

Stan and Maxine Selmer
National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office
Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Oral History Project
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Stacey Baldrige: This is Stacey Baldrige interviewing Stan and Maxine Selmer in Skagway, Alaska and Karen Brewster's on the camera. It is May 22, 2010 and this is for the Park Service Skagway Oral History Project. So we're going to start out by asking both you, you can answer individually, where you're from, your family past and how you got to Skagway.

Stan Selmer: I am Stan Selmer born in Iowa in 1948 July moved to Skagway in September of 1948. My father was born here and my mother was working here at the Dahl clinic which was then White Pass hospital for World War II and they left here to go to Minnesota where she was from. And that's where I was born when they were on their way back to Skagway. So my brothers and sisters refer to me as the black sheep of the family because I'm the only one that wasn't born in Alaska. But that's about it

Maxine Selmer: Okay and I'm Maxine Selmer and I was born in Tacoma, Washington. Um, my mother and father lived in Skagway at the time but my Mother had gone down to Washington for the occasion and I came back to Skagway when I was ten days old, on one of the old steamships. My family history my great-grandmother Harriett Pullen arrived in Skagway on September 12, 1897 and my mother grew up here. And they had the Pullen House over here and that's where I grew up until I was aged ten and then we moved down to Seattle, Washington with the Pullen collection they had a museum down there and I spent three summers here working down at the Golden North Hotel when I was in High School. And then after we were married we moved back up here and we've been back and forth between here and Washington so the grandkids could see both sets of grandparents. And we've been here since 1988 this time.

Stacey Baldrige: What kept you coming back to Skagway? What makes you stay in Skagway?

Maxine Selmer: I think we just love Skagway. You know it's in your blood, people love it or they hate it, and we love it. This is our roots are here.

Stacey Baldrige: Do you have any idea why your great-grandparents and ancestors came to Skagway to begin with?

Maxine Selmer: My great-grandmother came because of the gold rush, she came for the gold rush and wasn't successful she ran a horse freight, she freighted over the White Pass trail with the horses. And when the gold rush wound down she opened a boarding house, and stayed here.

Stacey Baldrige: Did she come originally by herself?

Maxine Selmer: She came by herself,

Stacey Baldrige: Wow, that seems quite unusual for a woman of that time.

Maxine Selmer: Yah, yes she was quite an adventurous woman, she left her husband down in Washington state and he was quite a bit older than she was and left her daughter was left in school over in [] no I'm sorry in Ellensburg. And the youngest son stayed with an aunt and eventually her husband followed her up here several months later with her other two boys. But she did come alone.

Stacey Baldrige: Did you ever hear any stories about where she got the idea and how she came to own a boarding house?

Maxine Selmer: I think that is what she knew how to do, she was a good cook and probably just saw that as something she could do to make a living. And Captain Moore was, she purchased his home, she originally rented his home and then ended up purchasing it.

Stacey Baldrige: Was he still around then?

Maxine Selmer: He had left

Stacey Baldrige: He had left

Maxine Selmer: yah,

Stacey Baldrige: So Stan you said your family had some gold rush involvement as well. Can you tell us about that?

Stan Selmer: My Father's uncle Peter Lundee came to Skagway and then went to Lake Bennett and also in later in 1897, early 1898 and he was a carpenter by trade and he built boats at Lake Bennett for the miners to purchase and take up along Lake Bennett into Windy Arm as far as they could with their supplies until they had to leave the boats behind which I believe they could go all the way to Dawson but I don't know. But he was a boat builder and he stayed there until my Grandmother and Grandfather and two of their children that had been born in Norway, they were all Norwegian immigrants came over in 1905 and they lived at Lake Bennett. And the first child that was to be born after they got out of Norway and went to Lake Bennett was my Aunt Virginia, and my Grandmother, as my dad used to relate, my grandmother didn't want any children born in Canada, I'm not exactly sure why, but my Grandfather brought my Grandmother to Skagway that evening that she was in labor in one of the velocipede, the hand cars, so she could have her baby here in Skagway. And that was in 1906. And then the rest of the children were all born in Skagway. I think there was a total of seven children in the family. And the Selmer family just stayed here we had originally had moved from Norway to Palsbo, Washington but I still have a cousin, a first cousin that lives in Palsbo but other than that we're all basically stationed, lived went to school here.

Stacey Baldrige: Was there a reason that your family left Norway?

Stan Selmer: My Dad likes to say they were kind of persecuted out of Norway, I don't know why, um. My Grandfather was a concert violinist and was a knife thrower in the circus so maybe he threw the knife at the wrong person I don't know.

Stacey Baldrige: Okay

Stan Selmer: It was like, it was like they were supposed to get out of Norway for whatever reason. But there was also the draw of my Great Uncle Pete in Bennett here that they would have been communicated by mail or whatever means they could get between here and Norway and I'm sure that Great Uncle Pete told them leave all the trials and tribulations of Norway behind and come over here the country is the same but the people are a lot better so come on over. So my Grandfather was one of the first barbers here. He ran a movie theater for a time and did a lot of work in the music field with a town band um, he was the mayor of Skagway for one time, as was I. My Dad skipped the mayor and he was just a City Council member. Maxine's Dad was a mayor here how ever in the '50s so. As I like to tell people it is a lot more about us making our own history than remembering the old stuff. You know we're here making our own lives making the history we want. So our recollections of what went on in the gold rush is probably less than you get from somebody else who studies it. Our families lived as providers of service to miners. They were not stampedeers.

Stacey Baldrige: Which is probably as interesting, but you didn't live it but what memories were passed down to you guys and the fact it wasn't all just miners who came there was a whole industry came along with it. And to think oh, yah people had to build boats and people had to help them haul freight, is part of the story and why did your Great Uncle Pete come from Norway in the first place?

Stan Selmer: He had heard about this boat building opportunity I suppose or maybe he went to Pilsbo first. I don't know. It makes sense he would have come to Pilsbo first and heard about this opportunity to build boats in Bennett in a newspaper in Seattle [] but he came up here specifically to be a boat builder. And ah, and that's what he did for most of the time that the gold rush was a viable situation, later on working for the power company that I currently work for, he worked there for years.

Stacey Baldrige: So do you know how your Great Uncle Peter was able to acquire the materials to build boats then?

Stan Selmer: It was all native materials then he brought his tools with him but it was trees that they cut, bark that they pulled off of the trees. I have a picture (cat sound) we're going to have to let that cat out. (Filming stops & restarts)

They probably had some, some limited ability to make wood with native trees that were there

Maxine Selmer: They logged on that side

Stan Selmer: They logged the hillsides but I'm saying even then the logs were not all that big but they were able to make some wood. The church that you see at Bennett, that was made with native materials, for the most part. So he was active in making, or creating the wood and then turning it into a boat or a raft or a freighter of some kind to take down the river.

Stacey Baldrige: I was wondering and we had talked to Keith Knorr and his Aunt Irene and from what it seems that upper area of I guess it would be the Yukon led back all those places, it seemed like a little Scandinavia, a lot people that came over from Sweden and Norway. Is that?

Stan Selmer: I won't challenge their information but certainly there were no other Norwegians in Skagway that I was aware of growing up.

Stacey Baldrige: Oh okay.

Stan Selmer: That would have been left over from the gold rush. They certainly could know that, they were Swedes and we were Norwegians maybe they just didn't get along. No I mean that sincerely, I mean Norwegians and Swedes probably didn't have all that great a relationship. But I don't know of any great amount of Scandinavians that came over. Certainly there were great amounts of Scandinavians that came to various places across the country but I don't know that Skagway was one of them.

Stacey Baldrige: And you said your grandfather was one of the first barbers. Did you ever hear any stories or how that came to be?

Stan Selmer: No, there's a story but it is a fairly recent story about some people that were doing some remodeling in their home and they were living in one of the first homes that my grandfather and grandmother lived in when they were in town, and as they were pulling probably old wallpaper turn of the century version of sheetrock off the wall there was this fairly large maybe 24 x 36 inch photograph of my Grandfather in the barber shop. I believe they preserved that picture and it has been archived now and his barbershop still exist at the corner of Four and a Half and Broadway on the northwest corner.

Stacey Baldrige: Four and a Half ?

Stan Selmer: Four and a Half, that's the alleys, yah

Stacey Baldrige: Oh okay. You said that your Father worked for AP&T

Stan Selmer: Nope I work for AP&T and my Great Uncle Pete also worked for AP&T

Stacey Baldrige: So when did AP&T come about? Can you talk a little bit about that?

Stan Selmer: ah, AP&T is fifty-three years old. They were started in 1957 before that []

Stacey Baldrige: What does AP&T stand for?

Stan Selmer: Alaska Power and Telephone Company, and at Alaska Power and Telephone Company when you get the current CEO and me in the room and somebody asks for the history of Alaska Power and Telephone Company you get two completely different histories because he's a part of the family that started AP&T here so they have a long lineage in the state of Washington and [] utilities on the Olympic peninsula. I have the history of my Great Uncle and my Grandfather working for Home Power Company which was formed I believe around 1917 and earlier to 1898 there was I think it was

Northwestern Light was formed in the same location where we are now. Maxine's Grandmother had some pictures of the original steam turbines [] with Carl Gherky before

Maxine Selmer: It was that John Becatta owned it?

Stan Selmer: Home Power Company

Maxine Selmer: Home Power Company still?

Stan Selmer: oh it may have been Skagway

Maxine Selmer: I thought it was called something else

Stan Selmer: Yes, well Home Power Company was the company that my Great Uncle worked for. I can't remember what John Becatta's version of it was. Skagway Power and Light maybe

Maxine Selmer: Sounds []

Stan Selmer: That's our history we have of the, of the basement games being held on our front lot, where the tide used to come all the way up to AP&T now. And so I loving put on emails and stuff that I send out Alaska Power and Telephone Company Skagway the first property. Because we were the first property that AP&T had. We have 25 or 26 now. And we celebrated our fiftieth anniversary as AP&T in 2007. And ah, kind of a funny note we celebrated our 40th Anniversary Alaska Power and Telephone Company, under my watch unfortunately printing the front cover of the phone book reverse so you had to hold it up to a mirror to see it [] and we have a copy of that buried in the time capsule that is buried in Centennial Park. So a hundred years from 1998 people will say where in the world was this spot.

Stacey Baldrige: So Skagway has quite a history of different power companies.

Stan Selmer: Differ power companies there were three or four of them plus the railroad ran their own power for a number of years. The company that I work for eventually got them to [] ore systems to us or got the ore to the company that was owned by Mr. Nigh and then owned by Bacatta and then owned by us.

Stacey Baldrige: So can you talk about how you get power here, how power is generated? And how that has changed through history when power first came

Stan Selmer: Well we've come full circle. Initially there were steam turbines that probably lasted into the thirties [] steam turbins and I've seen pictures of buildings down near AP&T where there was just cord after cord after cord of cord wood stacked up for them to burn. And they would create steam to turn the turbines to produce electricity for the town. But in 1902 the Dewey Lakes Hydro Project began generating power for Skagway. And I believe the Dewey Lakes Project is either the second or third oldest hydro-power project in the state of Alaska. And back prior to WWII the Hydro-power out of Dewey Lakes powered this entire town. Well as we grew the utility installed diesel generators [] as back up for the hydro, they installed diesel generators as back up for the hydro and then eventually we were running probably 60% diesel and 40% hydro. But since the early '90s my company has invested very heavily in

hydro projects. So right now Skagway and Haines inter-tied through a submarine cable that [] is powered by three, four hydro projects, I'm sorry. Goat Lake which is in Skagway, Dewey Lake which is in Skagway, Cassadayo Creek which is in Skagway, and a real small run of the river project which is called Loutec Hydro Project also provides power to the grid. But 95% of the power for Skagway and Haines comes from Hydro-power which emanates from hydro power from the Skagway area.

Stacey Baldrige: So that is much more efficient than burning all that wood.

Stan Selmer: Much more efficient than burning all that wood and certainly much more *** than burning all that diesel. Current today, 2010 prices for hydro all in it's about 22 or 23 cents a kilowatt hour if you burn all diesel it would be up to 32 cents a kilowatt hour[]

Stacey Baldrige: Can you explain how the hydro works, I mean Dewey Lake is a lake. How do you get hydro, I thought hydro is rivers and

Stan Selmer: Oh most normally you have to have some sort of impoundment to get the water where you want to take it from. You have this impoundment and then you have an intake. And that intake is a series or a single pipe that goes through a dam or a diversion [] down to wherever you're going to build your power plant and then you run that high pressure water through turbines and generate electricity with the generators that are connected to the turbines. It is as simple as that or as complex as you want to make it. The Dewey Lakes Hydro [] Goat Lake is 2900 plus feet in elevation and Cassadayo is around 600 feet in elevation. And obviously we can get much more power out of Goat Lake at 2900 feet than we can the other two projects because we have much, much more head pressures that spin that turbine, a bigger turbine, enough to generate [].

Stacey Baldrige: What did you do with the winter, probably it is a dumb question but I'm guessing a lot of the lakes were frozen?

Stan Selmer: Dewey Lakes has run year round as long as I've been involved with it and I know for you know decades before that they would just run it very minimally during the winter time. Goat Lake we run 24 hours a day [] 365 days a year. Cassadayo Creek although we turn that one off. Ususally in late November or early December and we only have two years history one year we turned if off in late November and one year we turned it off in early December. And then we restart it in either late March or late April. We've only had the two years. We think it's going to be running to around the first of December every year. And the purpose for the Cassadayo Project is to allow Goat Lake to refill each summer and we use that power until Goat Lake is full. And then when we have a full lake at Goat Lake we can turn that one off. We usually don't, but we can. We're looking for customers that want, we're looking for a big customer that can come in and use the excess power[] the diversions and currently there is no major customer that wants to use that much power in an excess power basis. And it is unfortunately not big enough to provide power to a cruise ship to eliminate some of that horrible cruise ship smoke that comes in here day after day, year after year, season after season.

Stacey Baldrige: Wow the cruise ships use that much power that your excess isn't enough?

Stan Selmer: [] It is no longer a city whatever we are, I guess a municipality, the Municipality of Skagway needs to build a hydro-project on west creek in Dyea and then we would have sufficient power for two to three cruise ships.

Stacey Baldrige: Why haven't they done this or is it being considered?

Stan Selmer: It is being considered however its there are a lot of unknown [] how will it change West Creek so I can never use it again for any of my traditional uses. Well they need to go down to Cassadayo Creek. There's a road up to West Creek we built the road up to Cassadayo Creek we built it for diversion. We then put the pipe right next to the road, the same thing that would happen to West Creek. So currently what you do in West Creek you could always do even if there was a hydro-project there. We would build a damn in West Creek, I shouldn't say we the community [] damn to damn up a lake so you can get much more power out of the system than just what you can get out of the river and that would create a whole new recreation area an area that can't be enjoyed by anybody unless you own a helicopter. It is just a matter of getting the municipality to be a little bit more proactive about recognizing what a resource []

Stacey Baldrige: You drive down the Klondike Highway coming into town up the mountain that comes into town. Is that one of your hydro?

Stan Selmer: Yes that is Goat Lake hydro yes

Stacey Baldrige: Okay, we were trying to figure out what it was.

Stan Selmer: Yes a twenty-four-inch steel pipe about seventy two hundred feet long that runs from the depths of 250 ft deep in Goat Lake down to the power house at the valley floor.

Maxine Selmer: You also control the water on the falls

Stan Selmer: Shh that's a secret (smiling) the waterfalls

Maxine Selmer: Not any more (ha ha)...

Stan Selmer: The waterfalls that used to be there that the railroad used to use for part of their tour as far back as 1910, they had a nice viewing area [] great big falls called Pitchfork Falls [] so what used to be strictly a railroad viewing opportunity was now an opportunity for anyone who was on the highways. So we were actually required to create a waterfalls because if we didn't we would actually use all the water for electricity and the falls would disappear. So we turn the falls on at 8:00 in the morning on May 15th [] and everyday from May 15th until September 30th.

Stacey Baldrige: Oh that's funny

Stan Selmer: Now the nice thing about it is once we built the Cassadayo and it came on line in late 2008 um, that should allow Goat Lake always to be filled sometime in the summer. And once it's filled then there's more water coming down that falls Pitchfork Falls than you can imagine so the old [] returned to the people who used to be able to see it, a huge waterfall because of the Cassadayo project.

Maxine Selmer: Did anybody talk to you about the cross on the hill that AP&T maintains?

Stacey Baldrige: ***

Maxine Selmer: Well do you want to tell them about that?

Stan Selmer: I don't know if I do

Maxine Selmer: Well now is your time.

Stan Selmer: Well during the course of [] Alaska Power and Telephone Company well it's owner a gentleman named Arthur Garrett, his wife had taken quite ill and my mother and another registered nurse Wand Warner had worked wonders with Mr. Garrett's wife and *** at the time [] to the Lord that if his wife survived he would put up a testimony to the Lord on the hillside. So she survived and he put a lighted cross on the hill up above Skagway. And except for the period of time when we were in bankruptcy which was in 2002 when we had to turn it off [] even having to spend the money just to keep the cross lit we then restored it I think it was 2007 and there was a *** cry by a couple individuals, that didn't know the history and didn't think it was appropriate to have a cross on the hillside and ah, we did some research and [] it's on a piece of lease property that we lease and it's on there and it's going to stay there as far as I'm concerned forever.

Stacey Baldrige: So AP&T do they trim all the trees around it and replace the bulbs and make it look all nice all year?

Stan Selmer: Yes but I've got to say that we got a little more, a little more 2010ish [] version of the lit cross and that is that we don't have bulbs, it's a strip light. It looks like a bulb from the valley. They don't really burn out they're like a ten twenty year light a very low drain of power.

(Discussion about barking dog)[]

Stacey Baldrige: Okay Maxine we were going to rewind a little bit and talk about the Golden North hotel when you were young?

Maxine Selmer: Well my Mom originally owned that hotel and she also was running the Pullen house at the time when I was a baby and people used to talk about seeing her pushing the buggy back and forth on the fly. And um, in about 19[] 59 somewhere in there she sold the hotel to the Soldeen Family Hans and Mavis Soldeen and Mark and Edie Lee and they restored it and put, their rooms were dedicated to different pioneer families [] were maid for three summers when I was in high school.

Stacey Baldrige: Was it a fun job, did you make decent money?

Maxine Selmer: For the time I guess. We used to have to wear the old fashioned dresses when we worked at the desk. And I have two of my best friends that I worked with []

Stacey Baldrige: That's great.

Maxine Selmer: So you know things that I remember.

Stan Selmer: And they all three still live in town. And they all three used to make fun of me because I was working across the street at Bill Furrow's Sourdough Inn. And I was kind of like the handyman and they would get up in the second or third floor yelling and screaming at me

Maxine Selmer: We wouldn't yell and scream

Stan Selmer: Yah you did

Maxine Selmer: We wasted a lot of time

Stan Selmer: You wasted a lot of time and I thought to myself I'll never stay I'll never stay there.

Maxine Selmer: (ha ha) No

Stan Selmer: She was flirting with me, we were, it was an arranged marriage really. When you look back on our thirty-fifth anniversary I put a picture of the two of us in the local newspaper and it was a picture taken when she was three and I was two-and-a-half and we were out in front of my Dad's house playing croquet. And like I say I didn't really have a chance to marry anybody else. It was a pretty much taken care of for me.

Stacey Baldrige: []

Stan Selmer: Yah we live across the street kitty-corned

Maxine Selmer: Yah

Stan Selmer: on Pullen Creek

Maxine Selmer: I lived back at the Pullen house which is Six and Spring and he lived on the corner of Seventh and Broadway

Stan Selmer: Seventh and Broadway yah

Stacey Baldrige: They've changed some of the street names around here. Has there always been Spring

Maxine Selmer: Spring street yah, it's just not a street that runs all the way through so there's [].

Stacey Baldrige: []

Maxine and Stan Selmer: that was Sixth Avenue

Stacey Baldrige: So that's the only one that's changed names

Stan Selmer: hundreds of them

Maxine Selmer: That's Gold Rush times, yah

Stan Selmer: Yah, I don't know

Maxine Selmer: Well the numbering system would have changed because that's now Sixth so the numbers run up

Stacey Baldrige: And then has it changed with the waterfront, and how far up the water is versus how far []

Stan Selmer: Ah, sure, ah, she's quite a bit older than I am, ah, six months I believe

Maxine Selmer: to the day

Stan Selmer: Yah, to the day, um, the Second Avenue by the White Pass Depot as you would walk east of the depot you would be right at tide water. And the buildings that were there during the '50s that were initially [] they were on pilings and you had to walk out on pilings to get out to these businesses. Over on the western side there was a small boat harbor that had been there since WWII that had been formed by a sunken barge and people would tie their boats up inside this little lagoon and anchor them out. And there was several [] boat houses down there along that same area which is now kind of where the Alaska Marine Lines freight yard is now. And further to the west was a long dike that went out into the salt water I think was an extension of protecting the airport but it was kind of near as a kid [] that was the only air traffic and airplanes that came in here. Sometimes the PBYS would just taxi all the way down to the end of the runway and then taxi out into the water and then take out from the water, when they had a real heavy load of baggage or other freight that was on the airplane and they didn't think they could get airborne off the dirt strip out here[] a hundred miles to take off if they wanted to.

Stacey Baldrige: So they'd just roll into the water and

Stan Selmer: Yep, yep yep

Maxine Selmer: They have pontoons

Stan Selmer: Yah, they have pontoons yah

Stacey Baldrige: So when did all that get filled in?

Stan Selmer: Well the ore terminal opened I believe it was in 1968 and in 1967 they were still trying to build the east side of the waterfront when the crew went home on night and came back the next day all the rock work that they had done, they had stacked rock on the side of the hill and it had disappeared in an underwater landslide all the way across the canal and cut the long distance cable that ran from Skagway to Juneau. Then they changed where they were going to build it and put it over where it is now [] and that is where the Ore Terminal is now. And they started shipping ore I believe it was in 1969.

Maxine Selmer: What year did you work there, '80?

Stan Selmer: '81 and 82, I was the last manager at the ore terminal before the railroad closed and ceased to haul ore forever. []

Maxine Selmer: Dirty

Stan Selmer: Maxine would say dirty and I would say without a doubt it is the dirtiest job I've ever had in my entire life.

Maxine Selmer: Cross the plank

Stan Selmer: Yah dangerous too. It was my job to make sure that the ship got filled the way the plan was for the amount of ore in each hold and then we would either have to [] in the ship with a [] down in the hole as we loaded it but a lot of time there was no gangway between the ships and you'd have to put a big board down between the ships and you'd have to get across or crawl across that or walk across if you felt comfortable and in some of the worst conditions you can ever imagine of weather and wind and temperature that you can imagine. Um, but we survived.

Maxine Selmer: They must not have had OSHA in those days (ha ha)

Stan Selmer: They had OSHA, they had OSHA they just didn't know about the Ore Terminal. [] in the biggest concern and it became an issue was the lead contamination and the zinc contamination in town. Which I was on the City Council at the time when this became a big issue and then I was elected mayor in 1989 and there was still a [] in town and they brought in a company called VERCA I believe was the name of the company. And they had these big huge trucks that would suck dirt up into these trucks down to depths to two or three feet of dirt to get all the ore out of the community off of the property, off of the streets off of the rail bed and essentially when the whole thing was done the State of Alaska's version [] if you'd have left it alone you would have been better off. That's why the actual Ore Terminal basin was never touched and there's probably a stratified layer of ore down there maybe three or four feet deep that they just decided it was better to just leave it alone than to try to disturb it and clean it up [] for a couple of years because mothers assumed that their children were going to die of lead poisoning. People that relied on the Ore Terminal as earnings for themselves and for shipping companies that were tell everybody it wasn't that unsafe it was lead sulfide it wasn't lead oxide it was not something that was easily absorbed into the system as far as I know [] one or two ore terminal workers whoever had a lead level in their blood that was significant enough for them to have to take some time off in order for their lead levels to return to normal.

Maxine Selmer: Didn't the community get tested?

Stan Selmer: Yah everybody in town got lead tested if you wanted to. And there was very limited I'd say less than ten people had [] but I guess if you find one you have to address the entire situation. There was, there was a million dollars of more spent trying to clean up the place. It really, it cleaned it up, whether it helped anything I doubt but it did, the ore was hoisted on people that didn't want it and it got cleaned up. And let's just say that was a good thing there but the after [] .

Stacey Baldridge: What did they do with all the contaminated gravel that they scooped up?

Stan Selmer: They put it down in a big pile down at the south end of the ore terminal. And then they brought a ship in eventually and mixed it in with lead and zinc that was in the ore terminal and shipped it out of here.

Stacey Baldrige: Okay. Are there still lead and zinc problems still here in Skagway?

Stan Selmer: Not [] anywhere along the railroad tracks you could probably still find traces of lead, zinc, copper,

Maxine Selmer: asbestos

Stan Selmer: asbestos, silver, gold

Stacey Baldrige: Just from falling out

Stan Selmer: Just from a hundred fifteen years of transporting, ah I shouldn't say a hundred and fifteen because they stopped in '82 but certainly almost a hundred years of hauling ore [] some would show up in the railroad beds.

Maxine Selmer: We used to play on the railroad tracks in the asbestos, (ha ha) it was good for writing

Stan Selmer: Yah it was good for writing

Maxine Selmer: It was like lead pencil

Stacey Baldrige: Was that like asbestos dust?

Stan Selmer: Yah asbestos dust it was packed in I think 125 pound sacks

Maxine Selmer: Yah, on flatcars, it was transported on flat cars []

Stan Selmer: My career with the railroad it was shipped in sacks and it probably was shipped down loose before, covered but loose.

Maxine Selmer: it was shipped in sacks when I

Stan Selmer: Was it still shipped in sacks?

Maxine Selmer: Yah

Stan Selmer: But yah you're still going to get some asbestos making it's way out of there. There were a number of longshoremen that died of lung complications [] I don't know if was from this. I'm talking Duncan Huckel and Richard Dick that died of lung related issues Dincan had Myosenogravis but there was still a component that could have been [] to asbestos Ellis Hubbard maybe. So there was some exposure through the longshoremen's group [] asbestos handling.

Stacey Baldrige: What about when Ore Trucks, wasn't ore being hauled in trucks at some point?

Stan Selmer: Yes

Stacey Baldrige: And how did that affect the community having all this ore coming through town?

Stan Selmer: That's how the ore got spread throughout the community. The ore that was brought in by the railroad was held and confined to the railroad.[]

Maxine Selmer: [] When the ore comes down today it's in a flat *** and it is dumped from the side

Stan Selmer: And it is different ore too

Maxine Selmer: Ah that's true

Stan Selmer: What comes through Skagway now is Copper ore and it comes in a car that is a side dumper that is covered with

Maxine Selmer: Tarp

Stan Selmer: Very heavy tarp, but there were two generations of, two generations of trucks and two generations of containers that handled the lead and the zinc and it wasn't until they started to truck it down here in 1986 that the ore, that the lead and zinc ore got spread throughout the community because it was pretty much confined to the railroad.

Stacey Baldrige: I was just thinking []

Stan Selmer: The ore trucks that had the lead and zinc they were economy but they were also a big nuisance on the highway. I mean you can't pass them, they're coming down with tons and tons of ore and they could barely make it uphill and then you get [] the proper place to have that stuff hauled out of Skagway was on the railroad. It should never have been allowed on the highways.

Stacey Baldrige: And they only let it because the railroad was closed and it no longer

Stan Selmer: No the railroad closed because there was going to be a shutdown of the lead and zinc mine [] when those prices came back those companies that ran the mines no longer consider the railroad as a way to ship the ore in here because of the cost they could ship it down in the trucks cheaper. The railroad made a couple mistakes in their lifetime too; one of them was when they opened the mine in Farrow, Yukon. They should have built the railroad from Whitehorse to Farrow because what they had to do was [] from Farrow to Whitehorse and then transferred those containers to railroad cars. Well when they reopened in 1986 they put these pots on these trucks and they drove them from Farrow to Skagway and they didn't have to handle them twice. But from the local environmental concerns to have them be on a railroad that had already been on [] highway systems and in our neighborhoods

Stacey Baldrige: So you said you were mayor of Skagway from 1989?

Stan Selmer: '89 to '95

Stacey Baldrige: What are some of the things that you did or accomplished or participated in while you were mayor, besides this dealing with this contamination?

Stan Selmer: [] When I became a member of the city council which was in 1988, there was a big outcry about the city being heavy handed with their enforcement of the sprinkler ordinance for businesses on Broadway. Being local being extremely naïve I thought I'm going to go door to door and see [] sprinkler system in their building. Most of them were completely unwilling to do that, some of them were willing. I then became the mayor and formed a committee to continue my effort and they all saw the need but as the committee brought forward that we should do something [] business be sprinkled and then as the committee was disbanded they all individually spoke out against it which I learned a good lesson there. Sometimes you don't need committees to do what needed to be done. Well John Trodrudden and myself got to thinking well maybe we could use some of the sales tax money that we have [] in the form of a grant to have these businesses get most of the installation of the sprinkler system paid for with sales tax money that they help collect each year with the sales to the tourist that come into this town. So we put that together and the ordinance still exists. I don't know how well funded [] all of Broadway with that approach and Skagway, because I'm Norwegian I can knock on wood like that (he knocks on his head) Skagway has never lost their downtown district to a fire most other small, even medium sized Alaskan communities that have had major fires in their downtown area. We don't ever want to have one but I think [] twenty-three years later after we put that ordinance into effect, twenty-two years later I'm sorry after we put that sprinkler ordinance into effect the people decided okay their serious about having us sprinkle and not only are they serious but they are putting their money where their mouth is. Let's put these sprinklers in. And there are a number of people downtown that are still angry that we did that because [] that's because of either poor workmanship, failing to leave a light on or a heater on in the stand pipe room, I mean there has been some freezing and breaking in the businesses but while it is no fun to go up and clean up after a flood at least you can clean up after a flood. Cleaning up after a massive fire that you didn't protect yourself from

Stacey Baldrige: They're all connected if one goes

Stan Selmer: yah, yah a whole block will go with the park building sprinkled, with the other major buildings sprinkled um that's the accomplishment that I like to point at that we took care of during my tenure as mayor, the worst, the worst issue I had to deal with.

END of disk 1 or 3

Disk 2

Stacey Baldrige: So Maxine you said you were the President of the School Board, can you tell us when and what you did?

Maxine Selmer: It was back in the early '90s and we had about 130 kids in school now, then I'm sorry now we have around 70. But basically we worked to make education as good as we could.

Stacey Baldrige: Were you involved in anything else, I think you said you play the piano?

Maxine Selmer: I play the piano at the Presbyterian Church, yah.

Stacey Baldrige: I have a question back on the school board, how does the funding work for the schools?

Maxine Selmer: The school here they get money from the state based on current enrollment and then the City Council supplements quite a bit of the money through, partially through sales tax now [] and at that time the forest reserve fund was available.

Stacey Baldrige: What's the forest reserve fund?

Maxine Selmer: The Forest Reserves is when they cut, I'll have to remember, it is the receipts they got from the forests

Stan Selmer: The community gets sales from the US Forest Service so in order to make it equitable and have some districts get millions of dollars and other districts get zero they came up with this US Forest Service Fund Reserve, this US Forest Service Fund Receipt Reserve that helps Skagway, helps Haines helps other non-timber towns.

Stacey Baldrige: That's interesting

Maxine Selmer: But it was designated for [] for capital

Stan Selmer: Capital improvements

Maxine Selmer: Improvements yah, and education I believe there was a portion in there. So but the city funds out of, there's a certain they call it the cap that the state will allow them to in addition to what the state gives them and then they also another [] needs so.

Stacey Baldrige: How is this school different from when you guys went to school here to when you were on the school board?

Maxine Selmer: Well I was only here through fourth grade but um, certainly a lot more things going on in the school now, and of course technology and all those things we didn't have any of that and I went to school here when, I don't believe we had Kindergarten in those days, and I was in first grade in the old school and they had built a new addition on the old school with two big classrooms downstairs and classrooms upstairs and the one big classroom on the one side was the First and Second grade and the other one on the west side was the third and fourth grade. So I can remember moving down to the, the new portion of the school and how exciting that was for kids. And we had lockers that were one big bank of lockers but the doors switched in so it was like one big closet but individual doors turned in so that was pretty fancy [] so but one thing that was different was I know I learned the Christmas Story from the Bible. I know I learned that in First Grade from my school teacher. And you would never do that today. Stan went to the mission school up here until fourth grade, third grade?

Stan Selmer: Through third grade

Maxine Selmer: He came down to the public school when he was in fourth grade to challenge me as best he could.

Stan Selmer: I never lost a spelling bee to you.

Maxine Selmer: I know if I can't spell banana what can I say...

Stacey Baldrige: That's the word that you lost on?

Stan Selmer: Un-huh

Maxine Selmer: Un-huh

Stacey Baldrige: So what was the mission school like and how was that different from the public school?

Stan Selmer: Well the mission school was a catholic school and I didn't hear the Christmas Story in the catholic school. And that's a joke.

Maxine Selmer: You didn't have to memorize it?

Stan Selmer: No we probably did. The Sisters at St. Anne's which was the probably the largest group of nuns in southeast Alaska, they ran the hospital in Juneau and probably had some other southeast involvement but Skagway, Haines, Juneau the sisters of ST. Anne's were the teachers and there was a Monsignor and they were the ones that were responsible that [] and the school was staffed and it was a first through twelfth grade. One Priest was quite talented in making garments so he made all the vestments for all the churches in Alaska and he taught the kids in school how to run these looms and machines and [] that were going to high school. Monsignor Gallant who was as long as I can remember was the head of the school here his job here was to go around the world and find funds for the school here. Good friend of Bing Crosby's he had access to that type of moneys. And he kept the school going until 195[] she wanted to move us from the mission school to the public school before it closed so we could better adjust because she thought the younger we were for that adjustment the better off it would be. My brother had completed second grade and I had completed third grade when we moved to the public school. And it was quite a setback in the curriculum of the mission school to the public school was so far behind

Maxine Selmer: I think that is your opinion

Stan Selmer: It is my opinion, It is my opinion, it is my interview

Maxine Selmer: It's not completely your interview

Stacey Baldrige: It is both of your interviews we'll see what

Stan Selmer: Mrs. Rapuzzi was a substitute teacher a lot of that year because of issues that Mrs. Wagh had and I would even give the spelling lessons because she needed to find something challenging for me to do [] and gone into the fifth grade or maybe I was in sixth grade.

Maxine Selmer: why not high school?

Stan Selmer: Because I was not ready emotionally

Maxine Selmer: Okay (ha ha)

Stan Selmer: In the mission school there was a third, fourth and fifth grade and we were all in the same room. And all of us, all three boys that were in the third grade were moved into the fourth grade curriculum and even in some cases into the fifth grade curriculum [] perhaps it was that we had the third, fourth and fifth exposure that gave us to go back to public school was going back to learning what I had already learned in the first half of third grade. I always wished I could have stayed a couple more years at the mission school until it actually physically closed so then I could have gone to the public school and been the principal. (ha)

Stacey Baldrige: When did the mission school close?

Stan Selmer: I think it was fifty-nine. I remember they let all of us, I was in the public school then, they let us public school kids go down to the depot to say good-bye to Father Gallant and for some reason I think that was September of 1959. Um, there are other people that can verify that date but for me it was September of '59 it might have been September of '60.

Stacey Baldrige: []

Stan Selmer: My mother was Catholic very staunch catholic and she probably saw that the educational opportunities at the mission school were probably better than at the public school, or knowing my mother it could have been that she didn't like someone at the public school.

Maxine Selmer: Or it could have been the Christian, or Catholic education, too

Stan Selmer: Yah, and it could have been the catholic education, too [] a whole bunch of time in eighth grade when I was already in public school, learning Latin for the Latin masses.

Maxine Selmer: You were an altar boy, you weren't a priest

Stan Selmer: I wasn't a priest, I was an altar boy but I had to learn the Latin responses and as soon as I learned all that they switched to English. That made me mad and so I became a Protestant.

Maxine Selmer: (ha)

Stacey Baldrige: (ha ha)

Maxine Selmer: Well see the mission I don't know if you've been able to talk [] young men and women from around the state, mainly native families I believe and Father Gallant brought them here to educate them. You were talking about the work they did they also had a dairy out over the Skagway bridge for a period of time and the kids worked out there. When I was young, when I was little I took piano lessons up at the mission. But there was three or four, three barracks where the kids lived or they used to [] there for housing and I took piano lessons from Sister Mary Amy in one of those buildings. But the way I

was raised you had to be cautious when the mission kids came downtown. And they used to come downtown in a line I believe seeing them [] more of um, kind of but I won't say a division but where the catholic community was, what do I want to say, you know what I'm trying to say... like the catholics kind of had their own community and you didn't cross the bridge so to speak

Stan Selmer: There was a lot of discrimination in Skagway because they were catholics or because they were Eskimos or other native tribe members um, and it was difficult to be a mission kid if you lived at the mission

Maxine Selmer: Well Skagway is mainly a white community. I mean that's the way it was and still is today majority of people are white.[]

Stan Selmer: Yah, I lived across the street at Seventh Avenue and Broadway as I grew up and as Maxine said the kids from the mission would go downtown in a line. They would have a nun in front and a nun in behind them and maybe a priest with them and we'd go to the movie theater. And I can remember an event over the course of the years that there was some damage or some vandalism or some issues caused at the local [] problem and so the monsignor said all right if that's the way that you want to play this game then we'll pick a different night of the week to go to the movies. So they changed whatever their night was to Thursday night and all the vandalism still continued on so it wasn't anything to do with the catholic kids or the native kids it was just an act of discrimination in my mind, let's blame the mission kids.

Maxine Selmer: But I was just thinking about because I went to the Presbyterian Church you mother didn't want you to associate with me. But I fooled her and I snatched you up and now you belong to the Presbyterian Church.

Stan Selmer: That's true, there was the division in town

Maxine Selmer: And even with the Assembly of God Church too. I mean it was more separate than it is today, but.

Stan Selmer: Yah, [] but I didn't experience, once the mission closed I didn't experience the discrimination that I had experienced through being at the mission. I grew up, my best friends were the native kids the white kids didn't matter we were all kids. We grew up doing whatever we wanted to do. [] grew up with and we're the best of friends we always will be.

Stacey Baldrige: So when you were at the mission school as kind of a local kid at the mission school versus a native kid there boarding were there differences in the school not in the community?

Stan Selmer: Yes I felt pressure from the native kids that lived there to do certain things that they required of us to be accepted at the school. But I mean it some of it was just more you were mixed in with bigger kids where as at the public school you have First and Second grade, Third and Fourth grade, Fifth and Sixth. Where as I'm in Third to Fifth grade, you have a pretty big swing in social adjusting kids. And third grade was a pretty tough year for me because [] these kids on the weekend because they couldn't go places I could go but they expected me to get them stuff from downtown whether it was

candy bar, ink pen or whatever and you just felt pressured to do it because they expected you to pay for it and they wouldn't have any money to pay you back. I mean it wasn't an overriding issue, the education inside the classroom the nuns ran the classes [] wash your mouth out with F*** N *** Soap if you were caught cursing

Maxine Selmer: a ruler

Stan Selmer: Well they didn't have a ruler they had a rubber strap about a foot long, if there was some other misbehavior. It went washing your mouth out with soap for cursing to a swat across the hand or more than one swat with the black strap to then a full blow beating from one of [] and then a *** from one of the priest if it was needed, it occurred, it occurred.

Stacey Baldrige: Were you a victim of the discipline?

Stan Selmer: No

Maxine Selmer: He's perfect, he's always perfect

Stan Selmer: No I did get one slap across the hand for the strap. I can't remember what it was for. I think the most devastating thing I saw in school was when I was in the second grade [] peed his pants and probably had peed his pants for about the tenth time in that class. And the nuns brought him up, I shouldn't say nuns, the nun, the teacher had him stand in front of the class to show everybody what he had done. And that seemed even in second grade that seemed cruel, unusual punishment even in 1955 and that was going beyond. Maybe calling his parents and have them bring him a change of clothes and try to work with the parents and try to find out why he was doing that, because I really don't know. That was, none of that would cause me to say that I would have rather gone to school anywhere else. I had a great childhood in Skagway. I had all the lumps and bumps and [] and not fights it was just a great place to grow up and we had no television, thank god, until I was 16. And then that was the end, not just for Skagway but I think for anywhere in the world where TV went in started taking over as a form of entertainment.

Maxine Selmer: But we used to get canned TV up here, they'd bring it up [] and we had a what was that called a circular message board that would play all the time on your TV. You could take a 3x5 cards in and put your advertisement on it and those would just roll on the TV screen a lot. And you'd have to wait on the weather, if you're watching a Soap Opera or something you'd have to wait on the weather sometimes to get the next group of tapes in.

Stacey Baldrige: So Maxine with you being in the community here and in the public schools you were taught that downtown to be wary of mission kids. Did you become friends with native kids?

Maxine Selmer: No, no I never did but some of that could be because I was an only child and I pretty much lived over in the Pullen House grounds then too. I could remember in the spring the kids coming down to wash the windows of the Pullen House. And my mom saying I wasn't to go outside when they were down there doing that. You know the things that

Stan Selmer: And I saw it the other way

Stacey Baldrige: Yah that's why I was asking

Maxine Selmer: Yah

Stacey Baldrige: It's interesting []

Maxine Selmer: I can remember [] at the kids and thinking you know I didn't understand why, what the big deal was.

Stacey Baldrige: So it was religious and racial discrimination?

Maxine Selmer: I think it is concerned because the kids because these are not top notch kids or kids that could do harm, [] yah basically. But now that I'm older I understand what it was. But at the time I didn't. It's too bad really.

Stan Selmer: Byron Malott was probably the most famous mission kid. He went to school here and became the head of the permanent fund eventually.

Maxine Selmer: [] occurred and people don't talk about them really

Stan Selmer: There's not many of us left I think there are four or five mission kids who are still here in town. I am one of them. Andrew who's in our band he's another one. He was a little bit older than I was so we weren't in classes together.

Stacey Baldrige: And where exactly is the mission school located?

Stan Selmer: It is Fifteenth to Seventeenth to []

Maxine Selmer: Garden City RV park is there now

Stacey Baldrige: Okay, what happened to the building?

Stan Selmer: They gradually slowly tore it down

Maxine Selmer: the final building, didn't the original building burn?

Stan Selmer: Yes but they rebuilt it, the original building burned before we were born.

Maxine Selmer: Wasn't your mother was the last funeral held in that building

Stan Selmer: Yah, and that was 1975. And it was used as a hospital for a while between the time, in '67 the centennial year they granted some money to Skagway for a new hospital, a clinic so they tore the old [] needed someplace temporarily so the second floor where the nuns stayed at the church [] where they could be heated separately from everyone else was the local clinic I think for a year or two

Maxine Selmer: Yah, well I went up there when I was expecting Phillip, that was our oldest child so that was in Sixty ...

Stan Selmer: '69

Maxine Selmer: Yah, '68, '69 yah

Stan Selmer: Maybe as late as 1970 it was Dr. Layman was Doctor there and then Mom's buried in '75 it wasn't too long after that that they built the new church.

Maxine Selmer: yah, well two of our kids were the first to be baptized in the new church

Stan Selmer: New church.

Maxine Selmer: Yah

Stacey Baldrige: Which is the one down ...

Maxine Selmer: the green one

Stan Selmer: The Green Church

Maxine Selmer: the catholic church

Stan Selmer: yah, catholic church

Stacey Baldrige: Your mother was a nurse

Stan Selmer: Un-huh

Stacey Baldrige: Can you talk about that? (phone call disrupts, tape stops then starts again) So Stan your mother was a nurse here can you talk a little bit about that?

Stan Selmer: Yes she had been a nurse in several places in the United States, Texas, Minnesota, San Francisco, [] opened but she had seen an ad for nurses needed in Alaska and she had focused in on this nurse's job in Skagway. So when she came up here to interview for this job she thought she would be too old for this job so she lied about her age only by a couple years none of us can still [] got the job in 1945 and at that time the United States Army had occupied Skagway and there were anywhere from 2 to 5000 soldiers stationed here and so the hospital was busy with any kind of hospital [] a fourteen hospital bed

Stacey Baldrige: Was that still the White Pass hospital?

Stan Selmer: That was the White Pass hospital but the army took over White Pass when they came in during WWII. They took over the trains and virtually everything in town was militarized. So she worked for Dr. Dahl from 1945 to whenever he passed away and taking breaks to have three children, me in '48 [] and our sister in '52 and obviously in 1946 she met and married my dad they left here for a while to go to Minnesota like I said earlier in the interview. And came back here and she went back to work there in

'48. And she worked until she retired in 1967 [] I don't know she ended up being the town doctor when the last doctor in town left and there are a lot of people here, still that she was the primary care giver for. And she finally just couldn't do it anymore and she wanted to do other things [] limited work into the seventies.

Maxine Selmer: Well people used to come and knock on her door all the time and she really didn't want to take the calls, sometimes she turned them down depending on what it was and sometimes she took it but she was trying to be retired.

Stacey Baldrige: You said there were a lot of things she did, she delivered babies

Stan Selmer: Delivered babies, set broken [] massive wounds I can remember a kid being brought in to an emergency room and she was the only person there and me so I had to help hold down this kid while she suitchered up this huge cut on his foot. And the kid's uncle had brought him in but the kid's uncle was one of those people who would flat line or pass out if he saw blood [] I mean she was very good at what she did and she was very respected at the medical end of things and in between that she also worked for a few years as a coach cleaner for the railroad where she made more money than she ever made at nursing but ... she also realized that the town needed her to be a nurse too

Maxine Selmer: And then she kind of took on the animal care [] tour

Stan Selmer: Yah

Maxine Selmer: which we enjoy because now our daughter has picked that up, that concern.

Stacey Baldrige: Yah you said your daughter started the animal shelter here.

Maxine Selmer: Yes

Stan Selmer: Yes

Stacey Baldrige: Seems she's inherited that from her grandmother?

Maxine Selmer: Right

Stacey Baldrige: So how was it that you ended up there on the job with your mom in the emergency room? It doesn't seem normal.

Stan Selmer: Us to check in with her when my Dad was working and we were out of school. And I'm sure that day I was just saying Mom can I go swimming up at the lake, or can I do something can I do that and it just happened to be the misfortune of a time that I needed to help her sew somebody up. And when we were at school she'd have us if she was working day shift which she very seldom here [] have lunch at the hospital with her.

Stacey Baldrige: Oh that's nice

Stan Selmer: Yah it was because the school was basically just across the street.

Stacey Baldrige: So what kind of training did she receive prior to coming to Alaska.

Stan Selmer: Ah, she'd gone to Nursing School and graduated in, I want to say 1940 but maybe it was earlier than that, in Minneapolis, St. Paul. And she was a registered nurse and I think we still have her registered nurse

Maxine Selmer: Yes we do

Stan Selmer: One of her licenses

Stacey Baldrige: Do you remember growing up as a kid having people knocking on the door and her being called out in the middle of the night.

Stan Selmer: I remember the call outs in the middle of the night more often than not those were bar fights [] the most famous one that I remember is she came back one night and she said, "You won't believe who I had to sew up this time." " Who?" "Our Doctor." The doctor had gotten into a fight and she had to sew him up. But yah she did everything. There's, there's still one other nurse in town here and I don't know if the park has spent any time or effort talking to Linda Bingham but you should write that name down.

Maxine Selmer: and Wanda Warner the other long time nurse here just passed away

Stan Selmer: She's dead

Stacey Baldrige: We did interview her in December

Maxine Selmer: Oh you did good

Stan Selmer: Good, Linda was a nurse with my mom and Wanda. My mom was here a year ahead of both Mom and Wanda but Linda and Wanda had worked with my Mom. [] I think it was good you didn't go anywhere for anything. Appendixes were taken out here, babies were born here, other minor surgeries were done here, um, but once we lost the doctor

Stan Selmer: Well I'll let you tell the story about being pregnant with Phillip []

Maxine Selmer: What story

Stan Selmer: He said he was the visiting doctor he was out of Haines, Dr. Jones and he said something is just not right I'd feel better if you didn't have this baby here. So we, she had to go outside to have this baby because the baby was going to be born [] breech and he didn't feel that he had the expertise or the staff to help support a baby born that way.

Maxine Selmer: Another thing that happened, it must have been when the clinic was being built

Stan Selmer: Yes and Layman had been fired or left or something.

Maxine Selmer: We'd fly over to Haines to see Dr. Jones and go to their clinic there and a lot of people would go over there to have their babies.

Stacey Baldrige: Tell us briefly what the history of [] you had a clinic and now

Maxine Selmer: Now we have a really nice clinic

Stacey Baldrige: Yes what is the time period progression? Can you tell me the dates?

Stan Selmer: Yes White Pass Hospital was built in the early 1900s before 1910 I believe.

Maxine Selmer: Well there was that Bishop Row Hospital but that was during the gold rush

Stan Selmer: Yes that was during the gold rush and I believe the army may have used Bishop Row during WWII but I'm not sure about that, it doesn't matter [] abandoned in 1967 and then Centennial money built the new Dahl Memorial Clinic at that same location. At the same time they used the Pious X mission building as a temporary clinic and then the Dahl Memorial Clinic was opened and dedicated I can't remember []

Maxine Selmer: Not too long after that. It was when they were building all the blue buildings

Stan Selmer: Butler

Maxine Selmer: the Blue Butler buildings at White Pass, the depot was one

Stan Selmer: the little carrier shed

Maxine Selmer: the school, the gym the recreational center is the one that is still standing

Stan Selmer: Still standing but ... in Municipalities and maybe it's the same worldwide [] where they don't take care of things and so they just didn't take care of this clinic building and it got to the place that it was pretty well chopped to pieces in the inside because you needed to make room for dentist, the public health nurse, the eye doctor, the mental health counciler and the building was never designed for anything other than a doctor [] seen for a wart for your foot and this became a full fledge clinic and the city didn't even maintain the outside of the building. So then they started putting their hand out to the Rasmusan foundation to get money to start building the new clinic which is a fantastic building but I'll say the same thing on camera that I've said off camera, that let's hope to god that they maintain this building because [] people that are going to come in and give grant money to a city that has an almost hundred year history of not taking care of their clinics.

Stacey Baldrige: Why do you think that is? Why won't they take care of their clinics?

Stan Selmer: I have a great belief that we take care of everything in this town that supports tourism and very little that supports year-round residents [] the clinic is a year-round resident based thing and it just doesn't get the attention that AB Hall gets or that City Hall gets or that our downtown gets. I mean they, every Thursday morning they go out and sweep Broadway. So every Thursday if it's a warm enough day

you could go out and cook your eggs on Broadway and eat them because it's that clean but yet if you go up to this clinic []this year.

Maxine Selmer: Or shoveled in the winter

Stan Selmer: Or shoveled in the wintertime, I mean ... this is a wonderful place to live but there are some really crappy things that people overlook. And one of the things that they overlook is that this is a vibrant community of 500 people that choose to live here. It is not a cosmopolitan [] and the 500 people have just got to get more vocal more involved with their needs.

Maxine Selmer: But I think that the city is also famous for getting grants through things and building it and then forgetting that they're going to have to maintain it long term [] I'm sure it's not

Stan Selmer: It's not

Maxine Selmer: But I think that happens, you get this wonderful *** then the price of fuel goes through the roof and you're still responsible for keeping that building warm

Stacey Baldrige: Now does the clinic have a permanent year-round Doctor?

Stan Selmer: No

Maxine Selmer: No, we have four, we have a nurse practitioner,

Stan Selmer: We have three nurse practitioners and I think a couple I think one RN and maybe [] staffed

Maxine Selmer: It's overly staffed for winter

Stan Selmer: Overly staffed with numbers then they use the - you need to have this many in the summer so you've got to keep them busy in the winter. Ah, but if I were ever to run for office again in this town, and that will never happen again by the way, I would to try to eliminate property tax. We make enough money on sales tax, from the people that are causing the cost meaning tourist [] but they seem to hell bent to build things for tourist and then putting the maintenance of it on the backs of the real property tax payers and it is annoying, it really is annoying that I've got to pay some of my tax to help maintain something that was built by grant money for tourism, it's nuts

Maxine Selmer: Except that tourists are our bread and butter

Stan Selmer: [] if we have the sales tax that adequately assesses eliminate the property tax. Then you only live on what you make that year. You don't live on what you're going to rip the other people off for which I don't agree with.

Stacey Baldrige: Why do you say you wouldn't run for office again?

Stan Selmer: Because I was on the city council in the '60s [] the '90s, the 2000 I was mayor in the eighties and the nineties and I've done my community service and I reserved the right to bitch about

anything that I want to. And I reserve the right when I go to the council meetings to say I've been where you guys are, I know how it's done, don't give me that crap []

Maxine Selmer: [] we relate less to the younger people, now that they come in with different ideas than what we were raised with or what we thought growing up to sixty years old you know but it's a different time.

Stan Selmer: Yah, and I can accept that even though they are still wrong[]

Stacey Baldrige: I wanted to ask you a little bit about your Pullen collection in Washington You said you grew up here in the Pullen house and then your mother moved

Maxine Selmer: yes in 1958

Stacey Baldrige: your mother moved to Washington with the Pullen collection and it is in a museum in Washington or something?

Maxine Selmer: We did um, my Mother [] here in the early 1900s her grandmother brought her up here. They were originally from Forks in La Poosh, Washington. And

Stan Selmer: you got me confused, your mother?

Stacey Baldrige: her Grandmother

Maxine Selmer: My grandmother my mother was from Forks.

Stan Selmer: But your Mother was born in Chena

Maxine Selmer: Yes they were living in Forks and my mother ... okay you want to go back that far?

Stacey Baldrige: Sure you have us confused []

Maxine Selmer: Well Harriet Pullen was up here for the gold rush, her daughter came up here in fact her daughter and her oldest son both attended McCabe College which is now our City Hall for a year. [] Harriet always had really high expectations for her children and she sent her daughter back to New York to nursing school and she became a nurse.

Stacey Baldrige: And what was her daughter's name?

Maxine Selmer: Mildred, Mildred was my grandmother and then when Mildred came back [] Jerry Moriarity who was working for the railroad and then they started building the Alaska railroad up in Fairbanks, Chena area so my grandparents moved up there and my mother was born in Chena, Alaska and she always said she was the first white child born in Chena. And the prospectors [] things but so he was up there to work on the railroad and from there they went back to Forks, Washington which Harriet and Dan Pullen were from Quileeoot or La Poosh. She came to the gold rush originally because they had lost their homestead there in Washington when Washington became a state and they were allocating land or their homestead, or their estate was in the one mile that was given to the Quileeoot Indians and

there was quite a lot of long legal battle that ensued and they lost everything and that was the motivating force for her coming. But a lot of family was down around La Poosh []

I forgot where I was going

Stan Selmer: Pullen collection

Stacey Baldrige: Pullen collection

Maxine Selmer: Oh, well anyways so then my Great-Grandmother Harriet took my mother out of Forks, she smuggled her out in a hay wagon to get her away from her living conditions and brought her up here. She raised her as her own and adopted her when she was 19 years old [] basically they were there for my grandmother she helped her run the Pullen House and it was with my Mother and Harriet's son Royal that Harriet was able I mean they supported her and helped her so when she died her will left her property to my mother and to Royal. And they decided that Royal would get all the land and my mother [] above the ground so she got the museum. And she ran the hotel there for a while. Until about I don't know '56

Stan Selmer: '56

Maxine Selmer: And they just couldn't make it. They stopped paying taxes on the land because they didn't own it anyways. Great Uncle Royal had given the property to his son and the son was having business problems at the time and decided he was just going to let it go for taxes he had no interest in it. They lived in North Dakota who cared about Skagway, Alaska [] who was on the City council at the time got in ahead of the Tax Sale and made an offer to um, to Edward I guess wasn't it, yes it was Edward. And my parents at the same time made an offer to buy the land and he wouldn't sell it to them. He went ahead and sold it to McGee so they were in a position [] so they decided they would take it up to Washington. Ah, they tried to sell it to the city here and the city wasn't interested. They tried to buy McCabe College which was at the end of being a Territorial prison at the time because that's when we became a state. And they couldn't acquire the building so they wanted to get it in a fire-proof building [] and moved it out to Lynwood, Washington and it was in a fire proof, they built a fire-proof building for it to stay in. And it stayed out there quite a while out on the highway and then they moved it into the Seattle Center after the Seattle's World Fair and it stayed there until my mom was ready to retire [] and then there was quite a lot of discussion in the legislature and back and forth and they just thought her price was just too high. I think that she wanted \$250,000 for it at the time and they didn't think that she really knew the value and yatta, yatta, yatta

Stacey Baldrige: And what time period was it that she was trying to sell it?

Maxine Selmer: In the early seventies, Uriyan

Stan Selmer: What's that?

Maxine Selmer: I was trying to think, Kathy Uriyan was on, her husband was on the legislature and he fought against it. She was, she came down and she was pro the state buying it and he wasn't but she

didn't have any say so anyway they weren't interested in the legislature and she felt like she had no choice so [] she auctioned it off in about '73

Stan Selmer: I think it was '73

Maxine Selmer: '72 or '73 because Stephanie was a baby, and she got well over what she had predicted it would sell for. And the auctioneer spent the money, he had a fancy sportscar from Italy and sponsored a hydroplane and did a few other things and then he dropped dead at the age of forty-five. So they had to sue the estate to try to recoup what he had spent and it ended up with having

Stan Selmer: Cents on the dollar

Maxine Selmer: Cents on the dollar but with having another auction of things that he had in his auction house to generate money to pay them back. So that's the story of the museum.

Stacey Baldrige: So whatever she auctioned off, she auctioned off piecemeal whatever the people wanted, it wasn't the whole thing?

Maxine Selmer: Well no she took the museum moved it from the food circus building in Seattle is where it was down to Greenfield Galleries and it went piece by piece.

Stacey Baldrige: Can you describe what kinds of things were in that?

Maxine Selmer: Chilkoot blankets, Soapy Smith's gambling equipment,

Stan Selmer: Aleut baskets

Maxine Selmer: Yah, Indian baskets, memorabilia and pictures, china and silver and all the things that were used in the Pullen House, just a huge collection of history.

Stacey Baldrige: So you know how your Grandmother acquired all those items?

Maxine Selmer: From being here, people would give her things and she always had [] I won't say high faluten things but she always wanted the best of everything and at Pullen House you got real crème on the table and her tables were set with silver and china and so then she started a little gold rush museum and acquired things that way as she could. Just that way...

Stacey Baldrige: What did you say, So you said that your Grandmother's name was Mildred. Your Mother's name was

Maxine Selmer: Mary

Stacey Baldrige: Harriet, Mildred, Mary

Maxine Selmer: Right, Maxine (haha)

Stacey Baldrige: Have you been to the museum, the Greenfield Galleries?

Maxine Selmer: Well that was in the seventies, that's when they sold it.

Stacey Baldrige: When they moved the museum down to Washington did you went down there?

Maxine Selmer: That's when we moved down there

Stacey Baldrige: And did you help with the museum?

Maxine Selmer: Um, I did when, we had our house attached to the museum. I was ten when we moved down and I don't think that the museum came down for a year or two [] pack it up and it was during that period that they sold the Golden North also, but um, and I did when I was younger and then when it moved down to Seattle Center I didn't work at the museum but I worked at the museum next door which was Jones Fantastic Museum

Stacey Baldrige: You worked for the competition

Maxine Selmer: Yes completely different museum, so [] yah

Stacey Baldrige: Did she talk about it?

Maxine Selmer: She really didn't talk about things much. We did have, she had a gun that belonged to Soapy Smith that was stolen out of the museum. They had built standing showcases that were panels with glass in them [] with effort reach over the top and somebody had reached over the top and snagged that gun out of there. And then after she died we got a call from the Seattle police detectives, and we had an unlisted number at the time and they had recovered this gun, someone had recovered it in a stolen goods operation in California and then somebody [] retired deputy Marshall bought it from this illegal person and then ran the serial number and traced it back to my Mom and then to us. That's always been, and we went down and picked it up in a paperbag.

Stacey Baldrige: And so what was that like growing up as a child at the Pullen House and around there?

Maxine Selmer: Oh it was great.

Stacey Baldrige: What kind of memories do you have from around there?

Maxine Selmer: We had the whole Pullen house to play in once it was closed and the grounds over there was a lot, the creeks ran through there. And it was just a great place for a kid to be. And my Mom we also had the annex which we called the Annex which was another building on the property and [] that's where we lived actually. We had an apartment there she had some rooms upstairs and so she ran that as a smaller hotel and so that's where we lived. Because I can remember being in trouble for drawing hopscotch on the stairs because after all it was a business you know.

Stacey Baldrige: Yes so at the Pullen House[] out of sight?

Maxine Selmer: I wasn't around when the Pullen House, I mean ...

Stacey Baldrige: It wasn't operating like that?

Maxine Selmer: It wasn't operating like that it was operating like a hotel. And they didn't do the meals and things like when Harriet was alive. It was more of rooms

Stacey Baldrige: So you could still be running around

Maxine Selmer: I could still be running around yah, yah

Stacey Baldrige: [] lives here in Skagway and growing up and your family histories?

Stan Selmer: Not anything that is really worth anything, um you know there's life's experiences but I'm writing a book so I'll put those in the book.

Stacey Baldrige: Good then I will look forward to reading your book!

Stan Selmer: But naw, I think that covers

Maxine Selmer: Covers pretty much

Stacey Baldrige: [] find recreation

Stan Selmer: Rock and Roll

Maxine Selmer: Well see since I was only till ten I did what kids do ride your bike and play in the creek and try to catch those minnows with safety pins, which I realize is impossible those type of things.

Stan Selmer: For a girl

Maxine Selmer: No. But he was here through high school so he probably has more

Stan Selmer: Well I had a friend of mine [] you know we grew up together close friends with Maxine too. And he called me up one day and said hey we're putting a rock and roll band together Duran will be on drums, Gary will be on guitar and I'll be guitar and we'll pick up another guitar and by golly you can be the manager. Well I already knew that I could play the guitar better than anybody in the band and I could also play drums better [] so I thought why do I need to be a manager of a band? So I formed my own band and I'm still in a band.

Maxine Selmer: That was a lot of your high school

Stan Selmer: Yah, yah we ah, we really we rented the Presbyterian Church Rec Hall and held dances every Friday night

Stacey Baldrige: Wow

Stan Selmer: and had all the money that we ever wanted as kids because we charged a buck to get in or fifty cents something like that []

Stacey Baldrige: []

Stan Selmer: We were called the Aristocrats, because that is exactly what we weren't. And now the band is Four over Fifty and it should actually be called

Maxine Selmer: Three Over Sixty

Stan Selmer: Five Over Sixty, we've gotten quite old

Maxine Selmer: Yes, but even when I was here as a youngster, back when I was here we had the movie theater, which that is gone now, but we spent a lot of time going to the movies []

Stan Selmer: Go to movies

Maxine Selmer: Yah

Stacey Baldrige: So Stan did you go out for college?

Stan Selmer: I went to the University of Alaska, in Fairbanks and then finished my education at a business college in Linwood in ... 1973, yah

Maxine Selmer: I'm terrible with years

Stan Selmer: And then took some Post-graduate courses at the University of Michigan and Washington State University.

Stacey Baldrige: [] Thanks

Maxine Selmer: Thanks

Stan Selmer: Yes thanks for coming by

Disk 3 of 3

Maxine Selmer: You ready?

Stacey Baldrige: Yah

Maxine Selmer: Okay, about McCabe college it was built to be a school. My grandmother Mildred and her brother Dan both attended school there and the courses were college courses quite a variety. French, I remember seeing French on her report card and she did very well. Then they closed it down and I honestly don't remember but at the time of statehood it was the Territorial Marshall's office and there is a jail in there as well. And Louie and

Stan Selmer: Clara

Maxine Selmer: and Clara Rapossi, he was the Marshall here at the time. And then it went up for sale [] earlier my parents tried to purchase it because it was a fire proof building but it ended up in the hands of the city and they've moved their city hall in there and have actually added on to it, done some work over there. But that's kind of a the Readers' Digest sort of version of it

Stan Selmer: It was also the territorial court in that building

Maxine Selmer: Court right, in the upstairs

Stacey Baldrige: So when was it built?

Maxine Selmer: 1899 I would say, 1898?

Stan Selmer: '98, '99

Stacey Baldrige: Was it built as a college? Or it was it built ...

Maxine Selmer: If you want to pause for a minute (tape break)

Stacey Baldrige: Questions of McCabe College

Maxine Selmer: which I may not be able to answer

Stacey Baldrige: Was it built as a school?

Maxine Selmer: Yes it was

Stacey Baldrige: And we don't know when it was built but

Maxine Selmer: It was during the gold rush time

Stacey Baldrige: Oh okay and you think it was Methodist?

Maxine Selmer: I think so

Stacey Baldrige: But anyway, it's interesting, why they built it

Maxine Selmer: Do you know why? At that time they were building schools at different places in the country and they came up here thinking this was going to be a hub, a good place to do that.

Stacey Baldrige: And the college was only in operation for a year

Maxine Selmer: Only for a year

Stacey Baldrige: That's too bad

Maxine Selmer: Yah, like I said I did some research but I'd have to go back and look at it because that was twenty years ago.

Stacey Baldrige: Well thank you

Maxine Selmer: Thank you