

ORAL HISTORY
2017-01-09

Si Dennis
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Skagway, AK
Skagway Oral History Project

- **Si Dennis:** Si was born in Skagway in 1948, and grew up there. His father worked for the White Pass Railroad, and as a longshoreman until he retired in 1965. His father was born in Haines. Si attended the Catholic Mission School, and when it closed he attended public school. As a child, he and his parents would climb the mountains and hunt goats, and hunted harbor seals as well. In 1958 and 1959 he gill netted in Haines for sockeye salmon and pinks, and in the fall, dog salmon and chum salmon. Commercial fishing in Southeast has weakened since the 1950's. His 5 uncles raised him as tradition for Tlingit people went. They taught him the Indian way of doing things, speaking, taking care of himself.
- **Working for the NPS:** Si has worked for the National Park Service in Skagway since 1982. He started as a carpenter helper renovating the administration and visitors center building for three years, then he moved on to building maintenance and custodian of the the buildings. He is now currently a maintenance mechanic and has been for around 10-12 years. The buildings are very important historically because the preservation of the buildings is like re-creating history. The City Museum maintains the building records. The outside colors of the buildings are kept true to history and Karl Guerke does a lot of work with that. The interior of the buildings are also kept as true to history as possible. The Park Service acquires new buildings and the "higher up" people decide which buildings to purchase and renovate. They recently acquired the Soapy Smith buildings. Si has a personal liking of the administration and visitors center, because it is where he first learned carpentry and it was a fun challenge. As a maintenance mechanic, his job is to take care of the park vehicles and fulfill work orders- his job is different every day.
- **Working as a longshoreman:** From 1970-82 Si worked as a longshoreman at the ore terminal. He started out as a worker on the Belt, then as a front end loader on the dock wharf with the Frank H. Brown barge which was used to haul freight to load on the White Pass trains. In high school he worked on the section crew doing maintenance up to Glacier, and maintained rail section 3 from Clifton to Inspiration Point. When the White Pass RR shut down in 1982 many of the men moved to working for the Park Service.