



Insider's Look at Grand Canyon

Webisode #27 – Another visit with Captain Hance by Ranger Ron Brown Transcript

Ranger Patrick Gamman: Welcome to yet another Webisode of Insider's Look at Grand Canyon. I'm here at the rim, just enjoying these great views and who came out of the wood but Captain John Hance. He's here with me again today. Remember from the first part of the Captain John Hance series that he was the first settler at the Grand Canyon. In 1886, Captain Hance placed an advertisement in the Flagstaff paper offering to show people the canyon. Well, since you've come out of the woods Captain Hance, can you tell us what the advertisement said?

Captain John Hance (Ranger Ron Brown): Being thoroughly conversant with all of the trails leading into the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, I am prepared to conduct parties there and to at any time. I have a fine spring of water near my house on the rim of the canyon and I can furnish accommodations for tourists and their animals.

Patrick: You know, Captain Hance soon began providing guests with food and lodging at his cabin and guiding them with mules and using horses. Is that true, Captain Hance?

Captain Hance: That is true. But I soon discovered that the real riches lay in entertaining the tourists.

Patrick: Well, you know, those first tourists must have wondered how you managed living all the way out here. Can you tell us what those early days were like?

Captain Hance: Oh, when I first arrived at the Grand Canyon, I didn't know nothin' about this place. And, the one thing that really surprised me the most was, they have winter at the Grand Canyon. And I was here, I had built myself a nice little cabin. I was enjoying living here. There wasn't a lot to eat. You could hunt a little bit. Well, when I first came out here, there was lots of things I didn't know. I mean, I knew how to build myself a cabin and I built myself a nice little cabin out here, but the one thing I didn't realize was that Grand Canyon has winter. I thought it was Arizona. I didn't know it got so cold here. And I realized that there was clouds a-comin' in and I didn't think too much about it. There weren't a lot to eat. I was doin' a little huntin' now and again. Clouds coming in a little bit more and next thing I know was it started to snow. And as soon as it started to snow I thought I better high-tail it outta here. So I grabbed me a willow branch and I twisted it all together and I made myself a nice pair of snowshoes. And I strapped on my willow snowshoes and I decided I was gonna head myself down to Flagstaff. You see, I knew where Flagstaff was (undecipherable)...brung me here right past it on the way. So I knew where Flagstaff was. So I decided I'm gonna walk on down there. So I started walkin'. But, boy, the snow started comin'. And the snow started getting' thicker and harder and faster and I kept walkin' on my willow snowshoes, but the snow kept a-comin' and pretty soon, I had ice a-growin' in my beard. And it was getting' harder and harder to walk. I kept trudgin' and I kept pushin'. It kept blowin' in my face. And suddenly, I realized I weren't gonna make it. So I decided I better turn around and try to make it back to the safety of my little cabin in the woods. So I turned around and got to the clearin' where I thought my cabin should be and no cabin. And I thought, "Oh my goodness! Somebody done stole my cabin!" And I couldn't find it...a little hole in the ground. And I looked at that little hole and there was smoke comin' outta that hole. And I looked over there and I realized...I'd never seen snow before...and I realized that

that was the chimney on my cabin. That snow had got so deep it had buried the whole darn thing and the only thing was left was the top of the chimney. So, I got over there and I dug down and I found myself a window and I dug through the snow and slinned on down in through the window. Layin' in there cold and wet and tired and hungry. I started hearin' a growlin' and I realized that growlin' was my stomach. And I started lookin' for food. So I walked over and I looked underneath the bedstead a little bit and no food. And I looked over at the little shelves that I had built on the wall and no food. And there weren't no food at all. I was really glad there was a little bit of fire, at least I was warm. But, I couldn't find no food. And suddenly, I looked up and way over there underneath one little corner of a cabinet, I found one jar of molasses. Oooh! I love molasses. Sweet, sticky molasses. But it was wainter and that molasses kinda stuck in there, so I commenced tryin' to pour some of that molasses down in a skillet. And it was slow but it got down in there and I let it stir and simmer a little bit and I thought, well now, that looks kinda runny. It needs something. So I looked around and over there in another corner on a shelf I found one bar of Babbitt's best soap. Rose-scented. Oh! It smelled so wonderful all wrapped in that pretty paper and I thought that smells really good. I wonder how that'd taste with molasses? And so I took my trusty sheath knife and I started carvin' some of that soap and let that stir and simmer on the stove for a while. I thought it looks kinda runny. That's kinda terrible. I need somethin'. And I looked around and there in the corner...there I found somethin' special. I found one...old...boot. And I got to thinkin', now boot and leather is made outta cow...that's BEEF! And so I started carvin' some of that old boot down into the skillet with the molasses and the soap and I let it stir and simmer and stir and simmer and when it cooked up into a nice, thick pasty mass, I took my wooden spoon and scooped it down there in that skillet and I...mmm...Aaaah! That was nasty. (*coughs*). Aaahh! That tasted terrible. But if you're hungry, you'll eat. So I ate it. Next day I woke up- still snowin'. So I took some more of that molasses and I poured it down in the skillet and some more of that beautiful rose-scented Babbitt's best soap. Oooh! Smelled so wonderful. So I carved some of that down into the skillet and I had to carve the little eyelet-thingies outta the boot, you know, with the knife but I put some more of the boot down there in the skillet and I let it stir and simmer and stir and simmer and this time I was thinkin' and when I got my wooden spoon, I held my nose. I held my nose and aaah! That's terrible stuff! But if you're hungry, you will eat. The next day, I woke up- still snowin'. I scraped the last little dribble of that molasses down there into that skillet and I unwrapped the last of the paper and scraped the last little tiny bit of that soap down there into that skillet, down to the sole of that old, nasty boot. Do you have any idea where a mule skinner's boot has been?! And I put it down in there and I let it stir and simmer and stir and simmer and I picked it up and it was crunchy this time. Aaahh! And I ate it. Ooohh! That was nasty. Fortunately, I woke up the next day and the sun had come out and put a nice crust of ice on top of the snow and so I strapped on them willow snowshoes and I high-tailed it down to Flagstaff, I did. I made it. I was alive! But, I'm here to tell you, and I expect you'll believe it's true, livin' like that for them three days has just plum ruined the taste of soap ever since! I'm never eatin' it again. Won't touch the stuff.