

Casey McBride
National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office
Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Oral History Project
Skagway, Alaska
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Stacey Baldrige: This is Stacey Baldrige interviewing Casey McBride with Kara on camera. It is May 22nd, 2010 and we are in Skagway, Alaska, doing the Skagway Oral History Project. Okay Casey we can just start out with where you're from, where you were born, and how you got to Skagway.

Casey McBride: Okay, I was born in Chicago. Lived in several different cities in the Midwest and then I went to high school in a town of about 1,800 people named Northwood that's where my mother grew up. Went to work for the railroad, the Rock Island Railroad originally and then and went to work for a little electric trolley line which was called the Iowa Terminal Railroad which attracted a lot of rail fans which this one does, did, did then too. Heard about this railroad, heard they were always hiring and the paid [] I was making three dollars an hour at the time. So I headed west. That would have been '71 ah '71, '72 and ended up spending a couple years in Washington State before I finally managed to get up here in '74. Never did get a job on the railroad, never did get a job on the long shore [] because it was basically a part time job with a full time wage.

Stacey Baldrige: So what did you do as a Long Shoreman?

Casey McBride: I'm still a Long Shoreman. At that time I was mostly working in the art terminal and that was mostly handling bulk lead and zinc concentrate, a dirty job but like I said it paid well and you didn't have to be there eight hours a day. Generally you'd work twenty or so hours or two shifts on the weekend or when the ship came in and so, but it paid really well. But anyway it allowed me to practice and work on my jewelry because I also realized when I got here Skagway tourist town and jewelry was the thing. The ah, I took some art workshop courses in *** McKnighter Art *** in Mayson City. And that's basically all the formal training I've had. I knew that jewelry was good here and that it had to eventually be called jewelry not silver. And as they said working the long shore gave me the income and it gave me the time to work on the jewelry, to build a business and I opened Taiya River Jewelry in '76.

Stacey Baldrige: What got you into []

Casey McBride: Ha-ha, well this is like a twenty something yeah I was just twenty I guess. Yeah my Mother said, "Oh McKnighter is having a class in jewelry making." And I said, "why would I want to make jewelry?" you know. But twenty year old male (ha ha) and there were girls in the class. They were all somebody's grandmother but I found out I liked doing it and I had a knack for it. So I took that nine-week course and then a year later I took another one and I really enjoyed doing that. I'm probably the most successful of that instructor's students.

Stacey Baldrige: So when you came here did you originally have your shop in this particular building?

Casey McBride: No, no Vocation is it's the back room of the um, the um of what the Idaho Saloon on the corner of 3rd and Broadway. There is a stain glass window and door over there that I installed. I was there for one season and then I moved into the front part of the store for two seasons. Then I was I sold through the co-op when a friend owned it and then I had a little space that used to be in the pack train building. It was like eight feet wide and fourteen feet deep, more than enough room for what I was doing. And then this became available and I put in a bid on it or a proposal and I've had it for twenty years now. I've got another five or six years, or seven years to go on the current lease. So [] Park Service building, in fact I was the first lease back in the country when they started that program. In fact I have a key on the wall (he points) from the Park Service. (Ha ha)

Stacey Baldrige: Nice key.

Casey McBride: (ha ha) Sorry.

Stacey Baldrige: Did you have to do any special renovations or make anything work because it was such an old building?

Casey McBride: They had restored the basic body of the building. Um I did the decorative work, the picture rail is mine. Um, there's [] on the sheetrock and I had to put a floor in, or finish flooring downstairs and of course cabinetry I had to have built and everything else. It was an empty shell but it had been restored and rewired, re-plumbed. Yeah.

Stacey Baldrige: So in terms of jewelry making, has your jewelry evolved to kind of, I don't know do you make it specifically for [] you feel like?

Casey McBride: It is probably more or less, eh, I mean I make jewelry using natural gold nuggets mostly. Um the jewelry I make is also called *** and again that style of jewelry has been made in this area since the gold rush. In that since it is aimed at the clientele, the visitor as well as the Alaskan but I pretty much [].

Stacey Baldrige: And where is the gold from that you use?

Casey McBride: The nuggets are all from northern BC, Yukon or Alaskan nuggets.

Stacey Baldrige: So you buy them from people that are at the gold mines?

Casey McBride: Yeah pretty much. Yeah.

Stacey Baldrige: Okay,

Casey McBride: And then the gems and the colored stones I use are from all over the world. I go to the Tuscan Stone show every year and we shop down there for all the goodies, the gumdrops and the sparkly's as there were.

Stacey Baldrige: Do you base your art on themes or inspirations?

Casey McBride: Not too much, ah not any more than the use of the nuggets and the gold. Marsha does the more, the little bit more arty work with her mountains and her animals and such. But she is also more formally trained than I am. That is getting an art major as well as an apprentice training from European masters. I'm almost completely well essentially [].

Stacey Baldrige: So you've been doing jewelry for almost thirty years now or around there

Casey McBride: Oh yeah at least thirty years now, almost forty, thirty, at least forty, '70, '71.

Stacey Baldrige: Okay, so for a while.

Casey McBride: (ha ha) Yeah!

Stacey Baldrige: I was going to ask what are some of the biggest changes you've noticed in the jewelry industry in Skagway since you came here to now.

Casey McBride: In Skagway [] the appearance of Alaskan jewelers and the massive increase of, we call them Caribbean jewelers even though several of them are based out of the US not out of the Caribbean. They come in the spring and they leave in the fall and they take their money with them essentially. And they don't, ... to illustrate this, we promote that we are Alaskan [] since I've been doing it that long. And we'll get people come in the door and they want something that they've heard about on the ship as being Alaskan jewelry like Lanzasite which is from Canada or Tanzanite or any number of other things that they promote on the ships for these people who pay for these promotions. So they hear about it on the ships but they would rather buy it from an Alaskan so non-plus when they walk in [] that's an example of what's happening up here. So rather than talking [] they promote what the jewelry stores pay them to promote. So...

Stacey Baldrige: And you don't do that?

Casey McBride: I don't take part in that. It is essentially um, it is almost a type of blackmail. I like a print ad because I have total control [] what they print about you, who talks about these stores and in the Caribbean so essentially all year around, they have a long ongoing relationship with them. I have no faith that he is going to promote my business positively and plus it is exorbitantly expensive.

Stacey Baldrige: And you like to be able to control how it is ***, the facts...

Casey McBride: Yes and more and more we're seeing and other [] more and more people looking for us. They're getting a little wiser to what's going on and they're not going to be sold a bill of goods. They may not be able to afford what I make but we send them to one of the other Alaskan or Skagway stores and hopefully they can find something there.

Stacey Baldrige: How do you find the competition to be between your Alaskan everything store and the non? The outsiders?

Casey McBride: Well essentially that's, that's the difference I don't try [] I compete for the dollar but not for the product. And we hear over and over again that that it's all the same, that it's all the same. Well

this is so different in this store, in my store. That's the point, (ha ha) for whatever reason that they're all going to try to sell the same things and try to compete that way.

Stacey Baldrige: Oh good, and you don't.

Casey McBride: I don't. Some people sell nuggets and some people sell jewelry with nuggets on it, you know but for the most part they're not selling anything like what I'm selling here. And also it's not made here and obviously that must work because there is another store up the street that is beginning to promote that their jewelry is made in Skagway and of course they're here May to September so I'm not sure when they're making it.

Stacey Baldrige: And you're open year round for business?

Casey McBride: We're open year round but we don't always put out display every day. I'm here five days a week.

Stacey Baldrige: What do you think the future of the jewelry business in Skagway looks like?

Casey McBride: I don't know, I don't know, (ha ha)

Stacey Baldrige: No guesses?

Casey McBride: No, we keep wondering how some of these keep staying in business and yet they keep coming back year after year. No answers there. Um, actually with the economy if I didn't have the long shores as an adjunct it would be a tough. You know I would ... Marsha and I would still be able to run the business but I wouldn't have employees. If I wasn't doing the long shoreman I would have to cut it back that far, so.

Stacey Baldrige: Um what [] make jewelry for specific tourist and have them returning?

Casey McBride: Oh we have people coming back; we had a customer that came in yesterday that had bought something from us last year. It wasn't something I had made but it was definitely a nice piece of jewelry. And this year he bought something I made. So oh yes we definitely, it is actually surprising how many regulars, well not regulars but some of them four and five six years apart coming in, um [I guess that is the result in being here twenty years at the same location. It, it's satisfying in that way too. That they come back and if at minimum they'll come back and say hi and see what's new, often they'll purchase another piece.

Stacey Baldrige: That's good.

Casey McBride: Uh-huh.

Stacey Baldrige: How would you compare business in Skagway as opposed to other really popular destinations that are not coastal?

Casey McBride: I wouldn't be able to say because I have no knowledge of what they're like. I mean we don't travel that much.

Stacey Baldrige: Oh, okay.

Casey McBride: Skagway is kind of blessed because it is so compact and when the old timers decided okay in the gold rush they set up their main streets differently than we did. They had them going east and west because the wind goes north and south. So Fifth and Sixth, especially Fifth was the main street but after the gold rush and then with the railroad coming up Broadway. Um, moved to Broadway moved to this four or five block stretch of Broadway and it has definitely been a better more compact area that is easier to get to once they get there. It is a bit of a walk from the south end of the art terminal so that is good. As far as the other cities I think that is one of our benefits. Juneau is all spread out along the waterfront. Ketchikan is I guess it's a little bit more compact. But they seem to like it, they seem to like straight like a nice Midwestern town, since it was surveyed and plotted and not just follow the coast. They definitely like the old time, the gold rush theme although many of them don't have a clue what it is really all about (ha ha). And I said I went to high school in Northwood High and [] it's got priorities its high time was probably just before the gold rush and then on into the 20th century. And they had managed to maintain most of their buildings that were built in that period. They are brick and just recently they finally got a group that would put them on the registry. So their downtown is getting there. I don't know what they're controls or rules or anything are [] but I'm glad to see somebody do it. If I had stayed there I probably would have pushed it. You know I have always been into old, it seems. I have always been into antiques because they have real value because they have lasted this long. Um and a certain interest in buildings and architecture, but I was never formally trained. I saw the value of Skagway when I got here. I don't remember the exact year. I remember that Ransmuer was Mayor the City Council had gotten *** with the plans that Planning and Zoning Commission was making at that time. So they abolished the Planning and Zoning, disbanded it. Well the historic district code earlier in the seventies was about four paragraphs but it did require a review, which Planning and Zoning had been doing so once the Council saw that they were going to have all these groups coming before them they decided they better have a historic commission. And Ransmuer appointed me and at that time four others, I can't remember. Our first meeting took place in one of the classrooms at the school. The new school had been built at that time so it was definitely mid-eighties. And we had one application which we turned down. And it got appealed (ha ha) so and saw we the evidence what it was [] a cut out sign of something and we said that's got to be modern and so we said no. So they came in, they appealed to the, we didn't have a formal appeal process at that time, they appealed to the Commission. At that time they had a Park Architect, A National Park Architect here. And they came in with a silhouette sign from the gold rush and we said, "Oh" and we allowed it. And I think it was the original Ice Cream Cone from the Ice Cream Company.

Stacey Baldrige: Do you know who the architect from the Park Service was?

Casey McBride: I think it was Higgins. Um but that taught me that we had just a treasure trove of what gold rush was and wasn't. And we'd been relying and hoping that the applications had been using the photo documentation that had been available to use for their applications. So I have been on the Commission ever since. There were no term limits at that time or no terms. There used to be the joke that once you were appointed to the Historical Commission it was for life. I've seen many members come and go. There are a couple other members that have been on either continuously for ten years or

cumulatively for ten years so lot of interested people but early on (he shook his head). You could always tell who talked about you behind your back because they called it the Hysterical Commission.

Stacey Baldrige: Not the Historic Commission?

Casey McBride: Right, right and they'd slip ever so often (ha ha) and it took a while to get respect but over time we have. And I think that they are definitely aware of what has been accomplished here.

Stacey Baldrige: So are you still the current Chair of the Historical Commission?

Casey McBride: Yes I am.

Stacey Baldrige: Okay how long have you held that position?

Casey McBride: Oh it seems like forever.

Stacey Baldrige: Good.

Casey McBride: Yeah one other member thought they wanted to be Chair and managed to lobby for the seat for a while but um, I did get it back. [] more than anything. I mean I run the meeting and I do it well and try to keep everything even keeled and generally we're not too hardnosed but we also like to see the applicant put some effort into their *** or at least read the rules, read the application. We had, when we originally started we had a Park Service book of [] Architecture of Skagway and that was the basic reference that we used for architecture at that time. And it had a chapter, it had a section on signage as well. But we've kind of expanded beyond that, we got the historic district codes from a couple different places. I think it is Jackson, Oregon - Jackson City, Oregon that we did a major re-write for signs. There has been some professional help. I know Glenda Shope organize and write it early on, write the codes for the historic guidelines early on, but since then that's been pretty much I've written the code.

Stacey Baldrige: So can you explain what the purpose of the Skagway Historic District Commission is?

Casey McBride: To protect and preserve the historic nature or the historic look of this downtown Skagway Historic District. Essentially it runs from half block south of Second to a half block north of Seventh, about a block and a half deep plus or minus on either side. Um in that there are several dozen [] many that are in their original location and many that were moved there. Skagway is known for its moving of buildings. Um we followed the policy that the new construction should follow the look that a modern building can look to the old gold rush buildings. Some have done better than others. There is a kind of similarity in the look of many of the new buildings. Many of the buildings were built by one person or owned by one person and designed by the same architect (ha ha) but they've done a fair job. You can tell they're new. Their proportions are not quite the same as the gold rush proportions. But when I was first on the Commission there were two philosophies in the United States. One was to have the outline of the gold rush or the time period but not have the look of the time period. And the other was to get as close to it. And I chose to get as close to it. And I think that that way is probably better. Um it makes it look like we have a lot more historic structures than we actually do but someone who is

sensitive to looking at these things can tell the difference, most people probably can't [] an early 1800-twentieth century building looks like can tell the difference.

Stacey Baldrige: So the Commission decides on colors, on windows, on everything?

Casey McBride: Everything exterior actually, we don't rule on interior layout, design fixtures, anything like that. We go a little bit interior as far as signage [] but even that if it gets this far from the glass or if it's a sign that is set in the window then that is out of our purview, if it is attached to the glass that is within our purview.

Stacey Baldrige: Oh okay.

Casey McBride: That's been sort of the unwritten way that we've dealt with it. So if you paint a sign on your window it's ours and if you paint it on a piece of glass and hang it inside the window it's theirs. Unless it says something against consumer laws, we just passed that this year. They cannot put signage in that is violation of the State Consumer Protection Act.

Stacey Baldrige: Which would be?

Casey McBride: Fraudulent sales, fraudulent statements that sort of thing, for the most part in the signage. And it's made a difference just having that in there [] the signs in. So...

Stacey Baldrige: So could you describe what a Historic District code is? When you're writing those?

Casey McBride: Oh well it would describe, say it is a sign, the sign code is broken down into several different kinds of signs that we've looked at in the historic [] façade sign for example is just a sign that is applied or painted to the side of a building, or a front or a non-frontage side. A projecting sign is attached to the building and projects perpendicular to the front of the building. A window sign would be a sign painted in a window. There are a couple other types but façade, projecting, and window are the main ones. So the code would describe again what we saw in the picture record that we usually paint it on the building but we don't require that. They didn't paint them spanning across windows or anything like that so it has to stay clear of architectural details, but on the front of the building there isn't any other limit. They can use the entire body of the front for their sign []. Window signs were smaller so they'd read, the window sign can take up 20% of the window display area and that's it. And the lettering has to comply with lettering that we have in a list of fonts that the researcher did for the Parks Service or batch of font that's on a sign from gold rush period Skagway. Materials we prefer painted on wood or some other kind of sub-straight. We're not too worried about what's underneath the paint because it is underneath the paint, or you can apply individual letters with vinyl whichever one you want. Most people are finding that the signs are lasting longer if they are painted. That's about it. We'll get an application and [] if it complies then we say okay and if it doesn't we will either modify it or approve it with conditions or we'll deny it. Usually we approve it with conditions. There aren't too many applications that are perfect. But there are some and that is really nice to see. [] decision then they can appeal it and then our decision then goes before the Planning and Zoning Commission and they argue where they were wrong and we argue where we were right or where we were following the code. And

then they decide and then if the applicant still isn't grieved then he can take it to the Assembly and the City Board of Adjustments and we argue it out again and then they decide but that's never happened so...

Stacey Baldrige: Right. So with the codes do they differ from city to city or park to park or how do codes

Casey McBride: Well the codes were completely written by the City of Skagway. Yes, as I said there are bits and pieces that we have pulled from Park Service research and other historic district codes but mostly for language and how they said things. But essentially Skagway [] I believe it was one of the original requirements before the Park would come in that the city had to establish a historic district. So the historic district has been established since the early 70's if not even the late, yeah the early seventies would probably be the best way or the best description. Um and it's, knowing who lived here at the time, knowing who owned what pieces of property why the lines went the way they did because there was some people who didn't want their property to be in the district even though they had a historic building on it. So it got drawn around them, well not around them necessarily but instead of going a straight on the east side or whatever of a district it will go in a lot and go up and it will isolate a lot out, but on the edge. But overall it will encompass definitely the main historic buildings that were at the time. Um since then we've lost one and that was the Pullen house. It had a wing that just all of a sudden collapsed and the Historic Commission had an emergency meeting and we looked at it and we said it is a hazard because a lot of people went through it. It was not a secure area, the property or the building, so it was taken down, which was a major loss. I know the Park Service and several individuals tried to purchase the property in the '70s and the property owner just wouldn't sell it. I think she had a philosophy that it should just molder into ruin. I've heard that said any way. And we've lost a couple other minor structures until we finally got it together, got the, yeah a couple minor structures until we put some teeth into the demolition part of it.

Stacey Baldrige: So when people apply to be in the Historic District ah how long do the applications usually take after you receive them?

Casey McBride: Well we first were formed the Historic Commission would meet if there were an application (ha ha).

Stacey Baldrige: Oh.

Casey McBride: Usually, usually intermittingly we would meet about a week later to rule on it. Well it got to be a little bit of a bother, you know because they weren't coming in all in a bunch obviously, so we established a monthly meeting and then we were getting so many especially this time of the year, in the summer we go to a meeting every three weeks.

Stacey Baldrige: Oh wow.

Casey McBride: Yeah because it is the busy time of the year. And it also helps the applicant because they don't have to wait a whole month. And the last meeting and we have a meeting Monday night that

will be the two heaviest of the year most likely. And in the past the previous meeting could have twenty applications. As it was it had about a dozen and then this coming meeting has about a dozen so [] where the meetings fell on the calendar. It will take a couple hours to work through them but ah, it's all pretty much signs. Most of our business is signs because that is what changes most. Once a building's in it's in and they don't modify it too much. Ah, it's interesting and we try to have fun doing it too. (Ha ha) It is probably one of the more enjoyable meetings to watch as well. It can go on and on and on about some little detail about a sign and like I said it can be tedious sometimes. But overall the benefit to the community is fairly obvious to everybody that, that there's something different going on here.

Stacey Baldrige: Does the Historic District ever sit down and decide we want this building and seek it out?

Casey McBride: We don't own anything.

Stacey Baldrige: But if you wanted to could you, you know like ask them to apply.

Casey McBride: Oh okay, an application is strictly to deal with a building that is already in this historic district. To be added to the District a property owner would have to go to Planning & Zoning.

Stacey Baldrige: Oh.

Casey McBride: I mean they could come to us for support but P & Z would make the initial decision and the Council would make the final decision. Um when Virginia Long was first working on the House, which is over at 5th and State, originally the big building that was originally Captain Moore's, his business block, it was not in the District. And they requested that it be added and we added it. But the building right across the street they adamantly [] they've done a good job as far as maintaining the historic building but they did not want to be part of the District. Um, so yeah but as far as going outside of, doing something other than extending the boundary of the District, nothing has ever been attempted. It is called Island Zoning and it isn't really liked by planners. A house that they wanted to protect I don't think it would work to make it a part of this district. See another big thing about this district is that it is commercial. Most Historic districts by far are residential. So that is a little different, especially when you're dealing with property owners who think, "Well it's more important for business to make money." That was the original *** that we were causing problems and making it more expensive for people to do business, to have a business in the Historic District. Well the ultimate benefit is that all the businesses in the Historic District will benefit from increase in business because of the Historic District.

Stacey Baldrige: So is that one of the primary reasons people opposed to being in the District?

Casey McBride: I think originally it was more of an Alaskan thing of not being told what to do.

Stacey Baldrige: Oh. Have they given that up yet, or?

Casey McBride: For the most part [] they've sold their property or died or moved away, you know. It's um, the last few additions to the Historic District were not opposed by anyone.

Stacey Baldrige: But you mentioned the one over by the Portland House.

Casey McBride: Right.

Stacey Baldrige: Did not want to be in. So what would be a reason to be in versus not being in?

Casey McBride: It's a historic structure. I mean we've added a couple of [] technically one was on skids and was supposed to be moved into the District by now and the property owner has kind of fudged around and skated the edge there. So instead of pushing him harder to comply with what he agreed to we just extended the District underneath the building, (ha ha) to protect the building. Another one, I can't remember [] it was new construction and one lot was in and one lot was out so we just added the one that was out because the building spanned both so that the whole building was under purview. But that was the only times we've really added property that didn't really have anything on it. Um, with in the case of the, it's the F&F building as I said it is a gold rush building [] and at that time the owner was just adamant [] the City Council but they just didn't add him.

Stacey Baldrige: Yeah I was just wondering what is the benefit to a person to have their building in the District. As opposed to that person that was so adamant about it.

Casey McBride: Probably no benefit one way or the other, I mean he's got the benefit of being next to the District. The benefit to the community is preserving the historic heritage. [] the property owner and he's had it for a number of years, is very sensitive to the fact that he's got a historic building. And he's not remodeling. And he's maintaining it very well. If that changed we might pursue adding it again. Now there was a historic house that we lost because it wasn't in the district. It, his building didn't building did not encompass [] 50 by 100 feet was what was surveyed but in the Historic District there not that many that are a full 50 by 100, there are quite a few that are smaller pieces. It's the only area in the city that you can subdivide a 5,000 square foot lot to something smaller. Um only because it has been done and it is from the gold rush. I mean they would [] to something you know. So any way this lot had two historic buildings on it, one was the F&F and the other was a historic house and the house was torn down and there was nothing we could do to stop it, so.

Stacey Baldrige: So that is how you lose a building if it burns or it collapses?

Casey McBride: Yeah, yeah

Stacey Baldrige: So how would you prevent it? Are there people on the District Commission that go around renovating and fixing and painting?

Casey McBride: No not the commission no.

Stacey Baldrige: Who does that?

Casey McBride: []

Stacey Baldrige: Or inside

Casey McBride: Yeah although there are resources available through the Park Service if you're going to do a formal restoration and get the tax deductions or tax reductions, credits. But of course that process is fairly involved too. Most of the owners of the historic structures are [] have but they're doing most of the work themselves. What we've done in protecting buildings is well the original is if someone wanted to demolish or move a building out of the Historic District, that was historic, um then upon approval [] okay so there was hopefully some mechanism in to save the building. Well that we decided was enough time and we extended that to a year and we increased the fine to something that is exorbitant because we were getting people that, "I didn't know it was historic." And then we were requiring documenting the building as part of the application to move or destroy it. Um [] non-historic then it can be knocked down or moved with no delays. An historic building would be anything that would be built between '97 and '10 by code. And then we've also got in the district buildings that have their own historic significant *** that are not a part of the gold rush. We've got the bank building [] and that was done in the '30s I believe. That is kind of an entity all its own. We don't apply the code that has been written for the wooden gold rush to this building. Basically we say this is the way it is and this is the way it's got to look.

Stacey Baldrige: So you allow exceptions.

Casey McBride: Yes well, yeah, yeah. And the same we've got a couple World War II buildings in the district as well. And again they have to [] we don't push the gold rush requirements onto them. That would be ... yeah.

Stacey Baldrige: That would be reversing it.

Casey McBride: Yeah that would be silly. It doesn't work, it just doesn't work. And we've got other modern buildings that were built before the Historic Commission or um, um, that are, that have since been absorbed into the District because of location [] over here where the gift store is and their new lobby, they are not in the district but they brought their plans for the building to us to review. And we thought it was pretty tasteful. They used a lot of the themes from the Park Service Administrative Buildings and did a real good job considering they didn't have to [] I think they appreciated our input.

Stacey Baldrige: So what is the relationship between the Historic District Commission and the Park Service?

Casey McBride: Well we look to them for information, mostly pictures (ha ha). They used to have a representative on the Commission and then the [] not just here but everywhere they didn't want Park Service people sitting on state or local commissions.

Stacey Baldrige: Do you know who that person was?

Casey McBride: Um, most of the time it was Karl Guerke for the longest time and then *** Teebalt was also on for a while. Um, Karl does attend our meeting he's just not a member of the commission. So he's there if we have [] there are resources about the history of the building um, and as I said the picture library is what we use most. But ... technically the Park Service doesn't even have to listen to us being a

federal entity, and neither does the city. The City is exempt from their own ordinances [] and Park Service generally runs things by us as well.

Stacey Baldridge: Okay, so you have, even though the Park Service owns the buildings you have control over what they look like or how they're preserved?

Casey McBride: Not the Park Service buildings.

Stacey Baldridge: Just...

Casey McBride: We, we assume that they're doing it right.

Stacey Baldridge: Okay.

Casey McBride: Okay and as a Park [] any signage that I put up the Park Service has to approve anyway. But if the Park Service puts up a sign technically they don't have to get permission from the Historic District Commission, if it is their sign. They do generally and generally their signs do fit the code, yeah ... signs are approvable as we say (ha) but as far as buildings themselves they're [] through the park service. The Historic Commission didn't want or feel that we needed to have input on those. They did bring the Red Front which is a restoration or a reconstruction or a reproduction, there we go, which they took from the photos and they've got the building and it looks just the building that was there and lost who knows when.

Stacey Baldridge: Which building is that?

Casey McBride: the Red Front, it's right next to the Parthenon Building which is right on 4th and Broadway which is on the west side of Broadway, the south side of Broadway. It's got a jewelry store in it, (ha ha) it is the one next to the vacant lot on Broadway just over here south of Fifth []. And the City didn't used to bring anything before us but then I convinced the City Manager at the time that it looks a lot better if you're going to require your tax payers to do it you should probably have a review of ours you know. So they had built a restroom over by Molly Wash Park and they didn't bother to bring anything to us for that [] but then when they did the restoration and they did bring the review of that although the architect that *** a bit of a pucks. He wanted to stucco it and the Commission immediately pointed out that that was never done in the District. "I don't care. We're going to do it anyway!" but they did face it in stone, which is, they did a good job on the addition ultimately. And a fair job on the restoration. They could have done a little bit more to the exterior restoration [] (nodding) a cave building. Since then they've brought most everything to us for review even though they don't have to. But it's ah, it's, and this is probably the problem of any historic commission as it gets older, it can seem picky (ha ha) because [] well it's it gets to be a finer and finer point sometimes what is and what isn't approvable. Um, most of the time it is pretty clear cut but sometimes it seems like it is a little picky. And early on um, [] so as I wrote ordinances or had help writing ordinances or historic guidelines, I tried to keep that in mind, that we can't nail down every little bit of things or the ordinances will keep getting deeper and deeper and deeper, and harder and harder and harder to manage. So I tried to keep it as um [] and make sure that we are covering the main points so things aren't getting too carried away. But as

time goes on people keep coming up with new ways to (ha) ... do modern things in the historic district that really don't fit. So it's, it's and you know we're not perfect either, probably one of our biggest mistakes was we started allowing people [] and they'd swing and things like that. And there were 20 or 30 projecting signs like that in the district. Winter before last was pretty nasty and we actually had several fall in the wind. And then I started thinking back and realized that there were several others that [] like one that had fallen within a week of it being installed [] so I started looking at the pictures again, every time you look at the pictures you see something new, and I realized that in the gold rush they never used a piece of pipe and the signs weren't swinging they were attached to the building and guy wires and they were attached to a post at the edge of the boardwalk and so we changed the code and we gave everybody two seasons to comply. Anybody who had a new projecting sign would have to fit the new code and [] to have to have them comply with the code before they can put them up or open next spring. So we met a public safety issue. Luckily nobody ever got hit by one of these signs plus we made it more historic.

Stacey Baldrige: Were people happy to comply?

Casey McBride: Because we gave them more time I think they'll be happy to do it. We'll see by the end of the [] signs last winter we still had to send out letters to about half to remind a half dozen, most of which got right on it and took them right down because it's a five hundred dollar fine, daily if they leave them up.

Stacey Baldrige: If it flies through their window it's going to be a little more.

Casey McBride: Well it would or yeah or hits somebody and so and that's how we take care of those kind of changes. We ascertain whether what the impact would be to the business to [] when we put the fonts in um before that we basically "well it looks old" (ha ha) and the Park Service researcher came up she really researched the Park Service Building signs, they were the signs that had been on Park Service buildings for the most part . And had only, well this is a problem, she had to use print font, and [] there is a difference – print font and then a sign has display font and there really is a difference. Display fonts aren't digitalized for the most part. So it's kind of hard to do in naming anyone but she did a pretty good job. And when we instituted that we said, "You may use any of these fonts for your signage or you can use references from gold rush pictures and most of the people [] and there was a sign shop down in Juneau that was calling us the "Sign Nazis" because they thought we were restricting everybody to those fonts and we weren't. It was just a more convenient use of those. That has gotten to be a joke both with us and with them. They are an excellent sign company and they're tasteful and they're into historic so anyway it was a good joke.

Stacey Baldrige: And what was that sign company called?

Casey McBride: Ah, Commercial Signs []. So when we established the font list and the new requirements for signage or lettering on signs basically anybody who had signs that were done before that could keep them and maintain them. We're not going to require everybody to conform to the new, the new, the new restrictions. When the Historic District first established [] I call them the bubble signs. They are kind of a dome plastic interior lit signs on half a dozen buildings in the District. And there were some other

signs that were really non-conforming to code changes as we refined what the look should be. Ah, so we gave those, we finally made a list of them there was about a dozen and gave them a sunset of about ten years out [] in ten years they would have to conform to the code and have those down. And it worked. It gave everybody plenty of time but put a limit on the non-conforming, the grossly non-conforming especially the plastic bubble signs, you know. Usually now to get it changed or to get a business to change now to the code it's [] If there is a new business and they're going to put a sign up and it has to comply or if the business moves they can't necessarily move the sign. They have to comply with the new sign law. Um, other than that they become pre-existing nonconforming (ha ha).

Stacey Baldrige: So there's a lot of rules and regulations that you have to, has that been difficult like have you had wars over it or has it been more go with the flow?

Casey McBride: For the most part it has not been wars. Um the, the councils and assemblies, I say assemblies because we went from a county to a borough. And most of the code was written by the council but the borough's assembly has had a few []. For years we put the changes in front of them and they pretty much agreed to them. Um, businesses don't generally put in that much comment either. They're generally not that horrendous you know. If we put in something that said that all buildings should be a certain color then that would be a problem. I mean especially if they had to change it by next season

Stacey Baldrige: Oh yes.

Casey McBride: Or something that would be, that would be really fascist. Um, you know it's taken a lot of years to gain the respect. Probably the biggest single step, well there were two, that started giving the Historic District Commission more credibility, there was the Keller building, over here on Third, has a fixed awning [] approval of historic commission without any building permit or building or any review by any building official at all. A long time resident owned the building and they put it up. Well it was non-conforming, non-complying, and we wrote code that said that no more of that because most Skagway buildings did not have fixed canopies or anything that had a canvas awning. Ah, so that fell down in a snow storm [] and they wanted to put it back up and they said no the code said this. Well the property owner pulled strings, whatever, and the other it was carried through to the full appeals process of the council at the time and they sided with the property owner and they required it meet at that time it was uniform building code requirements and so[] sidewalk and I think once that happened I think the council realized that "maybe we don't know everything that we should know", (ha) and we should rely on some of those that do. That was the first one and then the other one was a big fight over a new owner of the Golden North Hotel wanted to add on a glass enclosed area [] in the building and Broadway and we denied it. And then he went to Planning and Zoning and brought evidence in or brought pictures in supposedly that showed that it had this thing that he had never brought to the Historic Commission. And the Planning and Zoning sided with him so we appealed it but we asked them to [] so it went on and it was a long drawn out fight. Now the Golden North Hotel used to be the Klondike Trading Company, Klondike Commercial Company and it sat at the other end of the block at 3rd and State. And the top faced to the northeast not to the northwest like it does now. Okay, [] well why does it sit fifteen feet off the street, well the horse died. Apparently it was horses pulling it up the ... you know. Um, in this appeal

I realized after looking at pictures, I had always assumed that when they brought the building from its original location straight across all the lots to where it is now. Well I looked at a picture [] brush so they didn't do it that way they brought the building off of its corner lot on 3rd and turned it so it's tower was not facing northwest but northeast pulling it all the way up there putting it perfectly aligned with its property lines [] they put it. So that was the historic location and the front of it was a part of the front of the building and put any [] it was just against the rules and we won. We won. But it took a, it was a tough summer because it all happened in the summer time. A lot of sleep was lost on my part but it really established credibility I think. And once I explained how that building had to have been moved and that it was meant, that that space was meant to be there. It wasn't an accident. It wasn't [] it was to create a green space in front of the hotel that building something there would be non-historic so...

Stacey Baldrige: I've got to change tapes.

Disk Two

Casey McBride: And that did not come into play, really so.

Stacey Baldrige: []

Casey McBride: Sorry I lost all of that I suppose (ha ha) okay.

Stacey Baldrige: That's interesting that you gained credibility through these different explanations of why things are the way they are.

Casey McBride: Yep.

Stacey Baldrige: That's good. So I had a question you are also on the [] were you on the City Council at the same time you were on the Historical Commission?

Casey McBride: Yes, yes.

Stacey Baldrige: Oh okay that's what I wanted to ask you, what is the relationship between those two different groups?

Casey McBride: They don't, well they don't allow that any more. You can't sit on the Commission and sit on the Council.

Stacey Baldrige: Oh okay.

Casey McBride: Um, at the time I was a Councilman I was the council rep to the Historic District [] on the Commission there. Essentially the Council will establish the ordinances we will write a suggested code change and we'll have a public hearing with Planning and Zoning, or we'll have a public hearing [] assembly and they'll have the first and second reading, the first of which is a public hearing. So all of our code changes go through three hearings, which is a bit tedious but it is the way it is setup. So they establish the code by, you know the Commission doesn't. We just give suggestions and then [] council. Well that was a long time ago. I don't remember anything really coming up much that was very

controversial about me being on Historic District and my being on the Council. And then at one time I was also on the, the decided to re-establish the Planning and Zoning [] (ha ha) I can't do that. And obviously I stayed with, I resigned from the Planning and Zoning and I stayed with the Historic District Commission.

Stacey Baldrige: How long were you on the City Council?

Casey McBride: Um, I think at most six years and ...

Stacey Baldrige: Okay do you remember.

Casey McBride: And it may have only been one term. I really don't remember. I'm sure they've got records of that up at City Hall. But I certainly don't remember where to find them, and I've never and it's only been the last couple years that I've sat down and tried to remember how long I've been on the Historic District Commission (ha ha) and remember just what had happened to establish that and [] And as I was at Planning and Zoning I was only at it for not even two years, but it got it established, it got it going again.

Stacey Baldrige: Did you have any other accomplishments or things that you did while you were on the City Council that you remember?

Casey McBride: No, when I was on the Council they were doing, doing ah the first phase of repaving or paving.

Stacey Baldrige: Of these roads?

Casey McBride: Yes at the time most all the avenues and everything outside the District and off State Street was gravel. And the state was getting a lot of oil money coming in and then the city [] all beautiful evergreen trees that had probably been there forty or fifty years or more were in the right of way. And one of the first votes that I had to take part in was to take them out (ha ha).

Stacey Baldrige: Oh no.

Casey McBride: Yeah, yeah, paving [] you couldn't even really call it gravel. It was small rocks in dirt with big rocks, (ha) and every spring you know you'd have this row of rocks where the plows had kicked them up and kicked them out and over to the sides so they'd have to be all picked up. And you know it was very quaint and very nice, you know you'd have [] tour buses, cars, mostly tour buses. And it was really dusty unfortunately. And they tried a couple things but it just wasn't working. You know merchants have to dust things I mean three and four times a day. It could be really bad. So [] that which I think has worked over all, using a larger piece of gravel in the finish coat on top. They usually they like to use half-inch-minus for asphalt like this but for this finish coat on top they used one-inch-minus which gave it a rougher texture. [] It was kind of *** like it is now out here. Unfortunately at the same time they did that, although the code required buildings to have sprinkler systems they did not put in for the buildings to have sprinkler systems. That's why there is all these patches of concrete coming out into the street as buildings have added [] these concretes. I don't know it's kind of broken up and I don't know if that will

ever change. I mean its millions of dollars to repave. Um, there are other priorities obviously. So that was a faux pas. But there was controversy even at that. There were several merchants ah, who didn't want it paved. They'd rather [] the better option I think in the long run, but with their negotiations approved this with the paving. They didn't have, the City didn't have to get our approval again but they were sensitive to the impact that would have on the District so []

Stacey Baldrige: [] sidewalks all over the City downtown?

Casey McBride: Ah the city.

Stacey Baldrige: Is that something that the Historic District had to observe and ***?

Casey McBride: They have always been wood.

Stacey Baldrige: Just replace the planks when...

Casey McBride: Yep they yep, yep. There's a I don't know where they get them, there's a mill where they get the planks cut and they're a full cut wood they're not, they're not [] concrete would be cheaper by far but it wouldn't be Skagway either.

Stacey Baldrige: It wouldn't look historic.

Casey McBride: No, no and you can tell where there used to be concrete because there are curbs and boardwalk (ha ha). It is mostly on the side streets. But basically Broadway has always []

Stacey Baldrige: For approval for the signs and appearance how often do these businesses turn over once they get approval that's it or do they have to keep coming back?

Casey McBride: Oh, oh only if they are making a change. You know if they don't like their []

Stacey Baldrige: [] businesses that have to start from the beginning.

Casey McBride: Well um, let's see, like I said we have a dozen new applications on this new agenda of which it is probably five, six, seven new businesses. One business has probably four applications in out for signage [] the signage.

Stacey Baldrige: So there is a bit of a turnover of businesses?

Casey McBride: Yeah there has been in the last few years, but not a major turn over. You're probably talking one or two or three actual new businesses and then other businesses [] so it's pretty well built up out there. And no one is doing any major changes to their buildings, so.

Stacey Baldrige: And the community of Skagway here, how do they feel about this Historic District business?

Casey McBride: um, as I said I think they're pretty respectful of it at this point []. They recognize that we're trying to keep a lid on some the excesses that some of these seasonal businesses like to do in other cities. Ah, one of the earliest things that we established was no exterior display of merchandise. []

Stacey Baldrige: In Anchorage.

Casey McBride: Feasibly we might have allowed that. We do allow manikins and dummies. They do have to be of, they've got to look like they're historic or natural though. I don't know if we would allow [] um, we'll call them full size rag dolls. One business had a miner that they had made with a hat and a beard and stuff. And he sat there with a pan of gold colored pebbles. And it is okay, it was fun. And another business tried to bring in a [] but there was a, well the Indian is in the museum, but there was a Cigar store Indian on Broadway during the gold rush. But about the only thing that Skagway didn't have was a street clock, a clock on the street. At one time I toyed with the idea of buying a modern antique looking [] because the historic requirements were much looser. At this time we could probably get it in but it would be more questioned because it never was here. And that is one reason Kirmse painted it on the wall, there are rocks up there and it is cheaper to do that than to actually buy one.

Stacey Baldrige: []

Casey McBride: That's not an easy one to answer I don't know. I still enjoy it and that is part of the main reason. And maybe because I'm just kind of been there since its birth and I'm not ready to let the baby go. [] be part of it. I have always tried to deal with each application as the application and not too worried about who the people are, even though there are some people, some people from the [] just as fairly as somebody who has always put in the perfect application. The applicant what we went to war with over the Golden North gets 90% of his applications approved, 99% probably and we still get along fine [] others and it's never good to do that. But it is easy to fall into that in a small town. Then it's probably worry about leaving is that they could get more and more small town and be used in improper ways, which would not be good for the District itself []

Stacey Baldrige: []

Casey McBride: offhand I suppose I could come up with different stories I think I've hit most of the high points. We were awarded one of the Top Ten Main Streets in the Country last year by the [] but that's not an award (ha ha) but they did and that's being used on the City all the city's websites and some of the advertisement vehicles there are a couple magazines out and one of them has that, a page on that in it.

Stacey Baldrige: Tourist []

Casey McBride: It's nice to get an award like, get that recognition.

Stacey Baldrige: Yes.

Casey McBride: Um, it again says we're doing something right. And adds to the credibility of the amateurs that sit on the Historic District Commission, and we're all, there's nobody there that is a

professional which is also different than many Historic District Commission. Many of them require at least one of them to be an Architect. [] the original park plan was to have an architect here and when the Historic District Commission was established that was who was sitting as the Park Service representative, but then the he was only here three or four years after the park was established [] did finally take some exceptions to some of the designs that he drew for some of the modern construction that was built early on because he believed it should fill the outline but not necessarily look historic. And it's caused problems since then because the property owners wanted to do this [] wanted to caused us to have to really work around the code a little bit. Um, but yeah he designed a building that had a gable roof on it and upstairs windows that were fine and then didn't put any openings or display windows in the ground floor, even though it is a business frontage [] so it might be a good thing that he was moved to Anchorage. (Ha ha) Although ultimately I think the locals would have won out so to speak. Yeah I'm half amazed at myself that I've been doing this this long.

Notations:

[] indicates gap in replay

*** indicates the recording was garbled