

RECORDED INTERVIEW OF CLAY AND CLAUDIA ALDERSON, PART 2

CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER

IN ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

APRIL 10, 2019

ORAL HISTORY 2017-01-91

KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
TRANSCRIBED BY RUTH SENSENIG

[00:00:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok, this is Karen Brewster. Today is April 10, 2019, and I'm here again, um, continuing to talk with Clay Alderson and Claudia Rector Alderson at their son's home in Anchorage, Alaska. And this is for the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Oral History Project. So, thank you to you both for spending more time with me today.

CLAY ALDERSON: It's our pleasure.

KAREN BREWSTER: We have a lot to talk about.

CLAY ALDERSON: I haven't talked about the park for many years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: In -- in depth like this, and trying to dredge up some of the -- some of the names and places that were so familiar to us at the time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, you were there a long time, right?

CLAY ALDERSON: I think I still hold the record for a park superintendent staying in a Bush community the longest in Alaska.

[00:00:52]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, so you started in '86?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then in '99, you went to Mongolia.

CLAY ALDERSON: That's correct.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then did you come back and work?

CLAY ALDERSON: Officially, I was still at Klondike Gold Rush, but I -- and I -- that first winter back, I did spend time in the park, but it was kind of split between that and Mongolia, and it was obvious that Mongolia was going to demand a lot of my time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: Even during the winter.

[00:01:19]KAREN BREWSTER: And then you said you did a detail up in Fairbanks at APLIC (Alaska Public Lands Information Center). That was later?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yes. Um-hm. I went up there and helped do an operations evaluation. And then once we finished the work in Mongolia, then that was where the Park Service offered me employment, was to continue work as the manager of the APLIC and -- in Anchorage and in Fairbanks.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And so then, did you officially retire from the Park Service after that?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And what year would that have been?

CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, '05.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: So I was a few years with the public land centers.

[00:01:59]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah. But '86 to '99 in Skagway is a long time.

CLAY ALDERSON: It is.

KAREN BREWSTER: In Park Service -- in Park Service world.

CLAY ALDERSON: In Park Service -- they say, if you move every three years, it's as good as having a fire. You get rid of that much stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: So I kinda homesteaded.

[00:02:16]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah. Um, I wanted to ask about something that, in your 1989 interview, you kind of brought up because you were -- it was new, and I wanted to see, kind of looking back at it, which was the lead contamination issue from the ore transportation.

CLAY ALDERSON: That was one of those things that they identified a high concentration of lead, and it was from fugitive dust from the railroad and from the ore handling, so it was mostly along the corridor of the railroad through town, and then along the waterfront where they handled that, and around the --

KAREN BREWSTER: The ore terminal?

CLAY ALDERSON: The ore terminal and the handling facility down there. And then where they conveyored it out into the ships to take it away. There was a lot of contamination in the harbor, and they decided that there was enough silt had come in over that that it was encapsulated. And as soon as that was over, they were out dredging the harbor again, so. And now that's one of the big things that is an issue there, is we need to dredge the harbor so we can get deeper-bow -- deeper-keeled ships in there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: So the waterfront is kind of a moving target.

[00:03:40]KAREN BREWSTER: So as superintendent at the time that contamination issue was going on, did you get involved in it? What role did you have?

CLAY ALDERSON: Mostly our role was to make sure that the land that the Park Service owned, or was contemplating purchasing -- and we were in negotiations on purchasing land where we would build our visitor center -- or our maintenance building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: And so we made sure that that particular parcel of land was cleaned up to our liking. And it did.

KAREN BREWSTER: So who paid for that clean-up?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um, whoever paid for the general clean-up. The Park Service did not pay for that, I don't believe.

[00:04:24]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And was it a big issue in town at the time? Were people concerned?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, people were concerned. School children -- they gave blood tests to the school children, and those that had high concentrations of lead in their blood, um, they made sure that those children were -- I don't know, treated or changed their diet or checked their homes to reduce that amount. And so, yeah, it was -- there was a lot of emotional concern. And it's absolutely good that they went ahead and got that all cleaned up, especially along the railroad corridor.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: So yeah. And the park, of course, played a role. And not to overstep our -- our reach into it, but people in the community, like Susan Fredricks, I remember she came to us, and she had meetings to talk about it. And I attended some of those meetings just to assure them that the Park Service was doing due diligence on making sure our properties were cleaned. So that --

[00:05:41]KAREN BREWSTER: Was part of it the ore trucks coming through town?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Uh, initially the ore came in on trains, and then in more recent times, in trucks. And the trucks were pretty well contained because they had what they called the cupcake trucks, and it was a big round container, and they had a lid on it. And I guess by the time they got to Skagway, they probably wouldn't have had dust on the running gear.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: Or it would've all blown off someplace else. But there was probably a little bit.

[00:06:24]KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause I -- I would -- I have heard that that was part of the concern, was that -- that the contamination was being brought through town because of the trucks. But you're saying it was also the -- it was the railroad.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. They weren't hauling on the railroad by the time I got there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: It was all trucks. So.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Didn't they have an era early on when the trucks weren't covered, and that was --

CLAY ALDERSON: I think maybe they did have a --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And it was in response to that concern that they created those enclosed trucks.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. And that's probably why they had lids on those cupcake trucks.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes. I'm pretty sure there were open-topped ones before that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: It's probable.

[00:07:04]KAREN BREWSTER: And so now looking back on it, do you feel like it got resolved?

CLAY ALDERSON: I think so. It was one of those things where they identified a problem, they developed a plan, they carried out the plan, and when it was done, it was done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I don't know that it's been revisited.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and the ore terminal --

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: They -- they made some changes there?

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CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. In the handling and the ventilation system, and the conveyor system for conveying it out of the ore terminal onto the ships. Um, I think there was a lot of spillage and things that took place during the ore handling and loading that had to be addressed.

[00:07:52]KAREN BREWSTER: How did the issue come to light?

CLAY ALDERSON: I'm not sure. I -- whether -- I'm just, I would be remiss to say.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: 'Cause I don't really recall, but somehow they identified that as a concern.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Well, and it's --

CLAY ALDERSON: And got the state involved, and the state agreed that there was a concern.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [00:08:16]What's interesting to think about what's all out there in the harbor, and if they start dredging, and is anybody thinking about that in the process nowadays?

CLAY ALDERSON: Eh, well, they said -- You know, I talked to people that had worked for the White Pass and had been involved with the loading of ships, and they said, if the -- if the conveyor jammed up, they routinely just swung it over -- over the ocean, and ran some out into the ocean, and then once they got it going again, they would run it back over and put it in the hold of the ship.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: I don't know mechanically how the -- the loading facility works.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: Or if that's even possible.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: But that was the story I was told, that there was a lot of lead.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, and it would have been concentrated at that point.

[00:09:10]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I'm -- leads me to think about other environmental concerns in Skagway. We sort of before were talking about air quality with the cruise ships.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you were there in a time when cruise ship use -- arrival was on the rise.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was that something you noticed?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um, we noticed the -- you know, cruise ships were setting there, and you could see visible emissions coming out of the stack, and John Warder would call EPA in Juneau, and they would call White Pass and say, "Hey. You got a ship down there that's emitting too much." So then Paul Taylor called me, and he said, "Don't call EPA. Call us. We'll take care of it." I said, "Nope. That's not the protocol. I will call EPA." And he wasn't happy about that.

KAREN BREWSTER: He was in charge of White Pass at the time.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: You know, I -- I would have been very happy had EPA told me that's what they wanted me to do. But the polluter isn't the one that I would be likely to call, or the one that is responsible for the pollution.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that, they -- were they White Pass ships at that time? No.

CLAY ALDERSON: No. These were cruise ships.

KAREN BREWSTER: But they were docking at the White Pass dock.

CLAY ALDERSON: They were White -- at the White Pass dock.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: And White Pass was kind of responsible for them while they were in port. [00:10:39]And then, of course, Claudia started the work with the lichens to measure historic pollution.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: 'Cause we also had steam locomotives in that town for a hundred years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And so there was a lot of it. In fact, they would use the steam locomotive in the morning to pull the train out to the edge of town, and then it would unhook, and they would put diesels on it to pull it up the mountain. And then they would bring that steam locomotive down and park it right outside the windows of the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And in the summer time, when we had windows open, they would just leave it set there, and it would continue --

KAREN BREWSTER: And running?

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, it would continue to have a fire going.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: And there was smoke coming out the stack, and it seemed like it sucked right into our building, and I had people going home sick. And I finally had to go over and talk to 'em, and um, the -- The train engineer thought we were a bunch of pansies, but I said, "You know, we got people over there that are sensitive to that. Can you park it someplace else?" I forget who was the head of the railroad then. It wasn't -- I don't think it was Paul. I think it was somebody else. Anyway, uh, they did park it further away.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Outside their windows.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, as you say, you know, guys who spent their lifetime working on that kind of equipment, they --

CLAY ALDERSON: They wouldn't even notice.

KAREN BREWSTER: No. They don't think about the pollution. They've been living it.

[00:12:11]But so, with the lichen, did you notice a change in air quality?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, I -- in just that period of time, we only knew that we were effectively recording the -- a pretty steady production of air quality problems. But lichens don't tell you day-to-day --

KAREN BREWSTER: No, no.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Like a monitor would. So I couldn't compare it with anything, but I could certainly say that there was plenty of air pollution at that time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Yeah. You didn't have any baseline from fifty years before?

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CLAUDIA ALDERSON: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: But now, with Elaine continuing -- having continued it, now they may have some data.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: That shows --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So we'd be the baseline.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And we'll see if they're getting better or worse with the work that they're doing now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm. It's very interesting that lichen are indicator species.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Isn't that something? But they have no roots. Everything comes from the air.

[00:13:02]CLAY ALDERSON: And I met with the city, and I met with White Pass, and told 'em what we were doing, and they welcomed that kind of -- of research.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Well, I think there -- a little bit of the preserving the air quality in Skagway is maybe behind the hydroelectric, um, issues.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um, yeah, a little could -- that would have been another source.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, I was thinking that having hydropower is --

CLAY ALDERSON: Well --

KAREN BREWSTER: Less polluting.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: In that way.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, but in the winter, they went to the oil-fired, I think.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: Because they didn't have water available in the winter.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And in the spring, as soon as they got water, then they were hydro again.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But some of the hydro did disfigure the landscape considerably, right in the tourist areas.

KAREN BREWSTER: Really?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, when you run lines and dams and whatnot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So there's always trade-off.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Conservation's always best.

[00:14:00]CLAY ALDERSON: When they built that Goat Lake operation, why, Stan Selmer was working for the power company then.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: He was very responsive to our concerns that, here we've got a beautiful, pristine valley, and then you run a pipeline down it, so we had some influence on the color of the pipeline and things.

KAREN BREWSTER: So were you -- when Goat Lake was built, were you superintendent?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause did it affect the White Pass Unit?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yes. It was outside, of course, of the White Pass Unit, but it just affected driving that corridor out of Skagway. And, you know, for the rubber tire tourist, coming through the Yukon, and coming over that pass, and then come down -- you're assailed by -- the state highway department has a really shoddy looking operation just down from the top. The -- well, then we have Goat Lake.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: The dump.

CLAY ALDERSON: Then we have the dump and that incinerator.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Which is often on fire.

CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, I really said, "You know, the town deserves better, and if you want to be a tourist town, that's not the best use of that." But that didn't work. [00:15:20] And even the customs and immigration place looks like a Howard Johnson's.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It's such a -- But they did take care to try and make the Goat Lake facilities --

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Yeah. They were very responsive.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah. But a lot was said by the community. People really were alarmed to have that intrusion, but delighted to have hydro.

[00:15:42] KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I was gonna say, was there either Park Service or community opposition in general to having that Goat Lake project?

CLAY ALDERSON: We just wanted it to be -- we didn't object to the project or anything, but we just wanted to make it as environmentally compatible as possible.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It's so visible.

KAREN BREWSTER: Is it?

CLAY ALDERSON: But the incinerator, there was no way in the world to make that thing environmentally compatible.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's at the dump?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: On the way into town.

KAREN BREWSTER: I'll have to see when I go.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: There had been an old dump in town.

CLAY ALDERSON: There had been an old dump just around the corner on the Dyea road.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: Just after you leave the --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Where the pigs lived and cleaned up for them.

CLAY ALDERSON: And they turned pigs loose in the dump to eat the refuse -- refuse.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: When it was a smaller community.

CLAY ALDERSON: And it burned constantly. And there was just this little pall of smoke over the town, 24/7. And it was like that when I was --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Hot pigs.

CLAY ALDERSON: Came up the -- came up the canal and arrived in Skagway, and it was like that until they finally closed that dump.

KAREN BREWSTER: Huh.

CLAY ALDERSON: Which they did, and then they moved it a little further down the road and made it a pit, and they just generated more trash than what that pit would hold, so they went to the incinerator. And I said, "You know, it's visible from the road. It's visible

from the railroad. It's just above town. Isn't -- isn't there a better way to do it?"  
[00:17:12] The sad thing is, that's a very confined valley.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
CLAY ALDERSON: And everything that happens, has to happen in a very confined space. And so you --  
KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I was going to say, because of the valley confinement, the air quality might be more, um, difficult to handle.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yep.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Sort of like Fairbanks, you know, we have this --  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: We do remember that in winter time.  
CLAY ALDERSON: The power plant?  
KAREN BREWSTER: You know, the local geography and the winds, you know, I'm sure, and when that north wind's blowing down from those glaciers, it's fine.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It cleans it up, yes.  
KAREN BREWSTER: But, you know, everything gets stuck down there in that valley.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Well, when we had the Alaska Public Land Center downtown in the Federal Building, the guy from EPA had his reading monitor stuff up on the roof of that building, and his read-out material was down in a little closet in our part of the building.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.  
CLAY ALDERSON: And he would come out of there in the winter, scratching his head and say, you know, legally we should evacuate downtown Fairbanks. It's that bad.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
CLAY ALDERSON: 'Cause when that dome --  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right.  
CLAY ALDERSON: -- most of which came from the power plant, and I presume it's still --  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yep.  
CLAY ALDERSON: -- belching out coal smoke.  
[00:18:23]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you know, they try with scrubbers and all that stuff, and that's what I say, Skagway, I could see, would be same. And like everything gets trapped down there under certain weather conditions.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.  
[00:18:33]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, well, and you had mentioned before about some creosote fire.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Those, yeah, those were sporadic, but really nasty.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But they would settle in the morning, right into the town.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And that was White Pass burning --  
CLAY ALDERSON: Burning railroad ties. And that was not good.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Had they -- they did that for a long time? That was sort of standard procedure?  
CLAY ALDERSON: I think it was their standard operating procedure was to burn railroad ties in -- in the yard down there.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But the laws had changed, and they knew and were informed, and so when they did it after that, they knew that they were breaking the law.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And then --  
CLAY ALDERSON: We collected -- excuse me --

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KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: We collected water samples because it rained after one of those, and we took water samples to Anchorage and had 'em analyzed. And they said, "This is terrible. It is so toxic." And -- but -- and we provided that information to EPA.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did they do anything?

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, I don't know.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, they did with Paul Taylor. Had --

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, they said, oh, that's terrible.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Him indicted.

CLAY ALDERSON: But I don't know if they did anything, but they probably did.

[00:19:49]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, that incident where -- did you report that there was that fire, or when Taylor got --

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- in trouble.

CLAY ALDERSON: Course we -- we reported it, and the fire department came out and started putting it out.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And it was pretty out of hand, because that creosote burns hot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: And, but they did -- they did get it out without burning up the whole pile. And then we called Al Kegler, who was the EPA guy in Juneau that kinda handled things in our area, and he said, "Well, you know, we may have to evacuate the town. We may have to notify Canada that we're doing something on our side that could affect their side." And that never really did happen, because the fire got put out fairly effectively. And --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And some wind came up and broke up the cloud.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But it was pretty bad for the morning.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And then, I think we can say, Paul Taylor was charged, and there was a -- there were some --

CLAY ALDERSON: There was -- there was --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: He was.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, but so after that, um, did they stop doing it?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yes. Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: In our time, we never saw them burn again out there.

CLAY ALDERSON: Hope. Hm-mm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah, I think they developed a protocol.

CLAY ALDERSON: I think two or three times during the time that I was there, but that was the last time.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Um-hm.

[00:21:18]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Um, so speaking of another community/Park Service issue --

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: The Moore cabin property.

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CLAY ALDERSON: The Moore cabin was pretty much done by the time I got there. Uh, it -- I don't know -- I don't even remember who we purchased it from, but we purchased it, and it was in pretty rough shape, but some of the siding was still in -- in enough -- it was -- they were able to stabilize it with the replacement of some of the logs. [00:21:56] And the first thing was, what do you do with those old logs that came off the original building, but had to be replaced with -- with new logs? Newer. And I said, "I don't -- I don't see a reason to keep those old logs just 'cause they came off of that historic building. We have a representation of other logs from that building that are in good shape, and I said, they can go away." And they went away. So.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was that controversial?

CLAY ALDERSON: Not in the community. It maybe was a little bit within the park. More maybe in the region, but I just couldn't see storing -- I think we cut out a couple of pieces of representative material out of those and kept that, and the rest of them were disposed of.

[00:23:02] KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Well, wasn't there a conflict over the property line and the road, and rerouting the road?

CLAY ALDERSON: Ok. That's -- that's another issue. Going back in history, Captain Moore had that cabin. And he -- they -- every time the city changed, Captain Moore's cabin seemed to be in the way. So he'd have to move it, and he'd have to move it. Now after he moved it a couple of times, the city council said, this lot is Captain Moore's, and it will remain inviolable in perpetuity. And they -- and it's called the Moore -- the Moore Block, I think, and it was mapped out, and that was it. And it happened that as Skagway continued to grow, a corner of that lot extended into Fifth Street.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: I think. And they said, no. That is the Moore lot, and it will remain inviolable. [00:24:13] And so we built a fence to that corner post. And the regional office historian said, that is the most sacred boundary in the whole town of Skagway. Don't let that change. Well, it seemed like every spring when they brought in their new bus drivers to learn to drive those big tour buses, somebody would take out the corner of that. And they'd grumble, gotta get that fence outta there. And I said, "No. It's -- the city council made that, and we are duty-bound to keep that boundary." [00:24:55] And they even went to Don Young, and he sent one of his gunners up there, spent the day with me, and I told him. I said, "You know, it's -- the decision was made in Captain Moore's time, and I am just honoring the wishes that are attached to that deed on that piece of property."

[00:25:16] Well, they finally -- the same people that told me that that boundary had to be protected and preserved, came one day and looked and said, "Well, I think we can move that corner back, and maybe just put a little marker there to show where it really goes." I said, "That's fine, if that's what you would like to do, but I'm not doing it."

[00:25:44] KAREN BREWSTER: And why did they want to change it? To make that turn in the road?

CLAY ALDERSON: To accommodate so that the road would be wider there. And so, this happened I think the first or second year we were in Mongolia. I had already pretty much severed my relationship with Klondike Gold Rush, as much as you ever do. But they had the maintenance crew go out there and realign that fence, and so now it's different. I haven't -- I don't drive down that street. That made me so mad that I just --

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KAREN BREWSTER: But, you fought for it?

CLAY ALDERSON: I fought for that, as the regional office told me to, and then the regional office said, "Oh no. That was yesterday. It's today, and we want to do something different to accommodate the city." I said, "I coulda done that ten years ago."

KAREN BREWSTER: Sounds like it was frustrating.

CLAY ALDERSON: It was. It was. [00:26:42]But I was on the opposite side of the regional office a lot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, really? What other issues?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um, just, you know, just day-to-day things. Once the regional director called me up one Sunday, and he said, "You know, I just thought I'd call you up because we never hear anything from you. And I just want to know if things are really going well." That was when Boyd Evison was regional director. And I says, "Yeah. Seems to be. If you're not hearing any bad things, why I guess we're doing all right." But we were able to -- as I mentioned yesterday, stay fairly autonomous there. And we only called on region when we needed 'em. We were able to avoid that a lot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I was wondering how that relationship worked well and not well.

CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, well, it was like when we went to Mongolia, and they said, you'll have a lot of trouble with the central government. We thought they were talking about the central government of Mongolia. It was the central government of the United States that we had all the trouble with. [00:27:53]And so, um, but, you know, we got really good support out of the regional office. But we, as with anyone, had some controversies. And sometimes it was personalities, and sometimes it was philosophy, and sometimes it just -- we didn't agree. [00:28:15]And I know, just before I retired, I was talking to the regional director, and I said "Well, you know, I want to get all this wrapped up, 'cause the day I walk out the door, I'm gone." My old uncle used to say, "When I'm through, I'm all through." And that's kinda the way it was. And she says, "Why would you say something like that?" And I said, "You know, the day I walk out the door, the Park Service is going to drop me like a bad habit. And I don't expect to have any more involvement." Not that I have any regrets for a single minute I spent with the Park Service. And she said, "Oh, I just don't think that's true." You're the first person that's contacted us since we retired, and the first time I've been interviewed in thirty years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: So that means a lot, to get to clear the air on some things.

[00:29:13]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, it may be that the Park Service doesn't do this kind of recording. So -- I mean, I don't know.

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, they have their alumni association and things like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: So is there something you can identify that you think might have put you in bad stead with regional or something?

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, I don't think so. I think every superintendent runs afoul of regional offices every now and then.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: You know, like the story of the Boss Bakery sign that I talked about yesterday.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: That frustrated me a lot. And it's more frustration and less anger than, uh, it appears.

[00:29:54]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and also the -- the how it works -- the autonomy. Like, you know, this -- the Moore property, where you were doing what regional was asking versus doing what you wanted to do and how that works.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: When do you decide, I'm doing it myself versus doing what regional wants?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. And even at the time that that happened, some of the employees wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper, criticizing the Park Service for allowing that boundary to change. And it happened just after I got back from Mongolia for the first or second year we were -- The first year, I guess.

[00:30:39]KAREN BREWSTER: But so that whole process, though, of fighting for that property, and the debate about where it was in the road alignment, that took years?

CLAY ALDERSON: Several years, yeah. Yeah. It -- it had, I think, been a bit of an issue before I got there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: I guess maybe we -- I don't know if that fence was already built along that property line.

KAREN BREWSTER: I think -- I think Park Service built it, but I don't remember.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, the Park Service built it, but I don't remember when it was built. Anyway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it probably depends on when they acquired the property.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. I think it was already built.

[00:31:19]KAREN BREWSTER: But the debate was with the city council? They wanted to have more road.

CLAY ALDERSON: They wanted that -- more of that road. And then it was exacerbated a little bit by the lumber yard on the other side because they had a loading dock right across from that pinch point. And they -- I talked to some of the O'Daniels, and I said, "You know, you know, you guys could put that loading dock someplace else." Nothing doing. And they were always very supportive, but that loading dock was sacred.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And get along great with the O'Daniels, personally, but they just didn't want to make that change.

[00:32:02]KAREN BREWSTER: And did you feel like the community kind of was against you on that?

CLAY ALDERSON: The community didn't get that involved. I don't know that the community was for the most part even aware. It was mostly within the park and the regional office.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And the city council.

KAREN BREWSTER: And the city council? I was thinking, if you saw city council people at the post office, did they give you an earful or turn and walk away?

CLAY ALDERSON: No. It wasn't that controversial, but it put me in a kind of a bad spot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: Trying to defend something that was important to the park and important to the community, but then once the decision was made to move that boundary, why, I had to support that decision.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So yeah, so eventually the boundary was moved back so the road could be a little wider there.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Why couldn't they just have made the buses go a different way?

CLAY ALDERSON: We tried. We made a lot of suggestions. But none of them seemed to gain traction, so we didn't do 'em.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: So.

[00:33:26]KAREN BREWSTER: Were there other issues that were similar to that that you really were fighting for that were against the community's wishes?

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, I kinda had a pie-in-the-sky idea for Broadway. And historically, the railroad tracks went right up Broadway. You know that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I said, "You know, if we would close off those two blocks of Broadway and lay a little strip of rail up there and put that old Engine 52 right in the middle of Broadway, like it historically was." You woulda thought that I was causing an insurrection. "But we can't park right in front of the hardware store and go in and get a box of nails and come out and get in our car and drive away. We would have to park a block away." I said, "How close can you park to Fred Meyers in Juneau?" "Oh, about a block away." Well, it wouldn't work in Skagway. So that's always been my pie-in-the-sky idea for downtown Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: Make that main two, now three business blocks, a walking mall.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: Course the buses that do the tours, they have to go two miles an hour up the street, and that's fine, but, uh.

[00:35:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and it's funny to think about, well, they don't want to park a block away is, now during the summer, there's so much activity down there, you can't park down there anyway.

CLAY ALDERSON: That's right. That's right.

KAREN BREWSTER: There's no space.

CLAY ALDERSON: Before I got there, very early on, the Park Service offered to buy land and build a parking lot in the downtown area, a block off of Broadway. And they put it to a vote and voted it down. So. Uh, would've been a good idea, in retrospect.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: They -- things are working out. Most -- most of our traffic comes in on the ships, and there's not a lot of rubber tire trade, but it's enough to fill the town up every day.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: So that was another little -- and it never -- you know, I never fought for that ardently.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

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CLAY ALDERSON: But I just said, "You know, wouldn't it be nice if it looked like the train was coming up Broadway, like it historically did?" I didn't get into saying, "Well, we should tear up the pavement and make it dirt like it was." That --

KAREN BREWSTER: That would've gone over big.

CLAY ALDERSON: That would've been heresy.

[00:36:15]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, what about out in Dyea? Um, during your tenure, did you get involved in, sort of, developing things out there?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Uh, we did a general management plan that offered more activity for Dyea. Um, picnic areas, and -- we didn't really get into camping out there. But then the state came up with the idea that communities could make selections of unappropriated state lands adjacent to the town limits. Well, Skagway never did establish town limits because the limits -- city limits had to be surveyed. And in order to save money, they said, "Ok, Skagway runs from the Juneau borough on the south to the Haines borough on the north, from tidewater to the Canadian line." Skagway, acres-wise, is probably the biggest city in Alaska. But it also allowed them to make an exorbitant size of land in that declaration.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:37:42]CLAY ALDERSON: So the city council appointed a committee, put me on the committee, and we had one meeting. And we talked about all of the uses that we might make of the various lands, and they particularly did not want to make any selection of land within the boundaries of the park. So after they had selected all the land that they could possibly use and manage, they still had more land that they could select. And I said, "Ok." I said, "What about if you would select land within the park with the written purpose of exchanging or selling or moving that land ownership." Because the federal government only owns seventeen percent of the land within Klondike Gold Rush Park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: In any other park in the system, that would not be considered a manageable unit.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And as such, that park would've never been established. But in the enabling legislation, it said, at such time as a reasonable effort is made to establish the park, the state will turn those lands over to the federal government for management as Klondike Gold Rush Park. Well, guess what? The state decided that they didn't want to do that. [00:39:06]So we had a park on land that we didn't own. And I was sure that we probably would never get that from the state. But if it went to city hands with the stated purpose that that land would go to the federal government, either by purchase or trade or whatever needed to be done, then the federal government may have a chance to acquire that land. That was the only -- and I talked to our lands officer, Chuck Gilbert, and he said, "Boy." He said, "This is really creative." But he said, "Give it a try." And so that was in the minutes of -- and we didn't -- we just said, you know, lands. And I guess we did outline some priorities of land along the trail, land in Dyea. And that was the only meeting we ever had. Well, shortly after that meeting, the state came up with the idea of setting aside lands for Mental Health.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: The Mental Health lands.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Yep.

[00:40:16]CLAY ALDERSON: And so, Mental Health wanted land around Skagway, and they selected some of the same lands that the city had selected. And they said, "Well, you know. No sense having any more meetings to talk about this. This is out the window." And I think it was two or three years later, all of a sudden, they said, "We're giving Skagway all the land that they asked for, including all the land in the park." And I said, "Wait a minute. That was -- needed some agreement in order for that to take place." They said, "Nope. You were the one that said, select land in the park. We're select land." We had had an election in the interim, and we had a whole new city council. And they were wringing their hands. "Oh boy. We own a lot of the park." I still think it's the best way for the park to ever own that land, but it -- as Jay Cable used to say, "It's gonna take a few well-planned changes in -- in the administration in Skagway."

[00:41:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I was gonna say, how do you get that -- the city to give up those lands?

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, you know, we would have to have a reason, something to trade. Now there was something came up at Gustavus where the state wanted land at Gustavus for a power plant, and this happened after I left. It started before I left, but it -- I think it actually went down later. And there -- it was Park Service land, and the state didn't have anything to offer the Park Service as a swap, and they said, "Well, how about some of that state land in Klondike Gold Rush?" I don't know if that ever was consummated or not, but there was talk about swapping some of that land for land at Klondike Gold Rush.

KAREN BREWSTER: Be -- I was thinking the other way a park acquires land is they purchase.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Yeah. If you can --

[00:42:42]KAREN BREWSTER: And could the gov -- federal government have enough money to purchase that land in Klondike?

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, they have more money than God, but getting it -- You know, you can go to the Nature Conservancy and places like that, and they will purchase it and turn it over to the federal government, or hold it in trust until the federal government can buy it. That would be a very viable possibility. And I think it would be more likely for that to happen in dealing with the city than with the state.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: The state is just not motivated to make a move like that.

[00:43:20]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, and Claudia, are some of the lands that we're talking about valuable ecologically?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Extremely. Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because we're not just talking about the properties downtown, you know.

CLAY ALDERSON: Nope.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So the area that I was studying, the core along the trail, belonged to the park. But all of the other lands, the diversity centers up at the high elevation, those were state land.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So it would be extremely valuable. You can't manage a narrow corridor.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

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CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Animals need migration space, as do the plants, so it would be a great addition to the park.

CLAY ALDERSON: That is the crux of that center for biodiversity for the entire state.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes, 'cause you need the whole -- both sides of the valleys.

CLAY ALDERSON: As identified by Pojar and MacKinnon.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. You had said how that area there is just unique.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It is. And they've only begun to discover the uniqueness.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And so --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: You need very specialized observers, so if there were any development, it would break that integrity.

[00:44:19]KAREN BREWSTER: That's what I was thinking, if that's state land, they could develop something there.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right?

CLAY ALDERSON: They sure could.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And the city --

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, they're -- Talk about pie-in-the-sky, there was talk of damming the Taiya River and making it run backwards.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: Over the Chilkoot Pass into Canada to provide fresh water for a portion of Canada. Oh, people think big.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yep. [00:44:47]Yeah, I think it would be challenging to manage a park where you don't own the majority of the properties.

CLAY ALDERSON: It is. It is very challenging.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, I would think also, something particularly challenging about Skagway is the mixture of the mission of the history preservation and then, now with resources. And it didn't start that way. It was mostly just the historical stuff, but, you know, most of us think national parks, you know, it's the beautiful views, and the scenery, and the wildlife. So in Skagway, with all those historic structures, it's a little bit different, I would think.

CLAY ALDERSON: It's -- it's a very unique park to manage. Because there are a lot of somewhat competing interests in what you do there.

[00:45:42]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So how do you handle that, as superintendent?

CLAY ALDERSON: You just try and, not necessarily hit a mid-point, but a point of what is best for the most concerned. And you're not gonna hit it in agreement every time, but first of all, you involve all the parties that are -- that have an interest, and try and get input from them. And sooner or later, a decision has to be made. And it might go to court, but so be it. That's how things are resolved these days.

[00:46:30]KAREN BREWSTER: So did your staff have issues with, well, you know, cultural is getting more or natural resources is getting more? Was there -- ?

CLAY ALDERSON: You were part of the staff.

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CLAUDIA ALDERSON: You know, that was another interesting thing. I think everyone was very proud of the concept of a natural resource program, and very disappointed at the two years that it didn't happen when they'd expected it. So that by the time I got there, they felt that they were welcoming me into their program, that this was their idea that there should be a natural resource program. And they were very generous about sharing information about the cultural resources in the areas where I'd be going, and also any observations that they'd made. Because I, especially the first year, was completely unfamiliar with the trail, and they made excellent suggestions of places I should check. So my impression was, they were very proud to have the natural resource program. And as far as it getting more attention and more money, it wasn't getting any money. So while I was there, they really wanted it to launch. They thought it was a great idea.

[00:47:44]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And so I guess the question is now more recently, which you don't have the experience with is, are they, you know, battling for funding and attention and projects?

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, that's always the case, but I don't think at the time that we were there, the cultural re -- natural resources was really depriving the cultural aspect of anything.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They're different pockets. Things -- They're special programs.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So like this study I showed you they did in 2011. They were doing that in each of the parks, and there was a group that came from University of Minnesota. It really was not park funding or park employees, other than just support, so in fact, it added something, more knowledge, to the park, which for them, is still of interest to know why people put the trail where it was and things like that, and so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: Just like the work you're doing. Does that come out of the park operating budget?

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it's park money. I don't know.

CLAY ALDERSON: But it doesn't come out of Klondike Gold Rush's pocket, I don't think.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But different pockets.

CLAY ALDERSON: I think it comes out of an initiative that --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I don't know.

CLAY ALDERSON: Ok.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So that's my impression.

CLAY ALDERSON: But you know, I would have to know more about it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: I would guess that there is some natural res -- cultural resources money that would say, "Hey, it's time to do a study of the history of Klondike Gold Rush's administrative life." And that's where that money would come from.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. [00:49:10]Well, and back to the relationship with the regional office, I know in earlier times, I don't know about during your tenure, was a lot of that historic preservation, architecture, restoration stuff coming from regional?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Denver Service Center.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, you were still using Denver?

CLAY ALDERSON: We would meet annually with the Denver Service Center and say, these are the things that we want to do this year, and this is what we did last year, and this is what our history is, and where we see us going in the future. Those were the meetings that got us funding to where we had year-round work, we were doing it in a linear and organized fashion to keep those buildings on track and on budget.

[00:50:00]KAREN BREWSTER: So did you have somebody on Klondike's staff deciding which building was done when?

CLAY ALDERSON: That had pretty much been determined in -- in the early days. What's -- there's a book I think Bob Spude wrote called, uh, anyway, it -- Skagway district -- Skagway Historic District of Alaska or something. Anyway, that pretty much lined out which buildings, and not necessarily the order in which they would be done, but we would just kinda make a call. Steve Peterson would be involved, and there were other historians and the park, and we would say, "Well, you know, maybe we'll take on this building next." And off we'd go.

[00:50:57]KAREN BREWSTER: So they had some reason for choosing which building versus the other?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, um, first of all they wanted to get buildings that could be done quickly and leased back quickly. And that didn't necessarily work out because of the route that they used to get there. When they once got this good route of, I hire local people with initially Denver Service Center supervision, and later on we did more of that locally. But uh, once we got an established pattern, why that worked well for the community, worked well for the park. Everybody seemed to be happy.

[00:51:40]KAREN BREWSTER: And then did you every year have the same crew come back?

CLAY ALDERSON: Pretty much.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did that make a difference also?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Um-hm. Yeah. Now when we -- when we had these breaks for the winter, we didn't know who we were going to get the next year.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's what I was wondering, if the same guys would come back.

CLAY ALDERSON: Not necessarily, until we were able to get it as a year-round, reliably that people would have work for several years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And that was you got that program going?

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, with help from region and yeah, we --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: That was a goal that I established was, let's keep this going year-round.

We would get a building weathered in, and then in the winter we could work inside.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: It worked well.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I think the timeline on some of those restorations maybe was affected by the archeology they found.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or what they found once they started getting into the building.

CLAY ALDERSON: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: That things were --

[00:52:45]CLAY ALDERSON: We had an interesting problem with the Peniel Mission, where you have stayed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: It sat so close onto the property line that the eaves hung over onto adjoining property. Through the years, yeoman efforts were made to buy that adjoining vacant lot, along with a couple of other properties. It was gonna be a big package. And every time, it fell through. And we were ready to start restoration on the Peniel Mission, and legally, it was not on our property, or at least it was imposing a little bit. Maybe even a little bit of the foundation was off. [00:53:32]So I talked to the guys from Denver Service Center, and I said, "You know, we're gonna lift this building up, and we're gonna go underneath it." The archeology'd already been done. "And then we're gonna set it back down after we have built a nice foundation and done all the subsoil work. What if we lift the building up, build a foundation over here, and then when we set the building down, we move it and set it down over here"? And that's what we did.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: That'll work.

KAREN BREWSTER: So you just moved the building instead of getting the property?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yep. We got Hunz with his big bulldozer, and we put big timbers to protect the unrestored building, (sound effects, ch-ch-ch) and pushed it over. And it worked like a champ.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: And we didn't -- still haven't, purchased any of that land. There's -- So.

[00:54:26]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and it is interesting, you had mentioned the Moore cabin being moved so many times, that how much buildings got moved in Skagway.

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, it's amazing. And the size of the buildings that --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: -- got moved. The Golden North Hotel got moved.

KAREN BREWSTER: Really?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: How in the world would they move that?

CLAY ALDERSON: Put timbers under it and -- and cables, and pulled it down State Street with a bulldozer.

KAREN BREWSTER: Whoa.

CLAY ALDERSON: Paul Cyr did that. And his wife, Alice, is still living in Whitehorse. And she goes on cruise ships and does Skagway history programs. You've probably --

KAREN BREWSTER: I've met them.

CLAY ALDERSON: Ok. Good.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: So.

[00:55:15]KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. Yeah, because I was thinking, you know, modern times, you have a big bulldozer, you could move a building, but an old building would shift.

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh yeah. You'd have to do a lot of stabilizing.

KAREN BREWSTER: You put cables around it?

CLAY ALDERSON: Internal structural beams and a lot of things. I think either they rolled it on logs, or they made skids out of logs.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

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CLAY ALDERSON: Paul's told me the story several times, but --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: But there's even a picture of that bulldozer pulling that building down the street.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

CLAY ALDERSON: Alice would have that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. [00:55:50]Well, and also, as I say, in the gold rush days they were doing it, and then they would've just used -- as I say, used logs as rollers and had horses pull it, I guess.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Take a lot of horses to move a building that size.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, yeah, they were smaller buildings.

[00:56:00]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's probably when the military arrived and suddenly they had all the heavy equipment.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: That Soapy Smith building was once the Elks Club.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: And then it was the volunteer fire hall. I'm not sure which came first. And then it was moved to where it is now, and Martin Itjen built that ramshackle addition onto the back, which is now very well-built.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And uh --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And full of Martin Itjen treasures.

CLAY ALDERSON: Hm?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And full of Martin Itjen treasures.

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, yeah. Neat stuff in there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it just seems that -- I don't know if it's unusual for a community to have this history of moving buildings so much.

CLAY ALDERSON: I don't know. It's -- there were a lot of build -- well, you know, initially with the -- the trail went through town, from the waterfront up the canyon, and so people built their buildings, which were mostly tents.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, along the trail. Well, then they built the railroad, and put the railroad through town. And that became everybody picked up their building and moved it so it faced on the railroad.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that railroad wasn't where the trail was?

CLAY ALDERSON: Nope.

KAREN BREWSTER: No. Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: The trail actually went across the yard at the Moore -- the current Moore House location.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

[00:57:24]CLAY ALDERSON: I always thought we could do, um, magnetic resonance and probably find where that trail went.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: But that wasn't a priority.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

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CLAY ALDERSON: I had been very much involved with magnetic resonance at Knife River Indian Villages, and we found remarkable things without ever turning a spade full of earth.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. And now can it go through roads and sidewalks and things?

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, you can find -- you can find earth lodges, and you knew exactly where the door was, where the fire pit was, the thickness of the walls, any cache pits that were built in the floor, and we -- we initially started doing hundred-yard -- hundred-foot grids. And we'd go out and do a hundred-foot grid, and take all these magnetic readings, and then we would go next or wherever we needed to go. And the first summer we collected all that data, then during the winter, they computerized it, and that was when the early days of computers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[00:58:31]CLAY ALDERSON: And uh, so I don't know, we did probably a half a dozen 100-foot squares over a couple of the lodge sites. And what we learned was pretty remarkable. And we learned that there were lodges built on top of lodges, and there were lodges where we didn't think there were lodges, because they were very distinct, round. They showed up.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

[00:58:59]CLAY ALDERSON: And by the second year, they had brought the resonance to the point where they could -- boy, they could walk across the site and pull a trigger, and it would give a simultaneous reading at a control point.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

CLAY ALDERSON: And by the time they had spent two summers, we had the largest non-military use of magnetic resonance in the world.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

CLAY ALDERSON: In North Dakota. On the Missouri River.

[00:59:26]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and that trail you were talking about in Skagway, that was not the Chilkoot Trail, this would have been the White Pass Trail?

CLAY ALDERSON: This would have been the White Pass Trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: So the White Pass was a trail before it was the railroad?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh yeah, it was a wagon road, right?

CLAY ALDERSON: The Brackett Wagon Road. And I'm su -- I'm --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: The Deadhorse Trail, wasn't it?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, White Pass Trail was a Native

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, it was.

CLAY ALDERSON: Primarily Native-used trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, I thought the Chilkoot had been a Native trail.

CLAY ALDERSON: It had. But I think there were also -- Again, ask Karl, but I'm reasonably sure there would have been Native use in the White Pass.

[01:00:02]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, if it was a trail, it would make sense there would have been.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yep. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, now was the White Pass Unit already created when you were there?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. It was part of the initial legislation.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, it was.

CLAY ALDERSON: As was the Seattle unit. They were all created under the same -- and the idea was, it would all be managed by one superintendent, and that didn't work.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:00:24]CLAY ALDERSON: So we had a great relationship with the park in Seattle.

KAREN BREWSTER: In Seattle. Yeah, I was wondering how that worked.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yep. Oh, yeah. I would go down there, you know, I had occasion to be through Seattle every now and then, and I would always make a point to put an extra day on my schedule and spend a day with Willie Russell, the manager. That's where I got to know Sean O'Meara, and all the people down there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it is an interesting thing.

CLAY ALDERSON: It is.

KAREN BREWSTER: That there's a unit way down in Seattle and how they help tell that story.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yep. Yeah. And when we had the centennial of the gold rush, Willie came up and participated. The international designation, Willie was up for that. And so, yeah, we had a great relationship with them.

[01:01:15]KAREN BREWSTER: It seems like they kind of operate independently.

CLAY ALDERSON: Pretty -- pretty much, yeah. Complete different region. But they tried initially to have 'em much more together, but it didn't work very well.

KAREN BREWSTER: Why did it not work?

CLAY ALDERSON: I don't know. That was all before --

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: I think just proximity and the administrative part of it across two regions, but I don't know for sure.

[01:01:50]KAREN BREWSTER: And now, so tell me about the White Pass Unit. It seems to be an area that doesn't get quite as much attention. You know, everybody thinks of the Chilkoot Trail and the --

CLAY ALDERSON: I look at the White Pass Unit as money in the bank. There's a lot there. It's been looted extensively by local people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because of the artifacts left on the old road?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Yep. There -- but it has a couple of things going for it. One is, it's very steep. It's very remote. It's got a river running through it. It's got a railroad running through it. But when the railroad was shut down, people that worked for the railroad, and probably some that didn't, could use those little Casey cars and go up the tracks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Are those those push --

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, they were powered.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: But they called 'em Casey cars.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: And they could go up there and hike down from the railroad and get down to White Pass City. And -- but in order to get to -- into White Pass City, you had to cross the river. And you had to just figure that out. We did have a cable strung between two trees, and we could cable across. But one of the trees fell down, so I don't know that that ever got resolved.

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[01:03:04]KAREN BREWSTER: And was there ever an idea to build a trail and a bridge?

CLAY ALDERSON: No. It's -- it just -- there are things still there that are like the Chilkoot Trail was initially. And there are remains of the old trail. White Pass wanted to have us take a crew of -- our trail crew plus some White Pass employees, and go up and dig out the old trail. You can see it from the railroad. And then they could show people, yeah, right there. That's the historic White Pass trail. And it never came to fruition, probably on lack of interest on both parts, really. No real definite initiative for that. But we would have had to do archeology.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And it would've run into a pretty major thing within the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:04:08]CLAY ALDERSON: But it's interesting to have a railroad running through your park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. That's definitely another management challenge.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Yep. Um, but not very much -- we used to kinda do an annual, uh, something in the White Pass, and I don't know if that's been carried on. Just before I got here, two of their summer rangers walked from the -- I don't know, some of it -- they dropped off somewhere up in Canada. I don't know if they went clear to Bennett, or clear to Frasier, but they walked the rail corridor and camped out two or three nights, and just looked at things. I think Frank Norris might have been one of them that did that. And I think they walked across the -- that great big suspension bridge up there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: I think Frank talked about that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Alaskan.

CLAY ALDERSON: How scary it was. You're familiar with the Kuskulana Bridge going to, uh, McCarthy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

CLAY ALDERSON: It's very much like the Kuskulana Bridge.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. [01:05:21]Well, so there's never been a thought to develop that White Pass Trail like they've done with the Chilkoot?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. It's thought of, you know, but it would be taking on a pretty major financial commitment, and what would you do with it? Would you have a stop for the railroad to stop and drop people off to go? Uh, as it is now, I think the impetus for local people to go up there and haul things off has kinda -- there's been a few generational changes that don't make it quite so attractive. But when I first got here, there were rumors of people going up there and hauling out a lot of stuff. And there wasn't a whole lot we could do about it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Why couldn't you?

CLAY ALDERSON: But it's there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Why couldn't you do anything?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um, we just didn't have the infrastructure to house a ranger up there or a couple of rangers, um, and physically monitor what was going on. Nowadays, you could put a camera up there and watch everything that was happening.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. [01:06:48]Whereas, like on the Chilkoot, there are rangers? Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: The Chilkoot, there is a presence. We have rangers at Sheep Camp. We have rangers that hike up on a pretty regular basis from the bottom. Canada has rangers at the top. And so we have much more control over -- Canada -- over the Chilkoot.

KAREN BREWSTER: And all those decisions were, I'm sure, made before you got there, about the Chilkoot?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or were some made during your time?

CLAY ALDERSON: Mm.

KAREN BREWSTER: You said the permit system came up.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. The permit was the big change in the Chilkoot Trail. Uh, I'm thinking --

[01:07:32]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Hadn't that been a state park, so it was already being used?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: The trail was already established.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. There was --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: As a recreation area by the state.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I know that local people used to use it --

CLAY ALDERSON: For hunting.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, but it wasn't necessarily maintained, and so by the time when the park came along, they -- you know, that decision to start maintaining it and then eventually adding campgrounds.

CLAY ALDERSON: Have you run across the name Scott Home, H-O-M-E?

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh, I'm not sure.

CLAY ALDERSON: He worked, I think, for the state as a trail ranger, before the National Park Service came along. And then he worked for the National Park Service on the trail. I think he was up at Sheep Camp. And uh, he -- he's -- talk about an interesting guy. He has regular visits by extraterrestrials and --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Dyea. Perfect place to meet him.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: He -- he writes a lot.

KAREN BREWSTER: So he's in Dyea?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: He's in Dyea.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Writes science fiction.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[01:08:45]CLAY ALDERSON: And he worked for us in several capacities as a seasonal, and he worked for the Forest Service. But he was, for an employee, very anti-Park Service, we'll just say. And Scott, I run onto him at the post office every now and then, and he still remembers who I am and is congenial.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, but that trail, you know, certainly has been developed.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so --

[01:09:15]CLAY ALDERSON: And the state -- the state was initially involved in reestablishing the Slide Cemetery. And that's -- those markers don't in any way correlate with who's under 'em. Mr. Doran is buried three places in that cemetery. And I -- they just got names of people that they knew had died in the -- in the slide and put them on. In fact, one of 'em was from Emporia, Kansas.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I was born in Emporia.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: So I checked with the folks in Emporia at the historical society, and they said, "Well, he was on the gold rush, but he was not buried -- " They knew he was killed in the slide, but his body was taken back, I think, to Ohio, which was his original family home. And I think he was buried in Ohio. Can't even remember his name now.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Was it Morgan?

CLAY ALDERSON: And there was another guy from Kansas City, Kansas, and I did a little looking into him, but I never could find out much about him. And so, uh, that was a lot done by the state.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And we just kinda keep it up.

[01:10:40]KAREN BREWSTER: So the -- the campgrounds and the, kinda the trail reestablishment, brushing it out and all that, that all happened before you got there?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: The trail was in active use and had been for quite awhile.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But there wasn't a permit system? Just anybody could go?

CLAY ALDERSON: No, hm-hm. Anybody wanted to hike over the trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: And were the campgrounds established?

CLAY ALDERSON: The campground at Finnegan's. Uh, there was a campground --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Up at Sheep Camp was -- ?

KAREN BREWSTER: Canyon City?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Canyon City.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, I think the farthest up the trail was Sheep Camp. There wasn't one at the scales. That was too high.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: But the main one was at Sheep Camp, Finnegan's, and I was thinking, Canyon City. I think there was some camping at Canyon City.

[01:11:29]KAREN BREWSTER: And was there regular ranger presence already?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Well, they -- they -- the rangers were housed at Sheep Camp in a little tent village, and that was one of the things that we did up there, is we carved some money out of somewhere and built a nice ranger cabin up there and a storage building, so that we had a permanent presence up there during the use season.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And uh, that was a pretty good move, that we cared for our people better, but also cared for the public better, 'cause we had a facility from whence to work.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

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[01:12:20]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And also the environment. They began considering more carefully the management of the trail. You know, put bridges in instead of having people going through the water. Moved it when the beaver came in, or tried to convince the beaver to leave. But they -- they really did work with putting in good -- getting rid of all the little side trails everyone had and putting in a well-developed and easily walkable trail.

[01:12:45]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, as I say, that's what I was wondering about the campgrounds is that as use increased, if you've got everybody just camping wherever they want, that's going to cause environmental and cultural issues.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Exactly.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And bear issues.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes. So having it concentrated does make sense.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And Canada sort of followed suit with their side at the same time?

CLAY ALDERSON: They already had a cabin at the summit, and I don't --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Because that's the border crossing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I don't know that they had any other structures 'til you got to --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Lindeman.

CLAY ALDERSON: Lindeman, yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: They had a big presence at Lindeman. But they had campgrounds.

KAREN BREWSTER: They had camp -- yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: Several of the locations along there.

[01:13:34]KAREN BREWSTER: But in the early days, I don't know if they somebody up there checking passports and things?

CLAY ALDERSON: Mm-mm. No.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

CLAY ALDERSON: Passports were never an issue up there, so people could filter in and filter out, and if they wanted to hike a long ways, why that's a way they could do it.

[01:13:49]KAREN BREWSTER: But you said local people used to use that route for getting to the high country for hunting?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Lots of goats up there.

CLAY ALDERSON: I used -- um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it must be good goat habitat.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It's excellent. It's just perfect. They like their coastal environment.

[01:14:08]CLAY ALDERSON: We had a guy contact us one year, and he had the idea that he wanted to replicate the winter crossing of the Chilkoot Trail with a ton of goods. He and his son, who was a student at Brown University.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: In the history program.

CLAY ALDERSON: And he had it all mapped out how they would stockpile all their stuff in Dyea, and they would walk a section and haul, and walk a section and haul. And I said,

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"You know, this is a recipe for catastrophe." And I said, "I'm not going to authorize it on the United States side. If you want to helicopter to the summit and go through Canada, go ahead." Then Canada -- I don't really talk to Canada after my first visit with him. And we did a little investigating with Brown University, and they said, eh, not -- this kid's not the sharpest knife in the drawer. So they had had some dealings with him. But he was bound and determined. He was going to go to his congressman and make it possible to hike that in the winter time. And never did hear from him.

[01:15:32]KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know, why would you want to do that? Carry all --

CLAY ALDERSON: Subject yourself and your family.

KAREN BREWSTER: To carrying all that stuff.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's right. If you wanted to hike it in the winter, that's different.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. We had a military group from Canada that wanted to hike it in the winter as a winter training exercise, and that was before I got here. And off they went up the trail in the snow, and they were wearing winter camouflage so they could not be seen. Well, the day after they left, we got an emergency message that one of these military guys' father passed away or something, but they really needed to contact him. And they flew over there for two days before they found 'em, 'cause they were so --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They couldn't see them.

CLAY ALDERSON: They were securely camouflaged up there. And they finally found him and were able to haul him out.

[01:16:27]KAREN BREWSTER: I think it would be challenging in the winter, how you would found -- find the route.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: It would be. And we know that it's avalanche-prone.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. [01:16:37]And why would you want to go back and forth, carrying a ton of gear like they had to in the old days?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Finding the route would be pretty bad.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: It just wasn't a good idea, so we saved his life.

[01:16:53]KAREN BREWSTER: But you talked about communicating with Canada.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: That -- I would think you had to do that a lot.

CLAY ALDERSON: Hm-mm. Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: With the Canadian --

CLAY ALDERSON: We had a formal, annual meeting, swapped back and forth from location to location. And a lot of things -- Daily communication between the trail rangers, practically.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: 'Cause it was standard procedure from Sheep Camp. You would get everything cleaned up and get people booted out of Sheep Camp and say, "You know, just getting to the summit's not the end. You've got to go to the next campsite."

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: "So you need to be outta here early." And we had rangers that rousted people out and set 'em on their way.

KAREN BREWSTER: They still do.

CLAY ALDERSON: And then, would hike up to the summit every day, and that's a pretty good haul up there, and rendezvous with the wardens up there. So that was good day-to-day contact. [01:17:50]We had excellent relationship with -- I think there were three different managers on the Canadian side, but mostly Bob Lewis was the guy that I dealt with. He has recently moved to Vancouver area. He's retired. But yeah, we had --

[01:18:09]KAREN BREWSTER: So you had good collaboration?

CLAY ALDERSON: One time that we didn't have was when I was gone, and we had an acting superintendent at Klondike. And really wanted the international designation of the park to happen while they were there, to the point where the local folks said, no. In the legislation, it says, at such time as the government of Canada establishes a similar area adjacent to Klondike Gold Rush Park, then the park can petition for international designation. And I think there's only three or four national parks in the US that are international, so it would be kind of a nice thing. [01:19:03]And this acting superintendent wanted to preside over that, to the point when she didn't get the results she wanted at Whitehorse, she called Ottawa and made kind of an end run. And I got a phone call in Anchorage where I was assigned for the summer, and said, "You know, what she's doing is tantamount to a taking of sovereign land in Canada. And we don't want that to happen." So I went down the hall to the regional director, and we talked it over. And he made the phone call and ended that. But then a couple of years later, they had estab -- (clears throat) -- excuse me, had established the park and were of a mind to want to do the international, and we did it.

KAREN BREWSTER: So what's the Canadian park called?

CLAY ALDERSON: Chilkoot Trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's just the Chilkoot Trail?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[01:20:02]CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. And so, we had a big celebration, and I invited my cousin to come because that -- my cousin is Neva Egan, the first First Lady of Alaska.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. Oh, right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I thought she would enjoy it. So she came and stayed with us and -- no I guess, she -- well, anyway, she was there. And so we took the train up to Bennett and had a big ceremony at the -- the depot at Bennett. And then we had a guy from Washington that wrote his speech on the train on the way up, and he was waxing eloquent, and I was sitting next to Neva, and she said, "Who's this blabbermouth?"

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: She was half deaf.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, she was hard -- deaf.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Well, I wish he'd hurry up and get done.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: She was great.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: I was sitting in uniform next to Neva.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: She was just great.

[01:21:02]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I'm surprised it took Canada that long. So what year was that?

CLAY ALDERSON: I don't know. You were here by then, so.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I was here, so that means '94, '95, or '96.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, probably '95 or '96.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, considering Klondike was set up, what, in '77?

CLAY ALDERSON: '76.

KAREN BREWSTER: '76, yeah.

[01:21:21]CLAY ALDERSON: And uh, then we had the hundredth anniversary in '98.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: So we had two kinda big things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, so you were there for the hundredth anni --

CLAY ALDERSON: For both of those things.

KAREN BREWSTER: That must have been quite a --

CLAY ALDERSON: It was, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- thing to organize.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. We actually had a lady come from the regional office to take on a lot of the planning, but, yeah, we coordinated it all while I was there.

[01:21:46]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So the town was filled with Canadians, and the redcoats for the RCMP to patrol with their horses, and it was a huge celebration.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I'd say a big thing to organize.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: We had friends from the BC park system came up for that. We just had a good time.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It was part of a group of borderland parks between Canada and --

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. We had --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And they worked together.

CLAY ALDERSON: I don't know if they still do have a borderland managers group, and we met every other year, and alternated between US and Canada. And the borderland managers would just get together and talk about issues, transboundary issues. And sometimes bring in specialists that could help us deal with things. It was a very interesting group to work with.

[01:22:39]KAREN BREWSTER: Are there specific issues to a transboundary unit that another park wouldn't have to deal with?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, there were just things -- like an issue came up on the Chilkoot about carrying guns on the Chilkoot. And there wasn't really a regulation that said you can't carry a gun on the Chilkoot on the US side. It was definitely no guns on the Canadian side. So we made that a part of the brochure that we put out and part of the information that we disseminated. Uh -- you're best off not to carry a gun. We -- I had people that would call me up and say, "Well now, what type of gun should I be carrying when I hike that trail?"

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: In Alaska.

CLAY ALDERSON: Mostly uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: For bear?

CLAY ALDERSON: For bears, yeah. And there was a guy who was a police officer in Cleveland or somewhere, and he was -- he and his daughter were gonna come up, and he wanted to know what munitions he should bring. And I said, "None, if you plan on going into Canada." And the -- not any bears on our side that are --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They were good bears.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yep. Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They were so busy. Truly.

[01:24:00]CLAY ALDERSON: The bears were -- were pretty easy to manage because they followed the snow. And as soon as the snow melted off, they would go to the high country, and you'd never see 'em. If we had a year where there was an excessive amount of snow or cold weather in the spring, and the bears didn't go up the trail, or up the mountain, then was when we ran into a bear problem every now and then.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And we had people periodically that would put food on the table to attract the bears, but --

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Because the bears were still pretty good, they would try it, but it -- weren't habituated. So it wasn't a lasting problem.

[01:24:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and there's a lot of public education for people along the trail.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yes. Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: See, that's one thing Tim Steidel even went in the schools and talked about bear safety.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Because there were so many people coming in from the Outside, and they were having bear problems in Skagway, but the same program held for anyone who was going up on the trail, so they were very good with their education program.

[01:25:01]KAREN BREWSTER: And these are brown bears and black bears on the trail?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yep. Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And they all go up to the high country?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And there --

CLAY ALDERSON: We find that in Goosewing, where we work in the Bridger-Teton, is they -- they have what they call the green line. And immediately after the snow melts, these nice little grass shoots green up.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Dandelions.

CLAY ALDERSON: And that's what the bears and the elk like. And they follow the green line, and then they stay in the high country all summer. And that's kinda the way it was at Dyea and on the Chilkoot is, they would follow the green -- green-up, and stay in the high country.

[01:25:39]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's one thing in that 2011 study they did a review of the whole history of bear problem reports.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And they had incidents where people were in the same space as bears, but they didn't have interactions. They said the trail was really trouble-free, as long as -- the rangers, when they'd hike up the trail, would scare away any bears that they saw.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And people walked by them and never saw them because they were just occupied.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Pretty well hidden. It's very brushy, so people never saw them.

[01:26:12]KAREN BREWSTER: And that implies that there's enough of a food supply.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: In the whole corridor.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's right.

KAREN BREWSTER: For the bears that they were otherwise occupied.

CLAY ALDERSON: Right.

[01:26:21]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And so that again is the environment being attacked. And people don't go --

CLAY ALDERSON: In the fall, they would come down for berries and salmon, but they were totally devoted to fattening up.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And in the spring is when they're probably the most hazardous, and people aren't usually hiking the trail in the spring.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So they've usually moved up, and then they come back during the summer when the berries start to ripen.

[01:26:43]KAREN BREWSTER: Has anybody done any research on whether there's sort of generational transfer of knowledge of the bears sort of being habituated that this is a human corridor, and we kind of stay away?

CLAY ALDERSON: I don't know of any real research that's been done.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, this past -- remember, the natural resource program got up and running after we left.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. There's been a lot done since we left.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And so, in that 2011 report, they said they had been doing observations 'cause they wanted to monitor whether there was an increase of interactions, or of observations, and it seemed to remain stable during the -- the report was 260 pages. I didn't read it all.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, because --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But, they seemed to be quite contented with the bears.

[01:27:26]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Because there's a long history of human activity there, and so I'm just wondering if bears learn, you know, "I'm gonna stay away because there's human-- "They don't like us, either.

CLAY ALDERSON: No.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Exactly. So that may be, but the sense they had was that the bears just went where the best food was, and that there weren't really enough people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And nobody was staying in place long enough to cause a problem.

And, of course, the park is who's there all the time, and they are very conscientious.

[01:27:54]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, no, that's good. That's unusual. Not all park trails are so well monitored.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes. No, that's absolutely right. You were always aware of the rangers there. I think when you talk about putting a trail over at White Pass, you'd be very aware of the road and the railroad.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's what's magic about the Chilkoot Trail, is that the surroundings are essentially just exactly as they were historically.

[01:28:23]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I was also thinking, the White Pass, is there a reason to not sort of develop it in the idea of keeping some place more quote, "wilderness."

CLAY ALDERSON: I think that had --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I think that's huge.

KAREN BREWSTER: That would be the equivalent in another park, that's what it would be. I don't know if that applies to Klondike.

CLAY ALDERSON: Not with the railroad running through it.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

CLAY ALDERSON: It would certainly be an area --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Untrampled.

CLAY ALDERSON: To leave undeveloped as long as possible.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. [01:28:47]That -- is there biological -- you've said the cultural reasons, but is there biological reasons, too?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes, actually, I think they're different gradients. So the Chilkoot Pass is one of the connectors of the coast with the interior. The AB Mountain trail, that's where the mountain reaches the closest to the water, and that's where you get the interior, the sub-alpine fir that are only found in the Rocky Mountains or down there with their feet in the water. So that's another gradient. And then the White Pass is completely different because you have the most recently glaciated area reacting to the coast. And I think they've done some work there. I only did what I could walk to easily from the road - my plant collecting and bird observations. And I think from what I understood from that report, they have been doing more work in there, particularly with the lichens. And that's where they found some lichens that are not at all in the other places, so it's really three units, in my mind.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:29:49]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And so that's something the future will hold if they keep the enthusiasm they have for looking for the new species, the new populations. That will be something to look forward to.

[01:30:02]KAREN BREWSTER: Now, is that AB Mountain route, is that within the park boundaries or no?

CLAY ALDERSON: No.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: No. Mm-mm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But you know, birds, plants, everybody makes its --

KAREN BREWSTER: No, no. I was just thinking for preservation reasons.

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CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It's an awesome gradient, that one is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Very, very interesting. The plants there are completely different. And I think realistically the park is well-served to be aware, not just in the boundaries, but that -- that whole area there. That's really what the -- the story is about.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And they can certainly be aware of the plants that are there and the -- all of the groups, like the Native Plant Society in Alaska and the Herbarium in University of Alaska Fairbanks are very interested in that complete pocket.

[01:30:46]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, as you say, that Klondike, with the sort of, the historic district, and then White Pass, and then Dyea, and then the trail, it is very disjointed.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes, it is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Which I would think as superintendent would've made for some challenging management.

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, there were challenges every place you looked, but it was -- it was not a hard park to manage, really. At the time I was there. It's gotten more complex, I'm sure. You've got more staff. You've got more visitors. You've got bigger fish to fry. And I had it pretty easy.

[01:31:22]KAREN BREWSTER: So the campground out at Dyea is after your tenure? Is it a Park Service?

CLAY ALDERSON: Nope, it was there when I got here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: Uh --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I think that might've been a state campground.

KAREN BREWSTER: But now it's a Park Service campground, isn't it?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, it's Park Service, and we have a building out there. I don't know if they still house employees out there specifically for the campground, but I imagine.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: We saw there were employees housed there the last time we went out there.

CLAY ALDERSON: Ok.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But there's a second campground, one that's at the warehouse, and that's the city one.

KAREN BREWSTER: There's a city campground. Yeah, I've heard about that.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But yes, the Park Service campground, they were monitoring use. There was a national inventory of all the campgrounds to see what sort of use was going on.

[01:32:10]CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, that -- that campground there, the Park Service campground, Jay Cable and Dave Hunz went out there with a bulldozer. And Jay said, push this tree down, and push that tree down. And that's how that --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It's a nice campground.

CLAY ALDERSON: It's really a nice campground. Not much planning.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: However, the river is eating it.

CLAY ALDERSON: Hm?

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CLAUDIA ALDERSON: The river is eating it.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

[01:32:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I mean, how do you handle management when there's a river eating away at your property, whether it's the campground or the Patterson Cabin or -- ?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. They're all -- that's very friable soil down there. And we did talk to the Corps of Engineers and ask 'em about protecting that channel. But they would've built a concrete flume all the way from the area of the bridge all the way to tidewater. And we didn't want that, so Jay went out one year in the spring, and he tied cables around some big trees and then sawed the trees down so the cables would hold 'em from washing away, and they turned the water. [01:33:19]They've been fighting that change in the channel ever since that bridge was put in, which was the '20's or '30's. It's been there a long time. And it -- when they put that in, it changed just enough to where it was diverting water, and that's why Mr. Patterson's skull is on the counter at the Red Onion Saloon. It washed out, and somebody found it. And why we lost pretty much all of that old Dyea cemetery.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And some of the other things there.

[01:33:52]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it would be interesting, if that bridge changed the water flow, if you took that bridge out, what would happen? If that might --

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, they need the bridge there.

KAREN BREWSTER: I know.

CLAY ALDERSON: They need a bridge there.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was just thinking hypothetically, what --

CLAY ALDERSON: And it's probably -- there's been some talk of replacing that bridge. And when they do, I hope they look at the hydrology a lot and don't damage the downstream flow.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And the erosion situation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I think that flow is important for salmon and other --

CLAY ALDERSON: Salmon, it sure is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Other species.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

[01:34:30]KAREN BREWSTER: And then there was one year, this is probably after you were gone, there was a big flood. There was a glacial break or something.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Yep.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yep. That happened up West Creek.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, West Creek.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And there was expectation of a really big one, so they said the West Creek was the first of that size they've had for a long time, but the Norse River is really the main feeder. And it has some -- just, uh, the moraines from the glaciers have held the creeks in, but they're already having some spillage over the top, and so that's expected that it'll wash out sometime in an amount of human history. Not a long time into the future. And it'll be a big flood.

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[01:35:13]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, and you mentioned the beavers. I wanted to ask about that part of the trail with the boardwalk and the beaver dams, that changed.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Constantly.

KAREN BREWSTER: So was that during your --

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. That was --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes. It was huge.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, we first started dealing with the beaver when I was there, and I think it's gotten more pronounced since, 'cause I think they built a lot more boardwalk.

[01:35:33]KAREN BREWSTER: So when you were there, that boardwalk wasn't there? That was your guys' response to it?

CLAY ALDERSON: I think we built the first bit of boardwalk. We looked at removing beaver. We looked at, uh --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Fooling beaver.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Fooling beaver?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes, there're all kind of techniques that you have the beaver distracted.

CLAY ALDERSON: I talked to the superintendent at Acadia.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: Who had been an associate regional director in Anchorage, and he went off to be superintendent at Acadia. Claudia had worked at Acadia, so she knew that they had big beaver problem out there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: So I talked to Paul, and he said they had a thing called a beaver baffler which was to keep the beaver from -- you know, when -- when we built the first piece of boardwalk, the beaver incorporated our boardwalk into their dam. And it was an engineering boost for them because they could just dam it right up right at our boardwalk.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Any time there's moving water, they're attracted to stopping it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: So I think we built a couple of those beaver bafflers, and they proved nominally successful.

KAREN BREWSTER: What is -- can you describe a beaver baffler, Claudia?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, I can't remember exactly how you construct it, but it diverts the flow of the water so they don't realize that there is moving water there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: You know, they can use a very fine pipe and move it around whatever structure you want to leave open.

CLAY ALDERSON: And the intake is quite a ways upstream.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's right.

CLAY ALDERSON: It's not right at --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So they -- they leave it alone.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

[01:37:11]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And you can put screens and things on whatever your bypass is and protect that rather than the whole area that they're flooding, creating a lake. So it was fairly successful in Maine. They worked constantly with it.

[01:37:26]KAREN BREWSTER: But it didn't work in Skagway?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, it's -- that was a more civilized environment that they were working with. There were buildings, and so there was a lot of access to the area.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I dealt with beavers a lot in Grand Teton with dynamite. First of all, we'd dynamite the dams, and they would have it rebuilt by the next morning.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And so, we -- we had some really monumental battles with beaver in Grand Tetons.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did you ever dynamite their lodges?

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, we asked, and they -- the natural resources people wouldn't let us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: Somebody said that the way to get 'em to abandon their lodge is to take old reclaimed motor oil and pour it all over the top of the lodge.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Oh, those were different times.

KAREN BREWSTER: Different times.

CLAY ALDERSON: That was probably not going to fly, either.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:38:20]CLAY ALDERSON: But they did let me blast three or four beaver dams. And then we had a beaver that jammed his log -- his sticks into a culvert on the Jackson Hole Highway, the main east-west US highway. And so they sent me up there in the winter to spud a hole in the ice, and put a charge of dynamite down there, with the idea that we could push that and loosen it, and it would go on through. Well, I tried a little charge, and it didn't even break up the ice. So I stuck a whole case of dynamite down there and touched it off, and it not only destroyed the ice, it blew thirty-seven feet of concrete out of the end of the culvert. It just blew the walls out, and the top caved down.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I was wondering if you took the whole road out.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Darn near it. Fortunately there was enough so that it didn't get into the road portion. It got the shoulder. So we didn't do that anymore.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

[01:39:30]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, I think the beaver had been trapped out there in Skagway.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So it hadn't been a problem, just like bears hadn't been a problem in Wyoming because they removed them all.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So they were working against the success of the families, so what worked for a little while no longer worked after they had grown and spread. And that water, there was so much moving water there that they really couldn't use --

CLAY ALDERSON: We had a very active beaver trapper in the Dyea area.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And it was legal.

KAREN BREWSTER: And who was that?

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CLAY ALDERSON: Jay Frey.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And Jay kept the beaver trapped out of there pretty much.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So that was the change. We lost Jay Frey.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I think when Jay Frey died, the beaver took over.

[01:40:14]KAREN BREWSTER: And there was no way to have -- when they first started coming in, to have relocated them?

CLAY ALDERSON: They had a pretty good toehold by the time they showed up along the trail. They had been up West Creek, they'd been up the Skagway River.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And they're hikers.

KAREN BREWSTER: They are?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They'll go across country enormous distances, so they would be back.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: If you have such an attractive spot with all that water and all that vegetation, all those cottonwoods and willows, that's their home.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So you have to learn to live with them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:40:48]CLAY ALDERSON: So in some areas, you can reroute the trail to get onto high ground, but there you kinda had a historic trail corridor, and you wanted to stay as faithful to that, too, so we built boardwalk.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Which is not a bad thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, it works.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: It works over geyser basins.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:41:10]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And, you know, they have years when the trail is completely flooded by the river. It's a very living environment there, and so that's just the way it would've been historically, too.

CLAY ALDERSON: And we used to advise people, take wet-weather shoes and dry-weather shoes and you wade for awhile, and then you put your dry-weather shoes on and hike some more.

[01:41:31]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and that's -- putting the boardwalks and the bridges in, you've made it an easier trail for people.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And safer.

KAREN BREWSTER: And safer.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Yeah.

[01:41:39]KAREN BREWSTER: Which brings up accidents while you were superintendent. You know, more and more people on the trail, were there safety issues or accidents and things you had to deal with?

CLAY ALDERSON: Probably the biggest thing were people overestimating their ability, uh, either to hike safely or to have the stamina to get very far up that trail. And uh, we didn't have very many helicopter rescues because we -- one thing, we started charging the

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person. "If you need to be rescued, hey, we'll charter a helicopter up here for you." And that stopped people.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That was the era when people starting to get SPOT and so, across the country, there were people that got tired and thought, what the hell. Time to leave.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And would call in rescue.

KAREN BREWSTER: Those SPOT trackers?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes. So they --

CLAY ALDERSON: And we had a few, but not very --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: You know, the rangers checked the campsites and really checked people out.

[01:42:51]CLAY ALDERSON: We were really particular about helicopters in the trail corridor during the tourist season. We made sure that everything that we needed up there was up there before the first of June.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: Or we had a cut-off date, and then we didn't send a helicopter up there until after the middle of September.

KAREN BREWSTER: Unless there was an emergency?  
(Dogs barking in the background)

CLAY ALDERSON: Unless there was an emergency. [01:43:16]We, one year, came up with a little money, and -- yeah, I was gonna suggest that you let those dogs out for a minute. Um, there used to be an aircraft on a snowfield just below the summit of the trail. And we would periodically get reports from people saying, "Oh! A plane crashed out there." 'Cause it, you know, was a nice little single-engine plane, and looking at it from the trail over there, it looked like it maybe happened recently. But we came up with some money somewhere, and I told Jay Cable, I said, "Let's get that plane out of there." And the Boy Scouts were actively collecting aluminum.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I said, "If we get that plane outta there, would that be something that you could cut up and get money out of?" And they said, "Yeah. We could." So we hired TEMSCO, and they went up there. And we had to dismantle certain things on the plane, because if they had it on a line and were moving it, it would want to fly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And they had to remove things that would make that want to think it was air-worthy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Like wings.

CLAY ALDERSON: But anyways, -- yeah. We -- we got it dismantled and packaged to where it was -- the fly-out was a pretty simple thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: They put it down there, and we gave it to the Boy Scouts. And I think they got some money out of it. I hope. Anyway, we solved a problem, and that worked out.

[01:45:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it sounds like a lot of what superintendents do, is problem solving.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Yeah. My mentor told me, he said, "You only have two things you have to manage as a manager, and that's money and people." And I have added a third thing. Time. You have to manage time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Your own time? Or their --

CLAY ALDERSON: Time in whatever juxtaposition it is and what you're doing. If you don't manage time, you're gonna come up short. But he's absolutely right on money and people, but --

[01:45:38]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you must've had the talents to do that because managing money and people is not always easy. Or time.

CLAY ALDERSON: No. No. Uh, another good manager friend of mine, I was worried, I said, "You know, I put in for money for this, and by the time I got the money for this, I needed it for that." And he said, "Well. You will find that once you have the money, the lines begin to blur. Use it where you need it. So we did that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and the benefit of having some autonomy.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That regional wasn't micromanaging you.

CLAY ALDERSON: No.

[01:46:24]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, what made you decide to stay in Skagway for so long?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um --

KAREN BREWSTER: Or stay with that particular park for so long?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, I -- I just really liked it there. I liked the town a lot. Had a lot of friends there, and uh, I -- I always said, it would take something pretty special to get me out of -- out of Skagway. And I'd say going to Mongolia was pretty special.

KB: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, and you applied for a superintendency at Wrangell-St. Elias. That was the one temptation.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But they chose John Jarvis, so good competition.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: I didn't put in for very many jobs once I got to Klondike.

[01:47:14]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, so why -- what was appealing about Klondike?

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, it -- as we've noted, it was a challenge, but there were achievable goals that you could work towards all the time there. The historic restoration. The advent of turning that park from a historic restoration site to a visitor use site. And I was more inclined towards the historic restoration side of it because my background was maintenance.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And when this opportunity came along in Mongolia, I said, "Boy. This would be the ideal time to depart." Because I thought going in that Mongolia might be more than just a two-summer commitment, and it was. So Claudia and I talked it over quite a little bit, and we said, eh, maybe this is the time to leave Skagway. But as you see, we haven't totally left Skagway.

[01:48:27]KAREN BREWSTER: No. But and as we said yesterday, you know, typically superintendents move every few years, and you did not do that?

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CLAY ALDERSON: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: Once you got to Klondike?

CLAY ALDERSON: And I -- I stayed at Knife River for -- they told me I could -- if I was virtually still alive after two years, they'd see to it that I could move. They said I can't guarantee where you'll move to, but we'll get you outta there. And I stayed four years and moved because the Park Service wanted me to go solve a problem someplace else. So --

[01:49:03]KAREN BREWSTER: So why do -- what's the difference between you and other superintendents in terms of why you didn't follow that pattern of moving so many times?

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, you usually move to get a pay increase, and pay increases weren't that important, I guess. They should have been, but -- Quality of life and personal challenge of the job was pretty important to me. So I liked -- I always said these people that moved every three or four years never stayed long enough to live with their mistakes. And I wanted to stay long enough to have to live -- I made enough mistakes, I shoulda stayed forever, but thirteen years was almost forever.

[01:49:55]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, what were some of those mistakes, now in hindsight?

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, I -- I didn't get some of the land acquisition resolved that I wanted to get resolved. There were still initiatives having to do with the Chilkoot Trail and our relationship with Parks Canada on the permit system. I felt like I didn't see that all the way through. But there are very competent people that picked up, and those things have all been resolved.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:50:31]CLAY ALDERSON: Um, I was working actively with Phyllis Brown, trying to resolve something with the Rapuzzi Collection, and I would've liked to have gone further on that. But, you know, it just wasn't the time.

[01:50:55]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, the purchase of the Rapuzzi Collection, or the transfer to the park, that was during your tenure? No.

CLAY ALDERSON: No. We had -- we were days away from having an agreement on how the Rapuzzi Collection would be distributed, and that was through Phyllis Brown with Edna Rapuzzi, and then Edna died very suddenly. And I -- and Phyllis was the total heiress of the whole thing, and her viewpoint changed a little bit, in that, I think she wanted to know more about what was in the collection. So before she wanted to start parceling it out. And that took awhile, and by that time, we had moved on to some other things. But I always had a really good relationship with Phyllis, and it was interesting that we went back to Skagway three or four years ago, and they were just kind of half way with the restoration of the Soapy Smith building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And they offered to take us a tour through it as it -- the progress they'd made. And Phyllis was there, and she wanted to take a tour of it, too. So we all got to go on that tour and talk about things. "Oh, you remember the time that we had the earthquake and John Warder was up in the attic." That was a funny story. We were over there, and Phyllis took us in. We were looking the place over. And John was the chief of maintenance, and he wanted to look at structural things in the attic, so we got a ladder, and he crawled up in the attic. Well, he just got up there, and we had a very significant earthquake. And we all ran out of the building. John looks down out of the hole and says,

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"What're you guys doing down there, making this building shake?" And we weren't there. So that was a pretty funny story that we had in the Soapy Smith building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: But we did have a nice visit with Phyllis.

[01:53:23]KAREN BREWSTER: Now I can't remember, did the Park Service purchase that collection, or was it a donation?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, there was some purchase, there was some donation. The Rasmuson Foundation --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: What about the city? Were they part of the process?

KAREN BREWSTER: They got part of the collection.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, they got part -- the Rasmuson Foundation --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's right.

CLAY ALDERSON: -- put money into that. And, uh --

[01:53:43]KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause I was wondering, if -- but this was after your time --

CLAY ALDERSON: Jim Corless was the one that pulled that all together, and I sent him --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, 'cause to find the money for that --

CLAY ALDERSON: I sent him an email when that announcement was made, and I said, thank you for cleaning up something that I started those many years ago. And you've done a great job getting this to where it --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: The collection is protected, and everything is looking good.

[01:54:12]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well also, another one is back in '89 when you were interviewed and you were still new superintendent, you had talked about wanting a greater presence in Dyea with the Park Service. And so, o I'm wondering, do you -- did you accomplish that or -- ?

CLAY ALDERSON: Again, we had kind of a little tent camp in Dyea. A tent with a platform, but it was pretty tenuous. And we came up with some money, and we built a real ranger station there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was there any efforts towards interpreting the town site and the false front and all that?

CLAY ALDERSON: We talked a lot about that.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Karl did. He mapped it all.

CLAY ALDERSON: And Karl mapped it.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that was during your time.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: We had some good personal experiences. I know we were out there with Karl and he was showing us. And said, and there's -- in that picture, there was a stack of haybales.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And Claudia looked over and said, right about there. And there was alfalfa growing there in a rectangular shape, all these years.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Exactly. And then little poofs, up the trail of clover because the animals were taking some hay with them.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

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CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Interesting.

[01:55:30]CLAY ALDERSON: And the false front was kind of a neat thing. I think that there was one family or I don't know if it was a whole family, but anyway, one owner stayed after Dyea was completely abandoned. And I think there was a -- a foundation and a basement in the vicinity of the false front, and I think that was probably the house that that guy had because it was the most intact foundation. And Karl said, mm, yeah, maybe. Karl wasn't one to speculate.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

CLAY ALDERSON: He -- he wanted to know things. And we found the old Pullen boat.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And you also had the house that you got -- so you had someone living out there. We purchased a house from Alf Kalvik. Um, and they just called up one day and said, "Well, we've gotten to the point where we can't be out here anymore, and we're going to move to assisted living in Anchorage. And we would like to sell the house." And that would be -- Mrs. -- Mrs. McDermott.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Oh, yes. Loreliza --

KAREN BREWSTER: Lorena? Lorna?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Oh, yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, anyway, Mrs. John McDermott, she was a Kalvik.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: So I guess she and John didn't particularly want -- this nice little house that they'd built out there, so we were able to pick up that house at a reasonable price, and I wanted a law enforcement person out there. But Tim Steidel was here, but he'd already bought a house in town. And the only person that really didn't have housing that they were attached to, Karl. [01:57:45]And Karl said, "Yeah. I'll move out there." So we fixed the place up. We fixed him a generator and got him electricity, and he lived out there for several years. And then I think a subsequent superintendent decided that it had to be a law enforcement person out there. And I don't know if they've got somebody living out there full time, or just in the summer, or -- but Karl's back living in town.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It's a nice location up by West Creek, and it did give you an ear in the community up there because they were starting to add more houses. Develop more sites.

[01:58:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, yeah, I'd say, at the time, was, you know -- the other people living in Dyea, was there a bit of a community there?

CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, yeah, there were some ownerships and some full time residencies. Scott Home lives out there.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And the telephone company guy.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. I can't remember his name.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Menace or Mc --

KAREN BREWSTER: And the Hosfords.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. The Hosfords.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes, the Hosfords, for sure.

KAREN BREWSTER: The McDermotts. But yeah, I didn't know. You know, in the mid-'80's when you first came to Skagway, if they -- people were still living out there.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Skip Elliot had a property out there.

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CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's right.

CLAY ALDERSON: But he had already moved, I -- he was out there when I first was -- he was the city manager.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And then he was elected mayor. And when he -- he had served on the -- as the city manager, and he was the one --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I think he kept his place out there just as a little country estate 'cause the salmon run

CLAY ALDERSON: And he got married and became quite civilized.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: 'Cept he painted his house incredible bright yellow, didn't he?

CLAY ALDERSON: I think so.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Anyway.

[01:59:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, um, that's the other thing about when you arrived in Skagway, did you have particular ideas of things you wanted to accomplish as superintendent?

CLAY ALDERSON: Not a lot. I, you know, I had to manage a management plan, an early management plan. So I didn't have a chance to go up there and do a house hunting trip or anything. They don't do that for Alaska, for good reason. And so it was really kind of, I walked in and looked around and said, "Hmm. I gotta manage this?" And set about managing it. I didn't have a lot of pre-conceived ideas. Jay -- Jay Cable was the rock. I mean, Jay really guided me through some things. I went off on my own on a few things, and most of 'em worked. Not all of 'em. I -- I don't -- I can't say that I really arrived there probably with more ideas of integrating into the community, personally, than how I was going to change the park.

[02:00:56]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, but after a few years of being there, did you have --

CLAY ALDERSON: Priorities emerge, and, yeah. You get to things that evolve out of discussions with your subject matter experts. So we went up the trail and counted lichens. And then we counted artifacts, and one of the interesting things about artifacts on the trail, they -- every two or three or five years, they would do a very concerted effort to go up the trail and relocate artifacts. Because initially, they had put numbers on a lot of, just tin cans.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Shoes.

CLAY ALDERSON: And items.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Single shoes.

CLAY ALDERSON: Single shoes, yeah. And so they would go back and try to relocate those things. With GPS it would be easy now. But I think by the time I was there, they were still finding over ninety percent of the things that they had identified as artifacts along the trail, so not a lot was being carried off.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Sometimes it migrated. People would carry it for awhile and then put it down.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, sometimes it would go up the trail a little.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So they would document its travels.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, interesting.

CLAY ALDERSON: And as it is with petrified forest and people hauling off petrified wood, they send it back after awhile. We would occasionally get a few tin cans back, but things stayed pretty much where they had been.

[02:02:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. So are there some things in particular you're most proud of, that you accomplished or contributed to Klondike Park?

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, I think becoming -- there are personal things, and there are professional things. Becoming a contributing part of the community as a family, I think, was pretty good, 'cause I don't think that had happened before. And as far as the park was concerned, I think we had all of the thirteen buildings restored by the time I left, and that was a big accomplishment. We also had an active program on the Chilkoot Trail, and -- Let's see, something was floating through my foggy mind, and it went away before I expressed it, but --

[02:03:41]KAREN BREWSTER: What about interpretation and the visitor center programs?

CLAY ALDERSON: That -- that's kind of what it was that I was thinking of. We were at a crossroads in that park, as we've mentioned before. We were wrapping up the historic restoration. We were moving into day-to-day operations, and although I have been involved with parks like that, I liked the part that had to do with the historic restoration, and I was proud of the fact we got that done. And it was ready for somebody else, and I think that was more in the line of Bruce Noble, who had been more involved with parks that were day-to-day operations. Probably a good time for me to leave.

[02:04:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And so, did the interpretive programs and exhibits start developing during your time?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. We -- in fact, that was another thing I was pretty proud of, is my involvement with the interpretive, uh, design. When I first got there, they had hired a contractor to do an interpretative exhibit design for the railroad depot, and primarily those two administrative buildings. And I hadn't been there a week and I got a call from Bob Spude, and he said, "You know, we were down there for a roll-out on an interpretive plan for exhibits in the depot." And he said, "They were awful." And he said, "Well, we didn't really have an opportunity to express how awful they were, but we would sure back you up if you did." So I talked to Boyd Evison, and I said, "I haven't had a chance to really look at these exhibits, but the feedback I'm getting from your folks in the region are they're not suitable." And so he said, "Well, let me see what I can do." [02:05:58]And I think what he did was he contacted Harpers Ferry, and they said, "Well, let me send a couple of guys out, and maybe they can put that superintendent in line." And so they sent out Ben Miller and Mitch Zetlin from Harpers Ferry, and they were really good artists and designers. And they took a look at the plan and the place where they were supposed to go, and they said, "This is terrible." And we sat in the Sweet Tooth one day over lunch and drew drawings on napkins, the old story, and that's pretty much what those exhibits look like today. The other building was the Mascot because we had decided to use the Mascot as in interpretive building. And I'm not sure, but what we did some on the Bernard Moore House. But it was primarily the depot, and those guys sketched out things that became the plan. [02:07:07]And once we got it all formalized and ready to go to bid - we got bids - and I went to Harpers Ferry and sat on the selection committee, and they said, "That's the first time we've ever had a superintendent on a selection committee for exhibits." So we selected a company out of Seattle to do all that, and they did a beautiful

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job. There have been some changes, some upgrades made, but that's what you build 'em for, so somebody else can come up with something better.

[02:07:45]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and at the time, did you have a chief of interpretation and an interpretive staff?

CLAY ALDERSON: Betsy Duncan Clark. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, Betsy was involved in it. Very much so. But I don't know that she was as involved with that design, that original design, but she was involved when Mitch and Ben came.

[02:08:09]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Didn't you actually physically get involved with finding the bar or -- ?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: -- something.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. They -- they wanted to put a bar in the Mascot Saloon.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: That was as exact like the historic bar and the back bar that was in it. And Karl looked through old newspapers and found an article where Mr. Reichert had gone to Kansas City and purchased a bar from the Brunswick Company and had it shipped to Skagway, and it was the bar. And somehow, and I think -- I think it was -- I was walking up Broadway, going home for lunch one day, and I saw a Clay County, Kansas, car. And Clay Center was just down the road. I used to play baseball and football there, and I said, "Ah, hey. I see you're from Kansas. I'm from Kansas, too." You know how that goes. And so somehow in the conversation, I said, "Yeah, we're looking to try and find a bar to put in the Mascot Saloon." 'Cause they were asking me about the Mascot. And they said, "You know, we've got a guy in our area that is the world's expert on Brunswick." And I said, "What's his name?"

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

CLAY ALDERSON: And it was Joe --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: He was from Home, Kansas, right?

CLAY ALDERSON: No, that's where we found -- that's where the bar had come from.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Oh, ok. Jumping ahead, sorry.

CLAY ALDERSON: This -- Joe, anyway. [02:09:50]So he gave me information on how to contact Joe, and I called him up. "Oh yeah," he said, "I've got lots of bars here. We just need to know how long it was." So we went and measured on the floor where the bolt holes were that held that bar down, and they said they made 'em in two-foot increments. And I think it's a fourteen-foot bar or something. "Yeah," he said, "I've got a bar setting right here that came out of a saloon in Home, Kansas." And so we negotiated through the purchasing folks, and -- and we bought that bar. And we said, "We want it restored to look like the bar in the Mascot Saloon, not like the bar that came out of the Brunswick Company in Chicago." Wasn't Kansas City, it was Chicago. Anyway, he said, "Yeah," he said, "I've got the bar, the back bar, the whole thing." So he restored that to look as a used bar and loaded it in the back of a Ryder rental truck, put 'em on the ferry, came into Skagway. As it happened, we weren't as far with the restoration as we wanted to be because he wanted to install the bar. But we unloaded it into a secure, dry storage, and our guys put it in. But he was pretty fascinated with all that we had done.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[02:11:18]CLAY ALDERSON: And then, I don't know if Joe ever came up and saw his bar, but anyway, that was one that I personally got involved with, and it just happened to talk to the right people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: And Mr. Reichert had his bar back. It just wasn't the same one.

[02:11:40]KAREN BREWSTER: I'm surprised that that bar wasn't somewhere else in Skagway.

CLAY ALDERSON: I am, too, 'cause we thought that there was a bar with a back bar in the Pack Train, and it wasn't the same one.

KAREN BREWSTER: Maybe it got used as firewood?

CLAY ALDERSON: But at the end of the --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Or it went to some other town.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Things moved around.

[02:11:58]CLAY ALDERSON: At the end of the bar, there was a cigar case, and there was a lever on the back of the cigar case. And if you wanted a cigar, you'd come up and the bartender would pull this lever down, and the big glass door would open up, and you could reach in and select the cigar you wanted. And uh, I was talking to Jim Hamilton, and he said, "Yeah," he said, "I've got a case like that. It's upstairs in the Richter Building." And we went up there, and it has to be the exact same cigar case.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

CLAY ALDERSON: It has to be, 'cause there wouldn't be two of 'em in Skagway, Alaska, and then that one wouldn'ta gone anywhere. And we bought it from him for, not an exhorbitant amount. Fair price. [02:12:47]And then Bill Brown from Harpers Ferry, the historic furnishings guy who at that time was the most incredible craftsman I ever saw, and he got cigar boxes of brands of cigars that would have been available in 1898.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

CLAY ALDERSON: And those cigars -- and he had false cigars made, so that was one of the things in the Mascot.

[02:13:19]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And, of course, the Ton of Goods exhibit.

CLAY ALDERSON: The Ton of Goods exhibit --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Was great.

CLAY ALDERSON: Ah, the one regret that I had with the Ton of Goods exhibit is, we arranged it in the room with the guy looking south, and he shoulda been looking north. I thought --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Every time he went in the room, he'd say, "Uh, we gotta turn that around."

CLAY ALDERSON: And I thought, how in the world could we just take away those railings and turn it around and, uh -- [02:13:54]Another thing I got involved with personally at the Mascot -- the exhibit design folks from Harpers Ferry wanted to build a glass wall and separate the bar exhibit from the rest of the room. And I said, "I don't want a glass wall. I want something different." So we compromised by building a nice, oak railing with nice spindles and everything. And they said, "You know, people will hop over that or -- " They couldn't reach in and reach anything. So I said, "How about a security

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system?" You can build a security curtain that is electronic, and if anybody breaks that, it'll set off an alarm. And they said, "Where can you get something like that?"

[02:14:48]I don't know how it was that I got acquainted with Tony Fortunato at the Denver Mint.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And Tony was their security guy. And he designed -- he came up to Skagway on his own nickel, and he came up to Skagway and designed that security system, where if you just penetrated that area, it would set off an alarm. Now nobody would probably respond to it --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's what I'm thinking, what's --

CLAY ALDERSON: But at least it would let the perpetrator know that they were entering a secure area. And never have lost a thing out of that, that I know of. And Tony also said, "You know," he said, "you got all these balance beam scales that people would weigh out their gold in. How about a scale that you can use as an exhibit?" And I said, "What are you talking about there, Tony?" And he said, "We have at the mint, a balance beam scale that's six feet tall, and we want to get rid of it. And we'll ship it up here at no cost to you." And I said, "Ship it up." [02:16:03]And we got that great big balance beam scale. And we used it there in the Ton of Goods room for a few years, but it didn't really contribute like I hoped it might. And consequently, there was a guy opening what we called the "dead animal museum." And he was a guy from Fairbanks, had made a lot of money in banking and insurance, I think, and he decided that he was going to come to Skagway and build this big building and put in a museum and charge a lot of money and get richer. And I ended up giving that scale to him. But at least we got rid of it. And I think it's probably still over in his locked up building.

KAREN BREWSTER: So his museum never took off?

CLAY ALDERSON: His museum -- he and his wife -- it was more a museum to he and his wife and family. You know, it's got exhibits of his children's baby shoes. And her -- big wall of her insurance certificates, and things like that. And stuff that was totally inappropriate to the gold rush.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: But he liked it. And then, he got a great big loud speaker amplifier and put it up in the upper part of that and blared loud music all day long. And our staff that we had over at the Moore House, just it blew them right out of the place. And I went over and talked to him, and I got him to turn it down, but --

KAREN BREWSTER: I would think the city would've had an ordinance about that.

CLAY ALDERSON: I think the city finally did take action, 'cause it was only there for a month or so. So that was interesting.

[02:17:52]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I've a question that -- you know, Karl has referred to this, quote, "park crisis." And it was the mid-'90's, so you must've been superintendent?

CLAY ALDERSON: I'da been there. I don't know what Karl --

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, he was talking about that there was a -- maybe it was right at the end of your tenure, but that there were issues with the management team and leadership and getting along and conflict or something, and that the -- a team came in and did an evaluation and came up with recommendations.

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, that was --

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KAREN BREWSTER: And there was a big retreat that people went on.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. That kinda sounds like that, doesn't it?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

[02:18:33]KAREN BREWSTER: Is that something you're comfortable talking about?

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, it was part of the evolving natural resources program. And we hired this guy, and he started out pretty good. We got him doing things for the first year. Got into the second year, and I started getting phone calls from every place this guy went. We'd send him on details and things. Well, he didn't show up. Well, all he did was brought his fishing line, and he fished all day. Uh, he spent his time -- went to Sitka, and he was -- [02:19:14]Officially, he was the natural history person for both Klondike and Sitka. But he went down to Sitka, and he said he needed to be down there for a week, and I said, fine. So they had somebody got lost down there, and they organized a search. And he not only volunteered to join the search, but to be kinda the ramrod of it. And he was totally unqualified for that. Uh, he went someplace and bought a bunch of fish and was trying to sell fish to restaurants in town. He went to Whitehorse and admitted himself to the hospital, and then showed up with a shotgun and threatened to blast his way out of there. And this was within like, three days, all these things happened. [02:20:09]And I called the personnel folks in region, and I said, "We got a guy that's -- there's something going on." And as it is with things like that, you can't really ask him, "Is there something the matter? Are you having a bad day?" 'Cause I tried that. And, "Oh no, everything's fine." And he would go to training and not show up and went to Glacier Bay and went over there with his fishing pole and his waders, and never went to the meetings he was supposed to go to. [02:20:49]So we got a psychiatrist from Anchorage that was on contract with the Park Service, and he came down and spent some time. He said, "You know, the guy really needs help." Well, by that time, he had filed a complaint against me that I was harassing him, threatened to kill him, and it was handled through the BLM. And so, this lady from BLM wanted me to meet with her, and I told her all these things that were going on. And she said, "You know, after talking to him, I thought when you came in my office, you'd be carrying a pitchfork and have horns." I said, "No. It's not like that." [02:21:47]And then she came down and interviewed people in the park. The seasonal employees had an evacuation plan at their housing in case he showed up in an agitated state. And I learned that he had family in the East. Was able to contact his sister, and I said, "You know, I'd like to talk to you about your brother." She said, "He always was a mean little shit." And that's -- and so he had a big family. He had a lot of brothers and sisters, and one of his brothers was working overseas with some kind of a government program, and he was scheduled to come back to the states, and she said, "Well, when he comes back, we're gonna send him up there and have him kind of take control." Well, he came back and he said, "I don't want to have anything to do with that gumball." [02:22:48]And so we, through our personnel officer in the region and uh -- we offered him a disability retirement. And he never would admit that there was anything the matter with him, but he had real serious problems. And we -- we worked with him in a pretty positive way to help him make a good decision. [02:23:23]And as it worked out, he and his family left and went to Idaho Falls. And we, on a couple of occasions, got phone calls from somebody saying, "Well, I'm planning on hiring this person" -- as a volunteer teacher was one of 'em. "And I just wanted to know what kind of a person they were?"

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Well, what he was trying to do was get us to say something that he could file a claim against. And we quit hearing from him.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[02:23:58]CLAY ALDERSON: So I don't -- I don't know what happened to him. But anyway, he got his disability retirement. His family was taken care of, and we did what we could. And that probably was the most disruptive thing that I know of that took place.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I think that probably is what they were talking about. And he did a lot of damage to the natural resource program. Destroyed data, and didn't continue --

CLAY ALDERSON: And, of course, he was particularly aggressive towards Claudia because she had been the natural resources program.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: People spoke highly of my work, and it just drove him crazy.

[02:24:35]CLAY ALDERSON: And he said, well, we didn't like him because Claudia didn't get the job that he got.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And she wasn't even a candidate. She wasn't even qualified to apply. And so anyway, he manufactured a lot of things.

[02:24:50]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I don't know if that's -- if Karl was talking about something with the different members of the management team and how people got along or didn't get along, and the -- maybe that's what led to creation of that resources position.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah, it's possible. But the next chapter was the Thibedeau (means Thibault) era.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, the Thibedeau (means Thibault) --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: The shift of supervision for people like Karl who'd supervised themselves.

[02:25:13]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Yeah. Theresa Thibedeau (means Thibault) was the -- hired as the first head of resources, so she oversaw both cultural and natural?

CLAY ALDERSON: Over cultural and natural, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And maybe that came out of the --

CLAY ALDERSON: I think she came from another agency, maybe.

KAREN BREWSTER: Maybe that's what came out of that period?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes. 'Cause the natural resource program had hard times recovering, so that's why they brought Kyle Joly back, and brought me back, and we worked out a survival plan until they could work something out that we would try to rescue any data we could.

CLAY ALDERSON: And then we got Elaine, and Elaine just got her feet on her ground and ran into Thibedeau (means Thibault).

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: That was her demise. Then I think they got some pretty good people after that.

[02:25:56]KAREN BREWSTER: But before that, the resources programs, cultural and natural, were under the chief ranger person?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Which was Jay at one point?

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CLAY ALDERSON: Jay, and then --  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Bruce Reed.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Bruce.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And then Reed McCluskey.  
KAREN BREWSTER: McCluskey. But then, as I say, then there was a shift. You said, that didn't Reed McCluskey become chief of admin?  
CLAY ALDERSON: That happened after I left.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And that's what I was wondering, if that was the result of, um -- 'cause I think chief of maintenance left, and a bunch of people.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Didn't they all leave? Or that was after you?  
CLAY ALDERSON: Well, John retired.  
[02:26:30]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Clay felt it was the end of an era.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: The whole restoration era ended.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, John retired after I left.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And they got someone eventually. Johnny, I think his name was. He was a great chief of maintenance.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Wasn't his name Johnny?  
CLAY ALDERSON: Johnny, yeah. He came from Denali, and he was really good on historic restoration. And --  
[02:26:56]KAREN BREWSTER: So while you were there, Jay was the chief ranger? And then Bruce?  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And then Bruce.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Initially. And then Bruce Reed was there for several years, and then Reed McCluskey  
KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.  
CLAY ALDERSON: -- had just -- I think he'd only been there a year or two.  
KAREN BREWSTER: And then you had a chief of admin at the time?  
CLAY ALDERSON: Chief of admin. Admin was being handled mostly by a girl who had been a seasonal ranger with a lot of potential. Amy Caldwell. And she took on the administrative part, and then she had an opportunity to transfer out as an administrative officer, and eventually became a superintendent. So -- But anyway, she left shortly after I got there, I think within six months or so, and we hired a lady -- I think she was with the military up around Fairbanks, or some little outpost up there. And I think she was the administrative person there, and she needed a change of venue. And so we brought her down, and she handled the administration pretty well until it started becoming a little more complex, and we did some changing. Did she retire? Or --  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Who?  
CLAY ALDERSON: Clydene.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Clydene.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: She retired, yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, she retired and still lives in Skagway. We see her every now and then when we go to town. But she was at a point in her career where she could retire, and she was finding it difficult, and we were finding it -- that she wasn't necessarily keeping up. Anyway, nice person. [02:28:53] And then we hired a woman from the Park Service in Hawaii, and she got here just before I left. And she was the administrative person, and she was a very strong management type. She filled in as acting superintendent quite a little bit, I think, and she had quite a strong park background.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And she stayed for, I don't know, two or three years after I left. [02:29:26] And then when she left, they did a little reassigning, and that's when Reed became the administrative person, and Tim Steidel became the chief ranger.

[02:29:38] KAREN BREWSTER: Do you know why they separated some of those functions from the chief ranger when they did? Not -- well, the resources one, I guess, is the --

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, I think it was to make a place for Thibedeau (means Thibault).

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: Maybe. [02:29:54] And they probably felt that they needed that split off so that the chief ranger didn't have that responsibility and could concentrate on more things that were more germane to being the chief ranger.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Enforcement.

CLAY ALDERSON: 'Cause one of the big things was the leaseback program was under the chief ranger.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And that shoulda been under administration and became a big part of Reed's workload, once he took over administration.

[02:30:30] KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And then there was a chief of maintenance while you -- when you were there?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: But there was no cult -- resources chief and no interp chief?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yes. Betsy Duncan Clark was the chief of interpretation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, she was. Right. Right. Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: And she left before I did. She went down to Great Basin. And we hired a fellow from --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: David Eslinger from BLM.

CLAY ALDERSON: From BLM.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.

[02:30:55] CLAY ALDERSON: And he was there for a couple of years. And I guess we hired Cathy Cook before I left, too.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Now, Cathy Cook --

CLAY ALDERSON: Cathy Cook.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: She was the best ever.

CLAY ALDERSON: She also later became a superintendent.

KAREN BREWSTER: And she was interp?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: She was the chief of interpretation. She came from the California coast, Crescent City.

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CLAUDIA ALDERSON: She went there because that's where we visited her.

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, that's right. She went there.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: On our way to Mongolia. She was from Chicago?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, originally from Chicago. Excellent. Bruce Reed used to say, looking back, he said, "I'm not sure if the best hire I ever made was Cathy Cook or Debbie Sanders." And I got news for him. The best hire he ever made was Karl Gurcke.

[02:31:34]KAREN BREWSTER: So he's the one who permanently hired Karl?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. We hired Karl within a few months of my arrival, but -- and I guess Bruce didn't really hire Karl. But Jay and I did.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah, I was going to say Jay. That was Jay's doing.

CLAY ALDERSON: Jay. Jay knew him from before because he worked --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. He was a seasonal?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah. And Debbie Sanders was the finest curator I have ever worked with.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. I didn't realize at the time, but I had known Debbie from Zion National Park when I was at Cedar Breaks. She was a -- her husband was a law enforcement ranger, and she worked as a dispatcher.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I didn't -- that was a big enough park, I didn't know everybody. We didn't spend that much time down there, so anyways.

[02:32:27]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. So when you were superintendent, your sort of management leadership team worked all right together, or were there issues? Or how did that all work out?

CLAY ALDERSON: The management team?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: We got along pretty well. Course, Jay and I were pretty -- pretty close, and still are. I have lunch with him. He lives in Hawaii now, and also has a place in Wasilla.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: So if I happen to be here at a time when he is in town, why we usually get together for lunch, along with Gene Irvine, who was the chief of interpretation at Klondike Gold Rush before Betsy Duncan Clark.

KAREN BREWSTER: Didn't he work for Sitka?

CLAY ALDERSON: He worked at Sitka, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. But he was -- I don't know if he was duty-stationed in Skagway, or if he was a shared responsibility, but, anyway, we had --

KAREN BREWSTER: Because I think he had something to do with the Russian mission -- Bishop's house.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, the Russian Bishop's house, yeah. He sure did.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: But by that time, Gene was with BLM, but he really wanted to get back to the Park Service.

[02:33:42]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you've had a long career with the Park Service. Didn't you say you started in '59 as a seasonal?

CLAY ALDERSON: '59 as a seasonal.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that's forty-some years.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. '59 to '65, and then I was out of the Park Service 'til '72. Much of that time was spent in the state park system in Kansas.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[02:34:04]CLAY ALDERSON: But I also spent three long years as a department manager for Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company in an assembly plant.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was going to say, those years, I was wondering if you were in the military, but you didn't --

CLAY ALDERSON: No. I -- I just had worked seasonal and tried everything I could to get permanent with the Park Service and couldn't. So I went back to Kansas, and we just decided that if education was what I had to have, get a job and go to school. And I was able to get a job at the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company plant, and I was repairing damaged tires that would come off the assembly line. I had a little buffer and I'd buff little blemishes out of 'em. Paint 'em with some stuff. [02:35:02]Then one day I was at my assigned duties, and some guy walked by, and he was a kid I knew from college. And he was in quality control. And he said, "You know, you graduated, didn't you?" And I said, "Oh yeah." And he said, "Well, you shouldn't be on the line. You should be in management." And he said, "You ought to go talk to --" I forget what his name was. I was working nights, and he said, "Just stay over, uh, and after eight o'clock, why those guys will be in the office upstairs, and you can go talk to this guy." So I went and talked to him, and it turned out that he was a close friend of my brother, who lived in Topeka, or had lived in Topeka. [02:35:49]And, "Oh yeah," he said. "I know who you are." And he said, "Yeah. We'll put you on, what they called The Squad." And he said, "with The Squad, you start at the back of the plant, where the rubber comes in off the train cars, and spend several months working in every division until you are at the front of the plant where the finished product goes out the door." And he said, then after that, it's about a three-year program. I said, "Sign me up." [02:36:20]Well, I was also going to Washburn University, taking a course in biology -- bot -- bot -- biology, I guess. Anyway, I was going to school in the daytime, so when I went on The Squad, I worked during the day, and I had to quit going to school.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: So I thought, well, you know, Goodyear's not too bad a place to work. I was making some money. [02:36:43]So I gave up my degree, or my second degree idea, and went to work for Goodyear. And so, they said, "Well. We -- " It's getting towards summer. We want summer vacation or relief people. We need somebody in the curing, where they actually cure the tires, so we're going to labor-train you there. And I had labor-trained there for about two weeks, and I came in one Sunday night for night shift, and they said, "Well, your trainer fell off a catwalk yesterday, and he's not able to work for several months, so you're in charge of the department for -- until Duffy gets back." And so I ran that, and worked in that same -- and there was no -- I didn't get to do the whole thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, so you learned management by fire, kind of. Or by rubber.

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CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Very much.

[02:37:44]KAREN BREWSTER: So your college degree is in what?

CLAY ALDERSON: English.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So he's a communicator.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, so learned communications.

CLAY ALDERSON: Liberal arts.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Awesome.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: And so I --

[02:37:58]KAREN BREWSTER: But so, yeah, I mean, you've stayed in the Park Service for your whole career. Long time, and why did you --

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, then -- then I was working at Goodyear, and I said, "I've got to do something to get outdoors." And we saw an article in the Topeka Daily Capital that said that they were forming a National Campers and Hikers chapter in Topeka, so we went to the meeting, and, oh, I told them about all my derring-do of working in the parks. And they thought I was next to Paul Bunyan or Daniel Boone. [02:38:33]And the first time we went on a campout, I had a big ol' tent, and we were in there. And it rained, and the wind blew, and my wife said, "Why don't we just throw all of this stuff in the back of the car?" And her mother lived just down the road. "We'll go down and stay at my mother's." And I said, "After I told these people what a great hiker and camper I am, I wouldn't leave. They'd laugh me out of the place." The next morning we got up, we were the only ones left in the campground. I mean, that place was a vast wasteland. So we went over to her mother's and had breakfast with a bunch of wet stuff. Anyway.

[02:39:17]KAREN BREWSTER: But anyway, the point I'm getting to is, why did you decide to stay with the Park Service for so long and make that your career?

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, I just liked that kind of work. It was something that -- I sure knew that I wasn't cut out for Goodyear. And I had liked my seasonal work. And it was through this Campers and Hikers group -- they had a speaker come to one of their meetings who talk -- kept talking about the Kansas Park Authority and the parks that they were establishing. So I asked him, I said, "Where is this Park Authority?" And he gave me the address of where their offices were. And I went in and talked to the director of the Kansas Park Authority. Again, told him what a great camper and hiker I was. And he said, "Boy." He said, "You are just what we're looking for. We got two parks coming open." But, he said, "In order to get eligible, you have to establish an eligibility with the state personnel, and then when we have a vacancy, we ask for the top three names, and we keep going through until we get -- and we've got over a hundred names on the eligible register, and they aren't planning on opening that register again for the foreseeable future." [02:40:42]I said, "Ok." I said, "I've got a good job. I'll just come in and see ya every now and then." I think I went in about once a week for the next year. And he called me up one day, and he said, "Well, I called for the register because we were going to fill the job at Perry State Park," and he said, "I -- I told 'em that there was nobody on the register that met the qualifications, and asked them to reissue the test. Come in tomorrow, and I'll give you the stuff to study for the test." So I took the test, and

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got the job at Perry State Park. So left Goodyear, got about a fifty percent cut in pay from Goodyear to the state.

[02:41:23]KAREN BREWSTER: And as you said about Klondike, the fact that you integrated into the community sounds like that made a difference.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, you know, you join the Volunteer Fire Department, you go to church, you get involved with the school.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Clean-up in the spring.

CLAY ALDERSON: Do what?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: The spring clean-up.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, the Skagway spring clean-up. You cook enough sourdough, you make a lot of friends.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[02:41:53]CLAY ALDERSON: So people in Skagway were probably more open and welcoming than they get credit for. 'Cause they were really quite nice.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Well, and by the time you were there, the park had been there for ten years, so they were maybe adjusting to the fact that, ok, the park's here.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Yeah.

[02:42:16]KAREN BREWSTER: And I could see that somebody who integrates into the community and becomes friends and their neighbor, they're going to be more receptive to than somebody who's there for two years and doesn't --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And whose son is a basketball star.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: The park was very adamant that I buy a house and live on the local economy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: I -- when I first got there, I got there in September, and there wasn't much available. So there was a Park Service house that we had purchased that some seasonals had lived in, and they had just moved out. So Tim and I moved into that house, and the regional director was not very happy with me for doing that. And I said, "Look, I am actively looking for a place, and I didn't think you wanted me to live in a motel for six months 'til I can find a place."

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And as it was, the city manager got fired, and I went over to wish him well, and he said, "You don't want to buy a house, do you?" And I said, "Yeah. How much do you want?" \$35,000. And I bought a house for \$35,000.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. And then that's that house that's in the Martin Itjen book?

CLAY ALDERSON: That's the house.

KAREN BREWSTER: That was the customs guy's house at some point?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Yeah, it was a pretty nice little house, and we got this Jeff Mull to move in and he just built it around us. I'd go home at night, and I'd demolish something, and the next day, he'd start in, putting it back together.

[02:43:43]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and, you know, certainly nowadays housing for park personnel is challenging in Skagway.

CLAY ALDERSON: It is. It really is.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it was even when you started?

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CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. The Peniel Mission helped some, but they've got --  
KAREN BREWSTER: That's for seasonal.  
CLAY ALDERSON: They've got a lot of seasonal employees.  
KAREN BREWSTER: It doesn't help for year-round.  
CLAY ALDERSON: No, it doesn't help for permanent employees. And the Park Service wants more and more for people to live on the local economy.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
CLAY ALDERSON: I think if the park would've provided me housing, I would've not gotten along as well in the community as what I might have.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, so it -- you know, you just do things that you hope are common sense, and helping to ingrain your way into how the locals deal with things.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Mm-mm. [02:44:39]Well, and I was thinking, too, on those issues where maybe you were on another -- different side than some of the locals 'cause you were the Park Service, if they're your neighbor, or you're sitting next to them at the basketball game, do you think that changes -- ? They might disagree with you, but --  
CLAY ALDERSON: Well, that was certainly the way it was in North Dakota. I remember a lady came after church one Sunday, and we were talking, and I said, "Oh, yeah." I said, "I'm the new superintendent of the park." And she said, "Oh. That damn park." She said, "Well, you look all right to me. I'll hate you tomorrow." Violet Krieger.  
[02:45:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and that's what I was thinking, is that they might disagree with you on the issue, and you go to public meetings, and you debate and argue, and maybe they're sort of disgruntled for awhile, but then, come the next season, they're -- you're -- you're on the same side for the basketball game, or something.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Yeah.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They would say that we don't like the government, but you guys are great.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That was really exactly what they would say.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and it sounds like both of you --  
CLAY ALDERSON: Well, and that was that way at Goodyear. I had a guy tell me, I don't usually like supervisors, but you're all right. You're not an asshole.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's good. [02:46:01]Well, and it does sound both of you, you know, you participated in the community. And you made it your home.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.  
KAREN BREWSTER: You didn't just go for two years and leave.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Right.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And his wife, too. She --  
CLAY ALDERSON: She's a very good community person.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Really made an effort to socialize and joined all the groups. She's remembered very fondly.  
[02:46:19]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, and that's what you have to do in a small town.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.  
KAREN BREWSTER: But it also sounds to me, Clay, in getting to know you a little bit, just your style and personality, that you would be a good manager.

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, I tried.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I had good employees working for me.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, as you say, Claudia, a good communicator.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: He was very good to his employees. He really did -- he even helped me collect plants. I mean, he did it with everybody, every program. To go and work with 'em, and afterward they'd say, "Well, we'll fix it." 'Cause he didn't pretend to know more about what they were doing than they did. He just wanted to try.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, you didn't just sit --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Be part of what they were doing.

KAREN BREWSTER: He didn't just sit in the office.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: No. Not at all.

[02:47:09]CLAY ALDERSON: But when it comes down to it, you do have to make decisions every now and then.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: You don't always make the decision that everybody wants, and you don't always make the right decision.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: Say, well. We'll go this way for awhile, and if this doesn't work, we'll make another decision.

KAREN BREWSTER: But as you say, you have to --

CLAY ALDERSON: But I will make the decision.

KAREN BREWSTER: You have to be willing to make the decision, and take responsibility for that decision?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And then admit, "Ok, that didn't work. I guess I shouldn't have done that, but we've got to fix it and move forward."

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's the taking responsibility.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I maybe didn't make the right decision. I'm willing to re-think it.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Instead of just thinking --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I think you were right after all.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Instead of, I'm right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Too bad.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Somebody else's fault.

CLAY ALDERSON: I try not to do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: But, uh.

[02:47:59]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I did have a quick question, Claudia, for you. Yesterday we talked a little about your working for Alaska Geographic for awhile. Can you talk

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about how that -- that transition from Park Service to that, and how that might have been a different work situation? What it was like working for them.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes, as I say, I have done that before.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Even had an era when I was doing both at the same time, working part time for Colorado National Monument, part time for their ANHA. And I quite like that opportunity to facilitate things the park was doing. And since I had been included in all the interpretive program training, I was already very comfortable with that group and was very receptive to any suggestions they had, so I found that I was able to work in the two worlds together very well.

[02:48:49]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And what were some of the differences in terms of working for Alaska Geographic and ANHA than the park?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, working with Alaska Geographic was a whole different group of people. And they shared a lot of the same values I had, but also had a different initiative to do a lot of sales and a lot of publishing. And so it just was a different agenda, a different group of people.

[02:49:22]KAREN BREWSTER: And you could handle the sales and that agenda?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes. I'm quite comfortable selling things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I like money. So that was great. And I had a very clear vision of where the money was going, and very strong backing that we wouldn't be selling things that weren't really serving the parks.

[02:49:41]KAREN BREWSTER: Where does the money go? Does it go back into their publications?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Some. But some is available to the parks. So it was a very nice arrangement, and it's kind of like other areas where they have a large park someplace and then a lot of small ones around it, that there was money available from Denali for other small groups to do some publishing if they wanted. They would either loan or put it forward so that it was a very nice family of groups. [02:50:11]And we, being new and also being much smaller, initially, than the other programs, benefited from their advice. When we went to the training day, we were mentored by the old-timers who'd been doing Alaska publications for decades. And so, it actually was a very comfortable role for me. I felt I was adding something to the Klondike -- to the Park Service, by going out there, learning what they had to offer, and bringing back that opportunity for the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: So the money made from the ANHA sales, did it go back into their bookstore there in Skagway, or you said some goes to the Park Service?

CLAY ALDERSON: It went into a central fund, didn't it?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, there was some that went to the park, and so the park had the choice in using some of it.

[02:50:48]CLAY ALDERSON: I know, as a superintendent and manager, I sometimes would need something, and they had a line item called "Aid to Superintendent." And like when we had these big celebrations, I could tap that money if I wanted to host a dinner or something. If I wanted to have a brochure printed or -- there was Aid to Superintendent money that really helped out the superintendent and others.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [02:51:26]But the ANHA money to a park, who would make the decision on how that would get spent? Was it the superintendents?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I can't remember. I believe that the superintendents did. So I think the superintendents could put together an agenda. They'd like a book. They'd like --

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. I know you would submit --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Equipment for the walking tour.

CLAY ALDERSON: -- lists of books you wanted to add to the --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Now, let me think about this a minute.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I had the final say on that.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah. There was a certain amount of money, as I remember, that the park had available to them. And then there was a general fund so that they could put up more money than you had to help you launch particularly something that you would be selling.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So they would use part of the general fund to invest in all of the operations, but a certain amount went directly as a discretionary fund.

KAREN BREWSTER: To the park.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: To the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that the park could use either to publish something or for whatever?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah, for any --

[02:52:26]CLAY ALDERSON: That's how we got money for Days of Adventure, Dreams of Gold.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah. And that's one because it was before we started, they advanced the money from ANHA before we had worked. So I can't remember exactly how the formula works, but there is some that goes to the park entirely for you to use, and other that went and was available as a general fund for everybody to apply for.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I think they made sure there was some immediate returns, discretionary.

[02:52:54]KAREN BREWSTER: And then you ended your tenure there because you guys went to Mongolia?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you did not go back and work for ANHA again?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: No. No. You know, we went to Washington and gave programs, and then, of course, Clay was detailed other places, and I always volunteered wherever we went, so -- And they brought someone good in.

CLAY ALDERSON: You were really there through some transitions.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: With the organizations, from Frankie Barker to Charlie Money.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: To Alaska Geographic, which I would think would've put a little different management --

[02:53:30]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: ANHA had had someone of the traditional school running it for decades. She was wonderful.

KAREN BREWSTER: What's considered the traditional school? What do you mean?

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CLAUDIA ALDERSON: You come from Park Service roots. You let the individual organizations run their own operations. You facilitated the purchase of materials to sell in the store, but each park was very independent. And she came, actually, from the era where the Park Service essentially ran the cooperating associations and wrote their own books, and so they were required to separate themselves and become truly independent. And so she had ridden out that storm. [02:54:10]So when we initially considered signing up, it was to be that sort of loose, independent operation. But they brought in a manager from San Francisco who was pretty aggressive and sophisticated in his vision for Alaska. And so we were his first new park. [02:54:35]And also a very close association during the whole process when Clay was considering it, when he was working with the community. And gave very sound advice on how to deal with difficult situations. And so he had a vision of doing much more publishing and having a -- more of an internal control over all of the operations, and that was for ANHA was a hard change. Because Frankie had always been there, and they -- you know, everybody knew everyone. Jenny Wood. Everyone was in that family.

[02:55:11]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So who was the -- the first woman you mentioned? What was her name?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Frankie Barker.

CLAY ALDERSON: Barker. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then this new?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Is Charlie Money. So it was a great name. So he was very supportive and very involved in our complexities because it meant a whale of a lot to him, since no one had been able to get Klondike in to bring them on board. So he dealt a lot with me and with Clay. And so that's how we came on board.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then, that sort of centralizing -- ?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes, control.

KAREN BREWSTER: Of all of them.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: More training. He had some conflicts with some. Particularly the person that was the head of Denali had run a big operation on his own, and he didn't like someone coming in and telling him how to run it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That was probably the most developed program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They had almost run ANHA because they would loan employees and loan designers and so that was a tough time. But we were so far from them, that, you know, we were so new, that we just rode out the storm.

[02:56:13]KAREN BREWSTER: And the whole idea of ANHA is that because the Park Service can't sell things directly. Is that kind of the idea?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: Right. Um-hm. Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And they can't make profits.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: You know, so it's a very old idea. The first one was just a park ranger who would buy books in town, the chief naturalist, bring them to the park, sell them, and then he'd take the money to buy more books in town. And that really worked for a long

time that way. I can't remember if it was Grand Canyon, or Yosemite, I think it was. Anyway. And so as they became bigger and more sophisticated, it became very confusing whether it was private money or public, and, you know, it became part of the operation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[02:56:59]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So they had to set up their own board of directors and hire their own employees, and it was a good thing when it happened. So it was kind of -- we were doing it a little later in Alaska.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But essentially, that was the separation that was coming because Frankie had been, I think, the only employee, and she couldn't possibly go visit every place.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So she really trusted -- there was probably just an annual meeting, or maybe just an annual report, and trusted the individual parks to run on their own. And Charlie Money saw many opportunities if they would organize it better and centralize the direction and share opportunities more. And he did make a lot more money. And the Alaska Geographic transition came after my time.

[02:57:47]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And so, prior to that, they had been two separate organizations? Alaska Geographic --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes. Absolutely.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They published those wonderful magazines.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And they did the Milepost. And so, they were great publishers. Wonderful photography.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So they brought that ability. And I don't know how the two came together.

[02:58:08]KAREN BREWSTER: I didn't realize that they had joined together. And so I don't know why that happened. But that was after --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I don't either. After my time, and I was not involved in it at all. But there had been a lot of contracting with them. You know, they'd been working together.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: Is Alaska Geographic an off-shoot of National Geographic?

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: No.

CLAY ALDERSON: Or are they totally separate?

KAREN BREWSTER: It's its own thing.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It was -- it was really modeled after National Geographic, but National Geographic is kind of a family operation, completely separate, but a great idea.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And so Alaska Geographic already had the mission to publish --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: -- magnificent information on every corner of Alaska.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

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(Dog barks sharply)

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So it was a natural --

[02:58:49]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it does make sense to have them partnered, and there must be some reason why they did that.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah. I tried to do some research online when I was looking at this, and you raised that question. I had no idea what was happening, and I never found anything clear about how the change was made.

CLAY ALDERSON: But we noticed yesterday when we were going to lunch, we drove down Bragaw, and there's this huge building that says "Alaska Geographic Distribution Center." And I think it might be an old Sam's Department Store.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's their, like, warehouse.

CLAY ALDERSON: And that's a lot of square footage.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It could well be, 'cause they're a big operation.

KAREN BREWSTER: They are. They are.

(Dog still barking)

CLAY ALDERSON: And not only in park outlets, but -- want me to go talk to Nimblewit?

[02:59:35]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah. So it was a very easy transition for me because it's such a small park. I had worked with the interpreters.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They had told me exactly what they wanted. And I again continued working all the time at the desk, answering questions on the trail 'cause I had been there. Questions about publications.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, it does make sense to have somebody with the ANHA bookstore with all that park knowledge.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And now Betsy Duncan Clark is kinda doing the same thing.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Betsy Duncan Clark. She's the perfect person because she understands the park so thoroughly. So that's great. I'm delighted she's there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, and people are gonna come in and ask questions.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Um-hm. That's right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.

[03:00:15]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, while Clay is off dealing with the dogs.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, I've sort of gotten the sense from Clay about, you know, why he stayed in Skagway and liked it. What about you?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, first of all, I loved working with the natural resources there. It's an extraordinary place. And so, every time I was outside was a new discovery for me, and I found the opportunity to work from the beginning and to build and learn as I reported to them. And I, in time, had the help of those who had been able to cover a lot more territory, 'cause I really couldn't get around well enough to be every place that I wanted to be. And I had not really ever lived in a small town before and was surprised at how welcoming they were to me. So I enjoyed that. That's a new experience. I was so

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surprised at how many people knew me that I'd never met. I was new to that phenomenon because I'd always lived in big places.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So I stayed because I loved the work, and then because of Clay.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [03:01:26]And you guys met by both working for the Park Service at the same time? Is that kind of --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, yes. He saw me around the park, but since the hire had been such a last-minute, and I was gone in the field all the time --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: -- he would see me occasionally in the building, but I was rarely there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And then one time, we were standing in line together at the grocery store, and he said, "You know, I think I should know who you are." And introduced himself. And so we just -- and then the first year, I didn't really have time to come to meetings, but the second year -- and they hadn't expected to have me a second year. They thought they'd have someone, and I was not in line or interested in being in line to be the resource manager. [03:02:10]I started participating in all the staff meetings, and I was as bad as anyone, saying, why in hell do I have to -- on a sunny day, and the plants are blooming. And he said, "Because I want to know what you're doing, and I want everyone else to know." And then I was fascinated to hear all the other reports, and it really did build a sense of a team. And so then we shared after the meetings. So I found it a wonderful place to work. I would have continued indefinitely as the biotechnician if that had been the direction it was going, but I was very interested in seeing them getting a real natural resource manager to protect the resources.

[03:02:47]KAREN BREWSTER: So your biotech position went away once they did the natural -- because Elaine came in?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Well, the next person was Damian Sedney.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And he hired a biotech. But by then, I had a nepotism problem.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Ok.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So that was the next step. And so -- And Kyle Joly, I think, works with BLM now, but he was an awesome biologist.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So he often ended up having to be the bridge because they needed to get information from him, so he did that and came back to help hold the program together once Damian had gone.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Until they could get Elaine to come.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So he was a great replacement. I did have two SCA's working with me the second year.

KAREN BREWSTER: Student Conservation Association?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes. First one for the first half of the season, and then another one came in the fall to help me with putting together all the specimens, and that helped a great deal.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And --

[03:03:43]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and you were gonna say, you were seasonal at the beginning, but you did --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Became intermittent.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, but then you did stay for winters.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes, I often volunteered with Debbie Sanders because, of course, I'd be out all season collecting plants. I collected 500 plants, I think. So then you have them smashed in a piece of newspaper, and the next stage is to --

KAREN BREWSTER: You have to process them.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes, and you have to identify them before you mount them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And so, without a reference library, the Forest Service invited me down to the herbarium in Sitka, and I worked with those plants as long as I could. And I discovered that this study had collected all these plants in the park and had never gotten around to giving them a set.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So I started pulling out everything that came from Klondike, and I said, "You know, they don't have any of those plants." And so she gave them all to us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Nice.

[03:04:35]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So they were able to add several hundred plants from this study, and then several hundred from mine. And Debbie (Sanders) and Debbie (Boettcher) -- Debbie was my first volunteer -- did a lot of the mounting after we had sent them to Carolyn (Parker at University of Alaska Museum of the North) to process, and then one of the SCA's and I went up there to work in the herbarium, identifying things. Then there was another whole winter of getting them mounted and entered into their computer system. And it's a gorgeous collection now, because they did a beautiful job. Such care, mounting them.

[03:05:09]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I asked Clay about, you know, what's something he was most proud of, or an accomplishment, and sounds to me like that collection and your lichen --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah. Those were really significant. But I still think the most important thing was entering that little quote about being the center for plant diversity for Alaska into the sense in the community of who they were, and also the park. That comes up again and again in these very rigid scientific studies, that that's what they see there. So those, I'd say, are the three most lasting and most important things. [03:05:49]And the thing with the plant collection is that it's permanent. Once you have it properly mounted and curated, which Debbie does, then anyone can come on and build on that. They can trust it because Carolyn said that's what it is. They have all the GPS coordinates and site description. And all parts of the plant are there. So that's a safe reference. And then they can go from there to the areas. They can see where I didn't go. They can see the families that are unrepresented in my work, and I think, you just keep building that over time. Any

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time they get the opportunity like they did for two summers to have lichen specialists come in. I don't know where that money came from, but those pockets are always there. And to put together that huge lichen collection. I've never heard of one quite that nice.

[03:06:39]KAREN BREWSTER: What about any things you wished you had been able to do, whether -- whether --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Be everywhere. Do more.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then what about at ANHA?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: ANHA. I think I could have done a better job of keeping in touch with the community. I didn't know people well enough to go and talk to them about it. So that ended up being Clay. All the issues always went to his -- his office.

CLAY ALDERSON: And then I'd come to you.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And he dealt with it. But I would've been happy to have made ANHA more of a part of the community. I just didn't do that very well. And for ANHA, it would be lovely to have more publications. Um, but we did do well getting some artists involved, which I thought was great to have them as part of the family.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And produce the postcards that we have. Instead of being photos, are of the artwork that we did have.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, nice.

[03:07:38]CLAY ALDERSON: Did we do an artist-in-the-park program?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, you did?

CLAY ALDERSON: I was thinking we did.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And there was the photographer in the park, yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's the kind of thing that ANHA money traditionally goes into.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And I was pretty early in the cycle. We were taking instead of giving.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But yes, ANHA was often involved in all the parks and any artwork.

CLAY ALDERSON: I think ANHA is different now under the auspices of Alaska Geographic maybe.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And we don't know if it's better or worse.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: We're totally oblivious. But having been around the system, I went to a lot of national training when I was in Colorado during that era of weaning ourselves from the Park Service just running it and making all the decisions, and there were some sticky times, but for the most part, people were encouraged to stay true to the course of being a part of the Park Service message, supporting it, rather than creating one of our own. So. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [03:08:42]Well, we've talked a long time. Well, you've talked a long time. Are there other things you wanted to talk about? You guys, I gave you questions in advance, and you did your research. Are there other things we have missed?

CLAY ALDERSON: I -- I looked through this last night, and I think that we've covered pretty much, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, they were general guidelines, not that we have to do everything.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, but -- but -- but I made some notes on every one. Oh, here's -- did the -- about relationship between the park and the City of Skagway, I made a little note. We took turns being the bad guy. Sometimes it was the school, sometimes it was Customs and Immigration. Sometimes it was White Pass. But sometimes it was the Park Service, and we, you know, we had something going. But, seemed like always somebody was in the community doghouse.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, that's where the Moore property, maybe, was the one the Park Service was in the doghouse on.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. We had a little controversy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was there another one?

[03:09:51]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: What about the ATV's at Dyea? Did we get involved in that?

CLAY ALDERSON: No, that was a single issue.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: What about the, um, model airplanes?

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh! Gee.

KAREN BREWSTER: Flying model airplanes out in Dyea?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Out in Dyea Flats. For years, I don't know, maybe ten years, this model airplane club from Whitehorse came down on --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Victoria Day.

CLAY ALDERSON: Victoria Day. And they would camp out on Dyea Flats and fly their model airplanes. [03:10:25]And there were instances of them harassing wildlife, especially eagles, with their airplanes. And we did not allow anybody else to camp out there, so we had told 'em, yeah, you can camp out here this year, but why don't you just camp in the campground, which was just across the river. No, because we have big motor homes, and our wives like to sleep in, and if we had to drive over to the other side of the river, our wives wouldn't be able to sleep. And these guys just -- they were all from Whitehorse, and they just weren't interested in any kind of a compromise. [03:11:13]And we had kind of peacefully coexisted, like the turkey and the farmer, and I wasn't sure whether I was the turkey or the farmer some of the time. But I was gone on that weekend one year, and Bruce Reed was the chief ranger, and he went out and ran 'em out. Oh, they were wild!

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: International incident.

CLAY ALDERSON: And uh, they -- they wrote letters to everybody that they could find an address for, and I got a lot of flak out of that, but I just explained it. I said, "You know, we don't allow local people to camp out there. We don't have a campground out there, so no. We're not gonna let 'em camp out there." I had to take a little more of a stand than I had in the past, but -- and then I told Bruce, I said, "Don't run those people out again if they come back." But they have never ever come back again.

[03:12:14]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I saw their place right up by the golf course on the way into Whitehorse. It's a nice big, sort of, model light airplane club.

CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, yeah. Model airplanes. And it was mostly a family group, a father and son, that were the backbone of it. But we managed to offend them. And so that -- that was, you know, a short-lived problem.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, probably, a lot of them are short-lived problems, maybe?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, that's it. There's a -- what, a news cycle has about three days?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Or, you know, there's some new management issue, like you said, ATV's, you know, in the '70's weren't an issue, but by the '80's and '90's, maybe they became an issue for many --.

[03:12:57]CLAY ALDERSON: Right. We just had one landowner in Dyea and his daughter was of high school age, and she had an all-terrain vehicle. And I watched her ride that through Dyea, and it was really unsafe. And I told him, "You know, your daughter rides in the park, and I'm concerned that she's doing it in an unsafe manner." "Oh no, she knows how to ride one of those things." I said I'm just, as a father, telling you that she was doing things that she shouldn't've been doing. You know, she had made herself a little trail through the park, and we didn't complain about that. And she didn't kill herself.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's good.

CLAY ALDERSON: So everybody's happy.

[03:13:46]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, because, you know, in other places, like we were talking about Wrangell before, where the Park Service came in and now said, what you local people were doing, now that's park land. You can't do it. Like, ATV access or hunting in a place. So I don't know if those issues came up in Skagway where there was anything like that?

CLAY ALDERSON: A lot of it was addressed in the enabling legislation. If people hunted, they could still hunt. And as I say, we only owned seventeen percent of the land.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAY ALDERSON: And it's pretty hard to enforce some things.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That was quite a while ago. I think the world has adjusted to having a park there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It gives them a place to escape, too, when it gets crazy downtown.

CLAY ALDERSON: If we would've gone down there and made some iron-clad "you can," "thou shalt not" regulations, we'd still be fighting at the grass roots level. As it is, I think the park has kind of integrated. I know there's a lot of people that don't like the park being there, but maybe they don't like being as wealthy as they are either, because of the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[03:14:55]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And there are a lot of commercial operations that have to interact with the park.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, but are there any -- are there any outfitters or guides that -- do they use the trail?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. We had people that do float trips down the Taiya River.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, that's right.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um, I don't think we --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I don't know if the dog teams are on the park land.

CLAY ALDERSON: No, I think they helicopter over to a glacier.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: And they do dogsled rides on a glacier. Um --

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[03:15:22]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And the hiking guides don't usually go in the park, right?  
CLAY ALDERSON: No.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They go on other trails?  
KAREN BREWSTER: That's what I was thinking, are there -- are there outfitters or guides for the Chilkoot?  
CLAY ALDERSON: There are -- climbing. Now, there are people that do climbing on practice rocks up the Taiya Valley -- up the Skagway River Valley. I don't think they go into the park.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Buckwheat's company took people out hiking.  
CLAY ALDERSON: They took people up the White Pass, and they probably were in the park.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But not where anybody else was, so --  
CLAY ALDERSON: I don't know that we ever permitted.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And he was ethical. No.  
CLAY ALDERSON: They went up to Denver Glacier, and that's, I think, out of the park.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's right.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. [03:16:02]So anything else in your notes that we have -- I want to make sure that we cover everything that you guys had in mind.  
CLAY ALDERSON: We talked about --  
KAREN BREWSTER: You did such due diligence.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's us.  
KAREN BREWSTER: I want to make sure we get it all.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Klondike's important to us, and this is a chance, really, for closure for us.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, well, that's why I want to make sure that we talk about everything that you want to talk about, not just what Karl and I wanted to ask about.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.  
[03:16:32]CLAY ALDERSON: Well, we really covered what were the biggest needs of the park when I first got there, and to my estimation was sustaining the historic preservation program.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
CLAY ALDERSON: And then initiating a natural resources program.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.  
CLAY ALDERSON: And we accomplished both of those things.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right.  
[03:16:50]CLAY ALDERSON: Ah, the community looks to the Park Service for leadership on things like that lead clean-up. We had some expertise that we could make available. Uh, got criticized for too many jewelry stores, we covered that.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yep.  
[03:17:09]CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, the leaseback program, we accomplished getting a nice blend of National Park Service and private ownerships.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.  
[03:17:20]CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, talk about selecting the buildings that we were going to restore?  
KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: At the beginning, at the outset of the park, they established a period of historic significance from 1897 to 1911, and that was the time frame that, if a house or a building was not built within that time frame, it wasn't eligible for restoration.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [03:17:52]And the whole historic architecture program, and they had done a historic preservation plan and all that before you got there?

CLAY ALDERSON: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: That you based your decisions on?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yep. [03:18:07]Hm, relationship between the park and the city? It varied with who was on the council and what the issue was.

[03:18:17]KAREN BREWSTER: What about the traditional council?

CLAY ALDERSON: They didn't come into being until after we left.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: We sought, uh, Native American input into things through Si Dennis, uh, Si, Sr.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I would talk to him about things that we had, and Si was a very compassionate, very agreeable person.

KAREN BREWSTER: And he worked in maintenance?

CLAY ALDERSON: No, Si, Jr. did

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: His dad.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAY ALDERSON: Si, Jr. did. Si, Sr. --

KAREN BREWSTER: He didn't work for the park, he was just a local? Yeah, ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, he was a well-known and well thought of local elder.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: In the local Native community.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. [03:19:19]And then, of course, there's, you know, anything else you've thought of by doing all this prep and talking that aren't on my list. My list of questions is not the end-all, be-all.

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, our answers aren't, either.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I was going to say.

KAREN BREWSTER: That you probably thought -- brought back all kinds of other memories that I wouldn't even know to ask about.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Clay has much longer history than I do.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[03:19:52]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: You had a question about who I worked with, and I think I answered that, but it was really everybody in the park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah, you both, I think, answered that. I mean, we didn't really ask if there were particular people who were mentors to you or were particularly helpful. I mean, you've mentioned Jay Cable.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Karl for me, and as I say, Carolyn, Mary Stensvold, the botanist for Tongass, and the birders. I can't remember the people who were involved, but their whole bird program with the US Fish and Wildlife Service mentored us along.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And Linda Geiser with the lichens, and then everybody at Glacier Bay. In fact, Mary Beth Moss, who was their chief naturalist, natural resource person, invited me over for a session on learning how to be a manager.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: Hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And she sat me down for -- we talked for maybe three hours, or I listened, and she told me all about development of natural resource programs. It was a great session. So again, adopted by the neighbors.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[03:21:00]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So I would say the park gave me all the support I needed, but being new to Alaska, it was so nice having local experts who would help me.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So I could direct what I was doing more effectively.

CLAY ALDERSON: And that leads right into one of the questions. Can you talk about the relationship between the National Park Service and the state, the BLM, the Forest Service, during our stay?

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And it was always very cordial. We had periodic meetings, especially with the state. Since they owned all the land, why, I sat down with them and listened. We didn't do a whole lot with BLM. Did you do much with BLM on -- ?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: It may have been before your --

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. Yeah. But we did have that good relationship with the Forest Service that stemmed from that natural resources --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Absolutely.

CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, program.

[03:21:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I wonder about the state, as you say, since they own so much land. Were there ever issues or times where they said, we want to do something on our land that was in conflict with the park?

CLAY ALDERSON: Not while I was there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: They were pretty benign landlords.

[03:22:04]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And they did -- maybe it was earlier, a lot of some of the archeological survey work and things. Didn't -- weren't they involved in some of that? Maybe not?

CLAY ALDERSON: Not that I know of.

KAREN BREWSTER: Maybe not. Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: The archeological work.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: No, I think just historical. Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: They did that work in the Dyea Cemetery.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, maybe I'm thinking 'cause they had the trail.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's probably what I'm thinking of.

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CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So they had a historical message that they offered.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But they weren't doing the type of research the park did.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's probably -- Um-hm.

[03:22:38]CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, and the specific issues that we dealt with was the state was the ownership.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, and how did you resolve these things? My response, most weren't resolved.

KAREN BREWSTER: You had meetings, and you talked about it, and then --

CLAY ALDERSON: Yep. We didn't look for middle ground, and I think I gave this example yesterday, we looked for common ground. Agreed where we could agree. Where we couldn't agree, we just decided, well, we'll talk about that next year.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then there was a different player in the position?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yep.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

[03:23:22]CLAY ALDERSON: Local hire. We talked about that.

KAREN BREWSTER: We talked about that already. Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: Local hire. Uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I kinda got the impression that your superintendency really moved local hire forward.

CLAY ALDERSON: I think we had more opportunities because we were hiring more people. We got back under the more solid footing on the historic restoration.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[03:23:45]CLAY ALDERSON: But uh, increased efforts to document the history on the trail? I don't know. I think the natural history, there was definitely a great deal --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And your archeologists were still out there.

CLAY ALDERSON: And Karl -- Karl was --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Still digging away, still mapping.

CLAY ALDERSON: Would hike his way all the way up to the scales. I was amazed at how he could cover the miles, but he sure did.

[03:24:10]KAREN BREWSTER: So yeah, so that had started before your time, and you just continued that trail documentation work?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[03:24:22]CLAY ALDERSON: Talked a lot about the implementation of the permit system, and I don't see anything here that's new and revealing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: Development of the White Pass Unit, that's -- I put in here, money in the bank. It'll be there when we want it. The 18 -- 1989 review. Wanted more presence in Dyea. We covered that this morning.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And yeah, we accomplished that. Uh, international Klondike Park, we did that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Talked about that.

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[03:25:02]CLAY ALDERSON: Impacts of the park and the National Park Service on Skagway, we covered that from a lot of different angles. Uh, biggest accomplishments.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did that.

[03:25:17]CLAY ALDERSON: Uh, developed a balance of cultural and natural emphasis. Uh, hoped to accomplish.

[03:25:31]KAREN BREWSTER: Was there something you had hoped to do that you didn't achieve? We sort of covered that, I think.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Unless you have something else noted there.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. I put down here in my notes to acquire some of that land in Dyea, and that didn't work. But we changed ownership, it just didn't include us. And what are some of the roadblocks? Always the top of the list is funding. Uh, and we talked about working at Klondike and living in Skagway and what that meant professionally and personally. Being accepted as a family into the community, no outward animosity. Uh, why did you leave?

KAREN BREWSTER: Mongolia?

CLAY ALDERSON: I put down here, I didn't leave. I went to Mongolia.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah, once we started talking about Mongolia, that's --

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Became obvious.

CLAY ALDERSON: When I got done in Mongolia, I went back to Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yep.

CLAY ALDERSON: Although we're not right in town.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, but you're still connected.

CLAY ALDERSON: Still very much involved there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. [03:26:45]And your -- you ended your employment with the Park Service because you retired? I'm assuming that's why.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Alright.

CLAY ALDERSON: Thirty-one years was enough.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And then Claudia --

[03:26:58]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: I thought of one item. I'm always slow to react, and you asked about if there was any competition or conflict with the other programs. And when they were having some difficulty launching the natural resource program, the trail rangers and the trail crew decided -- and were given guidance on setting up their own wildlife observation program. And so there was a protocol on how you recorded it, and so they put together a whole collection and even worked on doing a database for it. So in a way, for wildlife observations, their's is the baseline.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[03:27:38]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And so we made sure that that was incorporated in all the records, because they were kind of floating out there because there wasn't a program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And so they were very happy to have their work kept and included in the process, and to have more built upon it. So in this 2011 report, their early work is cited as their true baseline for wildlife observations.

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KAREN BREWSTER: That's great.

[03:28:05]CLAY ALDERSON: And Jerry Watson was --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: Instrumental in that.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yeah. Was he? Ok.

KAREN BREWSTER: And Roy Nelson.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And also Nancy Schave and Dale Gosnell. They all had done cards, every time their observations. They developed their own little wildlife observation cards.

[03:28:19]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and it makes sense. Those trail rangers are out -- the ones who are out there every day, and, you know, daily personal observation monitoring.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Are extremely valuable.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: You know, there are other protocols that you need for getting population levels and things like that, but their observations are really the core of this program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I mean, I would think even for botany, you could say, you know, when they first saw a particular flower blooming.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's so important, yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that might change through time.

[03:28:48]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: For climate change, that's -- something they found that one of the early botanists in Alaska, it was Les Vierick, observed those dates. And you know who did it first was Thoreau.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So they've gone back to all of Thoreau's work, and were able to relocate because his descriptions are so good, and see the changes that have happened since his time. But Les Vierick is our Thoreau.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And so all of these journals, everything they can find, including the cards that the rangers had done.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's great.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Were so important --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: -- for a sense of time.

[03:29:26]KAREN BREWSTER: And now, Claudia, what about you and our conversation? And you took some notes before doing your memory lane research.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Anything else?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's the one thing that came out to me that I thought was really important was the -- the fact that everyone supported this because they'd participated in it, helping to launch the program.

KAREN BREWSTER: Great.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So I think that it's a real team.

[03:29:55]CLAY ALDERSON: One of the interesting things that Karl Gurcke has done through the years, and I would guess he's still doing it, is every, I don't know, I don't think it's

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every year. But every so many years, he will walk up and down Broadway and take a picture of every building up and down Broadway. And I think he does it on other parts of town. And that way he knows between what years changes took place. And he'll say, "Oh yeah, that took place in the winter of so-and-so."

KAREN BREWSTER: That's how he knows so much.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That can be on the trail, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: He has got --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That would be very interesting.

[03:30:29]CLAY ALDERSON: That was one thing I wanted somebody to do as a centennial project, was to go back to sites -- because the Klondike Gold Rush was hugely photographed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: There were three professional photographers that toured all the way to Dawson and all the way back again, and they took a lot of pictures. And a lot of those pictures survived to today. And I was hoping somebody would go back and find the site where some of those pictures were taken, and take 'em again.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: And -- and at the Bridger-Teton, we're working with a guy who is doing just that in the Bridger-Teton.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. I know someone who's done it in Denali. There's somebody who, you know --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Oh, yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Around the state. I mean, that's a very common --

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, it is.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- practice now for climate change. And you can see, you know, treeline has changed, or there's now new species that weren't there before. So yeah, that would be great, so that.

[03:31:25]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So that's Carl Roland, and he used Les Vierick's photographs. He had beautiful slides, which I scanned. That was one of my duties. And that's when he put together his site on climate change.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that would be great. [03:31:37]As you say, the gold rush and Klondike area was certainly well photographed.

CLAY ALDERSON: And it would be particularly interesting out on Dyea Flats. As the evergreen trees move back towards tidewater where they probably were at the time that the gold rush started.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And that definitely --

CLAY ALDERSON: It's taken all this time. If we go out there now and are amazed at the size of some of those trees that were just little sprouts.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah, people have said how that's growing back. And you're right, that would be a very obviously human impact, that those were cleared for the town site.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

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[03:32:11]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But also the uplift.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So we mapped the high high tideline.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. And that is one of the --  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And that's with -- it's all GPS points, so.  
CLAY ALDERSON: -- places in Alaska where the fastest glacial rebound is taking place.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.  
CLAY ALDERSON: So there's a lot going on, environmentally, out there on the Dyea Flats.  
[03:32:29]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So a lot of the trees are growing places they've never grown before.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Because it used to be flooded repeatedly with salt water.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And now the uplift is --  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So it's two things.  
KAREN BREWSTER: -- changing that.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Fast.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Interesting.  
[03:32:41]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It's going up an inch a year or something, more than that.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Something like that.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Some remarkable figure so all of a sudden in ten years, you could change the landscape a lot, 'cause it's so level.  
[03:32:53]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well. I think I've talked your mouths off.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Well, we are anxious to talk.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Something we're interested in.  
[03:33:01]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, well, and I say, anything else that you want to say or that you've thought about? When I contacted you and churned up all these old memories?  
CLAY ALDERSON: Oh, yeah.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's absolutely true. We had a wonderful time.  
CLAY ALDERSON: But even yesterday, after our session, uh, I didn't hear too many comments of, "Oh, I wish I'da said that."  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: No.  
CLAY ALDERSON: 'Cause you did a good job of preparing us, and your questions are spot-on.  
[03:33:33]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I appreciate you guys doing the research into your memories beforehand. That's great.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Ah. I can remember what happened then. I can't remember what I had for breakfast.  
[03:33:44]KAREN BREWSTER: And then, you know looking at this old Martin Itjen book.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.  
KAREN BREWSTER: "The Story of the Tour of the Skagway, Alaska Streetcar," which has great old photos and quotes and signatures and things.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.  
KAREN BREWSTER: It's wonderful.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: It is.

[03:33:57]KAREN BREWSTER: So, well, shall we finish it up?  
CLAY ALDERSON: If you are --  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.  
CLAY ALDERSON: -- overwhelmed yet, why --  
KAREN BREWSTER: No, I'm never overwhelmed.  
CLAY ALDERSON: I know.  
KAREN BREWSTER: But you guys have to do --  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: We thank you for giving us this opportunity.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it's been a pleasure. Definitely.  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah, a lot has happened since we were there.  
[03:34:16]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, I guess we could say, yeah, what happened after you left the Park Serv -- You said you officially retired in -- ?  
CLAY ALDERSON: '05.  
KAREN BREWSTER: '05. So fourteen years. What's been going on?  
CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Just -- ?  
CLAY ALDERSON: But I pretty much left in '99.  
[03:34:31]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. But so, you live in Tagish in the winter, and you volunteer at Bridger-Teton in the summers? And --  
CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm. Yep.  
KAREN BREWSTER: -- come to Anchorage to visit the grandkids every once in awhile?  
CLAY ALDERSON: That's right.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And then once we go south, we have all the other grandchildren available, and my family is down there, Colorado-based.  
CLAY ALDERSON: We don't get east to Buffalo, New York, but --  
KAREN BREWSTER: No.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: We have to figure that out for Ben. So we -- we've chosen to stay in the same public land management business.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But to do the things we like best. Let someone else have the buck stopping at their door.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right.  
CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And just be right out there, working with the public. And the public is definitely confused about the speed with which the world is changing, and so we can help them.  
[03:35:19]KAREN BREWSTER: So what do you do at Bridger-Teton?  
CLAY ALDERSON: We, um, live in this little backcountry cabin on the edge of the Gros Ventre Wilderness. And as our boss said, we want you to be the eyes and ears of the Forest Service up here. So they provide us all-terrain vehicles. We've got both single-seaters that we can ride separately, or we've got a side-by-side, and there's about eighty miles of road and trail that we patrol on a fairly regular basis. You know, we don't get over all of it every week, but a lot of it. [03:35:56]And a lot of what we've done is eradicate musk-thistle, that's --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So we're at the end of the road, and it's where they're just starting to receive the weed. So it's still possible to push it back, you know. You can't get rid of weeds, but you can push them back.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it's an invasive species?

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes, it is. There's lots. And we --

[03:36:19]CLAY ALDERSON: We have a lot of people that think that they can drive all the way through and come out on the other end of the forest, but you can't. The only way is to go back the way you came.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So Clay flies the flag, so that everyone will come to us. And they're good signs, and they bring us any of their problems, of which there are many.

CLAY ALDERSON: Right. And we've even had former Forest Service employees that drove up the road and said, "We didn't expect to see the flag. When we saw the flag, we knew that somebody was at Goosewing." And they came up to see us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm. Nice.

[03:36:51]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And it's important to know, this is a CCC camp.

KAREN BREWSTER: Conservation Corp.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes, 1935. And Clay had known it in the '70's. It was in pretty nice shape. And since then, they've only used it periodically, and it was really unused for about twenty years. And during that time it was in great disrepair. The mice had done well, but nobody else had. So we did the restoration work on it as our first job. Which, they all loved the place, but they just didn't have any time or money to fix it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And they've come to count on us to be their presence for a very large part of the forest.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[03:37:31]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And so we -- we are the contact for fire, for rescue, for anything that comes up. And work with local land owners. And again, that's Clay's small town community. There's problems with -- people have cows in the wilderness.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. But as you say, you've continued in public land --

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Absolutely. Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- management and resources and things. And just doing it as a volunteer.

[03:37:52]CLAY ALDERSON: I figured I dawdled enough when I was being paid, I should give back a little when I'm not being paid.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And, you know, it's really an important part of the forest there. So we now have the Native Plant Society coming out, the plein air artists bring a group up in the fall as soon as the aspen around us have turned.

CLAY ALDERSON: We've got a Boy Scout group that comes from Colorado Springs every year. We've got the YMCA group that was coming before we were there, but now they're occasionally coming to the Gros Ventre to spend a day or two.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: So they helped to repair things, paint things, pull weeds, which at first they're -- those young men are a little (unsure) about pulling weeds, and then they realize they're rescuing the native plants.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

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CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They're right there as vigorous as can be. And we have some barbed wire. They're removed miles of barbed wire there from the old ranches because the wildlife had a problem with it. And we found some areas they missed, so this year we hope maybe we can coordinate that with the Boy Scouts for another experience.

KAREN BREWSTER: Like a service project?

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: They love feeling they're taking care of the earth.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Great.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And then we bake them brownies.

KAREN BREWSTER: Even better.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes. So that's what we're doing, and we really enjoy it.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's great.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And every year we say, should we do it again? And so far, we have.

[03:39:11]KAREN BREWSTER: That's great. Well, hopefully they appreciate what you guys are doing to help that place.

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, they must feel it's working because now they're looking for volunteers for other areas in the forest where they've got some real problems just because they don't have a presence there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

CLAY ALDERSON: And I think they feel that it's working in the Gros Ventre, maybe it'll work at Signal Mountain or uh, not Signal Mountain. Anyway. Couple of other places.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Curtis Canyon.

CLAY ALDERSON: Curtis Canyon. Yeah.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Shadow Mountain.

CLAY ALDERSON: Shadow Mountain.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And so they would like just to have people there, no law enforcement responsibilities, no money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Nothing. Just to help them understand. They're trying to have people camp in assigned places. 'Cause the Forest Service has let them camp wherever.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it's sort of following the model of a campground host.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Yes.

CLAY ALDERSON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: That you have a presence, and that creates a relationship with the public.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: That's exactly what it is.

[03:40:00]CLAY ALDERSON: They -- they asked me -- I had a law enforcement commission when I worked for the Park Service, and they said, "Well, would you like to have a law enforcement commission? Then you could be a forest protection officer. You'd actually get paid." And I said, "No. That would change our relationship with the public too much."

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: Um-hm.

CLAY ALDERSON: If I need a law enforcement person, I'll -- I'll tie him to a tree until somebody can get here.

[03:40:25]KAREN BREWSTER: So this -- do all park superintendents get law enforcement?

CLAY ALDERSON: No.

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KAREN BREWSTER: No.

CLAY ALDERSON: I -- I happened to be working at the time when the General Authorities Act was signed by President Ford in 1970 at Yellowstone, and it came from some of the problems with the, uh, discontent of the '70's. And the park -- they found parks were kind of an unprotected place where they could come and do their running amok. And so they wanted to give law enforcement commissions to qualified park employees.

[03:41:11]Well, I had been in the state park system and had a state park commission and met the number of training hours, so even though I was a superintendent, they put me in for a law enforcement commission, and I was one of the first ones commissioned.

[03:41:31]KAREN BREWSTER: So did you have to do things annually to maintain that commission?

CLAY ALDERSON: Twice a year. We had to requalify for firearms, and attend forty hours of training. And I think it was twice a year.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you kept that up?

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. And even clear to the time when I was at Klondike. [03:41:49]One day Reed McCluskey came in and said, "Where's your gun?" And I said, "It's in the closet." He said, "You're no longer a law enforcement." He took my gun and walked away. I said, "The gun didn't make me a law enforcement officer. That little piece of paper did."

[03:42:03]CLAUDIA ALDERSON: And I think Reed ran into the same thing, 'cause his eyesight was terrible. And so he finally, as I remember what he told me, he was my boss off and on, he had reached the point where he could no longer qualify. And you couldn't be a chief ranger if you couldn't qualify.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. So that's what going to be chief admin was the transition?

CLAY ALDERSON: Right.

CLAUDIA ALDERSON: But, you know, he was -- I think his dad was a lawyer, and it was his natural inclination. He was awfully good at managing things.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yes, he was. He did a great job with the leaseback program, especially.

KAREN BREWSTER: Great. Ok. Well.

[03:42:40]CLAY ALDERSON: We had kind of an interesting thing happen with that leaseback program. You were asking how we administered it. Well, there was a lady in Washington that was responsible for the leasing program. Her name was Susan Harrison, and she put on a training course. We -- I actually went to Harvard to attend a week of leaseback training. And so when we got ready to lease back, I think, the second set of buildings, none of us really knew anything about it. So I contacted Susan and asked her if she would come to Klondike and sit in on our evaluation panel, and she did that. And so I was talking to her, and I said, "How do you set up these guidelines for how you lease back historic structures?" And she said, "Well, since you guys are the most active park that's doing that, we try things and see how Klondike Gold Rush does it. If it works, it becomes policy. If it doesn't work, it becomes a work in progress." So we didn't realize that we were doing a little pioneering in that.

KAREN BREWSTER: You were the guinea pigs, a little bit.

CLAY ALDERSON: Yeah. [03:43:55]And that was when Jay was still working with it. And he was excellent with the leaseback program. Maintained a great relationship with the lease holders and everything.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Yeah, it sounds like an administratively complicated thing to be keeping track of.

CLAY ALDERSON: Well, you just have to go back and look at the lease and see, "Hm, did I agree to that? Hm, ok."

AREN BREWSTER: Sort of like a concessionaire's contract, probably. It's probably similar.

CLAY ALDERSON: And that was -- I think that was the department that Susan Harrison was in, was dealing with concession permits. She got the short straw and ended up dealing with historic structures in Klondike Gold Rush. But she was good help. Very practical person.

KAREN BREWSTER: We done?

CLAY ALDERSON: I think we're done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

CLAY ALDERSON: I think we're done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Thank you.