here. But I hope this does show the difference between the kind of canyon it is and well, I don't know any other canyon that is at all like it.

E - It's pretty abrupt and just drops right off.

L - Yes.

E - And all of the side canyons leading into it seem to do the same.

L - Yes.

E - This is an air shot.

L - Yes. That's from the satellite. Now let me see. Always have to get my bearings on this. I can usually spot Shiprock on here and then I get my directions right. It's too bad there were so many clouds this day.

E - On the Bernofsky ((spelling?)), programs, he opened that whole program with a section on De Chelly, didn't he?

L - Certainly did, because it was the one place people had lived for two thousand years...This is some part of it. It's funny. I should have marked which was top and bottom...Four Corners... These are some parts of the Canyon, I think. No, I can't find it, sorry.

E - It certainly looks strange from that height, doesn't it.

L - Yes, it certainly does.

E - These are little contacts of flying over the Canyon.

L - Oh yes.

E - Beautiful dramatic shadows and lights.

L - Yes, that one's worth printing.

You know, you work so fast from the air because you see ~~se~~ things so fast. That's where I should have had that little microphone that I have. I could have just talked into it as I was flying.

E - (chuckles) then you would have had one more thing to do.

L - At least it might have given me some sequence! though!

E - The films were numbered though, weren't they?

L - I suppose they were.

E - Yes, they're all numbered, so you could probably go back...

L - Yes, I expect I could. Yes.

E - This one at the top right was the one, I'll make a little red mark up there. "To Print". ...And that's Spider Rock again from the air.

L - Spider Rock. Sure is.

E - And I got a print while I was in New York of the four contacts that you'd done in color of the light moving across the whole canyon in front of Spider Rock, and over it and lighting up that little rock way off in the distance in the back.

L - Yes, I remember. I think I did those, though, from the rim and not the air. Because I remember waiting to get things lined up so there'd not be these things... No, this must be an air shot.

E - That must be an air shot, it's so high up.

L - I have one I haven't found. A close up, I think I must have done it from the rim. Sheep and things. An interesting pattern. I haven't come across it again yet but I think it will show up, somewhere. ...Of course, this doesn't mean much in black and white.

E - What is it about the black and white, and the color? I know Phil Schultz was saying he likes black and white and you've said consistently that you need the color to get the canyon.

L - Well, I think you do need to get the color of the canyon. Did I ever tell you the funny thing that happened coming down? We went one time...I was in the Schultz' four wheel drive car and he wanted to go the old road that he had known when he was a doctor over there, you know. He used to be a doctor over at the Indian Reservation. So we went that back way and that road brings you out right at the head of the canyon where you're seeing these things that are way at the head of the canyon, and there was a strange shaped rock one place and we stopped. He and Eric started to run up where this rock was and then Bingo -- there was a Navajo came around the corner. And they turned and came back so fast that it wasn't funny. So I never have known what the rock was...

E - I remember when we drove across the Painted Desert. We were going to the north rim of the canyon once. And it looked like we were out in the middle of nowhere. You couldn't see a hogan, you couldn't see anything. And all of a sudden across the road came a marvelous old Navajo man, very traditional. Just walked across, didn't even notice the car, went off into the other side of the road. You couldn't see where he was coming from and where he was going.

L - I know. That's like that first time when I took that long hike after gasoline. It looked like there wasn't anybody within fifty miles or more. But I found there was.

E - When you and Betsy ran out of gas?

L - Yes.

E - And you said you came back to find her... was she playing a card game or something?

L - She was playing a kind of gin rummy with the Navajos all sitting on a rug around her. That was her first interest in the people. One finally came along who spoke English and he told her all the news of the country. So that was what I found, and when we came up over this hill...I think it was an old Buick I had. And here was this car surrounded with Indians. I didn't know what I'd find when I got there. This was what really interested her and it was the next year that this association here ~~thxxxxxx~~ in Santa Fe gave her a job out there as a public health nurse.

E - Which association was that?

L - It was the Southwest Association on Indian Affairs. And they paid her salary and everything for 3 years, until the Depression hit and then they couldn't keep it going any longer.

E - Was that one of her first trips when you ran out of gas?

L - I think it was one of her first trips. We were off on a camping trip, a vacation trip, because every fall when she had a month vacation we explored so much of this country during that time. ...no, it wasn't a Buick either, it must have been one of the earliest Chevy station wagons. I had.

Side B

L - I think this is looking west as we came over this part of the country, and then picked up the canyon. We were coming from the east and flying west.

E - Is Spider Rock one of the first things you see when you're coming from down in the canyon?

L - No, because if you're up here further you don't see it.

E - It's not until you get to that bend?

L - Yes.

E - These look like some old prints that are too dark -- those R.C. things, but the snow really shows up.

L - What I was after here was this big arroyo that is what makes the canyon.

E - Where does the canyon start?

L - You've got me now.

E - Does it go up near Washington Pass, near the shrine, is that what you thought?

L - It could be.

E - You were never able to follow it up, from the air, up to Washington Pass?

L - No, I wanted to do that. I've always wanted to make another flight over. Dave, who knows the geography so well, says there's no question but what that is the direct drainage down the canyon. But I'd like to see for myself and I'd like to fly once more just to get up high enough to check on that and be sure.

E - I was surprised in looking at those transparencies of those lichens up near Washington Pass, how big they were. I thought they'd be small. But they're huge.

L - Oh, no, they're great big things.

E - And the Navajo must have known about them.

L - Of course they knew about them. You mean the ones in the rock?

E - So they have any name for them, or you call them the sun and moon?

L - Well, somebody had written on them. I don't know whether it was some Navajo kid who was learning English, but he had written "sun" and "moon" on each of those things. But I don't know who did it.

E - And that's up near what Dave says is the head of the canyon, where it comes from. Are there mountains up in Washington Pass?

L - Yes, you're right on top of them.

E - What are the mountains?

L - The Lukachuki Mountains, I guess.

E - Oh really, all the way over there.

L - Did I ever tell you the strange thing that...let me think now, get this straight... Dave had been up there when he was 17 years old with an old medicine man that he knew in Gallup. They lived there for awhile. His father was connected with the Santa Fe Railroad in some respect, and Dave had been up there one time, horseback, with this old medicine man. And we went over, this is just a few years ago, and Dave produced this photograph that he had, that he had done when he was 17 years old.

And it was this old medicine man with him. And I called one of my Navajo friends, ^{Herbert Blasford} and he took one look at it and said, "That was my grandfather."

E - How strange. Isn't it funny how things circle around?

L - Yes.

E - And so Herbert Blasford's grandfather was the medicine man. How had the medicine man taken Dave Jones up there in the first place?

L - I don't know. He just was up there on a horseback trip with him.

E - And he didn't tell Dave what it was?

L - The first time he tried to find it, ^{he was} ~~we were~~ awfully close to it and he remembered it as being right on the very rim of the Lukachuki Mountains but it wasn't. It was in about 500 yards or something like that. We missed it the first time -- didn't see it at all. The second time, there it was, sure as shooting. I've got those negatives, of course, they're not printed yet.

E - What did the... did you ever have a Navajo comment on those lichens at all?

L - No. They won't, you know. ^{they're so insular} I learned a long time ago to go around the back door, so to speak, and maybe get some information, maybe not.

L - And I learned the other thing to do is photograph the place ^{or mountains} and ask somebody ^{else} from away from ~~where~~ ^{it is} somewhere. That has yielded me more information than anything. Another way to approach it, but that's what you have to do.

E - Did Herbert Blasford comment at all about them when you told him? What did he say?

L - Yes he did. Well, he recognized the old man right away. Well, Herbert is too well Anglicized, so to speak, but he was very interested in it. Dave brought these up one time and I called Herbert and he came over.

E - But he didn't claim to know anything about the lichens?

L - No. He probably wouldn't. It takes you quite a little time to learn what to ask and when to ask it.

E - Yes, I guess does, doesn't it?

(laughter)

L - It surely does.

E - That's more of that same arroyo but from a distance.

L - Yes, but I've got a good color print of this.

E - And you prefer it in color.

L - Oh, yes, I think it has to be because you pick up all this snow on the ground and then suddenly all this color over here.

E - That looks like a different area altogether.

L - Well, it's just a different angle on it, because that's the same arroyo.

E - Oh, it is. Well, it certainly does look different.

L - Well, it can change just that fast from the air, you know.

E - And here's a very nice one of Spider Rock, again, and it makes these mountains in the distance seem so close.

L - Yes, it was a better day or something.

E - What are those mountains?

L - That's the Black Mesa. I was up at this end of the Black Mesa where they're just tearing it to pieces with these huge bulldozers.

E - Somebody said they were going to put more power plants in up there.

L - Probably will. But that's up further, you couldn't see it here.

E - That's very nice. And these are.... It looks like you were flying quite high.

L - Yes, these are higher. Well, I see a color one coming up. I'm sure that shows it up much better, what happens.

E - Yes, well the pink sets it off from the green on the top.

L - Yes. You've been over there, haven't you?

E - Yes, though I've not flown over there.

L - You remember where the Thunderbird Lodge is?

This was looking clear across that whole valley and there was snow on top of these mountains.

E - This looks quite dramatic, with the light and shade setting off everything.

L - Yes, that could be printed. Laura Gilpin never learned to document. It's awful.

E - Laura Gilpin was too busy.

(interruption by visitors...)

E - This one's very fine. We need to get it printed, don't we?

L - Yes, once we have a good print it'll be easier for me to tell exactly where it is, but that must be Spider Rock. (pause)

E - This is the Canyon, I guess, but it looks so shallow, and again, the walls aren't very steep down there. Would that be down near the mouth, do you think, where it's flowing out?

L - Well, this looks like De Chelly and this looks like Del Muerto. It could be at the junction.

E - Let's see what number I've given this... seven.

L - This looks like the junction again.

E - I could be wrong. See these two little things sticking up here? Do you suppose it's the same as that, but coming from a different area? It's hard to tell.

L - I would say this is Canyon De Chelly and Del Muerto going off this way.

E - So this again is the junction?

L - Yes, I would say so. I think this is Junction Rock right there... I think.

E - Well, let's mark it and see...

E - Who thought up the name Junction Rock? That's probably not a Navajo name, or is it?

L - No. I don't think it was. I wouldn't know. (pause)
I think this is what they call Speaking Rock, and the other rock is Standing Rock. It should be over in the shadows somewhere.

E - It's so hard for me to recognize because it looks so different from the floor than it does from the rim.

L - I know it does.

E - It's quite heavily forested, it looks like, up on the top.

L - Yes, some of it is.

(pause)

L - Oh, this is an early air shot I did long ago.

E - Was it on that first barnstorming trip or a different one?

L - A different one. It was the first time I ever did anything from the air.

E - When was that, roughly?

L - It must have been... Didn't I give you an approximate date of one from the air? The White House was in shadow, so you couldn't see it very well. I'd have to hunt up my negative on that.

E - Okay, we'll hunt up the negative. Would that have been in the fifties, in the forties?

L - It would have been in the forties.

E - That was before you'd started the project for the school, wasn't it?

L - Oh yes, long before.

E - So you'd really pretty much cooked up this project in your head a long, long time ago.

L - Yes.

E - When did you first get the idea for it?

L - I don't know...

E - (laughing) in your sleep sometime?

L - I wouldn't know.This is one of the first things I did. I know it was that time in Gallup we had that plane and flew over it.

E - Who went with you?

L - I don't think anybody was with me, except whoever flew the plane. Well, this gives a very false feeling of it, because this is simply reflections from the light ground. It's not snow. That's one of the very first things I did, I'm sure.

E - You know Bill Clift had that photograph of the Black Mesa and the light's reflecting off of it in the same way. Most people think that's it's snow, and it isn't. It's just bright light.

L - Yes.

E - Are those mountains over there in the distance? It looks like clouds...

L - Yes, it's mountains.

E - What mountains are those? They look quite large.

L - It would be the end of the Lukachukas, I guess. I don't know. My only hope on some of these is that my negative is properly identified -- on the negative envelope, you know.

E - There's Spider Rock. Is it from that same trip?

L - Yes, it's from an early trip.

E - When you photographed on the Rio Grande, did you photograph from the air too?

L - Yes, well I did a few, ^{but} not very many.

E - Photographing on the Rio Grande --- I know that beautiful photograph at the end of the river going out into the gulf -- did that give you an idea to photograph De Chelly from the air?

L - Oh, anything would give me that idea. (laughs)

E - It wasn't hard? (laughs)

L - This is an early one, certainly. Yes.

E - It would be interesting to compare the early ones to the late ones to see how the canyon has changed.

L - Yes. ...I think, isn't that the White House. Yes. So that would be an early, early air shot of it. Probably one of the first ones. If that's the White House and I presume it is.

E - It looks like that great huge wall that's near the White House with all the cottonwoods down there.

L - Well, all the cottonwoods are gone. The Park Service finally put those in simply to keep from too much erosion there.

E - Well, it does look like that wall there.

L - I think it does too. But let's check on the negative on that because that would have the date on it, I'm sure.

...well, this shows how much erosion had already taken place before they put in the trees.

E - Who put in those trees?

L - Park Service. It's a national monument, you see.

E - But don't the Navajo serve as the park guides?

L - They may now, but they didn't then, I don't think.

E - That looks like Spider Rock.

L - Well, that's certainly the top of Spider Rock.

I'm sure that's Spider Rock. That's where the canyon makes a big turn.

E - Who gave Spider Rock the name Spider Rock?

L - It was a Navajo legend about the children being told that if they don't behave, why, Spider Woman would come down from the top and take them up and leave them there.

E - Oh, so the Spider Rock is the home of Spider Woman. Isn't she one of the major figures in Navajo mythology?

L - Yes, I think she is.

E - I wonder if that has any significance in relation to the canyon, because it certainly is an outstanding place.

L - Yes it is.

E - It would be a little tricky getting down from there, wouldn't it?

L - Yes, it would be.

E - This says "Looking down the canyon from the upper end."

L - Well, that i'm pretty sure is Speaking Rock right there. So there's Speaking Rock and Spider Rock isn't in the picture, it's just out of it.

(pause, picks up paper and rattles it) That must be useless information... (chuckles)

E - It's a Laura Gilpin document.

(laughter)

L - Oh, dear. (laughter)

E - Well, you weren't interested in being a secretary, you were interested in being a photographer.

(pause)

E - Those large mountains off in the distance, what are they called?

L - Black Mesa, they call it. Clear across the valley.

E - What are the four sacred Navajo Mountains? I don't know them.

L - Mount Blanca is the east and Mt. Taylor is the south -- that's the turquoise. Turquoise is related to Mt. Taylor. East was the white. Coral for the west. A blackstone of some kind is the north mountains, which is the Hesperus ((??)). You see them from Mesa Verde very well looking north and you see them other places, too.

E - Can you see them from De Chelly --- all the mountains?

L - If you were up high enough you could.

(pause)

L - Well, I don't think that tells too much. I don't think that title is a good enough title.

E - What would you call it?

L - I don't know now.

E - This is called Junction Rock...

L - I want to fly over that again someday and get some details of that, because I have heard since, some Navajo said that there are either some ruins or some fortifications or something up on top.

E - Up on top? How on earth would they get up there?

L - Well, probably footholds around the back, at the time of the Kit Carson business. But I'd like to fly over it again and do just a close detail of it.

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