

Jeff Brady  
National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office  
Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Oral History Project  
Skagway, Alaska  
May 21, 2010

---

Karen Brewster: I'm Karen Brewster and today is May 21, 2010 and I'm here in Skagway with Jeff Brady for the Skagway Oral History Project. And Stacey Baldrige is behind the Video Camera. Thank you Jeff for making time, I know you're a busy guy.

Jeff Brady: Yeah

Karen Brewster: a busy, busy season. Just to get started why don't you just tell us a little bit about yourself, your background and how you ended up in Skagway.

Jeff Brady: I was born in North Carolina and lived there the first eighteen years of my life, pretty much. And 1974 I came up here on an organized teen camping tour. There was a fellow in North Carolina that had done these and they were very popular. I had first gone out with him out west his name was Peter Cole. And then he decided to take a group of kind of alumni to Alaska for the first time and he invited me and I went along. It was the year of the Spokane World's Fair so we went out there and we drove up to, all the way to Prince Rupert all the way to Alberta and caught the train went to Prince Rupert got on the ferry and came here. And we stayed in Juneau for two days and here three days. And during that time there was a guy in town that some of the kids knew named Skip Burns who was running an outfitting company here called Klondike Safaris and he also ran a bunkhouse. And I, well we stayed there and I just kind of admired that whole operation so Skip wasn't here at the time, he was doing a river trip taking people down on the Yukon river. He'd hike them down the Chilkoot and then down the Yukon River. It was quite an amazing um, tour at the time. Um, and but I didn't get to meet him then but there was a guy there working named Mike Price who was a student at the University of North Carolina where I was getting ready to enroll in that fall. And we talked about Skagway and I said man this would be a great place to come for summer and um, so I went away thought that in my head and two years later I kept calling bugging this guy that I had never met about a job and he finally let me go, let come. I drove up I put a note on the bulletin board at the University of North Carolina Student Union. Twenty thousand students go through there every day

PHONE RINGS in BACK GROUND DISTURBS INTERVIEW MOMENTARILY

Karen Brewster: So you put up a note on the bulletin board.

Jeff Brady: Right so I put up this note on the bulletin board in the Student union people coming by and I get a call the next day and it's, oh and I put up a note that said, "I'm going to Alaska. Anybody want a ride?" and the next day I get a call and we start talking, "well where do you want to go?" and she says "Skagway." "Really? That's where I'm going. [] well that's cool, what's his name?" "Skip Burns" It was his

sister, (ha ha) So we all pile and go and I go work for him and it was his sister. And um, I spent the first two years um, kind of was his point guy in Skagway. I um, I operated a bunk house. Um, kind of Mike Price's old job. I drove a taxi. I gave tours and twice a summer I got to help lead Chilkoot Trail hikes for clients. And I love it and I did it for two summers. I was English/Creative Writing major in college but I had also done ah, some newspaper work in high school. And there was a paper here at the time called The North Wind and it was kind of ah, I wouldn't say a volunteer effort but it was kind of a hobby by Sy Coin who had been doing it for about ten or fifteen years and he was an insurance salesman/real estate guy/former Mayor and he just wanted to have a paper but he didn't really know what he was doing. And he'd admit that (ha). And we um, I ended up for the second year in 1977, so my first summer was '76 and my second summer was '77 dedication of the National Park and Sy had been very instrumental in helping make that happen when he was mayor back in the late '50s, early '60s and it took quite years and years for that to happen anyway the legislation happened and they set up a dedication here in um, June of '77. And so he wanted some help doing a very big kind of issue for the Park dedication. It was a very big event. And um, so we ah, there was a woman in Haines um, Barbara I can't think of her last name, and she had some newspaper background and she came over and she asked me to help and I wrote, I wrote a history of Skagway that was published on the back page. And I worked with Edwin Behers from who had written the park history. Can't remember who all was here at the time, Gary ... I forget Gary's last name and anyway there were some people here with the park and interviewed some locals and put together this history. And it was very well received. And the dedication was great. And I worked with him with a couple other things and toward the end of that summer I asked Sy, "I wouldn't mind working on the paper here." And she asked him if he would be interested in selling it. He was seventy-seven, okay. He wasn't sure about selling it to a twenty-one year old kid right out of college you know especially one that had kind of long hair and a beard. So he ah, but you know I don't think he thought I was serious at the time. But I called him back that winter and during that winter I pretty much had all my course work done for all my, you know, required stuff. And I had switched majors to American Studies and I was still, I was in the Honors writing program. But you know I got thinking, I'd really like to come up here and start a paper or something. So I went to the journalism department at UNC and said what can you do to help me. They let me in everything and I ended up taking basic reporting, and editing, and feature writing, and advertising and media law and then I also went down to a little paper in the county [] next door and for like an internship during the week. I don't know how I ever got all this done and graduated. But then I called Sy up and said, "I still really would like to buy your paper." And I know all that I was really buying was the subscription list. But he still didn't want to sell but he said, "I tell you what if you want to do this why don't you go ahead and start something and if it doesn't work then I'll go ahead and start mine up again." So we kind of had this gentlemen's agreement that he would have a final edition and then I'd start mine. And I came up for spring break and I did a newspaper for the town, a sample and it was very well received and it had this big thing in the back where you could subscribe and we signed up like a hundred people right off the bat. And um, that was great and then came back up in after graduation in May and actually I didn't graduate, I had one course that I hadn't finished it yet so I had to write a paper while I was here. But I did graduate officially that August.

Karen Brewster: And that was what year?

Jeff Brady: '78, 1978

Karen Brewster: And what did you call that first little paper?

Jeff Brady: The Skagway News, after the original. And um, so it started up but then in the first real paper was in early June and we tried it keep it going weekly. Um, and it was fine for that summer but all the people said that they were going to advertise in the winter kind of pulled back a little bit because it was costing them more than you know it ever had. So this is what it takes to keep a paper going. A few of them really stayed with me but we discovered that going weekly [] not going to work. The town's population was about what it is now.

Karen Brewster: Which was about what?

Jeff Brady: It was about 900 then. The highway was just being completed and that's another reason that I started it because I figured with the highway Skagway would grow a little bit and um, I was kind of right and wrong about that. It was I had all these grand ideas that we'd get up to 2000 population that we would be another Valdez of something like that.

Karen Brewster: And it didn't happen.

Jeff Brady: No it just stayed the same. And then we had, what happened I ran out of money in February of '79 and we're printing the paper in Haines and I approached those guys about their paper [] was kind of whenever they felt like it. And they called it Weakley Generally W-E-A-K-L-Y and um, same kind of situation an old guy running it as a hobby. But he liked me and he said yeah, and so we merged and became the Lynn Canal News in March of '79. And um, that went okay for a while but over time we [] the two Haines and Skagway were very different. And we had a really bad fire over there in '81 it burned our printing plant. We were in the old Ft. Seward and it was um, you know it was just this freak accident, we had this old wood boiler down there that threw a spark, and the whole place went. It was the biggest fire in Haines history. It was very sad. I thought my life was [] at that point but ah, both towns really rallied around us we got a paper out, we got a fire edition out up in Whitehorse. That was the first time I printed in Whitehorse and I realized hmm, there's something to this. And um, so we but at the same time I was doing all this we started doing the Skagway Alaskan Visitor Guide which was my other kind of brain [] where we made up a paper that looked like an old time Skagway paper from the gold rush. And um, we came out with like six or seven different little editions that summer, free circulation. We'd go down to the docks and hand them out, hire a couple of kids and made them dress up as newsees. And we're still doing that. And that paper allows [] paper to exist because there is no town, I won't say no town but very few towns of 800-900 people anywhere that have a newspaper. But that paper because of how many tourists we get, the advertising revenue allows the other paper to keep going. And um, so that was hugely popular and um, it just didn't quite make enough money to get me through the first []. It has ever since pretty much. Ah, see yeah that's a long story to the start of things.

Karen Brewster: What inspired you to do that visitor guide? And think that

Jeff Brady: Well I'm a real history buff, right. I was an American History major when I first came here I was just, we went to the Soapy Show and we went to the museum and we hiked around the trails and we hiked a little bit of the Chilkoot. I was just ah, I thought what a cool place. It was not only gorgeous and great outdoors but then it had this real history and not that old. I mean at the time there were still people here who remembered a few things like George Rapuzzi and um, couple other old timers, Bobbi Sheldon would come through here once in a while and he would just sit down and talk to them and it was just amazing. They were little kids when the gold rush happened but they remembered everything. George especially, he was kind of my hero.

Karen Brewster: Tell us about George.

Jeff Brady: Ah, George ah ... he just little guy who collected stuff and ah, kind of talked in an Italian accent and had all these stories and he'd always say, "You see, You see, You see," listening [] and he'd take you down into his basement and you'd kind of tunnel through his basement and it was floor to ceiling in his basement as tall as he was. He wasn't very tall so you had to kind of crouch, of just, I mean it was a lot of jars of nails and things like that but there were also you'd go around the corner and he'd say, "Oh see, did you see this?" and it was like the Monument Hotel registry and there's Soapy Smith's name in it and things like that and [] the original Skagway Streetcar Recordings and photographs that Martin Itjen had passed on to him and he was just amazing.

Karen Brewster: And who was he and how did he come here?

Jeff Brady: His folks came here during the gold rush and they ran the Washington Fruit Stand which is in, one of the jewelry stores right over here but one of the original buildings. But his family ran that and he was one of, I think, [] five kids, he was the youngest but loved Skagway and he was of just a quiet kid and very active. And when President Harding came to town he was a member of the Alpine club and he hiked up Mount Harding and up there so at a certain time of day when the sun was out, he took a big mirror up there and he flashed the whole town with his mirror, while the President was here. It was the only time a President ever came here. His stories like that were just great. Sadly he left us early, earlier than anybody ever thought, he was eighty, early eighties and I mean he seemed in great health but he got this bump in his head and it turned into cancer and it just went really fast. It was very sad. And the whole town turned out for his funeral and filled the school gym. But he was great. I remember when he was eighty he was playing in the alumni basketball game, he had a number eighty jersey. So a lot of old timers I enjoyed talking to. And they're all gone now unfortunately. You get to talk to the kids of the old timers now.

Karen Brewster: I guess as the newspaper man in town you must have a really good sense of this town and how it works and how it doesn't work.

Jeff Brady: Yeah um, it works pretty well. Um, [] ah, it's gone through a lot of different changes. I mean we had, I was first meeting ships as a tour guide and then doing the papers there were I'm thinking five to seven ships a week. Um, and um, you could drive down to the dock and just hang out put up your sign it was very low key and everybody had respected [] boundaries. And we were starting to get a few more ships and that was good for the economy and you've got to have certain rules when things grow and the

highway, it was bringing in people but it wasn't open year round in the early years. The railroad still was going full in late [] but it was showing, there was a lot of worry in the air about the future of mining in the Yukon and just the bottom fell out in '82. And nobody really took them seriously when they said, "if things don't get better we're going to have to shut down." And then at the end of that summer they you know the last train was in October and um, we were up [] a part of the Alaska Visitors Association then and we were up in Fairbanks and we had put together a convention bid for the AVA which is now ATIA

Karen Brewster: Which stands for what?

Jeff Brady: Alaska Tourism Industry Association and we um, and we were up there making a pitch and then we get this press release that is going state wide about the White Pass Railroad shutting down and we're like (grimace). But it, believe it or not it helped us get that convention because people felt sorry for us. And what happened from that I think was um, in the long run really good for the community. It changed Skagway tremendously because we went from a town that had 175 really good year round good paying jobs, the school was up over 200 and things were pretty good, maybe too good so that when that happened a lot of those people who had grown up here, had gone right to work for the railroad, they had nothing and a lot of them didn't have any training at all. And they had to get through all these training courses or leave, quite a few of them left and went to the Alaska Railroad. Park Service was just gearing up it's restoration program at the time, which was really good timing. Quite a few of them were able to go and work for the Park. And so that was really good and um, everybody just kind of learned some lessons and at the same time the city kind of rallied too, you know, we knew we had a good thing here with the Park and the outdoors and the highway now. So the [] people still come here, the railroad had not been a high profile tourist railroad I mean it carried tourist since the beginning since 1898 but it never saw tourism as its main bread and butter.

Karen Brewster: Because it was still hauling freight at that time.

Jeff Brady: Yeah, seventy percent of its revenue was freight, or more. So when that happened it was [] they had just gotten to where they were really more tourist oriented and then it just kind of, the rug just kind of got pulled out from under them. Like they had just restored the steam engine and then they had to moth ball it for a while. But anyway the city hired a tourism director and started going out selling Skagway to the ships and gradually we started getting more and more ships to come here and more and more were coming to Alaska because political unrest in the Mediterranean, the kidnapping of a cruise ship in the Mediterranean. The year after that happened all these ships came to Alaska

Karen Brewster: When was that?

Jeff Brady: Mid-eighties '84, '85 [] the Akilee Lauren was the boat. [] So all of a sudden we went from yeah I don't know 50- 60 a summer to over 100 in one year. And then you started seeing more and more of these buildings opened up. And the numbers grew to a point where um, there were people looking to buy the railroad [] Ralph Hogan in particular who's a very prominent business man in Whitehorse. He sat down and he figured out the numbers and he was ready to buy it. And White Pass, Marvin Taylor at White Pass looked at the same numbers and said, "Thank you very much but I think we'll keep it and start up again." And they brokered a deal with the unions to get it going again. Low and behold it in '88

they got it started again. At the same time they had lost, the mining had come back in the Yukon. Somebody had bought the old Ferrer Mine and had gotten it going again. Um, Curragh Resources and they were able to convince the um, powers that be in the town to support opening the highway year round. It was very controversial at the time [] rail workers mainly who still believed they could get those year round jobs back. But at the time the town was, it was like a three-three vote and the Mayor Bill Ferrer broke the tie. And then they worked out a deal between the Yukon and Alaskan governments to keep it open year round. And that was a good thing at the time. I mean it changed Skagway forever.

Karen Brewster: In what ways?

Jeff Brady: Well the trucking, we were going to be, the highway was going to be an industrial highway from that point on. Ah, because the railroad, you know the railroad was allowed to try and compete for that job and it just couldn't do it. It is going to be interesting in the next 90 days if that is able to happen again because there is a big enough mine up in the Yukon called Cellone that is [] and has that kind of tonnage. And it is whether or not the railroad and is interested in it or whether they even want it but the town I know really wants it to get the ore terminal going where it is full again.

Karen Brewster: So using the Railroad instead of the road.

Jeff Brady: It is possible, yeah it could use both, if it uses the road it's going to mean an awful lot of trucks every day. The numbers could [] the railroad will tell you that they need help this time around so if it happens there will be some kind of public/private partnership. But Skagway is competing against [] Stuart BC and there, yeah. Yeah they just passed 200 thousand dollars last night to go toward a Port Marketing person to try and sell this whole thing.

Karen Brewster: It is interesting that you mention the shipping increase at times when the community of Skagway kind of won out and lobbied the cruise ships to come here?

Jeff Brady: Very much at the time and ah, um, it was very successful. And Skagway has a great um, you know it's a great atmosphere for tourists and it's not phony it real buildings, I mean. A lot of people joke that we're like the Disneyland of the north. But our buildings are real. They have been here for a hundred years. And Skagway has never lost that sense of history I think. Some of the new people coming in takes a while for them to adjust to that. But it is like beaten into them, I mean especially when they go to put up a sign. They realize all the hoops they have to go through to sign to look just the way during the gold rush with the proper fonts and all that kind of stuff.

Karen Brewster: So there are very specific historic...

Jeff Brady: guidelines, yeah.

Karen Brewster: specific guidelines. Was it one person's particular idea to kind of market Skagway as the gold rush []?

Jeff Brady: Well I think ah, I don't think it is any particular person's idea unless you go back to Martin Itjen. It's like we're recreating history we're just making it better and moving it forward. We help with

that in some ways because Skagway looks like that way, and the park service [] and then all the business people were trying to go out and get the business for marketing Skagway as a historical park um with a lot of things to do, with a great downtown, a great shopping area obviously.

Karen Brewster: Yeah it just seems to go out and market to the cruise industry in the '80s with this idea that we're this cute little historic town. That was a good idea. Where did that idea come from?

Jeff Brady: It all started back in the gold rush. You know if you read Bright Norris' history of the Park and tourism he also did a great paper on the history of tourism. It all started back in 1898 when they were bringing up people. I've got some signs here in my office, some old advertising from the '20s and you know this great paradise and pictures of the face \*\*\*

Karen Brewster: Yeah the Garden City of Alaska

Jeff Brady: Yeah the Garden City all that promotion

Karen Brewster: And it was the circle [] when they came up by steamship and then by train and then back by steamship

Jeff Brady: Yeah and they networked with the whole river system. Some of them went as far as the Arctic Circle [] yeah it was elaborate. Ah, forever changing with the times, you know they didn't use the rivers and the lakes as much any more. But the railroad was always here for the tourists [] that period. And they are a very integral part of the history as well so you know. So they saw this happening and then they saw the numbers coming and they made it work. And now, they're hauling over 300,000 people a couple years ago. It is phenomenal I mean we were getting I think 50,000 visitors a year 40-50, 000 on the train the year it shut down [] that's well into the three hundreds.

Karen Brewster: Well I've heard that the old days quote unquote pretty much the railroad ran the place, a company town. Everyone worked for the railroad. Now when you got here was it still like that?

Jeff Brady: Somewhat but it was changing though um, and it was ah, because especially after '82 [] trust the railroad so much cause they did lose their jobs and very happy that they got their jobs back, some of them. But the trust factor, company town trust factor was lost in all that.

Karen Brewster: But in the '70s when you came was it

Jeff Brady: It was still very much like that but I mean Skagway has a lot of very independent minded people [] it did prove that the railroad did kind of run the town. They enough people on the councils to sway some big votes like the Tide Lands Lease down here and ah, in the late 60's

Karen Brewster: What's the Tide Lands Lease

Jeff Brady: That's where this City went into 55 year lease with White Pass to basically build the Ore terminal and allow that to happen. In that [] saying well that was a good thing at the time but maybe it shouldn't have been as long, especially after the railroad shut down maybe the city should have been in charge of the port development part of it. And there's you know it's getting close to the end of that now

and now there's a definite movement to try to work it out either with White Pass or AIDEA state agency which now runs the Ore Terminal [] Alaskan Industry Development and Export Authority. They own the Ore Terminal part of it now so there's a lot of things going on right now as far as the future of the port that are going to play out in the next year.

Karen Brewster: What are some of the major issues in this town that you written about for the paper?

Jeff Brady: Ah, well I mean just covering a lot of the tourism ups and downs has been very interesting. [] Same with the port there's ah, there's ah, gosh it's

Karen Brewster: Pick one of your favorites

Jeff Brady: My favorite just happened because we were able to do something pretty amazing or help and ah, last summer there was an incident where [] ah, kid in town broke his leg playing on the rocks down here and then another woman that was sick was, they both had to be medi-evaced at the same time. So they both got on this medi-evac plane and they were sent to Juneau and they're both fine. Within a couple of weeks they both got bills for twenty-five thousand dollars, okay, so they're like "what?" we can [] if it was just for one but they're basically double billed for the same flight. And we start investigating this whole thing and it, the price of that medi-evac flight from here to Juneau had quadrupled in one year. And um, it had been via change of ownership and it's kind of a long story how it had come about but it was a pretty big investigation on our part about what was going on. There wasn't much anybody could [] build awareness in the town that hey if you're going to be medi-evaced you're in trouble unless you have some kind of insurance. At the same time this company in Fairbanks was selling this insurance and it was fairly cheap. It is like a hundred bucks a year. And then people in town taking all this information kind of rallied to set up this kind of medi-evac fund [] an awareness campaign mainly but they also set up a fund through the Eagles that would help out people who can't afford it. And this is all happening during the great health care debate and everything. We had kind of our own thing going on here and um, we followed up with a lot and I for the first time in like thirty some years I submitted for the public service award for Alaska Press Club [] and won.

Karen Brewster: And what is that award? I'm not ...

Jeff Brady: It's a public service award its basically for I guess it's for journalism that helps your community and yeah that was pretty neat.

Karen Brewster: Some people might think that journalism never helps the community. There is no such thing as public service with journalism, I don't know.

Jeff Brady: Well they're wrong (ha ha) well I know some people hate the media or they like to blame the media [] wasn't around and they'd be relying on Facebook posts and coffee shop gossip and ... it's funny because the first thing I did when I came to town during that spring break is I went through town and I did a poll. I sat in the Northern \*\*\* restaurant and it was a very informal poll but I gave a sheet a paper what they would want in their paper. And they all [] and the main reason was they wanted to know what was really going on. They even though they might not like what is written sometimes you know

99% of the time we do get it right and we present both sides and we're trained to do that. A lot of people forget that journalists are trained to be you know try to be not fence sitters but to see both sides of the story no matter how you feel about something. A friend of mine Mike Seeka who helped me out quite a bit, he was a radio reporter here and he actually worked for me for a little bit, he always said he was adamantly the middle of the road. So you kind of have to be that way.

Karen Brewster: I would think especially when it comes to local politics and

Jeff Brady: In small towns you know everybody and you try to get along with everybody [] and I think that we've done a good job of that. I don't write you know I used to write a lot of editorials and then I found myself to be writing just to be writing them. So now I don't write them so much. I just let people talk and once in a while I get passionate about something and I'll give my opinion but I don't beat it into anybody. I figure I can say it once and everybody knows how I feel. But I still got to present [] you know but

Karen Brewster: So what's one of the things that you've been passionate about?

Jeff Brady: Ah, school funding is one that is going on right now. The Juneau road I was very much against. I didn't think it was, I wasn't against it for environmental reasons I think this highway is a great example of how they can build a road and do a really nice job, they could do the same and \*\*\*Canal. Um, I just [] the Skagway it was a really bad move and for Haines. I thought it was ah, unnecessarily expensive things just to help out Juneau in their, you know just to give them one more argument to be the capital, which I fully support you know but I don't think that they should build a Juneau road any more than they should build a new capital in Willow. I think all of that is unnecessary and our community has been the gateway to the Yukon forever and if we, we would give that up if we let the Juneau road happen. I think the compromise that they kind of reached to take it to \*\*\* Catsahene would probably be okay. But now the price is like, has gone sky high and law suits and I just [] up and down that canal and you look at all the avalanche shoots and you've got to wonder how they can do that.

Karen Brewster: I was wondering how it was coming into the small town and starting the newspaper and what to write about and how you were accepted and

Jeff Brady: Ah, I think I was a um, I was pretty well accepted but it took up a little while for some people to warm to me, [] because all of a sudden I was in their face asking them questions and then he writes them down and he puts them in the paper. That wasn't happening, even with Sy Coin's thing, that wasn't happening. He was just pretty much printing the minutes of a meeting. But you know if somebody did something or wrote it a certain way and I call them up the next day and say, "WHY, why did you vote that way?" You didn't really explain yourself very well. [] that the other day with the City Council member didn't explain himself very well regarding the school budget and he after I interviewed him it made a little bit more sense where he was coming from. So sometimes it takes that. So I'm, I see that as our role more than anything, people are going to hear about it the next day in the coffee shops and internet now or whatever or emails or Facebook it's all over the place, everyday you know but [] ask all the questions and I think when people are talking to us they know it's you know it's on the record and

its um, there's a trust involved I think. Basically as long as you don't you know, once in a while you're going to get a quote wrong but for the most part if you're quoting people accurately or paraphrasing them accurately they're going trust [] I always tell them if I get something wrong tell me right away so I can put a correction in and a little apology because it happens you know and ah, as long as you're up front about that I think people it is all about developing a trust especially in a small town. You're very important part of the community. It's funny my brother-in-law is getting ready to move back here. [] "I can't believe how much power you have in the town." And I'm going, "I don't have any ... I'm not a powerful person in town. I have a really big responsibility but I don't have a power you know. I don't push myself on the people I just tell the stories you know.

Karen Brewster: How do you decide what's a story? How do you decide what goes in ?

Jeff Brady: IT's, its, ... right there in front [] I mean it's you're covering local government, you're covering the school board you're covering what's happening on the street, you're listening to the Police blotter, you just know. I mean it's our training. You know you get 75 people last night at the Assembly meeting wanting them to reverse the school funding and supporting the Mayor's veto. [] That's a huge story in a town where you don't get twenty people to a meeting most times.

Karen Brewster: You did answer my question, I was going to ask you about the role of a small town newspaper, especially in this day and age with internet and everything.

Jeff Brady: Ah, it's even more important. Small town's newspapers are thriving right now. Um, and I'm talking real small towns [] because the daily newspaper most of them have gone into chain operation and they've kept cutting and cutting and cutting. A lot of the chains um, Morris' is a great example so is McClatchey, they're both in Alaska they bought too much a decade ago and um, and then the internet happened and newspaper were moved [] their websites wasn't balancing out with ads and now it's all shrunk um, everywhere um, and the bigger town papers are hurting and they're starting to rebound a little bit cause they've found their comfort center financially a little bit so they're okay. But in the midst of all this small town papers have done fine. We've lost maybe five [] circulation due to the fact that we have an online site. I gain more and more back every year. We do online, you do online to what's there, people trust you and if there is breaking news you want to put something out on it. It's like I'm going over this in my mind, I've got to get this interview over with because I've got to put something up, (ha ha) well that's okay

Karen Brewster: You could do

Jeff Brady: It's not too breaking in a small town.

Karen Brewster: No I'm saying I could break [] the Papers the Seattle Post they went under but you know a small town like Skagway News can keep going.

Jeff Brady: Yeah, yeah most towns in the cities are going to be one paper towns but they're not just papers they're competing with TV and everybody has a website and everybody's competing.

Karen Brewster: Is there a Skagway radio station?

Jeff Brady: There is KHNS [] It is out of Haines, it is public radio they used to have a reporter based here. And we used to joke you know how can we scoop each other when we're both covering the same stories or anything. So we both share a lot of info. They obviously got it out quicker but not everybody turns on the radio at the right time. Um, they had to cut back because of the cuts to public radio. We haven't had a reporter here in over a decade so they [] when something happens or one day a week a lot of time I find that their stories are like rehashing of what we had here.

Isn't that a wonderful sound

Karen Brewster: The train \*\*\*

Jeff Brady: Yeah, yeah

Karen Brewster: or just coming back?

Jeff Brady: Oh that's the steam engine doing some maneuvering, showing off. I have a little beeper right here to have them do that (ha ha) no ...

Karen Brewster: Oh ha, you had mentioned the road was going to change Skagway and make the population bigger But it hasn't. Do you know why?

Jeff Brady: I really don't know why. I thought ah, I thought there would be enough highway traffic to generate a little bit more business, like make the grocery store bigger. I don't know, as tourism grew a lot of the year round part of Skagway shrunk a bit. Ah, and that's [] you've had a great influx of all these tourist stores and jewelry stores and that sort of things. It's good for our sales tax coffers and good for a lot of projects in town um, and then good for the school believe it or not a lot of the money goes to the school not enough I think. But ah, but ah, people do leave [] so it's puzzling because Skagway is a great place to be in the winter. I think more people should try it. We're kind of like two towns in the summer we're all hustle and bustling. You saw that today when they brought in all those kids and everything. And then it's in the winter town it just eases back. There's still a lot that goes on because you're doing a lot of volunteer work and there's a lot of planning for the next year that goes on because in the summer everybody is so busy. But the highway I thought would have brought a little bit more year round I thought it would bring balance and commerce. I just misjudged it I thought because you know highways down south going into little towns was always meant a kind of big boom. Here it didn't really happen because I think we are just where we are.

Karen Brewster: Well I'm noticing your shirt and you have on the walls this Yukon River Quest. Can you tell us what that's all about?

Jeff Brady: That's really one of my pride and joys. It's um, my friend Buckwheat Donohue And I, the Tourism Director, I think you've interviewed him. Um, I was ah, part of the centennial committee and we were planning events from 1987 until the year 2000 and one of the things that we thought about um, Buckwheat and I in particular was about having this race [] basically a reenactment of the gold rush where we would require two person partner teams because there were all these great stories about gold rush partners, good and bad. Require them to take a certain amount of gear that was on the list

that they had to check through with the Mounties, right in '98. So we cooked up this [] have fifty two-person teams and take them over the Chilkoot and then they'd have their canoes shipped up to Lake Bennett and they'd get in their boats and go to Dawson. And we set it up and we worked through the Parks in the US and Canada. We got a permit, a bond and all this sort of stuff. And we ran it through the city of Skagway and it we got [] the first year, well we did it like the gold rush, the first year it was just some people here that found the gold and so we limited it to Alaska and Yukon and we had like 48 teams. That was a great race and we took the top five and we put them in the next year's race where we invited the world to the gold rush. And we had teams from all over the world. And it was just like sending out, we sent out postcards to all these canoe clubs around the world. And we had people here from [] Czechoslovakia banners sitting right over there. And teams from Czechoslovakia and Germany a few from England, Australian and it was great! It was two weeks and it was just a drain, luckily I had an editor here at the time helping me out and we followed this race all the way to Dawson. I was gone for two weeks [] faster than we thought they were and ah, we set it up and through all that the paddlers, we had some of the world's best paddlers here, they didn't like the hiking part but they really liked the river. And one of the Yukon people involved, John Furth who was gold rush descendent and he had done the race twice I think with his nephew and ah, we were all talking after the race about how it would be really cool for it to continue somehow. And the \*\*\* Dawson part of it was really hard to do, the trails and dealing with the parks and the lakes are ah, you know they're not always going to cooperate weather-wise but we thought doing a race from Whitehorse to Dawson was very feasible [] four days it would be easy to organize and a highway system for most of it and um, so um the Yukon Quest, the dog race took it on as a summer fund raiser initially. John was on their board and sold it to them and um, my wife Dorothy and I were entered the first one. And we have the record for being the slowest team ever (ha ha)

Karen Brewster: And you were in a canoe?

Jeff Brady: We were in a canoe.

END OF DISK one of TWO

DISK TWO of TWO

Jeff Brady: So Dorothy and I were married in 1997. We got back together in '96 she had been down in Gustavus for several years and um, kind of wanted to move back and be near family. We ah, yeah it's worked out great and we have a young son, Danny who is now ten. And ah, we [] going out canoeing. I've kind of rallied her family around a recreational canoe trips every summer so I don't just go canoe racing I like kicking back and we love the Yukon rivers. We go do the, we've do Talson, the \*\*\*, the Notsotlan, the Dëshlieesh, the Yukon of course, next year we'll do the Big Salmon. Throughout that there's great history in the Yukon Rivers so I trying to teach a little bit to my son and it's just good family time. So we try to do that every summer for a week or two. But this year we're taking a break from the rivers and we're doing the Chilkoot. So he's ready for the Chilkoot, take him up there this will be my 14<sup>th</sup> summit of the Chilkoot. Yes I did four my first two years and then I've spread them out over the last thirty.

Karen Brewster: Skagway is a pretty recreationally oriented community?

Jeff Brady: Un-huh I mean we're kind of limited by the land but the trail system here is wonderful. You know West Creek Valley is wonderful and of course we have the entire of the summit area for skiing and snow machining and then the lakes and the rivers of the Yukon, just miles and miles of them, we have an amazing, this is an amazing place it hasn't changed I mean it was a jumping off point for people going to the Yukon and the people who are living here are making money off of the people who are jumping off here. But at the same time we get to explore all these great places that we're the gateway to. And that's what great about Skagway. We're, we're just the right place geographically that's guarantees our future forever you know. We're going to go through these up and down years with tourist and the ports but we're always going to be here. We're never going to go away. I've always felt pretty good about the future of the town even though it didn't end up being 2000 people. It is almost 2000 people in the summer people time now.

Karen Brewster: It seems like more than that.

Jeff Brady: Yeah, yeah you keep hearing different numbers. It is between.. it is like 1500 or so.

Karen Brewster: So are you glad you came here?

Jeff Brady: Oh very much so but it's funny I gave up a lot in North Carolina to come here because my family owns a very business there that I could have gone back into but I didn't and I've kind of made my mark here. One time I kind of thought of going back and then I thought, no, no I'd rather be doing what I'm doing. We might once we get retirement age we might go down there for a few months, a year but that would be it. We still plan to try to put Danny through school here. I got other kids in College now so I get out to try to catch them.

Karen Brewster: What about you know your thirty years in the newspaper business what does that meant to you? How has that affected your life?

Jeff Brady: Ah, it's at time stressful just and it's not the issues so much as just the time it takes. A lot of late nights especially around deadline. So that takes it's toll um, people say oh you've hardly aged at all but I'm on blood pressure medicine and you just don't see it.

Karen Brewster: And you said you're kind of wanting to get out of it.

Jeff Brady: Yeah

Karen Brewster: and why?

Jeff Brady: Well I think after thirty-three years you're just ready for something different. And I you know I'm kind of tired of the deadlines and I just think I ah, Hemmingway wrote that ah, journalism is a great training for a young writer if he gets out of it in time. I'm past that time. I still, I'm not a young writer anymore but I want to be a writer, I want to write other things and I think to get to do that you really

have to break away and so I'm trying to do that, responsibly so that what I've started will carry on. I couldn't just walk away from it. That wouldn't be right.

Karen Brewster: In a small town like this I'm sure as the sole reporter you know a lot about what goes on in town.

Jeff Brady: Yeah I try to but there is a lot I don't know about.

Karen Brewster: Or maybe things you don't want to know about.

Jeff Brady: Exactly! I stay out of the gutter, I have had people ask me why don't you write a gossip column. I say no I don't want to run a gossip column that's for the coffee shop and the bars and I just don't, I just we're here to record we're like the first draft of history for a town, recording you know things that are happening and historians will interpret it all later but we're just writing the facts that we know about today. And um, and we can go on to the next day.

Karen Brewster: You're right we need the newspapers the old archive are our first source for historians. How else would we know what happened in 1898.

Jeff Brady: Yeah, yeah it is like when Frank Norris did the park's history he really gave me a lot of credit in there because he was relying on Skagway news articles from 1978 on up for the first you know twenty years of the park. We were covering a lot of things the park had done, right and wrong. You know.

Karen Brewster: Yeah you were here when the park was getting up and running, what was the sense in the community about all that, the sense of the people that all of a sudden a park being here.

Jeff Brady: There was um, people were very wary of it because they felt that they might be losing their freedom. They thought they might have to pay to go to Dyea and things like that. And there was a time when ah, the park tried to exercise too much control in Dyea and because it was not their land it was state land, the city and the people out there had and the in-holders had a pretty big stake in how to respond to all that. Um, worked with the park to make some changes that allowed them to do what they're doing. Um, and to not you know to be enforcer in Dyea. And there's still issues that go on about that land use things that crop up from time to time. Downtown here though in Skagway it's been a welcome thing. Everybody loves what they've done and beautifying the buildings. The one real regret though you know with all these wonderful buildings are here and there are nine or ten of them that are leased out to the public but there are only two or three of us that are here year round that are able to keep open year round. Nine or ten so it's I think the goal was, not, to have year round sustainable businesses and some of the leases are a little too strict to allow that, like you can't have a restaurant, you can't have food, things like that kind of limit that they're stuck with um, jewelry stores and gift shops and they can't make it year round, most of them. And then we're able to barely get by as a book store but having the newspaper here's been great. But we still have a hard time making it work in the winter.

Karen Brewster: Yeah well some places the park is coming in there was lots of animosity and protest and things in other communities and I'm wondering how they did it here?

Jeff Brady: Well they were lured here. You know over time um, the city fathers really wanted them, state government and then when they came in there were a lot of promises and I think that some people feel that some of those may have been broken. They keep coming, when I first came here the park would give thirty some odd thousand dollars a year to the city for boardwalk maintenance and that's not nearly what, I don't know what they give now, it's not much. It's in lieu of property taxes. But as these buildings became leased out the tenants pay property taxes. We pay those property taxes. I just kind of shifted.

Karen Brewster: They did things somehow right, I don't know

Jeff Brady: Yeah they did

Karen Brewster: in a way that the community could accept them. I don't know what that would be.

Jeff Brady: And it's because they are right in the community as well. And that pretty well

Karen Brewster: I'm sure it varies by who the superintendent maybe

Jeff Brady: Sometimes, yeah it's good that they're hiring more and more local people and that is really really important. And I think they've learned their lessons and they just get people coming in and out of the park service they just kind of rotate them. But you know when a job opens up stick a thing in the paper and on the bulletin board and you'll get. There's a lot of talented people here who've chosen to live here. They may, you know they can do a lot of things whether its carpentry or running excel on the spreadsheet or whatever it takes. That's kind of a weird way into

Karen Brewster: Something else about what it's been like working on a small town newspaper.

Jeff Brady: I think it is pretty similar no matter where you for a small town newspaper. You just have to be a part of the community and open, and like to talk to people, and listen to stories, you have to know how to ask good questions and it's just about developing trust you know, and I think its. And you have to be friendly you know you have to be, you can't be this old time Perry White type editor type thing. You have to be friendly, you have to know all the kids, you got to know, you got to put all the kids' pictures in the paper and [] be happy

Karen Brewster: Well I can see you office is full of photographs of people and community events and activities

Jeff Brady: Yeah

Karen Brewster: And you're either involved in or you're out there taking pictures in the community

Jeff Brady: Yeah pictures are wonderful parts of newspapers. You develop an eye for it.

Karen Brewster: And it was very cute this morning, this herd of kids that came in with you. You were out delivering papers and in the costumes and things.

Jeff Brady: Yep, yeah we try to look the way the kids did in '98 and get them out there hawking at the docks, its' the first job for most kids in town. I'd say I get about 75% of the kids working for me.

Karen Brewster: They get paid to do this?

Jeff Brady: Yep they get paid five bucks a boat and all the tips they can make. This one kid this morning [] he's eight years old and he made ten bucks in tips and he was ecstatic and I said it's not going to be that good every day.

Karen Brewster: So you do that every day.

Jeff Brady: Yeah we do that every day

Karen Brewster: The first thing in the morning

Jeff Brady: Yeah every day first thing when the boats come in. Yeah we bring them in here about seven and we go over here to a coffee shop and they get a doughnut or whatever and sit around there for about ten minutes and we go around to the different docks and I have [] teenage supervisors that help me. And ah, and then we have four docks, three docks that we work on that four ships will go to.

Karen Brewster: Today is a four ship day?

Jeff Brady: Today is a four ship day.

Karen Brewster: Is that the most that you'll get in one day four?

Jeff Brady: Yes normally, four are the big one, that's eight kids normally. We had six, we're a little short with my supervisor staff today so I took all six [] and it's a training day. School let out yesterday so we're um, we're developing the schedule and I had all the new kids and they were working with all the veteran kids today to kind of train them, show them the ropes.

Karen Brewster: No you all seem to have a great time!

Jeff Brady: Yeah especially in May in June they're just like shop keepers by the time August rolls around they're ready for it to be over

Karen Brewster: It's definitely [] tourism

Jeff Brady: Yeah, I try to take Sundays off but generally I'm here. And I build in time to go do the river trip. I'll have the two teenagers running things and Denise downstairs helps out too. But yeah that's the fun, I'm I love doing that. I love going down in the mornings and greeting people because you're the first people in town to greet the tourist and most of them are really happy to be here and they've saved up money to come to Alaska. And they love the kids. They just think that's the coolest thing because you don't find newsboys or newsgirls or newsees as we call them anywhere hardly any more. Nostalgia works It sells as some people would say. We're not, I don't know if we're selling something we're just [] it was like then

Karen Brewster: So the paper that you're handing out to them is the free paper?

Jeff Brady: The paper is the free paper. It contains a lot of advertising obviously a map full of everything and then a lot of information. It's got some standard stuff like calendar of events and attractions and something about the museums. We have a log, a kind of historical time line [] geographic sites and there's a Skagway Traditional Council submits a piece on the native history. And then every year I try to mix it up with a different historical feature based on kind of a theme. Last year it was, you know the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of statehood. This year we wanted to use this diary so our theme is like Love found [] and that was the love found part. The love lost was Marshall Rowen his family is coming up in July and they're going to be putting up a monument at the cemetery by the US Marshall service because he was the Marshall that was killed by one of Soapy Smith's bartenders that set off the [] led to eventually led to Soapy's down fall. But another thing I've done though which totally missed you probably didn't know to ask about it. I've been really involved in theater here quite a bit.

Karen Brewster: No I didn't know about

Jeff Brady: I was in the days of '98 Show for twenty years. I even played Soapy. "How're you fixed for soap?" (ha ha) So I still enjoy theater. My Daughter Annie is a theater major at \*\*\* in Chicago. She's in an internship in Chicago.

Karen Brewster: So how did you get involved in theater?

Jeff Brady: I did it in high school and just loved it. So in 1978 the ah, sort of semi-professional company started called Gulliver's Productions. Some friends of mine, it was that Steve Hites, Jim Richards and Dorothy Shaplain started it and they, the '98 Show had been going for a number and number of years

(PHONE CALL)

Karen Brewster: The days of '98 Show had started as a

Jeff Brady: Well it had started as a fundraiser for the old White Pass Athletic club, back in the if you got a program last night it's all in there,

Karen Brewster: We didn't.

Jeff Brady: Oh, okay and it's all down in the old White Pass Athletic club which is I think where the Westmark [] and then that shut down and the Eagles took it over in the '30's I think. It was a volunteer show that they'd do when a ship came in until the late seventies was all like five times a week, right. I volunteered a little bit in one of those here in town but then they got together with the Soapy Smith show had started at \*\*\* Hall at the time. There was this other show that got going and it all kind of shook out and the Soapy Show kind of merged with the Days of '98 Show to become more of a professional company and they were looking for actors and they hired a lot of people from the community and they brought in a few. And so I was a part of that. I played Frank Reed, Governor Brady. That's how people came to call me Governor Brady, [] that's kind of stuck because I was Gold Rush Governor John Brady.

Karen Brewster: Oh, I didn't know we had a Governor Brady.

Jeff Brady: Yes we did, 1898 and I got to interview his son who was here in July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1898 as a little boy and remembers his Dad talking about Soapy and all those stories are true. And in my book you'll have that whole story (ha ha)