

ORAL HISTORY  
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Andrew Beierly  
12/8/2009  
Skagway, AK  
Skagway Oral History Project

- **Andrew Beierly:** Andrew was born in 1940 in Juneau at the Native Hospital. In 1954 he moved to Skagway and attended Pious X Mission School with his brother Pete. This school was very different from what they were used to. In 1959 he transferred to Skagway High School, and a local Skagway family, the Feeros, took him in so he could finish school with housing.
- **Working for the Railroad:** In 1957 Andrew worked as a seasonal section worker where he changed ties, lined tracks, leveled rail and cut brush. It was all done by hand, and it was extremely difficult work. He was about 17 while he worked on the sections. In 1959 he joined the bridge crew and learned carpentry work. They worked from Skagway to Whitehorse on bridges. He did steel bridge spiking (bridge is now closed). In the 1960's he worked on stringers- the posts on the old "pony wall" were old and rotting and had to be reinforced because they were being used to haul ore. They reinforced all the bridges with more steel. The 17.5 mile bridge closed and is now a tunnel.
- **Army:** Andrew was in the Army from 1963-1966. Upon returning to Alaska, he worked for the White Pass section, then in 1968 he became a diesel mechanic helper. Then he transferred to the shops in the late 1960's and did carpentry work on the passenger cars. He did restoration work on them, all to original standards. He then became the car shop foreman with 8-12 people working under him. In the late 1960's ore cars shifted to flat cars. There were large amounts of men from Vermont that came to Skagway to work in the railroad business. Don Meaville, a man from Vermont, designed his own car which held up better than what the big companies were making. Another good man, Dick Brown was from Vermont.
- **Life working for the Railroad, transferring to the National Park Service:** The railroad was good work for Andrew, and then it shut down in 1982-83. He went to Juneau for a few months, then the National Park Service had an emergency hire and Andrew returned to Skagway. After the emergency job, Andrew was hired on as a carpenter, and did finish work on the buildings. The carpenters restored the buildings to their original 1890's appearance, with the help of Dave Snow, the plan drawer. He then worked as a custodian in the 1990's, and was promoted to maintenance mechanic in the National Park Service main building. The Park Service has always been nice to work for, and it was great of them to take in the many men who lost their jobs with the White Pass Railroad.