

RECORDED INTERVIEW OF DOREEN COOPER

CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER

IN FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

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ORAL HISTORY 2017-01-112

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

[00:00:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. This is Karen Brewster, and today is September 9, 2019, and I'm here with Doreen Cooper. And we are in Fairbanks, Alaska, at the Rasmuson Library, but Doreen lives or has lived part of the time in Skagway. And this is for the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Oral History Project. So Doreen, thank you for making time while you're here in Fairbanks to talk to me.

DOREEN COOPER: You're welcome.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, and just to get us started, maybe a little bit about your background, where you're from originally.

DOREEN COOPER: I was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. And I left there when I was nineteen and have lived many places: North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia. And then before I moved to Alaska, I spent thirteen years in Houston, Texas.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. And um, what's your educational background?

DOREEN COOPER: I graduated from Penn Hills High School, and I have my bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Houston.

KAREN BREWSTER: In --

DOREEN COOPER: Anthropology.

KAREN BREWSTER: Anthropology.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah.

[00:01:11]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And so, you came to Alaska in what year?

DOREEN COOPER: 1992, in August.

KAREN BREWSTER: And what brought you here?

DOREEN COOPER: I got a job with the Klondike Park as their project archeologist.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And why did you decide you wanted to come to Alaska after all those years in Houston?

DOREEN COOPER: It was a mid-life crisis. (laughter) I had visited Southeast Alaska in 1987, and so -- I came up with friend and we took the ferry from Prince Rupert and went all the way up to Skagway and over to Glacier Bay before returning to Texas. And Skagway was probably my least favorite community at that time, because I found it to be very commercial. But, um, in 1992, my daughter, my youngest child, graduated from high school and she decided to go up to Virginia to live with her dad, and -- or around that area, in the Virginia area, where her brother was. So, there was an -- job application that was posted in one of my archeology publications about applying for jobs in Alaska. So, I

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just kinda threw my hat in the ring and the Klondike Park called me that summer because they needed someone to come up and finish archeology reports. And they had a few on-going projects in connection with the restoration of the historic buildings in town. And they liked me because I had a lot of lab experience dealing with artifacts from historic sites. So um, they -- when I came up there, it was on a temporary hiring appointment. Um, but they said they expected that the job would last for four years.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's a long temporary.

DOREEN COOPER: Typical of the Park Service at that time.

[00:03:29]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so your experience before coming to Alaska, you'd been doing a lot of archeology around the Lower 48?

DOREEN COOPER: No. Um, my personal background was mostly in the secretarial and paralegal field. I worked with lawyers at the Justice Department in Washington, DC, and then in Houston for many years before I went back to school and finished my degree, and got my master's. So before I came to Skagway, I had not worked as a professional archeologist.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Just as a student. But I was a teaching assistant at University of Houston for the three years there.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you'd worked on field projects in the summers or something during school?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Yeah, we had a sugar plantation where we were mostly excavating in the former slave quarters.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, interesting.

DOREEN COOPER: It was. It was a very interesting project. And it broke a lot of new ground. And so --

KAREN BREWSTER: Literally.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Yes, exactly. But um, so I did my thesis on that project, and um, and then went back into the legal field, working as a paralegal for bankruptcy attorneys before I moved to Alaska.

[00:04:59]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. So you came in '92, and what was your first thought when you got off that boat? I assu -- well, maybe you drove up to Skagway?

DOREEN COOPER: I did drive up.

KAREN BREWSTER: You drive up.

DOREEN COOPER: Yes. All my friends in Texas were quite concerned, and they said, "Well, of course you are taking a gun, right?" And I got so tired of saying no that I just finally said, "Of course, I'm taking a gun." But, you know, of course Canada doesn't allow you to bring guns in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: So it was quite funny. But no, I drove up in my little Ford Festiva, kinda packed to the gills with my TV and whatever else I thought I'd need, and -- and so, I arrived in Skagway with my -- with my wheels.

[00:05:42]KAREN BREWSTER: And what -- what did they have you first work on?

DOREEN COOPER: Um, the -- my first main project was writing a report for archeology excavations that had taken place in 1990 and then, in the summer of 1992 before I arrived, on a site where they were planning on building a new maintenance facility.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: So we called it the Block 39 Project.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I don't think that's probably the official title on the report.

DOREEN COOPER: It is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Is it? The Block 39 Project?

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: But it's where the current big, new maintenance place is now?

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm. Yeah, there were -- during the gold rush period, there were a series of smaller houses on those lots, only three of which remain and which are actually privately owned that date back to the gold rush. Um, so, ah, I came in after the field work for that, but then they began construction, and there were unexpected finds.

[00:06:59]Um, well actually, I take that back. We knew where one privy was located, and so there was a planned excavation for the spring of 1993, and at that time, I had three archeologists working for me. And um, and then, um, there were two unplanned finds when they were doing construction of outhouse remains that my archeologists excavated in 19 -- actually, I think that was '94 when they were doing some utility line work, so. Um, it was an interesting project. We, uh -- the remains of the privies were probably the most interesting, and I was able to send some of the samples from what we call the night soil, which is the very, very old fecal remains, I guess, off for, um, parasitological and palynological -- some pollen studies, basically, and then also looking at parasites. Karl Reinhard down at Texas A&M did my parasite study, and he was quite excited because he did find the first evidence of parasites this far north. Although not in huge numbers, they were there.

[00:08:31]KAREN BREWSTER: And now, they would've been parasites that had gone through the human digestive system?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah, the digestive system. And I can't remember exactly whether they were roundworms or what type of parasite they were, um.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's amazing that they would've sur -- that evidence of them would still be there.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. They love the cop -- he had done coprolite research that went back thousands of years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

DOREEN COOPER: And those you can still see some of the little cases of -- when they do those analyses.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

DOREEN COOPER: So yeah. You can get a lot of information, which is why I always tried to save some soil from those test sites and either freeze it or something, because you never know what advances they might make.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: In the future. So you try to save a few things for future people to research.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: Or maybe to take a second look at.

[00:09:28]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And so, those privy excavations, were they connected with Block 39?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah, they were on Block 39.

KAREN BREWSTER: They were all Block 39?

DOREEN COOPER: They were all Block 39, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So you got there first and started helping write the report from previous Block 39, and then you did --

DOREEN COOPER: New work.

KAREN BREWSTER: New work, ok.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Because Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act, which was what mandated all of my work, requires that there be oversight in this case because Skagway is in a recognized Historic District. And even though this was slightly off of -- out of -- outside of the Historic District, the Alaska SHPO had determined that they wanted to make sure there was oversight during the construction phase.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: So that's also what I was doing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And SHPO is the State Historic Preservation Office.

DOREEN COOPER: Right. Little shorthand acronym.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Yeah, we all know -- have those that we don't even think about that we say.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah, we do.

[00:10:28]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so um, what other interesting things do you recall from that Block 39 work?

DOREEN COOPER: That was -- that was pretty much it. I mean, writing the report, um, I really got to learn a lot about the residential history of Skagway. Most of what is featured at the visitor center and in previous publications focused on the drive to get to the gold fields and didn't really focus on the people who stayed in Skagway to service the miners and to make their home in Skagway. And so, it was a different type of report that had been done before. I think there was only one that -- done by Cathy Spude, who was my immediate supervisor. She worked out of the Denver Service Center. That had looked at someone who lived in Skagway, and that was the priest, Father Philibert Turnell.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that was her -- she did a project on, was that his privy?

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm. His privy, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: And, uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: Where they found bottles and interesting things.

DOREEN COOPER: Lots of things, yeah. But she left part of it unexcavated. [00:11:49]I would've left these outhouses undisturbed if they hadn't been in the line of construction.

KAREN BREWSTER: Why would you have left them undisturbed?

DOREEN COOPER: Because it's really better to not excavate things unnecessarily. There's a lot of reasons for that. Um, first of all, it's always better to leave things in situ, in place.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Second of all, once you dig up something, there's a lot of costs connected with it. First of all, if you're finding artifacts, you have to analyze those artifacts. So rule of thumb, maybe, one week in the field equals at least one month to six weeks in the lab.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

DOREEN COOPER: By the time you get all the artifacts cleaned and processed. And then the information about each artifact stored into database and codified. So it's a huge

undertaking. And then, once you've gone through all that, there's the associated costs of curating artifacts, which um, especially with historic sites, where you have tons of nails and big chunky pieces of metal that all have to be kept in climate-controlled storage and preserved for eons to come. There's a lot of costs associated.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: Those are all hidden costs that it took people a while to start thinking about and really recognizing. Plus, all the records connected with the excavation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

DOREEN COOPER: Should be stored properly. All the photographs need to be indexed. All the field notes need to be duplicated so that they can be archived. So um, at the time, I really learned a lot about that process from Debbie Sanders.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Who was the park's museum curator. I think first I was kind of bucking against it. I'm like, oh no, I need all my stuff. But then I realized how important that part of the process is. So we developed an excellent working relationship. But there's a lot of costs associated with archeology when you do it right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And it's not all archeologists are willing to turn over their findings.

DOREEN COOPER: Oh, no. There's tons of stuff left at universities that professors have held onto with their dying, clutching fingers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, "I'm gonna write a report. I'm gonna write a report."

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah, I know.

KAREN BREWSTER: It doesn't -- doesn't happen. [00:14:45]Well, and the other part of it I was thinking is, I remember from reading Cathy's report on the priest's privy about some of the bottles and then all this research that goes into where this bottle was manufactured.

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And the date and what it might have contained. And it's a lot of historical research.

DOREEN COOPER: Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's not just, oh, this is a piece of glass.

DOREEN COOPER: Although often, that's what you have.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: But when -- that's why archeologists like privy sites, because you usually find whole bottles instead of when you're doing other excavations in what we call sheet midden, you're just going to get all the little broken up stuff that people have walked on. And all you can do is count it and maybe estimate how many bottles might have been discarded. It's much easier when you have an intact site. But that's also a good reason not to excavate them if you don't have to.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[00:15:38]DOREEN COOPER: But in Skagway, um, where there's been a lot of construction since I moved there in '92, there have been a lot of -- there's been a lot of disturbance. And the ones that aren't on public land, such as with the Park Service, they, um, haven't had the curation. But, you know, at the same time, you know, the park has had these examples, and they have some left in the ground, some curated, and the data is all out there. And so, you know, there is enough information to start saying things about a gold

rush town. You don't have to necessarily save every privy, even though that would be nice. You know, there are so much costs associated with excavation.

[00:16:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, I was going to say, if it's a private land owner and they want to do something on their property, are they required to do the Section 106 and all that?

DOREEN COOPER: Section 106 only comes into play when federal money is involved. So if it's a federal undertaking, whether -- whether it's -- whether the federal government is doing the work itself or under contract or as a grant.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Uh, the other times that Section 106 can come into play is if the government is transferring property from the public domain to private domain.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And I think also if someone is donating, like, private land to the government.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. But yeah, so given Skagway is -- every piece of property there has some previous history to it.

DOREEN COOPER: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: But if somebody, you know, wants to dig a basement on their own property --

DOREEN COOPER: Private land is private land.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- they can do whatever they want?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. The -- the -- Skagway has a Historic District Commission.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: That has codified rules that govern appearances.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: Exterior appearances of the town. But it doesn't cover things under the -- under the ground.

[00:17:46]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And doesn't it also only cover things within those certain blocks of --

DOREEN COOPER: The Historic District.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- the district?

DOREEN COOPER: The designated Historic District.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, so if you live --

DOREEN COOPER: Outside.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- outside of that boundary, you -- you don't have to follow those same aesthetic rules, either.

DOREEN COOPER: Right. Right. But there's no -- pretty much no commercial activity outside of the --

KAREN BREWSTER: That's true.

DOREEN COOPER: -- Historic District, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: Very little.

KAREN BREWSTER: But it means you in your house don't have to have your windows --

DOREEN COOPER: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- looking like 1899.

DOREEN COOPER: Unless you want to apply for one of the federal grants if you have a historic building, and -- because there are some types of grants available.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: To homeowners.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: But then you would have to follow certain guidelines.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right. Or if you have a building that is officially designated as a historic building.

DOREEN COOPER: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: You have to follow different guidelines.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Yeah. Either in the Historic District or a designated historic building. Or all of Skagway is in what's called a National Historic Landmark.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, it is.

DOREEN COOPER: So there's layers and layers of designations around Skagway.

[00:18:54]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so you said you had three archeologists working for you.

DOREEN COOPER: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you --

DOREEN COOPER: That -- in 1993, that was April Hayes. She was my lead archeologist from Houston. And then, um, Bob Daigel, D-A-I-G-E-L. He was also from Houston. And Megan Wehrstadt, W-E-H-R-S-T-A-D-T.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. And I guess -- I had another archeologist. I think she worked on the trail and then worked for me after she came off the trail. And her name was Amy Orenstein, O-R-E-N-S-T-E-I-N.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: And she stayed on at Klondike and eventually married the park ranger Jeff Mow.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok. I've heard the name Amy. I didn't know the last name.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. And they're now at -- I think he's superintendent of Glacier National Park, last time I heard, so.

[00:20:08]KAREN BREWSTER: What was it like, coming to work -- to write a report on an archeological excavation you hadn't actually worked on? How do you do that?

DOREEN COOPER: Well, you -- one of the archeologists who had worked there was still there when I got there. Her name was Diane Fenicle.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: And there was another archeologist there. Her name was Angie. Angela -- oh, what was it? Dunn? No. I don't remember her last name. (Angela Demma) She was married to a guy who studied wolves, and they ended up, um, moving to Anchorage, where she worked for the regional office of the Park Service for quite a while. They were from Minnesota. So she had done most of the artifact analysis. They were just finishing. She and Gretchen Guidotti were just finishing that up when I arrived. And so, it was kind of an odd situation, um, because Diane had been an archeologist for a very long time, but um, I think they wanted to bring somebody new in with more lab skills. Diane had extensive background in archeology survey, actu -- literally, all over the world. She had worked in a lot of places. So um, she and I became friends, though, and she stayed for

quite a while. [00:21:48]And she was making drawings of the stratigraphy. 'Cause what they had done was dug long trenches in 1990 and 1992 across Block 39 in both north-south and east-west directions. Um, just -- Paul Gleeson, who was the, uh, regional archeologist at that time, he and Cathy Spude had determined the research design for Block 39, and so, the trenches seemed somewhat random, but had been placed where they might go through where residences had been. And that's how the first privy that we excavated in 1993 had already been found, and we knew where it was, so. Was it -- yeah, '93. So um, but it, you know, luckily the field notes were good. I had the stratigraphy. There just wasn't a lot to say about all those trenches. You know, other than showing the drawings, what you really had was a lot of rock from -- from the glacial deposits and the - the historical deposits probably didn't go deeper than six-eight inches a lot of times, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, wow.

DOREEN COOPER: A lot of it was just described -- you could see the various geological episodes where sand had come in, you know, and overlain some of the rock, and then more rock and more sand. So that's not too exciting to talk about.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, right.

[00:23:33]DOREEN COOPER: So that part of the report was kinda thin. Um, but it was interesting. No one -- there had been some historical research done, of course, before I got there. But I was able to extend that and talk to one of the families. The descendants of the Hillery family, H-I-L-L-E-R-Y, who had lived on Block 39, um. Dorothy Brady is her common name. She's descended from Melissa Hillery and her children, and uh, so I talked to her, and um, her aunt Lorraine, Lorene, and just about kind of their family. And so, that was really nice, to have people living in Skagway who had once lived on that site.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And I had already found pictures in various archives. So when I went Outside for trips, I would always try to take the opportunity to do research in Fairbanks or Seattle, and look at the photos that were in those archives, and so I was able to get quite a lot of that done, and that was real helpful in the research.

[00:24:53]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And then, the Klondike Park has an archive of many photos. Were they helpful, or -- ?

DOREEN COOPER: They -- you always went there first, you know, because they're or -- organized spatially.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: You know, by streets or districts or regions or whatever. So that's where you went at first. Karl Gurcke, the park his -- cultural resources director at that time, he and I were always on the hunt for new pictures. Like, we'd go up to the Yukon Archives, and we might come back and we talked, and say, "Well, did you see that one? Or did you know about this one?" You know, so there was a lot of exchange of information. Karl was always very helpful.

[00:25:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, so I was gonna say that it seems like doing a report on an excavation that you didn't do the excavation on, is that typical? Or it's usually if --

DOREEN COOPER: I think it is at the Park Service at that time because they would quite often hire archeologists who were temporary, and although there was always the intent to write

a report, the truth is, you're not gonna get all the fieldwork done and a decent report done in the 1039 hours.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: That you're allotted. So it was a constant problem. And one of the reasons I was hired as project archeologist was because the chief ranger, Bruce Reed, looked back and saw all these projects that had been undertaken with archeology, and he wasn't seeing reports. He was just seeing three reports, and that frustrated him. And so, he really wanted my job to be one of getting these reports done.

[00:26:44]KAREN BREWSTER: So as project archeologist, it gave you the leeway to work on a variety of things? You weren't just working on one site?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah, as it ended up, of course, there was still archeology to be done on two other buildings. Um, so I did have to be active in archeology. Just like at Block 39, where they thought they had found everything, but they didn't. We had big -- huge archeology projects at the Moore House.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And then the Pantheon (Saloon). And those were both of my projects, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Those are big projects.

DOREEN COOPER: They were, yes. And so, um, at the same time, there was this need to focus on the old reports. So for the Mascot Saloon, which had been a huge excavation, I worked with Jed Levin, who was an archeologist in the eastern office of the Denver Service Center. And he flew out to Skagway, and he had an agreement where he was supposed to write that report, and we got that in writing. Ultimately, it was Cathy Spude who ended up finishing that report. And --

KAREN BREWSTER: And was she the lead archeologist?

DOREEN COOPER: She was. She was at the Denver Service Center, so when I would prepare my research design and my yearly budget estimates, all of that went through her. Because I was all project-funded. I didn't come out of the park's base funding. So um, so she was in charge of all of that. The other thing that we did was we worked out a cooperative agreement with the, uh, was it Idaho State? Or University of Idaho? Wherever Roderick "Rick" Sprague was, um, where Karl Gurcke had gone to school. (University of Idaho) Um, he and his student were supposed to finish up the Lynch & Kennedy archeology report.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[00:28:55]DOREEN COOPER: So I managed to -- to get all those things underway. Um, ultimately, the Lynch & Kennedy report was not found to be satisfactory. I'd still almost like to go back and redo that someday, but -- but it's out there. And -- and so, the projects that I undertook, Block 39, the Moore House, I wrote both of those reports. And then the Pantheon, I did all the administrative work on that, but my archeologist, Tim Kardatzke, ultimately wrote the report for the Pantheon. And I knew Tim from the University of Houston. He also graduated from there. And he came up to Skagway in 1994, and was one of my arch -- my lead archeologist. And he was there through -- he went away for a year and then he came back, so he was there for two or three years. And he would spend most of the winters in Skagway, so. My other archeologist who stayed with me a long time was Ken Graham. And Ken became a member of the Skagway community, and once he left the Park Service, once his term appointment was up, he worked for the fire

department for a while. And I think he's still a first responder, but I think he's involved more in tourism now, so.

[00:30:38]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. So for the Moore House and the Pantheon, which were your projects, were you out there in the field digging along with these other people, or you were in the office?

DOREEN COOPER: For the Moore House, um -- the Moore House excavations took place in 1993 and 1994. And uh, I dug -- I was -- I was out at the site somewhat, but I was also involved in writing the Block 39 report.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, you were still writing that?

DOREEN COOPER: It takes a long time to write the reports. They end up being, like, inches thick.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: So --

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and also, with Block 39, they found other things.

DOREEN COOPER: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that started in --

DOREEN COOPER: They were kind of ongoing.

KAREN BREWSTER: In '92, and you were still doing work on it.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Yeah. Um.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, so --

DOREEN COOPER: I had a large crew in '90 -- I'm trying to remember. Oh, '94, I think it was just Tim and Ken. Yeah.

[00:31:45]KAREN BREWSTER: And then the Pantheon was after that? Or simultaneous?

DOREEN COOPER: The Pantheon excavations started in 1995 in the empty lot south of the building itself, and my archeologist for that year, because Tim had gone, was Michael Kell. And Michael is now an archeologist with the Alaska State DOT (Department of Transportation).

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Um, so the Pantheon was just that one year, '95?

DOREEN COOPER: No. That was the beginning of the project. My other archeologists for that year were Lisa Hedman and Christine Stephensen. And they did some fieldwork, but they were working in the lab because I always had to have archeologists in the lab working on artifacts from the prior year. We always ran behind. I did manage to hire one person who did not have an archeology background, but to do my artifact analysis in the winter times, and that was a lady by the name of Deborah Boettcher.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Who is still with the Park Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: She is.

DOREEN COOPER: And the -- on the museum side now. But she had a background -- she had a very diverse background. But one of the things she had done was to sit there - 'cause she had a biology background - was sit there and count fish going up -- migrating up fish ladders. I figured anybody who could do that could sit there and count nails.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: Quite effectively. So -- and Deb's a very bright person, and she -- a lot -- there's a lot of tedium involved in analyzing artifacts. And she was just very good at putting up with that, and she found the projects interesting. And um, especially when she

had a chance to do a little bit of research on something that wasn't a nail, was a little more exciting than a nail, but she tolerated the nails quite well, too. So, um -- so that really helped keep the projects moving and on time.

[00:34:10]KAREN BREWSTER: So she would do things -- like she was numbering every object and cataloging them.

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And describing them.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. And that really worked because she had a different job in the summer, and, of course, in the summer, I would bring in other archeologists. But she was my winter person, and she needed a job in the winter, so it just worked out perfectly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: So I was -- that managed to keep the projects moving along. But I was responsible -- like Deb or my other archeologists, they would catalog everything and then leave them out on a tray for me to just kind of go behind and make sure. We had a -- Debbie Sanders and I had written up a cataloging guide, and we had a particular database that the information was put into. And the database was begun by Cathy Spude. It was an old dBase IV type of thing. But there were certain fields that were included, that we put in this database, that had nothing to do with archeology, but had everything to do with park curation. And so, we were trying to do two things with this database. We were trying to be able to have a computer database that would easily slide over to the archival side, so that it would make it easy -- easier for Debbie and her staff to then archive these artifacts. And then, that there would also be enough information in the same database where I could pull out reports on the types of nails, how many nails, and have them all tied to the unique provenience, because everything was given a unique lot number when it came out of the ground.

KAREN BREWSTER: And in archeology, it's very important to know where it came from?

DOREEN COOPER: Where it came from. Otherwise, it's kind of meaningless.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And where it is in relation to the other objects you find.

DOREEN COOPER: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And all that.

[00:36:11]DOREEN COOPER: So the lab -- you know, I was lab supervisor, and so a lot of my time, you know, was just making sure that -- you think everyone looks at a nail or a piece of metal the same way, but really, everyone sees things a little different. So my job as supervisor was to maintain consistency on glass color -- just the way things were described.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: So that we knew we were looking at all apples, not apples, oranges, grapes, cherries.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Sorta you standardized the terminology and things like that?

DOREEN COOPER: And then, not just that, but then the way people, my archeologists, perceived them, you know. You know, ok, this is this, or whatever. So just to maintain the consistency. And um, and that all worked pretty well, but it's very time-consuming. You know, both -- the artifacts from Block 39, except for really one privy, there wasn't a terrible high quantity, but we had a lot of artifacts coming out of both the Moore House and the Pantheon excavations.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[00:37:30]DOREEN COOPER: Because in 1996, when Tim came back, they began the, um, the reno -- the restoration -- no, that was a rehabilitation of the Pantheon. And because the building was on that site, we couldn't get underneath the building while it was still standing there. We had kind of pulled up some floorboards and run some tests, but we didn't really get anything. But they ended up -- literally, that building was hanging in the air.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

DOREEN COOPER: While they dug out the excavation. Um, and part of the -- part of it was by hand, almost. Well, while they finally got underneath the building, they did find things. And they found at least one where there's a water closet or something. But there were several -- there were several things over there that during the construction phase, my archeologists had to go over there. In fact, I -- when it came down to it, it was just Ken and me, in like October when it was cold, and we're down in the hole there. So I definitely spent my time -- my -- my -- my share of time down in excavation holes.

[00:38:51]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, then I've heard about the Mascot (Saloon), you know, they were like crawling around --

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- underneath the floorboards, and the same with the railroad depot.

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: So I didn't know how you get down under the Pantheon. They actually raised the building up, huh?

DOREEN COOPER: Well, it was just, yeah. It was just kind of like hanging 'cause they had to put a new foundation underneath it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: A complete foundation. So you know they had, you know, a rock thing, a conveyor belt that the -- throw the dirt onto.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

DOREEN COOPER: But, you know, I had worked -- I knew the guys on the restoration crew, and they knew me. And they -- they respected what we were doing, so if they found something, they called us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's good.

DOREEN COOPER: So it was -- we had a really good relationship. They were all good guys, you know.

[00:39:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, so for the Moore House or the Pantheon ones, you said, you know, you had to design those projects to start with, right?

DOREEN COOPER: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: So can you talk about what you do to design a project like that.

DOREEN COOPER: Well, in the case of the Moore House, Cathy Spude had done some prior work there and had published a report, which I think is Volume 1 in the series.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: But mostly she had concentrated on the original log cabin in that site because that was the first building to be stabilized.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: So she hadn't done too much around the house. So I basically kind of looked what they were doing. Normally, when you know there's gonna be foundation work, you want to look at least five to ten feet out. And so, my method was to throw some test pits. I think we were doing, was it 5x5's or 3x3's? I think it -- I don't quite remember the size.

KAREN BREWSTER: For the size of your test pits?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Um, but around the perimeter of the building where we knew -- because again, there's just no point in unnecessarily disturbing the soil. [00:40:57]So I had to work with the project eng -- uh, the construction project manager at the time was Mike Colyer, I think, and then it was someone else. I'm not sure when he left, but John Warder, maybe. They would provide me the construction drawings, and not only was I gonna look at what they were doing, but where the sewer and water lines were coming in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: So that I could put test pits in that area, because we knew that that area would be disturbed. And, of course, I looked at historic photos to see where areas of high potential for artifact remains, such as um, privies, where they were located, and if any of the construction activities would be impacting them. So that was my basic rule of thumb, um, certainly for the Moore House. [00:41:55]And so, um, what we found was that around the perimeter of the house, uh, we weren't finding too much in the way of intact remains, and a lot of it dated to when the Kirmses lived in the house, beginning about 1912 and forward. In the rear of the house, which was probably where the older structures had been, we did find in one test unit an area that I believe went back to the original occupation of the site by the Moore family, and some much older-looking artifacts. And then, there was a large former chicken coop next to the house that they were going to turn into the -- basically, the heating plant for the house, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: It's where they were going to put the physical plant.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: And so, I also put some test units in around there. And on the north side, what we found was that on this downward slope, that was a fairly intact midden site.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

DOREEN COOPER: That went down from the rear of that shed, down into the old relic streambed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: That was -- you can see in the old gold rush photos.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: So we found a lot of remains there, and that turned out, um, to be -- give us good information, but it was also very time-consuming.

[00:43:40]KAREN BREWSTER: And that would've been the Moore family trash pile, basically?

DOREEN COOPER: We found that the upper parts of it were probably from the Kirmse family, but below that, and especially down into the old relic streambed, the artifacts all dated much earlier, so we believe they were from the Moore family.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: We found a lot of, uh -- the Moores had children, three children, and we found lots of evidence of children, their little toys and little china doll cups, and doll parts, and all kinds of things like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now did you do excavations or testing under the floorboards of the house?

DOREEN COOPER: Um, there was a crawl space underneath the house already, so that had been, you know, kind of excavated out. I crawled -- in 1993, I went under the house and - and looked around. And then, in 1994 Tim and Ken did do a couple units underneath the house, the oldest part of the house. And we didn't really find much. It had all been kind of disturbed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: But on the east side of that old chicken coop shed is where we found one of the Moore -- one of the outhouses that looked like it came from the Moore family. So we had a lot of artifacts from that.

[00:45:12]KAREN BREWSTER: So when you're designing the project, do you say we're going to do all this test pit work, or does that -- ?

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Does the test pit precede that, and then whatever you find in the test pits directs what you're gonna do next?

DOREEN COOPER: You have -- I mean, you start off with, I'm going to put some test pits here and there. And then, if there are areas that are going to be destroyed by construction, and you do find something, then you are going to expand that. Because you need to understand what it is and recover any remains that could possibly be significant enough to help us understand the gold rush period, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And then you have to go and ask for more funding if it becomes more than test pits?

DOREEN COOPER: It's a matter of -- well, they were -- all of my excavations were test pits, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: I just call them -- they're excavation units, whatever you want to call them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: But I had already budgeted for so many archeologists in a certain time period, so I just pushed them. Maybe so, maybe I pushed them? I'd say, "Oh, you gotta get this done." And then, I would go out and help.

[00:46:27]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, and I was wondering about the support financially from the park or regional that -- was there support for all this archeology work?

DOREEN COOPER: No. There was no -- I was not funded by the park or the region. All of my money came from the Denver Service Center. So I would set up a budget, and they would fund me to that amount. And I submitted my budget every fall.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: When the fiscal year ended. And I would put in my budget request for staff and materials that I thought we might need. And so, I had to plan all that out. And -- and then, I was normally funded for that amount.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was going to say, it sounds like archeology was well-funded for that time period, for --

DOREEN COOPER: They really -- you know, they were at the end of a twenty-year stretch of restoration in Skagway, and they really wanted to get it done. So uh, so they were willing to fund. And just by creating the position that I filled was an acknowledgement that that was important and it needed to be done and finished, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Archeology is not always one of the top-funded activities, is it?

DOREEN COOPER: No. No. But also, we had the support of the -- Bruce Reed, the chief ranger. I always felt like Bruce was very supportive. And while the superintendent Clay Alderson may not have always understood it, Bruce Reed was always able to explain it and, you know. And he was very adamant that this should be done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[00:48:14]DOREEN COOPER: So I had a lot of support from a lot of places. And even up in the regional office, because I would go to some of the cultural resource meetings that they had yearly, and um, Ted Birkedal and the -- the regional archeologist -- Gary Somers was the new regional archeologist when I arrived. Um, they also would say, well, you know, let us know. They -- they weren't going to give me people, but whatever else, other resources. And so I got to know the people up there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did they ever come down and help or work on their own projects?

DOREEN COOPER: No, but they had so many projects going on all over Alaska. There was -- there was two of the archeologists who came down from the regional office when they built the new border station.

KAREN BREWSTER: Mm. Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: And so, that was a regional office project. We didn't have to do that with the park. So that was something handled by regional staff.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause it's kinda outside of -- well, I guess it's still within the park boundaries?

DOREEN COOPER: It's in the -- no it's --

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

DOREEN COOPER: I'm not sure. The park doesn't have, like, definitive boundaries like, you know, other parks do. It has buildings that it owns in Skagway, and then it has --

KAREN BREWSTER: It has the trail corridor.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah, the trail corridor, and it has some spots -- some areas that it owns. Because they -- they had to buy their property when they established that park.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was thinking the White Pass Unit. Maybe some of that goes where the border station -- ?

DOREEN COOPER: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: No?

DOREEN COOPER: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

DOREEN COOPER: It's on the other side. Well, there's the railroad. It's in the landmark district, but the Park Service doesn't own that.

[00:49:55]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Yeah, so why were they involved in archeology?

DOREEN COOPER: It was -- it was the Customs. That's a federal -- that's a federal building. It's a federal undertaking.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: So Section 106 kicks into place.

KAREN BREWSTER: So the Park Service is the agency who --

DOREEN COOPER: Who does 106.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- who had the staff to do that?

DOREEN COOPER: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: There was a time later, after 9/11, when they expanded their operations in Skagway and Haines.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And at that point, the regional office had downsized so much that I was hired as a private contractor, and I did most of that archeology work for the Homeland Security in Skagway and Haines.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: So that was further on down the road, though.

[00:50:42]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Um, well, you mentioned the superintendent support and understanding projects you were working on. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

DOREEN COOPER: Oh, with the chief ranger, Bruce Reed?

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you said Bruce supported you, but the --

DOREEN COOPER: Yes. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- superintendent didn't always --

DOREEN COOPER: Well, I think -- I think a lot of superintendents who come from a construction background or possibly another type of resource don't always -- see archeology somewhat as an impediment to getting things done. And they just don't understand why it's important. Um, but by the time I got there, um, Clay had seen a lot of archeology report -- archeology being done. He was starting to see some of the reports coming out, and um, and there had been a lot of Section 106 training done at the Park Service by the regional office. Sandy Faulkner (now McDermott) and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: -- others would come down and -- and all of the staff, the construction staff, you know, would take the training. And so, they had become a lot more sensitized to the importance of the cultural resources that were still in Skagway. And knowing that they were its stewards. And so, I think that was an important shift from the earlier phases of the park. Because when the park was established, the National Historic Preservation Act, which is what Section 106 is under, um, was a new thing. It wasn't clearly understood. And, you know, it took a while before people really began to understand it and work with it. [00:52:38]So I came at a very good time, and Bruce Reed, he had had so much experience with a lot of different government agencies, and he was just so savvy on how to get things done, because there were some contracts that I had to have, uh, that I had to do, you know, for some of the specialized analyses that I wanted done. And, of course, federal contracting is just -- it can just be such a bear. And I would just slam into Bruce's office and throw myself down in the chair. "They won't let me do what I want to do. Rrr, rrr, rrr, rrr, rrr." And uh, and he'd say, "Ok. Calm down. Tell me what -- " And he would have a way of making things happen. Say, "Ok, you can't do this, but you can

do this, this, this." And -- and so, he was just very savvy on those kinds of things that I had no experience with because I came from, you know, a background of private industry.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: So I -- I really considered Bruce Reed my mentor, 'cause he just helped me understand so many different things about how you do things in the federal government, which is different than in other places.

[00:54:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, there's quite a bit -- a little bit of a bureaucracy.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. So -- so it was, yeah. It was just -- the staff there was supportive. You know, Evelyn Meyer did a lot of the administrative stuff with payroll. She was always helpful. And, of course, Karl Gurcke, who just had so much knowledge about so many different aspects of Skagway history.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: And he was always willing to share his time, and -- Clydene (Sitton), who also did budget. They were just -- Debbie Sanders, the museum -- it was just a really excellent group of people. And Bruce, in the resource division, we would have, like, a get-together every year somewhere. Sometimes off-site, you know, to make us feel that we were a unit.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And that had not been done before, as I understand it. So you had the rangers, the -- the trail rangers, the interpretive ranger, you know, the museum, me, Karl, you know, who would do an end-of-season meeting somewhere at the -- you know, for a couple days. Just go through the year, what worked, what didn't work. So those were just really good times. It just really felt like things were clicking.

[00:55:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, were there times when it felt like that wasn't clicking?

DOREEN COOPER: As time went on, you know, Bruce Reed left. We -- different people came in. They bring changes in direction. Jeff Mow left. Tim Steidel came in. You know, um, they were trying to create different positions in the park, an administrative position and this and that, so people, you know. Clay ultimately left, and there were, you know, I don't -- I don't actually think -- I think Clay might have still been there by the time I left, but there was a new ranger, uh, in Bruce Reed's job. Um, Reed McCluskey.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Who was also very good, but he was pretty new, and he just didn't understand what I was doing and what my -- how I fit into the overall scheme of things, and it confused him for a while.

[00:56:35]KAREN BREWSTER: Were you the only archeologist there at that point?

DOREEN COOPER: There was never an on-site archeologist except for Karl until I came there. So um -- and Karl's work focused on Dyea and the Chilkoot Trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: That was -- You know, he didn't have time to deal with the other things in Skagway involving archeology.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and as you said, Cathy Spude did a lot of that.

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And Bob Spude, but they were not permanently based in Skagway. They were --

DOREEN COOPER: They were --

KAREN BREWSTER: She came up seasonally, right?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. And the problem was, construction's ongoing, and you need to be able to respond when they find something. You can't shut down the project for a week and wait for an archeologist to come in. And Karl didn't have the resources to really respond to that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Although he would take photographs and such, but to actually set up a project, he wasn't set up for that, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: Um, so, the regional office, Denver Service Center, the park, when I came on, they had all agreed that they needed an arch -- right there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And that was my job, to live there year-round and everything. And that was fine.

[00:57:52]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And were you there during the time when they then, there was a shift in the administration of creating a resources group, and things kind of changed around?

DOREEN COOPER: It was slightly after me. Um, they had just hired a natural resources person, Elaine --

KAREN BREWSTER: Furbish.

DOREEN COOPER: Furbish. And for a while, we shared the office at the Mascot. And I think that was right about when I was leaving. Maybe a couple months we shared an office. So I was just kind of at the end of that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok, because yeah, I think things shifted, so there was somebody who was head of resources instead of resources staff reporting to the ranger.

DOREEN COOPER: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: The chief ranger.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Ultimately, they created a position which Theresa Thibault first filled.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And then --

KAREN BREWSTER: But you'd already left by that point? Or did you --

DOREEN COOPER: I might have been there for a short time when Theresa was there. I don't remember. It wasn't long, if at all.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: But she and I talked about some of the projects. I would go in and visit with her after I left.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And um --

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause she was an archeologist, as well.

DOREEN COOPER: She was an archeologist, yeah. She had a lot of experience. Uh, so we would talk about this and that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: I don't remember exactly.

[00:59:19]KAREN BREWSTER: So you were there until -- you started in '92, and you worked there until?

DOREEN COOPER: 1999, the beginning, I think, of '99. So I was switched to a term appointment. First I was a temporary, and then the last four years, I was on a term appointment, so. Then when that four years expired, my position expired. And it was always a job of planned extinction. It was always considered that once the construction was done, the archeology reports were finished, that that job would go away. It was never contemplated to be a permanent job.

KAREN BREWSTER: And how did you feel about that?

DOREEN COOPER: It was fine. You -- that's what you sign up for.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well --

DOREEN COOPER: It lasted -- when I was first hired, Bruce said, "Well, it might be as long as four years." I made it to seven, so that's pretty good.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I was going to say, you didn't make an effort to try and get it extended or to become the permanent archeologist?

DOREEN COOPER: They had a permanent archeologist. That was Karl, even though his position was --

KAREN BREWSTER: Historian.

DOREEN COOPER: Classified as historian. His background is archeology.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right.

DOREEN COOPER: But they didn't need a permanent archeologist. You know, Karl would have his seasonals, which were doing the Section -- mostly doing Section 110 work. But without new construction by the Park Service in Skagway --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: -- you shouldn't have needed it.

[01:00:56]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. So do you feel like you completed the projects you were hired to work on?

DOREEN COOPER: Yep. Yep. I finished -- I wrote both the Block 3 -- both the Block 39 and the Moore House reports were finished by the time I left. The Pantheon report was contracted out to, um, my archeologist Tim Kardatzke, and he finished that and it was published. And then, Cathy Spude finished up the Mascot report. So yeah. And then Becky Saleeby did a retrospective on the twenty years of archeology at Klondike, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: We had talked about that at one of the regional office meetings that Cathy Spude and Frank Willis attended, and Frank's like, you know, he's like, "Well, you know, you need something to tie all that twenty years of archeology together."

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And Becky's report, too, is -- it ties it all together also for people who aren't archeologists.

DOREEN COOPER: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Trained to read technical archeological reports. Right?

DOREEN COOPER: Right. [01:02:06]And -- and I always tried to make mine -- my reports readable, but at the same time, as an archeologist you have to put a lot of stuff in there that non-archeologists just aren't interested in reading about.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: Stratigraphy, and, you know, endless tables showing the artifacts. But my goal was not so much that I was gonna come up with great conclusions about the work that we had done there, but that if I put the data out there, that would make it available to other researchers so that they could use that data in other analytical comparisons. And I think I accomplished that goal.

KAREN BREWSTER: And are you aware of other people having used that data since?

DOREEN COOPER: I haven't pursued that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: So I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: But you do feel like you met your goals?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah.

[01:03:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, were there things that you found particularly difficult or challenging?

DOREEN COOPER: Um, you know, each project is unique. Certainly, both with Block 39 and the Pantheon, um, working with construction and heavy -- especially at Block 39, heavy equipment and heavy equipment operators who don't really care about what you're doing, you know, and they're going to just edge up with that bulldozer, you know. And you just gotta stare 'em down, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Were they -- were they trying to push you along to work faster?

DOREEN COOPER: Of course. Just trying, you know, intimidation. Male -- most of the operators were all men, so some of them, you know, would try to be a little intimidating with their big equipment. And you know, just -- and at the Pantheon, that building just hanging there, you kinda look up and say, "Oh, I hope it's sturdy." You know, it's a unique situation, so. Probably the Moore House was the most traditional because almost everything that we did was ahead of the archeology. And the one thing that I felt very good about was that when they did do the -- the restoration of the Moore House, we didn't have to go back in because there were no unplanned finds.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause you had done the archeology in advance?

DOREEN COOPER: I had done it in advance, and I hit it all right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: And uh, and there wasn't any post-construction archeology for the workers to contend with, so.

[01:05:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and also, they maybe -- they didn't have to dig extra holes for the sewer lines. That they planned -- they dug where they said they were going to.

DOREEN COOPER: They dug where they said they were gonna do. Yeah. So um, but you know, I'd go over and keep an eye on things, you know. That was my job, you know. I'd wander over just to let them know I was still around.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: And one time when the construction crew was working, I think they were trying to get things done. It might've even -- it was on a weekend or on a Friday that I had off. Um, they -- they called Debbie Sanders and I 'cause they had found this packet of letters that was inside the wall.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

DOREEN COOPER: And -- and that was -- it was these love letters that Jack Kirmse's girlfriend from Los Angeles had written him in the 1930's, and so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. Well, that's not archeology, but --

DOREEN COOPER: Well, it is, actually. It is. Because archeology is not just under the ground. But if you're going to be dismantling a building, I mean, that's all the archeological site, so. [01:06:12]And that was true at the Pantheon, too. In fact, one of my archeologists, uh, Greg. What was Greg's last name? He ended up in the regional office doing something. Greg Dixon. In 1997, I had him going through the Pantheon building as they were -- I just had him work with the construction workers. As they were dismantling the building, he was there collecting things that they found in the walls or collecting samples of the wall paper that was being exposed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And ultimately, they were turned over to the park collections management team, but that is really what good archeology should be about. It shouldn't just be about digging the holes. You need to look at the totality of the site.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm. Interesting. Yeah, I would've thought the objects in the building, like you're saying, or the wallpaper, that that would be a, um, historian or an ethnologist or something. I wouldn't think -- I think of the archeologist as the holes in the ground.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah, no.

KAREN BREWSTER: That you'd work in conjunction with those other people.

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: But maybe you didn't have the staff at Klondike? There weren't other people.

DOREEN COOPER: To me, historians stay in their chairs. That's what I've seen mostly. But it -- it's not uncommon in historical archeology for the archeology to encompass --

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: -- you know, a view of the whole site. [01:07:47]And the other thing, um, was recording that kind of deconstruction and photographs, to have an archival record of these historic buildings about when they were kind of taking them apart, and so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Um, Ken Graham, I had him do a lot of that type of photography on the building, on the Moore House especially, because it is all part of that, so.

[01:08:19]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Um, you had mentioned the, sort of the intimidation of the timing with the construction, and it made me think about just the time period that you have to do these projects. Was there pressure to get them done in a short amount of time? Did you feel that affected the work you did?

DOREEN COOPER: The only time that you're going to -- should feel that type of thing is when you come across these unplanned things during the construction phase. And, you know, and the construction has to move around you. So they have to find other things to do --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: -- while you're getting the things out of the ground. And so, we didn't hurry. You know, we -- we worked at a normal speed, and we made sure things were recorded. But we were certainly aware that, you know, the construction people had to do other things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: That they hadn't planned on doing while they waited for us to finish, so.
But it wasn't intimidating.

KAREN BREWSTER: But, that's typical for this kind of work?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's what I was thinking. [01:09:34]It seems to me for, sort of, I don't know, salvage or compliance archeology that you might be pressured for time in a different way than if you're out, you know, excavating some ancient site.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That nobody's wanting to use.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Well, it's what makes Section 106 unpopular a lot of times because they'll shut -- they can, you know, shut down a project like they did in Skagway with Homeland Security.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: When Homeland Security hadn't done any Section 106 compliance ahead of time, and they started digging their holes in the ground. And the SHPO found out and shut them down. And so, that's when I was called in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: But that's a different story for a different time.

KAREN BREWSTER: But when you do that kind of work, you still follow archeology methodology protocol?

DOREEN COOPER: If you're -- if you're a reputable archeologist, you do.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And yeah, I didn't know if -- how you felt about doing that kind of work. As an archeology -- archeologist, how'd you feel about doing that kind of work?

DOREEN COOPER: It was fine. Yeah. I mean, a lot of my post-park projects, um, have been Section 106. Some salvage, um, and some planned ahead of time when the agencies got a little bit better about understanding their responsibilities under Section 106.

[01:11:07]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Well, you also had mentioned earlier, you talked about lab work, and I wanted to go back to that. If you can explain what happens in a lab. Is that cleaning the artifacts, or what are you doing in the lab?

DOREEN COOPER: Well, the first thing -- the whole lab work starts out in the field. When you take the artifacts out of the ground, and you keep all the ones together, and you have to know where they come from. So you have to have a system. Each one of those little packets of artifacts has to have -- be assigned a unique number. And so, you establish a list of this number and where these artifacts -- and that can -- has to be maintained all through the lab process. So you have to be careful not to mix things up. So once artifacts are taken from the field, they could be stored in plastic bags inside paper bags. Just plastic if they're really large. And they all would be numbered with Sharpies with all the information about where they came from. And um, if it was ferrous, you had to make sure the bags are vented so you don't build up moisture and contribute to -- to the artifact deterioration. And then, the first thing that happens in the lab, which may happen soon or may happen later, ideally it's sooner, is that these artifacts are taken out of these bags, and if it's glass or ceramics, maybe bone, uh, they're cleaned in water. When there's a lot of dirt, you'll use a brush, maybe. And then, they're put on drying racks. Metal is probably just dry-brushed with a wire brush, uh, to just kind of -- nails, you probably just shake off the dirt and not do too much with them. So then, everything's put on drying

racks, and then they're repackaged. And they await analysis. And uh, so you'll probably store them in boxes that show where they came from.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:13:20]DOREEN COOPER: And then ideally, you will have archeologists who open those boxes and those bags, and they have a cataloging form in front of them. And at this point, in the drying -- when -- when the artifacts are put on racks to dry, then they are re-bagged. And they are re-bagged by artifact type. So you might put all the nails from that thing in one bag, and all the pieces of glass and all the pieces of ceramic in different bags, so that when the cataloging archeologist pulls open this bag. Here's a bag of glass, ceramics, da, da, da, duh. And then, they have a cataloging form that will be for each type. So you will probably have one cataloging form for the 4d size nails. And another cataloging form for the different -- so all of your different sizes of nails will take different cataloging form, and then a separate one for just the little fragment things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And then, the bones, because animal bones, um, take -- you just can't tell what they are.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:14:31]DOREEN COOPER: We did not analyze the bones. I sent those off also under contract. And David Huelsbeck, H-U-E-L-E-S -- wait, Huelsbeck. H-U-E-L-S-B-E-C-K.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: With Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma analyzed all of our faunal remains. And he would send me a report that I then included in the final report.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And um, by the time we got to the Pantheon, he had had many years worth of analyzing faunal remains from Skagway. So he was really able to put together a --

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you remember what the -- the biggest -- the -- the most number of specimens were for faunal remains?

DOREEN COOPER: Mostly beef. But there was a lot of sheep, too. There was a lot of sheep coming up from Seattle.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Uh, so, sheep and beef, and then the fish remains, they don't preserve as well, but we did have some fish. And um, some pig. Not as much pig. And then some wild game, but generally there wasn't a lot of wild game. Chicken was probably -- and birds were probably underrepresented because their burns -- bones are much more fragile.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: So the big, clumpy beef and sheep can --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: Tend to preserve longer.

[01:16:05]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so that lab work is important for the whole organization of what you find in the ground?

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm. So once all those little catalog forms are done, I take all those little catalog forms, and I enter the data into a database. And I think at some point, I had to contract some of that out. Um, 'cause it just got too overwhelming. But then from that database, I'd generate reports. You know, and I would say, "Ok, these units around the perimeter of the Moore House, we're just getting broken-up little pieces here, and pretty

much all this area, it's just what people lost." Uh, we did pick up some remains from the Kirmse gardening activities in the front of the house, either from soil discolorations or from artifacts that we were finding. The back of the house was interesting because we found a site where it looked like -- because Kirmse was a jeweler.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And Kirmses had lived in that house for a while. And um, jewelers were -- one of their big activities was also doing assays.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And so, around the Moore House, we found several of those crucibles that you would've melted --

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: Metals -- which you wouldn't find around a normal residence.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: So you know, it was -- it was very evident that, you know, this was -- there was something else going on there, so. So that was interesting.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: You know, things like that where you could say a little -- something a little different.

[01:17:57]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And was there any archeological evidence dating back before the gold rush?

DOREEN COOPER: Not so much. Um, the Moore family, the son and father, William Moore and his son James Bernard Moore, um, had filed their homestead claim in 1887. And the cabin sat behind where the current house is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And later Bernard Moore had it moved to its present location. So that's why we were very careful in the back of the house because we knew that the old cabin had stood there at some point.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And we did find a few remains. And Cathy had found some when she did some work back there, so. Um, but those were the only pre-Klondike gold rush.

[01:18:58]As for the Tlingit Indians who used to come through there sometimes, I don't think there was much on what was at that time the Skagway beachfront to interest them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Other than pulling up their canoes there. They did have fish camps up along the Skagway River, and they would've went berry picking. Um, but on the Skagway shorefront, we didn't find anything. There was historical evidence in James Bernard Moore's autobiography that indicated that when he and his father arrived in Skagway, they found some snare traps and some things in the vicinity.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. But Dyea was more the -- where the Tlingit community might have been?

DOREEN COOPER: The Tlingit community, the Chilkoots went over there because the white man came there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: Other than that, they used it seasonally.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: But when, um, what was his name, established the trading post there. Healy?

KAREN BREWSTER: Sounds right.

DOREEN COOPER: Uh, when he put a trading post there, well, of course, the Tlingits were going to go there to protect their interests.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: 'Cause they were very aware of -- of their stake in things. And so, there's no way they were gonna let that be usurped easily.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: Without them at least having some presence. So yes, then, that was what, 1893 or so, that that trading post -- so then they started spending a lot more time in Dyea.

[01:20:42]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, and I was also thinking, too, the opposite question is -- is things that you may have found in layers post-gold rush. You mentioned the Kirmses who were 1912 or something.

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: But even Block 39, if there were things from a more recent period, World War II or -- ?

DOREEN COOPER: There was on Block 39, because during World War II that was a site where they had Quonset huts spread out all across.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And the way that we could pick up the World War I occupation were these curved -- these curved washers that were along the ribs of the Quonset huts. They were very distinctive.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

DOREEN COOPER: So whenever we saw that, we knew it was World War II, and um, that was probably the most common remain we found from World War II. Because they were raised up with floors underneath them, not much. So it was just kind of sheet trash and then from when they dismantled the buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Was mostly what we found. Although I found a watch part from that time period and perhaps a few other things. And I separated that out in the Block 39 report, and I talked about when the army came to Skagway, and -- and so, it was nice to have that element in the report. Um, World War II, when I was there basically had just become historic. It takes fifty years to become historic.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: And when I got there in '92, it was the fiftieth anniversary of the building of the Alaska Highway, so it had really just fallen under the protection of the Section 106.

[01:22:35]KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, interesting. Well, and I was also thinking what you said about everybody associates that area with the gold rush. Well, other things have happened. And as you say, it was a residential community. People were supplying the miners. I mean, eventually families and kids.

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: There's that whole other history. I didn't know how much of that shows up in the archeology.

DOREEN COOPER: Well, most of the archeology before Block 39 or the Moore House or the Peniel Mission, those were -- but other than that, had been in commercial buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: And sites that had been used by commercial buildings, so.

[01:23:15]KAREN BREWSTER: So did you work on the Peniel Mission?

DOREEN COOPER: No, that report was done -- there was -- I did one thing for them, and that was when they were doing the -- 'cause I was there during the re -- the rehabilitation. Or maybe it was a restoration. I don't think it was a restoration. Rehabilitation of the Peniel Mission. They, I think, were doing a water line or something, and came across this large wooden box structure that Karl asked me to look at. And I think we figured out it was a World War II-era kind of gray water box.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, interesting.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. But Diane Rhodes had done the archeology under Cathy Spude's direction. They found thousands and thousands and thousands of artifacts. Um, because of the gold rush buildings that had been there, the soldiers that had been there, and it was a relic streambed. And so, they just found a ton of stuff there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it sounds kind of fun.

DOREEN COOPER: It is fun. That's why we do it.

[01:24:25]KAREN BREWSTER: You know, the figuring out the -- like that box. What is this? Let's go figure it out. And I'm sure had to do some historical research to figure it out.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Yeah, it's fun. And the park had fairly good resources, you know, for an isolated -- I built up the library, um, of books that could help us identify artifacts. And Karl had acquired the microfilm -- film, yeah. Either microfilm or microfiche of old records from the Patent Office. He had purchased that. And so, when we found something with a patent number, we could go over and look up the patent number and print out what it was and get the date for it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, cool.

DOREEN COOPER: And what it was used for. So that was fun.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's cool.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Neat. [01:25:17]And so, what did you do after '99 when the job ended?

DOREEN COOPER: Did a lot of things. I, uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: You stayed in Skagway?

DOREEN COOPER: I stayed in Skagway. Um, my husband, Roy Nelson, was still working for the park at that time, and so I decided to take a part-time job as Skagway's magistrate. And I was also working as a tour guide on the White Pass Railroad.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And so, I was doing those two things. And I think I -- I was magistrate for about three and a half years. And then in that same time frame, I was -- I had my own archeology consulting business. So my main -- one of my main clients was Homeland Security.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: But I also had a few other clients. I did a small project in Dyea and another one over in Haines. And uh, I also went up and did a project for the Park Service up on the Seward Peninsula with Eileen Devinney.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: So I was keeping busy. Um, summers were busier. I tended to write the reports in the winter at home. [01:26:39]Um, and then the archeology consulting, it just got difficult. I had a really, really good archeologist who had worked for the Park Service who would help me out. Her name was Eve Griffin. And she stayed in Skagway and also had not -- was not working for the park anymore.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: But ultimately, consulting with the government just became difficult. You know, they were supposed to pay you within four weeks, and they were having problems meeting that time frame. And it's hard to plan where your money's coming from. And the taxes and the bureaucratic requirements of keeping registered with all the different things you have to register with the government as a private contractor, so that was becoming more onerous. And the jobs were dwindling, and I finally just decided, uh. So I worked -- kept working on the train for a while, and then in 2005 I took a job as bookkeeper and office manager with a lady and husband in town who owned four businesses. And so, I did that t'il I retired in 2015, and I still actually work for them now remotely, so.

[01:28:04]KAREN BREWSTER: There you go. And then you have been volunteering in the summers at Coldfoot?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Since 2017, Roy and I have been volunteering for the Bureau of Land Management, the visitor center up in Coldfoot. And I help out at the visitor center and help out our boss with the Alaska Geographic bookstore there. And there's an old -- not an old. It's a new mine -- it's a replica miner's cabin of -- a replica of the type of gold mining they did up in the Koyukuk between --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Focusing on the period between World War I and World War II. And so, Roy and I have both been involved with getting that done. We're hoping to see it come to fruition and open to the public next summer.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now has Roy been helping to rebuild that cabin?

DOREEN COOPER: No, the cabin has actually already been in place.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: But there are things that need to be added and done, smaller things. So he's been involved in that. And we're hoping to get a handicapped-accessible walking trail back there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cool.

DOREEN COOPER: They bought a -- brought up a big piece of equipment called a churn drill that's been stored down in Fairbanks. It's now up there, so we're hoping to get everything arranged. I just helped out with a project, a little remote sensing project with a metal detector in the old Coldfoot Cemetery this summer, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I was going to say, your archeology and historic archeology background would be useful in Coldfoot.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Yeah. I -- I think our background as Park Service employees, and then Roy with his maintenance skills, and me, I can type and do a whole lot of different

things. So I'm hoping that we can continue volunteering down the road, you know, that those skills will make us useful as volunteers.

[01:30:05]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, so what are your feelings about having worked for the Park Service at Klondike?

DOREEN COOPER: It was a very positive part of my life. It was my first professional job. I learned tons. I feel like I wrote two reports that are worth reading. Um, the people I worked with were great. Made a lot of -- a lot of friends that, you know -- It's funny, when you get around Park Service people who -- you start finding out you know people in common. You know, this or that. You know, 'cause you are kind of an extended family.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: And that is a nice feeling. But um, it was kind of interesting, both working for the Park Service and being married to someone who at the same time did -- also had worked for the Park Service but was a dyed-in-the-wool member of the Skagway community. 'Cause there's often a bit of push-pull between the Park Service and the community. So in a lot of ways, I felt like I was a little more grounded with the town than some of the other Park Service employees who might try to become a part of the town, but it was a little more difficult for them sometimes, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: So that was -- that was interesting.

[01:31:37]KAREN BREWSTER: But you came in as a newcomer, and then you met Roy as the local boy?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Yeah, well, we worked together.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you were -- you were accepted into that community?

DOREEN COOPER: Right. Yeah, because I was Roy's wife.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: I wasn't seen as just a Park Service employee. I was Roy's wife, and everyone knows Roy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: So you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and Roy was unique in that he was one of the earlier --

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- people who was from Skagway who got employed by the park.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. He -- he did that, you know, and some people thought he was kind of being a traitor, but it all worked out.

[01:32:14]KAREN BREWSTER: So once you were no longer working for the park and you were back to a public citizen of Skagway, did you get a sense of how people felt about the Park Service?

DOREEN COOPER: I think -- no. I mean, nothing really changed. Um, I think for me personally, my personal identity was more shaped -- more than as a Park Service employee but shaped by my three and a half years as magistrate. When they knew I'd be sending them to jail or whatever.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: And that was one of the reasons it's hard to be that type of figure in a small community.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: So ultimately, I was just like, I just can't do this anymore.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right, yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: Plus, you're on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, right.

DOREEN COOPER: And it was just cutting into our time so much, but I -- probably if anyone looked at me in Skagway, they'd say, "Oh yeah, she's married to Roy and she used to be the judge in town." And that's what they're gonna --

KAREN BREWSTER: That's how you'll be remembered.

DOREEN COOPER: They're going to forget that I was -- worked for the park.

[01:33:11]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, it's -- and now, did you ever do any archeology out on the Chilkoot Trail?

DOREEN COOPER: No, that was all Karl's. Um, that was Karl's division.

KAREN BREWSTER: And by the 90's, it may have been done?

DOREEN COOPER: The trail will never be done.

KAREN BREWSTER: There's always something new coming out?

DOREEN COOPER: Karl -- and I don't know what he does now, but in all the years that I was there, he would also hire two or three archeologists every summer.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: To continue with the Section 110 surveys of the trail. And then it -- and then I think later on, they um, when they moved a campground or something -- a campground -- another campground or site got washed away.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: And then Section 106 came into play. So um, yeah. Years after I left, he was still -- they were still doing work on the trail, and I think their most recent archeologist, Shawn (Jones), was doing quite extensive work up on the trail above the Scales area in the last couple years. So archeology along the Chilkoot is ongoing.

[01:34:21]Archeology along the White Pass has not really begun.

KAREN BREWSTER: You mean along the train or in the White Pass Unit?

DOREEN COOPER: In the White Pass Unit.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DOREEN COOPER: That is just, um, other than I think they -- they're supposed to have a survey. Whether that survey ever took place, but that's like a follow-up on what Caroline Carley did in 1983, so you're looking at a lapse of, what, thirty years or thirty-five years? And they haven't really done anything in that area. And um, at some point, they're gonna have to face that and pull some resources over there.

[01:35:07]KAREN BREWSTER: You didn't -- that was one of my next questions, is are there things archeologically that still could or should be done?

DOREEN COOPER: White Pass City, yeah. 'Cause that is the main unit, uh, that the Park Service is responsible for along the White Pass Trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And every year, you know, people from the train or -- will find their way down there. And if you don't know what you have, then you can't really monitor it. So um, I -- I think it's like a lot of federal places. You know, they know if they build a trail down there, they will come.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: And so, they don't want to do -- but at the same time, that just kind of leaves it open for people to go down there. So that's something that the park -- that's a big challenge that I think the park still has to face. I -- they pretty much have Dyea and the Chilkoot, as far as I can tell, under control.

[01:36:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, I was wondering in the White Pass is -- you said, like, why dig it up if you don't have to? That White Pass City is not very accessible from my understanding, and so, is it better to just leave it?

DOREEN COOPER: Mm. You don't have to go down and dig things up, but if you did some clearing, you would be able to see what you have. They don't -- not a comp -- there's no comprehensive map or survey of where buildings might have been.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok, yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: What type of resources are still left down there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Um, so if they have done that survey, then good.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know.

DOREEN COOPER: I know that money for it has been on the books for a while. But it's certainly a step that they need to take because it's just a big gray area. [01:36:53]But the Chilkoot Trail itself, um, the -- probably the biggest, to my mind, things that they found along there was when Bill Fortini and his crew, and I think maybe later, Andy, um, who was the park archeologist, um, became the park archeologist. 'Cause they did finally create an archeology position there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: Um, when they got to some of the caves, the shelters above the trail, above tree line was where they started to see evidence of when the Tlingit had used the trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And they found several things like that. And um --

KAREN BREWSTER: Interesting.

DOREEN COOPER: That was probably, to me, one of the most exciting things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: Um, that they found of that prehistoric use. And that's where you would expect to see the prehistoric use of that area.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: Is along the trail. Because really, that's what they came to Dyea for.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right. [01:38:04]Well, and also, I was thinking about Roy. I mean, the trail crew, they did so much work --

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- to make that trail what it is today, and they must have found things. I mean, they were digging. And then they would call Karl and he would go check things out?

DOREEN COOPER: Well --

KAREN BREWSTER: I mean, they were building bridges and --

DOREEN COOPER: Karl didn't really start until 1986, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

DOREEN COOPER: They were working on the trail before that. I don't know. They tended to know where larger artifacts were but never disturbed them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: Um, and they showed me where some were when I would hike up the trail. Because when Roy was on the trail crew, I hiked the Chilkoot Trail, you know, every other week. I could probably still hike it blindfolded. At least that lower part, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DOREEN COOPER: And then every year, you know, I'd make a couple trips up to Sheep Camp, too, you know. So I knew the trail. It just wasn't my job.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But I was thinking --

DOREEN COOPER: So I just knew it as a recreational thing.

[01:39:02]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, if you'd heard Roy and those guys talking about the stuff they found?

DOREEN COOPER: No. Really, they didn't find all that much. And they would more talk about their bosses or their fellow employees or just weird stuff. The hikers.

KAREN BREWSTER: The weird hikers.

DOREEN COOPER: The hikers. Problems with the hikers or the rangers, you know, whatever. Um, but their finds. No, not so much. I mean, if they would've found a big thing, they certainly would have notified somebody.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DOREEN COOPER: Both -- both Watson and Roy are culture -- you know, sensitive to cultural remains, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right.

DOREEN COOPER: And they made sure that their assistants were, too, so.

[01:39:46]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, so other things can you think of that I haven't asked about that relate to your time working for Klondike or living in Skagway?

DOREEN COOPER: No, I mean, it's a good part of our life. Spent over twenty-five winters there. Um, but when we left, we were ready to leave.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it's interesting, you mentioned a number of people who worked seasonally and then they stayed.

DOREEN COOPER: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: It wasn't just you. And -- and what it is about Skagway?

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because I don't know that that is typical for Park Service.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah, Skagway really does have an attraction. Judy Munns, who runs the museum, started off there with the Park Service. Um, Jim Jewell was a -- who owned a construction business, started with the park. Um, yeah. There was -- there were others whose names escape me, who've made Skagway their home. Came there 'cause of the Park Service originally. Um.

KAREN BREWSTER: So which, you know, Park Service, you think of people moving around a lot.

DOREEN COOPER: Well, most of the employees who came and stayed were in temporary positions. The people who stayed who were brought in at the higher management levels

and who had career appointments would -- would go in and out. Mostly they did not stay. Although Reed McCluskey and his wife still own their house in Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DOREEN COOPER: And they have been back as non-park people. So um, yeah.

[01:41:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Uh, well, I appreciate your time today.

DOREEN COOPER: Thank you.

KAREN BREWSTER: I know you've got other things you have to go do.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. Go check on the car.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So unless there's something else you want to say about archeology in Skagway and --

DOREEN COOPER: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- your work and legacy.

DOREEN COOPER: Yeah. It was -- What a funny seven years. Wow. It was so long ago now, I'm surprised I could recall that much.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it was great. Well, I'm sure as soon as I turn it off, you'll remember all kinds of things. That's usually what happens.

DOREEN COOPER: That's usually what happens, yeah. No, thank you.

KAREN BREWSTER: Thanks.

DOREEN COOPER: It was a good opportunity.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.