

RECORDED INTERVIEW OF BECKY SALEEBY

CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER

IN BOZEMAN, MONTANA

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ORAL HISTORY 2017-01-101

KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
TRANSCRIBED BY RUTH SENSENIG

[00:00:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Today is May 4, 2019. This is Karen Brewster, and I'm here with Becky Saleeby in her lovely home in Bozeman, Montana, having recently moved from Anchorage. Uh, and this is an interview for the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Oral History Project. Becky, thank you for letting me come visit.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: And get to know you a little bit and your husband, Bruce. Um, so partially why we're interviewing you is because of your great book, "Beneath the Surface: Thirty Years of Historical Archeology in Skagway, Alaska." Um, but before we get to that, maybe tell me a little bit about yourself and your background. I know you're an archeologist, and you did work for the Park Service in Alaska, correct?

BECKY SALEEBY: That's correct.

[00:00:51]KAREN BREWSTER: So what's your background?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, I think most of my career, I did work for the Park Service. I worked for the Park Service probably a little bit over twenty years. But I came to Alaska in 1983 after getting my, um, my grad -- two graduate degrees from the University of Oregon. And it was -- the first research I'd ever done or any -- the actually fieldwork I'd done in Alaska was, I believe it was in '76, and it was an archeological project on Paxson Lake.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: And I was a young graduate student, and I had never done archeology, and I spent the whole summer there. And I literally fell in love with Alaska, and I knew I had to return. So um, I went back to Oregon, and I finished my PhD. And then, literally, the day that I turned it in to the graduate school, I went back to my house. And I was with a friend. A friend of mine was staying with me, and she told me about a job at the University of Alaska Museum. I said, "Ok. I guess I better apply." So I applied, and I got the job, and I finally got to go back to Alaska. And I started working for the University of Alaska Museum on the Susitna project, where I met my husband, Bruce Ream. And we -- we've lived in Alaska, well, I lived in Alaska, for thirty-six years, and Bruce a little bit longer.

[00:02:19]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And your educational background, your degrees are in archeology?

BECKY SALEEBY: In anthropology.

KAREN BREWSTER: Anthropology.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. Three degrees in anthropology.

BECKY SALEEBY

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KAREN BREWSTER: And all -- your undergraduate's from the University of Oregon?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, my undergraduate's from the University of California Santa Barbara.

[00:02:33]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And where did you grow up?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, I was born in Beirut, Lebanon, because my dad was Lebanese, but our family moved to St. Louis when I was just a baby, and I never learned Arabic. I don't speak Arabic. So I grew up in St. Louis for the first twelve years, and then my family moved to California, so I went to high school and college in California. And then, then when it was time for graduate school, um, I had a real hard time getting in because I was a bad undergraduate student. But anyway, I got better as I went along. And then, I finally, after many tries, many, many tries to get in graduate school -- then I think it was pretty hard to get in. Um, I got accepted at University of Oregon. So I spent eight years there.

[00:03:20]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And why did you decide to do archeology?

BECKY SALEEBY: Actually, that's a good question. I started out doing physical anthropology. And I actually took my PhD exams in physical anthropology. And I was interested in genetics. I was interested in, you know, paleoanthropology. I was very, very interested in osteology. And I had wanted to do a dissertation on some kind of genetic research, actually osteo -- craniological research in Alaska. And as I was doing the proposals for it, I realized that I probably wasn't going to be able to -- maybe not even get the grant, but maybe not even get a job. And right at -- right then, I had a friend who had a very large collection of animal bones. Zooarcheological remains from the Columbia River. And he kept wanting me to come in -- and he had done his dissertation on the, um, on the artifacts, and he wanted me to do them on the bones. He wanted me to do -- continue to work. And I'm realizing, if I actually did this on a volunteer basis, it would probably take me fifty years. And I thought it was about time I changed from physical to -- to archeology, so I applied the knowledge I had of human osteology, and I learned -- I sort of -- I guess I sort of taught myself zooarcheology. Yeah. Was that your question?

[00:04:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, why archeology? What was interesting about it to you?

BECKY SALEEBY: It was the bones. I started out with the bones, and I had done fieldwork, and I absolutely loved the fieldwork.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: So it was the idea -- and then the possibility of actually getting a job was, you know, I was getting near the end. Not near the end, but like halfway through my graduate degree, and I thought, "ok, I better just change." So um, I -- one day I just said, "Ok, I'm going to be an archeologist now." And I remember, I was at that museum, which is the museum at the University of Oregon campus, and the director at the time was Dr. Don Dumond.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: And he and my advisor, Mel Aikens, came in. And I'm sorting my bones, and they came in and they said, "Um, so you think you're an archeologist?" And it was like, "Ah! Oh no! I'm a fake." They said, "We don't think so. You have to take this class, this class, this class." And I said -- it was at the beginning of the fall semester, and I said, "Whatever it is." And I literally ran out of the museum. I went to the registrar. I signed up for all the classes they wanted me to do. So that's how I became an archeologist.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And what was your PhD on?

BECKY SALEEBY: It was on the lower Columbia River. It was the prehistoric ethnohistory and settlement patterns of the lower Columbia River. And it was based on my friend, Rick

Pettigrew's, collections that he had made. And like I said, he did the artifacts, and I did the bones.

[00:06:21]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And so, when you came to the University of Alaska Museum and that Susitna project, what did you do for them?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, well, it was a big -- it was a huge project. And it started in the early '80's, and this was like -- the year I came was prob -- it was '83, so it was maybe the second or third year. And um, I was one of the supervisors, which was kind of funny because I really wasn't that well -- I didn't know Alaskan archeology as I should -- as I should've at that point because I had been doing, um -- Oregon archeology.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Anyway, um, we -- there -- we had various crews, and we just did huge surveys over vast portions of the -- the Middle Susitna River. And so, I would go out with the crews, and, you know, dig and find sites. And we did a little bit of excavation. Not really excavation. Reconnaissance -- reconnaissance survey and then a little bit of testing is the -- are the proper words.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: But really, I found out then that what I -- what I do best, and they certainly found out for me is that, um, fieldwork is not my forte. I'm a researcher and a writer, so I helped do the research and the writing, and that's what I sort of have been doing ever since.

KAREN BREWSTER: So you helped write up the reports and things?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

[00:07:45]KAREN BREWSTER: And for people who don't know, the Susitna project, it was a big dam proposal.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so, they were doing kind of like archeological clearance, almost.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. On a --

KAREN BREWSTER: Baseline research.

BECKY SALEEBY: Exactly. Huge areas. And we got dropped off by helicopter, and we would just survey all day long. And it was wonderful. I loved being out there, and then I loved it even more when I got to go into the lab and look at the bones and, um, and do the research, 'cause that's what I consider myself to be, a researcher and a writer.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And that was a period that, thanks to the Susitna project, there was a lot of funding for all kinds of projects.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, well, that funding went on for a number of years, and then it finally dried up.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And, of course, the dam never got built. But uh, recently, it's something that they've talked about again, and I have to -- I have to always kinda laugh when I think about it, but as far as I know, it's not -- nothing is happening.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: In terms of the dam being built.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But it was fortunate that so much archeological surveying was able to be accomplished.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes, right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because of that.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. [00:08:50]And I think there was lots of criticism about the -- uh, Jim Dixon and -- and his research methods and all that, but I found them to be just fine. And I think that he was very thorough, and I think that lots of -- I mean, there was so much that was learned, and so much really baseline information that -- that -- that was not known about the archeology of that -- in central Alaska. I mean, could not be more positive about it in my own mind.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Now was Jim the lead archeologist on the project?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. Dr. E. James Dixon.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: He was a curator of archeology at the University of Alaska Museum, and his associate was George Smith.

[00:09:35]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. So what happened after the Susitna project ended?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, for the museum or for me personally?

KAREN BREWSTER: For you personally.

BECKY SALEEBY: Ok, so Bruce and I were both working on that, my husband, Bruce Ream. He was -- he actually was writing his master's thesis at the same time as the fieldwork was going on. So we were -- we were research associates for the museum until probably about '86 or so, and then there was no more funding. We got one -- we got one grant from the Forest Service to do a survey of Prince of Wales Island, so um, Bruce and myself and his daughter, Kerry, who was only four at the time, went down, and we surveyed the northern part of -- part of the northern part of Prince of Wales Island, a little -- little area, um, for the Forest Service. And then after that, there was no more money, so Bruce got a job in Anchorage with Hart Crowser doing -- oh, it was some kind of a big survey, and I'm sorry, I'm going to forget what it was for.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's ok.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. So we moved to Anchorage.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[00:10:43]BECKY SALEEBY: And then I got a job with the Park Service in '88, 1988. And I worked as a museum technician.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, so you didn't do archeology?

BECKY SALEEBY: No. I was a museum technician, and, actually, it was a good job because I was pregnant with our older son, Allen, so I didn't want to go out and do fieldwork. So it was fun. I just sat there, and I learned how to, you know, do the databases, and I learned about herbarium collections, and it was all good.

[00:11:11]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And then how did you get involved with this Skagway project?

BECKY SALEEBY: So um, I was a seasonal with the Park Service for a long time, very long time. I started out as a museum technician, and then I stayed home after Allen was born. And then Gene Griffin, who was one of the archeologists there, knowing that I did research and writing, asked me to write the report for the Cultural Resource Mining Inventory and Monitoring program, CRMIM. So that was a very big project also. And what that was was, um, there was -- there were mining claims within the national parks, and there was an uproar about that. So we had to -- crews had to go out there and actually survey and find the sites and evaluate them for the National Register. So I was not on those crews. They were -- they were doing it -- they were doing it the summer that, like, Allen was born and the summer before. But it was an incredible amount of data, lots and lots of data. File cabinets full. And they needed a big report. So Gene

Griffin hired me to write the report. So I started doing that. It was on a seasonal basis, or maybe it was a term position. I'm not quite sure. So I did that. Actually, I did that for eleven years. It took me eleven years to do that report.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. Because there were over 350 sites in nine parks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

BECKY SALEEBY: And it was about, like, the entire, you know, scope of what the mining was about in the National Parks in Alaska.

[00:12:52]KAREN BREWSTER: And so, these are historic mining sites --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- not currently active?

BECKY SALEEBY: Some of them were. They were -- they were historic sites, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: Some of them might be peripherally still involved in mining. So I did that, and then I started doing other things for the Park Service. My background was in zooarcheology, so I'd do little projects like that. And then, um, I finally did get hired to take Susan Martin's position to do archeological education, and that was through the National Register program. So I got involved in National Historic Landmarks. [00:13:28]But specifically the Skagway report, I'm telling you what I was really hired to do.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: But what I ended up doing a lot of is when people would come and go, like they would have a, you know, like a summer internship, and they would have a project, and it wouldn't get finished because they didn't have enough time, or whatever the circumstances are, they'd give it to me. And they'd say -- my boss was Ted Birkedal, who was a wonderful boss. And he said, "Yeah, just" -- and also I had Gary Summers, who was also the -- the um, the senior archeologist at the Alaska Regional Office for a while. So they would give me these reports that were half finished and say, "Here, finish 'em." And I really loved that because there was lots of stuff already there, but I would be -- I was given the freedom to kind of change the -- the path that the first researchers were going. You know, I could just say, "Well, this is -- this is all really good, but let's -- let's change this." And they'd say, "Sure, whatever you want to do." I was given freedom to do it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: And I loved that.

[00:14:33]KAREN BREWSTER: And were these -- who was the audience for these reports?

BECKY SALEEBY: They were na -- they were just Park Service reports, you know, just like the Skagway report.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: It was just like an administrative report or um, some -- one of the ones that I really enjoyed was doing the Elmendorf Homestead report.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: And I'm not sure where that money came from. I really can't remember. But the state was involved in doing the actual fieldwork, and then somebody -- there was, like, a graduate student who had to leave at the end of the summer who started out the homestead report, but then she had to go back to go to school or whatever she did. And here was, again, all

this data, like tons of data, and it needed to be made into a report. So that's how I got involved in the Skagway report.

[00:15:19]KAREN BREWSTER: And those -- But, I was saying, those reports are written for a public audience?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. They're written for the public. You know, the Park Service reports, are -- they are -- they are published for the public. They're published for other researchers. But they are for the public, and you can get them for free.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then, they also, in some cases maybe Park Service employees is an audience, as well?

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Yeah, there's a -- there's a diverse audience, but it's basically, you know, for the public.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. 'Cause I was thinking, if you have all this data, you know, how do you decide what direction to present it in? As you said, sometimes you would change the direction from what the researcher has done.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, well, I think that you have to -- you certainly have to think about your audience. You have to think about why there's money to do this in the first place. And you have to try to satisfy those various, you know, goals.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: So, yeah. That's -- that's what I did.

[00:16:20]KAREN BREWSTER: It sounds challenging.

BECKY SALEEBY: I think that's why I liked it because it was never easy. It was never easy, and I liked that. I liked to go to work and really, um, you know, think about it and have the opportunity to be a little bit creative, but, certainly, um, draw into what I enjoy a lot, is just doing the research and asking a question and -- and yeah. I think when I look at -- I look at the cover of the Skagway report, I see some interesting artifacts, historic artifacts. And I remember having -- and really, I didn't see these artifacts. Most of the time, I just had the pictures.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

BECKY SALEEBY: And I'd think, I wonder -- oh, I see it right here. I see this blue and white ceramic plate.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Like, what about this? What do we know about this? And having, really, the freedom to spend a lot of time figuring it out.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And that was like, great. You go to work, and you get to figure out this great puzzle.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yep.

BECKY SALEEBY: It's just a wonderful thing.

[00:17:19]KAREN BREWSTER: And I don't -- most people don't necessarily associate the Park Service with the freedom to kind of run with something, 'cause as a big bureaucracy, it's sometimes known for rules and regulations.

BECKY SALEEBY: I had a great job. I had a great boss. Um, I was given lots of freedom. I really was given so much freedom, I could sort of invent what I wanted to do. Not many people can say that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And -- you know, it's rare, and I appreciate that I had that opportunity.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And the Skagway report, what 2011?

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

[00:17:53]KAREN BREWSTER: So when did you start that?

BECKY SALEEBY: I started it probably five years before. I'm not very fast. It takes me a long time. It took me five years, and the person who started it, her name was Yvonne Meyer. And she was a graduate student, so she was working on her own thesis, and, you know, she prob -- she just didn't have the time to devote to it, so they let me run with this for a while. And I -- you know, I was doing -- my real job was landmarks, but Skagway is a landmark, so you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: It all fit in.

[00:18:24]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, do you know whose idea it was to do this thirty-year overview?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, so the person whose idea it was, I am fairly sure, Sandy. Her name now is Faulkner.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh yeah, Anderson.

BECKY SALEEBY: Her name was Sandy Faulkner Anderson McDermott.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: So she's ch -- she changed through marriage and divorce different names. But she was the senior historian, and she wanted to do some kind of administrative report on the archeology. Um, so uh, Yvonne was hired to do that, and like I said, she was a graduate student and was not able to really complete it 'cause of her own research. So this was one of the things that was given to me. Here we spent all this money, and there's no product. Why don't you do the product? And I'm thinking, "Oh boy." You know, I had eleven years of research experience, working on mining sites, so I sort of had a background.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: So it was -- I was thrilled.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you also were an archeologist.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that helped, I'm sure. Because, I mean, I know, that there'd been archeology going on in Skagway --

BECKY SALEEBY: A long time.

KAREN BREWSTER: A long time.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And lots of reports. They had that series.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes, that were wonderful reports.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:19:39]BECKY SALEEBY: And, you know, let me just mention that this book -- I dedicated this book to people who were really good Alaskan historic archeologists and who actually worked in Skagway as fieldworkers. And that was Karl and Doreen and Cathy.

KAREN BREWSTER: So Karl Gurcke, Doreen Cooper, and Cathy -- now Spude?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. And they were the ones who did the archeology. I was the one who just went through all the files and got to look at the pictures and, you know, think about it. And um, and it's -- it's actually a pretty book, and I will say, we're gonna -- we were talking earlier

about Frank Broderick, and it's a pretty book because of him. He and I worked together. You know, I had some of the ideas, but certainly many of the ideas and how well it looks is all attributable to Frank.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, Frank does all the design and layout and production part.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. Um-hm.

[00:20:30]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, well, the reason I was asking all those -- that series of archeological reports that Cathy Blee Spude did --

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- the -- many of those write-ups, um, they're much more technical kind of documents --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- than what you've done.

BECKY SALEEBY: This is a -- this is an overview of a whole bunch of things. And it's not only -- I mean, it's the archeology, but it's sort of the administration, which was not the fun part to write. That was the hard part to write because it was file cabinet after file cabinet of, you know, Memorandum of Agreements, and, you know, all sorts of federal entities involved, and like, what does this mean, really? What can you -- you know, what can you say about one whole file drawer of this? In kind of a summary that won't make people want to go to sleep. So that's what I had to do. But then, I think that was the original intent of it, but I didn't want to just do that. That wasn't -- you know, that was necessary, but not necessarily fun. So I went through all the reports and I tried to figure out, well, what does this mean? You know, what -- what can -- what can we say? What kind of stories can we tell? I try to be a storyteller. It's real important to me, so I wanted to tell the story. So that's, I think, what I tried to work into it.

[00:21:45]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and that's what I found in it, as I say, it's much more readable and tells a story than just reading an archeological report with diagrams and the stratigraphy and --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: If that -- if you're an archeologist, I'm sure all those things make sense, and you come out with an understanding. But as a member of the public, that stuff doesn't make sense. You don't come out with a story.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. And I wanted to tell a story. And I -- I think what I really wanted to do, as I was -- like I said, I worked on it for five years. I had other work to do, but I did work on it for five years. Um, there were people who -- who were detractors of the archeology of Skagway. Ok, and I'm gonna -- um, the researchers, professors who I know and were -- are friends of mine, were friends of mine. I haven't seen 'em in a long time. But Oregon State, you know, they would look at it in an academic sense, and that they wanted to get to the research. And I'm thinking, well, this is research. This is research. This is good research. Just because it's within the setting of a bureaucracy and what you have to do for, you know, to get -- get the money to do it and to comply with 106 (Section 106 compliance) and all that, doesn't mean it's not research. So I wanted to highlight it in -- in the -- the greater view of all this kind of just feeds in to -- to the real research. And I think in one of the last chapters, I mention the topics that were important research topics, and how everything that was done, really could be used to feed into answering those questions. [00:23:22]Um, and as I said, I worked for the National Historic Landmark program, so landmarks are real important to me. Um, and I know that there are --

there aren't that many mining national historic landmarks in the western United States, so one chapter is actually about landmarks on the western mining frontier.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: And that part was really fun. And I went to visit some of these places, just on my own vacations 'cause I was interested. And to find out what other people were doing in other states in terms of their landmarks and the research, and I -- I think I found out that Alaska was doing darn well in, you know, in their -- the programs that were bringing light to the historic archeology in these landmarks.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that was sort of putting Skagway's work in a larger context?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

[00:24:17]KAREN BREWSTER: So I remember in the book, you mention this thing that academic archeologists sort of question the work in Skagway. Can you talk more about how they were critical of it?

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, you know, there's -- there's always been that rift between the academic archeologist and the government archeologist, and they're -- they're -- they're working under different parameters of different frameworks. You know, academic archeologists like to think that they're doing pure research, which maybe sometimes they're lucky enough to do, but certainly there's somebody paying the bills. Somebody's paying them. Somebody wants a final product. Um, and the government archeologists, of course, have to work under the auspices of the 106 process, and so they're -- they're kind of at odds. But certainly, they all want to basically tell the story. What happened here? Why is this important? Why does somebody who lives in Bozeman, Montana, why do they want to know about it?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: So there's always that conflict. Um, and what I was trying to say is, there doesn't have to be that conflict. It's not -- maybe some people think there should be a conflict, and there's maybe egos involved, but to me, it's all feeding into the little details that we know about what happened in the past, and that's really what we're doing.

[00:25:42]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Is some of the criticism about clearance archeology? You -- 106, that's, uh, Historic --

BECKY SALEEBY: Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act, uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that's -- that says if there's a project, it has to get archeological clearance first?

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. So in other words, if there is a project, and they're putting in, let's say, an outhouse. Well, you can't just say, "Well ok, here's this outhouse, but there's something really interesting over there." Perhaps if you have an NSF grant, you could say, "Oh yeah. Let's go over and look at that, too, because that feeds into the bigger story." If you have, um -- if you're working on a specific 106 project, well, you can't do that. That's not part of it. They're -- we're doing this right here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: This little square is it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: So that -- that really puts restrictions on people, but I think that Karl and Doreen and Cathy did a fabulous job of doing what they had to for their government work, and yet having a broader view of, um, telling the story.

[00:26:44]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and with clearance work, sometimes there's a time pressure. You know, like in Skagway, we've got this building we want to re -- renovate. You guys have to look underneath it.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And if you find something, you're holding up the rest of the project.

BECKY SALEEBY: Exactly. So there's all -- there's those pressures.

KAREN BREWSTER: So does that affect the --

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- quality of the archeology? I don't know, quality might not be the right word.

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, I think the -- I think the quality of the archeology they did was -- was excellent. I think it kinda probably put a lot of stress on them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: I mean, I didn't have to do any fieldwork there, so I don't know, but I'm sure that the time pressures and certainly, the fact that it's Alaska, and you can't work year-round.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Is another factor.

[00:27:25]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you had mentioned looking through all these administrative files. That was one of my questions for this report. What were your resources?

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh.

KAREN BREWSTER: What did your --

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, I worked at the regional office in Anchorage, and before the archeology was, you know, sent out to the parks and they did their own archeology, it was all done in the region. So we had -- we called them the gray elephants. We had these gray elephants. I think -- I'm sure they're still there. These huge files, everything you ever wanted to know about any project, ten times over, was in these files. And it -- you know, people didn't have the time to go through all this stuff. They had -- they had to kind of move on. So if I had wanted to do anything about the actual administration, um, I had to go through all these files. I still remember that.

[00:28:14]KAREN BREWSTER: And what about for the -- like, the archeology. Like, you wanted to know about the Mascot Saloon project or something?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. Well, there were all these reports that you were mentioning, the archeological series.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

BECKY SALEEBY: And I basical -- you know, that was -- much of what I did was based on those reports. So I would just kind of get a sense of what they had done and try to summarize it in a -- in a, um -- summarize it without as much detail as they provided in the original report.

KAREN BREWSTER: So you didn't go back and look at all their original data or the original artifacts?

BECKY SALEEBY: Only -- only if I had to. I mean, if there was some question that I couldn't answer, well, then I did. Um, I did go to Skagway a couple times to look at the artifacts and to photograph the artifacts.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: That was -- and to talk to Karl. And that was really wonderful and interesting. Um, yeah. So I did a little bit of everything, which makes -- which makes it, you know, I always -- you know, I think if you're not having a good time, it's not going to be a very good product. If you really enjoy it, and it's like, great. And you think, "Oh boy! I get to go to work today. Oh, boy. I get to take a -- I get to take a trip to Skagway and see Karl, you know, look at the artifacts." And then you really are into it, then it's going to be a better product.

[00:29:31]KAREN BREWSTER: Hm. Maybe you could talk a little bit about how archeology does help tell the story, and why that's important.

BECKY SALEEBY: Ok. Well, when you do historic archeology, of course, you have the historic documents. And I think lots of times, you know, they give you an excellent background, which you don't have in prehistoric archeology often 'cause there's not the written documents. You just have to tell the story on the basis of the artifacts. But in historic archeology, you, um, are able to ferret out the details that the written record doesn't tell you. I think probably one of the most interesting ones, I think the work that Cathy Spude and Doreen Cooper did on -- on the various, like, for example, the Father Turnell's trash pit, and the fact that there were liquor bottles there. I thought that was a pretty interesting story. Now, when you -- when you read the historic record, you're not going to really see a picture of the man's life in that detail. You're gonna maybe see his good works or -- but you're not going to see how he really lived. And don't we -- don't we really want to know how people lived? Isn't that why we tell stories?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: We want to know about that. So I think that is the benefit of it, is that you -- you get to see these details and understand the little quirks or little interesting things that -- People are curious, and they want to know that, and that's what makes it fun and interesting.

[00:31:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, but it is interesting that quite a number of the excavations in Skagway seem to have been in trash pits or --

BECKY SALEEBY: Privies.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- privy pits.

BECKY SALEEBY: It's where they threw things. That's where they threw 'em. I mean, if you just throw 'em on the street, or you throw 'em in the garbage can, they're gone.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: But if you throw 'em in a -- in a trash pit, I mean, excuse me, in a privy, they're there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Yeah, and I didn't realize that people threw things into privies.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. That's -- and I didn't know, really, until I started this, that they did. And that's where lots of the information came from.

[00:31:33]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And is that typical for historic archeology?

BECKY SALEEBY: I think it is.

KAREN BREWSTER: That there's a lot of privy excavation?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes, I think there is. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, yeah, which does not sound particularly glamorous.

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, probably when you're doing it, it isn't. Yeah, um, I'm -- I can't actually say that I've -- no, that's not true. I was going to say I haven't ever done it. I have done it as -- in Seward. And it's really pretty interesting.

KAREN BREWSTER: Really?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. It's -- I mean, all the gross stuff is usually gone.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh well, that's good.

BECKY SALEEBY: It's all decomposed. But you know, you -- I re -- I did one in Seward on some kind of a Park Service -- they were -- I can't remember exactly what it was. It was a land exchange or something. But there was an old privy site in the alley, right behind one of the main streets in Seward, and it was one of the earliest historic sites in -- in Seward.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: And it was a privy site. We found wonderful, interesting glass and all sorts of stuff. It was great.

[00:32:31]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, and I guess as you say, you didn't have a -- in that time period in Skagway, there wasn't like a town dump where you would take things. Of course, you're going to throw it in a hole in the ground.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Nowadays, we don't think about it that way.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, and I was interested in one of them, the privy they analyzed some of the decomposed layers.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: And found seeds and things.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And they could tell a little bit about what people might have been eating.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: And I thought that was fascinating, that you could tell that.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh. Yeah. So bones and seeds and -- they are great for about -- well, certainly it tells you about the environment if you're doing a prehistoric site, and also about, you know, the culture, what people were eating, if you're doing a -- a historic site.

[00:33:18]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, there was another one of the privies -- Oh, I don't know, maybe it was at the Moore House, where there were all the medicine bottles?

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes, that was one of Doreen's things. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that they -- they -- that made people think, well, were -- was Mrs. Moore, Minnie Moore --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was she consuming that as alcohol, or was it actually medicine for the children, 'cause that was a family home?

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. She was an interesting character, wasn't she?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And that makes me ask the question about, you know, how do you know?

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, I guess you -- I mean, even in -- even in historic archeology, you don't know for sure. I mean, few things are definitive. But you have -- you have another way of looking at it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: You know, it's -- it's -- you can't -- I mean, I can't answer that question.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: But you know, you -- perhaps it was medicine for the children, and perhaps she was indulging, I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And that's what I was wondering. Like, how can you tell? And I guess that's one you can't.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: But Father Turnell where there were liquor bottles.

BECKY SALEEBY: And that was his house, there was no doubt.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Maybe his guests were all drinking, and he wasn't?

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, it's possible, but, you know, it seems like, well, the obvious is that he was drinking, and -- and there was nothing against that. Except was it during Prohibition?

KAREN BREWSTER: I think it was just before.

BECKY SALEEBY: Ok. I can't remember the dates.

KAREN BREWSTER: I think the -- I can't remember, but I think the dating on the bottles --

BECKY SALEEBY: It was -- it was just before, yeah.

[00:34:51]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Which again, that's a whole 'nother interesting part is, how they figure out the dates.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Based on the glass and the --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- the color and the shape and --

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. That -- that's all stuff that I -- I truly didn't know much about, and I don't think I still know much about, but, you know, certainly, the people who did the original reports did. They had -- they had -- you know, they went into that quite a bit, the dating of the glass and the beads and the porcelain. And it's all very interesting stuff.

[00:35:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And now, do you think that the interpretive rangers in Skagway use some of this information in their programs?

BECKY SALEEBY: I hope they do. I hope they do because, you know, people -- that's -- it is for the public, and people want to know this kind of stuff. They're -- they're -- people who go to the parks and go on those tours, they want to know that. They -- you know, this is -- this is tax dollars for a good purpose. They think, "Ok. Well, we're learning something here. We're enjoying ourselves. We're -- this is a -- a -- a national resource that we have, and we want to know about it." So I -- I hope they do. I don't know -- I don't know specifically, but I hope they do.

[00:36:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I mean, I think you say, as a visitor, you go into the Mascot Saloon, you want to know what happened there. Or you see those bottles in the window, it makes you go, "Oh. What are those?"

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. And they have hundreds of thousands of visitors.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: And so, it's a perfect audience. Who go there 'cause they're interested.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: So, of course, they need to have stories. I mean, if you tell somebody, "Well, we did a 106 undertaking on that piece of ground over there," and uh, people are going to just kinda move away and go to the -- to the tourist stores and, you know -- But if you tell 'em a story, they're going to be captivated, and they're going to want to know more.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, and um, those artifacts that get excavated can be used in an exhibit, as well.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. Uh-huh. True.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, and help tell those stories.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

[00:36:53]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so. Well, you mentioned Father Turnell as sort of a favorite. Were there -- can you remember from the research for this book others sort of favorite tidbits of yours?

BECKY SALEEBY: You know, when I -- I have a copy right here, and I'm looking through the pictures, and I see these ceramics. Um, I see Minnie Moore. She was a very interesting person because she was Native American.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: And uh -- um, you know, the thing that -- that I wanted to know about more with -- not -- were not the -- the people who were in the historic documents as their names, they were important people in Skagway, but the people we didn't -- were unnamed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: I wanted to know why they were there and how they lived, and I wanted to know how they got some of these really nice-looking pieces of ceramics and plates and cups into their house -- houses. And I was just interested in the ordinary people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: That's what made me the most interested, and I don't know if I -- yeah, I think I did learn a little bit about them. I think that I realized that they were just ordinary people who were trying to live the best they could. And they did have some beautiful things. I mean, think about, in the -- in the late 1800's, and the effort it took to bring a beautiful piece of china to Skagway and have it survive and used, and, you know -- I don't know. I just like -- those are the stories I like.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: The people who are unnamed, and we can imagine how they lived. And maybe even kind of make up stories in our heads.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: That might not be based on facts, but -- You know, and the dolls, you know, the ceramic -- the heads of dolls. So there were children there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, so. I mean, it's all interesting to me. I mean, there's all -- there's so -- there's so many things, you can just kind of go off on any kind of direction and think about the people and wonder.

[00:38:52]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And I like your idea about the china, to think about, you know, traveling all the way from, you know, St. Louis --

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- to Skagway. You know, it was a long way. And you'd bring china?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yep. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, or how that china got up there and could be purchased there. I guess also part of the Skagway story that this archeology shows is, it wasn't just the gold rush. You know, there was the gold rush, but some of this stuff is people who settled there.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And had a permanent place.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. And that's what was interesting to me. You've -- you've -- you're saying it right now. So the people who decided to stay. You know, this was their home, and they were going to make the most of it, and they were going to have a nice house and some nice things, and live there as Americans and, you know, do their thing in a far-flung area that most people don't even know about.

[00:39:46]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And, you know, people think gold rush, the stampeders. They don't think about, well, there were families.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And children.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know what the children would've done for school.

BECKY SALEEBY: They did -- well, I mean, I guess after certain -- after they have a certain number of children -- of children in town, they do have to have a school.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah. There was a school eventually, I just don't know when it started.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, I can't remember the specifics, either, but yeah, that -- they have to start providing for the children. They have to set up the streets. They have to, you know, set up their government. And then, this is all above and beyond the -- the gold rush itself because they're going to live here now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. I think a lot of that happened after the gold rush.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, there were a couple of years of the gold rush, and then people started leaving, and then it kinda coalesced into more of a community.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's what I get from the book.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, that part's the interesting part to me.

[00:40:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, something else I was going to say about -- well, that's always my question about archeology in general is, ok, here you find this part of a ceramic dish, or whether it's a, you know, a prehistoric site with an arrow point.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: A stone point versus a ceramic dish, and the stories that kinda get told about the meaning of that.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And how much of that is fact versus how much is it storytelling?

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, I mean, if you're writing -- if you're writing an archeological report, you -- you -- you can -- you have to base it all on fact. This is -- I'll tell you, the one thing I learned in writing a dissertation, it was prehistoric, it wasn't historic, but I remember I had -- I had to do four years of looking at bones and looking through archives and reading the journals of Lewis and Clark. I based the ethnohistory of what I did on the Columbia River a lot on -- on their travels. You know, so I did this for a long time. And I was -- like I was getting to the end of my dissertation, and it was all -- all the facts were there. You know, how many bones, what did this mean, what animals? Where were the villages? And then I got to, like, the second-to-last page, and it was like, "Wow. Now I get to be creative." I presented everything, and now, I mean, I'm not going to tell you 100 percent, sure, this is what happened, but I can kind of go off on a little

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riff here, and I can imagine. And that was -- I still remember that feeling of, "Yeah. After four years of doing this, I deserve to write one page of speculation." So, you know, you frame it as such. This is -- this is -- this is what I learned, and I can't say for sure, but this is what I think happened.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: So that was -- that was really fun for me. I still remember that day, writing that, and -- and I don't know whether any of that was true, but, you know, certainly there was truth in it.

[00:42:42]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and in this book, you do at the end have a chapter about how this material can be used or some ideas for further research.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, do you know whether any of that further research ideas were followed up on?

BECKY SALEEBY: Honestly, I don't. Honestly, I don't. Because this was one of my last projects before I retired. So I finished this book, and I had another, maybe couple of months or something, and then I retired. So um, I truly admire the people who carry out -- who carry on interests into retirement and continue to do, you know, their -- their past research and have a life-long interest. Uh, I'm not one of those people. So when I retired, I felt that I had done all my jobs, and that I had closed every chapter I needed to, and I just did something else. So I don't know. I did not follow up. It was great while it lasted, and I figured, now somebody else can do it. But it's not my job anymore, so I'm moving on.

[00:43:46]KAREN BREWSTER: Were there any projects you wished you could have done?

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, man. This is a good question. God, there's so many projects. I mean, everything is interesting. Um, I'm trying to think if there was anything else. I can't think of anything off the top of my head because I really tried to finish up everything. And when I retired, I moved on and -- and started doing other things that were not anthropology and not archeology that I was interested in. Um, one of the things I was -- I like to write novels, so I've done that in retirement. But what is kind of interesting is that archeology always filters into it. And anthropology also filters into it because that's who I am, and I can't get away from it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But so you -- you felt like all your Park Service projects, you finished all those reports?

BECKY SALEEBY: I did. I did. I felt like I finished 'em. I wouldn't have retired unless I could have said that.

[00:44:47]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But there wasn't a particular Alaska subject that you wished you could have done a project on that never got funded or --

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, I started off in archeology, as I mentioned, with the bones. And there are lots of zooarcheological collections out there, um, that -- I mean, it's a -- it's a tedious thing. I mean, the only people who have a more tedious job are the people who do the seeds.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: I mean, and that's more tedious. And the pollen, yeah. That's even more tedious. But bones are pretty tedious.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: But I like them a whole lot, and, you know, I could -- I would be happy to sit in a table with nobody else in the room and just do bones. So you know, any -- any zooarcheological project that would surface would be interesting for me.

[00:45:35]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I'm just looking at the book to see if there was some other questions about, you know, part of the question was yeah, how you did this, and how you put it together, and how you decide what goes in and --

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, ok, so I can tell you.

KAREN BREWSTER: Kind of a process methodology.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, so I based the look of this book, which of course could not have been done without Frank Broderick because he's the --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: He's the brains of formatting and design. He -- he is the brains. But, um, there was a book that I used that -- it was a historic archeology of Albany, New York, and it was beautifully set up, and I used it as the model. So I had a model to go by. So I used whatever I was -- you know, the research that I was putting together for Skagway. And I used the model of that book, and Frank loved the book. If Frank didn't love the book, the other book, we couldn't have done it. But he loved it. He said, "Yeah, yeah. You're right." So between Frank and I, we figured it out.

[00:46:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh. I remembered the question I was going to ask from when I was reading this book, that there's quite a bit of mention that, ok, one person did work on this site and came up with an analysis this way and how they grouped artifacts or how they, um, put meaning to it all. And then another archeologist comes along and does it in a different way for a different site. So how do you compare -- it seems like methods change, or interpretations change.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: So how does that all get combined to create a meaning? It seems like you're mixing apples and oranges.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, no, that's a very good question. Certainly, everybody has their own methods. I think you have to always go back to what the original method was, understand what they did, and then, you know, of course you can't just do the same thing over and over. People, you know, in any kind of science, and it is a science, you -- you discover that, ok, well, this is what they originally did, but we can improve on this. So it's a matter of refining your methods. And that's -- that's good, you know. So it's not necessarily apples and oranges. It's just making a better orange.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: It's just looking at it a little bit differently, but always, you know, going back to the original and saying, ok, this is what they had to work with then. They only had a small sample. And now, ten years later, we have a much larger sample. We can look at it a little bit differently. It doesn't negate what they did originally.

[00:48:10]KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause sometimes it seems like it was a lumping versus a splitting.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. And that's a -- that's a sort of a philosophical thing that I guess whatever researcher has to deal with, whether you're a lump or a splitter.

KAREN BREWSTER: But then, but you, as the compiler of this summary --

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- how do you put those together?

BECKY SALEEBY: I think in every case, you have to put it together the best way you can. I mean, you know, you have to say, ok -- acknowledge that one researcher looked at it this way.

One researcher looked at it that way. And -- and maybe the third, who hasn't come along yet, will look at it a different way. You know, there are different ways to look at it. Acknowledge those, and like I said, if you have the opportunity to speculate and say, "Ok, well. It could be this. It could be this. You know. I personally believe A, or I personally believe B."

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: You know, just as long as it's clear. It -- it has to be clear, and so you -- you can't just make things up. [00:49:08]I think that's what -- I think that's why I like to go on to fiction because, um, after I retired, because to me, there were lots -- there were so many other interesting things to say, good, good stories, that I didn't want to be restrained by simply the facts. I wanted to be able to go off into more creative things. In an archeological report, you can't do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: As long as -- you can present the evidence, and then you speculate as to what is the most logical.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Did that -- I answer your question?

[00:49:40]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, yeah. Well, I was going to say, then, you as the compiler took these different archeological perspectives and were able to put them next to each other.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's -- that seems like a lot of research and hard work on your part to -- You had to understand all of the methods.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, and some of 'em, I went into not understanding, so I had to learn. I mean, of course, as a researcher, that's what you want to do. You want to learn. You're curious. You want to learn. Lots of these methods I -- that they used, the fieldworkers, you know, Karl and Doreen and Cathy, I was not familiar with 'em, so I had to learn them. I had to learn what they did, and I had to ask other people. And yeah, so that's all -- that's all good. That's all part of the process, and you have to -- if you don't know what they did, then you really can't write about it.

[00:50:33]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. That's kind of what I was getting at. Like, how did you learn that? You --

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, I mean, I know enough about archeology that I can read the books. I can -- I mean, I don't even know how many. There's probably a pretty good bibliography.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: But, you know, I had to read 'em. I had to call people. Lots of good historic archeology was done in Fairbanks at the -- Northern Land Use did a lot of stuff on Barnette Street, which I brought into this. I talked to those researchers, um, so. I talked to those archeologists. I mean, we're all -- we're all friends. It's a pretty small circle of people, so I was able to -- to see how they did their research, and try to incorporate it to better understand Skagway.

[00:51:15]KAREN BREWSTER: And was this your first foray into historical archeology?

BECKY SALEEBY: No, I had spent eleven years doing the --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, the mining stuff.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, the mining report. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's right. That's right.

BECKY SALEEBY: But in terms of real -- in terms of fieldwork, I only did, really, prehistoric archeology in my own fieldwork.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. So you didn't get to do any of the fieldwork in Skagway?

BECKY SALEEBY: No, I didn't do any fieldwork in Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: But you -- you researched the collections, I guess, you said.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. Yeah, I went there. I looked at the collections. People in the curatorial, um, department there in Skagway helped me. I mean, I pulled out -- I had them pull out the artifacts I wanted to look at and -- and photograph.

[00:51:54]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. So how did you know which artifacts you wanted to look at?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, I'd read all the reports. I mean, I had to read all the reports. I had to see what was typical, what was unique, and get a little bit of each one of those and kind of look at the whole range, you know. They had nails. Nails might not be all that fascinating, but, you know, they can tell you interesting things about the time period and how things were built. You know, and they had ceramics, they had glass, they had beads, they had, you know, so they had a -- yeah, I had to have a little bit of all of it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Yeah, I thought it was interesting about the nails. The shape of the nail. The wire nails versus the square nails, and -- Somebody researched the history.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah well, Cathy Spude did a lot of that. I'm sure Karl did, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. To know how that came about.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then I think it was the porcelain or ceramics, you know, some came from England, and some -- then the US started.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, all of that is -- you know, you say, it tells this bigger story.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes, and I think that's it. It's the bigger story. Once you -- once you get into a little part of -- little tiny tunnel vision on one place, you sort of have to put it into a bigger perspective or what does it all mean? You -- you can see how everything sort of fits together.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: I -- I -- I like that.

[00:53:14]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And then the, um, one of the sites where they were building the maintenance building.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wasn't that more of a World War II site?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, uh-huh. And I -- and Doreen was doing those.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And, you know, talking about the -- the military presence and, you know, what you -- what you can tell about the guys who were there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: That's all interesting, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Which is -- so that the story of Skagway is more than just the gold rush.

BECKY SALEEBY: Exactly. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, yeah. And I think the -- the military one was a lot of beer bottles, I think.

BECKY SALEEBY: If I remember right, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: If I remember correctly.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, you've -- you read the book more recently than I did, so I'm going to forget.

KAREN BREWSTER: But that's also, I mean, that's what I remember, but also I think that's what I would expect.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh. Yeah.

[00:54:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, you know, and the saloon, the Mascot and the Pantheon, you know, they -- it was more -- I found it interesting, it got separated into men's kind of sites --

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- and family sites, and um -- based on the type of artifacts that were found.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. Yes. Yes. I mean, that's -- that's common to all archeology.

Frequently, you don't have enough data to -- to -- certainly prehistoric sites, to do that. But sometimes you do.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, I don't know if prehistoric sites, you could see, well, this was the hearth and the kitchen area.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or this was the butchering area.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or something like that.

BECKY SALEEBY: But as far as, you know, coming down to who -- who -- who exactly, was it a man or a woman or was it a child, you don't often get that opportunity 'cause it's just not that well preserved.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, in the saloons in the Skagway sites, the assumption is, those were mostly male, uh, facilities.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: But women may have gone in there, you know, certainly the prostitutes at the time may have been in those saloons.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, and I think Cath -- Cathy Spude does a good job of pointing out the different gender-related artifacts.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

[00:55:14]KAREN BREWSTER: Were any of the cribs ever, um, excavated or cleared?

BECKY SALEEBY: I think they were, but I don't really -- I can't remember the details.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: So I can't really answer too much about that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and part of the problem, Skagway, is buildings got moved a lot.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, they did.

KAREN BREWSTER: Which I don't know how that affects the historic archeology.

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, certainly, you have to -- you have to know the building history if you're gonna -- certainly, if you're going to excavate, you really have to know the building history before you start. And maybe you'll find out things that -- that are inconsistent with the

historic documents, and then you have to, "Oh, what's -- what really happened?" Yeah. If it was all just -- if you're not learning anything more than just what you get from the historic documents, then you're not doing much good because you're, ok, well this is it. But if you're learning a little bit more, and, you know, improving, refining what we know, then that's when it becomes valuable.

[00:56:12]KAREN BREWSTER: And it seems like for your book, you had to do a lot of the historic research yourself before you could start writing and putting it together. You had to become knowledgeable on Skagway's history in general.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. Yes. Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Which sounds like an overwhelming project in and of itself.

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, if you like to do it, it's not overwhelming. You know, I mean, it just depends on what you like to do. I mean, I like to look at little tiny bones, and I like to look at little details of history. To me, that's, um, fun.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: So I like to do it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: You know, everybody has their own forte.

[00:56:45]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you had said that originally you were hired to do archeological education?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes, that's what I -- my main thing was.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so, can you describe what that means?

BECKY SALEEBY: Ok. Um, that means just bringing archeology to the public. Frequently, it has to do with school children. And the reason I got involved in that is before I started, the person who actually started that work was Susan Morton. And she did -- um, she started Archeology Month. I think every state has an archeology week or an archeo -- it started as a week. And I remember we -- we made it into a month because how can you get everybody, all the archeologists in Alaska, to do their programs in one week? You can't. You just say, April. April is Archeology Month, and then you just -- you just develop programs for the school kids. Mostly for the school kids, but often for adults. You know, tell 'em like, if you have a report like this, you tell 'em about Skagway. So it's just bringing the -- the money, taxpayers' money in terms of our salaries and everything, out to the people to let -- let them know what's going on. And it's certainly alive and well. [00:58:00]I have a funny story about moving to Montana, which my husband and I moved here just about a month and a half ago, and I thought I had finished that stuff. I wasn't doing this anymore. So I go to the museum, just down the street, at The Museum of the Rockies at MSU campus, and I'm going to look at the museum. I've seen it before, but they were having Archeology Month programs for the kids, and I backed out. No, I don't want to go. I'm leaving. I've done this. I've done this for twenty-five years or more. I don't want to see this. And then, I actually have a friend who I reconnected with, and she's still involved in it. And she -- she still has programs that are going on in Montana, so she just contacted me, and now I'm going to have -- I'm going to be involved in that again.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: So it's just, you know, it's just taking it to the public, and it's relevant even if the -- even if the child or the children don't ever do any archeology, because they learn things that are important for other -- anything. You know, they learn about measuring. They

learn about numbers. They learn about history. They learn about the past of their state. So all this, you know, you put it in the guise of archeology, but it has to do with education in general. [00:59:17]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it's doing sort of what this book was intended to do, is it's helping to show people what you can learn about the past from these artifacts that they dug up out of the ground.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. Yeah. Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: That you learn about the previous lifestyle.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And for people like us, that's really cool.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And hopefully you can excite kids about it.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. And some are -- some are excited, and some just think it's another boring job. And I think -- I mean, I think I remember all the programs that I did, and if you really want to be humbled, you -- you work with kids, and sometimes they're real excited. And I often went to my own son's classes and gave -- any time they wanted a program, I would do it. Not only could I want it -- not only could I do it because I wanted to for my sons and their classmates' sake, but because I could do it on my job.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, this is my work. I'll be glad to come. And I'd give 'em so many programs. And I remember my older son came home one day, and I said, "Well, what did you think?" He says, "Yeah. Yeah. Another archeology program." He said, "You know, one of my classmates even came up and said, 'You know, Allen, your mother really has a boring job.'" And I thought, "Oh god." Oh well. You can't please 'em all.

[01:00:35]KAREN BREWSTER: That's right. So well, we said this "Beneath the Surface," it was Sandy's idea. Do you know how the funding came?

BECKY SALEEBY: No, I do not. I -- I --

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause five years of funding, that's a lot of money.

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, the funding actually -- the funding was to start Yvonne on the process.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: I mean, I had a permanent job, and I did -- I did all my other job besides doing this. I mean, this became, you know, a big part of it, but I just had my salary.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

BECKY SALEEBY: So the funding was basically just my salary.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. So it wasn't funded as a special project?

BECKY SALEEBY: It had -- it started like that, so when -- when they allocate the funds, you know, for the different projects, at the -- the -- I can't remember even the name of that.

KAREN BREWSTER: PMIS? Is that it?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, there was that, and then there was the cultural resource -- you know, people from all the parks, they divvy up the money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: However it got started, um, was long in the past, and that money had been spent. And they were saying, well, what's the product?

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: You know, if we're going to spend this money, we want to see something. So that's how I became involved. And then after that, the money was gone, but I had a job, and I had my salary, so I just worked on it.

[01:01:45]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, I was just looking at the book. You -- you do make suggestions about topics that could be followed up on or made into, you know, park handouts or whatever you want to call it.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: So the residential privies, Father Turnell's trash pit and attitudes about drinking. Well, as you say, attitudes about drinking during the Prohibition Era.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, right.

KAREN BREWSTER: So maybe he was right on the cusp there?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes, uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, revelations about the early life in Skagway?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: The Moore family privy. Archeological evidence of the US Army in Skagway. What people drank at gold rush-era saloons. Hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. Were they, like, kinda high-brow people? I doubt it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and that I'm guessing must be that the types of bottles --

BECKY SALEEBY: The types of bottles, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- would tell you what types of alcohol?

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh. Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's cool.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, it's interesting. I think people would like to know those kinds of things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Do you really save all those old bones? Or what faunal remains can tell us about the eating habits in Skagway's past. And what broken dishes really tell us about the people who once lived in Skagway..

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. The, yeah, the ordinary people. That's -- that's what I'm interested in. The ordinary people and how they lived their lives. I think that's -- I think that's the way that archeology has gone in the more recent decades because, you know, let's just take Egypt, for example, which I really know nothing about. But I know certainly that they were more interested in the dynasties and the, you know, the kings and all that. And then they find out, well, what about all these people who built the pyramids? How did they live?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And then that -- that becomes interesting to people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Um, there's some other things here about -- I guess this is for interpretive staff, things to start a dialog with -- I guess, with their audiences about what is archeology? What are archeological resources? What do archeologists do? How do archeologists figure out how old things are? What are our personal and professional responsibilities? Um, areas of sensitivity. And then highlighting archeology in Skagway. So this is a good one about personal and professional responsibilities. Something -- can you talk about archeological stewardship and ethics in archeology?

[01:04:17]BECKY SALEEBY: Um, well, if you work for the government, you know, you -- you realize that there are lots of laws and regulations that pertain to archeological sites, and aren't we lucky in this country that we have them. Otherwise, we would lose a lot of information.

Certainly, many of us, most of us, maybe, who have jobs with the government, um, we -- we -- we made a live -- we made a life -- livelihood, a way of living on the basis of the farsightedness of our -- you know, people who make our laws in Washington, DC, so I appreciate that. Um, you know, you might -- sometimes it's just a matter of doing it because it's the law and you're not going to gain anything from it, but I think many times you do. You learn something new, and you can share it with somebody, so that's -- that's your responsibility. And that's -- that -- those are the ethics of what you have to do as an archeologist. You know, you have to -- you do this for the purpose that it was intended, to gather the information, give the information back to the public, whatever you gathered, collections or in the museum, properly stored so future people can go and look at them and make further interpretations. So that's part of the whole cycle. Um, and I think we're lucky in this country that we have those laws and regulations because it enriches all of our lives.

[01:05:43]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And what about, you know, sort of the protection of archeological sites? Now in Skagway, a lot of the sites are under buildings now, or um, things, but so I don't know how protection of archeological sites applies to Skagway.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, well, you know, there's the public/private thing. If it's on public land, it must be protected. That's the law. If it's on private land, um, it's -- there -- the law does not pertain. So you know, you would hope that the people are generous enough and that they would want to share the information, not hoard it for themselves or keep it to themselves. Or maybe they just don't want anybody to know about it because that's going to affect how they deal with their own private property. Um, so I think even if you work for the government, you have to reach out to these private people and say, "Look, you might have something very valuable there." I think most people, you know, recognize that and are willing to share.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and in Skagway, all this excavation has been done on Park Service buildings or properties for the most part. Um, there's a lot of private property --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- in the Historic District or --

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- in the town in general, and they don't necessarily get excavated.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. But they also -- but they do get the help of the Park Service. And I -- you know, I worked with Steve Peterson and Grant Crosby did lots of the architecture there, the historic architecture, and they worked with the private people to make sure that their buildings are not, you know, that are historically accurate.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: So those people get lots of government expertise, just on the basis of that they're right there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And that they -- they want to make sure that it's not, um, discordant with the rest of the landscape.

[01:07:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And that's for the building itself, but for any of the underneath or surroundings --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, they don't have to do it.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- they don't have to do anything.

BECKY SALEEBY: No. Well, unless they're getting federal money. If they're getting federal money because they're renovating, and they're getting some kind of grant, yes, then they do have to.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: So it has to do with where the money is coming from. If they're just -- if they're -- if they're -- you know, if they're just doing it on their property and not getting any federal money, it's not affecting the fabric of their building, I can't -- I really can't see any of those situations really happening. Yeah, but if they're getting federal money, then they do have to comply with the law.

[01:08:13]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And all of this we've been talking about the historical archeology in, sort of, downtown Skagway, around the buildings and things. Did you do any looking at the archeology out in Dyea --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- or along the trail?

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, I -- I didn't -- I actually looked at it one day, and I -- when you said that, I'm smiling if you can't see me. I am smiling because I took my younger son with me, and he was probably about, I don't know how old he was. He was -- he was young. Maybe fourteen or something. And um, Karl Gurcke took -- my son's name is Galen, Galen Ream, so Galen and I went to Skagway, and Karl took us on a tour of everything, including Dyea.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: And, you know, he was so interesting. If -- And I know -- I mean, I know kids from having kids, but also from giving programs to kids. A fourteen-year-old is not that easy to impress. You know, if ever you want to really bore somebody, find a fourteen-year-old, and I assure you, you will bore them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Galen was not bored. Galen was very entertained by Karl, and he was very interested. And he showed us all around Dyea, and he gave us a wonderful tour. So I tried to bring in a little bit of -- of that. You know, about the -- the -- the cemeteries and things like that. So that's in there, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Because there has been archeology done.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. Interesting stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: And along the trail, as well.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't think they've done archeology, but they certainly have collected and documented --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: What's out there.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: But I don't remember that from the book.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh, it's probably -- it's probably just mentioned in passing 'cause this was about the -- just Skagway, specifically.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[01:09:54]BECKY SALEEBY: But you can't really talk about Skagway without talking about Dyea.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: And, you know, I think I've probably mentioned it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I just saw --

BECKY SALEEBY: But it was not -- it was not focused on.

KAREN BREWSTER: Flipped through, I did see there was a sidebar on Dyea. But I see that's why the trail and stuff, it was specifically intended just for --

BECKY SALEEBY: For Skagway, yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- the Historic District of Skagway.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. So you have to do another one about the trail.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, other people have done that. Yeah, other people have done that.

[01:10:20]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, as I say, this seems like an immense undertaking, to have put all this information -- because what, that archeological series is, like, eleven volumes or something?

BECKY SALEEBY: I can't remember exactly. Maybe even more than that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I can't remember.

BECKY SALEEBY: But yeah, it's a lot of -- so I -- I felt at the end, I'll tell you, I felt very proud to be part of that series and have a publication in it because, you know, that is years and years -- thirty years of work. And yet, here it is for people to look at.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And I think if you look at -- so I think one of the things that I did is, I looked at all the other landmarks. And I think in Alaska, we did a darn good job.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: You know, as opposed to other places in -- in the country that might have done historic archeology. I was looking specifically at landmarks. I had to -- I had to narrow it down, otherwise I would've been -- I could've been studying it for the rest of my life.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: But, you know, in terms of really looking at the landmarks, which are supposedly our most important sites, and they are not all historic. We have lots of prehistoric landmarks. But these were just the mining --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right, these were just the mining -- well, 'cause that's what matches with Skagway as a sort of mining history.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. Uh-huh. So -- [01:11:37]And I think I was proud of the Park Service for doing this. You know, in -- in terms of, it was a landmark. It was Park Service land, and in other states, it's not necessarily. The landmarks could be on private land, and you don't need to do all the stuff that was done in Skagway. But in Alaska, it was done, so I thought, "Yes! Good job."

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and as you say, it is impressive that the Park Service funded thirty years of archeology in one place.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: To me, that shows they thought it was important.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh. Yes, absolutely.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, and you must've thought it was important, too, after all of this.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. And I was -- I was glad that -- I mean, I was very happy to have had the opportunity to take up the research that would've sort of died there in our office and be able to do something with it. And have a good time, and maybe share it with somebody else.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. That's what I was thinking, that that thirty years, all those archeological reports and the files of data might have just sat there.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. Nobody else wanted to go through those gray elephants.

[01:12:43]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and, you know, not being an archeologist and reading -- trying to read archeological reports, I can tell you, they don't hold my attention.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: In the same way.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. Nail -- nails are not really, you know, overly exciting. But, you know, if you get -- if you learn enough that you can get to the essence of it and portray it in a simple, straightforward way, it can be -- give you a little bit of information, and it can be interesting.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And I think that's what your book does, is it sort of serves as a translation.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And makes it more readable for the public. [01:13:18]Uh, I do like that you called it "Beneath the Surface," and you have a chapter, "Stories Beneath the Surface."

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, I do? Oh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Chapter 8: Archeologists as Storytellers. We're cheating. We're looking at the book.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, ok.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause neither of us are going to remember it.

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, I don't -- I don't remember that, but good.

KAREN BREWSTER: But I think that -- I mean, just the title called "Beneath the Surface," which, um, as you say, how these -- how objects can tell us about the past, is interesting.

BECKY SALEEBY: Mm. Well, thank you.

KAREN BREWSTER: I think.

BECKY SALEEBY: Thank you.

[01:13:50]KAREN BREWSTER: And I think that's important that people -- here you say, "Stories are not revealed by artifacts in isolation, but by artifacts found and carefully recorded in features such as trash dumps, privies, um, providing not only a time capsule of that time period, but also the preferences and even economic status of the individuals associated with them." Oh, I know, I had -- I was going to ask you a question about, this is just archeological terminology about assemblages versus features?

BECKY SALEEBY: So assemblage is, um, the collection of artifacts. And it can be everything, or it can be a sub-assemblage like the zooarcheological assemblage. It can be, you know, the assemblage of the ceramics. You know, assemblage is just all the -- all the stuff. A feature is actually something on the ground that you -- you can just destroy it with one shovelful, and it's gone. It's in the ground. You have to record it because you destroy it. Um, so a feature could be something like a -- a firepit. It could be something like, I mean, features can be on the surface, and they can go for miles and miles. Like, in northern Alaska, like the -- the -- the lines that -- caribou drive lines.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: That can be a huge feature. Or it can be a little firepit. Or it can be a posthole. But it's something that you can't dig up and -- I mean, you could dig up, maybe, the wood there, but it doesn't mean anything. You have to record it on the ground.

[01:15:27]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And so, like in historic archeology, the privy is not the feature. The privy's the whole site?

BECKY SALEEBY: No, the privy can be the site or the feature.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

BECKY SALEEBY: You know, so I mean, the site -- the site could be only a privy, and it would be one feature. Or you could have a site that had lots of features. It had a privy. It had a firepit. It had a posthole that used to be, you know, an old -- part of an old structure, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or the sewer line.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: In more recent -- in more recent layers.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

[01:15:59]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, 'cause there was -- there was assemblage, features, and what's the other thing where there's --

BECKY SALEEBY: Components?

KAREN BREWSTER: Components, or it's the lumping versus the splitting.

BECKY SALEEBY: So one thing that's really -- I find extremely interesting about archeology is, of course, you're going down through the layers, and you are, um, you're going to -- many sites are occupied by different people at different time periods.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: 'Cause it's just a good spot, you know. It was good then, and it was good later, and it was good even later, and it's good now. So you go down and down and down. All right, you see the different layers of the earth, and you see the different types of artifacts, but it's not always that easy to figure out how to divide this up. There might be this gray area in this, uh, you don't -- you don't know. Is it part of this occupation, you know, time period, or this occupation? So um, I guess that was the component. You know, it can have many different components, and things -- they were maybe all related to mining, or maybe it was the prehistoric people, and then there were the miners, and then there were the World War II guys. So you have to figure out how to -- how to use the data in the best way in order to portray what went on.

[01:17:20]Um, and I learned that by doing the -- doing the bones, because, you know, if you have -- if you have a very deep site, and you can see ten different strata, um, ok, well, here we have ten different layers. Or maybe we only have five different layers because maybe they -- a couple of 'em merged. So what I'm trying to say is, how you look at the data, how you divide up what you're looking at, is extremely important 'cause you're going to have to tell a different story, depending on how you do that. And that is -- that's what -- what -- what really makes it a science. Um, you know, you have to take into consideration the -- the -- the stratigraphy. You have, you know, you have to take into consideration the artifacts, the Carbon 14 data, maybe even other environmental factors. But you have to look at everything and say, "Ok. This makes sense. Here is one component, and then there is a gap, and here's another one. Or maybe there's no gap. Maybe they just kind of merge into the others." So how do you analyze that? I like that. I like the way you can juggle -- not juggle in a bad way, but, I mean, look at the data in different ways. But you have to make sure it's as accurate as you can in order to tell the story correctly.

[01:18:40]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and that was my previous question. On some of these projects in Skagway, somebody looked at the data one way, and then somebody else looked at it a different way.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And how do you put that all together to tell the story?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, well, I think -- like I said before, you have to acknowledge what everybody did.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And then, you know -- maybe it's -- maybe clearly, somebody didn't do it correctly. But I don't -- I don't think there's -- I don't think it was ever intentional. I think probably in the beginning, when you don't have much data, you -- you just have to go with what you have.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And then as you learn more and more and more, of course, you're gonna refine that, and you're gonna be able to do the analysis better.

[01:19:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. I was trying to see if I could find an example of one of those -- you know, sometimes it was, you know, a graduate student worked on something, and um --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, that would be really tough. I mean, I think it would -- to go into an area and not know anything about it and try to make sense of it, it's really tough. So the people who worked on it most consistently are the ones who really, you know, you'd have to take their interpretations more seriously than somebody who was there for just a brief period.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I'm trying to look for the wording that I'm thinking of, and I can't think of, you know, assemblages, features, and the lumping, splitting, and there were certain, um --

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, did I have a whole -- one of those gray sidebar things on that?

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, I think I did. That was -- I liked that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Here -- there is one here.

BECKY SALEEBY: I liked writing that one. That was really interesting.

KAREN BREWSTER: Here's one. Archeological Methods. Researching, testing, analyzing, and reporting.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's page sixty-two.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, I liked doing that one.

KAREN BREWSTER: I'm not sure if that's the one I'm thinking of.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, I really liked that. It -- it spells out exactly what I was trying to say. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: This talks about measuring, shovel testing, trenching, the layers, cataloging.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh, that's not the one I was thinking of. It was --

BECKY SALEEBY: So you have -- yeah, I mean, you know, it's all very methodical, and that's why it takes so long. You -- you can't just -- you can't just plow through it and jump to conclusions. You really have to do the analysis, and that takes a long time.

[01:20:55]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I can't remember where it is. It was somewhere that, you know, you're talking about this person looked at the artifacts by grouping them this way, and then somebody else grouped 'em that -- I can't find the right terminology.

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, typology, maybe. Are you thinking typology?

KAREN BREWSTER: Maybe?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: About, like, maybe the glassware?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. So you -- you certainly -- I mean, that is prevalent throughout all archeology. I mean, you can take an assemblage, that's a good word, an assemblage of stone points, for example. And depending on who you are or what method you're using, you're going to classify them and put them in different typologies. Well, it's the same with historic archeology and with glass and with anything else. Do -- do you look at the -- you know, for example, the thickness of the glass? Do you look at the color of the glass? What's the most important aspect, characteristic of that artifact that you're using? Are you trying to date it? Are you trying to, um, say exactly who the manufacturer was? So the way you do the typology is what kind of -- you always have to start with a question. You know, you start with a question. So here we have a whole assemblage of glass. What can I learn from this assemblage? Maybe all I can learn is, when it -- when it came -- you know, dating it. Maybe that's all you can learn. So if that's all you can learn, then you have to devise your typology or classification on something that's going to help you date it. So you start with that question in mind. Maybe there are a couple questions, and then you can be more refined about your analysis.

[01:22:34]KAREN BREWSTER: Like, you find all this glass and you want to know what type of alcohol was in them.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, like Cathy Spude wanted to do. So then you -- you're going to look at other things. So if you have a piece that has a little bit of, you know, embossing on it, you know, that's going to be really cool. Whereas this is just a piece of the side that has nothing to do with the dating or the manufacturer. Well, that's not as important, so you can put it in an "other" category.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or I was thinking, if you want to know what kind of alcohol was in that bottle, you'd have to know what types of bottles were used for different alcohols, and maybe the color made a difference.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh yeah, the color.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that would be your driving question?

BECKY SALEEBY: That would be -- yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or maybe you learn that the shapes of the bottles --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- answers the question?

BECKY SALEEBY: So maybe you want to look at the shoulder because that tells you -- Or the seam, that tells you when it was made. Or maybe the lip of the bottle. So depending on what you want to know is how you're going to classify it.

[01:23:30]KAREN BREWSTER: But how do you know what you want to know?

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, I mean, you go into any -- anything with a question in mind. There's always a question, even if it's just a simple 106, you know, compliance thing. Here's a -- here's a -- we're building -- in Denali, let's say, moving an outhouse. Um, we know about the sites that are there, are in the vicinity. What can we possibly learn? Um, this is what I learned in graduate school. There's a few things that made a real big impression on me. And what it is is, like, sometimes, you're going to have a lot of sites, and they're going to tell you the same thing over and over and over. Ok, well that's fine, and maybe you don't need all those sites to tell you the same things over and over and over. But maybe there's another question that can -- that can lead

you into a little bit more information, and when you go dig that -- that -- that -- that modern outhouse site, ah, that one is going to be in this kind of -- in this kind of land form that we've not studied before. This is kind of like a low, marshy area, and we don't know anything about the archeology there. Or maybe we don't know who was actually here. You know, so you always have a question.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: There's never a time when you don't have a question.

[01:24:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I can see what you mean if you have lots of sites that are the same, and Skagway could qualify this way, you have lots of places under buildings.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: But a new question of, well, you know, well, let's look at what the women might have done. We don't know that.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or the children. Or oh, look, we're finding coins.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: What does that tell us about the gambling?

BECKY SALEEBY: Right, exactly. So I don't think there's a time -- there's never a time when you don't have a question.

KAREN BREWSTER: There's always new perspectives to look at.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh. And the questions change through time. When you first go into an area, and it's -- you know, you just have to say, "Well, when did people live here? When did they first start living here? Why were they here?" And then you can get better and better questions as time goes on and you do more research. So after thirty years, you can get -- you can ask some good questions.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And I think Skagway's an example of, you know, they started with the gold rush questions.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And eventually, they moved to World War II questions.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause there's this history of occupation, and they've continued to move through time with those questions.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

[01:25:53]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, I found the -- one of the places I was thinking about. It's page 84, um, about the Pantheon complex. "And in the analysis of the artifact assemblage from the Pantheon complex, specimens were classified, aggregated, and quantified somewhat differently than described" --

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh.

KAREN BREWSTER: "-- previously."

BECKY SALEEBY: That's the word aggregated. I love that word.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's classifying and aggregating.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. Aggregating. That's the word I didn't use. Aggregating is important. Aggregating -- you have to aggregate the data correctly. I mean, to the best of your ability. How do you -- I mean, you know, it's -- you just have to look at that data. How do you aggregate it? That's the lumping and the splitting. Do I look at this as ten different entities, or do I look at this

as only three different entities, both horizontally and vertically, you know. And if you look at it as ten different entities, you're going to get a whole different picture as opposed to three.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Maybe you have the whole saloon floor, and this is where the tables and the people were sitting. And this is the bar, and this is the doorway. Ok? Maybe there's only three different aggregates. Maybe you only want to look at it as one different aggregate. But if you look at it as ten different aggregates, you're gonna -- you're gonna -- you're gonna find things that might not even be -- they might be insignificant.

[01:27:16]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And here you go on to say, "Kardatzke (2002) considered each feature to be the unit of aggregation and then determined both the number of individual specimens and the minimum number of individual specimens for each type of artifact within each class to arrive at a grand total of 8739 artifacts." So this is where, you know, the --

BECKY SALEEBY: The aggregation becomes important.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that it's different from before -- he did it -- or she. I think Kardatzke's a he?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did it differently than other people, and then that gets complicated in how you compare across --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- projects. So can you explain more about -- well, you just did the unit of aggregation, but then the number of individual specimens, and each -- classifying types of artifacts versus specimens? It's a lot of archeological terminology, but you're the archeological educator, so you could explain it to me.

BECKY SALEEBY: So if you have a bottle --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: Ok, here's a bottle. I'm just looking on page 84.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Ok. That's a com -- that's a whole bottle.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Ok. One unit. What if that bottle were broken up into a hundred different pieces? You wouldn't necessarily know that that was one bottle. You might consider it a hundred different bottles. Or, you know, you probably wouldn't. You'd probably say, "Well this is prob -- maybe more than one bottle." So when you -- when you have an assemblage of things, you -- and they're -- the things -- the thing about archeology is, almost nothing is complete.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Everything is broken. And -- and -- and, uh, you just get a fragment of it. So that's -- that's what -- that's what the aggregation is, is how do you put it together to mean -- to get something meaningful? It's what is significant, and what is meaningful? A hundred pieces of green glass. Well, there could be -- what does that mean? Were there a hundred bottles? Were a hundred people drinking these things? Or was it just one bottle that got smashed?

[01:29:22]KAREN BREWSTER: So how you do -- how do you decide, are each -- let's say it's broken into a hundred pieces. Are each of those a hundred pieces an individual item that gets numbered and cataloged?

BECKY SALEEBY: They do get cataloged individually, or they could be cataloged as a lot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

BECKY SALEEBY: Lots of things are cataloged as a lot, which means that it's something that was broken up, maybe one something or two somethings that was shattered, broken, and we can't really learn much except as looking at it as a whole. So, I mean, I guess that's where the science comes in. You know, you have -- you have to think about, how did it get there? How did it get into the ground? Not only who put it there and how was it used, but how did it get in the ground? What's the process of making it an archeological site? And not every tiny little piece of glass is going to be highly significant. So that's -- that's the job of the archeologist, to decide what is important and what is not. How do you aggregate it, how do you look at it, how do you interpret it? And it's not -- it's not like, um, it's not like -- you can't read -- you know, you can read about how to do it, but then you really have to sit there and think about it. I mean, I often think about people who -- who do archeology in the field, sometimes I think of them sitting there and just staring at the site and thinking of all these things. People lived here. People were here. People used these things. And then they left. And then the processes began to work. And then the ground began to froth -- frost heave. You know, all these things. So then, all those things have to come into your interpretation.

[01:31:09]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and in this case, you say that Kardatzke considered each feature to be the unit of aggregation.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: So is that your example where the table was here, the bar was there?

BECKY SALEEBY: It could be, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Just -- just for --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, for -- and I'm -- I'm -- I cannot --

KAREN BREWSTER: Just for discussion purposes, that would be an example.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Each table, bar, door --

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Would be three different features?

BECKY SALEEBY: Right. And maybe they should be, and maybe they shouldn't be. And maybe there were, like, two people there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And they were just right there. And everything that was -- everything you see in the ground was the result of these two people in one hour of time, and that's all their stuff. So are you really -- are you really making a better interpretation by dividing it up into three features, or maybe you should just say, this is just the barroom. This is the floor.

KAREN BREWSTER: The whole saloon is a feature.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. Yeah.

[01:32:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and then you talk about here that the classification of artifacts. So like, a class of artifacts might be the glass bottles?

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or the ceramic?

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or the coins?

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Each of those is a class?

BECKY SALEEBY: And it can be -- and it can -- you can make it even finer than that. You can say, glass. Window glass. Bottle glass. Drinking glass. You know, you can make your classes whatever you want. So I think it's the archeologist's job to look at what was done before and try to fit in whatever you're -- the new stuff you're going to bring into the methodology and the analysis based on the old. So you can't just go into an area, particularly like Skagway, where lots of stuff was done and just say, "Ok, this is how we're going to do it. Today we're -- this is my idea." No, it doesn't work. You've gotta fit it into what was going on in the past in order to better understand, not just impose a new regime on something that -- reinvent the wheel.

[01:33:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So maybe in the past, glass was just glass, and now you have a more refined method?

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, yes. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you can say, oh, there's window glass, and there's bottle glass?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. And you have 1/4-inch glass and 5/8-inch glass and you have glass that's amber. You know, you can -- you can refine it to your heart's content. But at some point, you have to say, what is meaningful? Maybe this isn't meaningful.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And maybe one archeologist is particularly interested in the glass, so they refine it down to that precise level, whereas the other archeologist was more interested in the bones.

BECKY SALEEBY: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And focused on those?

BECKY SALEEBY: Exactly.

[01:33:41]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Because you also, then, in this paragraph, you're talking about minimum number of individual specimens.

BECKY SALEEBY: Ok. That's -- that's a -- that's one of my favorite topics. You might not've wanted to ask me that. So a minimum number is exactly what it sounds like. And the example we used is, one bottle as opposed to a hundred glass shards of the same bottle. And I know it best through bones.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And that's where -- because that's where I started out in doing archeological analysis. And you got -- you have to be real careful, because you can really bias an interpretation on the basis of -- of how you are determining the minimum number of individuals. With bones, I'll give you a really easy example. If you have -- if you have three bone fragments, and you know that they are both femurs of a deer. One you can easily tell is right, and one is easily left, and a third one is -- is a fragment of either the right or the left. Well, you just have one individual. It's just one individual. Unless it's so obviously, you know, a young one and an old one, or a long one and a -- you know. It's just one individual. So, you know, you could really mess up the interpretation by saying, well, there were three. Well, there weren't three. There was probably just one. So the minimum -- that's the minimum number of individuals.

KAREN BREWSTER: Is one?

BECKY SALEEBY: Is one.

KAREN BREWSTER: For one deer?

BECKY SALEEBY: One deer.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: But with historic artifacts, like your glass bottle example.

BECKY SALEEBY: It might not be easy.

KAREN BREWSTER: You don't know that those a hundred pieces are from one bottle, or --

BECKY SALEEBY: You might have an idea -- you know, if they're right all there together.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And they're the exactly the same color and thickness, that's what you might assume.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

BECKY SALEEBY: So it's -- so I think it's, you know, the way you do your methodology is really important. You have to say exactly how you're doing your method and why you're doing that. And then people like me, who come later on and try to make sense of it, can see, ok, is this person -- was this meth -- was this method correct? Are we -- are we -- are they inflating the number, you know, by saying, there was a hundred glass bottles here, when there was really only one.

KAREN BREWSTER: So deter --

BECKY SALEEBY: So methods are important.

[01:36:06]KAREN BREWSTER: So determining a minimum number of individual specimens for an artifact type is determined by the archeologist on that project?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: There's not some hard and fast rule?

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, no. It's -- it's -- every situation is different. And you can -- you can have different interpretations. So it's not -- there's no hard and fast rule. I think, like, in any kind of science, you have to be conservative, and you don't want to say, there are three deer here when there was really only one. And maybe there really were three. Maybe it was a right from one, a left distal, a right -- a left proximal, and there were three. But without really good reason to believe that, we're going to say there's one deer.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I was gonna say, with the deer example, how do you know the right and left are from the same animal?

BECKY SALEEBY: We -- you don't know, unless there's some really good reason. Like I said, sometimes you know because of the age of the -- the age of the individual. The bones haven't fused yet, and you can see this was an old right, and this is a sub-adult left. There were two individuals.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

BECKY SALEEBY: So all the data you can bring in in order to, um, you know, to actually determine what that thing -- that archeological unit is, will help.

[01:37:21]KAREN BREWSTER: Right, and as I say, with pieces of glass, it might be hard to figure out, but with pottery.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ceramics that have the same design.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: You maybe --

BECKY SALEEBY: And you can fit 'em together.

KAREN BREWSTER: You can fit 'em together, and they're broken, and they're, as you say, they're laying close together.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: That might be easier to figure out than --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- nails or shards of glass? My favorite is always bags of wood chips.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh.

KAREN BREWSTER: In archeological collections.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yuck.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's always my standard when I'm talking about museum collections.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah. bags of wood chips. Great.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. Yeah. At some point in the future, maybe they'll have some -- some way to deal with that, because, you know, as we get new methods, you're -- you're able to get a lot of data from stuff that in the past, they couldn't.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: So you have to think of that, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: So there's sometimes a good reason for them to collect all those soil samples that take up enormous quantities of space in the museum. Because somebody's going to figure out what to do with that, and maybe they won't.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, as you say, like, you know, they might find seeds in it at some point.

BECKY SALEEBY: They might find seeds, uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: At some point in the future. [01:38:27]Um, well, are there any other things you can think of about this report or the work you did in Skagway?

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, I -- all I wanted to say is that I was really happy to have the opportunity to do this 'cause it was -- it was really a wonderful project, and it came toward the end of my time at the Park Service, so I was happy to have had it to do, and I learned a lot. And I had a good time, and I got to, you know, meet with Karl, and that was great. Um, so it was all good. And work with Frank.

[01:39:02]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, are there any other Park Service projects that you're proud of? You're glad you got to work on?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, well, yeah, my eleven-year project with the mining. I -- I enjoyed that. And that was great, and I got to work -- do -- do various zooarcheological projects that I enjoyed doing with Jeanne Schaaf and Roger Harritt. I got to do some of those. I think the thing that was the best was that, uh, I -- I had -- I got to do lots of things that I just did because I enjoyed them, and my boss, Ted Birkedal, was broad-minded and understanding enough to know that it was all important. I got to work with lots of other people, other archeologists in the state, in different parks and different agencies, in order to make a community of people who are interested in archeological education. [01:40:00]I got to work in the villages. Working in the villages with the kids was the best, because I loved those -- those kids were wonderful. So it was all good. It was like, how -- you know, how lucky can you be?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. What villages did you work in?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, I worked in the villages that were in the -- in northern Alaska. Let's see, I can -- I'm drawing a blank here. Well, one of them, I think, was Shishmaref. Um, villages that were near the parks. You know, I'm literally drawing --

KAREN BREWSTER: So the northwest region, the Bering Land Bridge?

BECKY SALEEBY: Bering Land Bridge. Like, you know, Kotzebue, Nome, um, there was no park near Barrow, so I didn't work near there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: But the villages that were near the parks.

KAREN BREWSTER: So, like, the western Arctic ones, like Selawik, Noatak?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, Noatak. Noatak was one of them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Kiana. All up in there?

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah, those. Uh-huh. Exactly. Kiana, Noatak. [01:40:56]And the way I did that was through money from the Beringian program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

BECKY SALEEBY: So I worked on the -- with the Beringian folks and got money to go to the villages and teach the kids about archeology and have them come out to sites and work on the sites. That was -- that was great. That was lots of fun.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: And, I mean, that was good will for the Park Service because they were involving the community, and the kids learned something, and it was all good.

[01:41:24]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so you -- you said you had all this freedom to do things. And the -- this Skagway report, you know, you were assigned to.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Were you -- Did you get to pick your own projects, or were they always assigned to you?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, this one was assi -- some -- a little bit of both. This one was assigned to me. That archeological mentorship program was not. I sort -- I guess I sort of invented that. Um, and it was -- actually, the reason that came about was because my job was as the archeologist for the landmarks, and that was really kind of a tough thing to wrap your mind around. Because the landmarks were not always on Park Service land. They were sometimes private. And I was trying to do some, um, exhibit that would show -- some display that would show the landmarks. And I can say, I did not do a very good job of that, and the parks criticized me. And they were right. And in retrospect, they were right. I didn't do a very good job of that. And then I felt really terrible about it. Like, here I let down -- not only did I let down the parks, but, I -- you know, it was an opportunity to do something, and I didn't do it right. And I thought, "Well, what can I do to make up for that?" And I just decided, well, the best thing to do would be to go into the schools and talk to the kids about archeology, and that would kinda make it right. I don't know if it really did, but it probably helped. Um, so I got the Beringian grant, and then I got to go to the different villages and -- and even bring in Russian students.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, cool.

BECKY SALEEBY: Because you know, Beringian was the -- the -- across the Bering Strait.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. So you know, you just learn from your mistakes. I made a mistake, and I hoped to make it better, and that's how the archeological mentorship came about.

[01:43:14]KAREN BREWSTER: Do you have a sense of why that landmarks exhibit didn't come out as you had hoped?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, I probably was naïve in many ways, and I didn't -- I didn't have enough -- I mean, I just thought I knew what I was doing, and I didn't know what I was doing.

BECKY SALEEBY

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So I think what I learned from that, and if -- and I would -- I'm happy to tell you is that, you know, any kind of project you do, you have to think about all the different people who are, I guess, the word, kind of a catch-word, is shareholders. Who -- who are these people? Who are the people in the villages? There are people in the villages who worked on archeological sites long before there were parks. And they're -- they were still there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Did I reach out to them? No. I was wrong. You know, you have to reach out to all the people who might have a stake in this. If you've done that, then your project will be much better. You know, you have to realize, who are these people? Think of them in your mind. And the way that our laws are set up and our regulations are good about that. You just have to follow that. You know, they -- if you have -- certainly, when it comes to burials or anything like that, there are specific things you have to do. But I think, in general, anybody who has a -- a big project, you have to know who the people involved or who have a stake in it or who are interested in it, make sure you talk to them. 'Cause they're going to tell you something you never thought of.

[01:44:36]KAREN BREWSTER: And do you feel like with this Skagway project that you did that?

BECKY SALEEBY: I hope I did. I mean, I really tried to because I've learned from my past mistakes. I hope I did. You know, I talked to all the important researchers, and I went there. I talked to the curators. I talked to the other historic archeologists. I actually came to Montana on my own --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: On my own to look at the landmarks. There's Virginia City here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. So I mean, you know, I did -- I did what I could do.

KAREN BREWSTER: So you feel like you -- in this one, you learned and you accomplished the goals you set out to.

BECKY SALEEBY: I think so, yeah. I hope so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: I have no regrets, so I guess it's good. I mean, there are projects I have lots of regrets, but this one I don't, so that's a good one.

[01:45:21]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, and your example of that landmarks exhibit is one that you have regrets on.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes. I have lots of regrets, but it -- but I think that the outcome was ok because, um, I tried to make it better. You know, I didn't just leave it there. I tried to go out and make -- and -- and -- and repair the damage I'd done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, well, as I say, I think this book is -- I learned a lot.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, good.

KAREN BREWSTER: From reading it, because as I say, those old -- you know, you don't have to wade through eleven different archeological reports.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And it does tie it all together.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Nicely. So I'm hoping that it gets used.

BECKY SALEEBY: I hope so, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes, I really -- I do.

[01:46:00]KAREN BREWSTER: So um, was there anything else that you wanted to share, that when I said, "Oh, I want to come talk to you about Skagway." Well, you said, "Oh, I have nothing to say."

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, I guess I have a lot to say. I seem to have a lot to say in my old age. Yeah. I mean -- I mean, all I can remember is when I was first doing fieldwork in Alaska, and I worked up on the North Slope one summer. And one wonderful Alaskan archeologist who you probably know, Mike Kunz.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: Ok, I was working at a site with him. It was called, was it the Lisburne Borrow site? And a helicopter landed with a -- with a crew of people, reporters, and he was -- he was screening. And they stopped him, and they said -- and here I am digging my little pit somewhere. And they started talking to him, and he started talking. And it was like, wow. He can just talk about this stuff. I'll never be able to do that. You know, and after you do it for thirty years or more, you can just talk about it because it's so -- it's so part of you that there's -- there's nothing to really think about. I mean, you think about it, but it's just part of you.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: So I feel like I -- when I retired, I got to the point where I could just kinda talk archeology.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was going to say, as an archeology educator, you have been doing that for --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah. And somebody the other day wanted me to talk about Alaska, and she goes, "Well, is this too much to ask?" And I looked at her, and I said, "I -- I've been talking about Alaska for so many years, if you want me to stop, do it right now, I would have no problem."

[01:47:34]KAREN BREWSTER: Now, we did talk about, you know, the -- the -- you had fun doing this report, and that you liked doing research and writing.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: But were there things that were especially challenging or frustrating on this project?

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh, challenging? Well, the thing that I didn't like, I mean, maybe that was the challenge, was going through all those 106 compliance reports. Oh, man. And trying to understand what it meant. Because there were many different agencies involved, and like I said, drawers and drawers. And that part isn't really fun. I mean, that part is just bureaucratic stuff. But if you really want to understand, I mean, it was necessary. You have to understand, why was it done this way? Well, it was done this way because, you know, they had money to do that building, that corner of that building. That's all they had. Well, if you don't know that, then you wonder, why do they have such a little narrow piece of the archeology? So you have to know that, but it's not really fun to figure all that out.

[01:48:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Were there any obstacles? You know, people who said, no, don't do this?

BECKY SALEEBY: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or people you contacted who didn't want to talk to you?

BECKY SALEEBY: Everybody was helpful. Everybody was great. And the best one was Ted Birkedal.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: He was -- he's a great -- he was a person who had a -- has -- a very good friend. He and his wife are very good friends of mine. Um, a very broad view of what anthropology and archeology is. It encompasses just about everything. So there was -- there were few things that I had an idea to do that he -- I don't think there was anything I had an idea to do that he didn't let me do. I could just do what I wanted to do 'cause it was all archeology. It was all public money, spent for the public good.

[01:49:20]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, and I -- the reason I asked it, too, is I know, you know, within the Park Service as a bureaucracy, there's competition for funding and for projects, and if people -- other parks or other people in the regional office thought, you know, why are you doing that? That's not a useful project.

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, there -- there was funding for this, and the -- you know, the money was allocated, but like I said, there was no product.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: So no -- I didn't -- I can't remember -- I mean, I didn't have any problems with people or anything.

KAREN BREWSTER: There was no -- I mean, you say it took you five years. Was there pressure that this is taking you too long? You gotta work on it faster?

BECKY SALEEBY: No, because I had -- that wasn't really my job. It was sort of -- you know, my job was archeological education and landmarks and writing. Um, yeah. Writing landmark nominations. I will -- can I branch off on that for just a second?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, the thing that was frustrating was not this report. The thing that was frustrating to me was, I worked on -- I worked on one successful landmark nomination. They're very hard to do, I'll tell you. It's -- it's like a -- it's a formula kind of thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: So they are -- they're harder than National Register nominations?

BECKY SALEEBY: They're -- they're like a full-blown -- a much, much more detailed National Register nomination.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

BECKY SALEEBY: It is a National Register nomination. It's just for a landmark, you gotta present it in better detail. [01:50:49]But, um, so I worked on -- one thing I worked on for five years, or maybe even more, was the earliest Americans. And it was a theme study. And all the earliest sites that were in Alaska, I researched, and I did lots of stuff. And I wanted to have a document that was ready to go, that could be used to do other landmark studies. It was a -- all -- it was a thematic thing. And there it was, and somebody could use it. And two things that I learned. Lots of this stuff gets buried in file cabinets, and there was one fabulous National Register document that was done, um, oh, I don't know, maybe in the '70's or '80's, and it was locked in somebody's file drawer. And nobody even knew it. The person who wrote it didn't know. It had never been -- it had never been advanced to the -- to the National Register. It was just there in a file drawer, and it was such a waste of great data. That broke my heart to see that. And the other thing is, I worked on this project that was kind of, ok, this earliest American stuff, this is good. But then the Secretary of the Interior changes, and the Secretary of the Interior has different ideas. We're not doing this stuff anymore. We're doing, um, we're doing, um, a diff -- a

whole different thing. He happened to be Latino, and he was interested in those kind of sites. So ok, well, we do what the Secretary of the Interior tells us to do. I'm not disputing whether that's right or wrong. That's probably just fine, except it certainly -- a person who spends a long time working on one thing, and then a change of administration -- this happens, I'm sure, all the time every day, but it's frustrating. That part is frustrating, because then you have all this time invested in this, and you think it's good, and it's good stuff, and then, no, we're not doing that anymore. We're doing this.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: So to me, that was -- that was frustrating. It never happened with this book. But, it happened on other projects.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's kind of what I was wondering with this.

BECKY SALEEBY: No, it didn't happen on this.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause I can imagine that that happens.

BECKY SALEEBY: It could have happened. It could have happened, and it probably happens to people all the time. So I'm not complaining personally. I guess I am complaining personally. Because you know, you spend a long time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And lots of energy, and then it's done. And it's going to be in that file cabinet in the bottom drawer.

[01:53:07]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And that's what I was wondering, if the nature of being in a large federal bureaucracy --

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- how much that happens?

BECKY SALEEBY: That does happen.

KAREN BREWSTER: And how that affects your work?

BECKY SALEEBY: That happens, and it affects your work, and it -- it certainly affects morale.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: And I was always -- always been a very positive person, but I can say, it affected my morale.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

[01:53:27]KAREN BREWSTER: And what was the relationship like between the regional office and Klondike park specifically?

BECKY SALEEBY: Um.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you know?

BECKY SALEEBY: Well, I think it -- it would depend on if you were talking about the archeologists or the superintendents or, you know, everybody comes at the job of doing Park Service work a little bit differently. If you're the superintendent, you have to have all these projects, and you have hundreds of thousands of visitors, you have a little bit different view of it than the person who's on the ground digging the hole. Um, you know, I was very fortunate in most cases in that I didn't have to deal with that. It was Ted who had to deal with that. I'm the person who does the education and the research and the writing. He's the person who does the administration and the dealing with, you know, things that are bad with -- bureaucratically bad.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um, so, you know, I'm sure there was bad feelings all along the way, but I never got that at all. Not at all. I was removed from that because there was Ted as the filter.

[01:54:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Because I know, yeah, in some cases having a regional person working on a localized project may or may not have been as accepted.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did they appreciate the help from the region, or was it looked negatively upon?

BECKY SALEEBY: You know, I -- I -- probably a little bit of both. I can't tell you exactly. I -- I never got any bad feelings at all about what I was doing. I -- I don't think -- at least, they covered up if they did. I remember one experience I had is that -- I did a lot of work, research-wise, in Wrangell-St. Elias.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: Because of the mining sites.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: I'd never been there. And there was nothing -- you know, you can't just decide you're gonna go -- sometimes you can go if you're writing a report, you can go to the park and look at it, but I didn't have that opportunity. But I had the opportunity, I can't exactly remember, but I wanted to go to Kennecott because I was writing about it. I knew a lot about it. And I want to take my son there. So we went as tourists. We went as tourists. I paid for the whole thing myself. We were walking around, and somebody mentioned something, and I said, um -- you know, we were there looking around, and I'm pointing things out to my son. And they might've said, "Well, you know a lot" or -- And I said, "Oh, I work for the regional office." They were just horrified. And they wrote to my boss and said, "You didn't tell us she was coming." I was like, oh. And then, I have to thank Sandy McDermott, who started this project. She wrote a great email back and said, "Is there -- you have a problem with tourists? You know, do we have to tell you when our employees go as tourists?" That's what I was. My son was with me.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And so, there was that -- there was certainly a friction, but I didn't have to deal with that too much. My -- my pay grade wasn't high enough to deal with that friction.

[01:56:26]KAREN BREWSTER: And on the Skagway one, you were able to at least go there and look around a little bit?

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, they were incredibly helpful.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: Incredibly helpful, yeah. I had no problem at all.

KAREN BREWSTER: So.

BECKY SALEEBY: I know other people have, but I didn't.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But so, the idea of you writing about something that you haven't seen?

BECKY SALEEBY: Well -- well, perhaps. Perhaps the original archeologists had a problem with me, but they didn't let me know that. They were very generous. They were very professional. So um, you know, if I -- if I reinterpreted or misinterpreted, um, you know, I'm sorry. But I -- I -- I did it to the -- to the best of my knowledge.

[01:57:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Did they have a chance to review this before it got published?

BECKY SALEEBY: I -- you know, I did. I sent it to them, and some -- and I can't exactly remember what happened, but I think I gave them a timeline. And I think that I got some comments, and I think some comments were too late in coming.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

BECKY SALEEBY: So they were not incorporated. If -- if I got a comment, I would certainly have changed it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: But I think that, you know, everything -- everything you do, you have to have a timeline.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: And I was going to retire, so I couldn't wait for them forever. So if I didn't get a comment, then I just had to move on.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: So that's a -- that's a hard part in -- it was not really a collaborative effort except with Frank, but, you know, if you deal with other people's research, you certainly don't want to step on their feet. And I really tried not to. And if I did, I'm -- I'm truly sorry. But I didn't hear any negative things from them. And if they said 'em, then I don't know about it.

[01:57:53]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, and as you say, you do have to set time limits.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: When it comes to publication and finishing a project.

BECKY SALEEBY: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you hope people can respond in that time frame.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, I understand, having written these kinds of things myself.

BECKY SALEEBY: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: But you can only do what you can do. But it does sound like in this one, at least getting to walk around Skagway and see the buildings and the places you were writing about, you found that helpful.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, ab -- oh, yeah. Yes. In -- I mean, you can't do it without -- without doing that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: You must go there.

[01:58:26]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. So anything else?

BECKY SALEEBY: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: That you thought of that when I --

BECKY SALEEBY: No, I think I --

KAREN BREWSTER: Proposed this --

BECKY SALEEBY: I didn't know I had all this in my brain because it's been such a long time, it's like, gone. You know, I'm one of these people, when I'm done with a re -- with a project, I'm done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BECKY SALEEBY: Uh, I'm just done. And I liked it. I enjoyed it. But I did it, and --

KAREN BREWSTER: It's not like you've gone back and re-read this report?

BECKY SALEEBY: No. No. I don't -- yeah. 'Cause I have other things to think about and am curious about too many other things to dwell on what's -- what's there. I have to move on.

[01:58:56]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, um, thank you.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, you're welcome.

KAREN BREWSTER: For your time. Unless there's anything else you --

BECKY SALEEBY: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- you can think about this project or other Park Service projects you worked on?

BECKY SALEEBY: I just want to say, I had a great time in almost all of them. I had a couple bad -- couple bad experiences, but really, not very many. Almost all of them were positive. Um, yeah. It was -- I had a great job, and I -- I think about that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you have any of those bad ones you care to discuss?

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, that one about that -- that exhibit I told you about.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BECKY SALEEBY: That was the only bad one, really. I can't really think of anything. You know, I mean, there were people that -- there were certainly other employees that were hard to deal with, but most -- most of the people I worked with were good, hard-working, um, intelligent people with lots of integrity. So, you know, how much better than that can you get?

KAREN BREWSTER: And it sounds like you were a little bit out of the bureaucracy.

BECKY SALEEBY: I was.

KAREN BREWSTER: That the Park Service can be known for.

BECKY SALEEBY: I was out of the bureaucracy. I didn't have to deal with all that -- the stuff that, you know, Ted and Sandy had to deal with. I really didn't. I was sort of insulated because as a researcher, you know, I just -- I got to do my research and boy, that was great.

KAREN BREWSTER: Sounds great.

BECKY SALEEBY: It was.

KAREN BREWSTER: All right. Well, thank you very much.

BECKY SALEEBY: Oh, you're welcome.