

RECORDED INTERVIEW OF KARL GURCKE
CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER
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KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIBED BY RUTH SENSENIG

[00:00:00]KAREN BREWSTER: This is Karen Brewster, and today is October 11, 2018, and I'm here in Skagway, Alaska, with Karl Gurcke in his offices at Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, and this interview is for the Klondike Gold Rush Park's oral history project. Thank you, Karl.

KARL GURCKE: You're welcome.

[00:00:22]KAREN BREWSTER: And um, we know you've been interviewed many times before. I know most recently by Susannah Dowds and Deb Boettcher.

KARL GURCKE: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Which was just a couple years ago for that Park Service 100th Anniversary thing.

KARL GURCKE: Right. Um-hm. U-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so, we will not recreate the wheel and do your whole life history.

KARL GURCKE: Ok.

[00:00:43]KAREN BREWSTER: We'll move on from that. But from that interview, I learned you came here around 1984. Is that correct?

KARL GURCKE: That's right, the summer of 1984.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you were working on the Dyea archeological survey?

KARL GURCKE: That's correct.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, and so in that -- a previous interview, you talked about working on that project, and um, but I was wondering, what did you find out at the end of all that? What kind of things did you disc -- artifacts you discovered or -- ? I know you wrote a report, but can you summarize, kind of, the findings?

[00:01:15]KARL GURCKE: Well, the intent of the report was to map in the archeological features of Dyea. We already knew that Dyea had a -- a -- a very rich archeological history. There was a lot of artifacts and features around. And so the basic intent was to map in all those features, to get a highly accurate map of where those archeological features had been, or were.

[00:01:41]Caroline Carley, back in 1979, had been involved in another project to do the initial survey, archeological survey, of Dyea, and she had found and located a lot of these features and had done a rough map of where they were located in relationship to the whole overall scene and the river and the road and whatnot. [00:02:05]So our job was to map in -- basically map in the features much more accurately with a, what they called an EDM, which is an electronic distance measure. It's a very high-end survey instrument. And then we were also going to, um --

[00:02:22]We had basically four main tasks. I was given a task directive from the regional office

when I had gone up to Anchorage at the beginning of June. And the four tasks were, task one was to create a two-meter interval, contra-interval map of the entire town site, which is basically the ground. The ups and downs of the ground. The whole ground itself, how it, you know, it drops down for the river, and then there's the slough, and then there's a little raise here and there's a raise there and all that. The concept behind that was to see if we could find any artificial, you know, illustrations of say, a road here or a road there. Some artificial constructions. [00:03:11]Uh, the second part was to do that archeological base map, to map in all the archeological features. Uh, the third was to create an archeological grid on the ground, actually on the ground, with benchmarks in the ground, every ten meters going north and then east and west, so that future archeologists would be able to base their excavations or whatnot off of those -- off of that grid. [00:03:44]And then, finally, the fourth task was to excavate twenty archeological test pits, one meter by one meter test pits. And that particular aspect was sort of a big thing for the regional office because they had never -- or had rarely, put in test pits on park property, certainly not in Skagway, except for -- [00:04:08]Well, in Skagway they had done some work, not the regional office, but Denver Service Center had done archeological work, but, uh, in other parks, they had done very little archeological work actually excavating. So that was the four main tasks.

[00:04:23]KAREN BREWSTER: And did you find anything in those test pits?

KARL GURCKE: Uh, well, we did. We actually did. It was -- it was varied. Some test pits we found very little, but there was one particular test pit where we only went down, oh, what was it, twenty, thirty centimeters, and found over 4000 artifacts.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, my goodness.

[00:04:43]KARL GURCKE: So it was just jam-packed with artifacts. I mean, they were -- course, they were the usual rusty nails and bits and pieces, but there was also bits of brick, ceramic, Limoges china, and there was this little strange wooden square with a hole in it, and it was covered by metal. Some sort of jewelry item. I'm not sure what it was, but interesting little bit and pieces. [00:05:15]So basically, what I like to say after that experience, Dyea was sort of like a very worn but very elaborate carpet. So there are places that were totally devoid of things, where the carpet had been completely worn through and it just didn't exist anymore. And then there were other areas that were very rich with stuff. You know, the design was just wonderful. So that's sort of what I learned. [00:05:48]And then, of course, I also learned that the river was taking out -- had taken out a lot of the Dyea town site, as it's still doing. Um, that first summer, I noticed human remains in the river.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

KARL GURCKE: Right by the town site cemetery. Uh, and I asked the park about that and they said, we don't know -- we don't want to know anything about that. It was something they wanted to keep quiet, and they just didn't want to know. [00:06:19]Um, and um, so I got a better idea of where things were located. You know, where those bright patches of carpet were located, where the really rich stuff was located, and where other things were not. It took a number of years to do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right.

KARL GURCKE: But I was beginning to understand.

[00:06:38]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, yeah, it sounds like it was very important kind of baseline information. None of that had been done out there?

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. Exactly. We had the Carley stuff, so that sort of showed the way, but now I was getting into the really fine stuff, saying, "Yeah. It's over here. It's not over there. It's here, but not there." You know, things like that. [00:06:58]And one of the things that has been still difficult is to find -- to lay out where the streets were, the street grid was, because at that time the downtown area of Dyea had no trees. There were just no trees at all, although they were planted.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

KARL GURCKE: The residents of Dyea actually planted a number of trees along Broadway and several trees along Main Street, ah so -- And then there was this rectangle of trees that was later planted in the aughts and the teens that actually shows up today around the false front. [00:07:41]Um, and so basically, what we did, we started out -- well, I should step back a little bit. I went up to -- I got the job in -- in -- in, oh, I guess it was May of '84. Went up to Anchorage in early June. Um, they put me up. Um, we had conversations. They gave me this task directive that had already been worked on. I went around and, you know, gathered the equipment. They gave me a quick training course in how to use this EDM. I used basic transit before. You had to run lines and set up grids and map in things, but I hadn't -- I'd never used this electronic instrument there. [00:08:34]And the neat thing about that was, you know, when you do a manual survey with these old transits, you know, you have to look at the -- the rod and the upper portion and the lower portion, and you have to do a lot of handheld calculations that trim distance. This, you just pressed the button, and it sent out an infrared beam that hit the -- the, um, crystal prism that was located where every --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: -- ever it was, you know, and then it bounced back and it gave you that information right away, so you just wrote that down. Nowadays, of course, they have a computer that does that and actually produces the mapping. You don't have --

[00:09:08]KAREN BREWSTER: And now they have ground-penetrating radar, which is probably even more advanced.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, they do have that. Um, and they have the now GPS that you just walk over and you press a button.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And it goes up to the satellite and you can locate the -- where you are somewhat precisely, you know. Um, so, yeah. I was dealing with old technology.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: Ancient technology in the '80's.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. [00:09:35]And then I know in '87, you became the cultural resource specialist.

KARL GURCKE: That's right.

KAREN BREWSTER: So, you kinda went from archeologist to a wider purvue.

KARL GURCKE: With a wider thing, yeah. So '84, we did that, and that survey, the initial survey, was actually very brief. It was just the latter part of -- well, I started out July 5th. I came back. I came down to Skagway in late June, spent about two, three weeks, two weeks maybe, working on a project for Cathy Blee, which was this Block 24 block project, where the Moore House is. She was doing some testing over there. She was from the Denver Service Center, and so she came down early July, and I had this packet of information with photographs, going

through the park's photograph collection, historic photograph collection, to help her on that project. [00:10:44]And then Harvey Shields, who was the archeologist in the regional office, permanent, he came down in, uh, July 3, I think, 1984, and then after the Fourth of July we went and worked on the Dyea project. He helped me set it up and all that. But he left about three weeks after that, and then I was out there alone for a month, month and a half, and then I had another person, Linda Midlock, come down in August of '84. And then we worked for two weeks, and then I went up to Anchorage and did um, write -- report writing, and then left. It was just a seasonal job, and I thought that was going to be it. [00:11:31]But then they called me back in '85 to continue on with the Dyea mapping. And then in '86, they wanted me to go up -- this is the regional office, wanted me to go up the trail for the first five miles because there was this, uh, dispute between the Park Service and the BIA over Native allotments in the lower part of the trail. So I surveyed that whole area and said, "Well, there's -- " There were, you know, a number of archeological features and sites in the area, but apparently not enough to stop the Native allotments from being transferred to the allottees. [00:12:13]So, oh, oh, in '86, I also did the Mascot archeological project because they had actually called me up, I think, in February '86, and they said, "We've got this project underneath the Mascot Saloon. They want to dig out the crawl space there. And we found stuff underneath there, and so we want to excavate it first, do an archeological excavation first, rather than just dig it out."

KAREN BREWSTER: Yep.

[00:12:41]KARL GURCKE: And so they said, "You know, all you'll -- we'll pay you at the same GS-9 rating, and, um, but you'll just be a digger underneath the Mascot." And Paul Gleeson was the archeologist from the regional office then, and he would come down and run the project and would have one other person working on it. So we spent March and April underneath that building. So it was -- and actually the ground -- part of the ground at the northern side of the building was frozen at that time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

KARL GURCKE: So we worked on the southern side until that became unfrozen. And excavated completely that entire spot.

[00:13:26]KAREN BREWSTER: And did you find any interesting things?

KARL GURCKE: Oh, yeah, it was almost 20,000 artifacts.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

KARL GURCKE: Things like well, bottles, there were some whole bottles, and lots of broken glass, shot glasses. There was a number of bar food, like peanut shells and walnut shells and nuts and there were uh -- There was a privy, because the building had initially been much smaller and with a privy outside, and then they had expanded over the privy and continued on. So the privy had been closed about 1898, 1899, somewhere around there, as the building expanded. Um, so we dug the privy --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oof.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah. And found -- Yeah -- lots of oh, uh, poker -- poker chips, and little, uh, hosiery clamps, you know, for -- for --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. Holding up stockings?

KARL GURCKE: Stockings, things like that. Uh, some coins and tokens, good for five cents in trade at the Mascot or some of the other saloons in town. So it was a really rich site, really rich. Really nice.

[00:14:46]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it's very impressive that this park seems to have recognized the importance of archeology and clearance on all these historic buildings before they did the work.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, it is nice. I don't think they've done enough. I mean, for example, when they did the clearance on this particular building, the White Pass general office building and depot, Cathy Blee did the work, but they didn't allow her to go underneath the building with the rest of the crew for some reason, so she was only able to put test excavations in the crawl space and around the outside of the building. [00:15:30]And there was a lot of stuff underneath the building that could've been dug archeologically, but they didn't let her do that for some reason.

KAREN BREWSTER: Some of the construction people may have found things underneath and brought them out, but then you lose the context.

KARL GURCKE: The context, yeah. Right. Exactly. And one of the things I heard is that a lot of the stuff that was dug out for the foundation eventually ended up spread along the Block 24.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, the dirt?

KARL GURCKE: The dirt, yeah. Along with the artifacts. So that's a bit of a problem there, because, you know, the top layers are stuff that came from the depot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And you -- there's no way to know.

KARL GURCKE: There's no way -- well, you just have to -- you can tell if it's a fill layer when you do --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, you can.

KARL GURCKE: When you do excavations because it's less consolidated. It's not firm, and so you can say, "Ok, the top foot or so is fill." Yeah.

[00:16:31]KAREN BREWSTER: So, what about archeology on the Chilkoot Trail? You mentioned the beginning with the allotments.

KARL GURCKE: That's right.

KAREN BREWSTER: What kind of work has been done up there, and what sort of findings?

KARL GURCKE: Well, we -- well basically, remember Caroline Carley was there in '79, and her remit was to do an archeological survey of the park, except for the Skagway area, basically. So she -- after she did Dyea, she went up the trail, and basically -- because there was -- she just had a crew of -- of two others, so there was just three of them, and they just hit the high points. So they hit Canyon City. They hit Sheep Camp. They did a little bit of work north of Sheep Camp to the summit. They went over to the White Pass and did White Pass City, and a little bit of work around that area, and that was about it. So they just hit the high points. [00:17:28]I think my remit, although it was never really explained to me, but I just took it. Since I did that first survey in '86, I said, "Well, let's get the rest of the stuff. We'll do the main sites. We'll do Canyon City and Sheep Camp and all, but we'll also do the in-betweens and see what's in between those sites." So, for example, we started out at the trailhead, basically, of the Chilkoot Trail and immediately found -- well, we actually had known about it before, 'cause Frank Norris had done some work in the area. Frank was a -- first of all, he started out as an interpreter in 1983, and in '84 he became sort of a seasonal historian. Um, and he also did a lot of archeology, so to speak, by -- Eventually, he worked on the White Pass For example, in '84-85 he did some survey just, you know, on his own time. And then he did some work on the Chilkoot, as well. [00:18:38]And he found this interesting site, just at the start of the Chilkoot Trail, and it was

basically -- you have to realize that the current trail is the recreational trail, and so the current trail was not historic. The historic trail was on the other side. It started, of course, at the beach in Dyea, and then you went through the town site, and at the northern end, you crossed uh, at first it was just the river, and then later they built the bridge, the Kinney Bridge that went to the other side, and then the trail went north from there. And so we have a couple of pictures, historic photographs, of Kinney Bridge, the Kinney Bridge site, which was just on the other side, on the east side of the river. And it's got a few log cabins, and maybe a frame building or two. And so there's not a lot. There's a tent or so. [00:19:30]But when we actually got onto the site, we found things like depression square, rectangular depressions, uh, privies, the cellars of buildings. We found artifacts. We found um, what looked like a road that had been highly overgrown, 'cause there was a line of cottonwood trees on this side and that side, and then nothing in between except a lot of low-level vegetation. [00:20:01]And then on these cottonwood trees -- this is the first time I decided to look up, we found these wooden dowels that had been nailed to the cottonwood trees, and glass insulators had been screwed on the wooden dowels. They're specifically for the telephone line.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

KARL GURCKE: Uh, the Dyea to Bennett telephone lin. The Sunset Telephone Company, I subsequently found out. And we found a number of those, all the way up, you know, up the trail in various areas. [00:20:32]At first, we thought they were only on cottonwood trees, cause -- which would make sense. I mean, they're big cottonwood trees, big straight things, and so perfect telephone poles. But it turned out that the first few miles of the uh, of the trail, had been logged by Ed Hosford. And there's the Hosford sawmill there, and Frank actually interviewed Ed Hosford, who was alive at that time, and got information about how, you know, he's running along with his bulldozer and running into this wire all over the place, telephone wire, you know. They had to cut up and get out of the place. [00:21:15]So, and then -- and then we began to find a few trees that were not cottonwood that were, uh, Sitka spruce or some of the things, and we realized that they just went from tree to tree, as best they could, from whatever trees they could find along the route. And we just happened to -- in that lower area, most of the trees had been logged out that had the wires -- the telephone stuff, apparatuses, attached to it. So that was probably one of the main things, was this telephone line we actually found. And we found a number of these telephone trees. I don't remember exactly how many, but quite a few. [00:21:57]And there was that Kinney Bridge site initially, and then we found another site halfway up, um, which had, again, some tent frames, some tent platforms and artifacts in among the moss. So like you'd peel off the moss a little bit, and there'd be a tin can, a long -- some long, very long tin cans. Uh, and that was one of the things that was really frustrating, um, is that all the vegetation hides things. So it -- it -- it really hides stuff, and you really have to -- I'm sure we missed things in our survey. [00:22:41]We would -- basically the way we did it is, we would start from the trail, and we would go east to the mountainside, and then -- in transits. There were three of us doing the survey. Frank Norris and Scott Zimmerman. And so we'd work our way from the trail to the mountainside, and then turn around and, you know, go back all the way to the river, and then go up a little bit and go back, and back and forth and back and forth, work our way up to Finnegan's Point. [00:23:11]And then every time we found a feature, uh, we would record it. 'Course at that time, we had no way of finding its precise location. Later on, we had GPS, but so we sort of estimated it. And then we actually tried to map it in with that, um, with

one of the -- the EDM that we had. And we were successful, sorta, but there was something wrong with the instrument that, um, didn't give us a correct reading or something. I'm not sure what, but we weren't really able to make a map, although we tried.

[00:23:49]KAREN BREWSTER: So when you're doing that kind of a survey, when you find those artifacts, you know, out in the woods or under the moss --

KARL GURCKE: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- do you collect them and bring them --

KARL GURCKE: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: You left them in situ?

KARL GURCKE: We left them in place. We photographed them. We wrote -- filled out feature forms on each feature, described them, and, you know, for a site, you know, you're doing a lot of photographs, a lot of feature forms. Uh, trying to make a sketch map of the whole site and described it. And subsequently, we've gone back and back year, you know, every five years or ten years or something like that and relocated those sites, and we've gotten G -- now we've got GPS readings, and all that stuff.

[00:24:35]KAREN BREWSTER: Given the increase of use of the recreational trail --

KARL GURCKE: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- has there been concern about protecting those artifacts and those sites? And so, have things been removed?

KARL GURCKE: Um, there has been some -- a lot of concern about some of that. It all depends again on where the sites and the features are. So for example, with this Kinney Bridge site, we thought it was fine because it was some distance away from the trail, and people hiking the trail would never know it was there. [00:25:05]And then we had this, um, glacial outburst or moraine failure back in, what was it, 2002?

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. That West Creek flood?

KARL GURCKE: The West Creek, yeah, and it sent a wall of water down there, and it hit the Kinney Bridge site and changed the direction of the current. And all of a sudden, we found out that the Kinney Bridge site was being washed away. In fact, we only found out about it because one of the -- one of the members of the float and hike tour companies noticed -- one of their employees noticed that there was this big dark area that had suddenly appeared on the bank in that approximate vicinity and notified us, and we went out there, checked it out. Turned out, it was this big stove, cast iron stove, that was really a neat artifact. It was a complete, uh, Jewett Echo from Philadelphia or something like that. Um, and it used to be like in the middle of the site. Now it's at the edge of the site. It just --

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

[00:26:21]KARL GURCKE: Erosion has taken away half of the site, and it was about ready to fall into the river. So we went back there, and we removed it, and we put it, you know, fifty feet back, twenty-five feet back. And I think we've done that a second time. And we may have actually taken it. I don't know what the status of that artifact is. But, yeah, so there's the erosion problem. [00:26:43]Finnegan's Point, we found out, was not only the current campground, but it's also on an archeological site, so, of course, whenever we want to do something at Finnegan's, like put in a new tent platform or put in a new privy or whatever, we go out there and do excavation testing and things like that. So yeah, that's a big concern. Finnegan's, Sheep Camp are on archeological sites.

[00:27:16]KAREN BREWSTER: I'm surprised that the Park Service built their campgrounds on an archeological site.

KARL GURCKE: Well, it wasn't that we built the campsites. The campsites were built by the state, for the most part.

KAREN BREWSTER: But that they were selected in spots that were archeological.

KARL GURCKE: They were selected in spots because they -- uh, that -- it was, you know, a basic, nice campground, just like the gold rush stampeders, pretty much.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: So, you know, we um, we just continued on with the process.

[00:27:50]Canyon City, for example, is different because they selected a site on the east side of the river, and the historic Canyon City is on the west side, so they're quite a bit different. But Sheep Camp is on both sides of the river, and our campground is on the east side, so it only hits a portion of the site. Um, it's just, you know, there are not that many good places to set up campgrounds.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And so you're sort of constrained by that.

[00:28:25]KAREN BREWSTER: And do -- do hikers still find things up there, and do they bring them to the park, or do they take them home?

KARL GURCKE: Uh, we've tried to get the message out to -- to leave things in place. Um, but we occasionally will get things back from hikers. I seem to remember a few years back, we got a -- a nail, a rusty nail, that this, you know, like thirteen-year-old kid sent back and said, "My parents told me I had to send this back because I collected it on the trail."

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: So we get things like that.

[00:29:01]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. But certainly before the park was established and people were able to get up that trail, I know it wasn't a maintained official trail as well, but local people or hikers, I'm sure they must have collected things.

KARL GURCKE: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Early on in the '20's, '30's, well, the Rapuzzis, for exa -- George Rapuzzi and several other folks, Emil Richter. And these young men would go up and start collecting for their museums. So there are several museums here in Skagway. Martin Itjen established a museum. The Rapuzzi brothers established a museum. Um, gold rush era museums.

KAREN BREWSTER: The Pullen House certainly had things.

KARL GURCKE: The Pullen House. Exactly. Right, Pullen had a collection of stuff. Some of that material was just, like, in Skagway buildings that they could take. Some of it, they took off the trail. Probably the White Pass trail as well.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: So things were coming down to Skagway. [00:30:02]Uh, then when the state opened up the trail, back in the early '60's, um, we begin to notice around Canyon City and Sheep Camp, especially, they built these cabins, state cabins, warm-up shelters, whatever. And all of a sudden, people started bringing things, artifacts, to those cabins. So at Canyon City there's a bunch of stuff. Especially at Sheep Camp, there's a lot of, you know, buckets, galvanized buckets and horseshoes and all sorts of odds and ends that they collected and put there at the cabins for people to see. Also, up at the scales, there's several piles of artifacts that

people have, you know, have gathered from other places and put down there to just show the tourists.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, and I can see --

KARL GURCKE: And I have no problem.

KAREN BREWSTER: if you're out hiking and you find stuff, you think putting it in one of those shelter buildings, those cabins, you're protecting it. You're keeping -- getting it out of the weather and that stuff, so.

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. So you know, they're good-hearted in many ways. [00:31:12]But I've also met with bottle collectors that have gone up and collected with a vengeance, you know, any bottle that they can find. This was before the park was the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Before the trail was in the park and all that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: I don't think they do that now. [00:31:30]And when I started in '84, and I told people that I was an archeologist doing archeology at Dyea, and I was told several times by people, they said, "Oh well, you won't find anything because we've taken it all. We've -- " You know, all the privies have been excavated and all that. It's not the case.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: It's not the case at all. But they did say that.

[00:31:51]KAREN BREWSTER: They took things from the surface? They didn't necessarily take it below.

KARL GURCKE: Well, there may have been some -- there's some evidence of some digging here and there, you know. There was a lot of holes in Dyea, you know, rectangular holes as privies. Large, semi-circular holes that were uh, cellar foundations, things like that. But then there were some more recent holes that were definitely pot -- potters -- potters, bottle collectors and things like that.

[00:32:22]KAREN BREWSTER: In all the historic building clearances and those excavations, um, is there anything that stands out in particular as interesting discoveries?

KARL GURCKE: Well, I think the Mascot was a great archeological project, 'cause we really did a good job underneath the Mascot. It was an intact, mostly intact, deposit. There was one room in the north, or the southeast corner of the building that had been disturbed because -- Actually, when I saw earlier pictures of the Mascot in the '70's, and in the back, this one wall is gone.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

KARL GURCKE: And so the interior's open to the weather and all that, and so that was the room that was pretty well mixed, like people had gotten in there. Or I don't know what had happened.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: But it had been disturbed. [00:33:31]Uh, we had -- I just recently got some photographs of the trail and also Skagway in 1975, and there's a photograph of the back of the Mascot, and it's a forest back there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

KARL GURCKE: There're trees all over the place!

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, yeah. I mean, when the park took over, there was so many rundown and empty buildings.

KARL GURCKE: Oh yeah, exactly. And the Mascot was one of them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And there was a tree growing right next to it on the north side. There was -- yeah, it was in pretty bad shape.

[00:34:01]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so when those buildings get restored, there's the archeology underneath them, but in those early ones, were there artifacts above-ground still in the buildings? Or had that all been looted?

KARL GURCKE: Um, I think there was a lot of artifacts in the buildings. Some of it had disappeared, of course, over the years. But there were a number of things that -- For example, going back to the Mascot, there was the remnants of the awning. There had been an awning out in front of the building for many years, and so you could still see the awning. Inside the building, there was the ghost of the bar, you know, where the --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, the -- the footprint?

KARL GURCKE: The footprint of the bar, where you -- you know, there's the bar, and you can see where it was. And that's how we were able to get the current bar in there because we had the description of the bar from the newspapers, the original account of Albert Reinert buying this new Brunswick Collender Balke bar and back bar in about 1900, 1901 or something like that. And then we saw the footprint, so we said, "Yeah, well, you know, we want this bar, and this is how long it has to be."

[00:35:18]KAREN BREWSTER: So, well that brings up an interesting point for those restoration projects. Must be a huge amount of research.

KARL GURCKE: Yes. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: In -- in photographs and archives and newspapers. So did you work on those? Was that your responsibility as the --

KARL GURCKE: Um, most of the -- the resource -- research for a lot of the buildings, by the time I got there, had already been done, so we had -- we had what we call the ten-building historic structure report. So that had done research. Bob Spude had done the historical research. Um, Dave Snow, Paul Cloyd, and others had done the architectural research. [00:35:59]And so, that was -- the ten buildings report, and then there was the NHSR historic structure report on the Mascot, and then there was also an historic structure report on the White Pass depot and general office building, this where -- were built. [00:36:18]So those are -- the historical work had been already been done for the most part, and the architectural work on the buildings had been done. And they had worked up, you know, cost estimates for restoring all these buildings that we had acquired, and how the buildings should be restored, to what period of significance. That was always -- trying to determine what the period of significance was for. For example, here with the depot, they decided it was 1908, I think, because they recognized that the roof had actually been extended in the original building, and then sometime around 1908, they had cut off a portion of that roof, that overextended portion, probably because the offices inside were being blocked from the sun, you know, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:37:12]KARL GURCKE: And then in 1922, this breezeway was filled in with a building, and so we took that building away, and so we restored it to that 1908 to 1915 period of significance.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. It's incredibly complicated.

KARL GURCKE: It is incredibly complicated.

[00:37:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, but so those original ten buildings, as you say, were already done, but since then the park has obtained new buildings?

KARL GURCKE: Acquired additional buildings, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so are there some that you did all that research on?

KARL GURCKE: So yeah. Yeah. For example, with Soapy Smith, the parlor. Um, it took quite a while for us to obtain that, but we eventually did. Back in 1996, I was asked by the acting superintendent, Janet McCabe, uh, if I could write up a justification for acquiring that particular building. It was all part of this Rapuzzi Collection, and we were negotiating with Phyllis Brown over the acquisition of the collection. And so, at that particular time, um, Janet and Phyllis Brown had sort of come to some sort of semi-agreement that we would buy the parlor, and so, um, Janet wanted me to write up this justification. And so I said, "Well, I can't do that because I don't know if the parlor is the historic parlor." Because there were several people in town that told me that no, it's not. Just look at the historic photographs and compare the historic photographs from 1898 with the current building in 1996, and there're differences. And indeed, there were. The door and the windows were aligned currently, but historically, there were -- the door was higher than the windows. The boarding -- historically, the sideboards, um, clapboards, were larger than the current boards. There was problems with the overhang of the top of the building. There was a number of discrepancies between the two. [00:39:22]And so, that's when I started doing these historic photo essays. Although at that time, we didn't have the technical ability to translate -- to scan historic photographs and put them in Word documents.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

KARL GURCKE: We just didn't have that technical ability. So what I did is wrote a strictly Word document, where I took each photograph of the building and described it, and, of course, cited it properly. And I found a photograph from the Library of Congress, um, that showed the reason why the discrepancy was because in 1900, this was after Soapy had been killed, and the building had -- went through the phases of a couple of restaurants and oyster parlor. Uh, so in 1900, it was acquired by the Skagway Volunteer Fire Department, and it was turned into a garage for their hook and ladder company cart. And so in order to make that operational, they must have stripped the interior completely of all the furnishings and whatnot. And they ripped out the front and put these big garage door type openings, so they could quickly open the thing and get their cart. So the fire department at that time didn't have any horses, or -- of course, they didn't have any gasoline engine vehicles or anything, so the power of these -- the hook and ladder company and the hose car company, there were two different companies, was just the people, the firemen.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

KARL GURCKE: Who would run to the uh, the garage, the hook and ladder garage, grab these uh, the things --

KAREN BREWSTER: The handles?

KARL GURCKE: The handles. And it was just a cart with one wheel and the ladder was -- well, with two wheels, basically, a two-wheeled cart, and the ladder was attached to it, and they would run to the fire.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

KARL GURCKE: Which was actually pretty easy because everything is relatively flat here. [00:41:31]And then they had a phone system, so you could -- and they divided up Skagway into various fire areas, um, so. And they had several different uh, carts -- fire departments here and there. Eventually over time, they consolidated to one, but -- and eventually they got gasoline engines.

[00:41:51]KAREN BREWSTER: I was going to say, I'm surprised they didn't use horses.

KARL GURCKE: Well, it was -- horses would've been too complicated to hook up, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because, yeah, in other places in that time period, they had horses. In bigger cities and things.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, and they had big steam pumpers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

KARL GURCKE: But they didn't need that because they had all the water pressure they needed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, from the hillside?

KARL GURCKE: From the hillside, yeah. And they -- they very quickly put in this water pipe system, uh, to -- to fight against fires, so they were really quite advanced thinking.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[00:42:25]KARL GURCKE: So because they had devastated the front, you know, completely reworked the front -- And then back in the '30's, Martin Itjen comes along, acquires the parlor, and has this idea of turning it into a museum, so he has to rework the front, and he doesn't -- he looks at the photographs. I'm sure he has one historic photograph that he uses. And he looks at it and sort of restores the front to that, but he's not precisely accurate. [00:43:02]For example, he has the Jeff. Smiths sign. So Jeff. Smiths Parlor sign. And there's an apostrophe, you know, after the Smith in the historic signs. But there's a couple of signs that were at the photographs -- or a couple of photographs that were taken when the buildings were -- one was the Fourth of July, and one was the Memorial Day, and they had banners on them, you know. And the banners covered the apostrophe, so he didn't put the apostrophe in there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's just grammatically incorrect.

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. Exactly. So he didn't put the apostrophe in, and so we have the Jeff. Smiths Parlor sign out there without the apostrophe. It drives me crazy.

[00:43:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, you guys haven't restored it to with the apostrophe?

KARL GURCKE: No. We -- we didn't restore the building to the Jeff. Smiths period. We restored it to the Martin Itjen period, essentially.

KAREN BREWSTER: And why was that decision made?

KARL GURCKE: Uh, well, that decision was made -- well, actually, we restored it to the George Rapuzzi period because basically the original building was up on the north side of Sixth Avenue. It was moved in 1960 to the south side of Sixth Avenue to make way for the Bank of Alaska building, which is now the Wells Fargo.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: Then George Rapuzzi -- after Martin died in the 1960's, George acquired -- well, George required -- acquired the building after Martin Itjen died in 1941. Well, probably the late '40's.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And then he moved the building, the parlor, to the south side of Second in 1962, '63, and he added several buildings to it to make this long building. [00:44:57]And so if

we were to restore it to the Soapy's period, then we'd have to break it up into different buildings, and we certainly can't get the property back on the north side of Sixth to put it where it originally belonged, and so you get into all sorts of problems like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Huh.

KARL GURCKE: And so we decided to restore it to George Rapuzzi's period, complete with the fence, uh, the metal fence around the building -- around the property, and -- and, you know. So it's a blend of Martin Itjen's and George's, and, of course, there's a little bit of Soapy's in there, as well.

KAREN BREWSTER: And --

KARL GURCKE: And we restored the interior to George Rapuzzi's/Martin Itjen's museum.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok, yeah. 'Cause they -- their intention with it was having it as a museum?

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. For the tourists.

[00:45:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So as a historian, is that difficult for you, these decisions that get made about what period and is it the accuracy?

KARL GURCKE: Sometimes it -- sometimes it is, um, because, you know, you can see several different sides. Like I said, with the parlor, you know, if you wanted to actually restore it accurately to the gold rush period, that means, you know, you'd have to separate the buildings, and you'd have to move it to another place, get -- we don't -- you know, have access to that place, and all that, so you have to realize, you know, what you've got, and you have to follow -- I mean, you can't -- gotta real -- You -- you -- I'm not sure exactly how to put this but -- but you've got to um, deal with reality, basically.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[00:46:38]KARL GURCKE: And so, um, yeah. That was probably the best, you know, the best decision.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was that hard for you?

KARL GURCKE: Um, for me? Not really. In fact, that was probably a decision which, you know, I supported and pushed for. You know, it's certainly the easiest decision because the building's there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And so you just have to restore the building as is, essentially. [00:47:04]Um, one of the things that was going on, playing on with that, was we had acquired this Rapuz -- by that time we had acquired the Rapuzzi Collection. This was a number of years after that 1996 photo essay that I worked on. So we acquired the Rapuzzi Collection and the property, including the parlor and including Martin Itjen's street car. Now in uh, in 1916 when they moved the parlor to the south side of Sixth Avenue, they also moved the adjacent building, which was the hose company, the fire department's hose company garage, which had a big tower to hold drying hoses. They moved that also to the south side of Sixth. When George Rapuzzi moved the parlor to the south side of Second, he demolished the hose company building 'cause it was in very bad shape. [00:48:09]So I was thinking, well, we have a problem with the -- the street car. Where are we going to put the street car, you know, when we eventually conserve it, restore it, or whatever we were going to do. And I came up with the idea, well, why don't we recreate that, um, hose company garage right next to the parlor like it was back in the teens and the '20's. Like the gold rush to the -- to the '60's, and use that as the garage for the -- for the street car. But that never

flew because we have certain rules and regulations about restoring or rebuilding historical buildings. Even though we had a pretty good photographic record of that building.

[00:49:02]KAREN BREWSTER: So you can restore existing ones, but you can't start from nothing and build one?

KARL GURCKE: It's a bit more difficult. We have done that, uh, with the Red Front, for example. Uh, Red Front --

KAREN BREWSTER: Is that the Onion?

KARL GURCKE: No, that's -- the Red Front is the building south of the Pantheon, south of Fourth Avenue. It's a two-story structure, and, at first, before we started restoring the uh, the Pantheon Saloon, there was this one-story structure next to it, and we thought at first that that building was sort of a cut-down Red Front. Um, but it turned out it was not, that the Red Front was demolished sometime in the '30's. We don't have an exact date, but we do have uh, photographic evidence that indicates that it was gone by the '30's or so. Late '30's, I think it is. [00:50:04]So this building that was attached to the Pantheon was a um, World War II building. It was built during World War II. And that's when the Pantheon became a saloon once again to, you know, service the military boys. And so they needed more space. They needed a dance floor, or whatever, and they -- so they built this one-story building. Um, and so, once we decided that, we were gonna -- ok, we'll restore the Pantheon, but we'll have to demolish this World War II structure. And what do we put in its place? Do we just leave -- that meant this whole half lot, or most of the property to the alleyway would be just blank. And um, historically, you know, there were no blank spaces along Broadway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: You know, there were just the alleyways, and there were the streets, and everything else was filled with buildings. [00:51:03]So I don't know exactly how the decision came up, but you know, we have good photographs of the Red Front. Why don't we just -- when we do the restoration of the Pantheon, we'll just build a new building next to it. 'Cause the two buildings were sort of attached on the roof, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: The -- the roof of the Pantheon was attached to the second floor of the -- the Red Front, so it made somewhat sense.

[00:51:35]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. So when these decisions get made about what period to restore to, or -- or that building, building it or tearing it down, who makes those decisions?

KARL GURCKE: Well, ultimately the superintendent will make the decision, the final decision, but there's a lot of -- sometimes there's a lot of discussion. Sometimes there's very little discussion, depending on, you know, if there's any arguments here and there.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it's clearly input from you as the historian and looking at --

KARL GURCKE: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- photographs and archives and --

KARL GURCKE: Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- and from a historic architecture perspective, an architect has say.

KARL GURCKE: Right. Right. I mean, you know, we look at -- from a historian standpoint, we looked at the photographs, and they're for the most part, most of those photographs are from the outside of the building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: Generally, they're from the front of the building, or you're looking down, say, Broadway, and you see the building off to the side. We have a few interior shots of -- of some buildings, but not of all of them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I'd think the interiors would be really hard to --

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, exactly.

[00:52:42]KAREN BREWSTER: And that team who makes that decision, too, is there also like a -- the maintenance department or whoever's doing the actual restora -- building?

KARL GURCKE: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do they get involved?

KARL GURCKE: And, first of all, you have to determine what you're gonna use the building for. So for example, with this building, the White Pass depot and office building, we were essentially going to use it for almost the same thing that the railroad was using it for, uh, office spaces. And for the depot downstairs, it was going to turn into the visitor center. So the major thing -- the major change we did is put in the auditorium, for example.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And then, you know, the exhibits down there, that's -- they're just sort of the basic building. The interior of the building is there, and then they're just put in there, and they can easily be taken out. Um, so you don't affect the character of the interior of the building, but um -- and we essentially, we -- in this case we tried to restore the building to that particular period, so we actually found remnants of the uh -- of the, you know, wallpaper, for example. And -- and so we restored the wallpaper. We had a problem with the lights, the hanging lights. We -- there were no examples in the building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: So I was talking with Dave Snow, the architect, and I think he said, well, we just found a period lamp that looks -- that was in the period.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: From the school house.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:54:19]KARL GURCKE: In this building we have the desk, the superintendent's desk. And I was able to do a photo history on the desk and found out that the desk actually -- I found out what the company, uh, Leopold and Rand Company, back in Iowa, made these desks. We found trade catalogs, uh, from the company. They're now at the University of Iowa digital collections, so um -- and I was able to determine that it's probably from 1900, 1901 or so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

KARL GURCKE: Based on the uh, the design features on the desk, you know, patterns.

[00:54:57]KAREN BREWSTER: So that -- that desk was here in the building?

KARL GURCKE: So the desk was here in the building. It's -- it's, uh, basically a desk for clerks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: So there were two -- it was not for the superintendent. Uh, there were two clerks, facing each other.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

KARL GURCKE: Um, and so it was probably here in the building, and we have oral histories that indicate a certain last railroad superintendent that was using it. It may have come, uh, from --

we actually have a photograph of Clarence Andrews using a similar desk. He was the deputy director of customs in the US Customs office, which was just next door, but that was a building built by the railroad, and supplied by the rail -- all the interior equipment was supplied by the rail. The railroad even did their janitorial service and all that, um, for, you know, a yearly rent or a monthly rent. So it might have been one of his. It might have been a desk that he used. I don't know exactly.

[00:55:59]KAREN BREWSTER: So in '87, you became the cultural resource specialist where you did a little bit of everything, it sounds like? It was --

KARL GURCKE: Yes, it was -- it was no longer just archeology. And it was -- it was kind of interesting, um, to get beyond the archeology bit. And that came by bits and pieces and all that. I was still -- we were still committed to doing the archeological survey of the trail, so. But then, we also had a number of compliance issues here in town. Section 106 compliance, 'cause we were still working on the restoration of all those ten buildings. And um, and I was working closely with um, the regional office and the Denver Service Center. We were still doing archeology on the compliance, but I wasn't doing that. We had -- the Denver Service Center was funding that. We had initially Cathy Blee, who later became Cathy Spude, was working on it up until about 1985, and then she got sort of overwhelmed with the -- you have to write a report.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:57:14]KARL GURCKE: And you have to compile these reports. And she was backlogged on that, and so, beginning in '86, we started with the regional office was doing all the archeology, '86-87, up until about 2000. No, '95? '92, I think it was. Then the park started doing the compliance, 'cause the regional office became backlogged doing the reports. So we started doing the compliance. Doreen Cooper came in and started working on compliance, in-town compliance.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: I was still doing the trail, um, doing the archeology there.

[00:58:00]KAREN BREWSTER: And then as a cultural resource specialist, were you also sort of the museum curator?

KARL GURCKE: Initially, I was. I don't remember exactly how many years I was the museum curator, but that was one of my jobs. Uh, the library, uh, was another one of my jobs. You know, any cultural thing, and also natural. Anything in the resource world was on my shoulders.

KAREN BREWSTER: So they didn't have natural resources staff?

KARL GURCKE: At the time, they had no natural resources staff, no.

KAREN BREWSTER: Whoa.

KARL GURCKE: And they had really no cultural staff. They were -- the park was relying on the regional office and relying on Denver for all the archeology and architectural stuff and everything.

[00:58:47]KAREN BREWSTER: That seems like a large duty list for one person for you to have done.

KARL GURCKE: It is. It is. And, you know, you just went from one project to another project and just bounced around all over the place.

KAREN BREWSTER: Were you able to accomplish anything, finish any project?

KARL GURCKE: Oh, yeah, I think so. Perhaps. It's hard to say. Uh, yeah. I mean, every year, or almost every year, I tried to continue with the trail work, doing the survey. And so we'd move

from -- well, from Finnegan's to Canyon City, cover that area, and then Canyon City to Pleasant Camp to Sheep Camp, and then gradually working our way up. So that was always a nice accomplishment, being able to get that under our belt. [00:59:34]But it was always a problem because we relied -- or I relied on seasonal help, and they never gave me enough money to do that. They gave me just enough for, um -- at first it was two fives, GS-5's, which are basic trainee-level archeologists, and then later on, I got a seven to lead them so I could do other things, rather than being out in the field all the time. So it was just a seven and two fives. And we didn't get a nine until uh, the late '90's, I think. So they were always underfunded. And the problem with paying them at such a low rate was that you got people that were training, trainee-level, so they didn't -- they didn't know a lot about doing archeology in the field. So you had to train them, and then they didn't like -- the money that they got was not enough for the work that we were asking them to do. Because it's a lot of work to go over that first hill, go up to Sheep Camp, work an eight-day stint and come back, and then go up again. You know, all that work. [01:00:47]KAREN BREWSTER: And the weather here is not always the nicest.

KARL GURCKE: It's not always sunny and nice. The mosquitoes are not always friendly. The black flies, the white socks that take a chunks out of you, and occasionally meeting the bears, you know, and things like that. So it's -- it was difficult work. And -- and virtually almost every season, I would have to hire new. So I had very few people that would return, at least for the beginning time. Later on, by 1996, I had a woman named Eve Griffin, and she came back year after year for what was it, five-six years or so. And that was great.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: Because we'd have that continuity.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: And she began to understand what was happening. [01:01:33]So we'd have -- before, we'd have these reports, year-end reports, which would be brief, and not very detailed, you know. But she was beginning to understand what was happening, and so we'd get much more detailed reports. But we still had the problem. So she was just seasonal, and at the end of the season, that was it. She had to sort of cut back the season in order to make -- write the report.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Instead of, you know, using the full amount of time, you know, the weather and all that, and working until -- you could work until October, basically, if you want.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right, and then write the report in the winter.

KARL GURCKE: And then write the report in the winter and plan for the summer.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: So.

[01:02:11]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, I was thinking about your photo collection. You have amassed a large historic photo collection here, correct?

KARL GURCKE: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was that already in place when you started as cultural resources?

KARL GURCKE: Ah, the initial photo collection was already in place. Um, Bob Spude, back in the late '70's had started out -- I don't know exactly how he acquired it, but he was able to acquire a lot of photographs from a lot of different institutions related to Skagway. He established the basic, um, photo category system we use today, which is tied to geographical areas. So for example, you have all the photographs of Canyon City in one, or a series of file

folders in one area, and then, you know, the trail, and Dyea. And you divide Dyea between photographs of every street, Broadway and West Street and Main Street and River Street and so forth and so on. And then you work your way up the trail, and there's Sheep Camp, and there's the scales and Long Hill and the summit. And then in Dyea -- in Skagway you have the various streets and then the avenues, One through Seventh Avenue.

[01:03:36]KAREN BREWSTER: What if you have photographs of just a group of people, you know, or the train? Do you have things also categorized by subject that way, not just --

KARL GURCKE: Yes, you have some of those miscellaneous categories. So you have "Skagway People in Groups."

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: You know, for those people that you can't really tell where it was taken.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Or like a group for the -- the Eagles Hall. I mean --

KARL GURCKE: Well, if it's --

KAREN BREWSTER: If it's an organized group?

KARL GURCKE: Inside the building, for example?

KAREN BREWSTER: No, no, no. But if it's like an event that they were hosting.

KARL GURCKE: Right, and it's inside a building, then you say "Building Interior."

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: Um, and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Or "Fourth of July Parade?"

KARL GURCKE: Right. Well, that we would probably put in under Broadway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

[01:04:18]KARL GURCKE: So, uh, but then there's "Skagway Miscellaneous." And there's a "Skagway Miscellaneous," and a "Skagway Vicinity." So a lot of these -- or all these categories were never really defined, and that was one of the things I did, is I -- After a number of years, I went through and said, ok, I'm going to define these categories. I'm going to say, you know, a photograph of uh, taken on the avenue goes into "Second Avenue," say, if it's of Second Avenue. But if it's a photograph, you know, looking at a building that's on the corner of Second Avenue and Broadway, then it's probably going to go in the Broadway category.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it would depend which direction it was --

KARL GURCKE: Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- looking? If it was at the corner of Broadway and Second, but the view was down Second, it would be a Second Avenue photo, versus if it's up Broadway, it's a Broadway photo?

KARL GURCKE: Right. Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's good you categorized it.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause that would be up to personal discretion otherwise.

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. And you see that in the record, you know, in the photographs, 'cause some of them are, you know, well I wouldn't do it that way. [01:05:26]And then things like the "Skagway Miscellaneous" and "Skagway Vicinity." What does "Skagway Miscellaneous" mean? I sort of can define "Skagway Vicinity, you know. It's within the vicinity. But "Skagway Miscellaneous?" And we sort of defined it as photographs related to Skagway, but they're not -- you know, like there's some photographs of -- of plants and vegetables at various events. You

know, they had "Vegetable Garden Day," or whatever like that. And all you see is the vegetables. You don't know exactly where the picture was taken and things like that. So, um -- [01:06:08]KAREN BREWSTER: And about how many photographs do you have in your collection now?

KARL GURCKE: Well, I think we started out back in '84 at, I don't know, maybe 4000-5000 photographs, and now, I think we're probably at 11,000-12,000, maybe a bit more. We've got this problem because some photographs nowadays, we acquire photographs that are just digital. We don't have any hard copy prints.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: So it's a little difficult to -- to count.

[01:06:41]KAREN BREWSTER: And now are you acquiring them from a broader time period of Skagway history, or do you still just focus on gold rush?

KARL GURCKE: Um, yeah, I've sort of decided that we need pictures from the whole range, the whole time range. And so, yeah. Um, most of the focus is on the gold rush, of course, and some of that, for example, on the Chilkoot Trail, we rarely get pictures post-gold rush. That big period from, say 18 -- or say 1900 to 1960's, I don't think there's any photographs. Or no, there are a few. They're in the '20's, there are a few photographs, but that's about it. There are just very few photographs. And then um, but I'm looking out for those photographs from the '70's and '60's and '50's.

[01:07:39]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, yeah, I would think people who hiked the trail in those periods might have taken photos, although I realize it was harder to hike it.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause it got grown over.

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. Exactly. But even in the '70's and '80's, when the trail was -- when the recreation trail was there. Um, in fact, I just had a collection just now that I got from Bruce Merrill who hiked the trail with his dad and sister in 1975, so some of the photographs are of Skagway at that time period. And that's the photo I mentioned earlier, of the back of the Mascot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Which is a forest. In '75. And then, uh, then there's the trail -- photographs on the trail. And so you see a number of photographs of the trail bridges at that time, totally different than the ones now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: And once you get beyond Sheep Camp, it opens up, and you begin to see the artifacts, and so there's photographs of that area with the artifacts.

[01:08:42]KAREN BREWSTER: And I was gonna say, how do you find out about these photos or acquire them now? I mean, you said, um, Bob Spude had got a lot from institutions.

KARL GURCKE: Right. Right, went to institutions, and we still do that occasionally. We'll -- because those institutions are acquiring photographs as we speak. So it -- it -- I would like to establish a program where we actually send somebody back to these institutions every five years or something like that. You know, rotating. Go down to Seattle and check out the University of Washington, and spend time going through their special collections and doing that. And I've done a little bit of that over the years as I've been able to get some travel money to do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: But we also get photographs from people, um, the -- the -- the -- the tourists. Um, you know, of the million plus tourists, a very small fraction of them, you know, maybe a dozen or so every year, come up with their gold rush stampeder stories. Or maybe they're not gold rush, maybe they're family members that lived here in the '20's and '30's. [01:09:53]World War II, that's another thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: So just this past year, we've gotten a nice little collection from World War II from a guy whose father was serving here in the military corps during the war. And so it's a number of nice little photographs. Uh, and they tend to be little, but you can scan 'em at a high resolution, and they're pretty good quality images of things that happened here in World War II. World War II buildings. There's a nice photograph of in the Eagles Hall, uh, was used as the USO, so they're having a wonderful song and dance there, whatever, and there's a photograph of the crowd, and everybody's laughing and it's a great time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Great. [01:10:37]And then do you get photographs from local residents, families here?

KARL GURCKE: Occasionally. Occasionally. Um, I mentioned earlier Barb Kalen, um, Betsy -

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Barb Dedman Kalen.

KARL GURCKE: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yep. Who was a photographer.

KARL GURCKE: Who was a photographer. And Betsy (Albecker, Barb's daughter) came along and -- and allowed me to scan a couple of albums, or some albums. And it sounds like she's got more stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hopefully, right.

KARL GURCKE: And so I'm gonna go back and talk to her.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Um, yeah, we have several -- several collections of locals here in town.

KAREN BREWSTER: All right. [01:11:19]So let's talk a little bit about the park administration and how things have changed, because you said there was no natural history --

KARL GURCKE: There was no resources --

KAREN BREWSTER: No natural resources.

KARL GURCKE: There was no resource division or department at that time.

KAREN BREWSTER: So when did that get established?

KARL GURCKE: Uh, well, that got established in, oh, what was it? 1990, 2000, or so. Um, I don't remember the exact date. But every once in awhile, the Park Service sends out a group of people to have a park evaluation, to do an evaluation of the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: So they come down to Skagway, and they're made up of Park Service employees from various other parks in the state and maybe Outside. And, you know, usually there's like a law enforcement person, there's an admin person, there's a resource person, there's an interp person, there's, you know, somebody else in the maintenance and all that. And then they come to the park and they talk to the superintendent. They talk to the various division members. Um, and come up with a report, um, suggesting some changes, or they might say everything's ok, but that's rarely the case. I don't think they --

KAREN BREWSTER: There's always something that can be changed, right?

KARL GURCKE: There's always something to be changed. You know, and -- and -- and I think these can be found. I don't know exactly where they're located, but um -- [01:12:46]So by the late '90's, I don't remember exactly when, they had one of these park evaluations, and I remember talking to the fellow who was the resource person there, and we had a long conversation about what the problems I was having at the time, and -- and that was, well, I was under the chief ranger, and -- the chief rangers, I'd been under three. I'd been under Jay Cable, and Bruce Reed, and then Reed McCluskey. And not -- neither of them or none of them had any cultural resource background at all. They'd been -- in some cases, they had a bit of wildlife management background, but they were just -- they were not cultural at all.

KAREN BREWSTER: They were more enforcement?

KARL GURCKE: They were law enforcement, yeah. They were all law enforcement. [01:13:43]So I was having trouble with them a bit. You know, my budget was always hampered. We just didn't have the money to do these projects. For example, like I told you earlier about the archeology.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: We never -- we couldn't get enough money to hire high-quality resource people. We got some high-quality people, but, you know, GS-5's are training level. GS-7's are still in training. Even GS-9's are somewhat in the training level, although they're more professional. So that was always a problem, and that made the archeology suffer. [01:14:22]Uh, by that time, though, we did have -- we did have Deb Sanders, who was our museum specialist. And then we had a natural resource person, as well. So we had the beginnings --

KAREN BREWSTER: Was that Elaine Furbish?

KARL GURCKE: Um, I think it was Elaine by that time. Yeah. There had -- there was a Damian Sedney there before.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

KARL GURCKE: Uh, but I can't remember exactly when he left.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. One of those two.

KARL GURCKE: And then Elaine. I think by that time Elaine -- it was Elaine Furbish, yeah.

[01:14:52]KAREN BREWSTER: So you talked to this evaluation person, and you were suggesting a different organizational system?

KARL GURCKE: I was suggesting a somewhat different organizational system. 'Cause, originally, when I had come in '84 and got the permanent position in '87, the system was, basically, there was the superintendent and a little bit of admin run by Clydene, who was the admin tech, GS-7. And then there was a big maintenance division, and then there was the ranger division. And the ranger division included the interps, all the interps, and me as the resource person. And so -- and by that -- then by the late '90's, we had again, Deb Sanders and Elaine Furbish.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: So we had a little bit of a resource division. [01:15:49]Um, they had just split off interpretation.

KAREN BREWSTER: From the rangers?

KARL GURCKE: And so it became an established department or division. Um, and I made the suggestion at the time -- I remember we had a meeting there, and I suggested that uh, we -- now

we could get to the stage where we could actually establish a resource division, we should. I mean after all, the point of the park was to preserve the resources, both cultural and natural. And so you think we could at least have a division. And that got some flak. Basically, they were saying, there's -- that'll make too many chiefs and not enough Indians. So that was canceled. [01:16:41]But so I -- I pushed the same idea to the -- to this park evaluation team. And, initially, you know, I said, well, I was doing compliance. I was the compliance officer at the time. And most of the compliance comes from the maintenance, and I said, "Well, maybe, you could put me under maintenance?" Because I did all the compliance for maintenance. Um, and I was just thinking, well --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: You know, how to get out from under these law enforcement types. Nothing against law enforcement types.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

KARL GURCKE: But um --

KAREN BREWSTER: Just a different perspective.

KARL GURCKE: It's a different perspective. And -- and the perspective I -- I say is, basically, you know, you're guilty, and you can't prove you're innocent. Um, so um, they came up, and I don't know -- remember all the meetings and the conversations and all that stuff, but the upshot was that in the report to the superintendent, the new superintendent, Bruce Noble, uh, -- 'cause that's one of the reasons the park evaluation team comes there is because you're going to get a new superintendent. Uh, Clay Alderson had been there for a number of years, so it was time for the new superintendent to see all the -- see the problems and see the suggestions. And they made a strong recommendation, uh, maybe I think a requirement, to establish a resource department and hire a chief of resources.

[01:18:15]KAREN BREWSTER: And then that was Theresa Thibault who got hired?

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. She was the one Bruce Noble hired. Yeah. So he was sort of required to do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And chief of resources means they're responsible for both cultural and natural resources?

KARL GURCKE: Correct. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now was this evaluation done in response to this period when there was quite a bit of changeover and turmoil here at the park?

KARL GURCKE: Um, well, it was done, I think, in response to the fact that the superintendent was changing. So Clay had left. There was this period between superintendents where we had -- Linda Cook was the acting for awhile. And then Betty Rickless, the chief of admin, became the acting for awhile. So it was certainly a time of turmoil, or beginning of turmoil.

[01:19:09]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, 'cause you've mentioned there was a period well, what quote-unquote "crisis." I don't know how much of a crisis, but where superintendent left, the chief of admin left, and the chief of maintenance. So kind of all the top leadership.

KARL GURCKE: Well, that --

KAREN BREWSTER: That was later?

KARL GURCKE: That was a bit later. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: That was a bit later. So this was -- this was before -- this was at when Bruce Noble took over.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: He was given this report. It was essentially designed for him, to -- you know, things to implement when he becomes the superintendent.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: Um, yeah. [01:19:47]So the report didn't really have anything to do with the later turbulence, although there was certainly some turbulence at the time.

KAREN BREWSTER: So would you like to talk about the later turbulence?

KARL GURCKE: Well, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or something comes before that?

KARL GURCKE: Uh, no. Um, what actually comes before that, um, is, you know, you go back to the gold rush. Everything goes back to the gold rush. So uh, the basic story is Captain Moore and his son established this homestead in Skagway. In 1887, he built his cabin. Uh, later on there was a house. There was a wharf, Moore Wharf. There was the development of Moore -- Mooresville, the town. And Captain Moore had this great vision of a gold rush and all that, and then it came to be. In 1897, the steamer "Queen" came in. This was the second ship to hit Skagway after the Seattle P-I headlines that sort of ignited the stampede. Um, so the stampede on the "Queen" looked over the situation and decided that they really didn't have to pay any attention to Captain Moore and his homestead and his property. They would just ignore him, and build a city on his land.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and they also used Dyea as their access.

KARL GURCKE: Yes, they did. Yeah. Uh, that was -- but there was this, you know, this division between Skagway and Dyea. The Dyea stampede went up there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: The Skagway stampede, sometimes they went here and then over to Dyea, but many of them stayed here in Skagway and then went up the White Pass and all that.

[01:21:38]So uh, these 200 stampede at the very beginning off the "Queen" just took over the property and that. And they continued in the -- as the boats continued to come up, and as the stampede continued, a lot of 'em just took over the property. And they laid out the grid, the street grid, in the beginning of August of 1897. [01:21:59]So this is where Ben Moore faces Frank Reid, who was the surveyor, um, and Frank basically says, "Well, I'm gonna run Spring Street right into your property." And Ben says, "No. Please, you know, leave me at least this property where my house is." And uh, where eventually Captain Moore's mansion was built. And then -- so leave me that property. And so he did. So it was about nine, six to nine acres, I'm not sure exactly, where his house was, and then Captain Moore's mansion, which became the Pullen House. And then the McCabe College building was also built on that property.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

[01:22:46]KARL GURCKE: So that's just where Spring Street just stops. And then it starts up again --

KAREN BREWSTER: On the other side.

KARL GURCKE: On the other side. So for decades, that didn't matter at all. It connects with -- with -- with Fifth Avenue, but that was the ballfield. And it was also the -- during the winter, it was the hockey rink, and, you know, it was this big area that had the Pullen Creek running

through, so there was subject to flooding. And also Spring Street was, you know, a street in name only, because for example, Charles Wynn-Johnson built his cabin -- his office and home, two-story home, in the middle of Spring Street. Between Third and Fourth Avenues. So it was nothing. You know, it was not -- it was just a street in name only. There were several -- a lot of other streets in name only. For example, one of those maps, street maps, show that there's a whole bunch of streets on the other side of the river.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

KARL GURCKE: Uh, you know, and they were named streets and all, but they were -- they were never surveyed, and, you know, they didn't exist except on paper. [01:23:57] So in 1984, uh, Skagway paved their streets. Not all of them, but the downtown streets and avenues were paved. And they -- so they actually formally made Spring Street into a street, and the connection between Spring and Fifth Avenue. So it was a um -- it was sort of a pinch point right there because the Moore Property, which at that time was now the Park Service property, uh, went into Fifth and Spring Street, that corner, and it -- and they actually had to, in order to connect the two, Spring and Fifth, they actually, I think, had to take a bit of the property on the other side of Fifth, on the south side of Fifth.

KAREN BREWSTER: Which is the lumberyard.

KARL GURCKE: Which is the lumberyard, yeah. Um, so they did make that connection there. [01:24:59] And, you know, when I came initially in '84, I didn't think anything of it. You know, I thought, well, that's an interesting -- interesting little corner, but so what? Uh, and through the '50's, through the '80's and into the '90's, it wasn't much of a problem. But then we hired -- or the city hired -- the city elected John Mielke, who was a White Pass employee, and who was um, pretty anti-park. And I, you know, you'd have to talk to him about the reasons why, but I think part of the reasons were that the park -- that the White Pass was actually having a lot of problems at the time in the '90's with environmental compliance.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: They had a World War II pipeline, the Canol pipeline, that they were using to pump petroleum products to Whitehorse. And it was an old, you know, old pipeline. It was narrow. It was rusting. It was falling apart. People were taking potshots. There were hillsides where rocks would fall on the pipeline, and they would have spills. They had a World War II tank farm, and, you know, petroleum products they spilled. They had other spills here and there. Um, they were caught working, um, taking Forest Service gravel, rocks, from outside of their right of way. [01:26:38] They had a num -- and then there was this big asbestos, or not asbestos, but the lead-zinc contaminant scare. Where for decades, since the early '70's, they had been transporting, um, the Cypress-Anvil lead-zinc from Faro to the dock, and then trans -- shipping it out. And they weren't very environmentally conscious, shall we say. 'Cause I remember in, I think it was '84, '85, by that time the -- that transportation had shut down. The mine had shut down, so they were no longer doing that. Later on, they restarted it, but -- so you could go to the ore dock, this big huge warehouse where they stored the ore --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: -- and just walk through. It was completely open. And I remember walking, and there was all this black dust there, and I didn't know what it was. It was lead-zinc. And I just walked through it and then walked out and transferred it into the lead-zinc --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: They also had this conveyor belt that took the lead-zinc to the ships. Conveyed it out of the warehouse to the ships. And it was open. And so the winds would blow the dust back into town, or back into the ocean, depending on the --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And so --

[01:28:02]KAREN BREWSTER: The Moore Homestead was an issue with John Mielke?

KARL GURCKE: Well, the -- the -- this -- all these um, problems that were surfacing with the -- the environmental problems that were surfacing with the railroad at that time, uh, the park superintendent, Clay Alderson, took the stance of environmental -- being environmentally sound. So he was, I wouldn't say necessarily attacking the White Pass, but he was certainly pointing out some of the problems. He was among a group of individuals that were, um, you know, wanting to make sure that -- [01:28:40]It was, shall we say, the railroad was pushed into being more environmentally friendly. And, you know -- and it was happening. You know, I mean, they -- they covered that conveyor belt, and they had a new company in there that dealt with the transportation of the ore on trucks, and they made sure that the -- the trucks were clean after they left from both areas. And then we had these big Supersuckers, vacuum cleaners on trucks, to suck up all the uh, lead-zinc, and they did testing here, and they did blood testing and all that stuff. So we were working toward being much more environmentally conscious. [01:29:30]But I think Mr. Mielke sort of took exception to the Park Service superintendent being active. He envisioned this being, you know, us versus them. And um, it looked like from his point of view that we were against the White Pass. Um, so he came in -- and, you know, the town -- there are people that are for the Park Service, and there are people that are against the Park Service, and I don't know exactly what the percentage is, but um --

KAREN BREWSTER: And I think it's changed through time, perhaps, too?

KARL GURCKE: It has undoubtedly changed through time, yeah. [01:30:12]Um, I've never had any problem with anybody of the town that, you know, screams and yells at me or -- even though they know I'm Park Service, but -- But, there are some strong feelings here and there.

KAREN BREWSTER: And certainly in the late '70's when the park came in.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: There were probably strong feelings.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, there were -- we -- it was a little different from -- with us as opposed to some of the other parks, 'cause we weren't part of that President Carter's big --

KAREN BREWSTER: ANILCA?

KARL GURCKE: ANILCA and -- and um, D2 lands and whatever, you know, expanding Denali, expanding Glacier Bay and Preserve and expanding these other parks. So we weren't part of that. We were a park that was established with the congressional delegation behind us, and the town folks were behind us, for the most part, and so it was a different park. And we got a lot of good reviews in the papers, saying this is a park that we want.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's good. [01:31:14]So this conflict between Mielke, John Mielke, the mayor, and Clay Alderson, the superintendent?

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, it -- if you want to put it with personalities, yeah. It was -- it was, you know, the White Pass against the Park Service, these two personalities. And so Mielke was trying to find ways to punish the Park Service. And so one of the ways he came up with was that we have around this building and the visitor center and general office building, their old depot,

we have elevated the boardwalk. It's a down -- you know, when you're on the boardwalk and you want to get down to the street, it's a two-step.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And he said, that's a safety issue. That's a real safety issue. So he was proposing to send his state -- his city crews out there to level the boardwalk, down to where --

KAREN BREWSTER: The street level?

KARL GURCKE: The street level, where the boardwalk is everywhere else. Of course, that would have been a problem with our doors entering into the buildings, so you'd have to crawl up one -- put in -- I don't know exactly how you would work it, but that would be a safety hazard. People would fall.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And now, was this built two steps up because it was that way originally?

KARL GURCKE: Uh.

KAREN BREWSTER: To keep people out of the mud of the streets, or -- ?

KARL GURCKE: You know, that's hard to tell. I think -- I think one of the things they realized when they were -- restored this is, you know, we're in a -- in a flood zone. And we have indeed photographs, taken in the aughts, um, the gold rush period and later on, showing Broadway, you know, flooded all the way up to Fifth Avenue. So maybe they decided to raise it up. The foundation's a bit higher, to do that, to protect it.

[01:33:11]KAREN BREWSTER: I thought maybe as a railroad station, you know, it had been up this high anyway, 'cause you were level with the tracks.

KARL GURCKE: Uh, that's possible, but I think that sort of the street came up to the tracks. At first --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

KARL GURCKE: At first the tracks were indeed a little high, and they filled in the street.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: Very early on. Uh, but they did have -- Initially, the early photographs show this wooden platform going out to the streets, to the -- to the tracks down the street. You know, so half of Broadway was taken up with this wooden platform.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: But they got rid of that soon enough.

[01:33:48]KAREN BREWSTER: So then -- so Mielke, he didn't succeed in the changing the steps?

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, I think some people in the city said, "No, you can't do that." But then, for some reason, he started focusing on this Fifth Avenue-Spring Street corner, because it's now a safety concern. It juts out. It pinches -- it's a pinch point. It creates -- there's a two-way road down to a one-way road. It's on a corner. Safety hazard. Huge safety hazard. And, of course, there was nothing to demonstrate that because there was no accidents there. No known accidents that had occurred in that area. The uh, -- what we had done, you know, in sort of in response to that, is okay, we had a fence here, and we cut uh, a gate into the fence, and then put a boardwalk along the inside of the fence. So if you -- if you really were concerned, you could go into our property and be on the other side and use the fence as a separation between you and the vehic -- and the road.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. As a pedestrian, right.

KARL GURCKE: And so -- but that didn't seem to be a solution. Uh, you know, I talked about possible streets -- possibly making that street one way, you know, as a -- but none of those solutions seemed to satisfy this urge. [01:35:23]And then Clay -- I don't know, and you'll have to talk to him about this, but Clay left us, um, for Mongolia. He got this job -- international job, so he and his -- and Clydene (it was his wife Claudia) left. Um, and so then we had Linda Cook come down as an acting superintendent. And Linda's job, she told me, was to deal with this solution. To deal with this problem.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Because Mielke had gone to the congressional delegation and complained, you know, the Park Service is against safety. Blah, blah, blah. So her solution -- she talked to a number of the state transportation people, and they basically said, "Yeah, we can cut the corner, but we don't have to cut it all the way. We could cut it down to a, you know -- " Or expand the corner a bit into -- taking into our property a bit, so that two cars can pass at the same time. Uh, and so that was what we went with. [01:36:29]Now um, for some reason, um, they had to run this -- they wanted to run this through the Historic District Commission. And, at the time, I was a member. I was the Historic District -- I was a voting member. And I was opposed to it. John Warder, the chief of maintenance, was opposed to it. 'Cause we're cutting into an historic part of our cultural landscape. And this is a critical corner, because it -- it symbolizes the Moores' battle against the city.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: You know, this huge battle that occurred at the founding of the city, and that went on for several years. Went to lawsuits, went to the justice system, and was eventually, uh -- uh, a settlement was reached in the Moores' favor. They got 25% of the assessed value of the town of sixty acres. I think they had 160 acres, but they got just sixty acres in the downtown corridor. Which was, you know, a pretty fair amount of money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: Um, so it's an important corner.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: It symbolizes all these battles, and whatnot. [01:37:52]So I was opposed to it. Now, you know, what I was being told, "Well, they're not really taking it. 'Cause part of the agreement was they're going to put a monument in the middle of the road saying this is where the corner is. And this is just a right of way. You know, they're just taking a right of way over the property." Yeah, but it doesn't, you know -- the people are not going to know that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: You know, well, "We'll put a, you know, a wayside exhibit there, you know." Or not in the road, but beside it, and talk about the -- You know, so I was opposed to it anyway. It's like, you know, I'm -- I took my oath to -- to -- to preserve and protect the park heritage, the park cultural resources, natural resources, cultural resources, and we weren't doing that. [01:38:45]And I know Clay would have opposed it, but he was out of the picture. So when the -- when the vote came up before the HDC, I voted against it, and it was 4-1, I think it was. Several of the members that didn't -- that didn't attend that particular meeting, told me that they would -- would have voted with me, so it would've been more like 4-3 or maybe even a tie, 4-4, but they didn't attend for some reason. And so, that was it. [01:39:29]Um, so what happened, uh, almost immediately the next day -- or yeah, I think it was the next day, I was called in by the

acting superintendent, who by that time was Betty Rickless. And it's interesting, her office is in the same office that I am now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

KARL GURCKE: So I was called into this office. Uh, and I was questioned about the -- the uh, my vote. And my boss, Chief Ranger Reed McCluskey, was in there, as well. And they said, "Well, you should've known to vote for it." But the one thing that my bosses before and the superintendent, they had never told me how to vote on the HDC before. They had never said, "Yeah, you take this position. You take that position." Uh, in some cases, I voted against something that Steve Peterson had suggested, for example, or in some other cases, I voted for things that we had suggested. But they never told me how to vote, and they hadn't told me how to vote on this one. And I voted my conscience. And so all of a sudden, I'm called in, and I get a letter of reprimand for my vote. [01:40:56] Now this is kind of interesting because there was a lot of lead-up to this. You know, this was -- didn't take place overnight. This had been going on for months and months and months, maybe a year or so. And I had sussed out how the politics of the situation were, and so I had written a letter to the, uh, uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: Newspaper?

KARL GURCKE: No, to the -- well, yeah, we had, uh, we had talked to the newspaper reporter, I think, about that. But to the regional director. I had written a letter to the regional director, and I explained the situation 'cause he was well aware of the situation. And I had told him what I was afraid of, that I, you know, for my stand -- and I explained why I was against it. And for my stand, I was afraid that I was going to be fired.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: You know, or punished in some way. And he wrote back a nice letter and explained to me that I wasn't going to be fired. That he disagreed with my position, but I wasn't going to be fired or punished in any way. So here I have this letter of reprimand, and here I have this letter that says I wasn't going to be punished. And I've often thought that what I should have done, is copy both letters and send 'em, you know, to the regional director and to the acting superintendent and said, "Ok. Can you please tell me about this letter and the conflict there. And I'm going to be punished, but I'm not going to be punished, and, you know." But I never did. [01:42:43] So that was, basically, from my standpoint, the start of these troubles, the lead-up to this corner, the Moore corner, and all the problems that were developing. And because at that time, I was not in a resource division or department, I didn't have any chief of resource person to go to and say, "You know, let's talk about this." And I didn't have any back-up.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: And so I was pretty much alone. [01:43:18] Although like I said, John Warder was sort of with me. He was the chief of maintenance. And there were other people were with me, sort of behind my back. But, we just didn't have any power. And so this went through. [01:43:38] And so I began to notice over the next few years -- I mean, there were some good things that happened. We got this new chief of resource division, and I was no longer under the law enforcement folks, although I had some problems with Theresa (Thibault), which we can get into later. But, I began to notice a number of things that were happening to me. So like, could this be retaliation? Uh, retaliation for my vote. So one of the first things to go was what they call "required occupancy." So back in 1990, I had -- at the request of Clay (Alderson), the superintendent, I had moved out to the Kalvik property in Dyea. The reason was because Mrs.

Kalvik, who had just lost her husband, Alf, they had used that property for sort of a vacation -- you know, during the weekends, and maybe --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Summer home, yeah.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, summer home or whatever. And when Alf died, Edna was kind of -- was quite getting up there in years, and she decided she wanted to sell the property. It was about two acres, uh, and a house and garage and uh, a little um, extra um, little extra uh -- uh shack for -- for -- for a --

KAREN BREWSTER: Like an outbuilding?

KARL GURCKE: Outbuilding. Several outbuildings and whatnot. [01:45:16]But anyway, so she wanted to sell it to the Park Service for some reason. And she wanted, I think it was \$90,000 for the property. And I talked to Clay about it, and we both agreed that it was, you know, let's buy -- this is within the park boundaries. It's -- it's another bit of Dyea, so let's buy it. Uh, but first of all, we had to go through the appraisal process. And it turned out it was appraised at \$87,000, so I actually had to go to Congress for the extra \$3000 to get permission. And so, but Clay wanted to be up front and good -- have good faith with Edna. And so, she said, ok we'll -- or he said, we'll rent the property from Edna at, I think it was \$700 a month or something. And that money will not go toward the purchase. It'll just be -- you know, we'll rent it until we get the money to purchase it. [01:46:23]So now we're going to spend \$700 a month and have nothing to show for it except this property, this vacant property. And so Clay approached me and said, "Are you interested in moving out there?" And I thought about it fairly quickly, and I said, "Yeah." I had -- I knew about the property ever since '84. I really liked it. It was open. It had a nice lawn. It had, you know, these outbuildings, a garage and whatnot, and um, yeah. Sure. 'Cause at that time I was living in a trailer in Skagway, and um, you know, moving to a house? This would be great.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: The -- the rent was about \$500 a month. It was a very complicated formula, based on you know, what you have in terms of utilities, lights, electricity, water, and all that. Or don't have, in my case, in that case, and the distance from established community like Juneau and things like -- so a very complicated formula. And it always looked to me like based on the formula, I should actually be being paid to live out there. But instead they -- all of a sudden this miracle --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: -- happens, and I have to pay them. It's -- it's a Sidney Harris cartoon, where --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, I think you've seen it, where all these things, and then a miracle happens, and then --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:47:43]KARL GURCKE: So um, yeah. So I moved out there. Now it was -- it was kind of dirty out there, 'cause it hadn't been lived in there for a number of years. Um, so I had to clean it up, and um, the biggest problem was the electricity. They had a couple of old diesel generators, but one was dead, not functioning, and the other was barely functioning.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because at that point, electricity had not been run out --

KARL GURCKE: That's right.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- to Dyea yet.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah. There was no electricity from -- from Skagway. So um, if I wanted electricity, I had to spend up to maybe thirty minutes hand-cranking this diesel generator, and sometimes it kicked over and started, sometimes it didn't. If it did start, then you had to wait up - - wait a little bit for it to warm up, and then you flicked a switch to send electricity to the house. Now sometimes I got electricity. Sometimes only the overheads were working, and the outlets were not. Sometimes it was the other way around. And sometimes I didn't have any electricity, even though the generator was going. There was a period of time where we had to send an electrician out to repair the generator virtually every week.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

KARL GURCKE: 'Cause it was old. It was shaking itself apart.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And basically, the soldering was going -- breaking.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:49:14]KARL GURCKE: So, but that was a bit of a bat -- you know, come home after a long work and then -- long work day and then crank and crank and crank and crank and finally get, maybe, electricity, or maybe not. I had my television hooked in, and although I didn't get any channels out there, I had VHS tapes and uh, when I turned on the television and watched the tapes, the picture -- the electricity was so bad out of the -- the picture would go in and out.

KAREN BREWSTER: Fade?

KARL GURCKE: Back and forth.

KAREN BREWSTER: I thought maybe the lights went out when you did that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh, sometimes they did, yeah. And in the morning, you know, uh, especially in the evenings -- or in the mornings during the winter and all that, I didn't turn on the electricity at all 'cause I'd have to run out there, hand crank it thirty minutes later, come back, quickly eat breakfast and then drive the thirty minutes to Skagway to work.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: So that was a big problem. They fixed that with bringing in a key start, a used key start generator, where you just had to turn the key.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And that was quite a relief.

[01:50:23]KAREN BREWSTER: But so you were feeling a shift in the park administration and how you were being treated?

KARL GURCKE: Well, yeah. So I -- there was a lot of problems out there in Dyea. The electricity I mentioned. The water was not portable (potable). It was not drinkable really. It stained everything brown. Um, there were problems with the heat. Of course, there was the drive back and forth to Skagway on this narrow road, which sometimes made life difficult. So, you know, I was keeping the -- Clay informed -- the superintendent informed about the problems I was facing, and, of course, he was noting the mounting bill for the electricity and all that stuff. Uh, so he put in, just to help me along, this required occupancy, which basically meant that I was required to live out there, but in exchange, all my rent was tax free. So that was a nice help.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:51:24]KARL GURCKE: And, you know, over the years, the park actually did a lot of work. Once we acquired the property, we did -- they did a lot of -- the maintenance set up a uh, the

diesel generator and then the, uh, solar panels, and so the electricity was fine. They fixed the water. They didn't fix it, but they made it a lot easier to work. And I was always bringing drinkable water in from Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And so on and so forth. Uh, had problems with the mice, and didn't ever fix that, but anyway. Uh, so it was actually pretty nice to live out there. So after this bit with the HDC and the Moore corner and all that, so one of the first retaliatory acts was getting rid of my required occupancy.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause Clay had left?

KARL GURCKE: Clay had left by that time.

KAREN BREWSTER: So now you had new people?

KARL GURCKE: So I was called in, um, by -- by that time I think it was -- Bruce Noble was the superintendent, and um, of course, Betty Rickless was the chief of admin. And I was called in and they -- Betty told me, informed me about the required occupancy. That they had apparently a housing committee that had come in to talk -- to study our housing needs, seasonal and permanent, and they had decided that they didn't need -- that I didn't need the required occupancy for some reason. They never talked to me about it, but all of a sudden, I no longer had the required occupancy. Ok. So I had to sign something for that, just to acknowledge that I had heard about this. [01:53:08] And then months later, I got a \$4000 bill that I had to pay because that's the difference between required occupancy with the tax free stuff. So that was kind of -- they never explained that, you know. Why do I have to do that? And so that was a bit of a concern. And then, maybe about a year later or so, or later that year, they told me I had to leave the Kalvik place -- the Kalvik house. Um, and so basically they told me -- Bruce Noble told me that -- it was the day before Thanksgiving, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Nice.

KARL GURCKE: You have four months to find a place in Skagway and -- and leave. Um, and fortunately, I was able to find a place.

KAREN BREWSTER: At least they gave you four months and not four days.

KARL GURCKE: Well, right. Well, I think they by law, they could've kicked me out and given me just a month. So I had this vision of me, you know, with all my furniture outside, and it's snowing around Christmas time. But so I was able to find a place in town, and then I approached them, um, Bruce and -- and Betty, and said, "Ok. I've got a place and now I can -- have to move. And so I'll be moving a lot of my stuff myself, but there's some larger items like my sofa and table, and the kitchen table, that I literally can't put in my car. It's too big. And so I need, say, a pickup truck and one or two guys to help me do this move." You know. And they said, absolutely not. We can't do that. We can't furnish you with any government equipment to help you with this move. Which is kind of interesting because they -- both of them came from Outside. They got their move paid for by the government. And their relocation expenses and all that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: But they are not willing to, you know, loan me a pickup truck, government pickup truck and a driver, for an hour and a half.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:55:29]KARL GURCKE: So that was annoying. So I did the move, and I was able to get some help from John Warder, for example, and some of my friends, uh, to do that move. And so I got everything out of the house for the summer season. The reason, the rationale for this move, for kicking me out, was we were going to use the housing for summer seasonals. So that first summer, we had one seasonal use the house for about three months, not the whole summer. And that was it. So it was vacant from, you know, that time 'til the next year.

KAREN BREWSTER: And this is about what year?

KARL GURCKE: This would be 2002, '03.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: Something like that. [01:56:23]And so the next year they actually got two seasonals in there. And then the year after that, they was able to get one of the permanent subject to furlough law enforcement people in there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: And I think that was the initial idea anyway. If they had -- if they'd been honest with me and told me that's what they wanted, I could understand that. To get a law enforcement person out there in Dyea.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Year-round. And that's fine. But they just weren't honest with me.

[01:56:53]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it sounds like that, after Clay, the next administration was problematic and not honest and --

KARL GURCKE: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. And -- and, you know, I could say that it was partly because of this, you know, my vote on the HDC, and so these were retaliatory actions. Maybe not so much on Clay -- on Bruce Noble's part, because he wasn't here at the time of this problem.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: But certainly, I think, Betty Rickless was responsible. Um, so -- so now I'm in a new building. I'm in the current place that I'm living.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: Smaller and higher rent. So.

[01:57:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Uh, so yeah, when did this happen that all these people started leaving? The superintendent --

KARL GURCKE: Well, that's a little bit later.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: So the next thing -- again, this is -- I'm looking at it from my standpoint.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right. Right. That's what we're talking about.

KARL GURCKE: So the next thing that happened was my professional library. So I had built up a professional library. I'd brought a lot of it up from Idaho. I'd been at the University of Idaho, and I had developed this professional library in archeology, historical archeology. A lot of trade catalogs and other material. [01:58:16]And it was interesting that when I finally got the permanent job, the park didn't pay for my transportation up at all. Which really didn't matter to me because all I had at that time was a vehicle and the stuff in the vehicle. And that was about it. I had a little bit of furniture down in Santa Cruz, actually, which I was able to bring up later. Um, but I didn't have much except for my professional library. I had a lot of books. So I talked to Paul Gleeson about that, and he said, "Ah, well here's a simple arrangement. Here's a bunch of

these prepaid mailers, and all you do is put your books in boxes, and seal the boxes up, and then put the Park Service address on the mailers, and slap it on and ship off." That was great.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:59:11]KARL GURCKE: And they all came, and so I established my library in my office, which at the time was Tim Steidel's office.

KAREN BREWSTER: The next door office, right.

KARL GURCKE: And I was using that professional library a lot in my work, but also the museum folks were using it as well, um, because they were dealing with historical artifacts. And then the folks up at the regional office were occasionally asking me to use it. Some locals were using it. I was lending out some of my books quite a bit over the time. [01:59:46]So the next retaliatory step was, I was told that the rule is, you can't have a professional library in the office. And I had heard somewhere that, well, the scientists were getting professional libraries, were allowed, but I'm not a scientist. I'm a scholar. So I was told that you have to move your professional library out of the office, and you have one weekend to do it. And we will give you -- at that time I had two crew members, archeologists, and we'll allow them to be paid overtime to do that. So I had just moved into my house. I had boxes all over the place, and I was just beginning to, you know, establish the kitchen, establish the bathroom, my bedroom and the living room, put things in where I wanted them to be. Now I had to move, I don't know how many hundreds, maybe a thousand-plus volumes from there, from my office to the house. And so, now we did that, all quickly, you know, using my car. We couldn't use the Park Service vehicle, of course. And we got 'em there, and so now I had piles and piles of boxes of books. [02:01:12]So then, a few weeks after that or a month after that, Betty said, "Oh. You don't need a big office." Now, you've been in Tim's office.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: It's not a huge office.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

KARL GURCKE: It's not a big office. But it was true, I didn't have, you know, the bookshelves. The couple of bookshelves in there were no longer filled with books. I could've filled them with other -- well, with Park Service books and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: -- you know, volumes and all that. So, oh, now you don't need a big office. So then we had this big, complicated office move. [02:01:49]So Betty had been looking at John Warder's office, which was the maintenance chief's office. And after John Warder had retired, we had this new maintenance -- Mike Amiotte, maintenance chief. So he was there, and -- and apparently they were friends, and so the decision was made that they would -- that they would switch offices. And that would be ok, except for some reason, the decision was made that they wouldn't actually switch offices. Mike would move into my office. Betty would move into Mike's office. I would move into the very smallest office in the entire building, which is right now where Kira is. And the person that was in there, um, I've forgotten her name. She was the branch manager of ANHA, the --

KAREN BREWSTER: National --

KARL GURCKE: National.

KAREN BREWSTER: I mean, Alaska Geographic Natural History Association.

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. Exactly. Um, she was going to move into this office, Betty's former office. [02:03:02]There was no really -- no need for that. I mean, if the two chiefs wanted to switch offices, that's fine. Why bring me into it? And the ANHA branch manager, she was basically part time. She worked in the summer. She didn't really work in the winter. She just needed a place for her -- her little safe for the money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: And a place to uh, uh, call around and buy books and things like that. So she -- she didn't need -- most of the time she spent -- at that time the ANHA office was or the sells -- the store was downstairs in the visitor center.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: It wasn't in another building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now it's in the Itjen -- old Itjen house across the street.

KARL GURCKE: Now it's in the Martin Itjen house across the street, yeah. So um, she didn't need a big office. She didn't need a big office year-round, so that office was perfectly fine for her. And she said it herself. And what's interesting is, after the move, she quit. You know, she quit the Park Service. Or, she quit her job.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Which was, yeah. [02:04:17]Um, so here I am, now in the very smallest office in the building, and I can't do my job, or part of my job. See, one item -- one part of my job is to meet and greet these gold rush era relatives. You know, relatives that have --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: -- stampeder, uh, stampeder descendants. And so they would come up, usually on the spur of the moment. I'd get a phone call, and they'd say -- uh, one of the rangers would say, "These folks want to meet you. They're downstairs." You know. "Ok. Come on up." So I'd go out of my office, 'cause there wasn't enough room for more than one person to actually have a meeting, a closed-door meeting with them. With me. So I'd go walk down the hallway, and if the conference room was open, fine. But if the conference room was not, then we'd have a meeting out in the hallway, standing up, or maybe possibly in the library, usually not in the interp work room. There just wasn't enough room. So it was, you know, it was hampering my job.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: Hampering my ability to do my job. So I began to get concerned. Um, you know, am I going to have to resign? And I think that's what they wanted. That's what -- I think that's what they were pushing for. [02:05:44]And then I got a call from the regional office, um, crisis management team. And I don't remember the exact date for that, but they called me up, and they said, "We have had a complaint from someone at your park." And they talked about some problems here and there, and at the end of that conversation, people at the regional office said, "Well, is there anybody else that can confirm your complaint, confirm your suspicions or whatever?" And the person who was doing the complaining said, "Yes. Everybody at the park." And they were shocked. And so --

[02:06:39]KAREN BREWSTER: Do you know what they were complaining about?

KARL GURCKE: No, I don't. I don't remember that. I don't remember the actual wording they used and all that, but so they were shocked, and they started calling around. And they were beginning -- by the time they reached me, it was looking to them that there was a serious

problem here at the park. That, you know, it wasn't just me. Because I hadn't complained. Yet. I was planning on it, but I hadn't complained yet. But it was a serious problem, um, at the park. I mean, maintenance was in uproar. Admin was in uproar. Interp was in uproar. Seems like everybody was in uproar. [02:07:23]So, and I think Bruce Noble realized that, because before this had occurred, he had established -- or he had had one of these retreats.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Park-wide retreats at the -- at the Chilkoot Outpost over there in Dyea. And we -- there was a whole bunch of us, and we had these Myers-Briggs tests, you know. Everybody went through that process.

KAREN BREWSTER: And team-building exercises?

KARL GURCKE: Team-building exercises, you know, the whole bit. And um, I don't think it really worked. [02:08:06]So um, these people from the regional office came down. They had an all-employee meeting, and they said that we are willing to meet with you face to face, have meetings, set up an appointment, and then they went into session, executive sessions, with the management team, the leadership team. I actually asked for an appointment, and I had a long conversation with them at the Peniel Apartments. Uh, and I tell ya, this was into the week. I don't remember the exact date, but it was toward the end of the week. And they looked knackered. I mean, they looked exhausted, the two of them. And while we were talking, there was a knock on the door, and, you know, somebody wanted an appointment. [02:09:02]So um, you know, in many ways, that initial phone call from the crisis management team was really a godsend for me. All of a sudden, I realized, it's not me.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: You know, yeah, they're -- they're attacking me, but it's creating -- they have created a hostile work environment for everybody in the park, or almost everybody in the park. Uh, so um, so that was interesting. And I heard that they had actually -- the crisis management team had actually required everybody on the leadership team to sign a document saying they were going to play nice with each other. You know, 'cause there was empire-building efforts before.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: And I think that was part of the reason, and --

[02:09:52]KAREN BREWSTER: And so the leadership team didn't get along with each other either?

KARL GURCKE: That's right. That was part of the problem, and then I think -- I heard stories about like Mike Amiotte was requiring some of his workers to work on his house, so, you know, that's a -- and I told you about some of the problems with Betty I was having. [02:10:13]I was also having problems with Theresa. Uh, because well, with Theresa there were several problems, like Eve Griffin, who was my long-running lead archeologist, she couldn't stand Theresa, and she switched to the maintenance division after Theresa came in. [02:10:35]And then Elaine Furbish quit. And that was kind of dirty because the last week that she was scheduled to work, they told her, "Don't come in. We'll pay you for that week, but don't come in." 'Cause they were quote, "concerned" about her, you know, damaging the park computers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because Elaine and Theresa just didn't get along personality-wise and -- ?

KARL GURCKE: I think so, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so Elaine was natural --

KARL GURCKE: Was natural resources.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- natural resources, and now she had to report to Theresa, where before she'd been her own -- ?

KARL GURCKE: Well, she's reported to Reed (McCluskey).

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

KARL GURCKE: McCluskey. Um, I'm not sure --

[02:11:14]KAREN BREWSTER: So what was so difficult about Theresa?

KARL GURCKE: Um, well, there's a number of problems. For example, with me and this problem with the housing, you know, all of sudden being kicked out of housing and all that, she didn't offer any support to me at all. And in fact, I remember very clearly, um, I was supposed to get out of the house -- the Kalvik house, on March 11. The Ides of March. So I had done -- I had gotten out of the house pretty much everything, and then, of course, I had to clean it up. And I was cleaning it up, and I realized that in order to meet that deadline, I needed some help. So I went around Skagway and tried to find a cleaning lady. And I figured I needed just one full day of cleaning with her and me working on it. And I found one. I found a woman that would be willing to do that. It was difficult to do, because they just -- they don't advertise.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: But she couldn't make it by the 15th. She could come the 17th, I think it was, couple of days later. Well, that shouldn't be much of a problem. But it was during the week, so I asked Theresa for a day off. And I don't have to tell her why I want a day off. I filled in the form and gave it to her, but I told her the reason. And she blew up on me. I mean, she literally screamed and yelled at me.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

KARL GURCKE: You know, I've never seen an adult go into a temper tantrum like that. And years later, she sort of apologized. This was just before she left, she sort of apologized.

[02:13:16]KAREN BREWSTER: But was that her normal method of operating?

KARL GURCKE: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: Of getting angry about things?

KARL GURCKE: No, not really. This was just a fluke. And I could never understand why, but she told me she thought -- you know, years later she told me she thought I was lying. But why would I lie? You know. I said, "I'm going to spend the time cleaning."

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: I don't have to tell you that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: (Snarling sound effect, rawr!) So that certainly soured me on her.

[02:13:48]KAREN BREWSTER: And in terms of you being able to do your job, was there difficulties with her in that regard?

KARL GURCKE: There were some. You know, she's -- she is an archeologist, but she's a pre-historian, which means she deals with the prehistoric past. I'm an archeologist, but I deal with the historic past, so I'm a historical archeologist. And because of what we deal with in the artifacts, it's different. Every artifact that she deals with is unique. It's a human artifact, and it's made by a human. No mass production. You know, no mass production of these arrowheads by

machine or these you know, projectile points or these atlatls, or these bows, and, you know, hammers. They're all made unique.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[02:14:41]KARL GURCKE: I deal with the machine age, so we have square -- we have round nails that were made by the billions, trillions, that are still being made today. In -- so now there -- some of them are in archeological deposits, and some of them are at your hardware store. Um, so there was a case, for example, with the Goldberg Cigar Store. Now, this is a little building that has -- the poor Goldberg. We purchased it in the late '70's. It was in its original location from the gold rush. It dates back to 1897, so it's a very early building. So we purchased this, but we couldn't purchase the land. The owner wanted us to take it out -- off. So we moved it temporarily to one place, and then we moved it temporarily to another place, and then we moved it temporarily to a third place, and then we moved it a bit here, and then we decided to move it to the north side of Fifth, behind the Kirmse complex.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[02:15:48]KARL GURCKE: So um, I had been aware that we were thinking about doing this, and I had talked to John Warder, who was the chief of maintenance, about possible archeological problems, and he said, "No. We're basically going to drag it over and plop it down, and we'll scruff up the grass a little bit, but that's it. We're not going to do any excavation or anything like that." So I should've talked to the new chief of maintenance, Mike Amiotte, but I didn't. But then I was walking down Broadway one day, on my day off, it was a Friday, one of my Fridays off, and I just happened to meet Theresa there, and she happened to tell me that oh, by the way, on Monday, the next Monday, they're going to move the Goldberg Cigar Store to this new location, and they're going to -- before they do that, they're going to scrape off the earth. They're going to do some excavation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: So deal with it. [02:16:53]You know, I don't know when she learned about it, but it would be nice to have, you know, had a couple of weeks advance warning instead of a weekend. Fortunately, I had my crew in town. You know, usually they're up the trail or they're off, but this time they were in town. And so I sent one person to monitor the work because it was not going to be a deep excavation. And in the monitoring, they found artifacts. Because if you recall, this is the area that they dumped artifacts from -- or dirt and artifacts from the depot excavation, the foundation excavations, spread it all over that place. And so there's this fill layer. So we're getting a bunch of artifacts in a fill layer. Yeah, they come from the depot probably, but we're not entirely sure. They could also come from the Pantheon excavations. And uh, they're in mixed context.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[02:17:55]KARL GURCKE: You know, they're rusty nails, a few other odds and ends, nothing unusual. One option would be to give them to interns to do interpretive things, but I don't think they wanted them. I mean, how many rusty nails do you want?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Um, so we were just going to throw 'em out. And I talked to Debbie Sanders, the museum curator, about that. She didn't want them either, I mean. So we were going to throw that out. Theresa said, you never throw out artifacts from an archeological excavation. And it's not really an archeological excavation, but -- 'Cause she was very upset at us. We were

unprofessional. But maybe she was unprofessional? [02:18:41] You know, for example, we do have in the collection a number of rusty nails from various excavations. So we had a number of situations where we did the excavations, but we didn't get the report done, and uh, many years ago, Clay was instrumental in getting Denver to come up with some additional funds to get these archeological reports finished. And so, with the uh, Block 37, where the Martin Itjen building is situated, uh, we had a major excavation there, and so we hired a contractor, and they went through and in the report, it says very clearly that by that time, which was like fifteen years after the excavation, they went through the artifacts, and they found all these rusty nails, which they didn't bother to measure 'em. The previous archeologist had measured them, and they took those readings because the nails had deteriorated in such a way that, you know, the readings that they got -- the measurements that they got would've been much reduced.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: And so essentially, what we're curating in a lot of these -- well, some of the boxes that contain these rusty nails, we're just curating rust.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: So I have no problem with throwing out rust.

[02:20:11] KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, and -- how did it work with Theresa being head of resources on the natural resources side when she's an archeologist? She's cultural. How can she manage both?

KARL GURCKE: Well, you know, that's one of the things. It's sort of "other duties as assigned." You manage them as best you can, and you -- You know, in that particular case, we had Elaine Furbish first, and then we managed to hire Meg Hahr after Elaine left, and, you know, you sort of take the lead of the natural resource person if you don't have any information about it. It's like Annie (Mastov), our current one. She is an historical architect, so she and I have long conversations about archeology, about history. She talks to the natural resource person, and, you know -- and she's actually going out in the field with the natural resource person and then learning their trade a bit.

[02:21:12] KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Yeah, 'cause there is still a natural resources lead or manager or something underneath -- ?

KARL GURCKE: Hopefully. Hopefully, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hopefully underneath the --

KARL GURCKE: But when you lose that, like when Elaine left.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: You know, then -- then -- you know, you have to hire somebody else.

[02:21:28] KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, yeah. It sounds like one of the things with Theresa, it sounds like it was a communication and --

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, she had communication issues. And for example, we rarely had, uh, resource-level meetings. Like with Annie, it's once a week, every Monday, for the most part. You know, except for holidays and things like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: But -- but, then it was like maybe two or three meetings a year, if that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

KARL GURCKE: So she was very closed. She didn't want to communicate.

[02:22:03] KAREN BREWSTER: So it sounds like it was a difficult time for you.

KARL GURCKE: It was a difficult time for me, yeah. And it -- it sort of makes you sort of hunker down, and you don't try new things. Um, and you just sort of try to do your job and don't show -- don't show up.

KAREN BREWSTER: And yeah, how -- yeah, how did you survive that, and why didn't you end up quitting?

KARL GURCKE: Um, well, I think part of the reason was because, well, this -- this crisis management team. Because all of a sudden, I realized that this problem was not just me and one or two others. It was a park-wide problem. And that -- that really, um, just opened, I said, "Hey. I'm not the only one." You know, I'm dealing this with a whole bunch of others, so that gave me a whole lot of support. That whole concept. [02:22:59] And then things changed after the -- after the crisis management team was here, and when they left, things started to change quite a bit. And so -- so the superintendent left, the uh, chief of admin, Betty Rickless, she left. The chief of maintenance, he left, Mike Amiotte. Uh, the -- Theresa stayed, and Reed McCluskey stayed. But Reed was the law enforcement person, so he's no longer my supervisor, so that's fine. And he and I interacted pretty well when that connection wasn't there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: I had some problems with him when that connection was there, when he was my supervisor. And I could tell a couple of times when Reed was -- there was smoke coming out of his ears, just about. [02:23:56] But so it was just Theresa. And I think Theresa relaxed a bit after that. So you know, she had come in -- So I can sort of see it from her side. She had come in. She's a new employee. Uh, she doesn't know all the things that are happening. She doesn't want to cause problems, but she's already causing problems.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: She's not reaching out, so -- But after this, when people started to leave, and then we got new people in, things started to change for the better. So um, the -- the -- the first superintendent after Bruce left, Jim (Corless), I think it was, um, I talked to him and Theresa and said, "I really need a bigger office." And this current office was vacant at the time, and um, oh I guess, um, Sandy was here. The chief of admin was here in the office, so -- but she wanted to move over to the other side -- the other side of the building. And so she did. And I moved into this. And then once I had this office, it was much bigger, I can build back my library a bit and uh, yeah. Things got much better.

[02:25:22] KAREN BREWSTER: So that superintendent, chief of admin, and chief of maintenance, were they forced out by the crisis management team? Were they told to leave? Or they chose to leave --

KARL GURCKE: I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- 'cause they didn't like the new rules?

KARL GURCKE: I don't know. That's something you need to talk to them about. Uh, yeah. I don't know, but they left. So it might have been the combination. Maybe they were encouraged to leave.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: You know, I don't know the relationship between them and the regional director, and maybe the word came down from him, saying, yeah, you need to go on.

[02:25:59]KAREN BREWSTER: So are there any um, sort of administrative structure or internal functionings of the park that have been successful versus that one sort of sounds like a bit of a failure. That the way those people ran the park didn't work very well.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, right. But it was the individual people. It wasn't the -- the -- the structure.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: You know, 'cause the structure -- the structure didn't change.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So but day-to-day operations under that regime were not affected?

KARL GURCKE: Um, well, they were effected to the point where we functioned sort of. In other words, the interpretive division did their thing with the public, and I don't think anybody in the public knew that we were having problems. The maintenance division kept the toilets operating and the lights on, and, you know, kept the buildings swept and clean. So, you know, the basic functions were going, but the heart of the park, the heart of the employees, they were pretty low-level.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: Pretty low. And um --

[02:27:09]KAREN BREWSTER: Can you think of a time in contrast to that where it was like just -- morale was high, and things were just clicking and working like clockwork, and everybody was -- ?

KARL GURCKE: Well, I think, you know, from my standpoint, you know, this time is now. That time is now. I mean, this is -- I feel that I'm really accomplishing a lot of stuff. I've got, sort of, semi-free rein to do what I think needs to be done. I'm -- I think I'm valued as an employee. I'm talking about, you know -- like I'm talking to you, talking to other people about past practices and decisions and all that. And those things are valued, not all the time, but, you know.

[02:27:59]KAREN BREWSTER: So under Theresa's, um, supervision, did you have a choice in projects you worked on, or she told you what to work on?

KARL GURCKE: It's a combination of things. Um, in some cases, like for example, she pushed me to write up a research plan for the park, a historical research plan for the park. And I was reluctant because it was going to be a big job. Or I envisioned it as a big job, a lot of work. But I got into it. Pulled a lot of information together. And I don't know how many pages, but it was over a hundred pages of, you know, suggestions for projects. You know, for example, one of the suggestions was oral interviews, the setting of oral interviews, doing um -- and that was the initial 2009-2010 oral interviews, and now this set of oral interviews. So there was a number of projects like that that I made suggestions, and hopefully some of that stuff will act -- people will actually read that. Probably most of them -- most of the people -- 'cause we've had a complete change of personnel.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: So they don't know where those things are hidden. They're not hidden. They're in plain sight, but you can't see 'em because you don't know they're there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: So that research plan is there, and I push it out every once in a while, and I don't know if anybody reads it, but -- but um, so yeah. Yeah. That --

[02:29:34]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I was -- in terms of research plan, that was one of my questions is, you know, now in 2018, has everything been researched and --

KARL GURCKE: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- studied about the gold rush? Or is there more to do?

KARL GURCKE: Not at all.

KAREN BREWSTER: I mean, there's certainly more recent history, but what kind of things do you work on?

KARL GURCKE: Well, I think one of the major things that should be worked on, there should be a major research effort for the -- the maritime -- effort of the maritime aspect of the gold rush.

KAREN BREWSTER: The maritime history?

KARL GURCKE: Maritime history, yeah. Because all the stampeders, or at least 99.9% of the stampeders, came via the ships. Mostly from Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles. So this harbor is extremely important. It tells the story of the gold rush. [02:30:32]What about these companies, the already established shipping companies, the fly-by-night shipping companies that were established during the gold rush? Some cases, they were just a single boat, a single ship. Um, we have a lot of first-hand accounts of the ships, and of their time during the ships. You know, there's -- people -- every once in a while, I'll get asked, "Well, how much did these people pay for their passage?" Well, it depends. It depends on when you were coming up during the time of the rush. If it was early, if it was mid, late rush? Did you take first class, second class, steerage, you know, place on the floor in the lunch room, or whatever? Uh, or you going on a private yacht? Were you a stowaway? [02:31:26]I knew that there were probably stowaways, but then this woman sent me a fictional account of these two kids going to the gold rush. You know, it was young adult fiction.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: Asked me to review it, and they had -- one of the kids was a stowaway. And I said, "I've never heard of a stowaway." And then within a month, I got an actual account of a stowaway. A pretty good stowaway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cool.

KARL GURCKE: So, yeah. And subsequently, I've heard additional accounts.

[02:32:01]KAREN BREWSTER: And then, are there shipwrecks out in the bay?

KARL GURCKE: There are shipwrecks out in the bay. We have photographs of several shipwrecks. There's the barque "Canada," which is now in Long Bay. I was able to do a history on that ship because now a lot of the newspapers are being digitized, and so you can track a ship's coming and going voyages with the newspapers. Uh, a lot of the ships -- a lot of the newspapers around port cities, New York and New Orleans and whatever, would track the comings and goings of ships. They would say, such-a-ship -- a ship is in port. Another ship is leaving port. Another ship is loading. Another ship met a ship at the sea, on sea, on the ocean, and they recorded passages, information from that other ship that they met. [02:32:58]A ship, for example, the "Canada," it encountered a hurricane or cyclone, I guess, near Australia, and they spent three days fighting it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

KARL GURCKE: And the ship was literally on the side of the water for a while.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

KARL GURCKE: And this way and back and forth. The captain broke his leg. They had to throw out all the deck -- cargo on deck. The masts were broken. It was just amazing. And this account was from the captain's log. It was published in Australian newspapers. It was published in newspapers back home here in the states.

[02:33:33]KAREN BREWSTER: And so, was that shipwreck visible, or is it still visible?

KARL GURCKE: Yes, at low tide it's still visible. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: But, so it's been changing, though?

KARL GURCKE: Well, it's --

KAREN BREWSTER: When you first came, was it more visible? Is it getting buried?

KARL GURCKE: Um, it's really hard to say. Um, what I need are photographs of it in earlier decades. And so I was able to find some photographs of it in the '70's, but, you know, we have 1899, 1900, maybe 1910, and then 1970. There's a big huge gap.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: I know people were visiting, you know, where --

[02:34:10]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But, yeah, I was thinking, though, between, you know, 1984 and now, if the sands coming down the rivers are filling in that bay more?

KARL GURCKE: Yeah. Yeah. You know, I think if you really looked at it closely, the photographs that we have, yeah, you'd see some deterioration. And certainly from the '70's, you can see that the -- the ribs were much higher then.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And they're not, um, now. They're almost down, completely gone. And so, yeah. And then, every once in a while, I would get a little baggie of -- of copper nails out of the ship. Somebody would bring them in and say, "Here." Doing their good deal.

KAREN BREWSTER: Your deed. Your --

KARL GURCKE: It's like the rusty nail.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Uh, doing their good deed. So. So yeah. [02:34:59]And we did, with that case, I was able to pull together a archeology team, and the park furnished housing for them. They were Canadians, a couple of Canadians. Well, three, four Canadians, and Dave McMahan from Anchorage. You know, they came down, and we did a survey of the ship and a mapping survey and all that, so that worked out pretty nicely.

[02:35:26]KAREN BREWSTER: So it is -- seems like that there's still things to do historic research on here?

KARL GURCKE: Oh, yeah. Exactly. Um, I'm putting together a photo history of Smuggler's Cove, and so far we have -- I think we had six photographs of Smuggler's Cove from 1898 to the present.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: Um, although I haven't really concentrated on the present yet. I haven't gone out --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, there's some nice ones on the interpretive sign out there.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Historic photos.

KARL GURCKE: And I just found another one. We had this, um, granddaughter of Frederick A. Callarman, who visited us there in the summer, and she allowed me to scan a number of

photographs, and one of them was of Smuggler's Cove. I recognized it immediately. And so I was able to put that in chronological order with the other photographs and made tweaks to the -- my -- my remarks section under each photograph to try to get an idea of what was happening out there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cool.

KARL GURCKE: So, yeah.

[02:36:32]KAREN BREWSTER: It sounds like you've transitioned well from archeologist to historian.

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. Exactly. So the archeology portion, now Shawn Jones is in charge of that. And he's using the new instruments, the GPS and all that stuff, to record. And it did work excavating what was left of the Kinney Bridge site, but we're still coming up with problems with Dyea itself 'cause that's washing away. And it comes in spits and fits and so, once -- for five-ten years, nothing will happen, and then all of a sudden, forty feet, you'll lose forty feet. And then another five years, and then another twenty feet there, so.

[02:37:17]KAREN BREWSTER: So are you glad that you transitioned into the historian position, or you miss archeology?

KARL GURCKE: Um, it's a combination. You know, I enjoyed doing the archeology, underneath the Mascot. That was fun. Doing the annual archeological work hiking up the Chilkoot, going to Sheep Camp, going to Lindeman, you know, going all the way over. That was strenuous, but it was fun. I enjoyed -- I enjoyed being out in the open air. I enjoyed finding places that had been untouched and are still, hopefully, untouched by the -- by the individuals, you know, the hikers, the tourists, and so they're sort of pristine, you know. So I definitely enjoy that. But I'm sure -- I don't think I could do that now, physically. Yeah. Um, so it's much more sedentary working at the computer, sitting all day at the computer. I need to get up and get around. Uh, but yeah. Yeah. [02:38:29]So um, Theresa sort of pushed me into the historian position. The interesting thing about that is that when I was initially hired, at that time, back in 1987, the position called for hiring either archeologist or an historian. I was an archeologist, historical archeologist, but you had to be in one of those categories, and there was a list of applicants, or a pool, where you had to put in your resume. An archeology pool and a historian pool. Well, when I applied for the job, the archeology pool was finished, was full. So they didn't have any room for additional archeologists. So I put my application into the historian pool. So they pulled from that, and they took me, and I'm classified as a GS-107 historian.

KAREN BREWSTER: So you made yourself a historian?

KARL GURCKE: So I sort of made myself -- well, I asked permission. I said, you know, to my bosses at the regional office, and I said, "Can I do this?" And they said, "Yeah, go ahead." You know, because of my historical archeology background.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: So I did that. [02:39:54]So yeah, so it was quite easy for Theresa to just say, "Okay, now we'll establish this historian position for a national historical park, why not, and move you, Karl, into that position." And then for the next ten years or so, she tried to hire an archeologist to take over my archeology duties, and she had a tough time for them, because again, I mentioned that pre-historian background.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: She was pre-historian, and what she needed is a historical archeologist. So, she would hire this archeologist, and the archeologist would work for a couple of years and then move on. And then the next archeologist, after a year or two, would do the same thing for maybe three years and move on. [02:40:40]And then the last archeologist she hired, Dave Cremer, he lasted only eleven months, and then she fired him. And I was quite upset about that because her rationale, her reasons, were bogus, you know. For example, one of the reasons was -- At the time, Theresa required us to report to her biannual -- uh, biweekly reports. Every --

KAREN BREWSTER: Every two weeks?

KARL GURCKE: Two weeks, right. We would have to report on what we were doing. So I'd send her about a four-page document. Other people would just send her about a page, but I'm very meticulous. And I was doing a lot. And she claimed that Dave Cremer didn't do that. But he did, because he would copy us on his reports as we would copy him, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: We would share our reports. So that was a bogus, a lie, essentially. And there was a bunch of other things. But he was in the probationary period, so he couldn't really fight it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [02:41:52]So do you think there's any long-lasting impact, legacy, from this crisis period and then under Theresa's reign?

KARL GURCKE: Um, well, I think there -- there may have been. I mean, probably one of the legacies that occurred, not so much because of them but because of the lack of funding that I faced, in terms of the archeology, is that the work that I did is not as detailed as much as it could have been. It's not as extensive as much as it could've been. There are areas of the Chilkoot that have not been surveyed that should be surveyed, but we just didn't have the time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: We didn't have the money. The folks I was dealing with, some of them were pretty good, some of them were not so good. And the level of recording could've been better, I think. [02:42:57]And, you know, like I said, for Dyea, for that first summer, it was a -- a summer that was just, well, July, August, and a bit of September, um, and I only had one person for the first three weeks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: And one person for the last two weeks, and I was out there alone.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: Um, and looking back at that, what I should've, you know, required, or what we should've done is like a six-person team. Three archeologists and three professional land surveyors. 'Cause there's a lot of survey that --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: That -- that task directive wanted. So a lot of surveying. And that, what was it, five-meter, two-meter contra-interval map, that's something that was beyond me.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: I can -- I can do line -- I can do flat. You know, here's the river coming in. Here's the, you know, the road coming in, and the things like that. But the elevations, the ups and downs and all that, that was a bit beyond me.

[02:44:08]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. What about lessons learned from those rough years with that administration and Theresa?

KARL GURCKE: Well, I think one of the lessons is you really have to be transparent. You know, you really have to be able to work with people. And, you know, we tend to get into these - - we're seeing this in the present day with the political stuff, rigid ideologues, you know. You do it my way or the highway. And that just doesn't work. It just doesn't work. Because your way is not necessarily, you know, the best way of dealing with these things. And you get the best way of dealing with things by working with people and literally listening to what they say.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: And each of you listening to what the other person is saying and actually having a conversation instead of a one-way, you know, just shout out. So yeah, that would be the -- the lesson learned. [02:45:12]And -- and I like the idea, and I don't know if they have it now, but I think they do, you know, that crisis management team, that there would be somebody you could call, outside the park, and say, "Hey, we have a problem here." I -- at the time, I wasn't aware of that, that it even existed. Um, now after thirty-some-odd years, I think it exists, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: And they're doing a number of things, like that, you know. This whole business about the sexual harassment stuff, they're really pushing on that. Lots of training. Too much training. You know, you tend to go overboard.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: But.

[02:45:54]KAREN BREWSTER: Looking back on all your years here at Klondike Park, is there something you can think of that's been the best part of working here, or your job?

KARL GURCKE: Hm. Well, I've liked -- I've liked working with a number of the folks, some of the archeologists that I worked with over the years. And some of the other folks. I like the community. It's a friendly community. Um, and I've always like the period, the time period we're focusing in on, the gold rush period, 'cause I think that Gilded Age that they talk about --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: Uh, has a lot -- we can learn a lot of lessons from that period. Uh, you know, our own gilded age, you know, where the rich are richer and richer and richer, and the poor are poorer and poorer and poorer, you know, that -- that different ranking and -- and individual wealth, that -- that can really affect people. Um, it's -- it's very comfortable, in many ways. Maybe it's too comfortable, living here. You don't have to face the -- the grind of a big city. Um, yeah, so.

[02:47:16]KAREN BREWSTER: What about, what's been the most challenging for you?

KARL GURCKE: Well, I think the most challenging was that time of troubles, trying to survive. And then in terms of the historian -- historical field, it's -- the challenging thing is to try to be able to bring all this stuff together. You know, I do these photo histories, and so I focus say on a particular building. And so I'm trying to figure out, okay, we've got the regular photographs of Broadway. And then where -- what other photographs can I use? Maybe the aerials, maybe the photographs from the hillside. And what other information? Well, there's newspapers, and I need to do newspaper research, and then there's other records, the census records for the individual business owners, and the business directories. You know, you just -- there's just the endless amount of information out there, and it's just a matter of compiling it. But that compiling it takes a lot of time and effort, and, you know, and having to constantly come up with um, of where is

that next bit of information coming from? And sometimes, it just drops in your lap, you know, which is great, but other times, you really have to uh, look for it. And then I just -- I say, you know, if -- I've been down to the state library in Juneau, for example. I've been to the University of Washington several times. The University of Alaska Fairbanks. All these institutions. And I just say, I want to go back, because I know I'll find new stuff there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[02:49:03]KARL GURCKE: You know, for example, for years and years, we had no idea what the Dyea-Klondike Transportation Company wharf site looked like. We had no photographs of that. This is a wharf site that's three miles south of Dyea along the hillside. The only thing we had was a drawing of -- of the road that went to it, and then just a couple of drawings of buildings, and that was it. And I went down to the state library once, one of the few times that I was able to get money to fund the trip down there, and just going through the collections, just at random, you know, looking through their finding aids, well, this has got Skagway and Dyea stuff, and bang. There it was. You know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cool.

KARL GURCKE: A nice set of, you know, half a dozen photographs of the DKT wharf site.

[02:50:03]So my next journey is where are there historic photographs of the Dyea Slide Cemetery? We have none, no gold rush era photographs of that Slide Cemetery. And it was a major event.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

KARL GURCKE: You know, but why are there -- you know, we have photographs of the avalanche site, photographs of them digging up bodies, photographs of the bodies. Um, but there's no photographs of the Slide Cemetery.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, you'd think from old newspapers there'd be something.

KARL GURCKE: There's descriptions, a little bit.

KAREN BREWSTER: But no photos?

KARL GURCKE: We have an account from the guy who built the coffins. We think he built the coffins and the headboards. But no photographs.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it all sounds like a little bit of a treasure hunt, you know.

KARL GURCKE: It is. It is.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that, when you find that picture, woohoo!

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, and -- And hopefully, either I or somebody else will know what we're seeing when we find it. Because you don't always.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[02:51:04]KARL GURCKE: You know, for example, one of these photographs of the Company L soldiers, the black -- African American soldiers, when they were stationed out in Dyea, and that was just for about a month before the place burned down, there's a nice photograph of them at attention.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

KARL GURCKE: You know, being reviewed by Captain Hovey. And um, the picture is reversed. And the state library also said, "Oh, it's -- it's of Skagway." So, no. It's -- you know, it's Dyea. But it's also reversed. And so we have to make the -- the connection, that mental leap to reverse it. And now of course, with the computers, you can do that easily.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Um, but that's what you get quite a bit. You know, every once in a while, you'll find this pictures that are reversed, and so you have to think about 'em and do that reversing in your head.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, this is the benefit of having somebody here for thirty-some years who knows those connections.

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's that continuity. [02:52:17]Um, the other thing I did want to talk to you about was the Historic District Commission.

KARL GURCKE: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now I know that history of that has probably already been pretty well documented in the previous admin history, but maybe we can talk a little bit about it. When was that established?

KARL GURCKE: I think it was established -- well, initially, the law, the ordinance, the city ordinance that established the Historic District was 1972, I believe. And um, so this was actually something pretty -- well, it was unique at the time because it was the first Alaskan city to establish a historic preservation ordinance. As far as I know. [02:53:01]And a couple of years later, they established the Historic District Commission to enforce the ordinance. And this was done at the behest of the Park Service. So this was in the early '70's, they were talking about establishing the park, and some of the -- the needs of the park were to have an historic preservation committee and ordinance to protect the historic district, to make it, you know, look like it did then or look like it did historically. [02:53:34]So um, initially the commission was a bit of a joke, and the "hysterical commission," you know. And it took a while for -- for both the city, I think, and the commissioners, and the people in general, to understand -- to begin to understand the presen -- the reason, the rationale before it, and uh, the reason -- some of the people still object to it, um, because it makes them -- you know, they have to go before the commission. They have to fill in the forms, which are not that difficult, but they have to -- they have to think about what they're doing.

[02:54:20]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and in some cases, there are local business people in the Historic District who have wanted to do things, and they present them to the commission, and they are denied?

KARL GURCKE: Yes. Yes. But we -- at least when I was there, and I think even today, we always tried to work with the applicants, uh, to come to a good solution rather than just denying them. So you know, you had -- the applicants were -- would -- came in various different categories. I mean, there were the applicants that knew nothing and had no clue. Um, and in those cases, those were people that were fairly easy to work with, and, you know, we would just say, "Ok, design it this way." And we basically worked the ordinance, the regulations, um, sort of to deal with that type of applicant. [02:55:16]So we set up, eventually, a fairly strict application -- set of guidelines on fonts, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: For the signs?

KARL GURCKE: For the signs. And we actually went through quite an elaborate process where I developed the photo essay on signs in Skagway, and I, you know, took each photograph of Skagway during the gold rush period and looked for signs. And so I scanned the photograph, put it on the Word document, and then I, you know, cropped out just the sign that I was looking at. And sometimes there were a dozen signs in the picture, and so I put each one down below. And

so we went through, and we looked at those, and we looked at books on sign fonts. There's a difference between fonts that are in a published book, you know, book fonts and sign fonts. They're totally two different things. And of course, sign fonts are made by hand. You know, the sign painters.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

[02:56:17]KARL GURCKE: And that's one of the problems that we face even today, because nowadays it's all computers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Computer, right.

KARL GURCKE: The computer designs the sign. Even though it's the proper font, it's designed by a computer, and so it doesn't have that human touch.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: So that's a bit of a problem.

KAREN BREWSTER: So how many people sit on the commission?

KARL GURCKE: Oh, I'm not sure of the exact number. It has varied over time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: But uh, six, seven, something like that?

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: Seven to nine.

KAREN BREWSTER: And they are appointed by the city?

KARL GURCKE: They're appointed by the mayor.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[02:56:57]KARL GURCKE: And um, and then -- that was a -- that was an interesting thing with me. So going back to the Mielke business.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: So I was on the HDC at the time, and um, they were just -- the city was just establishing term limits. So for years, there was no term limits on the HDC. So commissioners could serve as long as they wanted to, and unless they got into trouble, um, they could serve for their entire life, basically. Although nobody did. And so, the city was finally establishing term limits, and so there were terms of like, terms of three years, and two years to stagger them so that they would -- so that there would be a change, but there would still be some old folks on the commission and all that. [02:57:49]So I was given a three-year term, and when it was up, Mielke was the mayor. And so he sent me a basic form letter, thanking me for my service and asking me if I wanted to continue. So I talked to Clay and said, "Do you want me to continue?" 'Cause with me, the superintendent appoints me as the liaison, the Park Service liaison, and the mayor sort of confirms that. And so Clay said, "Yeah, sure. No problem." So um, I wrote back to the mayor and said, "Yeah, I would like to continue and all that." And so I attended the next meeting, and there was a person in my spot. The mayor had appointed a White Pass employee to take over my spot. The ordinance, however, specifies that there has to be a Park Service employee. Or at the time, it specified there has to be a Park Service employee. One of the -- one of the team.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: One of the commissioners has to be Park Service. So that was a bit of a thing.

[02:58:58]There happened to be Paul Lofgren, who was a Park Service employee in interpretation who had been on the commission for a couple of years. He was not the official liaison. He had just wanted to be a member for his own interest. And he had been on the

commission for, I don't know, three years, four years, something like that. So the mayor said, "Ah. Well, we -- we do have -- we have a Park Service person on the commission." Uh, ok. So I was in a bit of a bind, you know. And Clay wasn't going to, you know, make a big deal out of it 'cause we were sort of stepping on --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: You know. So basically, for the next six months or so, I sat in -- every meeting, I sat in the audience, and was occasionally called on to have an opinion or give technical advice or whatever. But that was odd.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: So eventually Paul resigned, and so the mayor appointed me again to the commission.

[03:00:13]KAREN BREWSTER: And is there still the requirement that there's a Park Service employee?

KARL GURCKE: Yes, there still is as far as I know. Um, the liaison. But it's a non-voting member.

KAREN BREWSTER: When did that change?

KARL GURCKE: That changed not too long ago. I was still on the commission, or I had just actually come back. And it's something that came down from Washington, DC. So it was not specifically directed to the Skagway Historic District Commission, but it was in general that park employees are not to be voting members of commissions and councils and blah, blah, blah, whatever. Ethical concerns.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Which in many cases, it would've helped if -- if back at the time of this business over the Moore corner, if I had just been a non-voting member at that time, then nobody could've given my letter of reprimand because I didn't vote on the thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. [03:01:18]And as the non-voting member, though, you're sort of the technical advisor if they have questions or want to look at old photos?

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: You provide all that information?

KARL GURCKE: So for example, when we talked about a need to design -- to redesign the fonts -- 'Cause we had initially in the ordinance had just said, um, a block -- block fonts, you know. And so we were getting a lot of signs that looked the same. So we -- the city -- or the Park Service designed a font list that we were gonna use -- require, only our buildings. Because we were getting to the same problem. You know, we have this business about fonts. Um, and the -- when we rent buildings to somebody, they want to put their business sign out in front, and so, you know, where do you put it and all that. [03:02:15]So the park had a historical architect up in the regional office, Bonnie Houston, and so she and I worked together. We looked at all the historic photographs of the park buildings, and we determined what fonts were on the buildings historically, the business signs historically. So for each building, there was a different set of fonts. And some buildings had awnings, and some buildings didn't. And some buildings, you could have fonts in the windows and all that, so. We developed the sign guidelines for the -- well, she did the developing, and I just provided information.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: For the park buildings. And that's still in place, as far as I know.
[03:03:04]And then the city, the HDC, took that and made it its own. And then we realized there were some problems with it because, one, the fonts that it was describing were -- were fonts -- book fonts rather than --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. Sign fonts.

KARL GURCKE: Sign fonts. And secondly, um, it wasn't big enough. It wasn't -- you know, what is the range of fonts? And so that's what I did. I put together this photo history and developed the range of fonts for both Skagway and Dyea, presented it to the HDC. We had a number of work sessions, and we came up with this very detailed list of the number of fonts that are allowed on buildings in the HDC, the Historic District.

[03:03:52]KAREN BREWSTER: I know that you said that the commission has been controversial with local business owners. Um, are there things -- do you find that it's been a worthwhile and effective organization?

KARL GURCKE: Oh, I think so. Yeah. I think we've -- we've helped a lot with a number of buildings. I mean, I remember, there was this big battle over um, the Canadian Pacific building, which is right here on Broadway, just above Second, on the west side. And it's right by the AB Hall.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: And so, when the ownership of that building changed, back in the '90's, the new owners wanted to, sort of, standardize the building, 'cause it's -- it's a little different. It has, you know, instead of a lot of the buildings had like a center entrance, two doors, center entrance set back a little bit, and they wanted to sort of standardize that. So this has a door on one side, a door in the center, a door -- three doors, or something like that. One door was supposed to be for the upstairs.

[03:05:06]KAREN BREWSTER: Is this the building that Corrington's Museum is in?

KARL GURCKE: Ah, no.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, it's the other side?

KARL GURCKE: It's -- it's on the other side.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok, yeah. That's the Golden North Hotel building.

KARL GURCKE: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's right. Ok.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah. So -- so we had a big battle, and, you know, I was instrumental in saying, "Hey, this is the way it looked historically. It's a unique building, and why don't we keep that uniqueness?" You know, so that the front window on the left is slightly larger than the front window on the right, and you know, there's some uniqueness about it. And we -- we won on that one. [03:05:42]Um, the Golden North, the Corringtons, once they acquired that building, they wanted to put a big, they said, arctic entryway on the front of the building, 'cause it had historically an arctic entryway. But their arctic entryway was to cover up that whole front of the building to the boardwalk, which is a big area.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: And they said, "Oh. Historically, businesses were fronted up against the boardwalk, so this is not historical." Even though historically, in 1908 it was moved to where it is located. So um, we had this long battle about that front, that quote, "arctic entryway."

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[03:06:27]KARL GURCKE: Yes, after the gold rush, the Golden North Hotel put in a small arctic entryway, really quite a nice little arctic entryway. But -- but it was nothing compared to the huge arctic entryway that uh, Dennis wanted, and that was basically to be able to have space he could rent out to people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah. And the whole point of that setback of the hotel, it was a hotel. And that front was a little garden with flowers, Garden City Alaska.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: They had flowers along the side, and it was really quite a beautiful little spot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: So that was a long battle that we had with him, and he eventually dropped the idea.

[03:07:13]KAREN BREWSTER: Are there any examples where the commission lost, and the business owner won what they wanted?

KARL GURCKE: Yeah. Yeah, the Bowman Barber Shop, which used to be Moe's Frontier Bar. Again, when Malcolm Moe died and the busi -- the building was sold, um, they came to us and I had worked on a -- or built a photo essay on that building. And, basically, it had a nice corner entrance to the alleyway and Broadway. And corner entrances were a lot more present on buildings during the gold rush period. They seemed to like that. [03:08:00]The Verbauwhedes has a nice corner entrance to the alleyway, rather than front on, it's just that -- that corner entrance, so you give the alleyway people, and the -- you know. Um, so they redesigned their, um -- the front of the building, 'cause Malcolm Moe had altered the first story of that building quite a bit. But the corner entrance was still there, somewhat. It was boxed in a bit, but it was still there. And so they went back to the gold rush period, and we did that front part of the building and did a pretty nice job. [03:08:39]But then, a few years later -- and we had approved, the HDC had approved their new front with the corner entrance. But a few years later, they came back and they said, "We want a standard front entrance, right in the center." Because again, safety concerns. You know, people walk out of the alleyway and get run by all those people driving in and out of the alleyway at rowdy speeds, so -- which, of course, didn't happen. So they were concerned about that, and I think that was the only reason they came up with that, and so um, you know, we argued with them. And we denied them. And, I mean, that was something that we really couldn't -- couldn't approve. And they went before the -- the council, the assembly, and the assembly voted in their favor. So the corner entrance was walled up, and the new entrance was put in in the center of the building. So it makes it look like just about another one of the buildings.

[03:09:49]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, yeah, it sounds like the HDC might be a focal point for some tough local politics.

KARL GURCKE: Yes, it can be. It can be. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And has it been in the past?

KARL GURCKE: Oh yeah, all the time. I mean, any time you're telling a business man or woman, you know, you can't do it that way, you have to do it this way, um, you get into arguments. And in some cases, we're actually helping them out by saving them money and -- but they don't see it that way. You know, they want it this way rather than that way. And then sometimes, three or four years later, they change their minds and they say, "Well, we don't want

it this way. We never wanted it this way. We want it this way." Oh, ok. You know, we thought this way was fine, but you wanted it that way, and we approved. And now you want it a different way, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now we've got to approve it again.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, we'll approve it again. Yeah, sure.

[03:10:45]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, then I also know, like, you've helped consult private people in town on historic structure issues, like the Portland House.

KARL GURCKE: Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Well, that was one of the photo essays that I started out without photos. I told you about that with the Jeff. Smiths Parlor, and this was the same thing. I didn't -- at that time, I didn't have the ability to transfer -- scan and transfer photographs to the Word document. Now Virginia was on the -- Virginia Long was on the HDC at the time, and I was on at the same time, and uh, so they had, I guess, acquired the building. And it was in pretty bad shape. We have lots of photos of it during that time period. Although it was operating as a restaurant, and I actually liked the food. Came back many times. [03:11:50]Um, but um, when they acquired it, and she became on the HDC, she proposed to demolish it. Um, so we -- that started a lot of conversations and all that. We were able to get the SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) office involved, I think, and Grant Crosby was involved from the regional office, the historical architect up there. And I don't remember exactly what happened, but, basically, we were able to get them grants for an architect to design the building to go back to the gold rush period, and they were able to get some money to do that, and then they started working on restoring the building. And I think you've talked to Virginia about that.

[03:12:44]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah, but that you were able to provide them information and guidance and --

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. Um, Grant provided --

KAREN BREWSTER: Something else that you do as the historian.

KARL GURCKE: Right. Grant provided the -- Grant Crosby provided the architectural guidance, and I provided the historical guidance. I went through the photographs and developed this photo history without photographs, and later on put the photographs in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: Um, showing the history of that building and what it used to look like, and so --

(Abrupt cut)

[03:13:18]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok, we're back. Sorry, we -- card stopped recording. It stopped recording. So you were talking about the Portland House and the first time you went inside when they were taking it apart, you noticed something.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, it wasn't the first time, but it was one of the times I went inside. And so the electrical system, the standard, gold rush era electrical system was a knob and tube electrical. So you had these porcelain tubes that would be placed where the wires went into, went through the wood, the studs, wooden studs, or outside, um, whatever. And there was a lot of that in the Portland House, but there was also this interesting electrical system where they had basically put a groove, two grooves, in a board that went along the wall on the -- on the east side of the building, and that's where they ran their electrical wires. There wasn't really any knob and tube wiring at all. It was just running the -- the wires, which was kind of interesting.

[03:14:29]And part of that building had been built without studs, so it was just a frame on both

sides, and you could actually see, um, the -- the outside by looking down, um, at the wall -- wall and floor joints. 'Cause it was -- the joint wasn't there. They -- wasn't connected.

KAREN BREWSTER: They weren't connected?

KARL GURCKE: It wasn't connected. So the building, it was amazing how it had actually stood up the hundred and some-odd years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: Because, you know, without studs and all that, it was just -- but yeah, it's -- They -- Captain Moore built well.

[03:15:11]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, so one last question, or area, maybe, we can touch on, is the relationship between the park and the community, and what that was like at the beginning when you first got here. And has that changed? And how do you deal with those issues?

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, well. I think the community relationship has always been relatively good. There are occasional issues that surface, um, that causes problems between the two. For example, there was an issue many years ago where we had basically -- Oh, actually, I remember the very first issue that I was somewhat involved with. We had a public meeting, and I think I was still a seasonal at that time, and I went to it. It was over the White Pass Unit and hunting in the White Pass Unit.

KAREN BREWSTER: And the White Pass Unit is up the summit and along the highway corridor, sort of up there?

KARL GURCKE: Yes. White Pass City area. From there, basically up the railroad corridor to the border.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: It doesn't go up the highway corridor.

KAREN BREWSTER: The railroad corridor, ok.

KARL GURCKE: The railroad corridor. [03:16:33]So um, so what we -- what we did at the time, we were -- basically had an agreement with the state over managing both Dyea and the Chilkoot Trail and the White Pass Unit. So the White Pass Unit is composed of property that we own, but also property that the state owns. So we would manage hunting in the state part as well as our own. And same with the trail. And I don't remember the exact problem, but I think we were trying to, um, cut down on hunting in the area. There was a lot of opposition to that.

[03:17:20]And so this public meeting, you know, it was just like 100% of the people were in opposition, and they had the state representatives, um, on the line, on the phone, and they also had politicians on the phone and all that stuff. So it was interesting to see the reaction to them against the Park Service. They just, you know, we don't want this. We don't -- you know. And we want to make sure that the state -- we want the state to control the hunting, rather than the Park Service. So, um, so there was -- and so I guess we -- basically, the MOU, the Memorandum of Understanding, with us and the state cut out the White Pass Unit at that time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: All of a sudden, the White Pass Unit is -- is not part of the agreement.

[03:18:17]Um, so there's our property out in Dyea, and then there's -- on the south, there was this large -- the Dyea Flats, which is all state owned. And every summer, once a summer, just a weekend, over a weekend, there was a remote um, airplane group that came out and flew their remote --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, remote-controlled --

KARL GURCKE: -- controlled little planes, you know. Model planes. And I remember they had a -- once a B-52 bomber that they were flying, and they were chasing eagles, or the eagles were chasing it, I don't know. So they would camp out there on the flats with their RV's, and uh, there was just a few of them, and then they would take off and land and have a great time out there.

[03:19:13]So uh, our chief ranger, Reed, um -- not Reed, but Bruce Reed. Yeah, Bruce Reed, at the time, um, he wanted to put in some sort of controls. And he basically told them that they would have to camp at the Dyea campground. So that meant that they would have to, you know, in the mornings, have to drive over the bridge and down this road into the flats and then do the flying, and then, you know -- So it was a bit of inconvenience. Not much, but it was a bit of an inconvenience, and they didn't want to do that. And so um, we said, or Bruce Reed said that, you know, after this year, that's it. So the next year they came back, they wouldn't camp at the campgrounds. They left in a huff and said, "We'll never come back again." And so the citizens of Skagway -- this was mostly a Whitehorse group. I think there may have been a couple of Skagway folks involved. [03:20:15]So um, they um, the -- the city got pretty upset, and the citizens got pretty upset, and so the upshot of that, there was these lands that were supposed to be given to the city, state lands that were given to the city, in part of the ah, state, you know, when the state was founded and all that stuff. Mental health trust and things like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Ment -- yep.

KARL GURCKE: I don't know. And so the city requested ownership of the flats and some other land in the Chilkoot Trail and all that. And um, we were somewhat opposed to that, especially the flats area, because we were managing it, and it had some archeological material, the Long Wharf and the old DKT Bridge over there and a couple of other stuff. [03:21:17]Um, so eventually what happened is the state -- actually the SHPO office required the city to have a um, a management plan for the area, for the flats. And the concept was that the -- the artifacts, the features, archeological features, would stay in the hands of the state, but the rest of the property would be city owned. And the concept was that they were going to build a campground out there. But in the documents that they signed and that the state approved, there was a statement that said, um, they were going to do -- before they built the campground, they were going to do an archeological survey of the area, and they would not put their campground in an area where there was a lot of archeology. [03:22:19]So this was at the time of Mielke, and one of the first things that they did once they got the land, actually even before they officially got the land, they put the campground in in the critical area where the archeology is, right in the front of the town. Um, and never did an archeological survey, and so they, you know, basically lied to the city -- to the state and all that, so. But it was considered too much of a political issue to, you know, to bring up at the time.

KAREN BREWSTER: So the park didn't fight the --

KARL GURCKE: No. No.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- issue?

KARL GURCKE: I -- I talked to the superintendent. I talked to Bruce Noble about it. And but he decided not to take it beyond.

[03:23:02]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. What about the response from the community that say, in this historic district, there's been opposition to the park buying buildings? That they feel like that you're taking away from private business, or the property taxes, or something?

KARL GURCKE: Well, there's -- there's -- it's -- it's a little bit of both. I mean, for example, the person that wants to sell to the park, they're definitely not in opposition to selling their property to the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: No. No.

KARL GURCKE: And for -- in fact, they have dollar signs in their eyes, and the highest possible price they want. But yeah, there certainly -- at the beginning there certainly was a lot of -- some opposition to, you know, how much was the park going to buy? You know, would the entire downtown area be Park Service buildings and all that? How, you know, it -- in certain -- I think a lot of uncertainty on both parts as to exactly how do you establish a park. You know, what is this park? What is the downtown going to look like, and what is it?

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: You know, because most people, when they talk about national parks, they say, ok. Here's the park entrance, you go into the park. All the lands are owned, or most of the lands are owned by the Park Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: You have your, you know, your hotel, and you have your concessions, here and over here, but -- and then there's lots of trails and roads and all that. [03:24:25]But here the park is different, because it's like we've got a -- we've got a building over there. We've got a building over there. Another building over there. And there's a lot of private buildings in between. And then there's a public building there, another public building that the city owns, and whatnot. So it's a different park. There are -- like Harpers Ferry is somewhat similar because it's not all owned by the Park Service. But it's -- we weren't quite sure how to manage it, how to set it up, and, you know, there was definitely some concern from the city's point of view, as well, 'cause they didn't want us all to be -- to have Park Service control the entire town.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: Which is understandable. And I don't think we would want to control the entire town.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[03:25:09]KARL GURCKE: So -- And now, you know, we -- we acquired the Rapuzzi Collection, for example, so that meant we required -- we acquired the Parlor. We acquired the Meyers Meat Market and the YMCA building. So that's basically the three buildings we acquired. We also acquired through a donation the Frye-Bruhn Refrigerated Warehouse, so we haven't -- and those are the only buildings that we required -- acquired recently. And all the other buildings we acquired at the very beginning of the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [03:25:45]So you think that local opposition about the property taxes, or the park taking over, you think that was just an early-on and that's gone away?

KARL GURCKE: You know, there's always been a concern about the property taxes, that we don't provide any property tax. But we have this lieu-in property tax program. It's a federal program, and the city gets a certain amount of money for that. And I'm not sure what the money is. It goes up and down.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: I know that for a time, the park actually provided funds for, like, maintenance of the boardwalks and all that, so they gave, like, \$30,000 to the city every year specifically for that.

[03:26:30]KAREN BREWSTER: And then, at least the Lynch and Kennedy Building, the park owns, but you rent it out for retail space, correct?

KARL GURCKE: Right. In fact, there's several buildings that we own, we've restored, and then we rent it out. Initially, there was some talk about, well, we will -- we will, uh -- what they were doing there? I think they were going to go out to the public and say, "Ok, you restore this building, you know, and then we'll rent it to you."

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: So it didn't quite work out. Um, so we basically had to restore all the buildings and then rent them out. So you know, I don't re -- I don't know exactly how many buildings we have rented out, but there's quite a few. [03:27:11]You know, and generally, that seems to have worked pretty well. We've had some problems, depending on the environment. Like, we used to rent out the Pantheon Saloon, and, basically, we found out that we couldn't rent it out after a while because there was no, you know -- every -- the rent agreements are like, for five years or ten years or something like that, and then at the end of that period, we have to go out and do uh, basically, an RFP, Request for Proposals.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Like a bid.

KARL GURCKE: A bid, yeah. So people will bid on it, and sometimes we'd get maybe one bid. Or sometimes we get no bids, as the case in the Boss Bakery. I think that was it, and also the um, also the Pantheon Saloon. So we decided, well, let's turn those two buildings into our -- to use it for our purposes. One is the Junior Ranger Center, and the other one is now the international trail center.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: For the Chilkoot Trail. Deal with that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right.

KARL GURCKE: So um, yeah. So we've sort of cut back a little bit on -- on renting out, but that's in part because there just wasn't anybody willing to go through the process and --

[03:28:30]KAREN BREWSTER: It's a little more complicated to rent a restored Park Service building than to rent a building owned by a private individual?

KARL GURCKE: It is, a bit. Um, you know, there are some rules and regulations we require. Like, you can't, uh, you can't have a restaurant in one of our buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: We don't want to deal with the food service and all that stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, that's damaging to the, um, interior environment, could be.

KARL GURCKE: It could be. Could be. Could be. And then there's the rules about, you know, your signs can only be in certain places and certain fonts, and so there's some restrictions.

[03:29:07]Um, and I don't know exactly what the prices are, you know, in terms of the rents.

They may be cheaper in other places, or they may be higher in other places. Basically, what we have to do whenever we do one of these requests for proposals, we have to go out and do a, uh, assessment of the rents, the general rents, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Do an appraisal.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And make sure it's at market value, basically? Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: Exactly. Exactly.

[03:29:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, I know also, like, I've read that back in the '70's and early '80's when the park was kind of getting going, there was this fear in town of -- people felt like they might be quote, "living in a museum" for the rest of their lives. Have you heard that?

KARL GURCKE: Uh, I've heard that, yeah. I don't think I ever actually had anybody talk to me about that. Um, because it's difficult to -- to live in a museum when it's obviously not. You know, people are going back and forth every day in -- in -- in ordinary costumes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Ordinary clothes. We're not all wearing period costumes. Most of us don't wear period costumes. Park Service certainly don't wear period costumes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: That might be kind of fun if we all did. Um, so yeah. I don't think that's come to pass. [03:30:36]But I've never really had, you know, much, um, blatant resentment of the park. Irrat -- I haven't had any really irrational resentment. I know -- you know, talked about Mielke, John Mielke, and some of his fears and hatreds of the park, but he always seemed to be somewhat rational. And there's been a few other people that don't like the park. [03:31:08]Uh, initially, there was some talk about, like, Nazi rangers in Dyea and -- and -- and up the trail, and I think that was, in part, justified, because there was some law enforcement people that were just -- were a bit like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

KARL GURCKE: You know, they insisted. I know I've certainly been a victim of someone I would call Nazi, uh, border guards, customs agents.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. [03:31:38]Well, and also the -- I think people had the fear of the park that, well, you know, now, they can't have horses at Dyea, and they can't do that hunting you were talking about. That they were maybe feeling that their subsistence and recreational activities were being threatened?

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, I think there's -- there's certainly some of that concern. I think uh, one of the things about the park is that we do do these public consultations. Whenever there's an issue, or whenever there's a new regi -- uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: Regulation?

KARL GURCKE: Regulation coming out, you know, we'll certainly discuss it with the public. And in some cases, we can modify it and have modified it. [03:32:18]With, uh, with the horses in Dyea for example, you say, "Okay, there's certain areas of the town site, the historical town site, that we want you to keep your horses out because of the features, the archeological features, the ruins, there. We don't want you tramping (traipsing or trampling) over those ruins." But there are other places where you can run your horses." 'Course, we don't have control over the flats, but that's certainly an area there. And we're trying to build a horse trail, that you can go from one place to the other through Dyea, through the town site. Um, so you won't impact the archeological resources. So, you know, we're trying to say, there are reasons for these regulations, and here are the reasons. And we can -- not work around the regulations, but we can work with the regulations, and the two bodies can coexist, the regulations and the running horses in certain areas, as long as they're over here, and the regulations apply to this area. So --

[03:33:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and it does sound like, uh, things have gotten better with the community appreciating the park.

KARL GURCKE: I think so. I think so. I mean, we're -- we're sort of -- we're there, year after year. We're there. And we certainly have spruced up the town. I mean, I remember at the very beginning, in '84-'85, we were -- one of the first things the superintendent did was, once we got knowledge of the historic paint colors on our buildings, we -- even though the buildings were not restored, they were painted up, you know, to match the historic colors.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was that Doug Sims? Was he the superintendent then?

KARL GURCKE: Dick Sims, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Dick Sims. Dick Sims. Ok.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, I think he was a big push for that. Maybe Richard Hoffman, the first superintendent. Uh, I don't know. But um, and -- and by our process of restoring the building -- buildings, we certainly got a number of other folks to go in and restore their buildings. The Red Onion, the Pack Train Saloon, a number of other, you know, spruced up, repainted, cleaned up, fixed up their buildings.

[03:34:38]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, there certainly is a lot more tourism now.

KARL GURCKE: There certainly is. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, and then I remember that first summer, for example, I was out in Dyea for, like I said, July, August, and a bit of September, I met with maybe six tourists over the entire summertime. Of course, you know, I was in many places I was out of the way, but in bits and places where tourists wouldn't visit, but I remember on the little road to the trail to the false front, I spent four days doing an excavation, and I only met one couple with their kid, so it was just three people or so. [03:35:21]When I was out on the false -- or out on the flats area doing survey for a week or so, and we had like three people there, four people or something like that. One group, and that was it, you know. Now, I don't know how many thousands and thousands of people visit. And I'm sure that there were areas that I, you know, couldn't get my work done because I'd have to talk to the tourists every day.

[03:35:48]KAREN BREWSTER: So what do you think about this increase in tourism in Skagway?

KARL GURCKE: Well, there are good things and there are bad things about it. I mean, the good things, of course, is the economy. It helps the economy. It's bringing in money. Uh, it -- I think it helps keep up the town. It cleans things up. [03:36:07]Um, one of the bad things is that, with all this money, people say, "Well, you know, I don't want to deal with this old, historic building. I want to just tear it down and put in a brand-new building that can -- is much easier, much more efficient." You know, and things like that. So we have threats to old buildings. [03:36:27]Um, we have all the people, all the population, you know. They hate the noise, the helicopters, the trains, the pollution from the ships, from the other vehicles and all that. Um, you know, like this intersection of Second and Broadway, I would always park on Second, and during the summer time, that intersection, to just go from Second, cross into Broadway, by golly, I have to wait ten minutes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: Because of the traffic. You know, but then when you compare that to someplace, with like, Los Angeles. I remember back in the '70's, I was living in San Diego, and I'd go home, and drive through LA, and it would take me two hours to drive through LA on the freeway, going at, well, sometimes, like, five miles an hour.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: Because of traffic. You know, so um, so we really, you know, we haven't maxed out the capacity. But yeah, so there's good things and bad things. [03:37:36]I don't know what's going to happen with the new cruise ships and, you know, instead of 10,000 people in the summer time, or 15,000 then, you know. What are we gonna do with all these people? There are problems with infrastructure, with the sewer system, with the electrical system, the water system. You know, the -- the -- the garbage system, they're having problems with that. So we have to deal with the fact that our little town of 500 people is really a town of 10,000, 15,000 at certain times of the year. And other times, it's down to 500.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Like now.

KARL GURCKE: Like now, yeah.

[03:38:15]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so you keep threatening to retire.

KARL GURCKE: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know when you plan to do that, but in looking back at your long career, is something that you're most proud of, or something you'd like to see as your legacy?

KARL GURCKE: Oh, I don't know. Um, I think probably the -- the best thing that I'm most proud of is just, you know, establishing the resource department, being part of that establishment. Pushing the concept of that the resources that this park was established to protect are important, all of the resources. [03:39:02]This is one of the things I've been learning over the years, all the different types of resources, you know. Uh, I remember, uh, back when we were talking about the Goat Lake project, people were saying, "Oh, you know, there's a water -- there's a viewshed." You know, here's -- we're gonna have this pipe in there, it's gonna -- from the Goat Lake down to the -- and it's gonna affect the viewshed. Well, yeah. It's an intrusion for the viewshed. Viewsheds are important. With the city's incinerator, that was another intrusion into the White Pass viewshed. You know, this big building with smoke coming out of it in a place that never had a building like that. Um, so I'm beginning to get much more sensitive to things like that. Cultural landscape. What is the cultural landscape? You know, it's everything you see out there in a certain area.

[03:39:56]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I always -- I assume that, you know, this park was established as a historical park, so that it took a long time for people to realize that there are natural resources here, not just historical, cultural ones?

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, well. The one thing about the natural resources is that they shape the whole cultural story. You know, because you've got these two narrow valleys, Dyea and Skagway. You have the narrow valleys that go all the way into the -- into the Canadian hinterland, but you have to get over those passes. Uh, and they funneled all these stampedees through. Don't know exactly how many numbers. Estimates like twenty-five, thirty thousand over the Chilkoot, and maybe another ten thousand or so over the White Pass. Um, and so the -- the -- the town of Skagway, the town of Dyea, they're all bounded by the natural features there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[03:41:02]KARL GURCKE: And the weather, of course, and the fact that we're out here in the middle -- right by the ocean, you know, the fjord and all that. So nature has been a great effect on the town, on the cultural resources and everything. They interact.

[03:41:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, Karl, we've talked for a long time. You're probably exhausted. I appreciate it. There's so much to talk to you about. You've been here for so long.

KARL GURCKE: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, is there anything else that you had in mind when we talked about doing this interview that you want to make sure we talk about?

KARL GURCKE: Hm. Well, we certainly have covered an awful lot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KARL GURCKE: And there may be still more up in my brain that I could get out, but um, I can't think of anything offhand.

[03:41:52]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I know that that crisis period was important for you to document.

KARL GURCKE: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: You feel like we've covered that?

KARL GURCKE: Yeah, I think so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: There are a number of little details that could've been added to it, but I think we did a pretty good job.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

KARL GURCKE: Um, because -- and there's a lot of things that I don't realize or wasn't part of. You know, there's leadership team meetings -- meetings when they were talking about that. I wasn't involved in that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KARL GURCKE: So I don't know the reasons before -- why -- specific reasons why they -- a lot of the team left and why a few of them stayed, and --

KAREN BREWSTER: But you know what it felt like working here.

KARL GURCKE: Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: And how that changed.

KARL GURCKE: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So, I think we reflected that.

KARL GURCKE: Um-hm. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok, well. We'll take a stop for now, anyway.

KARL GURCKE: Ok.

KAREN BREWSTER: If that's all right with you?

KARL GURCKE: That's all right with me.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.