

RECORDED INTERVIEW OF JULIE JOHNSON

CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER

IN BOULDER, COLORADO

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ORAL HISTORY 2017-01-102

KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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[00:00:00]KAREN BREWSTER: The background white noise in the room, so in case we have to, uh, manipulate the audio we can have that sound and then cut it out.

JULIE JOHNSON: Ok.

KAREN BREWSTER: The noise in the background that people will hear on the recording is just the white noise in this, um, office building. So this is Karen Brewster, and today is May 6, 2019, and I am here with Julie Johnson in Boulder, Colorado. And Julie, you're going to have to tell me what this building is that we're in 'cause I don't --

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, this is the office of the City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And that's who you currently work for?

JULIE JOHNSON: Correct.

[00:00:50]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Um, tell me a little bit about your background. Where are you from originally?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, I'm fourth-generation Colorado. My uh, one side homesteaded out on the Plains. The other was mining industry, um, in Idaho Springs and Georgetown area. And I'm technically the fifth generation of my family to live in Denver. Um, let's see. Well, I grew up on a ranch in northeastern plains of Colorado, and then I went to the University of Denver. My degrees are in Mass Communications, but um, I started I guess volunteering at the Molly Brown House Museum in Denver, and I just really, really loved it. I'd always loved history, but I'm not a very fast reader, so all the history books that they would stack up and send you home --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: I mean, I couldn't -- I couldn't do it. And so, um, I wasn't a history major, but I really, really loved it. And so then, when I was volunteering at the Molly Brown House -- there's always a project. You know, the house was built in 1893, so there's always a project, and I just really got involved and really had a lot of fun with that.

[00:02:05]I ended up in Anchorage, Alaska, because I applied for a job with -- as Anchorage Historic Properties executive director. And they hired me, and I had that job from 1993, uh, until -- '99, I think, is when Sandy McDermott stole me away.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: I had -- one of the fun things I did at Anchorage Historic Properties was a newsletter. The cool thing about Anchorage is, it's not very old. And so, at least when I

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was there, you know, there were so many people that were still alive that, you know, remembered really early days.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: And so, I got to interview them and had some really fun conversations. And got to see Anchorage in a whole different way.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, Anchorage -- you know, the Anchorage we know now has a lot of issues, but gosh, what a cool town that was, you know, when there weren't that many people. And they all talk about how much colder it was then.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And they were just, you know, it was really just kind of a family feel in that little town, and um, so it was great to get to know people that way. [00:03:11] So Sandy saw that newsletter, and she loved my writing style. And she -- as soon as she got money for this --

KAREN BREWSTER: The White -- the Wild Discouraging Mess.

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, she didn't know it was going to be called that yet. Neither did I, but yeah, the history of the White Pass. She really -- it was such an unusual thing that she really wanted my writing style to do it, um, because the White Pass really was so interesting, and she didn't want, you know, the typical administrative-type history. This happened then, and so-and-so did this, you know. And as I got into the story, I could totally see why she wanted that, and --

KAREN BREWSTER: And so, Sandy McDermott was in the Anchorage Regional Office for the Park Service.

JULIE JOHNSON: She was.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know what her position title was.

JULIE JOHNSON: You know, I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was she --

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, I'm in touch with her. I could ask her. I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, I don't -- just she was --

JULIE JOHNSON: She was a cultural resource --

KAREN BREWSTER: Resource something.

JULIE JOHNSON: She was in charge of the people in cultural resources.

[00:04:08] KAREN BREWSTER: Right. That why a project about, you know, part of the Klondike Unit, you know, part of the Klondike park's jurisdiction, why they, um -- project came out of regional instead of it from the park?

JULIE JOHNSON: I don't know. I don't have any idea.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. But it did.

JULIE JOHNSON: It did, and I was happy to do it. And I actually was never employed by the Park Service, um, because I didn't have a history degree. I was contract.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Um, and that was in '99?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I think it was '99 when I started there, yeah.

[00:04:48] KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. So tell me about working on this history of the White Pass Unit project.

JULIE JOHNSON: What do you want to know?

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, how did you -- how did you start?

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JULIE JOHNSON: So, um --

KAREN BREWSTER: What was your process?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, the first -- so, I -- I knew that I wanted the job because I hated Anchorage Historic Properties. I -- I was in, like, a two-person office, and there was a lot of turnover. It was an assistant kind of position, and um, I worked for a board, and working for a board is just terrible. It's just horrible. And um, and I was broke all the time, and it was really, really stressful. And so, I was definitely looking for a way out of that, and then this came along. [00:05:32]But before they -- before I accepted it, they wanted me to go down to Skagway and see Skagway and that kind of thing. And then -- Linda Cook was the interim superintendent at the time, and she and another person that was there, Toni Horton, I think, organized a field trip for us. And so, the Park Service sent me down there with Frank Norris, and then we met Linda and Toni in Skagway. And we got on the train. Of course I love trains anyway, so that's -- that was fun -- so even if I'd never even taken the job, this was such an adventure. And then we got off -- off the -- oh, the first tunnel. I forget. That big tunnel, you know, that goes up --

KAREN BREWSTER: Anyway.

JULIE JOHNSON: So -- Well, it's in there, no doubt. I've forgotten.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I don't know. Anyway.

[00:06:29]JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. Yeah. You can -- yeah. So anyway, so they let us off at that point, and then we hiked down to White Pass City. And it was really, really rough. There had been a road. When the railroad was building, um, there had been a road, a switchback, back and forth to White Pass City, which is at the bottom of the canyon there. And it had all been grown up with alders. So um, Linda was pregnant, and so she and Toni stayed up on the platform, which turned out to be a really good thing. Um, and I was bummed that they couldn't go, but it may have saved us. At any rate, we went down, and it was really thick with alder. You know Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: You know what that looks like. And um, but the reward was, we actually did see White Pass City. I mean, and, you know, I had seen a lot of diaries and photos of it, and um, so it was just really rewarding just to see a little bit. I mean, most of anything had melted. It's a rain forest, you know. And um, the materials they were using, of course, were all natural, so they were doing what they do. They were disintegrating and going back to the earth. But we did find some things. And I feel really badly now. I should've brought you some photos. Um, there was like, a -- a door for a metal stove and something, you know, just like -- and like the corner of a cabin, I know we, um -- but it was really, really marshy there, and I can't imagine there's anything left down there now.

[00:08:01]KAREN BREWSTER: Were there any structural remains?

JULIE JOHNSON: That was it. I think the only -- there were a couple of, you know, like corners.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: Where the, you know, where the joints, the dovetails, would be still in position and still kinda there, but it was so wet, and, you know, crumbling even as we were standing there, so I can't imagine anything would still be there now.

[00:08:23]KAREN BREWSTER: Why did they build on such a marshy spot?

JULIE JOHNSON: Where else were they gonna build?

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know.

JULIE JOHNSON: They didn't care.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: They were just there to mine the miners. They didn't -- you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, why did -- White Pass City was --

JULIE JOHNSON: White Pass City was a stopping point along the way for -- for a place to sleep and eat and get food poisoning from -- from everybody's -- From the diaries, if you read the diaries, White Pass, it was pretty awful. Um, and then get some supplies. And I think, um, it had something to do with the Brackett Wagon Road, too, I forget, but --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it -- oh, was it -- it was before the toll spot?

JULIE JOHNSON: I think so. I think past that, it was a toll. But you'd have to read the book to - - because I actually don't remember, but I think it did have something to do with the Brackett Wagon Road. I have seen the Brackett Wagon Road before White Pass City, so I know it existed before that. And I have walked on that, and that was really cool.

[00:09:26]But anyway, so there, so back to, you know --

KAREN BREWSTER: Your hike.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, back to the hike. Up was really challenging, and one of the alders -- there was a hiker ahead of me, and one of the alders snapped back and cut my eye, and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh.

JULIE JOHNSON: It's ok. I mean, it healed and everything. It was a little weird, but um, one of the weird things that did happen, and I've hiked hundreds of miles in Alaska and here in Colorado. I've only seen one fairy ring. You know what that is?

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, it's just a -- a level spot. It was a small circle, um, about twice the size of this table, so maybe four to five feet in circumference. And um, you know how dense the vegetation is in the rain forest, and it's a little place where there's no vegetation at all. It's just like dirt and moss and totally clear.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: And um, I didn't take a photo of it. Well, I was actually -- I think I was out of film. This was way back in the day of film, so it wasn't like, you know, I had my cell phone with me.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: But it was really cool, and we stopped for a moment, and -- 'cause I don't -- you know, I don't know what causes fairy rings, but it was really an interesting thing.

[00:10:48]Um, and then about halfway up -- and we're climbing and the alders are not easy to climb in, as you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And I'm like, you know -- we realized that, you know, that the mountain -- the tunnel goes through the mountain, so what if we're climbing on top of the tunnel?

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

JULIE JOHNSON: How are we -- how are we gonna know? 'Cause we were still below tree line. So that's when we started hollering for Linda and Toni, and then they answered us back, and so we could find 'em.

KAREN BREWSTER: Unhh.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, I -- yeah. And I -- I, um, I've thought about that a lot of times, like, wow. We were so lucky that they -- they stayed back. Um, and so that, you know, what an adventure. That was just so freaking much fun. And then got back and the next day, you know, all the seasonals and stuff wanted to know about the trip and how cool it was. And it really, really was fun. And um, the train, you know, the train stopped, and we got on and went back, and I just kinda fell in love with Skagway at that point and the project. And so it's -- the rest is history.

[00:11:54]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, well, and being able to visit a place that you're gonna write about.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And experience it makes a big difference.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. Yeah, that was really fun. And, you know, I'm sure that there are people that go down to White Pass City now. I think the train stops somewhere around there so that you can hike up to a glacier.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: But um, yeah, White Pass City was down, and it's steep. Um, so I feel pretty privileged to have seen it.

[00:12:25]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And then, tell me about the Brackett Wagon Road.

JULIE JOHNSON: So you can ask Karl (Gurcke) more about this. This was when I was into the project more. Um, I just -- I'll be honest, and everybody in the office would tell you, I fell in love with George Brackett. I mean, he was not an entrepreneur, but, you know, this was -- and I called it in the book, I call it "grand Victorian bravado." They just do it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: Ok, sure. I'll do it. Um, because they had to. They didn't really have any choice. He had, like, seven sons or something like that, and, you know, what are you going to do with 'em? Put 'em to work, you know. And so, he built a wagon road, and it was originally a toll road was the idea, but, of course, with all the craziness, it kinda was swept away, and I think he lost his shirt on the project.

(background noise, conversation from hallway outside of the room)

JULIE JOHNSON: But he did -- oh yeah, I know. This office is not sound proof, even in the slightest. Um, so I think -- I mean, I think he had a great time, and I know his sons did. I think they just had a wonderful time working on this, but it -- he lost investors, and a lot of things went south for him. And he actually ended up back in, I think, St. Paul, and then he had a son that lived in Denver. And I found some of the letters that he wrote to his son in Denver, but I just -- I just think George Brackett was just a really, really interesting person. [00:13:48]Um, he -- so you'll have to ask Karl where this was, but there's a big pipeline that goes over the river.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: And um, I was pretty -- I was really excited about going to see the -- you know, a bunch of us were going to see -- the park superintendent, and I forget his name, and his wife, and Karl and another historian, we were going to go see the Brackett Wagon Road. I was so, so, so excited. And then Karl said, "Well, you do have rubber-soled shoes?" And I'm like, "Oh, what?" 'Cause you have to walk over the pipeline.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

JULIE JOHNSON: And um, so Karl can tell you where that is. He would know for sure. And I -
- I tend to be somewhat afraid of heights, but I made it over because I just wanted to see
the Brackett Wagon Road so badly. It did have one rail on it, and, at the time -- pretty
much every time I stayed in Skagway, I kinda stayed at the White House.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: With the Tronruds. Um, and I asked John. He was like, oh, you'll be fine. If
it doesn't rain, you'll be fine. I'm like, oh great. It did not rain, and so I --

KAREN BREWSTER: Thank goodness.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah so, but we got to walk on the Brackett Wagon Road, which was really
exquisite. It was really, really cool. Um, and that was -- that would've been well before
you got to White Pass City.

[00:15:10]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, maybe we should step back a little to explain the
White Pass Unit and -- and -- and what the White Pass is versus the Chilkoot.

JULIE JOHNSON: The Chilkoot.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause everybody's heard of the Chilkoot.

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, sure. And I get that because you can hike it. And I've hiked part of it.
I've never gone -- I actually can't believe I've never actually gone over the pass. I've
been on the other end of it, but from the train.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: You know, um, so I think it's just because it's more accessible for people.
And there's that picture of the Golden -- you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But the White Pass -- the reason George Brackett was gonna put a
road in was the idea that as an alternate route to the gold fields?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, I think it was -- I think it, um -- I think it was lower and more gradual.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: I think. Because, you know, um, the Chilkoot has ups and downs, but then
it's got that last really steep, um --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: Climb, the Golden Staircase. And the White Pass was more of a gentle
incline. And um, I'm pretty sure that's why they were putting the -- the road there.

[00:16:20]And this was before the railroad. Um, so, and I think the White Pass just -- this
is going to sound -- well, you've spent time in Skagway. So there's the group that comes
to hike, and, you know, the younger, more fit, probably, group goes to Chilkoot. And
then, the cruise passengers get on the train, and they go up the White Pass. And I love the
train, but the stories they tell are horrible. I mean, to say that they're in -- you know, it's
drama, it's incorrect, it's Disney-fied -- it's not -- no, Disney would do a better job than
they're doing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Romanticized, sort of?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, it -- very much more drama. I mean, in fact, one of the things they
said about George Brackett was that he left Skagway a bitter, broken man, and that's --
there's nothing further from the truth. I mean, he's like, "Oh, I get to go home." And, you
know. I mean, he was -- he was not broken, and he was not bitter.

KAREN BREWSTER: But he was maybe not the millionaire he had hoped to be.

JULIE JOHNSON: I don't know if he wanted to be a millionaire. You know, I think -- you know, like, the railroad people, I mean, they had investors. But the people that actually worked there? I think they were in it because they liked the work.

[00:17:39]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and also, they were in it, you know, for the money in the sense that not everybody who was in the gold rush was out mining.

JULIE JOHNSON: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: There's all kinds of support people.

JULIE JOHNSON: No. In fact, really, you know, I mean, this is not just my supposition, but, you know, the people that made most of the money made it off the miners. Um, except for our friend Nordstrom, who actually, I think, he did get enough gold to come back and start a shoe store in Seattle.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes. That's -- I believe so.

JULIE JOHNSON: And I was really sad 'cause I really wanted to use that story, but it was on -- he was on the Chilkoot and not the White Pass, so I didn't get to use that story.

[00:18:16]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, yeah. I'm looking at the book to see what it says about how George Brackett got involved. I think, didn't he come from a surveying background?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I think so 'cause his notes are in the back of the book.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: Because they were just so beautiful. He had fabulous handwriting, and, you know, it was almost like a family reunion that he had. He had -- one of his sons, what was her name, Molly? Molly Brackett had a photograph book that you could find in any bookstore in Skagway. Kind of a different angle.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, yeah, somehow I -- I think -- well, I don't remember if it was Brackett or somehow I kind of remember had been in a -- or maybe that was -- maybe that was Heney who built the railroad, came from a -- having already done similar construction planning elsewhere.

[00:19:15]JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, Heney was a very interesting guy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, what do you remember about him? While I'm looking this up.

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, um, well, hm. I think he was just one of those guys that just did it, you know. He was kind of like George Brackett. You just did it. You just did what you have to do. But he loved what he did, and I do believe he had experience. Now the -- one of the engineers that worked with him on the project, gonna forget his name, but he -- because of the, you know, the topography of the White Pass, it was going to have to be narrow-gauge. And because Colorado also has narrow-gauge, the engineer was actually from Denver, and he was the same one that did the Moffat, the train that goes up to Moffat Tunnel. Um, and so, you know, they were just really fascinating people that just did what they wanted to.

[00:20:10]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, in the book, I just found this part about White Pass City, and it -- you say in the book, "it was a stopping spot for stampedeers before the ascent up Dead Horse Gulch, a construction camp for the Brackett Wagon Road, and finally construction camp for the upper stretches of the White Pass Railroad. The town's purpose was to provide rest and services to stampedeers and packers on their way over the summit." And then when the train came through, the town outlived its purpose. And the train was February of 1899. "And the town was deserted as quickly as it sprouted in late 1897." So it did have a short life. But here, this is the part about George Brackett.

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JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I -- I -- there's a book, like a little memoir of some kids that grew up in Skagway, and pictures of them. They would go and have picnics at the old, you know, the ghost town of White Pass City.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: But it was quite a bit easier to get to. Um, I don't think the vegetation was quite as big as it is now.

[00:21:13]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, and if the Brackett -- parts of the Brackett Road were still hikeable, then it might have been possible. Well, here you say, Brackett -- oh, he was a butcher for the -- during the Civil War. So well, I don't know a butcher. He supplied meat to the regiment. Um, Miller -- oh, he was made overseer of the highways and later supervisor of Minneapolis township. And then, yeah, survey party for the North Pacific Railroad. So he -- he did have background in all that. Built a section of the Canadian Pacific (railroad) west of Winnipeg. He'd been to Alaska as a tourist.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. Yeah. Tourism -- Yeah, in fact, I believe they went through the south -- up from Juneau, I think, maybe. From Vancouver.

KAREN BREWSTER: Pacific Coast steamship. Yeah, Inside Passage.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh, yeah, but there was --

[00:22:24]JULIE JOHNSON: There was actually a lot of tourism even back then.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it's amazing.

JULIE JOHNSON: Interesting, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause this was 1890.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um.

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, you know, the Victorians, they had -- I mean, some -- depending on what you did, you know, there was expendable income, and they did have the luxury of travel.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And it says that his son Jim Brackett went to Skagway in August 1897 with a load of cattle. Um, to serve the miners. And then, his other son built Brackett Trading Post. I'm just trying to see what George -- how he ended up doing the wagon road. He met Acklen. Congressman -- aah.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I don't remember all the specifics.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, it was the Skagway and Yukon Transportation Company, and then they must've hired him. 'Cause I was just figuring how he got there. And then, you said, they had investors.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm.

[00:23:33]KAREN BREWSTER: So um, another interesting part of the White Pass story is the horses.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Can you talk about that?

JULIE JOHNSON: Sure. Um, when I first took on the project, most people just wanted to know how many horses. 'Cause I think, um, gosh, what did they say on the railroad, like a thousand horses or something? I don't even remember the number. But, you know, a thousand horses died. And I, um, people wanted to know, "Well, how many exactly?" Well, who knows. I mean, it was so crazy. I mean -- and so the title of the book came

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from a quote from John Muir. When he landed in Skagway and Dyea, he described it as a wild, discouraging mess because there was so much activity, and it was ridiculous what was going on. And it was clear that none of these people, or very few of the people, had any experience with horses. Where they were loading them down and not feeding them. And um, so easily hundreds of horses did die. But, you know, on the railroad they say, a thousand horses or two thousand, whatever they say. It's impossible. And I even went to the archives and went through a bunch of bills of lading to see how many, but even that can't be accurate because, you know, the ships came, and they dumped, and, you know, nothing got recorded. So I don't think it's accurate. Um, in fact, I know it's not.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. In the -- in the chapter "The Dead Horse Trail," where you introduce it, you say, "the most commonly repeated figure declares 3000."

JULIE JOHNSON: 3000?

KAREN BREWSTER: But then you say 3800 were registered by customs. But who knows?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I just -- it's -- it's impossible to know. But that aside, I tried to make the story about the horses. [00:25:27] And um, one of the coolest things about this project was just sitting in that Klondike library and reading the first-person accounts and reading the diaries. And that's fairly controversial in the history world, and I don't know why. Well, I don't think it's as controversial as it used to be. I have had colleagues, and one of them might have been at the Park Service, who if it wasn't published, it wasn't right, it wasn't history. And I'm like, well, but if it's something published, then it's somebody's interpretation, and it's generally some white guy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: Who thinks he knows everything, and um, and has written his opinion and called it history. And it's just the human nature. We -- I mean, we -- it's just the way it is. We can't write something without having, you know, our opinion in it somewhere.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: I mean, journalists can try to be as fair and impartial as possible, but it's still, you know, we're still humans.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:26:35] JULIE JOHNSON: It's impossible not to tell the story from our point of view. And um, that's why I liked the diaries so much because the diaries were talking about the things. They were talking about the horses. And numerous accounts talked about horses committing suicide. Well, I grew up with horses, and I just -- they're really smart, and I love them to death, but I -- I just didn't -- I mean, they know cause and effect. Like, if you go out with a halter and they're not in the mood to work, they'll run. So they know that part of cause and effect, but I'm pretty sure that they didn't know that they were going -- if they jumped off a cliff, they were going to die. Then kill themselves and be out of misery. I just couldn't make that connection. So from the Anchorage office, I called CSU, Colorado State University in Fort Collins, and talked with Temple Grandin. She's a wonderful woman, and she's in the -- in their veterinary agriculture school. And she's autistic, and um, she has done a lot of research on um, on cattle and horses and that kind of thing. And so I talked to her, and it was really interesting, and she agreed with me. And I sent her the diaries, and we had a really interesting -- just fascinating phone conversation about how they just, you know, horses don't make that cause and effect. [00:28:10] However, they were starving. Most of them were starving, and if they were

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eating moss -- 'cause there's really nothing along the White Pass that's appropriate for a horse to eat, there just isn't. And these guys weren't -- they didn't want to waste the space on the horse's back for hay, and um, so they were starving, and they could've been hallucinating or just so weak that they fell down the side of the mountain. 'Cause some of those are pretty -- you know, some of those portions of that trail were pretty slick and just really deadly. And if a horse is -- you know, if he's not balanced properly and he's exhausted, it's -- you know, a lot of bad things happen, that's for sure. But I did put in the book, and I do feel this, I mean, we feel differently about animals now. And, you know, they're our friends, they're our pets, but for the most part, they really weren't then. They were more property. And I'm not going to say that people didn't love their horses, 'cause there's a little story in the back of that -- that woman from Seattle.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And -- but it -- but it was different.

[00:29:22]KAREN BREWSTER: They were their laborers, sort of?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. And, you know -- and that's one thing that really bugs me about, you know, history. We put today -- you know, we live today in this year. And we put -- we look at what happened a hundred years ago with our judgmental filter.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And judge the people that did those things, um, by our standards today, and I don't really think that's fair. And I -- because I, you know, we -- there was -- I mean, these people were also starving.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And I actually disagree with a fact that or the theory that many of them wanted the adventure. I actually disagree with that. I think they were really -- most of them were just really desperate for employment. They were desperate for money. And they heard about, you know, the strike. Unfortunately, for most of the people that went up there, news traveled very, very slowly back in the day. And, you know, now, if somebody had that kind of a strike, we'd know it probably in half an hour. It might pop up on my cell phone.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: CNN reports, you know, big, big gold strike! George Carmack. Um, but then, you know, it was -- it was months.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And so by that time, all the -- you know, most of the claims had been staked. So it was a really pretty desperate time, and a lot of the people died as well.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And we need to remember that. And, you know, not be judgmental about them. And trust me, that's hard --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: -- for me, because I love those horses. And the stories and the photos are terrible.

[00:31:02]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I didn't know that part of the story 'til I read your book.

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, I'm not -- I don't know all that history.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, it's also known as the Dead Horse Trail, so I guess I did know it. I knew it more -- I think I knew it -- and I lived in Alaska for a long time, so I think I knew it as the Dead Horse Trail before I knew it as the White Pass.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And I guess I know more about the Chilkoot, 'cause that's, like you say, the more popularized one. And they couldn't really take horses over the Chilkoot -- up over the summit? Maybe they took 'em --

JULIE JOHNSON: I think they tried in a couple of different ways. Um, but yeah, it just wasn't -- yeah. It wasn't --

KAREN BREWSTER: So that's why there was so many more horse deaths on the White Pass is, they were just using them more?

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, yeah. I think they just -- they barely went up to Sheep Camp, mostly, on the Chilkoot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: I mean, there were horses, but they didn't go all the way, for sure.

[00:31:55]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And as you say, that the -- the people using the horses, they were not wealthy people.

JULIE JOHNSON: Mm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And they needed their own supplies, so they didn't have either the money or the space for hay. And why they couldn't figure out that horses still need to eat -- ?

JULIE JOHNSON: Why do my neighbors not know that dogs have to eat, and why it is the dog barking all the time? I don't know. Why do my neighbors let their cats out so they can -- I don't know. People -- yeah, I don't have answers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: People suck, and they still do.

KAREN BREWSTER: But -- and um, and then, I assume the horses, they fell off the trail or they were just left there?

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: They were not -- nothing was done with their bodies? Were any of them salvaged for meat?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, if you read some of the White Pass diaries, probably. 'Cause, uh, some of the restaurants, we're guessing, were serving that, and a lot of people got sick.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's why the people got sick?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. Well, probab -- that and a number of reasons. They're probably drinking from the creek, and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. And the stress. I mean, this has got to be terrible stress for them, too, so.

[00:33:09]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And they weren't -- as you say, the men weren't eating very well themselves, probably.

JULIE JOHNSON: Hm-mm. Hm-mm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And the sanitation was probably non-existent.

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, I can't imagine there was anything at all, no. Yeah, you didn't hear about outhouses out in White Pass City. Skagway, obviously, but not -- Well, I don't remember any. I mean, they couldn't have dug. I mean, I can't -- I can't really --

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KAREN BREWSTER: Is it permafrost?

JULIE JOHNSON: No. I don't think so. But pretty rocky.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, the rocks under all that marsh, I think. Yeah, I don't think it would be possible.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was going to say something about the horses, um. I can't remember. Oh, well, eating moss. Was there something in the -- chemicals in the moss that might make them hallucinate?

JULIE JOHNSON: There could've been. And that was one of the things that Temple Grandin thought, you know, moss is not something that a horse would eat unless they're really, really desperate. And probably there's something --

KAREN BREWSTER: Chemical compound thing. [00:34:15]So why did you decide to go to Alaska in the first place?

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, well. My mom moved up there in 1980, and then my brother was stationed at Elmendorf (Air Force base). He's a pilot. And um, he and his wife had just started having babies, and then I -- uh, this is a pretty common story. My boyfriend was a doctor, and so he was going to go work in Bethel, uh, pay off his student loans. And so, then I saw this ad for Anchorage Historic Properties executive director, and that's why. I mean, I had been up there a number of times, so I kinda knew what I was getting into.

[00:35:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Um, I know what I was going to ask you, which was about the diaries and how some academic historians maybe didn't look at that as valid. I thought diaries and those kinds of things as primary source. That should be what you'd be looking at.

JULIE JOHNSON: I agree.

KAREN BREWSTER: But that was not the sentiment?

JULIE JOHNSON: That was not the sentiment of one of my coworkers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. But, I mean, and I think that's what makes your book interesting is, you have lots of quotes, first-person accounts.

JULIE JOHNSON: They already told the story.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: All I did was put it together.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: I mean, they told the story. [00:35:38]And this is interesting, too, and I don't think this is in the book, but one of the -- one of the diaries talked about a monster in the river. And um, and I -- I had meant to write to Eowyn Ivy. Have you read her books?

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, you know, in the second book, she talks -- you know, her husband is out kind of where this has occurred, talking about a monster in the river. Do you remember that part?

KAREN BREWSTER: There's a monster in the lake.

JULIE JOHNSON: Or lake, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. And -- and so I was just -- I meant -- I keep meaning to write to her to tell her. I mean, maybe she knows about it. Maybe that's where she got it, I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, her -- that book, which the name I can't remember.

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JULIE JOHNSON: "The Bright Side of the Earth" or something.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or something like that, yeah. And it's sort of -- when I read it, to me it was a little bit of a historical fiction.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Kinda based on the Allen Expedition, up the Copper River.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that's in, um, Athabaskan country.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ahtna country. And so, I was wondering if that idea of a monster in the lake comes from a traditional Ahtna story because it's in their region.

JULIE JOHNSON: I don't know. Maybe. I mean, I think -- [00:36:54]And then there was another diary, and this I think you can explain, um, but the mountains -- how the mountains were moving. And I think that's just like a mirage kind of thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: But um, it was -- I mean, the guy was truly terrified.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because he saw the mountains moving?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. He was truly terrified. And if you can think about it, a city kid from, you know -- I mean, think how terrifying this would be.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: I mean, the mosquitoes alone would be horribly terrif -- I mean, awful.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and as you say, they didn't know how to use horses, and then you arrive in Skagway, and you get a couple of the horses to carry your stuff, and --

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, no. It would be terrifying. Absolutely.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know how they knew what they -- well, they didn't know what they were doing.

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, they didn't -- they didn't.

KAREN BREWSTER: They -- or they followed some other stampeder.

[00:37:38]JULIE JOHNSON: Well, yeah. You look at the -- you look at the photo on the cover.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: I mean, they didn't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, it's actually -- it's great, this one -- one guy on the right. I didn't look at it before, but his expression looks a little bit befuddled and like, "What did I get myself into?"

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, exactly, and it's the kinda thing, you get that far into it, what'll you do, go back?

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, in some cases, I think, at least on the Chilkoot, I think they got to Sheep Camp and realized they were in more than they could and turned around. I don't know about White Pass.

JULIE JOHNSON: I don't know. I mean, I'm sure some did, but not enough.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, yeah, do you remember the numbers? I mean, know about the horses dying on the trail. What do we know about people dying on the trails?

JULIE JOHNSON: I don't remember.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did that fall into your research?

JULIE JOHNSON: Probably.

KAREN BREWSTER: Probably. [00:38:30]So in putting this book together, so you were sort of given this assignment, do a history of the White Pass Unit. How did you decide the themes to look at, and --

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, since it had been called the Dead Horse Trail, and most of the people at the Park Service unit were in Anchorage. "How many horses, how many horses?" So that's kind of where the thrust was. Um, and then my love of trains, I mean, that was an obvious connection. Um, the Brackett Wagon Road was just kind of a bonus thrown in. I didn't know anything about that when I got there. Um, and, you know, gold is in my family, so my -- my grandfather, my great-grandfather built Argo Mill, which is in Idaho Springs. And uh, Grandpa Ruth was a miner as well. Um, so I kinda had that connection. I think -- I mean it was -- it was -- so the first time I was in Skagway by myself to do research was in April, and that's before the tourists get there. But things are starting to wake up, you know, the coffee shops are coming back and, you know, people are starting to come and rest -- There was -- there were two restaurants open. Um, one was open for lunch, one for dinner, and then you just hoped they didn't get it screwed up so that they were both open at lunch and nobody for dinner. Um, and one was a really good Italian place. It was in Captain Moore's house.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

JULIE JOHNSON: I don't remember the name of it, but it was really good. Um, so I talked to the people of the town. I mean, they lived there. They know the stories, you know, the Rapuzzi stories and all that. And so, I kinda got their angle, and then, you know, truthfully, I just sat down and took the files out and started reading the diaries, and the -- and the -- really, I mean, I -- the story wrote itself, to be honest, 'cause, you know, I took it from -- from those diaries.

[00:40:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Now, they had diaries that were specific to White Pass?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yes. Yeah, I think so.

KAREN BREWSTER: There was particular people's names associated with them?

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm. Um.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I haven't been in that library for many years, so I don't know how it's organized now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was that the Klondike Park's library? Or their archives?

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm. Yeah, it's the Park Service library. And it was, you know, it wasn't fancy. It was just a room, maybe twice the size of this, and usually walked in -- walk in, sit down, and yeah, it was great.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, was it in the archives where you had to have it pulled out and wear white gloves and all that?

JULIE JOHNSON: Nope. Nope.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. It's their actual -- it's their library in the admin building?

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. I would think those -- well, maybe they made copies of diaries.

JULIE JOHNSON: Probably. I don't know, it's been a long time since I --

[00:41:22]KAREN BREWSTER: So how long did the project take you?

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, couple years. My mom got sick while I was doing this. She got lung cancer. So that slowed the process down. It probably would've been a two-year project.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: But it ended up, I think, a three-year project 'cause of that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. It does seem like, as you say, reading those diaries and everything, that it would be a fairly overwhelming amount of material.

JULIE JOHNSON: But it was awesome. It was so much -- yeah, overwhelming, I guess that's -- you could look at it that way.

KAREN BREWSTER: In terms of how do you decide how to narrow it down into a reasonably length --

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, what tells the story. You know, like the guy that wrote the moving mountains, that doesn't tell the story. What tells this story, and that was how I -- you know, and sadly, I couldn't use the Nordstrom story.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: Even though I think it's a fabulous story, I couldn't use it, so.

[00:42:11]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And um, you also have in your, you know, background chapters on other history to sort of set it in context.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Of Skagway and the gold rush.

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, and one of the chapters in there was kinda controversial when I first announced I was going to do it, or at least I was kinda -- I was working on it. And it's the one about the Victorian lifestyle. Um, and it was interesting 'cause there was a very conservative type of historian at the Alaska office, or the Anchorage office, and he just didn't understand why I would do that. 'Cause I had a -- I did a timeline. You know, this happened, this happened, silver crash, blah blah blah, blah blah blah, you know. All the way up to the Titanic going down. And it ended up scooting it all the way to 9/11, at the end of the book.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: So he just thought that was crazy. He didn't understand why that would happen, and so, I -- but I went ahead, and I -- and there -- I mean, the Victorians were fascinating.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: Absolutely fascinating. So much happened. I mean, for one thing, Queen Victoria lived a long time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: So, you know, we're talking about a hundred -- you know, about a hundred-year lifespan. So a lot of things happened, but they were also really, really fascinating people. Um, you know, books were suddenly more affordable. Travel was -- was possible. Um, they -- they had -- you know, they were interested in travel, and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And, you know, Audubon was busy. I mean, it was a really fascinating time. And so, the Victorian chapter was actually, Sandy loved it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: And the guy that didn't understand why it would be in this book, he's like, it works.

KAREN BREWSTER: Good.

JULIE JOHNSON: He was like, you're right, it works. 'Cause it explains a lot -- I hope it explains a lot about what was going on in these people's lives. I mean, they didn't -- you know, it's not like you and me. Well, you know, this sounds like fun. I could be there by 11:00, kinda thing. I mean, this was a huge thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And so, there was a lot of stuff going on. There was a lot of energy behind all of this. And um, I think it just helped to understand a little bit.

[00:44:25]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it sets the context. And I think it sets the context for, not necessarily for the miners, but for the people who went to create the community around the mining.

JULIE JOHNSON: For sure, and the people that grubstaked, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: You know, and that kind of thing. Yeah, absolutely.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then as you said, just, you know, the travelers who went to Skagway by ship just to go.

JULIE JOHNSON: And there were -- there were -- there were tourists, that's the crazy thing. There were tourists even at the height of the gold rush.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I don't know that Skagway would've been someplace I would've wanted to go in that time period. You know, maybe by 1910, it would've been ok.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, no, but I think it's right. It helped set the scene, just as much as you set the scene for, you know, why people went to mine, or why people -- you know, what life was like, you know, and the Native story of White Pass.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, all that's important context.

JULIE JOHNSON: It's a pretty fascinating place, and um, I mean, a lot of the White Pass story is also the Chilkoot because obviously Dyea is right there, and people, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: So a lot of the history is the same, but um, different. [00:45:40]And the train was interesting, too. Um, I don't know if you remember the article -- or the chapter about the Close brothers. They were fascinating.

KAREN BREWSTER: Were they the ones who did the train?

JULIE JOHNSON: They were the -- the investors, the financiers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

JULIE JOHNSON: And they were from -- from London. And I actually went to London and met some of the Close brothers. It was --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, they're still in business today.

KAREN BREWSTER: And I don't remember how they got involved in funding it.

JULIE JOHNSON: You know, I'm not sure I remember either. There's a really good book about it, though. I'm not sure. I don't remember. But um, they really got into it. I mean, they were --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, here. Well, here it says that they were concerned about the delays.

[00:46:31]JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, the other thing that's interesting to contrast from then to today was -- and I forget how many people were killed during the building of the White

Pass railroad, but I think maybe thirty, and they were bragging about how it was such a safe workplace because only thirty people died. Like, whoa!

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh, let's see.

JULIE JOHNSON: We can't even leave electrical cords out in the hallway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And yeah, here it's, you know, zero -- nowadays, it's a zero tolerance.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm. There they're like, oh yeah, only thirty people died, that's awesome.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you know, building a railroad, that probably was pretty good in those days. Let's see.

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, yeah. The train would never be built today. Never.

[00:47:17]KAREN BREWSTER: (Reads from the book) Um, the Close brothers had a land in Iowa for farming. Which they -- which sounds like they didn't do very well at. How they financed. (muttering) IT was in British Columbia.

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Wilkinson was an agent for British Columbia Development Syndicate, and he had connections to England and London, and somehow that's -- so the Close brothers loaned him money to start, and then that eventually became that they were investors, so.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, and I was there, oh gosh, the 100th anniversary of the rail. I guess it would've been the 100th anniversary, and I got to go up on the steam engine, and there were people from Close Brothers, and it was really fun.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cool.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, it was really cool.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cool.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, the steam engine was really fun.

[00:48:24]KAREN BREWSTER: So, you know, as I've said, you know, that the White Pass Unit sort of gets ignored.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: A little bit, so what besides, you know, you've already told some of the stories, but what is it important from your perspective that you think people should know?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, I think, um, I think I would like them to, um, think about how desperate these people were. You know, they weren't cruel people. They were everyday people, but they did cruel things to the animals. Um, there were a lot of crooks. Of course, you know, wherever there are people, there are crooks. I think -- and -- and I don't know how you would do this on the train, but I don't feel like they do a very good job of talking about the amount of activity that was there. Um, what it would have looked like. And I just -- I just think, you know, we lose so much in history, I think, simply because it's just told so poorly. Names and dates, you're like, eh, whatever. But, you know, when you can bring it back to who the people were and what they were afraid of and, you know, the letters home, you know, I miss my wife, I miss my girlfriend, I miss my mom. You know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:49:55]JULIE JOHNSON: Um, you know, they were people, and there was a lot going on in the world. We get so -- and I do it, too. I go home, and I watch the news, and I'm like, "Oh my god." Um, but this is -- you know, this is not our first rodeo. You know, it's -- I feel like we should be able to learn from these people. They went through a really horrible time, horrible time, and they survived. And, you know, they did it 'cause they had to, you know. They just -- they just did it 'cause they had to. I just feel like, um, I don't know. I got on my soap box.

KAREN BREWSTER: Go ahead.

JULIE JOHNSON: I just -- Well, we just -- we just whine so much about the littlest things, and these people and the things that they did. And some of them actually really loved the adventure, you know, and I don't think they went up there necessarily for the adventure, but some of them really, really loved it. [00:50:54]And was it -- was it Martha? The woman that went up with her first husband, and he decided not to go up the Chilkoot, and she went over anyway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Not Martha Moore.

JULIE JOHNSON: Uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um.

JULIE JOHNSON: Anyway, she ended up living in Canada for a long -- you know, for the rest of her life. And she actually went over the Chilkoot while she was pregnant. And in heels and a corset, no doubt.

KAREN BREWSTER: Heels on that -- well. I guess heeled boots, maybe?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

[00:51:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, that was actually one of my questions was, in this research, did you find out about the role of women and/or children, families?

JULIE JOHNSON: So I don't know much about children. I don't -- I don't think children really went, and there weren't very many women. Um, oh gosh, the woman that had the boarding house. What was her name?

KAREN BREWSTER: That wasn't Martha, was it?

JULIE JOHNSON: Pullen.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, Harriet Pullen?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, in Skagway itself, yes.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, in Skagway itself. I think Skagway is kinda where there were more women. I think I -- I did not see anywhere -- I didn't see any diaries of a woman going up Dead Horse Trail. Um, I think there were tourists, and there are some tourist accounts, and I can't remember the name, um, and they -- they tend to be from England.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, you had here -- I just -- I just missed it.

JULIE JOHNSON: But women making money and going to -- to mine, I -- I don't really --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, here you have excursionists Mary Hitchcock and Edith van Buren.

JULIE JOHNSON: That's right. Yep. Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, but they were tourists.

JULIE JOHNSON: They were tourists.

[00:52:43]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, and -- yeah, so I was wondering if there was any indication of women on the White Pass or in White Pass City having businesses and -- ?

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, not that I recall.

KAREN BREWSTER: So the diaries, they didn't talk about the women along the way?

JULIE JOHNSON: No, women were too -- if they were, women were too busy to write in a diary.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, I was thinking more if the men wrote about interactions with women.

JULIE JOHNSON: No, I don't -- I don't recall. I mean, it's totally feasible that there would've been, and -- you know, like working in the restaurants and in the hospitality industry.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: In White Pass City, but I don't remember any enterprising -- any entrepreneurs.

[00:53:31]KAREN BREWSTER: In the White Pass Trail, White Pass City was the main place?

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm. There were toll -- there were toll places along the way, but I think for the most part, they were torn down and ignored by the stampedees because they didn't want to pay.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And Brackett's people didn't have the manpower to, you know, the guns to make 'em stay.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Yeah, it is interesting to think about that being a toll road.

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, I mean, think about how expensive it was. How else is it gonna recoup that investment?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: There's no way to -- you know, I mean, our roads aren't privately built anymore for that very reason.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: I mean, there's no -- there's no reason to build such a road. The train, sure, you know, you can charge -- you know, you can charge for a ticket before you get on the train.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: But if you're on that road and they refuse to -- to pay, what are you gonna do? And I think there was probably a lot of violence, and I think they just gave up because the stampedees just weren't going to pay, period.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: So I think all those toll spots along there, they were very short -- very short-lived.

[00:54:46]KAREN BREWSTER: In the diaries and the research, did you -- was there any mention of law enforcement along the road, or the trail?

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, no. I think it was probably a fairly lawless place. I -- um, until they got to the summit, and then there would be the -- the Mounties would be waiting for them. And I know there was a boundary dispute, this was during Roosevelt's administration, where the -- where the actually -- you know, the US began.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: And I think the Mounties solved that problem just with placing a Gatlin gun at where they thought the boundary was, and like, uh, here you are.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So they had to do the same boundary issues in White Pass as they would at Chilkoot?

JULIE JOHNSON: Correct.

KAREN BREWSTER: It was still enforced by the Canadians?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: And the -- and the 1200 pounds?

JULIE JOHNSON: You know, I don't know about the 1200 pounds on White Pass. I don't remember.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: Probably assume so, but.

[00:55:51]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I mean, I know you mention it in the book, but I don't remember if that's in, um, the chapter -- you know, the kinda contextual chapter of the gold rush or not. Or if it's specific to White Pass. I don't know.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I don't -- I don't remember.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, here's a good quote. We were talking about the difference between the Chilkoot and the White Pass. Oh, Martha Ferguson McKeown. That's probably who you were --

JULIE JOHNSON: Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: Thinking.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: Quote, "There ain't no choice, said an old-timer, of choosing between the Chilkoot and the White Pass. One's hell, the other's damnation." So which was which?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, I guess it would depend on any given day.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, so Martha Ferguson McKeown, she was the one you were talking -- she ran a roadhouse or something?

JULIE JOHNSON: No, she was -- she was headed to the -- she was headed to the Klondike with her first husband, and then he decided not to do it, and she went anyway. And she ended up marrying somebody else in Canada somewhere, and I forget where she lived. Kind of a fascinating person.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I mean, I was actually thinking, you know, some of these -- these women -- I mean, they're all fascinating, but the women's stories tend to not be as obvious. And, you know, it was tough for anybody, and then to think women did it.

[00:57:18]Well, here's a photo right here of "French Camp Near Liarsville, White Pass Trail." Asahel Curtis photo. And there's a woman right there.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, Liarsville. Yeah, that was like -- I mean that's -- I guess it would be the north part.

KAREN BREWSTER: It'd be three and a half miles from --

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- the Lynn Canal.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, it's along the river there. Um, I think there's some houses there now, where people live.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, here you say it was the end of the easy part of the journey.

JULIE JOHNSON: That's why it was a lie. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And maybe that's why she was there. Maybe -- who knows if she went on.

JULIE JOHNSON: It was the lie.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause you thought, oh, this was going to be like this the whole way?

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then, it got worse.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

[00:58:06]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so what else did you learn about the people and the lifestyle from those diaries?

JULIE JOHNSON: Mm, well, I think in my -- in my mind, you know, I know Pierre Berton --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: -- had them as juggernauts. As, you know, as these adventurers, and they, you know, they went on this for an adventure. And I really honestly didn't -- no doubt there were some that were on it for the adventure. Um, but I -- I just really thought that they were, you know, considering what was going on in the economy in the rest of the country, I think they were mostly really desperate.

KAREN BREWSTER: What other things did they say in the diaries? I mean, you said like they were homesick.

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, yeah. Well, they -- and they were sick most of the time, too. I mean, there were some people, you know, with pneumonia, and I know that they had food poisoning pretty much all the time. So they were -- they were really sick. And they had to be exhausted. They had to be, you know, scared.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cold. Did they talk about the weather?

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, can you imagine what they smelled like? You know, they didn't -- I mean, they didn't have Gore-tex like we do.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: You know, and I'm up on the -- actually, with Karl Gurcke, I'm up on the summit in a cloud, and, you know, it's cool and it's misty, and it feels good to us. But you know, I was -- you know, I was wearing modern-day hiking and I had hiking boots, and I had wool socks. And, you know, these people had cotton and wool, and that was pretty much all they had. And it was wet all the time. And um, I -- I can't imagine that -- I mean, probably a lot of people died from hypothermia and lost, you know, limbs from frostbite and that kind of thing.

[00:59:53]KAREN BREWSTER: Were they going over in all seasons?

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, yeah. Yeah, in fact, it looks like it might actually have been somewhat easier, you know, with the Chilkoot as well, somewhat easier in the winter time because the snow would make the trail smoother.

KAREN BREWSTER: But definitely --

JULIE JOHNSON: A little chillier.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: Although summer, you know, summer can suck up there, too. You know, especially with the wind, the way the wind howls through up there, so. And it's wet, and -

KAREN BREWSTER: And on the White Pass is it getting the wind and cold off those glaciers? Are they closer to the glaciers on that side than on the Chilkoot?

JULIE JOHNSON: I guess so. I just remember that when I was in Skagway, man, the White Pass. You know, that -- that wind would come up Lynn Canal, and, you know, the White Pass is the point of least resistance, and it just howls, as you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes.

JULIE JOHNSON: I've -- yeah. Walking through -- well, I mean, it's not -- you know, from the White House to the -- to the Klondike, you know, to the --

KAREN BREWSTER: Park.

JULIE JOHNSON: To the office. Yeah, it's not a long walk, but, you know, when the wind is coming this way and the ice pellets are hitting you, it's a long walk.

[01:01:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, I was thinking, well, you know, other things that might be in people's diaries, you say that (Julie blowing her nose) -- What they might have been eating or not eating?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, I think they -- you know, they had stuff from home. I would not venture -- well, I might even have a list in there somewhere of the kinds of things they were eating. I don't remember.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did they -- you know, you mentioned the weather and the gear, I would think their feet would have been a mess. Did they talk -- was there any mention of that?

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, I'm sure there was. I'm sure. I don't remember.

KAREN BREWSTER: You don't remember. Yeah, I was thinking if there are little tidbits you remember from the diaries that stood out besides the monster in the river?

JULIE JOHNSON: No, just mostly being homesick, um, and really wanting a real cup of coffee. I do remember that. Um, yeah, I don't really remember.

[01:02:02]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and then the, um, the selecting what quotes to put in here. That's my, like, gosh, you must have had so much material.

JULIE JOHNSON: I did.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, it's one thing to, you know, pull it together in your narrative and go through the flow of a storyline, but how do you decide what quotes to use?

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, the ones that are the most colorful. The ones that'll be the most memorable. Um, the ones that tell the story that you want to illustrate the most.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then the photographs. How did you locate all these photographs?

JULIE JOHNSON: Aw, man. That was a -- that cost a bunch of money. Um, well, luckily we were at the beginning -- I mean, now it would be a lot easier, I think. But we were at the beginning of digitalization, and so, I was able to get some photos from different places and see them digitally. Um, the Close Brothers actually even sent me a photo. There was one -- the archives in Victoria has a wonderful collection of photos, but they were ridiculously expensive, so I think I only used one or two photos. I mean, they were photos that I had never seen before, which you know, af -- you know, you do the research.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And you see the same photos over and over and over again. Well, these were photos, really interesting photos I had never seen. And um, but they were just awful to work with. They -- they sent me to -- even though this was for the Park Service, and, you know, was not going to be for sale, but it's a different government, so they sent me to their commercial division for film. And I'm like, "No, I'm not doing that." And they were

going to charge a great deal of money, and the archivist said, "Well, we are not in the business of sharing our photos" Like, well.

KAREN BREWSTER: But you're an archives. What is your business?

JULIE JOHNSON: I kinda wanted to ask her that. And so, I think there's only one or two photos because they were -- it was like \$1400 for two photos, and I'm like, this is ridiculous. Um, yeah, I did have to pay for the rights for that.

[01:04:24]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And how did you find that that archive had that collection?

JULIE JOHNSON: Uh, well, it wasn't, um, it wasn't Google yet, but I think I was asking Jeeves.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

JULIE JOHNSON: "Ask Jeeves" was a website.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, an early one.

JULIE JOHNSON: And so, yeah. And then, you know, talking to Karl, you know, what you -- what places have these, you know, where would these be -- most likely be? And some of them are pretty obvious, you know, Seattle, University of Washington. And Victoria was kind of -- that was obvious, but they were a pain in the neck. Um, so yeah. It's a lot easier today. I'd probably have a ton more photos today.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah, 'cause it's just, you know, how you track 'em down and find out that they exist. As you say, back in the time when you couldn't just Google everything.

JULIE JOHNSON: Kids these days.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, they just don't know.

JULIE JOHNSON: They don't know the pain of having to go to an --

KAREN BREWSTER: Did -- you actually physically went to some of the archives to look at things?

JULIE JOHNSON: No, you know, I didn't. I actually was able to do everything digitally, yeah, and order them online. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um (laughter in the background) Our neighbors.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, welcome to my new world.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: They moved us here last August, saying, "Oh, it's going to be wonderful." I'm like, "Yeah."

[01:07:12]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so other people that you worked with on this project. Were there people that you worked with that were helpful to you?

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, sure.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you have some names in particular that were particularly, um --

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, Karl's probably at the top of the list. I mean, he's -- he needs to -- he needs to write a book. Or several. Um, and frankly, they -- the park needs to do oral histories with him before he walks out, 'cause --

KAREN BREWSTER: Some has been done.

JULIE JOHNSON: Ok, I'm glad. Um, um, you know, Sandy McDermott was amazing and very supportive. You know, 'cause she wanted the book to be a little different than, you know. So she, um, she was really supportive. And Frank Norris as a historian. Linda Cook was really helpful. She was the person that was the interim.

JULIE JOHNSON

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KAREN BREWSTER: She was the interim superintendent at Klondike?
JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, while I was --
KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.
JULIE JOHNSON: Well, when we did the White Pass City field trip. And Bruce. Bruce --
KAREN BREWSTER: Reed? No.
JULIE JOHNSON: Bruce Noble?
KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, he might've been superintendent.
JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I think it was Bruce. I don't remember his last name. He was a --
yeah.
KAREN BREWSTER: Bruce Noble was superintendent at some point. I -- I --
JULIE JOHNSON: Ok. I got the name right, then.
KAREN BREWSTER: Off the top of my head don't know the dates, but.
JULIE JOHNSON: He was there. Yeah, I don't really -- and then, you know, people at the
railroad. Glenda Choate. C-H-O-A-T-E. Wonderful woman. She's no longer with us. She
died of cancer a few years ago. She worked at the railroad, was very, very helpful. And
she -- she and Tina --
KAREN BREWSTER: Cyr.
JULIE JOHNSON: Yep. They would get me on the train, uh, anytime. [01:07:35]And there was,
in fact, he's -- I've mentioned him in -- in my thanking people. One of the conductors.
'Cause I think, you know, the people of the train, you know, they deal with all these
tourists, and it's just the same story every day. So for me to want to do something
different and get off at a different place, and they -- they let me do it. It was so much fun,
I think they really got off on it.
KAREN BREWSTER: Um, was it -- I was thinking if it was Carl Mulvihill. (laughter in the
background)
JULIE JOHNSON: No. I don't remember. But yeah, the people on the train were terrific, and I
actually --
KAREN BREWSTER: Lee Hartson.
JULIE JOHNSON: Lee, yes. Yes. Yep. Great guy. So much fun. And I actually get -- got to ride
in the, you know, in the front of the train with the engineer once.
KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.
JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, and then I was up with my niece and got to do that when she was
twelve, and it was really fun.
KAREN BREWSTER: Fun.
JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.
[01:08:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, what -- you mentioned Glenda. That made me think of
the city museum in Skagway. Did you have any interaction with --
JULIE JOHNSON: So the city museum, no. I really didn't. They were -- they were remodeling,
and so, the city museum really wasn't available.
KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.
JULIE JOHNSON: Um, they, you know, they're in the library.
KAREN BREWSTER: The old college.
JULIE JOHNSON: The old school, yeah.
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, and that was, um, so I think everything was pretty much packed up most of the time I was doing this, frankly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, and Judy Munns --

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- is the curator now. I don't know if she was then.

JULIE JOHNSON: I think so. I think so. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh, well, that's too bad that, yeah, you didn't -- weren't able to use their resources.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I don't --

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know if they would've had anything. I haven't seen their collections.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, most of the stuff is Skagway. I mean, I have been in there since, and most of it was Skagway. I mean, it's great. It's really fun.

[01:09:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Um, so we were talking about, you know, people who were supportive of this project. Were there (Julie blowing her nose) -- besides that historian you talked about, other detractors or people who you -- gave you pushback?

JULIE JOHNSON: No, I don't think so. I mean, there were probably a few people that wondered how I got such a great gig. But I was on the top of that list. I was like, I don't know how I did this. This is definitely -- I got the long straw in this project. And I really did. I -- I just -- it's the best job I've ever had. It was so much fun. Um, it was definitely.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and it's great that that's all you were doing.

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, I had a couple other projects.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, you had other projects.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, there were a couple other projects at the same time. But, yeah, I didn't have to be in an office and that, so that was -- yeah, that was great.

[01:10:23]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, I was thinking about the detractors question. Did you have a sense of how this project was or was not accepted by staff at the park in Skagway because it came from regional? Was there ever a -- or did they appreciate having regional's assistance?

JULIE JOHNSON: I have no idea.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

JULIE JOHNSON: I just -- I -- I was always treated with respect, and always had -- always had a lot of fun with the staff there. I don't -- if there was resentment, I certainly never felt it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok, um --

JULIE JOHNSON: I think in Skagway in fact, they're just so happy to see a different face, 'cause it's a small town, you know.

[01:11:13]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, now did you face your own challenges in putting this together? We've been talking about the hardships and challenges of the people on the trail.

JULIE JOHNSON: Uh, no, I -- I, you know, except for, you know, when my mom got sick, but that was, you know, that's --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: Certainly nothing -- I mean, it was actually a godsend that I had this project that I could work on that I really loved. Um, and then I was able to go back -- well, she was -- she had -- the last summer, she had a really good summer before she, you know,

between rounds of chemo. Um, so I was able to go back to Skagway. But um, no, I -- I was having a blast. I really had a great time doing it. I don't remember any real hardships.

[01:12:04]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, in talking about the, you know, the importance of the story of White Pass, um, I don't know how much is there in the Park Service exhibit area about the White Pass Unit?

JULIE JOHNSON: I don't remember.

KAREN BREWSTER: If you feel that -- How the Park Service is doing about telling that -- those stories of the White Pass?

JULIE JOHNSON: I don't -- I don't remember, to be honest. I don't remember being appalled that it wasn't good, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: I mean, there's so many stories. Um, so I don't remember being unhappy about the amount.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, 'cause I was wondering if there was -- yeah, if you had ideas about how they could tell this story of the White Pass better?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, I think the railroad could. They need to -- I think they could -- I think they could do a lot to improve their stories. And perhaps they have. Like I said, my niece was twelve the last time I was on, and she's 26 now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: So it's been a while since I've been on the train, so it could be quite a bit better now. [01:13:12]So um, uh, I mean, it's -- you know, let's be real -- it's a tourist town. So there's going to be the melodrama. There's going to be the shootouts. And, of course, you know, we have um, Soapy Smith there. And course, he's from Denver as well.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: So I'm familiar with the tourist -- you know, the campiness of it all.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And how silly it is. Um, one thing that drives me nuts, but, you know, there's -- I don't think there's anything that we can do about it is, you know, even -- even the cruise lines tell terrible stories. Apparently, I'm -- I'm not a cruise person, so I don't know, but, you know, the stores on the street. I mean, Lladró Porcelain has nothing to do with -- with -- with the gold rush except that in a way it does because they're mining the people that came -- the people in the stores are doing the same thing that they did, Skagway did, when they were setting up shop.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: They're making as much money as they can as quickly as they can selling whatever they can.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: So in that way, history is repeating itself, but um, when you got people trying to make a living, they have to do what they have to do.

[01:14:34]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Having been out into the White Pass Unit, do you have any thoughts about things the Park Service could do out there? Like, should they develop a trail like the Chilkoot on the White Pass side, or -- ?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, so the idealist in me would say, sure, that'd be awesome. That'd be a great trail. The pragmatist, I -- you know, my job here is I'm manager of historic

preservation projects. Their -- the Park Service's backlog of things, it'll never happen. I mean, I can't imagine it would ever happen. I mean, how much fun would it be to redo the George Brackett --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: The Brackett Wagon Road. But given the vegetation, it's a rainforest, I just -
- I can't.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and does the train go on part of the route of the Brackett road?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well --

KAREN BREWSTER: Or the Klondike Highway does?

JULIE JOHNSON: I think the Kl -- no, I don't know. Once you get to Liarsville, you know, where it stops going flat, I think both when you're driving and when, you know, the train, I think you're both leaving -- There are places on the train where you can look down and see the wagon road.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, but I don't -- yeah, that's a good question. I -- I just -- I don't see it happening. It'd be -- it'd be a great trail.

[01:16:10]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Or I was thinking even a trail -- could there be a trail from the train down to White Pass City?

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, well, you'd have to do switchbacks. But once again, what would they find down there? I don't know. At this point, I haven't -- I mean, it's obviously been a long time since I was there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, but uh, I mean, I -- if there -- I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because I was thinking, as you said, I think there's some hiking up to the glaciers.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, and I don't know if -- you know.

JULIE JOHNSON: That has nothing to do with the road.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, and that's not established, maintained Park Service trails.

JULIE JOHNSON: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: But that's why I was asking. Like, could those things be put in that area and -- ?

JULIE JOHNSON: I suppose, but, you know, I don't know if they need to be. And like I said, given the budget.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I don't see that happening. In a way, it's -- it's -- I kinda like how it's mysterious, you know. I mean, everybody likes to take the train when it's beautiful and sunny. And, of course, I do, too, but you know, when the clouds come in, as they do, and the mist is low, I mean it's -- it's kinda -- it's mysterious. And, you know, you can kinda feel the people that were there and the activity that was there, and um. I kinda -- I think it's ok to have mystery. I think mystery is ok. And you know, with the Chilkoot, you know, you don't really have that. You've got hiking trails, you've got places, you know, warming huts. You've got tons of other people. So I don't know, I think -- I think the mystery's ok.

JULIE JOHNSON

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[01:17:59]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Um, I guess the other question is, are there things about the White Pass story that you feel haven't been told, that you'd like to see more research on or wish you could have included in the book?

JULIE JOHNSON: Hm. Well, I think I would probably have liked, uh -- I think I probably would've liked to put a little bit more about Skagway in it. And um, yeah. 'Cause Skagway, um, you know, the way it started out is just a place to mine the miners. But then it got to be kind of an interesting little town, you know. Um, as the -- and people -- it was a really interesting town. What is it, Garden City?

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: You know, Frank Norris wrote that little book about the gardens. Um, the Rapu -- I mean, there are so many really interesting stories, so I mean, it might -- it would probably be a separate book, but, you know, I did talk about Captain Moore and how he thought, you know, this is the place, kind of thing. And um, and that's a very interesting story there, too. I don't know. I think -- I think I would probably talk -- or write more about Skagway itself and how interesting it was. And yeah, 'cause it really was. And it was funny 'cause I -- one of the -- I don't know if she was a historian or intern or somebody at the Park Service, her grandfather lived in Skagway, and I think he worked when the army was there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: But he was on the -- McCarthy's Un-American list. And so, I mean, they were in Skagway, the -- you know, the Un-American --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: -- Committee was in Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

JULIE JOHNSON: Looking for people. I mean, they were looking for people everywhere, even Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: I didn't know that.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Fun.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, so it's a -- it's a very, very interesting little town.

[[01:20:15]KAREN BREWSTER: And now, what have you done since? This book was published in 2003.

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, I did a couple other things for the Park Service, and then I got this job, which is the City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks. And I was the public information officer first. I've -- uh, so my -- my masters is in mass communication or public relations, and so, I started here doing that, talking about how to avoid bears 'cause I had hiked so much. You know, that kind of thing. And then, they didn't have a cultural resource program here, but the city council decided that we needed one, and so, I applied for that, and I got it from my previous experience. And so, now -- so City of Boulder, we have 46,000 acres around the City of Boulder preserved as open space. And um, I manage -- I -- I try to take care of the historic buildings as much as we can. I did a really big rehab last year. I'm working on one. This afternoon, I'm headed up into the hills to look at a little cabin that Historicorps finished, um, so that's the kinda thing I do now.

JULIE JOHNSON

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KAREN BREWSTER: So you moved into buildings.

JULIE JOHNSON: I love buildings. I love them. I love them. In fact, I wanted to be an architect when I was in high school, and the high school counselor told me that women didn't get to be architects.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: It's very incorrect, 'cause I work with a lot of women that are architects.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes. Well, and you said you got your masters.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And where was that from?

JULIE JOHNSON: University of Denver.

[01:21:59]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Uh, and did you have -- when did you leave Alaska?

JULIE JOHNSON: 2002.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, so you finished this book while you were out -- already back down here?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, other Park -- you mentioned you had a few other Park Service projects.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um, I did a lot of DOE's, Determination of Eligibilities for the National Register. I was in Wrangell. Not Wrangell. Gustavus.

KAREN BREWSTER: Glacier Bay.

JULIE JOHNSON: Sweet little place. Oh my god, I loved that little place. I don't think I could live there, but what a cool place. You know, and that kind of thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: So Determination of Eligibility for National Register sites, like buildings and --

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: I guess there's National Historic Register areas.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, and I worked on Seward, you know, 'cause they -- the visitor center wanted -- needed to do some, um -- so they needed a DOE for Seward.

KAREN BREWSTER: And those were also contract projects? So you were never actually a Park Service employee?

JULIE JOHNSON: Hm-mm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that probably worked out all right.

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, I wanted to be because I really, really, really loved working at the Park Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I guess, were there pros and cons to being on contract versus being an employee?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, the money ran out, so yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Ok. [01:23:25]Um, any other things about this White Pass Unit project or the history of the unit or Skagway?

JULIE JOHNSON: No, I just -- I just remember it was a really fun time. It was just -- um, I know that Sandy was pretty brave, you know, 'cause it was kind of a departure from the norm. And Karl was very kind. I know, he would probably have preferred something very, you know, conservative. But I just -- people were really nice.

KAREN BREWSTER: Have you gotten any sense of if this is used? Or how widely distributed it has been?

JULIE JOHNSON: I don't know, but it has five stars on Amazon.com.

KAREN BREWSTER: There you go.

JULIE JOHNSON: And I kept one of the -- some professor from a place in California shot an email to Sandy that she sent to me. It was -- was it, "scholarly, yet readable." I'm like, I'll take that.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's nice.

JULIE JOHNSON: I'll take that.

KAREN BREWSTER: And we should say, Sandy is now long retired, I think, from the Park Service.

JULIE JOHNSON: Sadly. Yeah, she lives in Los Angeles with her daughter and son-in-law.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Um --

JULIE JOHNSON: And son.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, there was something else -- and so, the audience. Were you given an assignment for, this is -- you had to write to a certain audience for this?

JULIE JOHNSON: No, I don't think so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Like was it for the public, it was for Park Service employees, or --

JULIE JOHNSON: I don't remember that discussion. There probably was one, but I don't remember. I don't remember.

[01:25:02]KAREN BREWSTER: And my final question was about the collections of the Park, like the artifacts. Did you do any work with those?

JULIE JOHNSON: Hm-mm.

KAREN BREWSTER: You were just diaries and photos?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. No, I didn't really do anything with the artifacts. I mean, we saw some, like at the top of the, you know, the summit, but through the years, so much of that has walked away.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: You know, when they're taking bones up there to make it look like dead horse bones. I'm like, you know, this is over a hundred years ago.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: But I think they -- I think maybe the railroad people do that so that the tourists can take pictures. And I'm in a bunch of tourist pictures, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah?

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it's like, oh yeah, let's take a picture of the historian.

JULIE JOHNSON: They weren't expecting a chick at the top of the summit, that's for sure.

[01:25:53]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, was it a conscious decision not to use artifacts? Like, to -- 'cause the park has, you know, artifact collections. Why you didn't go look into that?

JULIE JOHNSON: No. I guess I didn't -- it's a book -- I guess I tend to -- well, how would I have used them in the book?

KAREN BREWSTER: That's my question, I don't know.

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh. Yeah, see -- I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Whether you thought about that?

JULIE JOHNSON: Unless they were photos.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

JULIE JOHNSON: No, no, I didn't really think -- think of that. I, you know, it wasn't that long ago, to be honest. A lot has changed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: But it wasn't that long ago. Cans are still cans.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: Canvas is still canvas. And leather boots are still leather boots. So it's, you know, it's -- yeah. I don't know that that would've been -- I think you can put the story together without seeing what it was. I don't -- I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you felt the photos did that for you?

JULIE JOHNSON: Well, yeah. Sure. They're artifacts in some of those photos.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: Especially that one of that -- that gentleman at his tent, having coffee.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, that's a good photo.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, it is, isn't it? It has a nice story, too. I mean, he went back and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, so yeah --

JULIE JOHNSON: Had a real life.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, so here's a -- he's actually named in the photo.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Which is not always so common. Charles Ainsworth.

JULIE JOHNSON: It's not. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so, you were able to find out something about him?

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, he went back and had a -- had a life. Yeah, I don't remember a whole lot about him, but.

[01:27:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I mean, you have lots of, you know -- the quotes you -- you have attributed to specific people.

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that's all from their diaries?

JULIE JOHNSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's pretty amazing.

JULIE JOHNSON: It is.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause that's a lot of people.

JULIE JOHNSON: It is.

KAREN BREWSTER: And I didn't realize that John Muir was up there at that time period.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: A slobbery bog.

JULIE JOHNSON: I think -- was he on the Har --

KAREN BREWSTER: Was it the Har --

JULIE JOHNSON: Harriman Expedition? I know that, um --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, he was.

JULIE JOHNSON: I think he was, and I know that there was, oh that -- it wasn't Audubon, but the other one that has three names, that loved birds so much that they shot him.

KAREN BREWSTER: That was Audubon.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, but there was another one. It's Jose-something, I think.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. That was the norm at the time.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, it was.

KAREN BREWSTER: As you say, you know, the horses, it was the norm. They were --
[01:28:13]And they didn't use sled dogs on the White Pass?
JULIE JOHNSON: I think there were some, sure.
KAREN BREWSTER: But it was more of a horse trail?
JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. Yeah, I don't think dogs were -- were very available. I don't know.
KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and again, the people coming from Outside would've had even
less experience with running a dog team.
JULIE JOHNSON: No kidding.
KAREN BREWSTER: That would've been --
JULIE JOHNSON: Oh my god.
KAREN BREWSTER: That would've been if somebody guiding them, taking them up there.
JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. Yeah. The Iditarod would never happen if those were -- those were
inexperienced mushers trying to get the serum to Nome.
KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Um, and so that's what I don't know if -- [01:28:51]Were there
packers? I mean, that people could hire someone to take their stuff?
JULIE JOHNSON: Yes. Sure.
KAREN BREWSTER: Um, and those guys, did they kill their horses, too, or they were better?
JULIE JOHNSON: I think overall they were better because it was their business, but I think,
yeah, sure. They killed their horses, too.
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I'm just looking at some of the photos, and it's men pulling their
own sleds.
JULIE JOHNSON: There was a lot of that.
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.
JULIE JOHNSON: On the Chilkoot, as well.
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Here's a few dogs, but they may have been, you know, just
individual with pack sacks on, not actually pulling a sled. [01:29:27]Uh, well. Unless you
have anything else you want to add that --
JULIE JOHNSON: No, I don't. I just --
KAREN BREWSTER: -- that when I approached you about this, that you wanted to make sure
got covered?
JULIE JOHNSON: No, it was just a -- it was just a really fun project, and I hope I -- I hope I did
a good job. I think I did. Um, it was, yeah. It was -- it was fun.
KAREN BREWSTER: You went from knowing nothing about the White Pass Unit, right?
JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.
KAREN BREWSTER: To it sounds like you kind of fell in love with the stories.
JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, I sure did. I sure did. In spite of the horse story.
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.
JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah, it's, you know, we just need to remember to take today's filter and
our judgments on today and not place 'em on what people did. And not just in the White
Pass. Oh, for god. I mean, in everything in history, I mean, you know, you just -- it was --
you know, they had different times, and there were different mores and different social --
and different pressures, for sure, you know. People talk about the good old days, and I'm
not sure there ever were any really good old days, you know. 'Cause everybody's always
had trouble.
KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:30:43]JULIE JOHNSON: You know, one of Brackett's sons died of the flu. You know, in fact, I think it was the youngest one that was married to Molly. Um, I mean, horrible things happened to all -- all the time, and to all people in history.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: I -- I think it would be great if we weren't so judgmental. And we're really judgmental now, especially with social media.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: It's just so easy to not know people and, um, so I think it's really -- if there's one thing I would like people to just take off your lens and try to empathize and try to see where they were coming from.

[01:32:07]KAREN BREWSTER: Any thoughts about how you'd like to see this, um, book or this history of White Pass get carried further into the future?

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, it should definitely be a movie. And Julia Roberts should play me. You know, I don't know. Um, I -- I don't know. Maybe I should go up to Skagway and get -- immerse myself back into it all and maybe have some ideas. I don't know. I would hate -- I mean, as long as there's tourism, and there has always been tourism in Alaska, and there probably always will be, um, I think it'll exist to some extent. I just wish it were more accurate, but --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. But it sounds like you feel like you covered the history and other than individual people's stories, the history of the White Pass is done?

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh -- oh, no. I mean, how cool would it be to have a whole -- a whole study on White Pass City? I mean, that would be fun.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: And then, you know, or to have a whole book about the Brackett Wagon Road. I'm sure there's a whole story there. There is a story about the White Pass, uh, railroad, and it's a really good book. I used it heavily. I mean, those stories would be really fun to tell.

[01:32:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Because yeah, the development of the railroad kind of eliminated the use of the trail and that Brackett Road.

JULIE JOHNSON: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Sure. And, you know, right about the time when the train was done, gold was discovered in Nome.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. End of -- end of the heyday in Skagway.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah. Until tourism.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: And then -- Well, the Alaska Highway was part of it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

JULIE JOHNSON: I think that kept 'em going for a while, and then, um, then tourism now, I think, is about the only thing they've got.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

JULIE JOHNSON: I haven't been there in a while.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And the park.

JULIE JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Well, thank you. I know you've got --

JULIE JOHNSON: Sure.

KAREN BREWSTER: Got other things to do today, so thank you for your time this morning.

JULIE JOHNSON: Sure, of course.