

RECORDED INTERVIEW OF SANDE MCDERMOTT

CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER

IN EASTVALE, CALIFORNIA

JANUARY 4, 2020

ORAL HISTORY 2017-01-114

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

[00:00:00]KAREN BREWSTER: All right, this is Karen Brewster, and um, today is January 4, 2020, and I'm here with Sande McDermott at her home in Corona, California. Or Eastvale, I guess.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Eastvale.

KAREN BREWSTER: California. Uh, and this is an interview for the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Oral History Project. Thank you, Sande, for having time to see me today.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Oh, thank you, Karen. Always happy to talk about Klondike.

[00:00:27]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Well, before we get to Klondike, we're going to get a little bit of an overview of --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Sure.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- your personal background and history. So you said you grew up in Alaska?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I did. Born in Illinois, but my father worked in an arsenal, and it was the time -- I can't think who sang the song, whether it was Arlo Guthrie or someone else, about McNamara closing down the defense plants. And so, my father was given a choice. Either leave federal service -- uh, he was civil service, or he could go to work for the contractor who took over. They privatized the arsenals. And he could work for the contractor, or he would go wherever the government offered him a job. [00:01:19]And where the government offered him a job was at Fort Rich, Fort Richardson, in Anchorage. And he took that, which turned out to be an excellent choice, because while the contractor took those federal employees in, within a year, they fired all of them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. So he went with where the government sent him?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He said he was a child of the Depression, he had twenty years in with the federal government, and he would go wherever there was a job. And so, we left all our families and friends and moved to Alaska. And I was a sophomore in high school.

[00:01:56]KAREN BREWSTER: And so what year was that?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: 1965.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And we drove up the Al-Can, which was then primarily a dirt road.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And it still had the signs on curves, "Four died here in 1955."

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KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And you'd hit another curve, "Three died here in 1963." And there were cross markers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Uh, it was still a very primitive road.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And experience. [00:02:26]And when I moved to Anchorage, I think the population was about fifty thousand for Anchorage, sixty thousand for the whole area.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Including like, Rabbit Creek. And Spenard was a separate town then.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, really?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um-hm. And uh --

[00:02:44]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and also Fort Rich being out in the Eagle River part, yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Towards Eagle River. But we lived in town. Lived near West High.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It was the year after the earthquake.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was just going to ask, it was after the earthquake.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. And so, there was only West High. East was -- had been built, but we were doing half-time with East students while they were doing repairs to East High School.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So those students could go back to school at East. And so, they did. If I remember correctly, it was juniors and seniors went from seven in the morning 'til noon, and then sophomores went from noon 'til five or whatever it was. But anyway, we went very early in the morning.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And uh, so we lived near West High. We were in Spenard.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: 99503, as Mr. Whitekeys would say. And in fact, the apartment we moved into had sunk in the earthquake.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Up to the roof. In Turnagain. But had been pulled up and moved.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: To where we lived. [00:03:56]And where we lived is roughly the corner of, uh, let's see, Arctic -- no, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And uh, C Street. And in fact, the road ended at C Street.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right, right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Arctic was gravel between Fireweed and C Street.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so we were on the very edge of town.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which -- and it was all tundra beyond us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And mountains. And my mother painted, and so she liked that, having that view.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Right from the deck of our apartment.

KAREN BREWSTER: Nice.

[00:04:34]SANDE MCDERMOTT: So that's where we lived. And in fact, many years later, when the Alaska Regional Office was building its new building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Downtown in Anchorage, and we were moving out of the building on Gambell Street, before the building was ready, we were just stacked in there. So a decision was made to move a division out of the regional office on Gambell Street, and they moved cultural resources over to a building on C Street. C Street and Eide. And the parking lot for that building was where my bedroom was. It was -- that's where my apartment had been.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's funny.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They moved us there, I think, because the resources library --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- was in the other part of the building or right next door to it, I don't remember which. But they moved us there in the interim until we moved downtown.

[00:05:28]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. So do you have siblings?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I do. I have a brother who's much older and never moved to Alaska.

And then I have a sister, who's a couple years younger than me. She somehow always figures out she's four years younger than me, but she's really only two and a half.

KAREN BREWSTER: But so, it was the two of you growing up, then?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The two of us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah, in Anchorage, which was a great, wonderful time to grow up in Anchorage.

[00:05:58]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And then you went on to college and -- ?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. I went, uh, to Colorado State University my first four years of college, where I was a music major. My first -- we had quarters there, and so my first four quarters I was a music major, which meant I had seventy-six credits in music and not much else, and decided that that was not what I wanted to do. That it was making something that was a great pleasure to me. Hard work.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So I then became a philosophy major for a couple quarters, and then, uh, changed to psychology. And then, Colorado State raised its out-of-state tuition where it just was not going to happen. And University of Alaska Anchorage had opened.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Where it was really going. [00:07:03]And so, I went back to Alaska, as we so often do. I used to call it the yo-yo effect, you know. You move away for good how many times?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then you move back. And so, I went back to Alaska, and I finished a degree in psychology at UAA.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then decided that wasn't really what I wanted to do. And then I went to my true love, which was history, and so I got a degree in history.

KAREN BREWSTER: A master's degree, or a bachelor's?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: A -- a -- first a bachelor's.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[00:07:38]SANDE MCDERMOTT: So I got my second bachelor's at UAA. And what I was going to do, my plan was to get a teaching certificate and teach secondary school. And so, I had my history degree, and I had everything done in the education requirements except student teaching when they changed the education -- the requirements. The state changed the requirements. And, of course, once they're changed, they're changed.

There's no grandfathering in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, they wanted a social science degree. So that meant another year of school. And so, I started doing that, and then I thought, you know, what I really want to do is go to graduate school. And so, I applied and got a full fellowship at University of Oregon's history department, which at that time was a very good -- still is a very good history department, secondary program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so I went in as a fellow, and that was 1982. [00:08:39]In the meantime, I had married and had two children. And um, so it was, you know, how am I going to manage. And the marriage was falling apart. I knew I had to have a future. And it was how am I going to manage graduate school? Well, my father had retired, and he went to graduate school with me.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: My children were four and five when I went. And he said, "Oh, you want me to go where it doesn't really snow much, and it's not very cold in the winter, and spend all my time with my grandchildren? This sounds great." So I will be forever grateful to him because he made it possible for me.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, I went to University of Oregon. And my intent was to get a master's and then PhD, but through the master's program, when I was about to get the master's, the divorce happened, and it was chaos in my life.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:09:38]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, I decided to go back up to Alaska and deal with my home and the divorce. At that time, it seemed like every woman I knew in graduate school, and there weren't that many, history departments were very much a male bastion.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: In fact, we noticed of the fellows -- fifteen fellows came in when I went in. And in the history graduate program, they have what they call standing seminars. And if your primary field of study, for example, is American history, as mine was, then you're in the American history standing seminar. And I was the only woman in the American history standing seminar.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then, if you were doing European history, there was a European history standing seminar, and my friend Judy who I made friends with at graduate school, she was the only woman.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: In the Western.

KAREN BREWSTER: And this was in the 80's?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: This was in the 80's.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And we viewed ourselves as the token.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We were the tokens. [00:10:41]And there was one other woman in the graduate program that came in of the fifteen. And she was in the -- was doing Asian history, and so there she was.

KAREN BREWSTER: And she was the only one in that?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But she was the only -- well, she and I were both in the Asian seminar because what I developed as my primary field of study was I was doing a Pacific Rim specialty. And so, it was the American West, the Canadian West, Alaska, Russian America, and Japan.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, I also was in the Asian standing seminar. Um, and then, my primary interest was indigenous peoples. And stemming from my view that, if you want to really understand a country's policies, and I've always been a policy wank, that you could publish policies, but it's how you implement them that makes a big difference.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: If you have a civil rights commission, and Strom Thurmond is head of that civil rights commission, it gives you an idea of what that's going to accomplish.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Nothing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:11:54]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, I thought if you really want to understand a nation's policies, look at how they treat the weakest citizens. And inevitably and unfortunately, indigenous peoples in our time --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- seem to have been those in the recent past, the last 200 years, let's say, and maybe always, who have been politically and economically the weakest citizens.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, I did a specialty, and that's -- so I chose to look at treatment of indigenous peoples. And then my master's thesis was on the United States Board of Indian Commissioners that was part of the celebrated "Peace Policy" of President Grant.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And when you looked at that board, the initial members of it were philanthropists. They were, uh, people who -- the person who brought the Salvation Army to the United States. They were people who truly cared about the American Indians and their treatment. And this was in 1870. The board, that board, had resigned in protest

because none of their recommendations were being followed. And the policies that were coming out were really that of annihilation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And assimilation. [00:13:30]And so, when we look at the -- the Custer battle is 1876. When you look at the make-up of the board in 1876, it is primarily made up of directors of railroad companies. Who had their own interests.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: In the treatment of Native Americans.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Of American Indians. So that was my field of study.

[00:13:58]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Now you had said that your father came to help. Was your mother not in the picture anymore?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No, my mother stayed in Alaska.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And actually, my brother's son was living with them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: At the time, and so she was taking care of him. And then later on, her health was starting to deteriorate, and so --

KAREN BREWSTER: So just your father came?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. Just Dad came.

KAREN BREWSTER: Neat.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. It was. [00:14:25]So then I went back up to Alaska to settle things out, and I thought, well, and I'll figure out, you know, going back to do the PhD.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The last two fields, and do the PhD. And I got a call from UAA, the history department, and Dr. Haycox called me and said, "You're back?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "You got the master's?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Do you want a job?" I said, "What?" Here I am, a single mother with no job. And he said, "We've just had someone quit who teaches history classes. Can you take them over?"

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I said, "I haven't -- I'm not ABD yet." And he said, "We've just combined the community college and the university systems together."

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He says, "We have lots of professors here who don't have PhD's." And so, I went to UAA. And I was there from '84, and I kept teaching until 1997, actually.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, even after you were with the Park Service?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Even after I was with the Park Service. Yeah, I loved it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I loved being on faculty.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, yeah, that's what Rachel Mason at the Park Service, she's doing the same thing.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: She's mixing, um, positions.

[00:15:43]SANDE MCDERMOTT: So then, I'm at UAA, and they were forming Alaska History, the journal.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Of Alaska history.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, I was participating in that. I don't even remember if I was officially on the board of it starting out, but I -- maybe. Not sure. And I met Bob Spude.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Who was then regional historian for National Park Service. So we get to talking, and he says, "So your field of study? Pacific Rim. Your language? Russian, uh, for graduate school." And he said, "We need somebody to do the boundary review for the Pribilof Islands National Historic Landmark." It was one of the first National Historic Landmarks in Alaska, and I don't know if this is true or not, but I always look at it this way that, I think it was Senator Gruening went, "Oh. We're a state now. There's these things called National Historic Landmarks. We want some of those. It'll be here, here, here, and here." And Skagway was one of the first, or if not the first. And then Pribilof Islands were part of that. But no boundary reviews had been done. [00:16:54]And this becomes really important to understand later, even for Skagway. You can designate a National Historic Landmark, and you say, "Ok, this is a National Historic Landmark." Klondike Gold Rush.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Pribilof Islands. But because the National Historic Preservation Act also affords protection to historic properties, and those -- now these properties were designated before the act of 19 -- of 1966. They were designated in '63, I think.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: '62 or '63. Um, there's a very short history done, like three-page significance description.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Bam! You're a National Historic Landmark. [00:17:39]Well, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 takes the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks and more clearly defines what they are. And it also provides for a process by which, under the expenditure of federal funds or a federal permit, the qualities for which something is a National Historic Landmark or listed on the National Register for Historic Places must be taken into consideration. And that's the Section 106 process.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. That's the compliance thing.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The compliance process. There are no compliance police. It has no penalties. It has no fines, unlike the Archeological Protection Act, which has civil penalties and fines associated with it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The National -- the National, uh, the Historic Preservation Act does not.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

[00:18:41]SANDE MCDERMOTT: In addition, it also created a whole panoply of programs. And here's the beauty of the National Historic Preservation Act is, the National Historic

Preservation Act recognizes that preservation occurs at three different levels. It occurs at the national level. And what occurs at the national level is that overview and perspective that comes from looking at the country as a whole.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And saying, what are the things that we choose to remember that tell us who we are as a people? [00:19:25]Then it also created the State Historic Preservation offices.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And a mechanism to provide federal funding. Originally, it was eighty (percent) federal, twenty (percent) state.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I don't know what it is now. I think it went to seventy-thirty. It may even have changed further from there. But the concept was, people in their own state also have a vision statewide of what is important in our state. And so, if you look at Virginia or Georgia, you're -- maybe plantations are important. But they're not going to be important at all in Alaska.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: 'Cause we never had them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But what will be important in Alaska? What tells Alaska's story? [00:20:19]And then it also recognized it by creating Certified Local Governments. That local governments could participate in this three-tiered national program because they can look at their own community. And here is where, in my own personal view, loc -- is where preservation happens. Because if a local community doesn't care about a building or a site or an archeological site or a sacred place, somebody in Washington, DC, can't do anything about preserving it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Because remember, the law under which things are listed on this National Register of Historic Places, either at national, state, or local significance, still has the same protections. It's advisory.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

[00:21:22]SANDE MCDERMOTT: It -- it says, we all agree. This is really important. This is important to who we are as a people. But what happens to it is determined really in that local community.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And how communities protect their historic properties are through local ordinances.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Really, that's the only place there's any teeth. Unlike Great Britain, where they -- if something is a National Treasure, it's a National Treasure.

KAREN BREWSTER: So --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It doesn't matter who owns it.

[00:21:52]KAREN BREWSTER: But if something is -- becomes listed on the National Register of Historic Places in a local community, does that give it extra protection?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It gives it extra protection only if -- under -- if federal funds are being used in a project or a federal permit. If you own a building that's on the National Register of Historic Places, and you are not using a federal permit, you are not using federal money, you can do anything you want to that building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You need to understand -- and part of my job as Historic Preservation Officer in Alaska and in Washington, DC, for the whole Park Service, was to let you know, "Well, what you're doing is going to destroy those qualities for which it's eligible. Can we talk about it?"

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Can we find a way to -- to maybe meet your goal, your need for this building, without destroying the qualities for which it's eligible, which means the qualities that tell the story. [00:22:57]And actually, that sometimes works. When MarkAir -- remember MarkAir in Alaska?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes. Yes. Alaska -- early airlines. Yes.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. They were going to start flying out to Dutch Harbor. And Dutch Harbor -- certain buildings there were National Historic Landmark from World War II.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And there was the old aerology building that sat on the runway, which is where during World War II, you have pictures of guys with binoculars, you know, looking out the windows of the aerology building, and they're looking at fog because it's the Aleutians.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But they sort of ran the airport, right?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They -- the weather, they -- they're -- who comes in, who goes out. Well, MarkAir was taking over the -- had bought the aerology building, and was going to turn it into a -- a kind of a VIP terminal. And have offices there. So I wrote them a letter, which our then Associate for Cultural Resources in Alaska, uh, Paul Haertel, he says -- I'd get him to sign it. And he'd say, "Is this another one of your crackpot letters?" And I'd say, "Yes it is." Sometimes they work. [00:24:06]So I sent MarkAir a letter, and I said, "Do you realize that this building is part of a National Historic Landmark, and it's important for these reasons? And we'd be happy to work with you so that you can, you know, meet your needs and still maintain its historic qualities." Well dang, if MarkAir doesn't contact me and say, "This is really great!" They not only rehabilitated the building, but they restored it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It looked just like it did in -- during World War II. They did a beautiful job.

[00:24:38]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I'm glad they did something positive with the money they made out of --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. And in fact, they were going to fly us out there for the dedication of the building and stuff. We couldn't accept free tickets, of course.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Because we were federal employees, so we had to somehow find the money to get out there.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was going to say, it was too foggy. You couldn't get there.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No. We spent a lot of time in the Aleutians.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Anyway, so that's -- that's where it ended up.

[00:25:01]KAREN BREWSTER: So something is designated a landmark, --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- that's different than being -- how is it different than being a park or a monument or something?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: A national park is managed by the National Park Service, and it's owned by the people of the United States.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: A National Historic Landmark can be privately owned, commercially owned. It's just -- it is simply a designation that says, this is not only nationally significant, but it has -- there's criteria for landmark, which is rarity. It's the only. It's the best of. Its condition is. It's the only place the story is told. It's the best place to tell the story.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. So there are cases where something gets designated a landmark, and then does it maybe eventually become a monument or a park?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes, and that happened with Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[00:25:57]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then to go back to my first job with Park Service, so I got -- Spude hired me to do the boundary review for Pribilof Islands, because as I said, when it was designated a landmark, and then I got off on what landmarks are. It didn't set any boundaries. So boundaries, you think, well what do they matter? Well, if there is a compliance action, you have to know, is this federal funds or federal permit tak -- the action taking place within the boundaries of the landmark or without? Because something could happen at Dutch Harbor, for example, that wasn't anywhere near the landmark. If you don't know what its boundaries are.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So Park Service began doing, and -- and think, it takes time for -- the National Historic Preservation Act was passed in 1966, but it takes time for people to figure out what it means.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: For all the programs that are in it to get up and running.

[00:27:02]The Tax Act program is in there. National Register. National Historic Landmarks. Certified Local Governments. Um, uh, what else is in there? Historic American Buildings, Historic American Landmarks, and Historic American Engineering Record.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which had actually come out of the 1935 act, but were now in there. So you have to -- you have all these programs. And in the act it says, whenever it says, "The Secretary of the Interior shall," in the definitions, it actually says, it means the

National Park Service shall. So the National Park Service not only has its parks and there are the designations of park, historical park, battlefield.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, recreation area. Uh, national seashore. There's all these different designations.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They're really all administered the same by the National Park Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Preserved. [00:28:05]And so, those are places that have clearly defined boundaries that are -- they're not owned by the National Park Service because they're owned by the American people. But the National Park Service manages and administers them for future generations, unimpaired. We have a preservation mission.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Not a conservation mission. Uh, conservation as well, but we also have the layer of preservation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That's what separates us from BLM and Fish (and Wildlife Service).

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We're responsible for them. We have much more control over a National Historic Landmark or a National Register property. Like I said, that really is up to local communities.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: To take care of their own.

[00:28:59]KAREN BREWSTER: So you did this boundary survey. What year was that?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: For, uh -- 1984.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No, '85. '85-'86. I did the boundary review for Pribilof Islands, which I -- the National Historic Landmark name should always reflect its historic name. And so, I named it Seal Islands.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Because that's what it had been. The -- St. Paul and St. George had been called.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Most often.

KAREN BREWSTER: Huh. I mean I know that --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Was the Seal Islands.

KAREN BREWSTER: I know the history of fur seal hunting there, but I didn't realize they'd been called Seal Islands. But it makes sense.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, yes. And so, I did that study. [00:29:39]And then, the next summer -- see, you can hire -- do a faculty hire, non-competitive. So I had the language, I had the background, and I was a faculty member.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So I was easy-peasy. And, in fact, it wasn't until I became regional historian that I found I was, like, the fourth or fifth person they hired to do the Pribilof Islands. Nobody had produced anything.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which sometimes happens.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So anyway, then the next year, I got hired back again as a summer faculty hire, which was great for me 'cause there I was single parent with children. And I wasn't teaching in the summer, so I wasn't getting a paycheck in the summer.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:30:20]SANDE MCDERMOTT: So I went to work for Park Service, and I worked with the wonderful Bill Brown on his Gates of the Arctic. And so, I helped him. Whatever he needed. I checked --

KAREN BREWSTER: He was working on that history?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. He was doing the administrative history of Gates of the Arctic. What did he end up calling it?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I know the -- I know the name, but I can't think of it.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah, the -- left my brain for the moment.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And also, all the HABS/HAER, the Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record documentation had been done in the area of Gates, and so I put all that together. Put the photographs together, the history together, the descriptions together, which was his Volume II. And so, I worked on that the second year. [00:31:10]And then -- UAA adjunct faculty doesn't pay a lot.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I didn't have insurance. I didn't have anything, you know, and I had two kids to bring up. And uh, Park Service -- you recall I talked about those programs that came out of the Historic Preservation Act.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which Park Service at various times, and people like or don't like, but this is what people called them, "external programs," meaning they were outside of parks, external to parks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then internal was park programs. Or outhouse programs was a little less complimentary. [00:31:55]There's always been a testy relationship between the National Park Service and the programs that came out of the Historic Preservation Act. Part of it is because, originally, there was a new agency created, Historic Conservation -- "hookers." HCRS. Historic Conservation -- you can Google it. But it was HCRS.

KAREN BREWSTER: HCRS.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And we used to call -- and then HCR -- it came in under Carter. And then it disappeared under Reagan. And so, all those former "hookers" (HCRS) were absorbed into the National Park Service, as were the programs. Because it does say in the act, National Park Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So they come in and line Park Service people look at these and go, they're taking money away from our parks. They're taking -- those historians could be helping our parks. Why are they working on a Tax Act project, or why are they helping

this community? Why are they doing this? There was a contentious relationship, which in all honesty, continues to this day.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[00:33:26]SANDE MCDERMOTT: Now in Alaska, you'll recall, ANILCA (Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act) and ANCSA (Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act) had passed. When I went in in 1985, --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- we were birthing national parks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You had national parks out there. I never forgot Harlan Hobbs, who was one of the real estate people who bought the land in Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: For the park. When the first superintendent went in, who was Hoffman.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He said, and I will quote it, "They sent that poor son-of-a-bitch up there without so much as a DI-1 or a pencil and told him to make a park." Now a DI-1 was a purchase order.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That's what we used --

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- to buy -- you couldn't -- to buy a pencil, you had to have a DI-1. They've long since gone to history. But I've never forgot that. [00:34:25]And so, when I came into the regional office in Anchorage, they had gotten these new programs to manage. And one of them was the Historic Preservation Fund Grants Program. Those grants did two things. One is, it was the eighty percent funds that went to the State Historic Preservation Office. And then ten percent of that had to go to Certified Local Governments for their projects. And then anything else that would be put under the umbrella of HPF would go through there. So if Senator Stevens wanted to fund something that was historic, --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- he could earmark money in the Historic Preservation Fund to go to the Alaska Data Center in Anchorage, for example.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He could put the money in and say, "I want it to go there. This is how much goes there." And the Park Service, I, did that paperwork.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I made that happen. And they did not have someone doing that before.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, they advertised a part-time permanent, but it was permanent.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Gotta get that permanent status. It was permanent, to manage the HPF fund, the Historic Preservation Fund Grants Program. [00:35:59]And I'll never forget, I walked in there my first day, and I -- Bob Spude hands me this -- remember file trays that you used to get In and Out boxes on your desk?

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right, right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And it's stacked about a foot and a half high with paper. And he said, "Here's this." And then he gave me this book, "NPS 49," that was about three inches thick. And he said, "And that's how you do it. Go at it. And don't screw it up." Because apparently it had been screwed up at some point, and this is why they got the funds for a grants manager, and the state didn't get their money on time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And Senator Stevens was, rightly so, not happy about that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:36:50]SANDE MCDERMOTT: So I came on as the Historic Preservation Fund Grants Manager. And then, the next year, through accretion of duties, it became a full-time position.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which I got. So then, I started just teaching night classes at the university to fill in, because again, single mother. And I had a hockey player and a figure skater.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, my.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And as another mother and I used to sit on the bench watching our daughters skating, we said, "We can't wait until they go to college. It'll be so much cheaper than skating." Competitive figure skating is very expensive.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, also a lot of time of, you know, watching hockey games and figure skating. I mean, they are --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Oh, yeah. Five AM, I'm at the rink.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Where are you at five AM? I'm at one of the rinks. When my daughter turned sixteen, I gave her a car, a AAA card, and a cell phone. You can get yourself to the rink at five AM.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: 'Cause I still have Ben to get to a rink at five AM.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:37:55]SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, but anyway, so I was the grants manager, and then I'm --

KAREN BREWSTER: I'm looking at your -- so that was in what year?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: '87 to '89.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And by -- in '88, I became full-time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then, '89 to '92, I was the Historic Preservation Program Manager, and that was the NHL, National Register, Tax Act. I was also the contracting officers' technical representative, COTR, on grant -- on agreements.

KAREN BREWSTER: Like cooperative agreements?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And that's what I -- that's when I worked with UAF.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: 'Cause I was responsible for the Project Jukebox.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right, ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then, and the Alaska at War commemoration and conference in the early '90's.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I was the Park Service representative to that team. Um, and then, from '92 to '95, I was concurrently with being Regional Historian, I was also the Historic Preservation Officer, which meant every park compliance action (coughing), excuse me, went through me. And we would manage a couple hundred a year.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. [00:39:19]So how was being a historic preservation officer different than, like, what Ted (Birkedal) was doing as head of cultural resources where he was dealing with compliance?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Ted dealt primarily with archeological compliance.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And uh, (cough) but uh, myself, and then by then I had staff. My staff managed the files. In the Park Service, they called -- our compliance form was called a Triple X form. They keep trying to change the name of it, but everybody still calls it the Triple X.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. But so, your compliance was like, historic building compliance?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Oh, and I also, uh, managed the paperwork for the archeological compliance.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But I would rely upon Ted or his staff for their expertise.

KAREN BREWSTER: To do the actual work?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: To do the actual work, or to make sure that the work being done was appropriate.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Ok.

[00:40:13]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then, and it was '92 to 2004, I was supervisory historian. My title began as regional historian.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I followed Bob Spude as regional historian.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then, um, with the '95 reorganization of the National Park Service, those regional titles went away. And so --

[00:40:41]KAREN BREWSTER: Why did you decide to become regional historian or apply for the position?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It was a promotion.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And also, I had to -- it really was a decision to be made, because I loved project work, which is what you do as a GS-7 or 9. Somewhat as an 11. At 11, you start supervising. And each of those is more money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, more autonomy. Um, but regional historian came open, and so I had to make a decision. Did I want to be a pencil pusher? Did I want to do budgets? Did I want to spend my days supervising and doing performance appraisals and all the management stuff? Not leadership, 'cause there's -- in my mind, there's a huge difference between management and leadership.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, it was all the management stuff. Did I want to do that instead of research and writing?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which is what I went to graduate school for. So I had to make that decision. [00:41:58]But on the other side, it was an opportunity for leadership. And leadership to me is having a vision of where our program should be going. Of having, um, the ability to inspire others to move in a cohesive direction. Um, at one point in my career, later on when I went to Santa Fe and I encountered an office that was not like the Alaska Regional Office and was going through a lot of changes, which quite honestly is why they hired me, to make those changes. Is, I had to say, it's not the job of the National Park Service, it's not our purpose, to provide you with a job only doing what you want to do and only going where you want to go and only living where you want to live. The purpose of the National Park Service is to ensure that our parks are preserved so that when you visit it, your son visits it, your daughter's children visit it, and your great-grandchildren visit it, it's still the same. The experience and the story -- I'll back off on story. But the experience never changes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:43:21]SANDE MCDERMOTT: The story will always evolve. There was a time when we didn't talk about slavery.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: At Civil War sites. Uh, you know, that evolves.

KAREN BREWSTER: The interpretation evolves.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The interpretation changes, and our understanding of who we are as a people changes. We often will realize, when we say, "All people are created equal." And "We the people." Who "all people" and "we the people" are changes all the time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Remember, women didn't vote.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Until --

KAREN BREWSTER: A hundred years ago.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: A hundred years ago. But I was going to say less than, but we're getting there. We're there. Native Americans didn't vote until 1924. Black Americans got the vote out of the Civil War, but Reconstruction and Jim Crow took it away.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:44:21]SANDE MCDERMOTT: We're constantly changing, and the story needs to develop, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: There's a lot of places where we -- I never forgot. Here's the best example. I was at the Smithsonian looking at artwork, and there was this painting. And it's wagons coming through the Cumberland Gap.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: With people walking beside the wagon and riding on the wagon. And it's called, "The Pioneers and Their Wives." And I looked at that, and I thought, the wives are staying at Holiday Inns at night?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They're not pioneers?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, they were pioneers, too.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Even Alaska Pioneers used to have Alaska Pioneers, and then there was a women's organization that was separate from it. Uh-uh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So anyway.

KAREN BREWSTER: You decided --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I -- I digress.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. You decided --

[00:45:10]SANDE MCDERMOTT: I decided that I wanted to do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: That it was ok to switch roles?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. And I also like to know stuff. I like to be in those meetings where you find out what the hell's going on.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You know. Uh, we used to say, "We're federal employees. It's like being a mushroom. We're fed a lot of poop, and in the dark." But, anyway, uh, so I decided that that's what I wanted to do, and I also looked around and went, I don't want to work for any of those other people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[00:45:43]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And um, I think by then, Ted had become chief. I don't remember if Leslie was still there. I liked working for Leslie.

KAREN BREWSTER: Leslie Hart?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Leslie Hart, yeah. I did. She could -- some people found her very difficult. In working for her, I did not. I -- I actually really liked working for Leslie.

KAREN BREWSTER: So she was head of cultural resources?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah, when I got -- when I came on.

KAREN BREWSTER: And historian fell under cultural resources?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes, cultural resources was history, archeology, cultural anthropology, historic architecture, cultural landscapes. Did I leave somebody out?

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, ethnology, but that's anthropology. Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Part of cultural anthropology. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And subsistence is separate?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Subsistence is -- that comes out of ANILCA/ANCSA.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. We won't go there.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which I always say 'em together, some is --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But yeah. That's out of ANILCA/ANCSA.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Uh.

[00:46:45]KAREN BREWSTER: So why was -- what was the feeling of why Leslie was difficult?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, she was very tightly wound. And I always picture her with her half-glasses halfway down her nose, with her sitting at a calculator (sound like fingers tapping), and her voice would come out. And actually, Susan Morton and I, who was the Susan I was talking about.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Was archeologist in the National Register programs. I was historian. And we were hired the same day. We got full-time the same day. In fact, I have a picture of both of us on our first day at work. Our desks are on top of each other. They weren't even ready for us. And we're climbed up on top of those two big desks and did a picture.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's great.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We called it, "The day of the short girls." And Leslie called us "Sindy."

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, really?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That was a combination of both our names. Susan and Sandy became "Sindy." And she'd be in her office, and she'd -- we'd hear, "SINDY!" And we thought, "Oh no, what did we do now?" And she also would point a finger.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That finger would just wag at you. But on the other hand, she also made sure I could do my job, and she was very supportive of what needed to be done. You know.

[00:48:14]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. So when you became the regional historian, Bob Spude had left, and you became --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He'd left.

KAREN BREWSTER: So what did need to be done, and what did you think needed to be done?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: There was a lot of work in parks that needed to be done. And we needed to be working with parks to get that done and to figure out what that work was. The relationship between -- now I'll speak to the relationship --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- between regional offices and parks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Is often a contentious one, because the people in parks are there every day, and they're on the ground. They know the re -- they think they know the resources better than anybody. They deal with the visitors. They deal with the totality of the park. You sit in a regional office in divisions.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Think of the word, divisions. Hate that word. And you're primarily concerned with your area of interest, whether it's contracting or budget or cultural resources or natural resources. Uh, law enforcement. You're in your little cocoon.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It's very -- very stove-piped. [00:49:35]And so -- and often the people in the regional offices are PhD's, or are "professionals."

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Right, quote. I'm doing air quotes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Air quotes.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Same could be in parks, but the people in the regional office think they know better than the people in the parks. The people in the parks think they know better than the regional office. And everybody hates everybody in the Washington office. Because they're so removed from parks, they have no understanding of what we face out here in the field. [00:50:13]Now in Alaska, because remember, we're birthing parks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. A lot of them were created in 1980.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They don't have cultural resource staff. They don't have hardly any staff. Well, what was it, Klondike, I think, at one point when they think they have a lot of staff, they have eight people?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Working in a park? And so -- and plus, with Ted's absolute commitment that our role was there to support parks, that's where we were going. [00:50:55]The other thing that happened was the 1995 reorganization of the National Park Service. Before the reorganization, there were ten regions of the National Park Service. Five of those regions were called "super regions." What that meant was, they -- regional office not only had responsibility for the national park units, and I'll use that meaning recreation areas.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: All the -- all of them, the whole panoply, the whole alphabet soup in that region. But they also had responsibility for those National Historic Preservation Act programs. And so, they had staff that dealt only with state historic preservation offices, and at that time, they believed that if you were funded through the Historic Preservation Fund, you couldn't do any work --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- for -- in a park. Or you could only work on the Tax Act. You could only work on this. You could only work on --

[00:52:00]KAREN BREWSTER: And so, Alaska was one of those super regions?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Alaska became -- when we became a region, after being an area office, we already were a super region.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We were constantly fighting with the office in San Francisco, who still thought that they controlled us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because when Alaska was an area, San Francisco was the -- ?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. The super region.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I'm not sure -- Frank Norris would know, of course, but I'm not sure when the ten are -- ten regions, five super regions was created.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So --

[00:52:36]KAREN BREWSTER: 1995.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: '95 comes, the reorganization of the National Park Service. No more super regions. We went from ten regions to seven.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Alaska remained its own region. There was discussion about putting Alaska under San Francisco again. Uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: I can't imagine.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: One of our staff even made up t-shirts that said, "180 Degrees of Management." It would be all the way from Alaska to Guam to Hawaii, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It was -- it would have been a huge region. But Alaska remained as it was a region.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And the other regions, the boundaries changed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:53:25]SANDE MCDERMOTT: The other message of the reorganization was that -- did away with those titles of regional historian, regional this, regional that. It fully put forward that these central offices were there to serve parks. Some people call it "The Superintendents' Revolt." And it truly was designed that -- in fact, there was even, uh, targets given to central offices. Our office, if I remember correctly, went from 225 permanent employees, and our target was 98.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But it stopped at, I think 118, 120, because of subsistence. We got subsistence responsibilities.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, they went, "Oh, stop. We can't have that added on and still get rid of all these people." And cultural resources lost a huge amount of staff. The first to go were all the term employees. First, temporary employees.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Then term employees. Uh, then permanent employees. [00:54:36]And so, Ted had the vision, and he'd -- remember, he always said, "Our purpose is to serve parks."

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So what Ted worked at was getting parks to hire the people who'd been in the regional office.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's what I was about to say, the people who lost their job regionally, did they get sent out into the parks?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: In Alaska, they did. Not in other regions.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Because Ted thought it was important, and he worked with superintendents to get -- and with the regional office. He gave up funding to fund -- move that money to the parks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, that's what he was saying yesterday.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: To pay for those people out there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That did not happen in other regions.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Uh, so --

[00:55:23]KAREN BREWSTER: So did that change your responsibilities as a historian?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. We were advisory. And so, I was no longer Regional Historian, so I became Supervisory Historian. In fact, I remember being at our last regional historians' meeting in -- under the chief historian in Washington, DC. And I said, "So what's our title now?" And he said, "Well, Sande, your title can be anything you want." And I said, "Then I want to be the queen of history." And one of our gay regional historians says, "Oh sweetie, I've been that for years." And, in fact, my goodbye poem that Ted wrote for me is called "The Empress of History."

KAREN BREWSTER: There you go.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Since I had the Russian background.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So as a --

[00:56:05]SANDE MCDERMOTT: So but anyway, we became supervisory.

KAREN BREWSTER: Which meant, you -- if there were historians in the parks, such as Karl is currently at Skagway, you were their supervisor?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No, not at all.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The superintendent.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Was their supervisor. I supervised my staff, which was ever-shrinking.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you were supervisory historian in that you were in charge of all the projects?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And we were senior -- I did the same work I did before.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Pretty much. It didn't change for us in Alaska because we always worked to support parks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:56:40]SANDE MCDERMOTT: One of the differences that came with that was when I first started, the Alaska Regional Office -- you know, the president's budget is passed. This chunk of money goes to Department of Interior. Department of Interior gives this chunk of money to the National Park Service. The National Park Service then divides up that chunk of money. The Alaska Regional Office would get a chunk of money, and part of that chunk of money would go to cultural resources.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And in that chunk of money was project money, which is the lifeblood to the parks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It's how they get stuff done. [00:57:19]Well, parks would write -- I can't even remember now what they were called. 10-238's. Which were their proposals for projects. And they would come into the regional office. And we would then sit in the smoke-filled room, not quite, and we'd go through the projects. And all the projects that wanted an administrative history or other history, I would look at. Uh, Ted or whoever was regional archeologist after Ted became, uh, chief archeologist, Gary Somers, would look at the archeology projects, historic architecture.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Divvied it -- divvied out.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We'd sit around the table, and then we'd go, "Ok. We have this much money." We have -- always had requests for ten times money we got. "How we gonna divide it up?" Under Ted's leadership, we would make an effort to divide it among parks and disciplines.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[00:58:28]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And we also worked closely with the parks, so we knew who really needed, uh -- you know, this place really needs to have this archeological study done because they're going to put a visitor center in. We gotta do the work. Um, this place really needs it because we know new interpretive panels are going to go in, and they need information. We tried to divide it up. There was also a little bit of, archeologists would look, "Oh, Denali. They're asking for an archeology project for them to manage. And their cultural resource person is a historian. We're not giving her archeology money." Neh, um, supposed to be based on need.

[00:59:16]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, but, in that example, would they say, "Well, we'll do the archeology based out of the regional office?"

SANDE MCDERMOTT: If they had the money.

KAREN BREWSTER: They couldn't use that project money.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No. No. In the old days, we could, yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So ok, we could do it. We'll do it.

KAREN BREWSTER: But in the new regime, you couldn't?

[00:59:34]SANDE MCDERMOTT: After the '95 reorganization, a whole new way of doing funding comes in. And I forget how long it took, but they created this PMIS.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Project Management Information System.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's what they use now.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: What it is supposed to do is to identify the needs and priorities of the National Park Service as a whole. So when I would go argue with budget when I was in Washington as Deputy Associate for Cultural, and parks were my responsibility, not so much external. I didn't have the external programs.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I was parks. And I'd go to the comptroller and say, "We really need money for submerged cultural resources. We've got all these sunken ships. We've got all this, and we've got that." He'd -- he'd look at PMIS, and he'd say, "Well, there's not one project in here. Project request." Well, that's because the submerged cultural resource unit was doing all that work. So I got them to start putting in --

KAREN BREWSTER: Projects.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: PMI projects through the parks, 'cause only parks could put in for 'em.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Not regional offices. The money wasn't supposed to go to us.

[01:00:45]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But so, that's the example you gave of Denali that if they wanted the archeology, they didn't want it funded 'cause it was a historian, but the regional office couldn't then do that project?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: The money had to go to the park?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And after '90 -- after -- with PMIS, it didn't -- the person in the regional office didn't decide who got the money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You could make recommendations.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But you didn't decide it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It was determined by need and priority and the funding availability, ideally.

KAREN BREWSTER: But somebody -- somebody decides need and priority.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It's supposed to be based on what's in the system.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it's somehow an automated --

[01:01:24]SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. It's supposed -- that's how it's supposed to work. And you notice I'm saying, supposed to, supposed to, supposed to.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Because what happened is, not everybody understands that. And so, now looking at the national perspective, when I'd sit there, I found out that some parks only allowed cultural resources to put one project into PMIS. Well, they might need ten, but no, they could only put one in. Some parks only had one person who was allowed to enter things into PMIS, and you had to go through that person. A gatekeeper.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then we found out they were prioritizing based on what they thought they could get money for. If they knew there was going to be a lot of backlog cataloging money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, let's put in backlog cataloging projects. 'Cause there's money there. There's no money over here. So it really was not working that it truly reflected the needs and priorities of the service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:02:22]SANDE MCDERMOTT: However, I will argue that it was more fair.

KAREN BREWSTER: Then you guys sitting in a quote/unquote "smoky room" and deciding?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. I mean, the example I'll give you, when I got to Santa Fe as the Chief of Cultural Resources for the Intermountain Region.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which was Montana to Texas, across to Arizona and up. So Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Arizona. And Utah. Um, I had a superintendent come to me and say, well here -- and I was asking, "Ok. What changes do you need?" He says, "Well, I've had one of your archeologists spend over a million dollars of archeology money in my park, and he didn't do one thing I needed done."

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It was his own interests. He was following his own research interest. And that was happening all over the service. PMIS was supposed to fix that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It was supposed to fix that. So.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Anyway.

KAREN BREWSTER: We got off onto that.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I get on tangents, I apologize.

[01:03:43]KAREN BREWSTER: That's ok. Um, where were -- so um, you -- when you became the historian in Anchorage for -- I'm going to want to call you regional or supervisory historian.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Call it regional. Call it regional historian, 'cause that's what it is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, did you feel you had the training and background from having worked with Bob Spude before, or were you sort of dropped into it?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Probably some background from Bob being there, but we were very different kinds of managers, and the world had changed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And priorities had changed. Um, but I'd at least observed him doing it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:04:29]SANDE MCDERMOTT: Probably my strongest influence was Ted.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I really modeled myself as a leader.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: On Ted, and seeing how he accomplished things. And then, you know, you just do it. You just figure out, I know this park needs that. How can I get that for them?

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: How can I get it? How can we get this done?

[01:05:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Did you have any specific goals in mind when you went into the position? Or things you wanted to accomplish?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I can't -- I don't know that I had any specific things. I know I wanted to do a lot more with Alaska Native groups than we had. There were stories that we weren't telling in our parks yet that needed to be told. Women's history. I also was very interested in getting cultural compliance to not be a big pain in the ass. It's supposed to be part of the planning process, and, unfortunately, too often it's the thing that comes in at the end where everybody's already decided. What I mean by that is, I'll give you an example from another region. I had a park that had the old-fashioned entrance to the park. It still had the gateway across it and the little -- little -- little building where the ranger would come out and say, "Welcome to this park, and here's your information." And if they had a fee, collect their fee.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So times have changed. And we had a problem. This park had a problem where the fee collector had on two occasions been attacked by a visitor.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Because she had to come out of the little building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And go to their window. They couldn't pull up. There wasn't a window that you pulled up to.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So there was no separation between herself and the visitor. And the second time, she was really hurt. The person -- she had reached in, and the person grabbed her and just started driving away, and she was dragged down the road.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ugh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So park has a problem.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:07:06]SANDE MCDERMOTT: So law enforcement says, "We have a safety issue here. We're tearing down that building, and we're building the brand-new style."

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Uh, greet the visitor from inside the building. Cultural resources says, "You can't do that. This building is part of the National Historic Landmark. You can't tear it down." So we have a fight. Well, that's because they started thinking about it. They weren't asking the right question.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The problem that needed to be solved was safety. Nobody's going to argue about that. So what should have happened, and ultimately did, is law enforcement and cultural resources together should put together a package that says, here's what we can do to make sure -- maybe we make an adjustment to the building. Maybe we do tear it down and build something compatible. We document it, tear it down. Maybe we don't. But what happened is, everybody focused on, I want to tear it down.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you're stopping me.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And you're stopping me. And we're not letting you tear it down. Instead of focusing on what the problem was, which was, we have a safety issue. How do we solve it? [01:08:36]And so, my goal was to get compliance to the point where people worked together rather than coming in late. A good example, the visitor center -- there's going to be a new visitor center put in, um, Seward.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Kenai Fjords (National Park).

SANDE MCDERMOTT: For Kenai Fjords. Great project. So we sit down with planning, and I say to them, and -- and planning and construction guys. The planning guys, the construction guys, and us sit down together, and we do a calendar. And I said, "Ok. Visitor center needs to be done here. Ok, so we have that date. Let's back up. What are the -- the -- the -- "

KAREN BREWSTER: Milestones?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Milestones, yes. Thank you. And so, it was, "Ok. We need to have this by then." We'd say, "Well, we need to have this by then, so we know we need to have this done. If we don't have it done then, then this moves. If you guys don't get the funding -- " Like one -- they didn't get the funding when they thought they were going to get it, so that moved everything ahead. That changed what we did. Also, we need funding to do this work here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, it ended up that because we all worked together, that project for Seward was one of the best things we ever did. The superintendent loved it. The park loved it, and the community loved it because we didn't just go in and do our archeology. We did public meetings. We had, uh, Judy -- Kesler? Yeah, who was a brilliant I/T

person, did all these -- took the aerial photography and the old fire maps. Put it all together. And we did maps and did a public meeting. And people brought in their own photographs, and they identified buildings and places that were now gone.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So it informed our archeological survey. It was fabulous. It was -- we learned so much.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:10:50]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And they moved that visitor center I don't know how many times, and not just because of us, but because funding would change, the community would change, this would change. What -- this changed, that changed, but we all worked together, and it was exciting. And so, we all learned.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:11:06]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so that's -- that was my goal for compliance. Because compliance was really -- had -- was viewed by -- by construction and by most parks as "that thing we have to do." Something we -- A box we have to tick off, rather than understanding that it's part of the planning and it can inform you.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Of what you're supposed to be preserving. Anyway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Yes.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So, yeah, there was a goal.

[01:11:33]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Let's kind of move in your connections with Klondike and some of the work that was done over there. Um, do you remember your first, uh, going to Skagway?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Wow, I went so many times. I don't know if I remember the first. I'm trying to think if I went out there with Kate Lidfors when -- she might have been regional historian between Bob and I. I don't know if she was actually regional historian or not. She was there and then left. Yeah, I guess she did come back as regional historian. So maybe she was after Bob. But for a short time, and then she left again.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:12:10]SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, I just remember it was, you know, the -- I think the thing that struck me most, one, is how difficult it is to get there. Second, when you get there and you realize -- the first time I went there, the little grocery store was the only commercial building that was outside of the historic district.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And when you realize that Skagway is only, what, four streets wide and ten streets long, maybe? Um, then you understand why the people who live there were so concerned about these plans the Park Service was doing. Like, no driving down Broadway. Well, it's the commercial center of the town.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Wanting to -- didn't want the streets paved. Park Service didn't want the streets paved. So it would retain that historic look. But that was ridiculous. That was ridiculous. And we found a pavement that -- I think actually it was used at historic Williamsburg. That sort of looked, gave the appearance of, but still you didn't have -- I think as one local community person, "Well, when you get one of those visitors sliding

down the street in her lime green pant suit in the mud, maybe you'll want to have the street paved." Uh, so it was understanding that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And how far away Dyea is. And how very different Dyea is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:13:50]SANDE MCDERMOTT: I do remember you talked about the trip with -- taking Gary Somers out there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Uh, and Karl (Gurcke) taking us over to Dyea, Karl and Clay (Alderson). And just that Clay was, like, worried about bears.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's Clay Alderson, the superintendent?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah, Clay Alderson, the superintendent, sorry. And we're going (silent gesture of raising shoulders and arms up). But -- but this place is washing away, you know. So I just remember that and the Slide Cemetery and wanting to know, like, are these markers at all related to where people really are or not? What's really here and what's not? [01:14:31]The Pullen House was still standing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The first time I went, and it broke my heart when it went.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I will always regret that we did not get the Pullen House. It would've been such a contribution.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Was it under consideration by the park?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Oh, yes. Park Service wanted it. Frank Norris writes a lot about it in the administrative history.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: What I was told in the community was that the people who owned the Pullen House thought the Park Service was offering peanuts, and somehow, the local community and not just regarding the Pullen House, got the idea that Disney wanted to buy Skagway and make it a historical park. None of that is true. And that they were holding out for the millions that Disney was going to pay them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, that was never, ever -- there's no fact --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- base for that whatsoever. Um, and so, but losing the Pullen House really broke my heart. [01:15:43]I think the other thing, thinking about Skagway and impressions from there was, um, how much the staff loved the place. They really did. Alaska staff are really like that. You know, a lot of park people love the parks they're in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They really do. Um, and that's why some people, we call it "homesteading," when somebody stays in a park probably too long.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Or spends their whole career --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- in one park. Um, but I think a park staff needs to be a mix. You need some homesteaders, who have that --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Karl Gurcke, who remembers everything that ever happened there. And then, but you need the new ideas coming in, too. You need people to know the new story, the understand what's happening in the wider Service because we are a service. [01:16:43]Um, compliance was not a big issue at the park because we had the eleven-building survey, and -- which was the Historic Structures Reports that are needed for historic buildings before you work on them. And that was done for Skagway. Also, the archeology was done. So often, when we think about the building, we forget about the archeology underneath.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The opposite we had at Brooks Camp (at Katmai National Park). When I went out there, and everybody was so worried about, you know, getting under that twelve inches of dust to the archeological, that they're redoing a historic building out there. Didn't even think about the building, you're worried so much about the archeology.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You need to look at the totality. Um.

[01:17:38]KAREN BREWSTER: So by the time you were involved, had all the buildings been restored? They'd all been purchased?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They'd all been purchased, but not all restored. And that, I guess I'll talk about that now because I -- that is, for historic preservation thinking, it's so important.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I'm not really sure how it came about, and even looking at Frank's administrative history, I don't see it in there. But a decision was made early on that we would purchase, I think, fifteen buildings. Fifteen or sixteen, I forget. And we would restore, uh, the Moore House, the Mascot, and the Depot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And the Depot would be used for administrative purposes. So it's -- the Depot is more of adaptive reuse, but holding very strongly to the historic qualities of the building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which it did, beautifully. It won awards.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:18:46]SANDE MCDERMOTT: The Mascot would be for interpretive purposes and would be fully restored. In fact, one of the mannequins is supposed to be Frank Norris. And then, the Moore House would be the same. It would be restored, and it tells different stories there. And then the other buildings, the exteriors would be preserved, but we wrote off the interiors. Now, that is a questionable historic preservation decision.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Because the interiors still had historic fabric, whether it be wainscoting or wall paper, they were there. [01:19:26]But the decision was made to create a lease -- a historic properties leaseback program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Uh, which the proceeds of the leasebacks would then be used to maintain the building exteriors. It was the best decision we ever made.

[01:19:46]KAREN BREWSTER: So if somebody's leasing that building, they're not responsible for the painting and the exterior?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's all the Park Service retains that? Oh, ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Park Service does that.

KAREN BREWSTER: I didn't realize that.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And we also maintain rules.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: About the buildings. For example, you can't live in the historic building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No cooking. 'Cause you'd burn it down.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, we also looked at what's being sold in the buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And there's no artifact sales in the buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:20:24]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And that was -- I talked about Susan Morton, who was the archeologist in the National Register programs. Susan worked very closely with law enforcement on several cases. In fact, she became a special agent for the National Park Service, and a concern was "fossilized" ivory.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I'm doing air quotes again. You can't see them. That's archeological ivory.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It comes out of archeological sites.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And the idea that none of it comes from federal lands, which then it would be protected by ARPA, the Archeological Resource Protection Act, is ludicrous because of the amount of it being --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Being sold. [01:21:16]Plus, the huge issue it had in -- for Alaska Native communities. There was a huge bust that Susan was part of with US Fish & Wildlife that was actually instigated by elders in a community.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Who were doing everything they could to stop the looters from -- the buyers to come in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Where they would get the young people in the community to go out and loot a site, and as they put it, they'd show up with their suitcases full of money and drugs. And Susan actually wrote up a wonderful pamphlet on the story of an Alaskan mask. And it was a mask that came out of, I want to say the Barrow area.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That sold at the community level, say, for \$1200. By the time it was sold for auction in New York at Sotheby's, it sold for \$112,000.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Or 112, you know. And so, the people in the local community are getting peanuts.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Their heritage is being robbed. [01:22:35]So she did a brochure, and we also looked at all of the sales in Skagway and told them, no selling of fossilized ivory. They already knew they could not sell anything that was an artifact, which are sold in places, because they'll say they don't come from federal lands.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And Susan was almost fired over that. There was such an uproar.

KAREN BREWSTER: In Skagway?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: There was one family in Skagway who said now they could not have children because they couldn't sell this. I mean, these are the things. Sue got another call from another salesperson, "Susan, Susan, this is terrible! This is terrible!" Mostly from Juneau shops.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But also, there was complaints from Skagway. Now these were the, I want to say they're people who owned the businesses and were summer people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But I won't. I can't be sure. But um, complaints were made. [01:23:41]Susan had to defend the brochure she had done. I remember the deputy regional director was bound and determined. And then, it was a blessing from above. I want to say Walter Echo-Hawk. It was one of the Echo-Hawk brothers. Had a radio call-in show on public radio.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And somebody from Skagway, one of the Skagway shops, let me say, not necessarily the community, but the Skagway shops, called in and said that the Park Service was limiting the ability of Alaska Native peoples to make money "mining archeological sites." Air quotes again. But they used the term mining archeological sites. And what did Mr. Echo-Hawk think about this. And his response was, "On our reservation, we know what to do to people who turn our heritage into key chains." Bless him. It saved her job.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: After that, everybody shut up. So that -- that was exciting.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That was exciting. [01:24:53]So heading back, I digressed there. Heading back to the decision on the interiors of the buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I didn't really fully appreciate it until, mm, early 2000, maybe. I made a trip up to Dawson City and then floated the Yukon down to Eagle. And I saw what had happened to Parks Canada. Now Parks Canada had undergone huge -- they had, about the same time as we did, purchased all these historic buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: In Dawson City, as we had in Skagway. They made a different decision, initially, than we did. We decided, let the interiors go. Bring in historic leasing.

They went for full preservation and put millions of dollars into their buildings.  
[01:25:52]But I'm up there, and it's years later, and the funding program for Parks Canada, or funding authorities for Parks Canada had changed significantly. And they had changed in that no more did they get central funding from Ottawa. Each unit had to be self-sufficient. So when you went to Dawson City, that park had to pay for its own stuff.

(some background noise)

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Do you want to pause?

KAREN BREWSTER: You can finish this thought. And then, yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Ok. Uh, had to pay for their own. So when you went there, if you wanted a brochure, it was a dollar. If you wanted this, it cost you something. And the historic buildings that weren't the reconstructed saloon and the -- the main buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That were being used for interpretive purposes, they were falling apart. Ceilings were collapsing. Wallpaper's hanging off the walls. Because they had no funding source to preserve -- to continue the preservation of the building and the maintenance of the buildings. Whereas the buildings in Skagway were maintained through the leasebacks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:27:00]SANDE MCDERMOTT: Just in preparing for this, I looked online, and I found that Dawson City has a new, um, management plan from 2017. And in that management plan, they talk about commercial use of those buildings and leasing the buildings. Which I hope is recent enough to save the buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hope so. Ok, we'll take a little pause here.

(break in recording)

[01:27:29]KAREN BREWSTER: Let's see, we are back from our little break. So back to Skagway and projects. Do you have a memory of particular projects you got involved with or made happen?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I really did more general stuff for Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Such as?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: After Clay left, when Bruce, I think it was when Bruce --

KAREN BREWSTER: Bruce Noble?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Noble came in, um, he had me down for public meetings. There were a lot of issues between the community and the park, and complaints had come in. And Bruce really wanted to -- Bruce was a fixer. A very, very nice man, and his wife is just lovely. And they just wanted to be part of the community, and they wanted the park to be part of the community. [01:28:40]And also, the park had been there a while. So people were kind of used to the Parkies being around, you know. In all of Alaska that was changing. I'm sure you remember from Yukon-Charley (Rivers National Preserve), in Eagle, how much they hated us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, in Skagway, I don't think they were particularly welcoming.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: Either, were they?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No. Not at all. But things were changing, and I think a really good example of that is, I remember having breakfast, probably at Gerties, and this young man

comes and sits down. Lives in the community. And starts talking to me about, um -- he is running -- he has a concession for horseback riding into the park. Very nice young man with his -- I think I even met his wife and kids or something. Don't remember exactly, but I just have a general memory of just -- of lovely conversation. And he said to me, "Why do you treat Klondike -- why don't you treat Klondike like other national parks?" And I said, "Well, what do you mean?" And he says, "Well, we've been on vacation, and we went to a national park. And the rangers are out, and they greet people, and they're -- they're there. You know, you see them." And I said, "Well, I thought people in Skagway didn't want us to wear uniforms." And he says, "Well, when I bring my guests out on horseback," he said, "I think it would be wonderful if there were a Park Service ranger in uniform, so you know they're Park Service, greeting my guests and welcoming them to the park." That was astonishing to me.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I hadn't heard that side of it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:30:43]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I thought, "Well, how much of this is left over from the days of Hoffman?"

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And Simms, who were not well liked in that community. In fact, Hoffman surprised me because I started doing the administrative history. Bill Hannibal and I were going to do the administrative history. And we went down. Hoffman was superintendent at, um, San Juan Islands. And so, we went down to visit with him, and he's sitting at his desk, talking about his time at Skagway, which from all accounts I had heard and read, was very contentious. And he starts crying about how his time at Skagway was one of the best times of his life.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, I'm going, where do these myths originate, and how do they influence how we see something and how we interpret something? Where are we missing the mark? We're not doing something right here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:32:10]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then the other time I went down was to look at the Rapuzzi Collection before we actually got it.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was going to ask if you were involved in the Rapuzzi Collection.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Not a lot. Tangentially. Go down to look, I'd say, when it was still all in those long buildings where you opened the door, and it was floor to ceiling, stuff. And in there would be the -- I remember seeing the, uh, books from a mercantile or something, some store.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so you're going, "Oh, my God!" For a historian. Here are the actual records of what people bought and sold, and what they paid for it, and how much of this they bought and how much of that. Very important. Next to a 1950's Electrolux vacuum cleaner. But really, Jean Swearingen Rodeck is the person who had the most to do with that, with Theresa Thibault.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:33:11]SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, when it finally happened, finally happened, that was so long. I was so worried it was going to go the way of the Pullen House.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That it would just be lost. Because there's too much valuable information there and lovely things.

KAREN BREWSTER: They had to sort of do salvage curation, like you do salvage archeology, I think.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. Yes, it seems to me they -- they rented, like, the gym in an old school or something. Some big space to set it up in.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was going to say, they couldn't keep everything. They had to prioritize it.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Exactly. You have to go by -- every park should have a collections --

KAREN BREWSTER: Management plan?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Management plan, thank you. So that -- But so, my trips to Skagway ended up being a lot of fixing, or try -- helping -- helping the park fix.

[01:34:15]KAREN BREWSTER: So would -- did you get involved in any staffing issues? If there were problems amongst the staff? Or that was left to the park itself?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That was left to the park. Uh, I do remember, though, when Karl was hired. Bless you, Karl, I love you, but he was hired as a historian, and he's not a historian.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. He was --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He's an archeologist.

KAREN BREWSTER: He's trained as an archeologist.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He's an archeologist. And I just remember yammering at Ted about that. You've got a historical park, and no historian in the park. Uh, this makes no sense to me. It's not an archeological park. The archeology is important, and Karl should absolutely be there. But they also should've had a Frank Norris.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Or someone else on staff. They needed a historian on staff. So that --

[01:35:08]KAREN BREWSTER: Do you know what happened as to why it transpired that way? That they started with a historian and not an archeologist?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They started with an archeologist.

KAREN BREWSTER: I mean, why they -- they didn't have an archeologist position. They had a historian position.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Right. And then they hired Karl and qualified him as a historian.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, I'm sure that was an influence from Ted and Paul Gleeson. Now, Paul Gleeson was still going down to Skagway, doing a lot of the archeology there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Under the buildings, yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah, under the buildings. And in, uh, the lots at the Moore House, I think.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But they were forever digging up --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- toilets. Outhouses. Archeologists love outhouses.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes. Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Every conversation with archeologists always ends up talking about poop.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and then because Karl had already done a lot of the Dyea archeology and the trail archeology. I think that was sort of ongoing, wasn't it?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:36:06]SANDE MCDERMOTT: But yeah -- And then, so much of it -- I mean, you watch the transition. Again, it's that transition from central offices having control over parks. Um, when Dave Snow first went there as architect, historic architect.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He worked for Denver Service Center.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And he didn't want to work for the regional office. And he didn't want to have to move to Anchorage, I don't think.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: If I recall right. [01:36:40]The archeology was all being managed by the Denver Service Center.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Cathy.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Cathy Spude. Cathy Blee, at the time. And then, um, even historic reports, uh, the administrative history. Why we had to do it in-house, when finally, "book-of-the-month Frank," uh, finished the administrative history was because Denver Service Center took the money, spent it all, and never did anything. And I remember going down to Denver and chasing that historian around the building. He was jumping into elevators to avoid me, because I wanted to know where our project was. We'd sent them money, a lot of money, and got nothing. And so, uh, a lot of my work was to make sure stuff that was supposed to be done was actually getting done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:37:34]SANDE MCDERMOTT: But also that -- that change, from central offices controlling parks, I would argue it never was a good model. Never.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We should all -- and then we went to -- we created teams. What nonsense. They call them teams, but they -- everybody operated the same way they always did. They were not teams.

(background noise of creaky door opening)

[01:37:58]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, but -- Oh, you mentioned about, you know, things not getting done. That seems to be a pattern in the Park Service, that money gets thrown at something, and there isn't necessarily a product, whether it's internal or a contract. How can that happen? How is there not checks and balances or something? I don't know what the word is.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Uh, good management. There's supposed to be.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, someplace else, if you're given money and you don't do it, you're fired.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Exactly. Um, as someone once said, "You're a federal employee. It takes an act of Congress to fire you." Which is not true, because I have actually fired people. It just takes a lot of time, effort, and work.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And you have to have a solicitor's office who supports you. It's not easy. The other thing is, it's rarely one person. As I said, for example, with Seal Islands. I was the third, fourth, or fifth person to work on that project. Uh, I wrote the Yukon River lifeways nomination. And I was at least the second, if not third, person to work on that.

[01:39:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I mean, I guess oversight. There's not -- I mean, all that money that didn't get a product. How is that possible?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, what happens is, first of all, it's one-year money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So you don't get the money 'til maybe May, and it has to be spent by October 1st.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Uh, so you hire a summer seasonal to do the project. And it's impossible for that project to get done over one summer season. And so, they do their work on it, and then it gets picked up by the next summer seasonal. Because even if -- even if the project is a continuing project, you don't get the second year's money October 1st. It doesn't come until there's -- You've seen it. There's an appropriation -- first, the budget has to pass Congress, and the president has to sign it. Good luck with that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:40:27]SANDE MCDERMOTT: We once traced funding when I was in the Washington office. And here's how it works. A park program decides they have a need, so they write up their PMIS statement for their need. That gets fed into the Washington -- their region. Their region then prioritizes all the needs from all the parks. And they're prioritizing based upon where they think there might be money. If there's an initiative coming down the road, that's going to have money thrown at it, whoop! You know, or does it look like we're going to get money for backlog cataloging? Does it look like we're going to get money for deferred maintenance? If we get deferred maintenance money, then that means we have to have the compliance done to get the deferred maintenance done, so let's -- things get prioritized. That priority then goes to Washington, and then the National Park Service takes all those -- those seven regions' priorities and makes a single priority that then goes to the Secretary of Interior. The Secretary of Interior looks at Park Service and Fish (and Wildlife Service), BLM and says -- BIA -- ok, here's what we're going to put forward to the president because we're all the executive branch.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Remember those three branches of government.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We're the executive branch. [01:42:04]So we're gonna feed all this into the president's budget. Ninety percent of what's in the president's budget didn't start anywhere near here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So park has maybe ten percent chance for their little project to make it all the way up to the president's budget. Then the president's budget goes to Congress, where it's dead on arrival. No matter who the president is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And who the Congress is. And then it starts. Then they start looking at it. Then this initiative comes. That initiative comes. They're not going to give money to this anymore. They're going to give money to that. The Historic Preservation Fund every year has been recommended for zero funding.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That's what funds all the state historic preservation offices. It usually gets put back in, somewhere along the line.

[01:42:55]KAREN BREWSTER: But because that budget process takes so long, you don't get the money to do these -- ?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It could be ten years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Before you get your money.

KAREN BREWSTER: But the fact that you're --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Then you finally get the money, and you're gonna put it -- so what do you do with it? You don't get it until May. So well, let's put it in a cooperative agreement. Let's put it in a CESU. Those are excellent.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cooperative Park Study Units?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Kind of things.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. Cooperative Education Study Units, they are now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Because you could put money into those pretty quickly because they've already been through the competitive process.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So we give University of Alaska Fairbanks Oral History Program money to do a project for us. And we give it to them. And then the person that they were going to have do the project leaves. But that money's good for -- once it's in the project -

KAREN BREWSTER: Five years, yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It's good for up to five --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Up to five years, if it's been written right in the first place.

[01:43:56]If the person writing the project didn't know what they were doing, they might've only written it for one or two years, and now we're screwed. And so, that's what happens. A lot of times, you have the university -- your agreement is actually with the university.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Not the individual professor.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right, right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So what if they have a clunker individual professor who has all sorts of projects going on. You can't believe the excuses I have heard.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you have a favorite?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Oh, well, probably the best one was, she died.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, well.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, ok. She's taken the money for three years. We have nothing. The university is responsible for the project. Where's the project? Oh, well, all her notes and stuff are in her garage, and her husband doesn't know where they are. And so, they're all thrown out because she died.

[01:44:55]KAREN BREWSTER: And so, what does the Park Service do?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We -- we're -- what do we do?

KAREN BREWSTER: You've spent the money, and you have no project, so, yeah. What --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You're stuck.

KAREN BREWSTER: So then you have to find the money all over?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You have to find the money all over again.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it seems like that's not --

[01:45:10]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And in contractors, lord save me from contractors. Because at least in a cooperative agreement, you're working closely with --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- that professor or that NGO, non-governmental organization.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And usually, you're working together to get it done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, contractor, you give 'em the money. They go away. Maybe you get something, maybe you don't.

[01:45:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it just seems like there should be some way to make it happen. Well, maybe when you were the historian, did you have ways to get those things done?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I'd stay on them. I'd be calling those people and annoying them all the time and saying, we -- and writing your agreement properly or your contract properly with benchmarks that people are held to. But the problem with report writing is, the benchmarks are squiggly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I had one contractor who wasn't producing, wasn't producing. "Oh, my car broke down. My dog died, you know. My kid ate the -- ate the paper." And so finally, I got on it, and got contracting. We wrote a letter and we said, "You will produce by then." She then went to the regional director and said I was being mean to her.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And she cried. And he felt sorry for her. And I was in trouble. There's so many fingers in the pot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It's not one person managing it. And it's not like when you have a contract for twenty widgets.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Everybody knows when those twenty widgets are made, and there they are. When it's a report --

[01:46:58]KAREN BREWSTER: So do you feel as supervisory historian that you helped get some things done that hadn't been done?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Absolutely. One would be, the boundary review for Klondike Gold Rush. For Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: There were -- it's two NHL's. The Chilkoot Trail and the White Pass.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Are two different NH -- National Historic Landmarks. We did the boundary review, got it done, and we sent it to Washington. And we heard nothing. And we heard nothing. Ten years later.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, my God.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I'm calling and saying, "I've got a congressional. I need this done." This community -- I've got the White Pass Railroad. For some reason, they hated being part of the National Historic Landmark. Finally, I said to the guy, "You know, nobody rides your train except it's historic. Why aren't you bragging about being a National Historic Landmark?"

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Go figure. "Well, then you'll tell us what to do." "Uh, am I telling you what to do now? No." So it was a lot of trying to get people to understand and value what they had. [01:48:16]To talk about the boundary review for Klondike Gold Rush. I'm probably being indiscreet, but I'll be it anyway because I love this story. So we finally get the boundary review for Chilkoot Trail and White Pass blasted out. But it has to go -- it must be sent to your congressional delegation. State Historic Preservation Office. Um, I don't know. There's a list. Well, Washington sends that, not us. Not the regional office. I was regional historian at the time. So we get a new regional director, Jack Morehead. Lovely man. But we had heard before he came that he hated cultural resource people. He thought we were all royal pains. I had not met him. So I'm in Washington, DC at a meeting. And the Associate for Cultural Resources for the National Park Service pulls me out of this meeting and tells me that Don Young is livid over the boundary review for the National Historic Landmark for Chilkoot Trail and White Pass. And he's really livid over the letter that I had drafted, but the director had signed, back to him. So I should back up. Boundary review goes through. Don Young, Congressman Young, sees this, and he misunderstands what it is. I think, I'm not certain, but I think he was confusing the boundaries of the park --

KAREN BREWSTER: Mm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- with the boundaries of the landmark. The landmark will be different than the boundaries of the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Remember, the park has boundaries over what we manage. Landmarks, we only administer the program. [01:50:33]So he sends a letter to the director, a "what the hell's going on" letter to the director, which, of course, gets filtered back down. The director doesn't write letters.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: People write them for him. So it comes down to the regional director, who sends it to Ted, who sends it to me. So we have this new regional -- regional director, who doesn't like cultural resources, I've heard. I haven't met him yet. And so, I write a very long letter with a lot of explanation in it that I assume will be removed by people up the line because -- but I want our new regional director to understand. And so, I write the letter that explains this is a National Historic Landmark. This is what a

National Historic Landmark is. It was designated in 1963. It's not a new designation. It's defining the boundaries. It has nothing to do with the park boundaries. And in his letter, he had said, "Just because something's old doesn't mean it's important." So I said, "While we can disagree on what's historic and what is not, I look to the congressional record for when Klondike Gold Rush was made a park to determine the historic qualities of Skagway." And I quoted him back to him.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I thought that would all be taken out. It wasn't.

KAREN BREWSTER: Aha.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But it did inform Jack Morehead.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: About what it was we did, what it -- and what it meant, and what it didn't mean. [01:52:24]So I'm in Washington, and I get pulled out of this meeting. And it says, "Don Young is livid. Your letter -- you're going to be fired. You know, we're going to take care of this from here now." So I thought, "Oh, they'll just screw it up even worse. We don't want Washington solving our problem."

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And it's our congressman. So I called Ted. And this is before cell phones. So I'm calling Ted, and I said, "Ted, blah, blah. This is what's happening." He says, "Let me get with Morehead and figure this out." So then he says -- I said, "Ok." I said, "I'm going over to the Smithsonian. Should I still go?" And he says, "Yeah. Just call me from there." So I'm calling him from pay phones. And we're going back and forth, and so, I -- Ted says, "Ok. I've talked to Morehead. You know, he's going to talk to Washington. Blah, blah, blah. Just -- you're out of it now." So I go back to my hotel, and it's like eleven o'clock at night, and I'm in bed. And my phone rings in my hotel room. And I answer the phone, and this voice says, "Sandy, this is Jack Morehead."

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The new regional director.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And honest to God, I said, "Am I fired?" And he said, "No. That was a great letter."

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And he said, "And thank you for the warning. We will take it from here. And we don't want Washington office having anything to do with this. This is our issue." And it got all resolved. It got all taken care of. [01:54:07]But -- but that was Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: That was just the --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Everything you did, people ex -- went crazy over it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, Skagway was a tricky place, it sounds like.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. Very tricky. And as I said before, when you go to that town, and you walk down the street, and you look, you realize why it is. Because the park and the community are pretty much the same thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And that's unusual. Are there other parks like that?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I can't think of one where the -- the -- maybe on the East Coast. Maybe -- no, 'cause even I've been to, like, Gettysburg is outside of the town.

KAREN BREWSTER: And Williamsburg. I haven't been to Williamsburg.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, Williamsburg is not a park. No. Not Park Service. Um, I can't think of anywhere else.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, where your downtown is a national park?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Where everything is the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And it -- they're so overlaid.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: On top of each other. And -- and have to be. And, of course, you have this small community. What, I think that was even before the road went in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So it's very isolated.

[01:55:18]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, you had mentioned that, you know, in the early days the relationship with the park and the community and those first superintendents -- Dick Simms, you sort of hinted, was controversial.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, people in the community told me that -- and Dick Simms sort of said, he just gave up. He did paint the buildings. 'Cause the Park Service came in, and the first -- everybody thinks, tomorrow it'll be a beautiful national park. Right? And everything will be done tomorrow. Well, it's not going to be. Plus, they understood they needed to do archeology under the buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: And they had to buy the buildings.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Buy the buildings. So everything's bought.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You get a superintendent in who only had one staff, and they raised the buildings up, and there's all these -- all these people come in from other places.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Everybody's outsiders. Everybody who works at the park are outsiders. Uh, Frank in his administrative history talks about, they couldn't even get SCA, uh, Student Conservation Association hires because nobody wanted to work for the crappy wages we paid.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:56:26]SANDE MCDERMOTT: So here's all these outsiders coming into your town, and all these buildings just get jacked up, and there's people crawling around under them. And people digging up outhouses, but what are they doing?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It looks like hell.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And they're telling you that your town is historical, and it's just where you live.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Exactly. It's your home.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:56:47]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, the first thing Hoffman does when he comes in. Or I'm sorry, Simms.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Is he paints the buildings. And our historic architects are outraged. And he said, "People in the community loved it." Because it -- something was happening.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. It made it look pretty.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It made it look pretty. And even if it wasn't the right color, you're going to paint over it anyway. What does it matter? Uh, he did something visible.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It's a little bit like when you watch those shows on TV, you know, Flip or Flop or whatever.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, the house flipping shows?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah, and they have to do the plumbing and the electrical. And they said, we're putting hund -- tens of thousands of dollars into this that won't show. And that's what we did at Skagway. We put tens of thousands of dollars, hundreds of thousands of dollars into Skagway, and nothing showed. So Hoffman did that.

[01:57:44]But it -- I think it -- I think it was too isolated for him. He was not happy there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He didn't sit and cry about how he missed Skagway, like --

KAREN BREWSTER: You mean Simms?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Simms, I mean, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Like Hoffman did. Um, and people in town said, "Oh, we'd just see him sitting in his car, reading a book."

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You know, what they were saying was, what's happening?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Why are you spending all this money, and nothing's happening?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: At least he painted the buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But uh, I think they were too much outsiders, and both were at the ends of their careers, where they might have run out of gas.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Both, I think, got called into the regional office after that, which we had an old saying in the Park Service, "Superintendents misbehave, they end up in the regional office."

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And in fact, when we were putting staff from regional offices into parks, parks would say, we don't want regional office rejects.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. [01:58:46]Um, another project I think you were involved with was the White Pass Historical Resource study, the "Wild and Discouraging Mess?"

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Oh, that Julie Johnson did?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: You want to talk about that?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Oh, yes. I love that project. Really, a lot of it stemmed out of the work we did in Seward, where we saw how much the community responded to the work we were doing. And up until that time, if you've ever seen like a library of Park Service reports, they had -- they were a white page with a green stripe across that -- and it had the

name of the park on it. And they were, for the most part, deadly dull. No pictures. They weren't -- they might've been good history, but they certainly weren't interesting to read. [01:59:40]So it came time to do the administrative history of Kenai Fjords. And Linda Cook did it. And we said, "No. We're doing something people want to read." And I had the superintendent call me and say, "It's your fault." I said, "What's my fault?" Anne Castellina was the superintendent. I said, "What's my fault, Anne?" She said, "I didn't get any sleep last night because I started reading our administrative history, 'A Stern and Rock-Bound Coast.'"

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We actually named it things that people -- that were interesting.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And she said, "And I couldn't stop. I was up all night. I read it, all, cover to cover." She said, "I love it. We're going to sell it in the bookstore." Ha! What about that? [02:00:30]And I had people come to me and say, "You can't put pictures in those." I said, "Show me the rule that says I can't." People are always telling you, you can't do stuff. And then when you say, "Well, show me where in law or policy it says I can't do that. Where does it say in our management policies that I can't put a picture in here? Or print it in color?"

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah, well, it's not there. [02:00:51]So when it came time to do the project for Skagway, I thought, you know, this is our healing time, right? We're supposed to be getting along with this community. Let's give them something the same way we did Seward. And Julie Johnson had been the director of Anchorage Historic Properties. And she had written something, I don't remember what it was, that I had read and really liked. And so, I made a point of meeting her. Plus, when we still did external programs, we did a lot with communities and stuff. I think I'd worked with her on the Tax Act project for the Fourth Avenue Theatre in Anchorage.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which was a nightmare. Um, I hear it's going to disappear now. But anyway, um, Julie just had a way of writing that was engaging and personal. And um, so we had the project coming up. [02:01:54]And we actually did it through Alaska Association for Historic Preservation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We entered into a cooperative agreement with them, and then recommended that they hire Julie Johnson to do the project.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And she did. And as part of the agreement, we also provided her office space and access to Xerox machines and computers and stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So there's a method to this madness. Remember, people don't finish projects?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, if they're sitting right there, they do finish 'em. And when you help them have -- make part of the agreement the things that they need to get it done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They get it done. [02:02:50]And also, by sitting right there with all of us, she got excited about parks. And she got to understand parks, more than if she just sat by herself, either at Anchorage Historic Properties -- She actually quit working for them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They got a new director. She resigned. She became part of the Park Service family, and she did a fabulous job. I love what she wrote.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. It's a really good, well, I wouldn't call it book, but report.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. It's a book.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It's a beautiful book.

[02:03:23]KAREN BREWSTER: But do you know what the decision was about why that study needed to be done?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: 'Cause the park didn't have one.

KAREN BREWSTER: They didn't have a White Pass Unit --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- study?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And they didn't know how to manage the White Pass. They weren't managing the White Pass. It was managed by default.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Since nobody went there. It wasn't like the Chilkoot Trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They really didn't have to manage it. But if there were resources in there, they really needed to know what those resources were, and they needed to make informed decisions about how to manage them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And did that --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And the park knew that.

[02:03:59]KAREN BREWSTER: And so did that decision to do that study come from the park, or that came from you?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Both of us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Both of us. In talking about what the park needs were.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [02:04:10]And they still don't really manage that unit.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No. There's not active management in the unit, but at least they know what's there, and they -- and I think they do -- they might do survey to check on stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, probably.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And especially if things are archeological or have become archeological, really, all you need to know is that nobody's messing with it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, and it is more difficult to access those spots.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Absolutely. It's difficult to access. The railroad goes up there, but nobody gets off --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- along the way. Um, you know. It's -- they can manage it the way they do, but they need to know what they're -- they've made informed decisions about how to manage that unit.

[02:04:53]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. At the time, were they -- were there discussions about doing more with that area? Hiking trails and things?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah, there was discussion of, should there be a trail? Should there be hiking? Should there be more activity in there? But I don't think the park has the staff or the resources to be able to manage.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Another unit like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, you know, if they went back to the days when -- well, they never had the staff they needed there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But if they were fully staffed to their needs, they might be able to do it, and it would be a fabulous experience.

[02:05:31]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I mean, I learned a lot reading that book.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, you hear about the Chilkoot. I didn't know anything about the White Pass.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: So.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You just think of it as the train route.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But it wasn't.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. [02:05:42]So, but then, there's -- Karl had also mentioned this "History of Historic Preservation in Skagway." Was that another, uh, report, book thing?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. Yes, and that --

KAREN BREWSTER: What was that?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That was again looking at where I talked about the preservation decisions made to lease back the buildings, to let the interiors go. Was that a good decision or not?

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Compare it to Parks Canada at Dawson City.

KAREN BREWSTER: So was that a report that got done, the history of -- ?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You know, I don't know what ever happened with that. I think I left.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And when you leave, your babies don't get always taken care of.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I truly don't remember what happened to that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. But that was something you were working on?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Ok. [02:06:24]So when did you leave the Alaska Park Service?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I left in 20 -- 2004.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And you went to Washington, DC?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No. Then I went -- I was Assistant Regional Director for the Intermountain Region.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: For cultural resources.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, I went the -- I was in Santa Fe.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which, when there were ten regions, Santa Fe was a regional office.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We have that lovely building there. The old Santa Fe Trail building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so I went to Santa Fe for the first two years, and then because they had taken the position of Chief of Cultural Resources and made it an Assistant Regional Director, uh, they then moved me to Denver, so I'd be with the rest of the directorate.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [02:07:20]What was behind your decision to leave Alaska?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Couple things. Uh, I had remarried, and it was a terrible marriage. And I'd gotten divorced. My kids were now grown, and I didn't have to stay for them to be in school. Ben was off playing hockey in Montana, and Jennifer was ready to -- graduated college and was ready to move on. And I had been through a one-year leadership program. Uh, like future leaders or whatever, that wasn't Park Service. It was government-wide.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I just figured, it was time for my career. [02:08:21]The other part of that decision was, people were leaving and not being replaced. There was so much attrition.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: In the office. And so, like, I think -- I can't remember when Gary Somers, the regional archeologist after Ted left, but Ted never was allowed to hire another regional archeologist. Um, just if somebody left, it was just a hole not filled.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I kinda looked and thought, if Ted leaves, they won't fill his position. I'll end up doing the job and not getting paid for it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Maybe not, but I did a lot of acting.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: In my career. Sometimes call it an academy award career. Um, and I thought, neh, and I was just ready. [02:09:21]And as a historian of the American West, the idea of going to Intermountain Region and having that Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Arizona. That area being my area of responsibility was just exciting. So I went from what, Alaska has fifteen parks, to ninety-one parks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: With responsibility for. And --

[02:09:50]KAREN BREWSTER: Were you recruited for the position, or you just -- ?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I was asked to apply.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I was not guaranteed.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But I was asked to apply. The new regional director in Intermountain Region was Steve Martin, who'd been superintendent of Gates and Yukon-Charley, and then --

KAREN BREWSTER: At Denali.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He'd been superintendent at Denali. Um, and there were other people, and they were -- By then, I was known.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[02:10:18]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, I'd done an acting as Assistant Superintendent at Joshua Tree National Park, which I loved. And I often think, I should've just stayed there. But you know, woulda, shoulda, coulda.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And besides, when you look at decisions of things you didn't do, you only think of the rosy way it would've worked out.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You don't think of the bad parts that might've happened there. So I was ready to do something with my life.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, and so, I went to Intermountain Region. [02:10:52]One other thing I'll say about Skagway before we leave there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The -- one of my concurrent duties from '92 on was -- or was it '95 on, sorry. '95 'til I left in 2004 was um, the Indian self-governance. Indian Self-Determination Act was passed, and part of that was Indian self-governance. And part of Indian self-governance was that tribes that had -- and I'll use tribe in the legal sense because in Alaska we know they weren't tribal people but they'd get the designation tribe, so that they qualify legally for all sorts of Indian benefits. [02:11:46]Tribes who had an affiliation, that's not the right word, but you'll think of it, to a National Park could -- I know you're thinking of the word, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Traditionally associated people?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Traditionally associated, sort of like with subsistence.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They could -- I want to say affinity, but that's not right either. They could propose to take over aspects of park operations, and this really got going in the Clinton administration. The Department of Interior during the Clinton administration was very open to this concept. [02:12:35]So under Indian self-governance, actually -- so subsistence was coming in. Indian self-governance was coming in. A realization that we really needed to not be islands, but we needed to be part of communities. And that in Alaska, when the Alaska parks were created, remember, they're very new, they didn't kick out all the indigenous peoples as other places had.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And not just indigenous peoples, but local communities. Just kick 'em out. Shenandoah suffered from that. [02:13:16]So the regional director created an Alaska Native Issues team, and I was asked to chair that team. I was asked to chair it because of my educational background and my writing and my studies. Also because I had managed the tribal grants program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So I had worked a lot with Alaska Native peoples before. See, the '95 reorganization took all those programs and pulled them back to Washington.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Nothing that I ever thought was a good idea. They were our entrée to communities and how we worked with communities, but I won't get on that tangent. Um, and so, under Indian self-governance -- my team had negotiated the first agreement under Indian self-governance in the Department of Interior. And that was with Kawerak in, uh, out of, um --

KAREN BREWSTER: Nome.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Nome. [02:14:22]And so, whenever a tribal entity would document its affiliation and then want to meet with a park, I would lead that negotiation. I would assist the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And lead that negotiation. And it was even nationwide. Not left to individual superintendents, because we had to act as a Service. Because if Superintendent A agrees to something, then every other superintendent would have to agree to the same thing. And so I worked also very closely with Barry Roth, who was the Department of Interior solicitor who was managing Indian self-governance. So Interior -- because Interior wanted to be sure we were consistent. [02:15:12]So I dealt -- I managed several negotiations. Sitka was one, and Klondike was one.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And um, was that the -- the corporation out of Juneau.

KAREN BREWSTER: Goldbelt, no?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, um, Sealaska.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Sealaska wanted to take over management of Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park. And that's usually where negotiations began.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The tribal entity would come in and say, we want your whole budget, and we want your whole park. You go on your way, and we'll take over.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And that's never where it ends up because that just does -- that for many reasons, will not work. [02:16:01]And so, I went down to Skagway for those negotiations. And they weren't very long negotiations because Sealaska looked at the budget for Klondike Gold Rush and said, "You do all of this for this amount of money?" We said, "Yes." And they said, "Don't you get, like, so much money per person on the cruise ships?" We said, "No. We don't get anything." And they went, "Oh. Huh. We're not interested." They thought --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- that we got, you know, like, so much per person --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- who got off the cruise ships, which we do not.

[02:16:38]KAREN BREWSTER: Which is an interesting thought, that, why not? But maybe that's a different --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That's a whole different thing. I'm not going anywhere near that one. Uh, so that -- so that was a short-lived negotiation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now, were there --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That was another time I was down there.

[02:16:55]KAREN BREWSTER: Are there other parks in Alaska where that Native self-determination has taken into effect, and they're helping operate the parks?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I'm not certain what has happened in Sitka.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm. Ok. That would be a good example.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Something may have happened after I left the Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Because they had their own issues.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right. But that's a good example, that it could have happened there.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. I don't know if anything ultimately happened in Sitka or not.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[02:17:26]SANDE MCDERMOTT: The only agreement I know of that works is at Voyageurs (National Park). Is it Voyageurs? At International Falls (Minnesota), under Tim Cochrane, who had been cultural anthropologist in Anchorage. He entered into and has maintained for many years, he's retired now though, so I don't know the status of it, an agreement with the local band to, uh -- they do all the maintenance at the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. So sort of back to the --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So that was another thing I did at Skagway for the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, I'm glad you mentioned that 'cause I did not know about that.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. Yeah. It was short-lived.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um.

[02:18:12]SANDE MCDERMOTT: We offered a position, you know. We could hire someone that, if they had someone going to college.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You know, a Native. And they looked at what we paid and were not in the least interested.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. [02:18:24]Did you have anything to do with any of the work on the Chilkoot? Or that was more archeology?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No, that's all -- that was pure archeology.

KAREN BREWSTER: All the history part had already been done?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. The -- the history, you know, there was a trail. People climbed it. There's the picture that everybody sees. Uh, but the rest of it was archeology.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, thank God I never had to climb the trail. No hiking for me.

KAREN BREWSTER: No hiking for you?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No. [02:18:51]And Dyea, I would've loved to have seen something happen for Dyea. Uh, there -- there's a wonderful story to be told there. There's not much physical remains.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Of course.

KAREN BREWSTER: But why was nothing more done?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, it's washing away.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I don't know if they ever moved that bridge. When I found out, they said, "Oh, you know, because of the way the bridge is situated, it -- it causes the flow to come into Dyea." And I said, "Well, you know, they should change the bridge." Well, but, you know, it had been twenty years. So I don't know if anything's happened in the last twenty years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, but I used to think about Dyea a lot as that really is part of the story not being told.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Or could be told even more than it is. [02:19:48]Uh, there -- there -- there's always something you can do at a park, but Klondike, I think they do tell a great story there. The people are really passionate. They're there forever.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, it's harder to tell the story when there isn't the physical evidence. Like you say, Dyea, there's not much there.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Absolutely.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's harder.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I used to begin -- I used to do a talk on historic preservation in Alaska, and I would always begin it with a slide of the iconic red mining buildings with the white frame on them. And everybody would say, "Oh, that's Kennecott." And I'd say, "No, it's not." It was -- now I've forgotten the name. Some other island.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Where the same company, Kennecott company, had built mining. But it had all been demolished, so nobody remembers it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Even I don't remember the name of the island right now.

[02:20:40]And that's -- when you lose those physical manifestations of the past, you lose the story.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And that's why, you know, doing documentation, take a picture, write the history. It's not really the same. Not everything is worthy of preservation or able to preserve.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But, I do like the philosophy that we did at Kennecott. And that was really Steve Peterson, who -- who really hammered it home. Which he said, "Let's -- let's just put roofs on the building 'cause that gives us a fifty-year fix." Because what we say is impossible today, "Oh never." People will never, there. This will never happen. Well, ten years from now, it may not be never.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Ten years from now, the store is our visitor center out there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You know, people in McCarthy don't shoot at us anymore.

[02:21:44]Uh, you know, things change. And so, what you want to do in the work you're doing is not preclude other preservation options from the future. And so again, that's why the history of historic preservation is important is to look at those preservation decisions. You know, when we let the interiors go, we precluded preservation options that might have kept those interiors intact. But we might've lost the whole building, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And -- and so you have to make those decisions. [02:22:23]Historic preservation now, when I -- when I talk with students just coming out of preservation schools now, how they put it is, we don't want to be the paint police anymore. That we've spent so much time with the Secretary's standards, worried about a sconce, worried about wainscoting and the color of the paint, that we have looked at historic buildings as if they're all museums where you talk in hushed tones and nothing can ever change in them. And they're not living parts of the community. And remember where I began this. Historic preservation is local.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: If a local community doesn't care about it, kiss it goodbye. And so, you need to -- to meld that together. [02:23:26]And so, there's a real movement in historic preservation to get away from this idea of being the paint police. And what do we need to do that -- wild animals evolve and change over time, so do buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But we must allow them to change and evolve over time so you don't lose the nature --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- of the building. And -- and it's hard.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It's hard to do, but we have -- [02:23:59]I think we need to go there. Because even museums anymore. Who -- what museum survives anymore, where it's a place where you just go in, and you speak in hushed tones, and you look at a thousand things in a case and all it says is, bowl.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I mean, that drove me crazy. I find some museums to be the most boring places in the world. Because it says, "Bowl, 1850," "Bowl, 1870," you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, so what. What was in the bowl?

KAREN BREWSTER: You need to put it in context.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Put it in context. What's its story?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[02:24:34]SANDE MCDERMOTT: I remember when Ted first gave me an archeological overview and assessment. It might have been for Bering Land Bridge, but I'm not sure. It was one of those parks, north parks. "Archeological parks," right. Air -- air quotes again. And he said, "There's something wrong with this report, but I can't -- I can't grasp it.

Would you read it for me and tell me what you think?" And so I read it, and I went back and I said, "So was it cold? Did people live in houses? There's no people in here. You've described all these points and little pieces of things. You know, a thousand pictures of things that, you know, is -- somebody either worked or a caribou stepped on."

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: "But where are the people? What's the story?" And he said, "Oh!"

[02:25:32]KAREN BREWSTER: So when you worked in Anchorage, what were the working conditions like, and how did people get along?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, that was changing, too. When I first went into the office, my first couple years there, both -- first two years as a seasonal and then as a employee, it was a little contentious because of those words, division. And everybody had their own budget, which they guarded with their lives, and people would, like, try to use -- sneak getting pictures -- getting pictures printed, you know. Taking their photos in and giving somebody else's account number.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Ooh, you know. [02:26:21]Um, when I first went in, it was still very much divisions.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And everybody worked in their silos. But that changed. And changed pretty quickly over time. Although I can remember shouting matches, and Leslie standing up in the middle and just saying, "Boys, go back to your offices."

KAREN BREWSTER: So they were in cubicles?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. Cubicles. Everybody was in cubicles.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Even Leslie was in a cubicle when I first went.

KAREN BREWSTER: What were they shouting over?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I don't know. [02:27:01]In fact, Susan, for the first year she worked there, she would come to me, and she would complain that Ted wouldn't talk to her. That she'd go and ask Ted for directions, and he wouldn't tell her what to do. And why that was, was Ted didn't know Susan worked for him. He thought she worked for Bob Spude.

KAREN BREWSTER: And Bob never told him?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No. Not until somebody called to -- Susan refused to get on a chartered flight. She'd chartered a fixed-wing out --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah, Ted told this story.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So you know that story.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, there was that. [02:27:44]But there seemed to be forming kind of a nucleus. And we had a lunch table. We were one of the few programs, divisions, that had a lunch table. We had a cultural resource lunch table. And we pretty much all ate lunch every day together. And that was good because we -- we got to know each other as people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And became, actually, friends.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And then, as time wore on, we became such an incredible nucleus, um, and when it was Ted and myself and Steve Peterson and Gary Somers and, uh, I forget who else was there, man, we worked well together. We really were a team. We worked -- we all bought into Ted's saying, we're here to support parks.

[02:28:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Do you think that was unusual within the Park Service?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. I think it's unusual for offices.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, when I went to Santa Fe, originally it wasn't like that. And I thought, nah. We're not -- it's gonna be -- we're gonna do this. And so, once a month I had dinner at my house for my program managers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Nice.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And we'd all have dinner, and we'd talk and we'd go to lunch. On Thursdays, the roadhouse would serve buffalo burgers. And so, Otis Halfmoon, who was a Nez Perce Indian, lovely man, he'd call and he'd go, "Tatanka!" And we'd all go -- we'd all go for buffalo burgers. I just think that's so important. But when I got there, I had archeologists in eight different locations.

KAREN BREWSTER: This was Santa Fe?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And there were people in Denver, and people there, and people in Tucson. And no. So I spent the next three years putting all of -- everybody but museum services was at the museum center in Tucson, and everybody else was in Santa Fe.

[02:29:50]KAREN BREWSTER: And now in Anchorage, was some of that kind of old school Park Service people and sort of a new generation coming in?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I think so. And I think that's changing. I -- I -- I think the barriers are coming down with this new generation. I think of, like, people say they hate cubbies, they want private offices, right. Private offices. Gotta have private offices. And you look at spaces like, for Google.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Or uh, some other places where everything's open.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And you're -- it's looked on with suspicion if you go off by yourself and work because everybody works together. And people who were my age in DC were -- they hated that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They wanted their own private office. They wanted to be able to shut the door and not have to talk to anybody. Well, how do you work as a group if you shut your door and don't talk to anybody? And I think of my nephew, who is early thirties now, was thinking about maybe looking at another job. And he's looking at -- and I -- he's sitting with me, and he goes, "Oh. I wouldn't even think to apply there." I said, "Why?" He said, "Look at the picture. Private offices. I wouldn't even work in a place like that."

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They don't work together.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm. Interesting.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

[02:31:09]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, the other thing on the Park Service, you had mentioned being a woman.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And I was wondering how -- how that was for you, being a woman in the Park Service organization?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, I had two strikes against me. I was a girl historian. How useless could I possibly be? The Park Service had a long tradition of being very male-oriented. Um, the -- I think of it, there were phases. Probably when I first came into the service, the rangers still ran the Park Service. Everybody you'd meet would talk about, you know, going to FLETC.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center together. They went through the intake program together. They were, you know, at this park together or that park together. And they used to -- and nothing was better than being an O-25. That's the series for -- the ranger series. Everybody -- you're not -- if you're not O-25, phew, we don't need you. [02:32:28]Then planners took over the Park Service. And everything went through planning, and they controlled the money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And they controlled new unit studies. They control -- It seems like planning was controlling everything. Well now, the bean counters control the Park Service. The budget weenies. And of course, there's a prejudice there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[02:32:55]SANDE MCDERMOTT: Where do resource people come in? Well, we never controlled the Park Service. I'm sure Ted gave you his analogy of, I don't know. He has so many of them. We're the stable boys in the, uh, the king's palace, you know. But truly now, or when I left, it was the budget people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They controlled everything. I remember somebody saying to me, you're a GS-15. When are you going to stop letting a GS-7 budget person tell you what you can do? And I said, huh. Good luck with that.

[02:33:30]KAREN BREWSTER: But as a woman, did you feel that it was more difficult?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. Um, not in cultural resources. One, Leslie. We had Leslie. Um, and two, there were a lot of women in cultural resources. And Ted is gender-blind.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Completely gender-blind. Uh, it didn't matter to him. Professionals are professionals.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, but Outside, yes. [02:34:04]And sometimes dealing with superintendents, uh, who were from the old ranger division. Jack Morehead, that regional director.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He was the ranger's ranger. And so, with him though, I just went to him and I said, "I hear you don't like cultural resource people. I'm going to change your mind." And he says, "Well, I hope you do." And I did. I got him to go to National Historic Landmark plaquings. No regional director ever did that before.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[02:34:31]SANDE MCDERMOTT: Uh, you had to work at it. You had to quit thinking that -- some of it I'll also blame on cultural resource people. We think we know everything, and we think our stuff is more important than anybody else's stuff. And I had a cultural resource person once say to me, "I could stop the entire park by using Section 106." Well, that's not what it's for.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We're not the Nazis, cultural resource Nazis, you know. Get over it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Get over ourselves. We're all part of a family here. We're all trying to make parks good. [02:35:04]But I was lucky in Alaska because there were so few Park Service people, they couldn't dispense with anybody. And we all did everything.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: If you're out in the field, and we almost all spent our summers in the field, you did everything. If somebody needed you to hold something up for them to nail, it didn't matter if you were a historian or a maintenance worker. You did it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We all -- we all just did everything. If it needed to be done, you just do it. That's just the way it was. That was the -- the magnificence of then. My career in Alaska, I just look on as the -- the greatest of opportunities. Because like with most things in Alaska, it's not like how they do it Outside.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um.

[02:35:52]KAREN BREWSTER: But with any -- any job or career, it couldn't all have been the good things.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No. No. There -- there were times -- I worked for a regional director in Denver who was a misogynist. Who, as my immediate boss said to me, once you get into upper management -- or middle management, I guess. Upper would be Washington. You sometimes have to make decisions that hurt people. And we all feel bad about that. He'd take special joy in that. I had him throw things at me. I had him poke me in the face with his finger. He hated me, and I hated him, too. It was just fine. So no, it wasn't always rosy. [02:36:49]There were times in Alaska where I'd get so frustrated, because we didn't have the funds. We didn't have the staff. I mean, I was supposed to manage a historic preservation program where the NHL's (National Historic Landmarks), I think there's ninety in Alaska, um, you're supposed to visit them every three to five years and do a condition assessment on them, ok? So unless you go to Sitka, where there's like seven or eight -- They have more than LA does. I love Sitka. Anyway, it's a lot to get to them. Plus, I was supposed to be doing new NHL studies. I was supposed to manage the grants program. All of this, and I was supposed to do it all on a travel budget of five thousand dollars a year. That was my full budget. And I had to go back to Washington at

least once a year to be told what we were supposed to be doing. Which we never paid any attention to anyway. Um, it was insane. To have a thousand dollars was a lot of money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: To do something. [02:37:59]Uh, so it would be so frustrating that we never had enough money. We never had enough staff. Uh, the needs of the parks, just for the basics. Every park should have an administrative history, an archeological overview and assessment, an ethnographic, excuse me, overview. They should have their collections management plans. They don't, 'cause they never are going to get the money to do them. And then, I figured out at one point, I sat down, and every park at that time had 125 reports they had to submit to Washington a year.

KAREN BREWSTER: Whoa.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Now that doesn't matter if you were Grand Canyon with 425 employees or you're Skagway with eight employees. You still had to fill out that 125 reports.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

[02:39:00]SANDE MCDERMOTT: I sat down with our budget officer, Tom Ferranti, god, he was so much fun, and we figured out that we were reporting on the same dollar ten different places. It was insane, the amount of reporting.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And accounting you had to do. That would make me crazy. That made me crazy. But the work we did, I loved the work we did. And the people we were with. In fact, for my birthday this year, my sister invited a Alaska Regional Office clan reunion, and so, it was great. It was just so much fun.

[02:39:40]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, that -- you were saying before, there is -- with Park Service, people do stay connected if they want to.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: There are people who stay connected, and then people who don't, but --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, and people who stay connected with -- I put it this way. Someone -- I read somewhere, so I won't claim -- I didn't originate it, but I love it. It resonates with me. That you make friends for a reason, a season, or a lifetime. And so, there are people in the Park Service that I made friends with for a reason. We were on a task force together or something. People that I made friends with for a season, and then there's some that are lifetimes. And I really treasure the lifetimes. And I -- there are many of them. And we went through a lot. Birthing parks is not easy.

[02:40:29]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, it sounds to me like, at least in Alaska, those relationships that you built with coworkers and the people in the parks, that that really made the difference.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Absolutely.

KAREN BREWSTER: For something working or not working.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. Yes. And that may just be the way I work or function, but it really did. I mean, working with the State Historic Preservation Office, which we did a lot. Working with Judy Bittner. Oh my God, what an incredible person she is. She's smart and dedicated, and also politically astute, which you better be.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, working with her office. We worked great with them. If you looked at the board of Alaska Association for Historic Preservation, Alaska Historical Society, Cook Inlet Historical Society. It was all -- all of us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[02:41:31]SANDE MCDERMOTT: I mean, I was president of Alaska Historical Society for two years. I was nominated by Elva Scott from Eagle. I looked at her, and I said, "Elva. I still work for the Park Service. You folks up in Eagle put up big signs: 'Pinko Commie Park Service, get out.'" She says, "Yeah, but I know you." And times change.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You know. Uh, so we -- if historic preservation was being done in Alaska, and by the broad sense of the word historic preservation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: We were part of it. That's why we were part of Jukebox.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: That's why we loved it. It was like, this is -- this is phenomenal.

[02:42:13]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, I was going to say, the other side of that coin is, people in parks or in regions could throw up lots of roadblocks as well, if they didn't want something done, correct?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: And how do you deal with that?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Some of it you just swallow, and some you go, you cajole, you work it. At one point, I mean, there I was, just a little GS-9 historian. And I had a superintendent, the superintendent of Denali, this was when I was first doing compliance.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They didn't do compliance at Denali. So, you know, I go up the chain. Not doing compliance at Denali. Ok. Kick it up one more. Kick it up one more. I got all the way to the regional director, and he says, "Well, I guess we better have a conversation." So the superintendent came in, and I was there with the regional director, and he says, "Sande tells me you're not doing any compliance." And he says, "Yeah, we're not." And he says, "How come?" The superintendent says, "I don't want to." Regional director says, "Ok, thanks." And we left. And I thought, well, that's that. Well, they started doing compliance. Not for everything they were doing, but they would trickle in five or six a year, and then after a while, especially when Ann Kain went up. When they hired an actual cultural resource person.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Steve Martin did that. Um, they got a -- a program going.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[02:43:52]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And they also found that having a cultural resource person at the table means they're not just there to be the compliance police. They're not just there to be an archeologist who digs holes. They're part of that whole park family that says, we have parks, and we have parks for a reason. And these cultural resources that are within this park are part of that reason.

[02:44:18]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Were there any projects that got stopped that you wished you'd been able to complete?

(squeaky door hinge and wind chimes in the background)

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, none that got stopped. Probably some I had in mind that -- I think Logan finally finished the history of mining in Alaska. That was important.

KAREN BREWSTER: Logan Hovis?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. Um, no, I think anything we got -- we finally got the money for.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And we got the wherewithal to do, we were able to do. And that was really good. That was good and exciting.

[02:45:05]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I was thinking also about Klondike. I know there's some -- well probably any park, a history of people in positions and personalities working or not working.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: To accomplish their goals. Did you come across that?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, I think it was rough under Hoffman and Simms. People weren't always getting along. And there weren't -- they didn't have many people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And they were faced -- and I don't know how much Clay was faced, Clay Alderson, was faced with, but they were faced with a lot of the big decision-making for the park being done by entities outside of the park. Either the regional office, when Anchorage was still an area office, or the regional office when Anchorage came in. You know, there was so many fingers in that pie, and so many people telling them what to do and not do that I think it's hard to be a superintendent. I think Clay had it better in his later years. Probably not in the beginning.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[02:46:19]SANDE MCDERMOTT: I mean, the decision on historic architecture, that eleven-building study was done, and Steve Peterson was or Gar -- or uh, Snow.

KAREN BREWSTER: Dave Snow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Dave Snow. Were down there all the time, telling him, you could do this to this building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Or you can do that to this building. We're telling them what they could sell in the gift shops. I mean, there was a lot of interference in that park because, I think, of the nature of the park. And -- and me going down to solve problems with the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: With the local community. Having public meetings. I think I did, I know two. I want to say maybe even three. I got so that I was really well-known on Skagway Air and -- (laughing) --

KAREN BREWSTER: Hopefully in a good way.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Oh, yeah, they liked me.

[02:47:10]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, well, I do know that they went to some reorganization with the resources department, and --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: No? That was after, or before you, maybe? 'Cause it --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No, that would've been after me because --

KAREN BREWSTER: When Theresa (Thibault) was hired as head of resources.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. Theresa was at the end of my tenure in Alaska.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok. Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So you didn't interact with them at that point, so much?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No. No. Um, and I was -- yeah, no. Once Theresa was there, I think there were issues there, personality issues.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I don't think Theresa and Karl got along.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But did you --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Very different people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. [02:47:53]And you worked with stuff with Karl?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah, I worked with Karl a lot. Karl is his own person. Uh, but his heart is in that park.

(squeaky hinges and wind chimes in the background again)

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I -- anything I ever asked of Karl, I got. If I needed something, or if he -- and I hope if he needed something from me, he got it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But no, I had a really good working relationship with Karl. Uh, yeah.

[02:48:21]KAREN BREWSTER: I was also thinking about sort of the Park Service in general, how you felt about working within that institutional power structure and bureaucracy. How that worked for you?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Uh, well, probably the interesting thing was when, here I am sitting in Washington, DC. I'm the deputy associate director for cultural resources for the Park Service, which means there's an associate director above me, and then the director. Well, and there's a deputy director, but I mean -- I'm where it happens, right?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I had less autonomy than when I was in the Anchorage Regional Office. I mean, the bureaucracy in Washington is just hellacious. [02:49:14]And it's -- having worked at three levels of the Park Service, in regional office and then I did my time at Joshua Tree, and then I was also interim superintendent at Bighorn Canyon and Little Bighorn.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, and then working in Anchorage, you were in parks all summer anyway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It was like you were part of them. We need all three levels, but what it's about is different at every level. In Washington, it is all about money and politics. And anybody who says it isn't, they're lying. It's all about money and politics. It's the driver. And it should be, because that's what it's about there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[02:50:09]SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, and I had a management trainee person come in and say -- and I was complaining. I said, "Uh, my staff here in Washington" -- most of whom had never done a day's duty in a park. I said, "They have no understanding whatsoever of

what a park needs, what day-to-day operations of a park is like." And I said, "And they think they know everything." And she said, "That's all headquarters. Not just Park Service. That's headquarters." So you have that. [02:50:50] Then at regional offices, if people work well together, the regional offices -- the regional office in Western Region, uh, where most of the cultural resource people are in Seattle.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Which is left over from the old regions, they work together really well, too. Maybe it's a western thing?

KAREN BREWSTER: Maybe.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You know. They -- they communicated well and worked together well. Um, Northeast Region seemed to be more stove-piped. Atlanta, they had changeover in staff all the time, so I think they had a hard time getting it going. But they'd work at it. [02:51:41] I was on a TMAP, Transitional Management-something. Anyway, you're going in and you're mapping what the conditions are now, and making recommendations to a new manager coming in and where you might want to go in the future. And it's not like a -- in the Park Service there's a thing called operations evaluation. Operations evaluation is when the regional director sends somebody into a park, or the director sends somebody into a regional office and says, "It ain't working, and we're going to fix it."

KAREN BREWSTER: And that happened in Skagway.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It was an operations evaluation?

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I don't know. There was some sort of an evaluation.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, and I can't remember, I think it's between Alderson and Noble, somewhere in there.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Uh-huh.

[02:52:31] KAREN BREWSTER: They had some kind of an evaluation, and things got restructured.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And I didn't know if you had known about -- that was --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah, I do remember some of that going on. And I'm sure things changed after Noble because I remember by the time Clay left, we were saying things like, "Clay had been there too long."

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: He was too engrained in his ways. Which weren't necessarily wrong or bad, but they had too many homesteaders.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They had a staff that had -- just about everybody had been there forever.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And couldn't see any different way of doing things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You know. Which is not healthy. You can't have all new people, and you can't have all homesteaders.

[02:53:16]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So after Skagway, you went, Joshua Tree and then Intermountain Region.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then when did you go to DC?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I went to DC in 2013.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And then you retired from DC?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I retired from DC.

KAREN BREWSTER: And when did you retire?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: 2016.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. Um.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I left with Obama.

KAREN BREWSTER: It was time?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It was -- Oh, yes. [02:53:43]A lot of people left with Obama.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And they have not been replaced.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, I'm sure not.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They have not. The Park Service has not had a director since Obama left, since the new administration.

KAREN BREWSTER: They haven't -- ? Well, they --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They have actings, but we do not have a director.

KAREN BREWSTER: They put head of Interior, but they didn't go down to the park level?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Nope. The -- I think, I want to say there's nine associates in Washington. The only one -- there's the Associate for Natural Resources is the same one that was there for Obama. There's no Associate for Cultural Resources, hasn't been since Stephanie Toothman left, who was in the Obama administration. She left with Jarvis. Uh, no Chief of Interp(retation). I don't know about facilities. There's budget.

KAREN BREWSTER: There's got to be somebody acting in the budget position.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Budget is filled.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I think public affairs or legislative affairs is filled. Other than that, they're all acting.

[02:54:54]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it sounds -- you had a very long career with the Park Service.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I did.

KAREN BREWSTER: And how would you reflect back on that career?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I can't believe the things I got paid to do. I mean, I've been to so many national parks, and I've worked -- done meaningful work in the parks. I remember being at a meeting at the Grand Canyon, and every day we ate lunch at the meeting, and we're in this off -- this room with no windows. And we're in the meeting, meeting, and it's our last day, and they suggested a working lunch. And I said, "You know, I heard you got a big hole in the ground around here. I'd like to see it." And so, you might not see the hole in the ground.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, worked with great people. I really had, I think, an excellent working relationship with a lot of the Alaska Native groups, which I treasured. We had

an incredible relationship with, I don't know what they changed their name to, but Gordon Puller's program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: When I was there, it was Department of Alaska Native and Rural Development. And I know it's changed its name.

[02:56:08]KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah. Ted was talking about it. You guys did courses for -

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Ah. They -- there's -- nationwide, a very small percentage of Native Americans graduate from college. Many'll go, but a very small percentage actually make it through to graduation. So UAF looked at that and said, we need to solve this. I think in Alaska, it was like one percent, or two or three percent. I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: A small percentage of Alaska Native students made it to graduation. And so, they -- the Department of Alaska Native and Rural Development was part of looking at that. To enter the program, students had to have at least two years of college in. And it was a real program. It was not a pretend program. But much of their work, they could do from their village. It was done by computer classes, which are so popular now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But were innovative then.

[02:57:14]KAREN BREWSTER: This was in the '90s, right?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. And they had great staff. But they would meet a certain number of times a year, I think it was four times a year, in week-long intensive seminars, and one of those was resource management. So we entered into an agreement with Gordon's program, with Gordon and his program, that we would co-sponsor their week-long seminar in resource management, because after all, that's one of the things we're all about, right?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, the curriculum would be set by us, a student representative, and Gordon and his staff. We would host it in a park. We hosted in Sitka, we hosted in Nome. We hosted at Wrangell-St. Elias at Copper Center. And the curriculum would be different for every one. And it would meet the students' needs.

[02:58:20]KAREN BREWSTER: And it was natural and cultural resource management?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It was resource management, so it would lean toward cultural resource management if they were interested in, say, museums or something like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But if it was -- it was really focusing on, how do we manage this? For Sitka, example, they wanted to know, how do you manage a park? And so, we had the chief of facilities. We had the law enforcement. We had resource manager. We had museum services. The superintendent. Everybody participate. And we had a rule with the week-long seminar. You didn't just participate for your one talk. You had to participate the whole week because in being able to communicate one-on-one on a daily basis was an essential part of the class experience. Uh, so you weren't just talking heads.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[02:59:16]SANDE MCDERMOTT: And we were accessing all forms of learning, of how you learn. You learn through talking heads, but you also learn through touching, everything.

And so, we did that. And that was fantastic. And we ran those students through there, I don't know how many hundreds of students went through that program. And the reviews we'd get back were phenomenal. It would be, "We didn't know the --" "I thought the National Park Service only arrested people." You know. Or "I didn't know you did this." Or "thank you so much for the ideas on arsenic in collections. We didn't know about that." And for us, we learned a great deal about the villages people came from and who they were. And we learned how to communicate better.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So it was a wonderful, wonderful experience, and I'm so sad that after Ted left, that they're stopped.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Because the bean -- the budget people again went, "Well, what are we getting from this? We're not hiring any Alaska Native people." I said, "Well, if you paid more money, you might, but you don't pay enough money." And it was just --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But that was -- Oh, I loved those. [03:00:35]And one year, I had met Virginia Salazar, now Halfmoon, who was the chief curator for Santa Fe when that was its own region, at a meeting. And she is a Santa Clara Pueblo Indian. So she hosted us in Santa Fe one year, and we went to Bandelier (National Monument).

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And we went to Pow-wow, and Albuquerque, and, I mean, it was a fantastic experience.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And another year, we were hosted in Arizona. Um, and went to, um, parks there. The small --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Tonto (National Monument) and Casa Grande (Ruins National Monument).

KAREN BREWSTER: Cool.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, it was a great experience.

[03:01:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I have another quick Klondike question.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Sure.

KAREN BREWSTER: Which is, the Seattle Unit?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now, did you have anything to do with them, because they're in a different region?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: They're in a different region, and they were totally managed out of the Seattle office of National Park Service. I did go down there and meet with them and use their archives some, and just kind of -- to see what their operation was and how they were interpreting the gold rush.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, but --

KAREN BREWSTER: No joint projects or anything?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No. Mm-mm. 'Cause again, it's how the funding comes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: The funding goes to -- we get our region funding. That was another region.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: So to coop -- do cooperative was really hard.

[03:02:05]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I don't know within the park, if, you know, the staff in Skagway and the staff in Seattle, how much they cooperate and share back and forth.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I don't think they do. They may now, but they didn't use to.

KAREN BREWSTER: They didn't. And I was just wondering, from the regional level.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: You probably didn't have much to do with them?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Huh-uh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No. I didn't even know their names.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You know.

[03:02:28]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I've had you talk a very long time. It's been fascinating.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Well, I do ramble on.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, that's -- you've covered so much. It's the -- beyond Klondike and Skagway. Are there other things that came to your mind when you knew I was going to ask you all these questions?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: No, I think --

KAREN BREWSTER: We've covered everything?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I think we've covered everything.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you're --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Probably even more. And as I said, I tried to not pre-think so it would be a spontaneous conversation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But any other Skagway/Klondike things?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I just -- only other thing that we didn't talk about and that's about Chilkoot Trail, was there was a huge discussion whether Chilkoot Trail should be managed as a trail or as a historic trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: What's the difference?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Difference is, if it's a trail and you need to change how the trail goes, you just bulldoze it through, and you change the trail. If you -- you don't concern yourselves with tin cans laying along the way. And so, there was an effort at one point for facilities management, the maintenance crews, to say, "No, we want to just manage it as a recreational trail because it's a lot easier to manage." And it's used a lot as a recreational -- similar to a recreational trail. But it is a historic trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Excuse me, and so there was a lot of discussion about that. But it stayed managed as a historic trail, which means the route of the trail and uh, items along the way, are important to the experience. It's not -- you're not hiking the trail just because you get a good view of the inlet or because it's -- you can tell your friends, "I made it to the top of the Chilkoot Trail." You're hiking it for that experience, so you could say, "Oh, this is maybe what it felt like for the '4 -- for the gold miners coming up through here."

[03:04:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. So were you involved in that decision-making?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes. Yeah. We had lots of discussion. We assisted the cultural resource -- assisted Karl --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: -- in the park. And Ted probably had a lot to do with that.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you were promoting the historic trail?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It's a historic trail. I mean, it just is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: It is what it is.

[03:04:57]KAREN BREWSTER: And was part of that discussion about the plan of how they -- you have to camp in certain spots now and get a permit?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Versus it used to be, you could just hike it.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. Because once you permit and you limit where people camp, you're protecting that historic resource. And that's why you need those things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. Yeah. So that was one other thing that just came to mind.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cool. Well, I'm glad you mentioned it. Hadn't thought about it. Um, so anything else?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I think --

[03:05:26]KAREN BREWSTER: To summarize your -- well, I know. This is sort of a summary question. Is you started out doing history and you ended up as a manager.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: In administration. How do you feel about that change?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I found out that what I was good at was solving problems. And in a way, that's what doing historical research is, but every job I've had, it seemed I've been brought in and given the direction that, this needs to be fixed. Even from that first thing with the grants program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: This program needs to be fixed. It's not working. Fix it. Um, and I like doing that. I like fixing. And when it's fixed, I'm done. I'm ready to go.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I'm ready to move on. Um, whether it stays fixed after I'm gone or not, not my business.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[03:06:35]SANDE MCDERMOTT: People who've come into jobs behind me, I've said to them, "It's your job now. You have to do it your way, not my way." Uh, unless you work for me, and then you can -- we're all going to have a common goal.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And it doesn't matter if you get from A to B in a straight line or a curvy line, round the mountain or over the mountain. That's up to the individual to do. But we're all going to agree on where it is we're going to get to. So that's kind of managing. And even going into Washington, I was given the, "This has got to be fixed."

[03:07:13]KAREN BREWSTER: And do you feel like you fixed the things you were asked to fix?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And in Alaska, what would that have been?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, I fixed the -- I fixed the compliance program where there was none. And then there became one.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And it was not a compliance police program, it was a cooperative program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: I fixed that. [03:07:36]Uh, I fixed park relations with Alaska Native peoples. Not by myself, certainly.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, no.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: But that was something I was told we need -- And why there's an Alaska Native issues team, not just a self-governance team, but it was, we need to have a better daily -- we work with Alaska Native peoples every day. And we need to have a good working relationship here. And we need to have communication and -- both ways. We don't just go in and tell people, this is how it's going to be. "Hi, we're from the federal government, we're here to help." That never should leave our lips. And so, I think -- I think I contributed to that a great deal. Through the relationship with Gordon's program, through the negotiations under Indian self-governance, through the tribal grants program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Um, I loved doing that. That was so great. And sometimes we'd find out, grants that didn't get funded, we'd find a way to get it done. I mean, I remember one project, all they really needed were archival boxes. So we bought them archival boxes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: You know, come on. Uh, I loved that. [03:08:59]I have a dance paddle.

KAREN BREWSTER: Mm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: From Sitka. Where I worked with the -- breaks my heart to say that the tribal center there in the park that had been there for twenty-five years was gone because of the bean counters.

KAREN BREWSTER: The Southeast Alaska --

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Alaska Cultural Center. (Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center at Sitka National Historical Park)

KAREN BREWSTER: Cultural Center is gone?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: I didn't know that.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Oh, it's been gone for years. The bean counters got rid of it. But I helped them get a grant to put up the totem, the healing totem.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: In the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok. Yeah, I know the project.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And when that totem was raised, we were there. And it was raised -- first raised in like a hundred years in a traditional manner. And pulling on the ropes, I never forgot, one of the gentlemen, one of the tribal men called out, "Only men pull the

ropes! No women." And the tribal women looked, and I thought, "Oh. This is Tlingit country. No, no, no." This is a matriarchal society.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And everybody pulled the ropes, and they said, "You too, Sande. You too, Park Service." So we all pulled ropes. [03:10:15]And then that night, they had a huge potlatch dinner, and each clan had their own table or set of tables.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And so, you know, there's the Kaagwaantaan and this -- and there's NPS. And then the superintendent and I were both presented with dance paddles.

KAREN BREWSTER: Nice.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And when they'd call out National Park Service, we'd stand up and dance with our paddles. I mean, you can't -- those are incredible moments.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: And I have to believe that they did make a difference.

[03:10:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. That was the -- was that the Katlian pole?

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. It took me a minute to think of it.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah. I didn't remember myself.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, yeah.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Anyway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Special moments, for sure.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: All right. Well, thank you very much. That's a lovely note to finish on.

SANDE MCDERMOTT: Thank you. Oh my goodness.