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Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Oral History Project
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Stacey Baldrige: This is Stacey Baldrige interviewing Mike Korsmo, Karen Brewster on camera for the Skagway Oral History Project, it is May 18th, and we're here 2010 and we're here in Skagway.

Karen Brewster: It's the 19th

Stacey Baldrige: Oh it is?

Mike Korsmo: Yeah it's the 19th

Stacey Baldrige: Okay May 19th, 2010 alright so Mike you can start out with your upbringing and where you're from and how you got into the fishing and tugboat industry.

Mike Korsmo: I grew up in Tacoma, Washington. I was actually born in upstate New York but my parents were just there temporarily. I was raised in Tacoma, Washington. Um, I started ah, you know my Dad started taking me fishing when I was probably eight, nine, ten, eleven years old on the Washington coast. And when I started Jr. High I met a kid who's Dad had a charter fishing boat in West Port, Washington. And I started I actually road my bike from Tacoma to West Port about a two hour ride and got a job with him fishing so all the summers when I was going to high school, and jr. high I fished in the summer time, I salmon fished. And then ah, and then I ... after you know high school I continued fishing going to college. And then I kind of, I went into a marine science program up at Shoreline Community College, which was a community college, thinking I wanted to stay working on water. And ah, maybe get into some sort of fisheries or research type work. About 1984 I got a job, through out of Seattle I was going to college and I answered an ad in the paper to take a job to run a boat between Juneau and Skagway for Holland America West Tours. By that time, I had a Captain's license, I had built up my captain's license to be able to run that boat. It was a two-hundred-eighty passenger boat that hauled passengers that would come off Holland America ships in Juneau and haul them to Skagway. Their ships wouldn't dock here at that time they would just dock in Juneau and then come here for and you know they come here and they get on buses and they go on tours. And that's what we did. Um, prior to that I mean actually ... I have to go back and forth now, it's kind of hard for me to lay it out. I had another job trying to get up to Alaska prior to that on the same boat but it didn't work out. So I was really [] but I um, ended up getting a job running this

tour boat. I did that for about three years. And then I started a charter fishing business here with another guy, a friend of mine. And we did that for just one summer in Skagway. I think it was 1987 I believe. At that time there wasn't really good, very good fishing here it wasn't enough [] a charter business. The since then they've been releasing king salmon here in Skagway and the charter industry has actually built up a little bit, but at that time it wasn't very good. So in about 1988 I went to work um, on the tugboat. I got a job through a guy, a local guy named here Ed Hanousek on a boat called the *ARCTIC SCOUT* and that [] actually operating out of Juneau and it was hauling equipment over to the Greens Creek, to build the Greens Creek mine on Admiralty Island. And so I did that for about two years. Um and we ended up, and we ended up they culminated in working with on that vessel at the start of the Valdez oil spill [] as soon as the Exxon Valdez hit the rocks and we set up a command center, an Exxon command center on a barge that was kind of a coordinating barge for the parts of the oil spill. That crew was mostly people from Skagway that hung on that, on that, on that tugboat. Um, during that time, during the oil spill I decided I wanted to do something else. I got tired of the job situation so I ended up getting a job with a company named called AMAK (it's a-m-a-k) towing. And ah, that company I took the job with that company knowing that they had a tugboat stationed in Skagway. And so I initially worked for them during the Valdez oil spill after quitting the other [] and then in the fall of '89 I went to work on the tugboat here in Skagway the *Le Cheval Rouge* and I made some notes from the last time about the spelling it is a French name. The boat used to be owned by the Mobil Oil Company and it was called the Red Horse and if you knew Mobil oil company had [] big red horse and the boat used to have it on the side of the stack and although the Mobil Oil company didn't own it anymore we kept the name, even though the tugboat was blue after we got it. So from that time on I pretty much have worked on *Le Cheval Rouge* in Skagway um, for the last twenty years doing [] work. Um, [] doing it we ah, every ship that came into port here every ship was assisted by a tugboat. The ships were older, obviously twenty years ago, their propulsion systems weren't as sophisticated as today so they generally needed help getting into the dock. And that included at that time, twenty years ago a pretty consistent ore shipment out of Skagway, coming out of the mines up in [] and ah, I'm trying to think of the name of the mine but it was pretty consistent, once a month a ship would come in back then to take the ore out of Skagway. So every month we had one ore ship coming in. So there was fairly, fairly consistent work for the tugs then. Over the course of the twenty years the ore shipment has changed it's went away because the [] because the mine's opened back up it's been very sporadic and for probably five or six years in recent history there wasn't any ore shipment at all up until I'd say two years ago they started shipping copper down here, copper concentrate out of um, a mine that is located [] in the Yukon Territories and so it's Skagway provides the closest deep water port for some of these mines to get their material out. And so, it's good for us on the tugboat industry cause it gives us, you know it gives us more work and a reason to have the tugboat here in the winter time. Um, the other thing we do in

the winter time with the tug, well let me stay on task[] I was talking about the ship assist work the other thing that we do obviously is assist the ships well over the course of the years the cruise ships have gotten more, more maneuverable better propulsion systems and so I before tug out four or five years ago we either assisted them in or we would escort them in. And then starting about four, five years ago the we [] at the dock and if they need us they call us out. When there's heavy winds when they have a mechanical problem and so that's how, that's how, that's how we operate now. And up till this last um, this last I'm trying to think, this last spring, I had the *Le Cheval Rouge* and now we've bought the company that I work for has purchased a new tugboat called the *Brian T* and it's a new modern it says Z-drive tugboat it's pretty large. It's a lot, it's got 4400 horsepower which is about a thousand more horsepower than the *Le Cheval Rouge* had. It's also taken the place, one, now we have one tug where we used to have two tugs here because of this new vessel, so.

Stacey Baldridge: Can you elaborate on what a Z-Drive

Mike Korsmo: A Z-Drive propulsion general convention tugboat, it has an engine with a shaft coming out and going straight to a propeller and then it has a, it, it, that goes through a transmission. And when you, you can you that propulsion systems either goes forward or backwards and then behind the transmission you have a rudder which gives you the ability to turn it. And so basically [] it's forward and backwards, the new, the reason they call these new systems a Z-drive unit because they have an engine and then they have a shaft that comes out of the engine and then it kind of goes up hill and then it goes to ... I'm trying to think of the name of it, it goes to a joint that comes down what into a they call it, they called it a unit it's I'm trying how to describe this, anyway it forms a z the shaft comes up and it's hooked up to another shaft that allows it to come down at 90 degrees and then it goes to a propulsion unit that um, also has a shaft coming out of it that has a propeller and a sort of a round cage um, um and that unit is can go 360 [] so the reason they call it a Z-Drive is that it forms a Z. The whole system forms a z with the two shafts and the unit and a small shaft coming out. So that's the reason they call it a z-drive unit. But what it does is takes away the need for a rudder and you can point those units any directions you want, you can point them, you know whichever way you point that propeller it can go 360 degrees and [] it will push that boat very efficiently. And the difference with that and a conventional tug is in the z-drive unit the propellers are always turning, the way that you stop it or you go backwards you reverse it is to reverse it or the way you stop it is oppose them against each other and that's what stops it. But they are always turning. If you look around the water on a z-drive tugboat there's always water, wash coming out there's [] stopped propellers are always turning. They are very maneuverable they are very efficient. They can forwards and backwards almost as efficiently they go sideways really well. They handle ship work really well. They also handle barge work, doing barge work, really well. And it is becoming the norm in the industry and they are slowly replacing all the [] easy drive

units. So it's ah, and their pretty, it's like learning a new, you know you have to almost know running a conventional boat and try to you know start fresh. In fact the guy, I had a trainer that trained me for oh I'd say two weeks and he said that the [] right off the bat in learning them is kids that had played a lot of video games (ha ha) which isn't me so but that no their pretty, pretty neat. Plus the other thing with them is that, if you see this boat, or if you get a chance go see it, the visibility out of the um, wheel house, you can see all around the boat. They have built them now so they have great, great visibility and their [] modern day technology you know. This particular boat that I um, am running is also set up, it's not set up for just doing ship work it is also set up for doing towing, long range towing. In fact it holds 110 thousand gallons of fuel and ah, and it has twenty-two hundred feet of two inch tow cable on it so it's capable [] um, so it's very versatile. In fact when they bought the boat, the company I work for bought the boat they had a job, a possible job towing a barge from Seattle to Peru with it, which would have been kind of fun I would have enjoyed that, but it didn't pan out, the company didn't get the job. But anyway it's a, I think that it's really exciting that they decided to bring it up here to Skagway. Skagway they've looked at this type of a [] probably the last fifteen years, even though the ships aren't using us as much it's a very windy port and the ships, most of the ships pay for a tug to be here because of the wind conditions. Um and it's kind of exposed so it's kind of exciting that it took us that long to actually to finally find one but it, it's also happening at a time like I say [] they are actually using us less and less but they still recognize the need for it. Yep and this boat probably won't stay here this winter they'll probably send it to Kodiak. (Phone call) That's me, oops.

Yes as far as history of the tugboats I'm not sure exactly when the first tugboats actually came to Skagway but um, I'm pretty sure there's been different [] vessels coming in um, for you know probably prior, prior to World War II, Skagway was a fairly busy port during the war. I'm pretty sure with the train and there was a lot of military shipments going through here. There were some old wood tugs that were operating around here, even when I got here I assume they were operating around here back then. Um boats like the *Tagish* and the *Natoma* when I first got here in 1984 there was an old boat called the *Natoma* and it was an old wood tug and it was only about 700 horsepower and some of these other boats were you know were anywhere from 500 to 1500 horse. And a lot of them would be generally and I said this last time, generally a lot of the tugs were probably built before the '50s or '60s [] wood tugs some even after that but some there was still, boats um built there was still boats built back then and they were riveted hull steel tugs. But most of the tugs that operated out of here to my knowledge were old wood tug boats. And I think a lot of times they came, you know they traveled around different ports of southeast [] they, they, they, they assisted ah, um, there was a guy named I mentioned Don Starkweather, his, the guy who had the *Natoma*, there was another, a Don House out of Wrangell who had a couple tugs. One of them was the *Taiya* which I mentioned earlier um, and he, he had tugs that would operate around southeast um, and those guys would

you know they were up, they would come up here whenever there was [] they probably, they traveled, there was a lot more going on, you know back in the you know '50s, '60s even '70s well '70s, 80s the tugs were busy with the logging industry so they were busy all the time, they'd be traveling around. I'm not sure how often they had a tug stationed here permanently prior to you know, prior to the '80s I'm sure depending on what was going on, I mean there's been, there's been [] operations, ore terminal operations in this town you know over the years and I'm not sure when they started but I know the ore terminal was now stationed on the east side of the port on the ore dock but at one time they used to ship ore off the, I mean, I'm sorry, I mean off the west side of the ore terminal, off the east side they used to have the ore terminal where the railroad dock is currently located. The tug history is probably fairly varied um, you can actually, you know it would be interesting you know talk to someone like Karl Gurcke or someone and find out if how much archived information there is on it. The other person in town that has a pictorial of all the tugs that have been coming in here forever is Barbara Kalen. And she's probably, she's got, she loves taking pictures of the boats, she's taken many, many [] boats that have come in here. So she would probably have a really good understanding of some of that history. It's you know, Skagway's been a port town since the turn of the century so I'm assuming that even back, back in the steamship days they might have had some sort of vessel assisting at times. I'm not sure what they were using back then but could have been a rowboat (haha) [] started you know like Faust down in Tacoma they got started by having rowboats that assisted the ships and so they could go under small steam powered boats and then eventually diesel boats but then imagine, but I don't know, I don't know the exact history of the tug industry past you know the '70s and '80s [] much more about it.

Stacey Baldrige: So did the tug industry start picking up when all the huge tour boats started coming in?

Mike Korsmo: Yes definitely it actually warranted a permanent tug here and that other than the um ore ships. Now the ore ships would come in prior to the industry picking up and I think that like the people that I mention earlier um Stark, Don Starkweather was there and then Don House the guys that had the tugs at that time I believe [] their ship coming in and they'd be notified that their assistance was required and they'd travel up here. But I'm not sure that they stayed here when the ships weren't in. So ... but the industry really did pick up, when the, as soon as the cruise ships picked up we generally had two tugs stationed here all summer and [] winter. And keep in mind at the same time that all that was going on that there was also a mill in Haines shipping out, shipping out lumber so that was another you know reason they needed a tug in the area. And that closed down probably early '90s so that is fourteen fifteen miles away so whenever a ship would come in we would travel to help the ships come in. Um I gave a little history last time about some of the stuff, you know and it was kind of scattered but about the stuff um has happened you know in the water front with the tugs and ships since, since,

since I got here in the early '90s [] 1994 they had a major, major dock collapse. They were rebuilding the old wood dock which is the railroad dock and um they were replacing the wood dock with what they call a sheet wall dock, cause where they drag sheet wall dock piling and they fill in behind it, so basically they fill in all behind this wall. And they had about four hundred feet out, it is a 1200 feet dock [] wood pilings and filling it in and putting this sheet wall up and ah, one day the whole thing gave out. The sheet wall, the old dock, it all collapsed and everything went into the bay. Two guys were killed that were down there cutting off the old piling. It created such a force of it sliding down into the bay, it created a about a 25 foot wave from what I've heard about it, it actually washed by the Skagway harbor um, sucked all the water out of it, cause it was like a tsunami, it created its own little tsunami situation. It just, it pulled all the water out of the harbor so all the boats in the harbor so the boats hit the bottom. It hit the ferry dock which is a floating, part of it is a floating dock and it broke that floating dock loose. That floating dock, broke loose and hit the Broadway dock. And it hit the end of the Broadway dock it was quite a catastrophe [] tug boats goes up we were actually sitting in Haines doing a ship in Haines um, I guess in '94 they were still doing some ships in Haines. We were down there tied up in Haines when it happened. We got the call, I can't remember the time of night, it was the middle of the night, it was a catastrophe going on in ah, in Skagway and so we took off. We went down in the boat and took off [] coming into Skagway we saw sections of dock and pilings sticking up that had big metal pins sticking out. It was night time so we could see them on our radar these big pins sticking up and just debris everywhere. And we thought that's not good. And when we got there things were a mess. The Skagway ferry dock ramp was floating in the water the float itself was over against the ore dock the end of the Broadway dock like I said was wiped out there was so much debris that [] choked off you couldn't get in and out of there and of course the railroad dock was gone. I mean everything was gone. And it was like, it was, we spent the next year or you know, yah the next year ah, working with the different companies fixing all that stuff up. Um, we moved all the barges, at one time we had seven barges in Haines and materials on em trying to get railroad dock rebuilt fixing the ferry dock and also fixing the end of the Broadway dock. And ah, it was a pretty busy year for us, the neat thing about it is they were able to get a new dock in place in time for the next tourist season and not lose any ships it was pretty amazing [] you know the effort that was put forward by the efforts of White Pass and tugs and everybody to get that going, so.

Other than that there were some other situations that were happening and I mentioned it last time. We were pushing on one of the old Regent C Ships, it is called *Regency*, the *Regent C*, we were actually had, we made up to this ship and turning around we were coming into it in Skagway [] and decided to go around it, around us, around the ship that we were made up to, and they actually collided out in front of town and we didn't we were really close to getting pinched between them but as it turned out we didn't get pinched. The ships collided, one collided the stern collided with the side of the other ship and it caused three million dollars on

one ship of damage and [] there were probably 16 video tapes of it because everyone on the deck had their video camera, one gal got a lot of glass in her hair. But the ships were still able to maneuver after it was all over but it was, it was really, it was a crazy incident you just wouldn't think that two ships would have gotten that close out here. In fact the coast guard interviewing me, I had a pretty extensive interview, well actually not the coast guard but one of the lawyers [] and he said now you can tell me what really happened. And I said the ships got too close I mean it's crazy I can't believe they would do that. So from that point on the coast guard Captain in Juneau has required the ships to have you know a certain distance before they come, they can't be coming in all the same time. And then we've also had ships over the last twenty years that I've been here that have taken out [] to take part of the dock out. I was a part of that and a reason was partially due to high winds and because at the time we didn't have a tug boat that had the power to stop it. And then there have been a few other little general instances where something got hit hard enough, ah, like the one time the one ship hit the, the end of the um, um, ore dock it [] dolphin because it wiped out the cat walks. They were all out there by themselves and the tug had to go pick them up. But ah, there's been a lot of real close calls with the ships that have you know gotten into trouble but knock on wood we haven't had a major instance for quite a while. It seems like there for a while, every year there was something, something that happened that pertained to a dock, or something that we had to deal with on the tugs but lately it's [] instance. But this port it's got a reputation for you know being fairly dangerous when the winter high it could be pretty potential for something going wrong because if they come out of the port of Skagway and they back out into channel, into the channel or into the Taiya Inlet if they lose power or if you know they don't have capability and they don't get around the wind they don't have anywhere to go [] and more over towards Dyea and there's not really a good anchor spot for ships and so that's, I think that's the reason why they pay for tugboats.

Stacey Baldrige: So would you say driving tugboats can be a bit dangerous?

Mike Korsmo: Yah, it's ah, well it's depending on what you're doing it's kind of a contact sport. You know you're pushing, you know you're pushing on a ship [] a ship that is all steel and very powerful so you know when something goes wrong generally it can be fairly catastrophic. you know these ships are also if you're coming into the ship you have to choose where you go there's a lot of parts on a ship, like up under the bough, there's a big flair and you got to make sure that you're not you know laying up underneath there []. We've had lots of little situations where we've you know bent railings or bent the mast a little bit. But it is usually because they've been in distress situation and they want us to get in there really fast and you want to get in there in a spot where you're going to do the most good and sometimes that spot is pretty dicey and you know sometimes it is, you know, I mean you have situations where something gets bent [] you there has been tugs that have hit ships hard enough to actually ding them a

little bit you know. Um, but yah we've, yah one of the most dangerous things that has happened with what we do is when you put lines up on the ship your lines are set up to pull so much weight and according to you know what the power of the tug you know can pull. And sometimes the line goes up the ship and you don't know exactly [] or whatever if it is going around any kind of a sharp edge, there is so much tension on that line when you start pulling or pushing on it um, if there is any kind of sharp edge or anything it will cut that line. And I would say in the course of twenty years we have probably snapped fifteen, fifteen lines. And what happens when they break is that they tend to come back at you, at the tug, and it is usually most of the time it has been because of a situation [] um, but ah, or ah, lot of times we used to tow the ships off the docks and we'd tow them, we'd have about a 200 foot tow line and sometimes they'll have us tow them around in a circle and if that line gets on the edge, on the stern of the ship it will have a tendency to also um you know break it that way. And then if a line parts when you're bringing a ship in [] you have, when you come in like when you bring in a ore ship with a conventional tugs that we have been operating over the last, that I have for the last twenty years you put three lines up and you set yourself up so you're kind of like a thruster for that ship. He can stop himself fore and aft but you're actually helping him on the dock or off the dock depending on the conditions are. So if one of those three lines break then it usually swings the tug around and you have to have a really coordinated crew [] black marks on the rudder on the ships before I mean, and that was just a situation where a line broke and things were happening fast and we were pulling full, we were pulling back full the tug just swung around and we were just lucky that we didn't have anything major happen. We haven't had any, since I've been here we haven't had any major, we haven't had any injuries, really other than you know any because of doing assist work [] Alaska and in our company we've had injuries. We had a situation where a tug was pulling a ship off a dock in Ketchikan and it was a smaller tug and he was pulling off the dock and generally what happens is you get them pulled out the dock and if the ship starts dragging you that is not a good thing usually. And he started dragging this tug and actually dragging him backwards so the stern of the tug was going underwater. Well the deck hand on the tug went back there to [] and as he stepped back the line broke on the ship and came back and hit him. Yah! And since that time because of the situations like that we've gone to having a release mechanism in the wheelhouse of the tug and so if we're pulling on a ship and it looks like we're getting, they call getting in irons but if we if we're getting pulled backwards or sideways and it looks like we're going to [] push of a button. So those kind instances are they're pretty rare but it can happen any time in the industry it's not I would say it is not as dangerous as the Alaska fishing industry especially like the crab industry or some of the fishing industries. And a lot of that has to do with the fact that we are pretty well regulated by coast guard and everybody and there's now a days [] even you know, you work on a tug boat you have to take quite a few courses and classes and you have to be licensed up and so. But there's still situations where you definitely where things can happen

fast I mean I kind of liken it to you know it's usually like four hours of sitting around you know you're traveling on the tug boat, you're sitting around, you're cruising you're just [] if you're going from doing some job from long ways away and then all of a sudden you're doing the job and that job may only take twenty minutes but that twenty minutes is pretty intense. But the four hours prior to that is pretty "la-te-da". But it is just that short period of time that you're doing the work that things can happen. And the reason why you're doing the work is because conditions are usually extreme so. So we do a lot of [] of last four years we've put out two major barge fires [] and I think I might have mentioned this on the last interview, we put out a barge fire of scrap metal on a barge fire outside of Haines and then we put water on that thing for 17 hours and that was a situation. The Coast Guard initially was responding to the fire and they had a coast guard ship putting water on it and as soon as we showed up they backed away because it was too dangerous for them and we put water on it for 17 hours. And so it was kind of you know kind of crazy. And so the next fire, these are calls we've gotten out of here so from sitting here, was an Alaskan Marine Line barge coming out of Sitka and it had, they were hauling garbage a lot of these communities in the southeast have their garbage hauled south. And they had three, I believe three garbage containers and they are basically an open, like a big shipping container that's just got like a canvas top on it so it's filled with garbage and what happened I think was that garbage obviously composted or something and it got hot and it caught on fire. Well and it around those containers were also freight containers, trucks, cars, refrigeration vans, and when the, the tug that was hauling the barge saw the fire back there they thought the whole barge was fully engulfed in flames but really the garbage was creating such a big you know flame and it looked like it was but it hadn't really caught onto the other freight on the barge. And we didn't get there for 16 hours, they were in South [] and we were in Skagway, so when we finally got to the barge it had been going for quite a while but it was still burning in the containers and we fought that for almost 24 hours and they finally got it out. It didn't destroy all the freight on the barge or destroy the barge, but. And then the other thing um that will happen is that we will get a call occasionally we might be the closest tug to be to a ship in distress that's not a cruise ship here, a ship out in the Gulf of Alaska. Another tug that has lost a barge out there or we've done you know ship rescues or barge rescues or fishing boat rescues and those happen just out of the clear blue. You'll just get a call and someone will say you need to leave right now and go help somebody and that's another part of the industry you know and it's Okay, here we go! In fact I just hired a new crew [] I kind of gave him a long talk on the hiring process, Can you leave on a moment's notice, (ha) because it is part of the nature of our work.

Stacey Baldridge: Why is it that so many tugs are always being called out of Skagway? Are there not other tugs located in the southeast?

Mike Korsmo: There is, there is other tugs. One of the reasons why in particular I think, why we got called over the last twenty years is because the capabilities of the *Le Cheval Rouge* it's a good size boat, it has firefighting capabilities and it has quite a bit of horsepower. We also have a tug in Juneau but generally that tug has not been as capable as the boat that is here [] to ships here so it's, a lot of times it's just the boat we have is more [] at this here. And it is just a lot of times here, this boat that we have this vessel here, and this boat that we have now is even more now I call it an ambulance chaser. We're going to be you know, we'll be you know, we'll most likely be called because it is even a bigger boat. But actually our other boats do the same thing, the company that I work for has boats in Ketchikan and um, Prince Wales Island, Juneau, Skagway, Kodiak, Seward and they all have to respond to those situations. The one situation that [] that was here was, boy I can't remember what year this was now, the *Star Princess*, oh boy what year was that it must have been early 2000 or late 1990s, I can't remember, the *Star Princess* hit, it ran over Poundstone Rock. It was more of a pilot error situation there is a buoy on top of this rock, [] ran it over and it didn't, um the new cruise ships have a double hull, there's an inner hull, and an outer hull, and it penetrated the outer hull about 200 feet and also wiped out the propeller on one side and so the ship you know obviously turned and at that time it was capable of maneuvering with one, with one propeller and it also has some bow thrusters on it. It turned around and went back into Juneau and then we were called to [] and escort it to Portland, Oregon and so we went down and we put 2000 feet of oil boom on the back of the tug, because what we really were doing, we were with them for a couple reasons, one in case they got in a situation where they needed help maneuvering and the other was we were carrying if they did develop a leak we were carrying the oil boom to boom them off. So we escorted them in June which is you know an unlikely time for us to leave port. They had to send another tug up here to take our place and we escorted them to Portland, Oregon.

That ship has a really wild history, that's the same ship, that *Star Princess* for some reason it's like the Lynn Canal is like a Bermuda Triangle for it. It's the same ship that hit the end of the ore dock and caused some damage, and you know it wasn't the ship's fault again it was the people that brought it in, and it also came into port time and it had oil leaking out of the shaft log, um, the shaft comes out and you know there's a seal coming out of the hull of the boat where the shaft comes out and then the propeller is on the end of the shaft. Well those shafts have a seal on them that doesn't allow anything you know coming in or out of the boat, water coming in or whatever but those shafts have an oil bath, coolant kind of situation where they're there's this oil bath behind the seal that keeps the shaft cool well this seal it got a little tiny like shrimp line caught in it and it was like [] and it was actually they use mineral spirits, mineral oil so it's pretty clean oil but ah, it was leaking and it still leaves a sheen so they actually when they got to port they had this leak and they actually, I'm a diver too and I actually dove down and tried to get the line out but it didn't work. So they actually cut the whole shaft guard which is almost the size of this room off the shaft. I didn't do that I'm not capable of that kind

of underwater work but they had to call two different dive companies to cut that shaft guard off and they picked it up. And that was just to get this little tiny line out. Yah and then they had to reattach it at the next port. But that poor ship has had more instances, it's no longer coming here I'm sure. [] But there is a new *Star Princess* that is a different ship, but that ship always had bad luck, but ...

Stacey Baldrige: Hmm, so what do you think the historical significance of having tug boats in Skagway is?

Mike Korsmo: Well it's you know people always identify with tugs, you know I'm not really surprised with how people think you know tug boats are cool. I mean it's kind of what you know even all the kids, I, I think that [] you know that tugs boats have just been a part of the history of this town as well as the rest of the southeast. And ah, it's actually a part of the fiber, fiber of the whole region you know from the timber industry to now the cruise ship industry to the freight industry. Um, there has always been tug boats involved. And the fact that the ports are somewhat exposed at times you know with weather, and the weather is sometimes extreme, not only you know because of winter conditions and high winds and it has just been a part of business on the water in the whole region you know in Skagway, they ah, I mean it's just woven, it's kind of woven into the whole history. And if you really look at tug boat history [] and not just from Skagway prospective but the regional prospective you know with all the, especially I'd have to say with the timber industry you know the part that really you know sticks out in people's mind is people towing log rafts through very narrow channels and even you know Skagway never had any, they have shipped wood out of here from the interior or from Yukon, never really had any export log kind of thing going on here, it was kind of rare for most of the southeast, but even Haines they shipped you know, they shipped logs all the way to Haines from timber cutting areas farther south so it can be milled up in Haines. So those kind of things had to be those things were definitely challenges ah, trying to get wood to where they were going, you know where it was going to be processed and that's you know where the tug boats came into play. You know they're the ones that were capable. You know you're towing 90 miles at a knot, you know when you're towing wood you're towing really slow, you can't tow at any kind of extreme, extreme weather and you have to work the tides. And the guys that did that kind of work, they knew the currents and the back eddies and all the passages really well. And some of those guys that I've worked around that used to be in that industry [] as far as knowing you know, like the current conditions you know that are going to be the best and they are amazing, their wealth of knowledge. But there is not very many of them left. That industry you know has just been pretty down for a lot of years and you don't see it coming back really. Just a little bit here and there, just a few mills in the region, it's just that things have changed. And it's just, that knowledge is all kind of gone away you know [] world is very much different it used to be you know it used to be the ones who came up working on tugs, like me working on

fishing boats then went to work on tug. They got their knowledge from experience it's what we call "coming up through the "hawse pipe" um, a hawse pipe is like the anchor chain, the pipe that comes out with the anchor chain and that goes down to the bottom, it is a visual [] hawse piper people who actually got their knowledge by actually working on the boats where as a lot of new mariner even the ones on the tugs because of the requirements of the licensing and everything else they're most, a lot of new mariners are actually just going to school, going to a maritime academy they're able to get their sea time at the school and then they come on board [] experience. So it's kind of, it's changing the whole industry is changing.

Another thing to note you know is the tug boats were always, at one time in the past were kind of like fishing boats, you know you had to have a license to operate one generally most of the time but as far as the tug boat itself as far as a licensing requirements for the vessel it was pretty limited [] and ah there wasn't a lot of oversight from um, you know from coast guard or anything like that other than the license for the captains and crews, but now a days that changing also um, they're going to start inspecting tug boats here pretty so they'll be inspected, you know like the similar to the passenger vessel for the safety and everything and all equipment and everything and so um, that's definitely [] and a lot of that has been brought on by accidents down in the Gulf and down in the river systems down in Louisiana, you know every time some of those accidents happen we get more rules. Some of them are good, some of them are just making it hard for some you know some companies to survive, but I guess it's just I guess it's reality you know []

Stacey Baldridge: So where do you see the [] tug boating going these days?

Mike Korsmo: Um I think you know I think you know, I think it's kind of, right now it's sort of a status quo as far as what I do, the fishing companies continue to be willing to pay for having the insurance to have a tug boat um, then that will, I don't think that is going to change much um, [] the other kind of work goes I think you know it is kind of scary really, the only of industry that really um, I mean the only industry that will sustain like a tug like I run for long term is you know, whether there is any kind of cargo coming in, whether in this area there is a couple, you know mining operations, you know the ships that haul cargo

END OF DISK ONE of TWO

DISK TWO of TWO

Stacey Baldridge: I just wondered what the involvement of women on tugboats is?

Mike Korsmo: Um, one of the tugboats that I worked on just to [] fill in before I you know took the job in 1988 was a tug that was locally, it was local here it was owned by a guy named Mike Keso and his wife was his crew member. And I would work with them once in a while and then

during the Valdez oil spill I was working around a tug that had an all women crew. I had no qualms at all to hiring someone that was qualified you know if I had that opportunity, you know if that presented itself, but generally no. Most of the times that I've seen in southeast especially is usually a husband and wife situation. Um, the there is a tug company out of Ketchikan that hires female cooks which is kind of you know. But very rarely do I see women on the boats and I don't know why that is.

Stacey Baldrige: It is the same with the fishing industry, it's just the work.

Mike Korsmo: Yah, yah and anyhow definitely.

Stacey Baldrige: What are the quarters like on a tug?

Mike Korsmo: Well the boat I'm on now is pretty darn nice! It is um generally the boats that I've been on, there's usually well *Le Cheval Rouge* has two individual state rooms, so the one is kind of four berths so maybe that is part of the situation. The tugs that I am on now has individual berths. You know at some time if you'd have a really big crew [] you'd have to, you'd have to share but generally when you're traveling on the boats, when you're staying on them like that you have whale watches and so you work six on and six off or four on eight off. So generally you're in your state room by yourself most of the time.

Stacey Baldrige: How many members of a crew are generally on a tug boat?

Mike Korsmo: It depends on what you're doing you know if we're doing [] in port harbor work and the size of tug I run we can generally do it with three people. In the past we did it with two people but I mean it was just too much, I mean it's a big boat and you know we just said that, we said we didn't want to do it that way and we told the company that. But the boat that I'm on now is 117 feet and we have four people but if you were to operate it in you know one of the big ports [] also more involved I'd say it's generally four or five people and sometimes six, depending on what you're doing. The coast guard might dictate in the future how many people we have on each boat, by the size and when they come out with these new regulations they might dictate how many licenses, right now you're supposed to have the qualified people to operate that boat and the deck hands are supposed to be merchant mariners. And that's one of the things that I was talking about earlier, that's one of the things that's where it's changing along with having to have certification, Merchant Mariner they will have to have certain training, including Safety Officer Training and stuff like that and so also [] depending on where the tug operates, if you're operating inland waters, just inside southeast Alaska's considered inland, you just have to have an inland license. As soon as you go outside of the coast you have to have either an ocean or a coastal license if you go and yah that 's where if you go off the coast, if you go over two hundred miles you have to have an ocean license. And actually I'm one of the only guys in the company that has an ocean license [] two hundred miles off shore. The

only time that we would normally do that is say if I were traveling with what we do where our company operates. If I were to go from southeast Alaska to Kodiak and if I were to sail straight across the gulf of Alaska I would be at some time operating under my Ocean Endorsement. And the only difference the ocean, well in order to get that qualification [] inland license to say you have to have worked on the coast so it is really hard for people to accumulate that time. They have to as a deck hand and stuff. So those guys at the whale house they have to have that endorsement if they're working out there.

Stacey Baldridge: You mentioned Ed Hanousek.

Mike Korsmo: Yah

Stacey Baldridge: Can you tell us a little bit about him and who he was.

Mike Korsmo: Ed Hanousek, I'm not sure of his title for the railroad but he's, ah, he's [] I'm not sure if he's in charge of all the training crews or the tracks or whatever he is, but Ed works for White Pass and has for many years ah. I met Ed working on the tug he grew up here and he had a construction company at one time, but he got involved, I don't know how he got involved with the tug boats but like I said I started working for him in 1988. He was working then for, ah the *Arctic Scout*, the boat I mentioned [] it operated under Bering Sea Marine it's a company that Linden Corporation owns. Linden Corporation just to give you a background is one of the biggest freight companies in the country. And they also own Alaska *** Freight which they have air cargo, Linden Air Cargo. The boat that I worked for the *Arctic Scout*, was one of the construction sites for their company [] materials and stuff all throughout the coastal areas of Alaska. They have lots of stuff going on up in Barrow and up in the river systems up in the Bering Sea Coast they have tugs and barges and they haul up the river and build airports and build all the sorts of stuff you know it's mostly support for big construction projects up there. So Ed is in town, he's a character[] you know I worked for him for a couple years and I learned lot and I learned a lot what not to do working for him (ha ha) I ought to not put that on tape but that's the honest truth

Stacey Baldridge: Well I know the Hanousek family name goes back to Dyea right?

Mike Korsmo: Yah, well I think you know it probably does. His dad ah, his dad was the mayor at one time there was a lot of White Pass involvement there the little RV park over there is called Hanousek Park, I'm not sure which family, which member that was named after but, yah Hanouseks have been here for a long time. And Ed is still here, he's not working and like I said he's involved with the trains now. I'm not sure how long he operated on the tugs it was for quite a few years. And that was how I got to work because it was a local thing and I was working with him and they needed somebody and I got to work with him. It was great, it was a great opportunity, say we had all Skagway tug and it was actually a construction company out

of Juneau building this mine and I could come back home on the weekends and we would come back to do our weekly run to the mine. So

Stacey Baldrige: It sounds like it's been a good deal for you.

Mike Korsmo: Yah, it's been great. I feel fortunate. I think [] I don't know what I'd be doing, if I'd be in the fishing industry you know where I'd have gone but the tug boat industry afford me a good living um, it's allowed me to stay here in southeast Alaska, in Skagway. You know it's been my home for well, since 1984 and it's a great place and it's really fortunate to have this kind of job and be able to stay [] you know um, so

Stacey Baldrige: You've been able to raise a family

Mike Korsmo: Yah, yes I've got one daughter who's still in high school, one who's going to college at University Alaska so my one daughter's got two years left, and her basketball team won the AA state (ha ha) last year in Anchorage. And no, the kids, it's a great place to raise kids. Everybody's their parents it's [] it's pretty safe there's somebody to bail out of problems with them. The biggest problem is the lack of them, you know what I mean? You know there seems to be a lack of the numbers are really dropping, it's not just here, it's a tough here. But no they're really happy kids. I don't know what else to say.

Stacey Baldrige: So we'll switch gears a little bit to Parks and Rec. Can you just talk about what Park and Recs Service does and your involvement

Mike Korsmo: The Parks, I became a council member I believe it was 2001 to 2009, I was a council member for eight years.

Stacey Baldrige: A city council member?

Mike Korsmo: Now it is assembly member at the time it was council member. We were at the time the City of Skagway and now we're the Municipality of Skagway. The mayor at the time [] Tim Bourcy he ah, um he was a he was, he was a friend, he is sort of a friend of mine but he also has an outdoor store and also a guiding business so he put a pretty strong emphasis on the trails and stuff in the area. I used to help him a lot prior to becoming an assembly member on the assembly projects [] and so ah, when I became council member he made me chair of the Parks and Rec Committee. Now the Parks and Rec Committee is just, is just a committee assembly ah, committee the municipal city committee that is appointed by the mayor. But we kind of oversee all the Parks and Rec Projects in the municipality. The parks and rec as far as departments go it comes under the public works [] the structures set up so they have a dedicated person who works on the projects as far as doing the actual work you know under public works. And then they have an assembly committee, they have a crew of kids that do the

work but what we do as the Parks and Rec committee we task out, what we see we want to get done, what projects either the direction of the mayor or [] work on projects and one of the um, some of the original projects that we worked on were one we created a recreational area in the lower Dewey Lakes area which is the trail system that is right on the east side of town, it is the most well used hiking areas in the area [] one of the first things that the mayor did was task me out and then we actually formed a sub-committee to create a recreational area up there because we recognized the significance of it up there. And there's a huge significance and you know historically it's been a recreational area for the community. So it's a recreational area that is pretty open. It's not limited to a lot but it did kind of make it not a park but kind of park for the city [] Dewey Lakes Recreational plan for that and you can find that in the city ordinance. And the next thing that we did was we, he tasked me out to helping to form a Comprehensive Trail Plan and Skagway has some great trails but it didn't have a formal Comprehensive Trail Plan and ah, other communities had been doing it [] go after, you know after grants and show that you have a structure in place showing that you know how you want to do all of your trails and so we spent a couple years putting together a pretty comprehensive plan. And we used, a Sitka model, a Juneau model that had been put together and it was really helpful. We got a grant from Rivers Trails Conservation, a gal named Cassy Thomas through the National Parks Service it was [] didn't really entail money passing over, it did for her expenses, they paid for her expenses for her traveling here, but she helped us put together this plan and it was really you know it was great. It was a couple, it was over a couple year period of time with lots of public input. Um and so we finished that and there was another gentleman at that time was ah, was ah, director of the Skagway Development Corporation. His name was [] became an assembly member but he contributed immensely to this trail plan, he was actually the one who ended up doing all the formatting and putting it together. We put it together with a pretty small bunch of people um, if you look at the other trail plans in larger cities, the involvement of different groups has been immense. But we had partners such as the Forest Service and the Park Service and [] the groups that were involved in the trails be involved you know they're involved in the trails around here but we really basically kind of did the work, the leg work and we would have the meetings with all the groups that the participating groups but that was their involvement, more or less. So that was a big thing. Then there's some, there's a lot of projects that we did. We increased the size of our [] um, there had been one ball field, when I got on we built another ball field, we built a soccer field. It's not, If you look at it you think it's just a bigger field but the ship, the people would come off the ships they'd want to play soccer when they would come into town and they had been using our school field and pretty intent and heavily and whatever they could find and there was a little field by our rec center that they had been using but [] built just a big grassy area for them to play soccer on. We put together sort of a homemade you know BMX track out there but it you know it hasn't been used all that much but we put it out there because the kids wanted a BMX type track. So that area that's a pretty neat

thing. The other thing that we worked on, I worked on it the whole time I was on the assembly was trying to get a new location for our rifle range [] right existing, the old rifle range was right on kind of a trail system on Yakutania Point and it was kind of a conflict, not only that but the rifle range is located, housing, property owners were starting to, well there have always been property owners around the rifle range but they started building around it. And it was because it was becoming an issue with people had bullets flying over their heads and all this was all getting kind of crazy. And this old range was just kind of a strip clean [] on the end of it and a whole dilapidated work bench on it, or a firing bench. So I spent a lot of years trying to figure out where to put a rifle range and it was trial and tribulation. We found a place up on the pass, passed up where our incinerator is and it was kind of a cool because you knew the road was going to be maintained and it was close enough to town because people are used to being close. And it was state land and it went into negotiations and [] place and at this same time another company was looking at that same property for a climbing business and the state ended up you know they ended up being like we all came to the same place at the same time and the state decided it would be a kosher situation and I didn't, I could not see how a climbing situation and a rifle range were going to go hand in hand. So we backed off [] bluffs right there. They're doing really well. We fought it for a little while and then we saw that that wasn't going to work. And so had to go back to ground zero and our former City Manager, a guy named Bob Ward, thought of this area that we had used as a dump and it's right at the end of the corner, well if you go out towards Dyea but towards Jack *** (18:15) point but you go towards the [] back up in the Long Bay there is a road that goes up the hill, it's paved, it's got a gate. It was a dump, it was a, when I got here they our old landfill had filled up and they were kind of desperate and they decided to locate a dump on this site, which was kind of sad because the site was really nice. But it only lasted so many years and it filled up in so many years [] It's capped now it's, it's covered it's ah, doing what dumps do as they sit there. But off to the side of that um, is a, is a nice old canyon that looks really good and Bob Ward the City Manager said, "Hey why don't you go look at that." And I did I looked at that and actually talking to the Parks and Rec committee and we started looking at it. And we got some grant money from the NRA and [] money from the state to try to develop it. And we got the money and we ended up, through the process and through the committee and public participation we decided to move the range there. And we just last year we built a nice range there with shooting baffles and stuff like that there. There's only, there's only about there's a couple property owners close by and [] that didn't really effect any property on our side and when I went up there the first time and tried to get all the property owners to listen as I shot a gun in that area to see if and they couldn't hardly hear anything but after we cleared the trees and did everything, there is an effect on one neighbor but ah, any other place that you would have put that range. There was some talk about putting the range out at Dyea. There's quite a few problems with that, for one thing there's [] and they would just be shooting wherever they wanted to be anyway. And the

other thing is that it is close to park boundaries and you know it's just, there were some great sites but distance wise, being close to the park, um, there was just too many factors that you know weren't good out there. What else did we work on? Um, [] um, I like hiking, it's a great ah, um, I don't know the trails being, the trails are just there's tons of people that use them, and ah, it's a great place and there's great trails around. And I've just been involved with trying to fix them up. No this is really, this is some real great trails [] and this came kind of through the direction of the mayor again. Was our easiest trail for those people who can't actually go up hill, is that Yakutania Trail system which is right across the river from like where the airport terminal is and that, there had been a trail system there and there is also a road that comes down from there, it is kind of a fire break road. And that is where the rifle range is up on top well there was a trail that you could do a loop at [] that was a very steep hillside and we developed a trail um, that follows the water over towards Long Bay and comes around and it is pretty gentle and so it's a good trail for people and it's probably, as far as dog walking and stuff like that goes, it's probably almost the most popular right now because it's easy access and people can go right over there. One thing about Skagway is, you always have conflicts in every town about user groups and ah, and we've avoided pretty well user group conflicts um, generally our trails are pretty open but generally a ATV group or something is not going to want to go four-wheeling up the lower lake trail because it is just too steep or something like that and there is usually some dividing factors that keep the user groups having issues with each other. And there's a lot of places for ah, um, ATV use that is just generally not necessarily a designated trail but off on the railroad tracks or other places where they just go off and play. And so we haven't had a lot of problems with that. Another thing, well I guess the latest thing that I was working on when I got off the assembly was the West Creek area. The West Creek area has been has always been a multiple use area for all the people of Skagway. At one time it was logged by a local family and ah, and the road is washed out, over the years since I've been here probably three or four times you know so it's always kind of a neat area. It is one of the most kind of a remote area you can drive to without you know without getting out of the country. It is really pretty back there. So what we [] one of the things that I did before I left is help facilitate putting a bridge across the West Creek up there to access more area um, for you know for a full, once again, our idea is that that area is a multi-use area because a lot of people go up there four-wheel, snowmachine, so we built that bridge with the intention that to keep it multiple-use. Right now the city is going through a [] um, um, review of how that area is to be used, they put out a public survey and stuff. I started that process but you know we started on my watch while I was there but we never really, really you know got it finished up. But the bridge is in you know! We should have done the planning before the bridge, but what happened was we got the bridge, I was talking earlier about this big [] 90s the bridge that we use is the old passenger ramp for the ferry terminal and it went into the water and the state didn't want to reuse it so they gave it to the city and so we as Parks and Rec committee were

kind of tasked out with kind of to figure out where we wanted to put it. you know we knew it was going to be a perfect bridge to put across some river to access some area um, but we finally came up with the West Creek area. And the bridge is in and it's, ah there's nothing developed [] that was kind of developed to put the bridge in the trail.

Stacey Baldrige: So that's not part of the park?

Mike Korsmo: Nope, no it, no, this is off to the side valley, when you go, it's not under park management. Most of the park lands are not park, there only managed by the park, they're not owned by the park. It is very interesting. Anyway but no it's not, it's separate. That's interesting [] he's ah, you know city's taken control of the Dyea flats you know they're going under, they're going under review right now on the use, on the uses out there. That we didn't take that on under parks and Rec committee, they actually formed a Dyea Advisory Committee and they are but they, they work on a lot of the same issues out there [] up for ah, it will be for, the new plan will be up for review tomorrow night for the assembly on the new Dyea Management Advisory. But they were asked to look at the West Creek planning because it is that area because it is out there and it is mostly residents that are a part of this advisory council out there. Yah I was one of the um, it there's also tons of ideas for the West Creek area [] but the you know our intention from Parks and Rec's side was to develop a trail system that was multiple use, because what has happened up there over the years is people have developed their own trail system and not maybe not you know and this is the most responsible manner so that everybody can use it and not you know and still maintain a pretty pristine area. There's some really nice old growth there is some really nice timber up there. Some people look at it one way, some people look at it another. Some people look at it as a wood supply, some people think that it is some wood that you can't find because this place was denuded during the Gold Rush. You have to go to some of these back valleys to find a really old forest. But the Parks and Rec stuff, there's a ton of stuff we did and I'm just kind of drawing a mental blank.

Stacey Baldrige: What about the relationship with the Park Service?

Mike Korsmo: it was good!

Stacey Baldrige: City Park and Rec?

Mike Korsmo: It was pretty good at times, at times it was better than others, but we had some great relationships. When we went to put that comprehensive trail plan together there was a gal I'm not sure if she was the only one but she did all our GRS, or mapping on that plan. And that was all through the Park Service. Um, I think from the Park and Rec's side we had great relationship. [] you know from the city as a whole or certain members of the assemblies or whatever that with the Park but as far as but as far as the Park and Rec's stuff goes, you know we worked with them a lot. I wished we would have worked with them more. And just before I

got done we started working a lot with the um, the Skagway, the Tribe because they were getting access to a lot of money and one of the projects that we were working on just before I left was [] um, trail reconstruction and the um, um, Skagway, the Tribe he I can't even think of the name now. I'm having a mental block, but they got a grant to do a planning project and so they were working through us to work the A-B Mountain Trail. And [] end up follows it's called, it's also called the Skyline Trail and it follows that ridgeline all the way to the top of A-B Mountain which is the one right up here. And it's a really cool local trail but it doesn't for some reason we haven't done a lot with it, and it's a good trail until you get up above tree line, and then it needs to be identified. And one of the things that we were thinking of doing is [] all the way up to Mt. Cleveland, which is a big mountain over there and having a longer range trail system up there and possible having a cabin or something. The other thing that I guess I forgot about another thing that is on-going but still going and getting close. When I was on the Parks and Rec, prior to me being on Parks and Rec they started a cabin, they started putting together the ideas of building a new cabin up there and this was [] ah private individuals that were working on it that were you know coming to the city and asking for materials and stuff like that. So when I got on we kind of brought it under the Parks and Rec wing. And we ended up building the cabin. It is kind of modeled after Park Service cabins. It's on upper Dewey Lakes. It is absolutely gorgeous; it was built with mostly volunteer help and city funds. It was very little city labor [] it was all volunteer. And the last, you know I was also involved in writing a lot of the grants. One of the grants that I helped put together was a the outhouse grant for the Upper Lake cabin. One of the things is, when they built the cabin they just threw a couple of fiberglass outhouses up there with you know for pit toilets basically and there's a really nice meadow, the cabin sits [] the old dike, the upper end of Dewey Lake is a man made lake. People don't realize that. It was part of the reservoir system for the city, it was actually a dike, it was actually railroad tracks in that dike where they had carts that people, I don't know how they got them up there around the turn of the century but it would be pretty tough. But anyway it sits on a dike and behind the dike there is this beautiful meadow you know it's really gorgeous and that's where one of the outhouses set. [] some, we have, we got a grant to build a, we wrote the grant with the idea that out house it was built for the Laughton Trail, which is one of the whistle stop trails off the railroad and a guy that I know built this outhouse that actually has an outhouse that actually tips over, no one could take a person do it and tips it over, and when it tips over the barrels that are sitting in a rack that you can lift it up with a helicopter and bring it down. And so the grant has been written and he is currently putting the outhouse together. He has changed [] the design. I helped write four grants while I was there and successful on pretty much all [] Dewey Lakes Trail System. I keep regressing back to stuff that I've forgotten. You know one of the things that we did somewhere in that mix, because of Dewey Lakes, it was the most popular trail system we had that identified under a comp plan and we had a come in and got we got a grant, no actually the city paid for the money to have a guy come in [] project on

the Dewey Lakes Trails all the way from upper Dewey Lake to lower Dewey Lakes, a guy put together a construction plan for rebuilding that trail. The trail from Lower to Upper Lake is fairly beat up and rutted out and we've done two phases of that so far. [] We're currently in the state, when I left we were writing another grant to keep coming down so were some of the, those are some of the things that I did. I could do that and enjoy it. you know some of the other things about the assembly you know were not so enjoyable(ha ha) the daily abuse, the stuff you have to make decisions about [] care, so. I am happy to be off the assembly to be honest with you. But I do miss the trail stuff though, I don't miss the politics.

Stacey Baldrige: When the Park Service came into Skagway and started setting up their operations that was about when you were here?

Mike Korsmo: It was close, they were building, they were building um, their they were developing [] there in the building

Stacey Baldrige: So how did the people of Skagway see all that, that was going on []

Mike Korsmo: The people are paying in, you know there are people that are totally opposed to it, still are they think it's just another big brother over looking what they want to do, or that they just don't like the regulations. I think there are a lot of people who think it's great. If people looked and saw the amount of unemployment, what it's brought and what it's done for downtown [] I think it's a great thing, myself included, but there are a lot of people that think that people could have done it a lot cheaper you know privately. But, you know there's that. But I'm not sure where the mix would be. I mean you know it's definitely a mix of people and their opinions about the Park Service. I think they've been a great addition to the growth [] one thing about it, if you think about it if the cruise ship thing dies down or something else goes away here and there. You've still got the park. You know it's a way to look at it, not that people look at it that way, but I've, for some reason I've lived on the edges of a park all of my adult life. In fact when I got to Skagway I told [] two years, a couple years off worked in Glacier Park, Montana in the early 80's and I ran a boat on a lake that went from ah from Waterton Parks which is actually on a border with the Canadian side of the Park which is Glacier Park. And the reason I got, I got the job because of my license the international rules allowed me to go to the other side of the park [] boundary there too in a town that was on the edge of a park and had park involvement I mean it's, so I've always been around it. In fact when I moved to Skagway a bunch of the guys that worked on the trail crew at the Klondike Historical Crew I knew from Montana just from there working there, so. Yah, I think there are people who just don't like the management [] and working with people and trying you know, trying to put their fears to rest and what they're trying to do or not you know and I think you know

Stacey Baldrige: Well it seems to coincide with the trails and Park and Rec and

Mike Korsmo: Yah, and I think you know being an assembly member and doing most of this stuff voluntarily [] the Rec department I almost had a job that I could coordinate this stuff that wasn't just a volunteer job, there'd be a ton more coordination but generally most of this stuff is done in the city or the municipality is done through volunteer work from the assembly. You do have a Parks and Rec guy but he's just, he just have to maintain the trails but he has to maintain all the [] all the different little parks in the Park I mean they have to maintain all that so he doesn't have a lot of time just to do planning and stuff like that. But he does, Frank, what is Frank's last name? Jesus, (ha ha) anyway this is what happens when you put me on the camera, Frank has um as a sign making machine and we have coordinated with them and you know they have, volunteered one of their people that can make signs on it to help us make signs. We buy the materials for it and if one of the guys has the time they let him make signs for us. And it's really nice sign making machine, you know it's computerized sign making machine. And so there's there's quite [] for it, you know, on the city side I mean the Park is always there willing to work with us, I mean they you know I think it would be great if there were more cooperation but there is quite a bit. They have assembly members though that don't want to see the cooperation. I can't think of anything else. But I know there's more.

Stacey Baldrige: []

Mike Korsmo: The railroad at one time had a um, ship, two ships, *Frank H. Brown* and I can't think of the other name of the other one, they were sister ships. They were very unique ships, they hauled fuel and freight. And at the time that they had those ships built they were a revolutionary idea of hauling [] have to you know go back to historical, you know go to a historian to find out, but I've always heard that they were instrumental in revolutionizing modern day container ice freight through the White Pass. So those ships were also very interesting in the fact that they hauled fuel and freight there were probably more ships like that back in those days, that is no longer the case here you know something that people do because it's because of the danger involved but that was a very unique [] when there was a lot going on and so there was you know there was, those ships provided year-long employment for longshoremen. And that period of time there was a lot more cargo and fuel going through here of course now the fuel is now brought in by barge which is tug and barge and it is shipped to Whitehorse. The pipeline that hauled the fuel off the [] you know they were still operating about the mid-1980s or the late 1980s. It was still coming when I got here in 1984. Not for very long I think maybe a year. This is just a port type thing, they were you know they would bring the ships in and they would pump the fuel to Whitehorse and we talked about this in the last go around. The pipe [] was compromised and it ah, and it was broke and through a construction project and they were changing the rail bed. And it turned out being a fairly large thing because it was covered up, or somewhat or thought to be covered up. And that was the end of the

pipeline for, I'm not sure if the pipeline was still pumping fuel in it, sub-fuel was what the deal was. But

Stacey Baldrige: What is that? []

Mike Korsmo: [] yah

Stacey Baldrige: And do you still see the pipe when you drive down the Klondike Highway?

Mike Korsmo: I think they removed it.

Stacey Baldrige: They removed it?

Mike Korsmo: Yah, the only pipe that you see on the Klondike Highway is a hydro-pipe that comes down from Goat Lake

Stacey Baldrige: []

Mike Korsmo: Yah I think they had to remove it all, yah it was a really big thing. The whole issue with the White Pass and everything was you know FBI was in town so it was a really huge thing, and Hanousek was involved. So that was the end of that. So now all the freight comes in by you know barge and so does fuel.

Stacey Baldrige: []

Mike Korsmo: So Whitehorse comes, goes to the Yukon Territories comes through Skagway.

Stacey Baldrige: By truck?

Mike Korsmo: By Truck, barge, truck and then up to their storage facility up there. A lot of the things that the railroad used to do [] you know like freight, they used to haul freight up there and it's now taken over the highway. Ore too, the ore used to go um, on the trains. I mean one of the ideas I guess you know looking at the future, you brought that up and I didn't think about it but there really is actually some pretty big port development plans I guess that should have been triggered with your question earlier but I wasn't thinking about it but the [] the Port Steering Committee in town now, that is working on trying to develop that ore terminal and that side of the port become a more industrial side of the port to where it would be capable of you know more ore, possible freight considerations, pipe considerations and there's actually pretty comprehensive plan, port development plan, that addresses all of that. And in that plan it also includes [] to haul um, to haul all of that material, I mean haul you know possibly haul ore, haul pipe. And some of plans actually include expanding the rail bed to accommodate um, larger trains. For now the initial phases of it would be just trying to incorporate the existing rail into it. Which would be [] you know see the railroad be used in more of a year-round capacity. I

don't believe right now that the railroad itself, the White Pass and Yukon Route which is a Canadian owned company is really jumping on board because they are making quite a bit of money and that would be a disruption to that and this, and they're not, they are a very reluctant player, I would say, reluctant player in port development.

Stacey Baldridge: Is there an area that you would change over to a different rail because it's

Mike Korsmo: No they'd have to, no it's an idea, no I mean this is just a concept in the port development plan if you could ever develop the capacity, you know you could, I mean the size of the pipe in the pipeline situation is pretty big. I mean it was looked at, they can haul it on the existing rail but it would be really close, I mean the tunnel, they'd have to expand some of the existing tunnels stuff like that, not so big the pipe [] there is a concept out there to expand the railroad and make it more of you know a normal size railroad. And make it into something that is not just you know, not just a tourist railroad because it used to be um, multi-use railroad. And it would, there's a lot of people that are excited about that because it is definitely you know economic development thing if you had the railroad thing right now you know, other than you know probably some, you know, not too many people on the out in the shops but [] seasonal, seasonal railroad. But when you were talking about the future you know that is something that is out there and is being worked on, but whether, it depends on so many factors.

Stacey Baldridge: Speaking of seasonal you sort of touched on and then you didn't finish I don't think about tugs in the winter time and what you guys do and winter your operations, the cruise ships are coming in and []

Mike Korsmo: We still have ore ships coming in well that, between the ore ships in Skagway which is you know three or four months long. And then there is ore ships at the Green's Creek Mine which is usually once a month. In the past when we didn't have the ore ships coming in here during the winter time, in the past a lot of years we didn't, they would leave the tugboat sitting in Juneau because it is closer to the mine. And we'd have you know one guy on it and we'd , so we'd you know, we'd do that. But the last couple of years because of the ore ships coming into Skagway um, most of the crew on the boat and most of the crew on the boat living here they've allowed us to stay here. It's actually probably you know it's probably breaks even or maybe it's even cost effective because when they're flying us back and forth all the time it becomes kind of expensive, it only takes us another, if we're going to Juneau to the mine there it only takes us about four hours, an additional four hours of running time, so. I think if we were doing a lot they'd probably have us sitting in Juneau, if that mine was more active.

Stacey Baldridge: And then you just, waiting for these rescue operations.

Mike Korsmo: Yes rescue operations, two winters ago, well um, last winter I um we got tasked out to go up to Icy Bay which is on the Gulf Coast. They have been logging there for about, for

about three weeks we took out all the left over equipment and anchor system that had been left over from fifty years of logging, and so we spent, we took a barge, we had two tugs and two barges up there. And we spent three weeks in Icy Bay pulling out um, pulling um, all that stuff out which it is, it's really cool area, not a lot of people get there so it's really pretty fascinating. [] our ore ships here and our ships at the Greens Creek Mine we went to Seward to do ships three times because they needed another additional big tug. We have a tug stationed in Seward but this situations they needed another tug boat. So we ran to Seward three times, to Seward and back so those would be like, by the time it was all done it would be two, three weeks depending

Stacey Baldrige: per trip?

Mike Korsmo: Yah the ship would be there for maybe ten days but by the time we traveled there and back, you know two to three days. The thing, the thing in a situation like that you know if they let us know ahead of time or we don't have another job right there it's easy for us to get right there. But last year, this is a pretty fascinating little, well on January 15th we got a call. They just realized they needed to get the tug up to Seward [] a second tug or they wanted our tug up there so they said you have two days to get there. Well it takes fifty hours to get there. And so it was blowing it was 5 degrees in Skagway and it was blowing 70 degrees out of the north and in fact the first thing we had to do was get fuel. And so we got fuel at the ferry dock. And it was so cold that the fuel was gelling up from the fuel facility so we actually had to run a higher grade fuel through there just to get the fuel flowing. We got fueled up, we took off [] heavy freezing spray on the gulf coast which is not, usually you try to avoid that. We traveled you know out of here with a 70 mile tail wind and we got out in the ocean and went ah, we just went off shore where it was warmer and we missed all the heavy freezing spray and we made it into Seward, the ship actually got delayed because of the weather and we beat the ship by three hours. To Seward so you know but those kind of things happen in the winter time but two winters um, two winters ago the boat, you know that I usually operate the *Le Cheval Rouge* we hauled construction materials for a dock in Ketchikan. We did ah, six round trips with a tandem tow, two barges behind us, from Ketchikan to Seattle and back. Six round trips so that's another that stuff happens once in a while or we [] that's I think you know there's always something a little you know little

Stacey Baldrige: So it's not really a seasonal job, it is an all year round

Mike Korsmo: It's a year round job yah, yah definitely yah I'm paid for the year I'm actually salaried which is unusual for the tug boat industry. Generally tug boat you know guys are paid by the day but the company that I work for pays a salary. And it can be to my advantage to []

Stacey Baldrige: alright, anything else for us?

Mike Korsmo: (shakes his head no)

Stacey Baldrige: Alright you've covered