



## Insider's Look at Grand Canyon

### Webisode #19 – Interview with artist Peter Nisbet Transcript

**Ranger Patrick Gamman:** I'm here with artist Peter Nisbet on Insider's Look at Grand Canyon. And I am sitting right here on the edge of the canyon just a little bit east of Yaki Point. Peter, welcome to the show.

**Peter Nisbet:** Hey, I am delighted to be here. Thanks for inviting me.

**Patrick:** It's so great to be out here with you, and hearing the ravens, and watching the canyon. Peter you have been coming out to the Grand Canyon, painting here on the canyon edge, painting this landscape. When did you start coming out to the Grand Canyon to paint?

**Peter:** I guess I was first out here probably around 1984-85 when I first came here. Actually, I first came here when I was in the U.S. Navy out of San Diego. I drove up here and that was in 1970. But after my time in the Naval Service and a hitch as a commercial illustrator and designer in Washington D.C. I moved out here for good and began my painting career. So I have actually physically been painting this landscape for 25 or 30 years.

**Patrick:** What is your medium, what do you paint in?

**Peter:** I paint only in oils and my canvases are 9 by 12 inch, that are pre-prepared in the studio and I have got a sealed box that keeps dust, and particles, and bugs out. I carry those things out here in a day pack, weighs about maybe 25 pounds.

**Patrick:** Peter, you have been coming out here for over 25 years to paint. What is it about Grand Canyon that brings you back time and time again here?

**Peter:** Well, without question this is the greatest landscape on Earth for painters. A landscape painter faces more challenges here than anywhere else on the planet. You've got light moving quickly, you've got forms that are incredibly complex, you've got an array of colors that are beyond description, you've got a time issue of the sun clocking overhead. You have to finish these paintings in two hours or you are just painting a moving shadow.

**Patrick:** Peter, that sounds really challenging, trying to catch all those colors with all the moving light, even the clouds that we are looking at right they are moving quickly and that can change a lot of stuff. But in a quarter century of coming here, being inspired by this canyon, you're right here on the edge and I bet you have seen a lot of different seasons. A lot of folks don't realize the rim of the canyon is at 7,000 feet and that we get real different seasons here. The fall will start up here at the rim in about a month, and then the colors of the deciduous trees we have, it will keep going down the canyon until, at the very bottom, and it will be late November or December when the leaves change on the Cottonwoods down there. So up here we also get some real snow storms. Have you ever painted in the winter time? Have you ever been caught in some sort of really terrible weather, and why would you actually still go out in that?

**Peter:** Well you know, since you asked, I do have a good story about the snow storms here. I was here in January and I was working the winter storms. The winter storms here are very different than the summer storms. They have different character, the clouds have a different light, it is a different kind of color. And even though it is uncomfortable temperature wise, and wind wise, and storm wise there are some special effects that you can find that is worth trying for. The one story that I do remember that happened about eight years ago, I came out here in the middle of a snow storm. The procedure is normally is to scout out what's moving and try to position yourself somewhere around the canyon so you can get it advancing upon you. You can get really good views that way. So, I knew something was happening here at Yaki point. There was no shuttle service coming out here and there was about eight inches of snow on the ground. It is a nice long mile walk, from the main road out here. So I started walking and as I was half way it started (the storm) set in on me. It was a total whiteout. I was really uncomfortable. I had my pack on my back and I made it to the point. I worked my way east a quarter of a mile and found a lee where I could hide out until the blizzard passed. Because what I was waiting for was a "light event" and what I mean by that is; a moment when the clouds open like a grand story and the canyon is revealed in the most dramatic of possible ways. Because the air is clean, it has been cleansed. the ground is saturated. And the colors that are ripping through. clear. glassy. air up to your

your eyes are absolutely pure. So you get to see the canyon in its richest color. So I worked a field sketch, did some photos, and at the end of that experience I was able to do a sixty inch painting that wound up in the Tucson Museum of Art. Hanging next to Thomas Moran, Albert Bearstad, and Ansil Adams. Not that I am on that level, but it was a delight to have a piece from Yaki point hanging with those old guys.

**Patrick:** Peter you sound inspired by the canyon, about the history of artist coming here, and I think a quarter of a century coming back again and again to paint here is a testament to how much you love this place, how much you are inspired by it. Thank you so much for being on Insider's Look at the Grand Canyon. I hope to see you on the rim here, year after year, season after season, being inspired by the canyon.

**Peter:** Thank you, may it be so. I love this place with all my heart. It is the greatest place on Earth and I am never happier then when I am here.