

ORAL HISTORY
2017-01-04

Evelyn Meyer
12/4/2009
Skagway, AK
Skagway Oral History Project

- **Evelyn:** Longtime Skagway employee- 1989 to present. Born in Wyoming, moved to Montana. Moved to Sitka Alaska in 1970, her husband Edward was a teacher. They then moved to Skagway, and rode the Wickersham Ferry. She remembers the Jones Act being enforced. The town was much different then- the buildings were not fixed up and it was very old fashioned, "western type" town.
- **Dramatic Changes:** The number of stores is one of the most dramatic changes. In the 1970's there was Kirmse's, Richters, a Furrier, Dedman's, Kellar's. There were only two ships that came in to port per summer. Skagway is over-run by tourist ships now.
- **NPS building dedication:** It was a beautiful sunny day- there was the high school band and dignitaries present. The dedication took several years to occur.
- **Work history:** Working for the NPS is interesting and fun. Evelyn has held 4 jobs with the NPS. She worked at a bank before the NPS, and applied for a job as a procurement clerk with the NPS. She intended to only stay for about 5 years, but has been there for over 20.
- **NPS purpose in Skagway:** Fix up and renovate Skagway. Re-vamping of town buildings and nice making. They work with the school on some projects. Evelyn's daughter is a teacher at Skagway school. The NPS is a good element in town. It provides good work. When the railroad shut down, a lot of building crews were local men. Some changes in the Park also occurred; women started working traditionally male oriented jobs, such as on the trail crews.
- **Major changes in Skagway:** The closing of the railroad in 1982. The school has shrunk in student population to about 100. People tend to leave for the winter. In the summer Skagway is packed with people, but in the winter there are only about 800 locals in town. The Park has grown.
- **The NPS presence in Skagway:** Many people did not want the park, they feared the government would be too strong in their town. Due to the turnovers of people working for the Park, there were some negative sentiments toward some of the superintendents. No protests or anything occurred when the Park came, but people voiced their opinions at the council meetings. The Park was originally run from Glacier Bay by Scott Ohm and Clay Alderson. The acting superintendents have been female. Evelyn doesn't feel like a "Parky." People retire from the NPS and usually stay in Skagway, which is nice.
- **Living in Skagway:** Living here takes a lot of gumption- people have to really appreciate a small town. In the 1970's, for fun, the school put on plays, had a drill team and a band, there were sewing organizations and meetings. Cable TV came in the late 1970's. There were potlucks, house visits, parties- "Rolling dinners," the Skagway Fine Arts Council, and the Rec Center.
- **Cliques in Skagway:** There were the railroaders from Vermont, there were the engineers and office people, the school people. The store owners, NPS people. They all got (get) along very well, some of the groups still exist today.
- **Evelyn's work history:** Evelyn didn't have a degree, worked at the Sitka Public School junior high. A half day in the superintendent's office, the other half in the library. She then moved to the Mt. Edgecumbe library. They moved to Haines, and she worked on the library board, library, and substitute taught. In Juneau she worked for the GSA with the Skagway superintendent. She worked with libraries from 1970-1984. The Skagway library was a small one, and they eventually added on. They received money to buy books and magazines, and by the time Evelyn left the library, it had 8000 books. Evelyn also served as the chair of the Library

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Board, and chairperson of the Museum Board where she helped accession materials. Evelyn loves books, reading and the school atmosphere of kids. She followed education.

- **Why is Skagway so special?** Evelyn can't imagine living anywhere else. It is home, she says. She had a chance to leave, but didn't. There was a also a sense of security for her, when Ed was away working on the North Slope.