

RECORDED INTERVIEW OF DENNIS AND NANCY CORRINGTON

CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER

IN SKAGWAY, ALASKA

OCTOBER 2, 2018

ORAL HISTORY 2017-01-84

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

[00:00:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok, this is Karen Brewster, and today is October 2, 2018, and I'm here in Skagway, Alaska, with Dennis and Nancy Corrington at their home on Broadway Street. And we're gonna talk today a little bit about the history of Klondike Gold Rush National Park, and Skagway, and business here, and wherever else we go.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Wherever it takes us.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wherever it takes us.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: All right. Sounds good.

[00:00:30]KAREN BREWSTER: So yeah. So Dennis, maybe if you don't mind starting.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Sure.

KAREN BREWSTER: Can you tell me, did you grow up here in Skagway?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: No, I grew up in St. Louis. And I wound up in Alaska when I was going through a -- what a --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, you -- you ended up here as a school teacher in Nome.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: In Nome.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: After I got out of the army, yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: After you got out of college, yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Well, after college, then the army. Yeah.

[00:01:09]KAREN BREWSTER: So you went to college in St. Louis or -- ?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes.

NANCY CORRINGTON: In Missouri.

KAREN BREWSTER: In Missouri?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: In Missouri.

KAREN BREWSTER: To be a school teacher?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Correct.

[00:01:17]KAREN BREWSTER: And then what -- about what year did you come to Alaska then, to Nome?

NANCY CORRINGTON: '66.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: '66?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

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DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

[00:01:26]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And then you went into the army after that?

NANCY CORRINGTON: No.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: No. I did that --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, before that.?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes.

[00:01:33]KAREN BREWSTER: And then what brought you to Skagway?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Um, I guess it was a job. Let me think.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You came to Skagway because you were teaching, and -- and then you had gotten into -- into the trading post business.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Oh, that's right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And you got interested in tourism, and you came down in 1974 for a conference, and you -- what you told me is there were 9000 visitors to Nome at that time and 80,000 to Skagway. And you --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I lied to you.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You lied. So anyway, that's -- that was the start.

[00:02:22]KAREN BREWSTER: So Skagway seemed like a better business opportunity?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yes.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes. Yes, and actually, when I graduated from college, I -- I went to Nome as a teacher, and I did teaching up there. Um, and it was a boarding school, almost, scenario, with bringing Natives to that area as far from Gambell and Savoonga and Shishmaref and every place.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wales, and yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Right. Right. [00:03:02]And so that was -- that was very interesting because I -- it just kind of was easy to work with these kids. They were -- they were articulate. They couldn't speak much. I couldn't speak much.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You couldn't speak Eskimo. At that time.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: At that time, I couldn't, so.

[00:03:22]KAREN BREWSTER: And -- and they were more fluent in Inupiaq than in English at that point?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: The kids were?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes. Yeah, so I spent a lot of time learning the language, and I -- it's going away now. If you don't use it, it goes away.

KAREN BREWSTER: I have the same problem.

[00:03:37]DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah. But uh, I started traveling in the off-season to their villages. I'd go to Savoonga. I'd go to Gambell and Little Diomed. I mean, Shishmaref and different places, and talk to the families and talk to the people in the store -- stores. And it became apparent to me that there's an opportunity there as well. Uh, just like the ivory that you're wearing. People don't understand it, don't see it, but there's a market for it. [00:04:22]And if people are making things in their homes, they -- they can't just turn around and give it to the local -- local place 'cause they don't want it. Anybody can do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And so, I started having a trading post in Nome, built out of a log cabin, and traveled pretty much all over. Had things -- I liked St. Lawrence Island a lot. I liked Little Diomed. And just really, places that nobody ever goes to.

[00:05:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And -- and so you were buying up the ivory carvings from the artists?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Correct.

KAREN BREWSTER: And selling them at your store in Nome?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And were other people doing that at that point, or you were -- ?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Not rea --

KAREN BREWSTER: -- sort of the first one?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Not really. [00:05:16]There were a couple of uh, bad guys that were -- hook up with a bunch of whiskey and go into the places and trade 'em out. I stayed away from them. I knew who they were, but I just stayed away from them.

KAREN BREWSTER: You paid the appropriate money to the artists?

NANCY CORRINGTON: If -- if we could --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Money or whatever they wanted, you know. We needed a new fire.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Or we need a thirty-five ought --

KAREN BREWSTER: We need gas, or --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah, whatever the local store didn't have. And the people --

[00:05:49]NANCY CORRINGTON: Are -- are you recording for something that somebody's going to listen to?

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Ok, well, as I said, there's an issue with memory here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So if we can back up just a little bit.

KAREN BREWSTER: Sure.

[00:06:02]NANCY CORRINGTON: His, um -- when he was teaching, he was a teacher for one year, and then he became principal of the Eskimo regional boarding school. And when he went out to the villages to recruit, he would get requests for various things. Can you bring me sewing needles? Can you bring me this, that, whatever it happened to be, even an outboard motor and fishing rods and things like that? [00:06:31]And so he was still teaching at that time, but when the Natives paid him off, they paid him in carvings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And so all of a sudden, he ended up with a lot of ivory carvings, and nothing to do with the ivory carvings. [00:06:49]So at that point, he had thoughts of -- of perhaps opening a trading post. He loved the Native culture. That was his -- he really, really loved the people up there. And so when he finally decided to get out of teaching, it was -- he was at a point where he kind of had to either -- they wanted him to be superintendent of schools, and he either had to agree to do that and to get into the politics of things, or strike out on his own. [00:07:23]And so that's when he decided to open the trading post in Nome. And it was called the Arctic Trading Post, so he --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Right, but they also wanted me to join the -- the -- the -- the -- what'd they call them?

KAREN BREWSTER: The union?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: The union, yeah. [00:07:41]And uh, I said, "No. I can't do it because the people in the union don't know jack shit about the schools and that kind of a thing." And so I decided just to have a trading post.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Which made it a lot differently.

[00:08:05]NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, yes. I mean, and then you really got involved actively with the -- with ivory and skins, furs, all that kind of stuff. You were a trapper. You did a lot of things like that that went along with the idea of trading post.

KAREN BREWSTER: All out of Nome?

NANCY CORRINGTON: All out of Nome.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: All out of Nome.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Traveled around by snow machine.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But then -- right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Or dogs.

[00:08:30]NANCY CORRINGTON: And you did -- he did -- he raced snow machines, and he ran the Iditarod. He was part of the uh, Nome Kennel Club, which was the contingent that put together the Iditarod, so he was one of the founding members.

KAREN BREWSTER: With, um, what's his name?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Joe Redington?

KAREN BREWSTER: No, the other guy, from Nome, um.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, um, um, Earl Norris.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, he was from Wasilla.

NANCY CORRINGTON: No?

KAREN BREWSTER: The guy from Nome.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, the one from Nome? Ok, let me think.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Howard.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, Howard --

KAREN BREWSTER: Howard.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah, Howard.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes. Right.

[00:09:01]NANCY CORRINGTON: But anyway, that was kind of his thing, and his bailiwick. He didn't really want to leave Nome. He was pretty happy there, but family issues, and then the -- I guess being in the colder community, he decided that Skagway would be a good --

KAREN BREWSTER: You came south for the weather?

NANCY CORRINGTON: More or less.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, and the business, right?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Because there were so many more tourists.

[00:09:33]KAREN BREWSTER: You said it was '74 when he came to Skagway and started?

NANCY CORRINGTON: First time was '74. '76 was when he opened the business.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. So '74 was like a state-wide tourism conference or something?

NANCY CORRINGTON: It was kind of like the ATIA. I don't know if they called it ATIA in those days.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah, that was --

KAREN BREWSTER: What is ATIA?

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's the Alaska Travelers -- what's it stand for? I have to think.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: Alaska Travel Industry --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Alaska Travel Industry --

KAREN BREWSTER: Association? I don't know.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Adventures. Or something like that. I don't even know. But ATIA.

KAREN BREWSTER: But it's -- it's what you're -- as a tourist business, you become kind of a member of?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Right.

[00:10:07]DENNIS CORRINGTON: No, but this town was -- was uh, in pretty bad shape because they didn't have money coming through. The railroad wasn't going on. People were moving out. There were a lot of empty houses all over the place. But it still had some --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, the railroad was active, but it wasn't -- people had started to leave town.

KAREN BREWSTER: I think the railroad shut down in '82.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm. '82. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then started again in '88.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But it started as a tourism --

KAREN BREWSTER: As a tourist, I know.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it was still going in the '70's, but not maybe as full-blown as it had earlier.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Definitely. And there weren't as many tourists.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:10:52]NANCY CORRINGTON: So it didn't have the same appeal, and they weren't -- they weren't considering it a tourist route.

KAREN BREWSTER: No. At the time, they were --

NANCY CORRINGTON: At that time, it was a working route.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- it was -- yeah, they were moving ore.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Moving coal up and down and things like that.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So I think maybe the ore had --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Stopped.

NANCY CORRINGTON: They weren't bringing as much in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But it wasn't like it was when the train closed. I mean, that was terrible for the town.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It was devastating. People were -- I mean, it was a mass exodus.

[00:11:21]KAREN BREWSTER: But even in -- so in '76, when you opened your first business here, it was a community you wanted to invest in even though it was on the downside?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Um, yes. Yeah. I mean --

NANCY CORRINGTON: He -- you saw opportunity.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I saw -- I saw the opportunities. And the things that they had down here were similar to what we had in Nome, and so -- there's more, uh, more ivory in Nome than there is down here. They're always looking for it, so here's a --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: But they had furs and other things. But every other building was empty in Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It was --

[00:12:08]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that takes a lot of courage to start a new business in a town where every other building is closed.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I see it as another um, possibility, because what -- what -- they all are falling apart, and what's wrong with it? Find out what's wrong with it and can you -- here's a house, and the guy says, "It's for sale." And I say, "Well, how much do you want?" "Well, well, I paid x-y-z, but I don't need it. Nobody wants to rent it. Would you want to rent it?" "No, I wouldn't want to rent it." "Would you want to buy it?" "Yeah, I'll buy it. How much?" And then you're dinging back and forth. What can you do?

KAREN BREWSTER: So it was cheap real estate.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Fairly cheap.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Pretty much.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[00:13:01]NANCY CORRINGTON: The -- when Dennis first came, he went to Kirmse's, across the street from where our present flagship store is, and there was a realtor in town whose name was Cy Coyne, and Cy was getting to the point where he was kind of losing his memory, and Dennis wanted -- when he bought the property that he bought, he wanted the piece next to it, but it wasn't for sale. And I think Cy owned it himself.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And so he agreed to let Dennis have right of first refusal.

[00:13:40]And a year later, the Park Service went to him and asked for the same thing, so

--

KAREN BREWSTER: Went to Dennis or to Cy?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Went to Cy. And Cy gave them right of first refusal.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So when it came to our wanting to expand our building in 1984, uh, we -- well, we had already at that time, the Park Service said, "Well, let's just split the property. We'll take the corner, and you can take the middle," which -- or the part adjacent to your building, so that's what we ended up doing at that time. [00:14:19]But um, it was kind of interesting because the Park Service at that time said, "Well, we're never going to build on that building, you know, or on that lot. We won't do anything with it." So we gardened it, and we ended up, like the gardens that are there now, we actually put in --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Ourselves with all of our kids, carrying rocks from the river.

[00:14:40]KAREN BREWSTER: And that's the Corrington's store up on the corner?

NANCY CORRINGTON: On Fifth Avenue, yes. So, but Kirmse's, he really was interested in Kirmse's, but Cy Coyne did not have a key to the store. And at that time, he probably -- I think you said you could've bought Kirmse's for maybe \$120,000.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Something like that.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It was full of antiques.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And everything. But he couldn't get in to see it, and he wasn't going to buy something that he couldn't see.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Pig in a poke.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So he missed out on an opportunity there, but, you know, one opportunity opens the door for another, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um, but it's just --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I gotta look at it.

[00:15:18]NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, you usually do, but that's kinda how most of the acquisitions we've made in town. An opportunity would come up, or somebody would come to us and say, "You know, we need to sell this property. We have to get out." And Dennis was always the idea man, so he -- he never lacked for ideas of what to do next. And I'm kind of the implementer, so I went along with that.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Made it work.

[00:15:47]KAREN BREWSTER: So that one there on Fifth, that was your first store, right?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that's where the ivory is still being sold?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Then what --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: But we bought the land and then built the building.

KAREN BREWSTER: That building wasn't there?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Hm-um. Actually, the building that was there burned down. I just showed you a picture this morning. Maybe I'll get it real quick.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Ok.

[00:16:09]KAREN BREWSTER: Because then you own the Skagway Outlet Store, right? The one downstairs?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: No. Uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: The store that's downstairs from where we are now.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes. Uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: And you own this building?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Own this building, right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And the Golden North Hotel, is that yours?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Golden North Hotel.

[00:16:33]NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah, well the history -- this -- this is a picture of him building -- when they built the log cabin.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

NANCY CORRINGTON: That just came up, but um, I don't know if I've got those phases of the store.

[00:16:52]KAREN BREWSTER: So you built that building?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Which one?

NANCY CORRINGTON: The log cabin.

KAREN BREWSTER: The log cabin building.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: The log cabin, yeah. Yep, yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: You built that yourself?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Uh, myself and another guy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. Had you ever built anything out of logs before?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Uh, no. But the good news is, I still have all my numbers from --

KAREN BREWSTER: You do have all your fingers.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: All my fingers, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And all your toes.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Well, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's good.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah, it's not that hard. I mean, you can look at it. If you ever played with a Tinker Toy, you can put it together.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And then if you put it a big Tinker Toy, it was pretty much the same.

[00:17:35]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, do you remember when you got here? Well, the Park Service hadn't really started yet when you got here.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Correct.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you remember when they came and what you thought about them coming and setting up this park here?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Well, when they -- when they came, they didn't say anything about setting up a park. Um, as I recall, there was one person or two people that came, and they were gonna talk about the buildings and things like that.

[00:18:14]NANCY CORRINGTON: They said they were going to build two buildings only, and that would be all they were going to do. It wasn't going to be a regular, big park.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Two refits.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And so, they were only going to do the two buildings they have down at the other end of the street. But now they have twenty-two buildings, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So it was going to be the old railroad depot and --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Right. And the -- what was the other one? Oh, what was that before?

KAREN BREWSTER: Martin Itjen's? That one?

NANCY CORRINGTON: No. It was the two buildings that are right close together. I'm not sure. One was the train station, I guess, and the other one was what?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I'm trying to -- trying to remember, but --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Can't.

KAREN BREWSTER: They have that.



NANCY CORRINGTON: They have all that.

[00:18:53]KAREN BREWSTER: I'm more interested in how they went about interacting with people in Skagway when that -- The park was designated --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- and then what happened here? And how people here felt about this new designation happening.

NANCY CORRINGTON: From what Dennis told me, they were very skeptical. And not -- just not real trusting of what was going to come about, and that's why they made all the assurances that they weren't going to take over any properties, and they were just going to limit to the two main buildings that they were refurbishing, so I think that kind of settled the town. And they've done -- they've really done a nice job of -- of --

[00:19:37]KAREN BREWSTER: So did they stick to that agreement?

NANCY CORRINGTON: No.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: No.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Not at all.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Absolutely.

[00:19:43]NANCY CORRINGTON: Um, every superintendent that came to town changed what they were going to do and how they were going to do it. And um, when I got here, it was -- I'm trying to think of Doug, what his name was, his last name. His wife worked at Westmark. But he was real easy to work with, and he was -- in fact, he gave us permission to garden the property next to us because the Park Service hadn't done anything with it. It was just weeds there, and they didn't even really keep it mowed, so to make our building look more attractive, it would --

[00:20:20]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I was going to say, it would attract to your business.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Right. So Dennis loved to garden, and he did all kinds of wildflowers and everything, and got an old rhubarb plant from the Clark farm out in the um, where Jewell Gardens is now, and planted it, and so it was our 100-year-old rhubarb plant.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

[00:20:40]NANCY CORRINGTON: And then people started planting it around town. Dennis has done a lot of things. In fact, when he first came to town, he was told by one of the ladies that owned a shop downtown that she was so angry with him because he was washing his windows in his store, and that meant everybody was gonna have to wash their windows.

KAREN BREWSTER: You were making it look too good.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah, it did look good.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:21:09]NANCY CORRINGTON: And when we built our first building, we went to the Park Service and asked them what they thought about the plans, 'cause we didn't have a Historic District Commission at that time. And they told him that it -- our plan looked too much like Disneyland.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Not to do it. But we did it anyway.

[00:21:28]KAREN BREWSTER: So at that point, yeah, there was no enforcement that you had to keep a certain look?

NANCY CORRINGTON: No. They wanted it to be much plainer than it actually is, but their buildings aren't plain.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I mean, if you look at the two down there, they're not very plain. I think they're ornate and look really pretty. [00:21:45]Um, I would say that, well first, Dennis had the log cabin. That was in 1976 he built that. And then in 1984, no, 1978, he added on another section, and I was trying to find those pictures, but they're all kinda packed away. Um, and he added another section to it. And then we didn't get married 'til 1984, and when we got married, two years later we added the part -- the green with the tower.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And that was to house our museum. [00:22:26]So we had that for a while, and then we thought about expanding, and we went to -- I think the Park Service had started opening up things like the Lynch and Kennedy, and so Dennis thought, well, maybe we'll just -- we had a really good manager at that time, and he said, maybe we'll expand. [00:22:49]So he put in a bid for that building and was told that even though we bid more money, they weren't going to give it to us because they were afraid we would sell ivory, and uh -- Trust me, it was really interesting. So, and I forgot what the difference in the bid was, but, you know, we found out that --

[00:23:14]KAREN BREWSTER: So that -- so Lynch and Kennedy is an example that that is a Park Service-owned building?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Owned building.

KAREN BREWSTER: They would lease out the space?

NANCY CORRINGTON: And they leased out the space. So anyway, we -- we said, well, you know, we can -- we don't have to sell ivory. We can sell other things. But they said, well, you're an ivory -- in the ivory business, so we don't trust that you won't sell ivory. [00:23:35]So they opened it up to the present owner, who actually happened to work for the Park Service at one time, but anyway, she took it over as a children's clothing store, and within two years, she was selling ivory and all the artifacts and all the things that they told us that we couldn't sell.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because that's what the tourists wanted?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: That's where you could make some money and the tourists wanted it.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um, more -- at that time, probably more. So anyway, because we didn't get that building, it ended up that this American Legion hall, which is what this building was --

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- was for sale, and we converted it into the Skagway Outlet Store, and then a year -- two -- well, how many years later? That was in '95, so in um, '99, we added this part, which is new. There was nothing.

KAREN BREWSTER: The upstairs?

NANCY CORRINGTON: No, the whole thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, the whole -- oh, I see. This whole section.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Just stopping at that wall.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[00:24:34]NANCY CORRINGTON: And so then in -- while we were doing that, then I think we were kind of interested in a lot down on Broadway, farther down on Broadway, because the farther down, the better off the business is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And we tried to purchase a lot next to the Golden North Hotel, but the gentleman that owned it at that time said that he wouldn't sell the lot without the hotel.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So then we started negotiating for the hotel, but we really didn't know what we were going to do with it, and so we decided to put in a micro-brewery. We wanted to kind of keep it as it was.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was -- was it an active hotel at that point?

NANCY CORRINGTON: It was. And so in 1997 is when we purchased that and refurbished it and remodeled the whole thing, and um, so we had this building and the hotel, and we built the building next to it, the annex, and then in 2004 we built the Skagway Bazaar. And then in 2007, we built Skagway Old Town, which is the next complex down the street here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[00:25:42]NANCY CORRINGTON: And it was just, you know, things would come up and you'd buy a piece of property, and then you -- but basically, if I can toot our own horn a little bit, the -- we pretty much set the precedent for building in Skagway. After we used the architect that we used, almost everybody used him for every job they had. In fact, he was telling me the other day that he credits us for his business, and he told us how -- told me how much we had spent with him over the years, and I thought, "Holy cow. we could've built another building with that." [00:26:15]But, I mean, you know, it's been a process, but he's a visionary, and he always has been. And, of course, um, there -- there -- things change.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, you get older.

[00:26:28]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's what you need, probably, to be a successful small business person is to have the vision and be willing to take the risk?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And just follow through with it.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And be willing to work the schedule we've worked for thirty --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It's wicked.

NANCY CORRINGTON: For the number of years that we've worked. I mean, there's not -- we don't even know what a day off is.

[00:26:46]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, so you work May 'til October, 24/7? Or May to September, 24/7?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, more than that. I mean, we work all winter long, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, you still do?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, we -- I mean, you have to. If you see all the merchandise that has to be ordered, and it's hard to get employees. You have to start in the summer before to get employees to come up here. Housing is a really big problem in Skagway.

[00:27:12]Um, and that's one of the things, I think, it seems to me that there's so much, like -- the Park Service, as good as it has been to this town, and as much as it's done, it's

also in competition with people like us who have real estate and kind of look to that as a retirement.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[00:27:32]NANCY CORRINGTON: And there are a few other entrepreneurs in town, but if you actually go up and down the streets, there aren't that many people other than the Park Service that own buildings. So they will always be in competition with the private sector.

KAREN BREWSTER: Even if they lease the buildings for businesses?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Even if they lease the buildings because they're contending with -- I mean, we have the Skagway Bazaar is all leased out. And we're going to have a vacancy or two this year, and you know, they have the option of going to a Park Service building instead. So we're really -- they are competitors of sorts, so we're competing with the National Park Service, or with the government.

[00:28:16]KAREN BREWSTER: Are they -- are they -- I'm trying to figure out how they're competitors. Are they competitors in the same way if it were another business owner owning that building, or is it somehow different?

NANCY CORRINGTON: No, it's not different.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's the same. [00:28:27]Where there is a -- a -- a big difference, I would say -- I mean, you don't think of -- if a private individual or entrepreneur builds a building, like Mark Knorr built a building down the street with four -- and its -- ahead of most of our properties -- with four actual buildings within the building for rental locations, you know, you think, ok. Well, he's --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Good for him.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Good for him, 'cause he's a businessman.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right, an entrepreneur.

[00:29:00]NANCY CORRINGTON: And an entrepreneur. But when the Park Service comes in and builds four buildings that they rent out, and you are the private business person, you can't compete with the National Park Service, so that is a little bit of an issue. [00:29:16]I know we -- one of our congressmen had been in town, and he said he couldn't believe how many buildings the Park Service owned, and, you know, if -- is it -- are we creating work when the private individual -- are we taking away the opportunity for --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- for the private sector to come in and build by doing this? You know, maybe it's accidentally, that's what's happened.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:29:41]NANCY CORRINGTON: Um, but I know when we -- I think I even mentioned to you that when we were gardening the lot next to us, the Park Service came to us and said, "You know, if you want to continue to do this, you're going to have to insure and indemnify us in order to keep gardening this lot." And we thought, wait a minute, we've put in like twenty years of gardening and work on this, and now you want us to indemnify the federal government? I don't think so. So, um --

[00:30:13]KAREN BREWSTER: And then are the property tax issues different if it's a Park Service-owned building than a privately owned building?

NANCY CORRINGTON: I think if they lent, -- and I might be wrong on this, but I think if they lease it out, taxes have to be paid. But they don't have to be paid by the Park Service. They have to be paid by the individual --

KAREN BREWSTER: The lessee?

NANCY CORRINGTON: That's leasing the property. I think is the way it goes. Now I may be wrong on that.

[00:30:37]KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause I was wondering if they -- yeah, if having the Park Service own all the buildings if there's a down side, property tax-wise, for the City of Skagway and services?

NANCY CORRINGTON: I think it has to be paid, but it comes through whoever's leasing the building pays the taxes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So I don't think, as long as they don't do anything with it or lease it out, I don't think there's any tax liability attached, so.

[00:31:02]KAREN BREWSTER: And now, I want to take us a step back because we skipped over Nancy, your personal history and how you ended up here in Skagway and when.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, you would never think I'd end up in Skagway, given my background. But long story short, Dennis and I -- my parents and his parents lived in St. Louis during the war, World War II, not I.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Across the street from each other.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And so I -- my parents didn't have children, and they wanted to adopt, and the opportunity came up through a family member, Dennis's mother's sister, as a matter of fact. So my parents -- after my parents moved back to south of St. Louis about sixty miles, a small town, um, I was born and they adopted me. [00:31:57]But our families remained friends, so fast forward -- we used to vacation together when we were little kids and everything. So fast forward, I guess it was 1980, my -- I had married, and I had four chil -- three children, and my husband was an orthodontist on a big game hunt in the Yukon, and he was killed in a plane crash. So I was expecting my last baby, and, um, Dennis' mother and I had remained good friends over the years, and so two years after my husband died, and actually two years after her husband died, Dennis came to St. Louis to visit his mom and go on -- he was going on a trip with his brother.

[00:32:44]And so she said, "Well, you haven't seen the boys for years. Why don't we go out to dinner?" So we did, and Dennis and I were reacquainted. I was a widow and he was divorced, and we started dating, and we decided we really kind of liked each other, but what are we going to do with this situation, 'cause I'm not moving to Alaska. And especially after my husband had been killed here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, I didn't like the idea.

[00:33:12]DENNIS CORRINGTON: First thing she said is, "You can't have an airplane and date me." I said, "All right. It's for sale." Because her husband got killed in a small airplane.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And I had one.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So anyway, it was --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, you had one at the time?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah. It was an interesting match. And so finally, after several periods of off-and-on, he called and said, "How about a compromise?" And so I compromised. [00:33:44]We eloped in Skagway in 1984 and moved here at that time, and came back and forth every year since then. So I was just saying today how difficult it is. My -- I didn't want to take my kids away from their grandparents because I -- my only brother had been killed, and I was an only child. And my husband's --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- family didn't -- they had two kids, and so it was a big loss for them to lose their son, and I just thought, you know, I can't -- can't take them away, so I stayed. [00:34:20]I said, "Well, we've got to at least do part of the time in St. Louis." And it's gotten more and more that it's like seven, eight months in Skagway, and four months in Missouri, you know. Or visiting our kids now that most of 'em are married.

[00:34:34]KAREN BREWSTER: But when you moved up here, your kids were still in school?

NANCY CORRINGTON: They were all with us, yeah. They came with --

KAREN BREWSTER: So they came here for the summer --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Every summer. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- and then school back in St. Louis?

NANCY CORRINGTON: I would go to -- well, Dennis' wife, ex-wife, had remarried, and his children, his two kids were living in Minnesota, so what happened at that time was I'd pick -- I'd come up to open the stores in April. We'd get everything set. I'd go back. I'd pick up the kids in St. Louis, the kids in Minnesota, and come here. And then we'd be here all summer until they had to go back to school, then I'd take 'em back to school, then I'd fly back and close the stores.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So that was -- and I mean, we do a lot of traveling because of that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Quite the compromise.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It was quite a compromise.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It was.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I mean, it would be so much easier to just live in one place.

[00:35:23]KAREN BREWSTER: But now, once your kids all grew up and moved on, you still chose not to live here during the winter?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Correct. Because our mothers were alive. Both of them had Alzheimer's, and we tried bringing them up here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It didn't work. They were so out of their element.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It just didn't work. And so then, um, after they passed, we still had kids -- we have one that's 28. So she's married now, but she was still little and, you know, so we didn't want to take her out of her school.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And then you had grandkids?

NANCY CORRINGTON: It was -- and then grandkids. And that's the one reason we still -- I mean, I love to be here this time of year 'cause it's quiet.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And I can get a lot of work done, and, um, you know, everybody's in a pretty good mood. The weather's usually good, and it's a nice time to be here, but, um, I don't know, it's been quite a journey.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Something to do.

[00:36:22]KAREN BREWSTER: That's a -- that's a good love story, though. I like that story.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It is.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's very sweet.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Twenty -- yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: He gave up his airplane for you.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Not only his airplane, he gave up -- I mean, he loves Alaska. He -- that was a tough thing. He said, "Do you know how hard I tried to get out of Missouri?" But, um, and he always -- he tells his stories about his -- he always says he was a high school dropout, and he actually was. He had -- he was a month from graduating, and his art teacher told him he'd never graduate him because he -- they had an argument over the value of art, and I guess Dennis wouldn't compromise. He said it's worth whatever a willing buyer is going to pay. Anyway, um, so --

[00:37:13]KAREN BREWSTER: But it's interesting. Then you ended up selling art.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And he ended up selling art. That's why I -- I mention it because that --

KAREN BREWSTER: That's funny.

NANCY CORRINGTON: That is exactly -- he was going to be a teacher. That was the way he was headed, but he's -- he ended up -- I think you went into the army right away, didn't you?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: After -- after --

KAREN BREWSTER: After high school?

NANCY CORRINGTON: High school. He -- he enlisted when he was seventeen. And his father had just died that year, so it was kind of a not great year, but, um, then he went -- came back and --

KAREN BREWSTER: That would've been Vietnam?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Uh, it was af -- before Vietnam.

KAREN BREWSTER: Af -- before.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Before.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Before Vietnam.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[00:37:50]NANCY CORRINGTON: So that -- well, that was '60, 1960, 'cause your dad died in '59. And so anyway, he decided when he was in the army that that wasn't what he wanted to do for the rest of his life, so he came back and went to college. And then he got drafted for the Bay of Pigs, didn't you?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Or not drafted. You were already in. You were in the reserves then.

KAREN BREWSTER: Recalled.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And then he got recalled for Bay of Pigs, and then he went back again and finished college and then went on to get his master's degree in high school administration. So he always says he's a high school dropout. He doesn't tell the rest of it.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I was.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you've done very well for a high school dropout.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You bet.

[00:38:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you were talking about building the new buildings.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: But they all look like they're period buildings. I wouldn't, you know --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Well, that's the --

KAREN BREWSTER: So that's the requirement?

NANCY CORRINGTON: No, that's Dennis.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: That's --

NANCY CORRINGTON: That is Dennis.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Well, it should look like --

NANCY CORRINGTON: He wanted everything to look like an old building. Like this is the old --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Look at that wall.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: The BPOE, and I -- I wish we had time to take you through the hotel because it's really neat. It's been totally restored.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:39:03]NANCY CORRINGTON: And, um, he just -- he's just always had this real knack for bringing things back to life. And in the hotel, um, it -- it -- well, we have the museum in the hotel now, his Corrington Museum of Alaskan History, which is all the scrimshaw tusks telling the history of Alaska.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, cool.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And that is -- actually that was born out of his situation in Nome when the -- I guess it was 1973, the Marine Mammal Act --

KAREN BREWSTER: Protection Act, yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- came about, and he at that time was in possession of how many tusks? Thirty --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Oh, forty.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Thirty-eight, forty tusks, ivory tusks, and he couldn't do anything with them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Raw tusks.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Raw tusks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And I mean, he could have them because they were legal.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: They were legitimate.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Legit.



NANCY CORRINGTON: But he didn't know what he could do with them, because he couldn't

--

KAREN BREWSTER: That makes it difficult.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- you know, what am I going to do with all these raw tusks? So they were all banded and tagged, and he decided he would do the history of Alaska in scrimshaw on the tusks, and they are gorgeous. And so he did the --

[00:40:16]KAREN BREWSTER: So did you do the art on them, or you hired somebody to do --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I hired artists.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But he drew, like, he did all the research, and then he would draw a picture on the tusk, and then the artist would do, you know, the more definitive --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Shading.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And nicer art, but that didn't always happen. He had one artist that had a stroke, or two of them, actually, that had strokes.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And so he drew out his stick figures and everything, and that's how it came back to him. So in the museum, they're called bloopers. They're our bloopers. But yeah, there's --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: He tried.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's been a --

KAREN BREWSTER: That's a cool idea.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Quite a journey. But -- and it's beautiful. I have -- I have a book. I'll grab that real quick if you want to take a peak.

(Nancy goes to find the book)

[00:41:08]KAREN BREWSTER: So I know that now, aren't there historic building requirements in downtown Skagway, that things have to look a certain way and meet certain standards?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Were you involved in setting that up?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Uh, not really, but from the way that I built those up, somebody else would like it and do it, and somebody else would like it. And there was a group here that belonged to the city, I forget what they called them. They were --

KAREN BREWSTER: The commission? The Historic District Commission?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Exactly. Exactly. [00:41:52]And we didn't really pay much attention to them because they had their heads up their butt, and the gal that was in charge of it hated me. I don't know why. I never did anything, but anything that ever came up, they'd always say, "No, you can't do that."

(Nancy comes back)

KAREN BREWSTER: The Historic District.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh. We've had -- well, we don't have any trouble anymore. But these are the tusks, and that's the book.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. Oh, neat. Wow. Yeah, well, that's what I was wondering, is that you started your buildings before that commission --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- came along and made people do things?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Not all of them, but some of them.

KAREN BREWSTER: But the beginnings, right. So you were kind of ahead of your time.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I've always been ahead of my time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Sounds like it. Cool. [00:42:44]Now, so you never served on that commission?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did Nancy?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, ok. Well, this book, it looks beautiful. That's really cool. I'll have to look at it more closely. [00:43:04]So the Golden North Hotel is now the museum?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Uh, correct.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or is it also a hotel still?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Hm?

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you still have it as a hotel?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Oh, no. No. It's -- we're that close to opening it up and doing it, but it's -- it's, uh, three -- three stories. The only way you can go up is with stairs.

KAREN BREWSTER: Stairs.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: So right off the top, you know, somebody's gonna sue you because they can't go up there, and you can't do that, and you have to put an elevator in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And it's going to cost you, you know, uh, big money, and it's a pain in the ass.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: If you have something like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:43:49]DENNIS CORRINGTON: And people want it to be a different way, and they want you to spend all of your money to do it, and it's easier to say, no. Screw it. It's -- you want to come see it, here. It's out there. It's out there. Take a picture of it. And some people want to come through and go through and take pictures, and we -- we dilly-dallied along it because my -- my -- my gut is, stay the hell away from it. What are they gonna make? They're gonna pay three bucks or four bucks to walk through it. Somebody's gonna fall down the stairs. It doesn't have an elevator.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And the first guy coming in with a -- with a, you know, problem.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:44:34]NANCY CORRINGTON: We're in the process of moving to the hotel.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: We're opening it up as a tour next year.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's what I was just asking Dennis --

NANCY CORRINGTON: So.

KAREN BREWSTER: If you have it as an actual hotel, but it sounds like you're going to make it a period museum of what it looked like in its heyday.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Exactly. But see, this is what he started with the log cabin.

DENNIS AND NANCY CORRINGTON

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KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And then he added that, and then when we got married, we added the green part.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, because the way it is now is that tower in the corner.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But, and I can't even -- I don't even know where all these pictures are.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It's still here.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I think I must've taken them up to the hotel already. But our Skagway Bazaar, you know, he always took a theme, and this -- if you look on Sixth Avenue, the Skagway Bazaar has this look.

KAREN BREWSTER: That look of the old building.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Of everything, um, and then --

KAREN BREWSTER: So in that other picture, is that you on this --

NANCY CORRINGTON: That's him on the dog bike. He used to do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: The dog bike.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I can't believe I can't find those pictures.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, that's a great picture. So you were advertising your store?

NANCY CORRINGTON: He got in trouble for that.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes.

[00:45:33]KAREN BREWSTER: So you're on a bicycle being pulled by dogs like a dogsled, kinda?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did you -- did you create this contraption?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I created that, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I also ran the Iditarod.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And, uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: But not on a bicycle?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Not on a bicycle. That would've been better.

[00:45:53]KAREN BREWSTER: So Nancy said you got in trouble for doing this advertising?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Um, yeah. There were people that had -- they were all bent out of shape because when somebody comes to town, they come on the boats.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: So what I do, is I build that bicycle.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I go down to the dock, and the boat's tying up. And I'm going back and forth on the thing in a big furry, buttoned --

KAREN BREWSTER: You had your big fur parka and fur hat.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And my parka and my dogs and everybody on the boat are off the rails taking pictures like this, and when they finally got off, they wanted to go where that thing was.

KAREN BREWSTER: They saw Corrington's and went, "Oh, what's that?"

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And all the competition just blew their brains. They just tried to -- nobody should be able to go on the dock. He can't have that dog on there. They just don't think out of the belt.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And so.

[00:47:01]KAREN BREWSTER: So you had to stop doing it?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I did it -- I did it for a few years. No, because I don't care what the hell they think. You know, if you want to work as hard as me, go ahead.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: But --

(Nancy returns, door closes)

NANCY CORRINGTON: I guess I did take those up.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And I guess I still have it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, you do?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I mean, I could -- I could fire it up any day, but I don't want to.

NANCY CORRINGTON: This is just a -- of the log cabin when it was --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, that's the log cabin.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Remember that one?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:47:25]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, yeah, I was gonna say, that's what it takes to be a successful businessman, right? To get your name out in front.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Oh, absolutely.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah, it does.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It was fun.

[00:47:34]NANCY CORRINGTON: He has a -- a history that is amazing. I mean, he's all -- some of the things that he's done in his lifetime, it's pretty crazy. And it's not just because he's my husband. He's kind of a bigger-than-life person, and uh, just --

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it sounds -- yeah, I mean, all the businesses you've had here. And so I was asking about the Historic District issues.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that -- when you -- the first buildings, there was no Historic District requirements or anything like that.

NANCY CORRINGTON: No. That was for Corrington's. But that was the only one that didn't have some restrictions.

[00:48:07]KAREN BREWSTER: And so, how did you deal with the restrictions with the new buildings, and how you got along with that? I know that Historic District has some push and pull.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's so much better than it was.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah, they got rid of --

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's very cooperative. They try really hard to work with you. And, you know, I feel like sometimes when I'm before the district for something, they're so -- they're so nice and so helpful today, compared to what they were when everything -- you knew when you went in you'd have to take a pill for acid indigestion.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It was a battle.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Because you knew, it didn't matter what it was. And so now when I go in, I kinda have -- I know the --

KAREN BREWSTER: Know what they're gonna ask.

NANCY CORRINGTON: The routine, but I also know that I -- I need to get rid of that reaction of, everything's gonna be a no, because --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It used to be that way.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You go in prepared for battle because that's how it always was, and it's so pleasant now because they really try. I'm not sure what it was. It was used as a retaliatory thing at one time. Um --

[00:49:20]KAREN BREWSTER: Do you have examples of things you wanted to do that they said no?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, tons. I have a file that big. We've had attorneys involved. I mean, ridiculous, ridiculous things. And I mean, even people now that were previously on the commission have said to us, "Oh my gosh, we hated -- when you were going to bring something in, we knew it was going to be a battle. Whatever it was, if Dennis Corrington did it, it was gonna be a battle." And it was. [00:49:49]As a matter of fact, one time in 19 -- let me think. I'm 71, so in 19 -- I guess it was, uh, '90 -- '96, I guess, Dennis decided -- or maybe it was even before that. Dennis said, "Ok. Let's get an old car. We're gonna get an old car and bring it up here." Because at that time, we just had fairly newly paved streets in Skagway 'cause we had dirt streets until, I guess it was '84.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yep.

[00:50:25]NANCY CORRINGTON: And so anyway, he said, "Let's just get an old-time car, and I'll park it in front of the -- the shop." Because what was happening was, we had a lot of over-the-road traffic at that time. And so they would bring a big old camper and park in front of our store. Well, of course at that time, it was a little building like that, and it would cover the whole store. You know, so he went to the -- I guess it wasn't the Historic District Commission, I don't know who it was. Planning and Zoning or something.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah. P&Z.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But anyway, he wanted to have them put a "No Parking," or, you know, "No Overnight Parking."

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, to try to keep people from -- and they would empty their gray water in the street right in front of our building.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And sleep there all night for three or four days.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And sleep there all night, and so he said, "Well, we'll go -- we'll get an old car." [00:51:17]So we were looking for cars, and we were in an old, I guess it was an antique car place, and they had a Rolls Royce Corniche convertible. And it was my -- well, it was forty years. I was forty.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah, but it was ivory color.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So it was quite some time ago.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, perfect.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Ivory convertible, and it was beautiful. It was, of course, a car that old, it was in 1976, and so it wasn't really that expensive, but it looked like a brand-new beautiful Rolls Royce. And so he said, "Well, we're gonna drive it to Skagway." So we did. We had a really fun over-the-road trip in a Rolls Royce convertible.

KAREN BREWSTER: Waving the whole way.

[00:52:02]NANCY CORRINGTON: And uh, I think we had dice in the front. Somebody had given --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yep, big pair of dice.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So we brought it up, and lo and behold, af -- 'cause that was our way of keeping the campers out, they passed a "No Parking Zone" as soon as we brought the car to town. And so we couldn't park it in front. We either had to park it in front of Kirmse's or on Fifth Avenue. So we messed with that for a while, and finally, we kept it here in the winter, you know, we didn't drive it back and forth. And finally, Dennis said, "Ok. Let's just take it home and sell it 'cause it's not going to do any good to keep it here." 'Cause we can't use it for the purpose we wanted to use it. So we drove it back to Missouri to sell it, and guess what. They passed a -- another ordinance that you could park in front of Corrington's. So --

[00:53:02]KAREN BREWSTER: Do you think they did it on purpose?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Just to mess with you?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, yeah. There was one particular person that just did not like us. People don't like, um, often don't like success. Well, same thing with, don't wash your windows because now the rest of us --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- have to wash our windows. And pretty much, the architect that we use set the tone for the rest of the buildings in town. Almost everybody in town used him.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: After we built our buildings. And Dennis would get an old picture out, just like this one, and say, "Ok. Let's do this." This one was the old BPOE building. It's extended.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's not the same size, but if you look at it, everything fits.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, it's the same.

[00:53:44]KAREN BREWSTER: And that's the purpose of the Historic District, was to make --  
DENNIS CORRINGTON: To make it look historical.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- everything match the theme of the historic period.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Sure.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: At the time, right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But you can't afford to match the way the Park Service matches.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, if we could do that, that would be wonderful, but we can't. I mean, even -- we painted the Golden North Hotel, and did some repairs on the roof and the dome last year, and it was \$78,000.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[00:54:11]NANCY CORRINGTON: I mean, we -- you know, a regular business person can't do that. Whereas the Park Service hires ten more people, and they paint a building --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- you know, every three or four years, and it looks pristine.

[00:54:22]KAREN BREWSTER: So other historic requirements. Did you have to paint your buildings a certain way?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Certain colors, uh, that fit within the historical palette, which I don't object to. They had a few things that when -- when they had the person that was always unhappy when we brought something to the table, when she was still on, there was a building across the street from the hotel, adjacent but across the street, um, and they painted it McDonald's red and yellow. And how that ever got passed is beyond me. Now they've put some signage up that's kind of tempered it a little bit, but it certainly stands out.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Nobody misses the building, but it was really awful when it first went in. Nobody could believe that that got through. [00:55:15]But, uh, just like if you change the paint colors, you have to take it through the district. If you just repaint, you don't.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

NANCY CORRINGTON: They, you know, they're pretty liberal about that. I mean, I have -- I can't even tell you how much better it is to work with it now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But I was thinking, what it was like in the old days and what things they were requiring that were so, kind of, difficult.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Things that probably were worth a lawsuit if you wanted to go through the problem. One -- one thing they said is you can't put anything on your windows.

KAREN BREWSTER: You mean, like writing?

NANCY CORRINGTON: If it touches your window on the inside. So if you wanted to put a sign on your window, unless it was an inch away from your window, you couldn't do it. And finally, I think our city attorney said, you know, let's -- you gotta quit pushing that one. That's not gonna work.

[00:56:05]KAREN BREWSTER: Now, could you write on your windows?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Mm-mm.

KAREN BREWSTER: So your signs for your stores, your advertisement, it's on a signboard hanging --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: On the outside.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, you could, like put a logo or something like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Course, it had to be passed by the district.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it had to be a certain style?

[00:56:22]NANCY CORRINGTON: But when we had the hotel operating, we had a bar, a restaurant, a microbrewery. We tried to keep it in keeping with what it was historically. So we had a big problem with -- it's not air -- it wasn't air conditioned. So people wanted their windows open. And the premier rooms are in the front of the hotel. So we had a bar in the front of the hotel, and then outside, we had a patio with a fence around it and, you know, we could serve alcohol there, but it had to be fenced in. And we tried to keep it pretty quiet, but we had people -- I mean, people go to bed at 7:00. You know, and they didn't -- you know, you couldn't keep the noise down.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And they'd complain at the front desk and, you know, we want a refund on our room. It's noisy, it's this. So we decided to have our architect draw up a false front for the hotel that I -- that mirrored the hotel exactly. The only difference would've been that if you looked at from the side, you could tell that it had been added on. But it had an original entrance, an arctic entrance, that was probably twelve feet long. This would've had to be, I think, twenty-five feet or something like that, maybe a little longer.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

[00:57:42]NANCY CORRINGTON: And it looked exactly like the hotel, and nothing would've been disturbed on the inside. The same wall would've been there, but it would've just been an enclosed bistro-type thing. And it passed. And we were like, oh good. 'Cause -- 'cause that was going to make our decision whether to keep the hotel or not, because of the, you know, having to refund money and all that kind of stuff. [00:58:07]So this one particular person that was chair of the commission came back from a ten-day vacation, and she got back on the tenth day, which is the limit for anybody protesting something that has been passed. She did a model of the hotel and took it to Planning and Zoning, and they turned it down. And we took it back to Planning and Zoning, and, uh, anyway -- it went through Planning and Zoning. It went through the assembly. And it was totally kiboshed, and it was something that they had agreed to allow us to do. And so that's when Dennis said, "Ok. Fine. We're -- we're taking the hotel -- we're gonna close the hotel. We're gonna turn it into retail. It doesn't make enough money to warrant our investment, and we're done."

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And so that's basically what happened then.

[00:59:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, running a hotel is a whole 'nother operation.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Absolutely.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, well, and the bar and the microbrewery and all that. I mean, it just --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Parking the cars.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But even down to the opening the microbrewery, Dennis was always an historian, so he, um, liked Captain Cook's journals. He bought an original edition of all of his journals. And so in the journals, he talked about making spruce-tip beer.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And he did it because his -- his people were getting scurvy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And they needed something. So he made spruce-tip beer. So Dennis brought spruce-tip beer back. And now it's everywhere.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's everywhere, yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But he is the one that brought it back in 1997.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And we used to take all of our people out and pick the little spruce tips --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Pick the -- pick the --



NANCY CORRINGTON: At the beginning of the season. But he always had -- he was always thinking and moving and had ideas like that constantly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:00:07]NANCY CORRINGTON: And, you know, it's kind of a shame because you -- you don't want to -- I mean, people don't get honored, usually, within their lifetime, but he has done so much in this town. And, you know, and of course, there's always jealousy if you're successful. That's -- people think you're just in it for -- and if we were in it for just the money, we wouldn't go to all the extra expense with what we do with our buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And I mean, it's -- it's the pride, the personal pride and joy that you take in making things like that.

[01:00:41]KAREN BREWSTER: Do you -- that sort of entrepreneurial, that drive and all this ideas that you have, do you know where that comes from? Like, were your parents like that or your grandparents?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Um, no.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I don't think so.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's just who you are.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah. I think so.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah. I think his brother was more academic. He had a full scholarship to Yale, and he did all kinds of things with computers before it was -- you know, he said, "I'm going to be a millionaire before I'm thirty." And he was a millionaire way before he was thirty, 'cause he sold something to IBM, and you know.

[01:01:22]KAREN BREWSTER: So you both were ahead of your time in different ways.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Pretty much. And Dennis was always an adventurer. I don't know if he told you about his trip to South America, but he walked from St. Louis, uh, Missouri, to Bogotá, Colombia.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh my goodness. No. You didn't mention that.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: We hadn't gotten there.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Just for fun.

KAREN BREWSTER: Just for fun.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Didn't get to that.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

NANCY CORRINGTON: He did. And that was an interesting time in his life.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It was very interesting.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But you know --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I learned Spanish.

[01:01:48]NANCY CORRINGTON: You asked another thing about the -- the HDC. This is a good one. We had flower -- uh, wrought-iron flower pots. They held pots. They were containers for the -- the pots. And then it had a bench across it. And it was behind -- they were behind the fence when we had the brewery, and we did have two in front. And Stewart Rothman, who was a photographer and a friend of ours from Fairbanks, came down, and he photographed the hotel, and he took pictures of all of it. And it was 1998 when he did that.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

[01:02:28]NANCY CORRINGTON: And um, I got a call from the commissioner of the HDC. At this time, it was a man. And he said, "You don't have a permit for your flower pots in front of the hotel." Well, we had taken the fence down because one side was leased out to a jewelry store. And I said, "No, they've been there since we put it -- " "Oh no, they haven't." And I said, "I've got a picture taken by a professional photographer that shows the benches." Now the benches, the wood cracked on the benches, so we just had the containers and a couple of the other -- of the benches had to be thrown away, but we still used the containers, the wrought-iron containers. And they were very Victorian-looking, you know, with the flowers and everything and the wrought-iron green. [01:03:15]So we ended up having to go to court with the magistrate for an entire day to prove that those pots had been there. I mean, can you imagine?

KAREN BREWSTER: So they were grandfathered in.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, they were grandfathered. They changed the law in '99, and that's when they cited us for it. And they wouldn't believe us, even with the picture.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

NANCY CORRINGTON: This -- the head of this commission would not believe it. And so we had the chief of police, we had the magistrate, uh, Dennis, me, and I don't know who all else on this hearing. I mean, just wasted time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Just silly time.

[01:03:52]KAREN BREWSTER: So who serves on that commission?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Now --

KAREN BREWSTER: Not by name, but like, the -- are they local people? Are they Park Service people?

NANCY CORRINGTON: The local -- normally -- no, Park Service isn't allowed. They're a consultant. You know, and that's nice to have somebody. In fact, Susannah, I'm trying to think of her last name.

KAREN BREWSTER: Dowd.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Dowd. Sent me a -- a thing about awnings because we've done awnings. And you know, we've -- we went through all kinds of hell over awnings, but anyway, we do have our awnings. And I need to replace them. And so I said, "Would it be all right if we use the same material if we can get them? And if not, can we use the material that's down the street at -- on Third Avenue?" And so they got into this discussion of our striped awnings. Ok, well, the striped awnings had been approved in 1997, so, of course, they are. But she was good enough to copy this stuff and send it to me to remind me. You know, and I knew that they were acceptable because they were on the Clayson building, and that was one of the buildings we almost copied, but then we didn't get that piece of property. But anyhow, just -- they're just so much more helpful now. It used to be like, they just wait until you could do something wrong and jump on you. You know, and now, it's like, well, that font isn't approved anymore, but we have one that's almost like it, so you can use that one. And that's the -- it's a totally different, totally, totally different tenor.

[01:05:23]KAREN BREWSTER: And why do you think it's changed?

NANCY CORRINGTON: I think because the two people that were causing the problems beforehand were on a power trip, and there was for some reason, either jealousy or -- I have no idea.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, they made it difficult for you, but they made it difficult for everybody.

NANCY CORRINGTON: For everybody.

KAREN BREWSTER: They made the same rules.

NANCY CORRINGTON: For everybody. We were really a target, but there were more than just us that -- I mean, people dreaded going before the HDC.

[01:05:51]KAREN BREWSTER: You still have to use the certain type of font in writing for your signs?

NANCY CORRINGTON: You do, which I actually think it's a good thing. You know, I -- I don't think they could -- I mean, if it's not an historic building, I -- I -- I think that they shouldn't have a whole lot of say over what you do, but I mean, a door got placed in one of the buildings on Fourth Avenue, and it was a all-glass, you know, panes, and that's not historic, and it looks so out of place. So I'm kind of, you know -- I don't know how it got through. But I think keeping that mentality. Nobody wants it to not look old and historic.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Everybody really does. We're not Seattle or you know --

[01:06:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it's what the tourists come to experience, right?

NANCY CORRINGTON: They do. And that's what -- I mean, I think most of everything -- I mean, our buildings are all fairly historical in nature, but the hotel that has the -- the museum which is very under-rated and under -- well, I don't know if it's under-rated --

KAREN BREWSTER: Under-visited.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But it's just under-visited, um, that is -- when we first opened that, in 1986, I think it was, Princess Tours approached us and said, "You know, there's nothing to do in this town." The train was still closed. It was before it reopened. And they said, "You gotta get that museum going." So we did. We got it finished. We opened it. We had a big party and invited all the tour guides in town. And then the lady who was running the Skagway Museum, the city museum, got all up in arms because we were opening a museum. And at that time, what did we charge, two dollars?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I think so.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And she complained about that, but she also told this person in charge of Princess Tours that if they brought people through our museum that -- I don't even know what all. I forgot what he told -- what this man told me, but they wouldn't -- they wouldn't take on the water or the waste or do whatever. You know, there were repercussions. [01:08:13]And then he said, it's because it's attached to a retail store, you know. So that's why the city didn't want that to happen. Now the Park Service is also in competition in they're starting to sell things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, so that's a competitive thing, too, but, I mean, that doesn't hurt our business. It's not enough to make a big difference. The real estate is probably the biggest thing. And they don't lease everything out, either.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, a lot of it's just, uh, for tours. [01:08:46]But then you have the Mascot, which is a very nice little building, and it has bathrooms, but they don't really want to advertise that it has bathrooms. 'Cause we operate free bathrooms in our bazaar, and holy smoke, is it costly to do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: We do it to attract people to the back, and right now it's not run the way we'd like for it to be run, but it -- but by the time you buy all the toilet paper and pay \$6000 a summer for somebody to clean it, and -- you know, it's hardly worth it. So I can understand why they don't want to keep it open. But we desperately need that -- the infrastructure to keep up with the cruise travel.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Because we're just getting way too many people in this town.

[01:09:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Has there been any discussion amongst the city or whomever to limit the tour -- the cruise ships?

NANCY CORRINGTON: No, more to get the cruise ships because the more -- now that we, you know, the White Pass lease expires in 2023.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And so, we did not control our docks since 1968, I think, is when that lease was written. And White Pass controlled all of the tide lands. And at present value, in 2014 or '15, whenever this -- we really started examining it again, they were paying the city \$126,000 a year for the entire tide lands, everything.

KAREN BREWSTER: Who's they?

NANCY CORRINGTON: White Pass.

KAREN BREWSTER: White Pass, ok.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm. So they proposed a new lease, and that would be, um, I think that would've been, I think it was \$240 -- it would be up to \$240,000 by the end of another twenty-year lease. [01:10:47]And we had people -- a few people in town that were smart enough to put the numbers together, and they said, you're talking -- we're giving up four million a year. More than four million a year. What we'd be getting if we controlled our own docks is amazing. So now we have a new company in, and we'll see what happens. But you have to be wary of, I think too many people in town think, oh, the city can't do it, or we don't have the capability. Well, White Pass paid cruise line agencies to take care of it. Um, there's no reason that the city couldn't hire somebody to take care of it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But the problem is the real -- the entrepreneurs, the people that are really capable of putting that kind of thing together, leave in the winter, and they're not allowed to -- and even people that are here in the winter leave in the winter and go -- that live here and have no other home, go away.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So it really limits the experience, the expertise. You don't get businessmen on. We have one now. But almost everybody else up to this point was -- worked for White Pass.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, and so the conflict of interest was very, very prevalent, and even though a lot of the people would say, "Well no, that we're being neutral." How can you be neutral when your boss is sitting in the audience? You know.

[01:12:18]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I mean the question is, is there a point where, you know, 10,000 tourists a day, you know, what's too many? Is there such a thing as too many cruise ship tourists here every day?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, I think there will be if we don't build the infrastructure. I mean, it can't hurt -- now the other thing that could hurt is if -- if we do give away the tide lands again for another twenty-five years, and they build gift shops and touristy things on the tide lands. That would kill the Historic District.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And that could happen, you know. Right now, the ordinance is they can't.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But you never know.

[01:12:56]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and it seems like the Historic District, I mean, the downtown here, businesses could fight against it.

NANCY CORRINGTON: We could, but then if you -- and we would, there's no doubt about it, but then if you go up and down the street and you find out how many people actually own buildings, there aren't that many. Like the person over here on Seventh Avenue, Tony Heckle, is an absentee landlord. He comes maybe for a few weeks in the summer, but he has somebody in town running his store. That does happen a lot. I mean, we've been here every year.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But not everybody is.

[01:13:34]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, how has the businesses changed since -- you know, 1976 this was a different place than it when you started.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, now with so many cruise ships coming in, there's more jewelry businesses.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh gosh, yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: How does that affect your businesses?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It does in a lot of ways. The one point that you didn't step on is the, uh, I want to call 'em, what are the -- ?

NANCY CORRINGTON: What, hon?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Oh, it'll come up. Just a second here. Um, that -- oh, what you wanted to talk about.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Which has to do with the --

KAREN BREWSTER: How the types of businesses have changed.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Well, yeah. They have, what do you call 'em, the Smokey the Bears. All the guys --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, the Park Service? Park Service.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Park Service, ok, thank you. Yeah, I couldn't bring it up.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's ok.

[01:14:49]DENNIS CORRINGTON: The Park Service is come in, and they've taken building after building after building after building. And get money, and they fix it up, and they have uh, ten -- ten or fifteen Smokey the Bear guys that every -- in twenty minutes we're gonna have a --

NANCY CORRINGTON: All the tours. All the free tours.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Another tour. And everybody'll get together, and then they're down the street here, or they're down over there. What the hell is this all about? They're in here, and, you know, I've got -- I watch 'em go by my doors, and other people watch the doors, because it's a Smokey the Bear, and they're coming around and it's -- it's just bullshit.

KAREN BREWSTER: They're on a walking tour?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It's walking tours.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, that's gonna happen.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And it starts with one, and then there's two, and then there's three, and then there's twelve in there. They got their little hats and a group of twelve or fourteen people, and they walk 'em down the street, and they walk 'em over here. They walk 'em down the alleys. I mean --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And they bypass your business.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Exactly.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: It doesn't give them the freedom to go where they want?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It's -- no. It's -- it's, I mean, why all of a sudden? I mean, for -- for -- for the last sixty years, the people come and everybody gets a piece of the action. Right now, they've -- they've got all their stuff all over, and everybody's got their little hat.

[01:16:21]KAREN BREWSTER: And the cruise ship passengers go on those walking tours?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Some of them do. I mean, a lot of them do.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because I know the cruise ship passengers have limited time --

NANCY CORRINGTON: They do.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- and have their own controlled activities.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I don't feel that that takes that much away from us. How -- the balance in the gift shop tour businesses has been tipped a bit because a lot of people are here for the experience, and they don't really care about shopping, you know, which they're hardly -- when we opened the museum, there were hardly any tours. As I said, Princess came to us. Now there are so many tours, and they just keep opening, and I don't -- I don't even know how many we have, but I bet we have over fifty different types of tours. People that come in --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, you mean excursions?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Excursions.

KAREN BREWSTER: That the cruise ship people go on.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Walking.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Buses take --

KAREN BREWSTER: They go out to the glaciers?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, to Car -- to Carcross.

DENNIS AND NANCY CORRINGTON

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KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, they go --

NANCY CORRINGTON: They take them -- and once they go to Carcross, you never see 'em again because --

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and also, they go on the train, but then --

NANCY CORRINGTON: But the train -- the train -- the effect, I think, the overall effect of the train is it takes -- it kind of tempers that influx of too many people at one time 'cause it takes about half of them out, then it brings them back.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[01:17:38]NANCY CORRINGTON: The problem is, they take 'em down to the docks and unload down there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, they should leave them at this end of town and have them walk.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Right, yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And they never do -- they built a new station, turnaround station, I guess it is, down at the --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: On Fifteenth Street, but it doesn't --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Nobody gets off.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Then they still bus them back to the docks. [01:18:00]Then the other thing that the city did, I think, in -- in keeping with the Park Service, is they decided to do a stream walk, and it's behind Broadway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So everybody goes down -- if they take that tour --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- they go down. And it's -- you know, it can be self-guided or whatever. But if they take that, then they come out on Seventh Avenue, and they either go one -- down one side or the other, but they won't go back and forth.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:18:25]NANCY CORRINGTON: So that has actually hurt instead of helped. And, you know, we've proposed many things, like an arch for this end of town that's in keeping with the gold rush, something that kind of confines the Historic District.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Defines it. And we had 200-and-some-odd signatures, and it was a different council at that time, but they just tabled it and wouldn't even --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, but something to attract people to this end of town?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Exactly.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: To -- to -- to come to this end of the town.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And you know, it probably could be done for a quarter of a million dollars, which is a drop in the bucket compared to the \$18 million public safety building and the \$18 million swimming pool they want to put in, and the rec -- you know, it's like. I mean, you have to -- you have to understand that it's -- it takes -- you can't just keep investing in things that don't make money. Everything the city has invested in, the public safety building, the library, which of course is good, and not that the public safety building isn't good, but the upkeep and maintenance on that building is more than this city can really afford. And they want to build a retirement home for -- or senior citizens

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apartment place. It would house six people, plus one person to monitor it, and they want to spend \$7 million on it. You could give people money and they'd do better than that.

[01:19:55]KAREN BREWSTER: And is the tourist economy enough to support the infrastructure?

NANCY CORRINGTON: For now it is. But if they ever do away with the head tax.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, there's a head tax?

NANCY CORRINGTON: If there's ever an issue that we -- and the city doesn't get all that. They get some, but not -- I think they get two and White Pass gets eight.

KAREN BREWSTER: So the rest goes -- oh, ok.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um, but you know, if they ever do away with that, and we're not getting that money in -- and that's why we want to keep the docks --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- for the city itself because if they have that revenue, then they've got it, and they can save, and they don't have to spend every penny that comes in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And that's -- you know, you've got to operate, and no government does, but like a business if -- if you want to be fluid.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: If you want to be able to survive. [01:20:48]And I think people here think it's never-ending. And we've been through it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: We know when it gets bad. Boy, in 2008 and '09, it got bad.

KAREN BREWSTER: You really noticed a difference?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh my goodness, we did. We really did. And I mean, it's gradually crept back up. Usually, it's slower here. You know, it doesn't happen as quickly as it does in the Lower 48.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But once it catches on, it takes the same amount of time to go back.

[01:21:17]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, well, I mean, taking a cruise and coming to -- an Alaskan cruise is an investment for somebody, so I can see that in 2008, 2009 --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- they didn't have those resources.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But the cruises got so cheap that they still came. We had people that would get on the cruise ships -- and this one man that you worked with on multiple occasions, seven times.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Just, he'd never get off. He just kept coming back, every -- well, I'll be back next week. I want to see if that -- if you'll give me a better price on that. And Dennis said, "No. Not gonna do it. It's not gonna go down." And then the last time he came in, he said, "Ok, I'll buy it." And Dennis said, "Sorry. It's sold."

[01:22:01]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I was wondering, like does the -- I noticed that one time I was here in May 2010.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm.



KAREN BREWSTER: It's just the beginning of a season, and these jewelry shops, the -- you know, not selling Alaskan gold or jade or things, but these outside -- quote-unquote "outside" jewelry shops connected with the tour companies, is my understanding.

NANCY CORRINGTON: They really aren't.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: No, no, no. They're -- they're -- they're coming out of the --

NANCY CORRINGTON: The Caribbean.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: The Caribbean.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But they're not connected. See, that's what everybody says, the tour companies own the jewelry stores, but they don't. They're -- they are independent. Now they might own them because of the advertising because, like, Diamonds International, at one time, I don't know if it's true, but they were reputed to pay over \$20 million in advertising. If that's actually true, if it's \$2 million, it's a lot in advertising.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

[01:23:03]NANCY CORRINGTON: And advertising does not work very well. It really doesn't. Because people -- with the hordes of people that are coming, they don't even know what town they're in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, there are very few, I'd say 10 percent really study where they're going and what they're going to do. And that 10 percent takes tours.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: They just follow the train.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: You know, or people walking.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But the -- the -- the pie has gotten larger, but the pieces of the pie are still about the same.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:23:33]NANCY CORRINGTON: And that's, I mean, all these things have contributed to what we're facing now, and, you know, we really don't know. There are a lot of unknowns in Skagway's future.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, business in general is probably like that. You never know.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Exactly.

[01:23:50]KAREN BREWSTER: But, yeah, I was wondering if those jewelry businesses, what effect they've had on the other businesses here?

NANCY CORRINGTON: The tourists don't like them 'cause they don't look -- the worst thing they can do, and we do have a couple of tenants, but they all wear suits, um, a lot of cologne, and smoke. And they stand out on the boardwalk, smoking and throwing their cigarettes in the street, and I guess most people, I don't care if you're an average American or who you are, that is offensive. [01:24:32]And if you -- but the, I mean, the jewelry stores, they're nice people, really nice people, but it just gives a different flavor to the town. But it's inevitable that that was going to happen eventually, because anybody that travels knows, like, people are going to St. Kitts. Steve Hites has his tourist train down there, and he's in business with another partner, but, you know, there -- and a lot of our jewelers here are moving to St. Kitts, and they're moving to all -- well, Mexico, but Mexico's not doing as well as it was.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Not as well. The Caribbean.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um, but even the Caribbean's not doing so well anymore.

K[01:25:14]AREN BREWSTER: But is there anything that the other businesses here, the community, could do to say, we don't want those jewelry stores coming in?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well.

KAREN BREWSTER: We don't like the feel of them?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: No. I don't think you could stop them.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: You could stop 'em from stepping out of their door, but you -- they -

-

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, honey --

KAREN BREWSTER: You don't want to control who can have a business?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Dennis -- Dennis took it to the city council. Now he's run for the council once, and the mayor appointed him one time, but they won't because of the -- you have to be here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. The residential.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So. And even if you're here eight months, that doesn't --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But I did some research on it and found out that people are gone all the time, but they get excused absences. [01:26:02]But anyway, bottom line, um, when it comes to the -- I think you tried, probably in oh, maybe 2008. No, it was sooner than that. Probably 2003, '02 or '03, he went to the council, and he said, "I'd like to suggest that we put a cap on the number of jewelry stores that are" -- he said, I'm hurting myself to do that because I can lease to them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But it's hurting our business in general to have too many stores, too many jewelry stores. And they said, "We can't do that. You know, you can't -- "

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Can't control it.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's stifling of business.

NANCY CORRINGTON: That's -- but actually they could because the lady that runs the Red Onion Saloon has a moratorium on walking tours. Nobody but the Park Service and her can have walking tours. And so they can do it. It's not that they can't. It's just that they don't want to. [01:27:06]But I think it would be helpful if there were a limit. I think we have twenty-two now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I don't know how they all can stay in business.

NANCY CORRINGTON: They obviously can't. I mean, they -- they do turn over.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: There are a couple of really solid places, and they're some very reputable people, but you -- it just gives people the wrong feeling. It's not what they're -- you kind of have to --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: That you're not in Alaska.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: No. You have to assimilate into the culture. And if you don't, I mean, it's ok. I don't have a problem with a person not dressing the part, but we had this shop in Vail, Colorado, that our kids ran for a while, and boy, they came out of Boston College

and Columbia, and, you know, and they had their suits and their, you know -- and that lasted about two minutes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Because in Vail, Colorado, you better not look like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And they just -- they didn't get it. They were gonna be fancy, and all of a sudden, it was jeans and flannel shirts and, you know, cowboy boots.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And you had -- kind of, I mean, that makes people feel comfortable.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:28:15]NANCY CORRINGTON: And even in our own stores, we've made a couple of them -- basically, because we had to take over a jewelry store that we had leased out, we made it a little higher end and more exclusive looking and it has plants and all kinds of stuff because I like that kind of thing, but it's almost too fancy for Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: People like the rusted -- rusty, rugged look of the, you know -- they want to hear Johnny Cash and North to Alaska and --

[01:28:45]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I know that's what Alaskans want, but I didn't know if that's what you feel the cruise ship passengers want.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I definitely think they want that. Definitely. Um --

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you had mentioned earlier about recruiting employees.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: That you have to spend all year doing that. And how --

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's tough.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- housing is a problem, so where do you get your employees? And then what do you do with them in terms of housing?

NANCY CORRINGTON: We pray a lot. Most of -- what we started in 1998 was the work camper program, where you hire people that um, have -- they travel and work in different parts of the country, and that's how they come to see the country. I think, I would say seventy-five percent are remarriages, you know, they've -- maybe a divorce or a death or something, and they want to simplify their lives, and they sell everything and buy an RV and kind of travel to live.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: (singing) On the road again.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And so we just by happenstance bought an RV park -- or we developed an RV park, but we bought some property. [01:30:00]Again, somebody came to us and said, "I've got this property, and I really need the money, and I want to leave town." And we're saying, what will we do with it. We don't -- and so again, as I say, why would we want that? And Dennis goes, opportunity. So.

KAREN BREWSTER: We need a place to house our employees.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: All those --

NANCY CORRINGTON: So anyway, we built an RV park, and so these people come to work in Skagway, but it -- it used to work out better than it does now. Now, it's so expensive to get here with gas.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Or if you take the ferry, it's -- it's almost cost-prohibitive unless you just want to see Alaska. And so that's where we start, with the work campers, and we like them because they're at least in their late 40's.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was going to say, they're older people.

NANCY CORRINGTON: 50's.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: 40's, 50's.

NANCY CORRINGTON: They've never come to work drunk. They're always on time. All the things -- and they don't have to go back to college.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: They can stay 'til the end of their contract.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:30:56]NANCY CORRINGTON: So that for us works out very well. We always hire kids, too, a few kids.

KAREN BREWSTER: Local kids?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um, well. There aren't -- local kids don't really -- some of 'em work, but they all want to work for the railroad, where their -- the wages are a lot higher. And that's -- but we do. We hire anybody -- we love hiring locals, but there aren't enough to go around. That's the biggest problem. But we import some. We've had -- had a family from Joplin, Missouri, that came up every year for six years in a row, and they came because their grandparents were work campers. And then the next year, they brought their kids with them. Or their grandkids. So there's a lot of that. But housing is terrible.

KAREN BREWSTER: So your camping area is in town?

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's two miles out of town. It's Mile 2.2 --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Or something like that on the Klondike Highway.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Beautiful spot, on a river where you can catch the fish.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Our campers work, so they love it. And it has a clubhouse, and we reserve it for only our employees. And we used to charge, let's see, I think we used to charge \$150 for a parking space for the whole, you know, for each month for the summer, and now we charge nothing. And it costs about \$600 a month per parking place just to --

KAREN BREWSTER: For the hook-ups.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: The electricity hook-ups, and water.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But what they're used to doing is usually the husband and the wife both work, and then like at Disneyworld or someplace like that, then they charge them one salary for their parking place.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But it's a lot easier to get to Disneyworld than it is to Skagway, Alaska.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. [01:32:33]So -- so about how many employees do you have every summer for all your different businesses?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Right now, about thirty is our max. And that's just all retail and a couple of maintenance. And you've gotta have the maintenance.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: There's no way around that, but.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did you used to do all the maintenance yourself?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, yes.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: We've done a lot.

NANCY CORRINGTON: He used to crawl under buildings every year and get the water going, and drain the anti-freeze out of the pipes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And all the things that you have to do.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, for shutting down every winter and starting up again, it's a lot of work.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Uh, it's -- it is. It's really crazy. But it's, you know, it's part of what you have to do. Sprinkler systems are another big issue in Skagway because they are so expensive. And the city has generously given some assistance with that for a lot of people, but it -- I think now it's down to 30 percent, maybe, this year, and then 20, and then it'll be down to 10, and then none. But you have to have it.

KAREN BREWSTER: So sprinkler systems are mandatory?

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's mandatory. And they are so expensive. I'd say our maintenance on sprinkler systems is \$20,000 a year minimum.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, they have to be tested and inspected every year or something?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm. Every year. And honestly, in our museum, it would be ruined if the sprinkler went off. It'd be done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, I don't know. Our insurance doesn't treat it that way, but I mean, it would be --

KAREN BREWSTER: I mean, those are irreplaceable items.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, yeah. Unrecoverable. So.

[01:34:08]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you were talking about, you know, the difficulties with the Historic District, and you know, 2008 with the economic decline.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And all this work it takes to do all this. Why do you keep doing it? Why have you kept doing it? What keeps bringing you back?

NANCY CORRINGTON: That is a good question.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Well, what brings you back? Um --

[01:34:31]KAREN BREWSTER: Why didn't you just throw your hands up and walk away and say, forget it. I'm not doing this anymore.

NANCY CORRINGTON: There have been times, believe me, that would've been -- but it just - I think it gets in your blood, you know. And at the ages we are now it's, you know, we have to look for an exit strategy of some sort. But we have one employee who's our general manager who's been with us since she was seventeen.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: She's a relative. She's very dedicated. She works seven days a week, all summer long, and for her, as long as she wants to do it, we'll keep it going. Maybe one store.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, but we, you know, we feel a responsibility to her. And I don't know, it just -- part of it is just a matter of pride. You know, being -- I don't have the energy to keep up with my pride. Or my expectations for us and myself because we are -- I mean, I'm 71, and Dennis is 76. And you know, we're getting to the point where some things are a lot harder than they used to be.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And I can't accomplish in one day what I used to accomplish in an hour.

[01:35:58]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But you know, I was thinking, even those obstacles and hurdles with the city council and the Historic District, I think some people would say --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: That's the biggest problem.

KAREN BREWSTER: That --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: If we have one.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, you won't let me do what I want to do, then, bye. I'm selling the business and I'm leaving town. But Dennis, you kept going. You didn't leave.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: No. We'll leave, eventually.

[01:36:24]KAREN BREWSTER: But do you know why, when you had those fights, you kept fighting and didn't leave?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Because they weren't that bad.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh. I think that took a lot of years off your life.

KAREN BREWSTER: Something was more important.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: What -- what was more important? Just being in Skagway and you like it here? Or you like the business of working with tourists?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: That's an interesting question. Never really thought about it. You know, you're in a --

NANCY CORRINGTON: A groove.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: In a groove, and off you go, and um, it's not that bad.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's kind of, I think it's his identity.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And I think that's why I was willing to do it in the first place because I thought, you know, we -- and that's what he said to me. Your kids need to know who I am and what I do. I can move to St. Louis and be moderately happy with where I am, but I mean, he's so -- he's always been so ambitious, if he had moved to St. Louis, he would've found something else that would've --

[01:37:39]KAREN BREWSTER: But being here, and being in Alaska and doing the business was who you were. --

NANCY CORRINGTON: His identity. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- that thrives that you wanted the kids to see.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Absolutely.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: And they've seen it. They've seen it.

KAREN BREWSTER: You're a different person because of it.

[01:37:57]NANCY CORRINGTON: But just the personal satisfaction in seeing something done right is -- I don't know that -- I think a lot of people think that when you have a lot of

property, you're in it for the money. And I remember when -- and, of course, you're not gonna be in it to go broke.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But I remember people saying when we did this building, and then we ended up buying the Golden North Hotel, I don't know how many times I heard, when will the Corringtons say, enough is enough. Don't they own enough property in town? You know, anybody could've bought it. Anybody could've worked their tails off. Anybody could've begged the bank to loan 'em the money, you know. It's just -- and that's another thing, I mean, paying off these buildings isn't an easy thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:38:47]NANCY CORRINGTON: So to just quit, let's say we decided in 2008 that this is just too much. We can't take it. It's not making enough money anymore, and we sell everything at a fire sale. I think we would've lost our sense of personal accomplishment. And I think it has -- I mean if -- anybody that walks through the hotel with me or the museum with Dennis knows we love doing things like this.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's not just -- I could -- I could no more operate in a store that wasn't clean or well put together or well-merchandised or attractive. I mean, I like hearing people come in and say, "This is the nicest store we've been in in Alaska."

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. That's nice.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It gives you a sense of identity and self-worth and pride and just, you know --

KAREN BREWSTER: It's more than just a job.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Absolutely, more than just -- if it were just a job, believe me, we had a lot of five-year plans. I would've been out of here after the first five-year plan.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So, I mean, it's been an adventure. It's -- and when Dennis asked me to marry him, he said, marry me, and your life will never be dull. And let me tell you, it's --

[01:40:06]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and obviously, you continue to enjoy doing it. Or you have enjoyed doing -- it gives you joy to do it, which is why you kept doing it.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Oh, yeah. Well, 'cause you come up with new ideas. You think, now if a fella --

NANCY CORRINGTON: If a fella would just.

KAREN BREWSTER: If a fella just tried this.

NANCY CORRINGTON: He's -- he's mostly these days in his museum.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Likes to talk to people, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's a great thing.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And that's really fun for him. [01:40:33]And he has been so bored the last couple of days that we haven't had the stores open.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because you're closed up for the season?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh my gosh.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Well, I --

NANCY CORRINGTON: But we open again tomorrow for one day, and so he'll be out there tomorrow.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, at the museum?

NANCY CORRINGTON: The museum.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. Ok.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm. So if you have a chance, go in.

KAREN BREWSTER: I -- yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And he can take you -- if I'm not around, he can take you upstairs in the hotel.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it would be fun.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It would be fun to look at. It's really cool.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um, all the rooms are dedicated to old gold rush families.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, cool.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And the beds from the 1898 -- just stuff all over the place that's really fun.

KAREN BREWSTER: Neat. Sounds like a great idea.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's just -- I just wish I had more -- more life ahead of me and more energy to do -- there's so much to still do, you know.

[01:41:17]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it sounds like you keep saying Dennis is the one with ideas. I think it's a -- I think it's a team effort.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It was kind of catching after a while. And, you know, like, he's had some issues with um, memory and everything in the last couple of years, and I realize how much he's taught me over the years. I was a school teacher, and then I was an interior decorator. I mean, for crying out loud, I had no --

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, he was a school teacher, too.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, he was, too, but he was a businessman at heart, and I guess I was, too, but didn't know it.

[01:41:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and your interior decorating background clearly shows in maintaining the historic look. You've succeeded at that works.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, that -- that works. [01:41:58]But at the same time, my dad was a businessman, and, you know, I think that you just pick it up. I used to do his books, and uh, while I was in college and high school, and you know. You just -- but the Midwest has the strongest work ethic.

KAREN BREWSTER: Nice.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And that's where our manager comes from. She's my cousin's daughter, as a matter of fact, and she started at seventeen, went to high school -- uh, went to college, um, paid for college by working up here. And then she --

[01:42:31]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, as you said, your family's had that ethic.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: You were raised with that.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Don't know how to do anything else. I mean, I could no more -- I don't know what I'd do if we retired. I think we'd both -- well, Dennis has written some, and I probably would write a book.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.



NANCY CORRINGTON: We were both English teachers.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
NANCY CORRINGTON: And, uh, I think it'd be --  
KAREN BREWSTER: Well, Dennis would be bored.  
NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh.  
KAREN BREWSTER: In retirement, right?  
NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh my gosh. I don't know what he'd do.  
DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah, I don't think I'd want to do that.  
NANCY CORRINGTON: He's already bored just not going to work every day.  
KAREN BREWSTER: That's what I mean. Yeah.  
NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, it's -- it's not fun for him to do.  
[01:43:04]KAREN BREWSTER: So Dennis, it sounds like you're a doer. You want to always be doing something.  
DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah, most of the time.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah, most of the time.  
NANCY CORRINGTON: He's not a --  
DENNIS CORRINGTON: As long as I can do it with her.  
NANCY CORRINGTON: He doesn't -- he doesn't like to look. Like the kids -- he wants to be a dog musher. He wants to -- you know, if you're going to do softball or baseball, play the game. Don't watch it on television. That's always been his deal.  
[01:43:29]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, yeah, I was thinking about the -- why I said why you keep doing it, and you said the pride. And that's what I was thinking, too. It's the following through with something. You, Dennis, have had these ideas, and you started these businesses, so you've wanted to see them through. You don't want to quit part way.  
DENNIS CORRINGTON: Right.  
NANCY CORRINGTON: I never would quit.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right.  
NANCY CORRINGTON: Doing any -- I don't care -- I'm one of those people, and he is, too, that will stay up all night to get -- if the store's not gonna be ready, or what -- I remember when we were much younger, we were up three days trying to get Corrington's ready.  
DENNIS CORRINGTON: Get it all set.  
NANCY CORRINGTON: After we built the museum. And we had this kid that worked for us, and we called him Chicken Man because he was everywhere. I mean, this guy just ran around like crazy, and we absolutely wore him out.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.  
NANCY CORRINGTON: And we did not sleep for three days till everything was done. And he just passed out, and we didn't see him for a week.  
[01:44:27]KAREN BREWSTER: But, yeah, I can see there's something about putting your all, both financially and your energy and your identity, into a business. You don't want to just walk away when it gets hard.  
NANCY CORRINGTON: Hm-um. No.  
DENNIS CORRINGTON: No. You can always fix it.  
KAREN BREWSTER: You would feel -- yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: There's -- yeah. You have to fix it. Everything's a challenge, you know, and it all opens a door. I mean, to lose my husband and have three little kids and be pregnant with my last?

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It was a terrible blow, but at the same time, it opened other doors that I would've never experienced if it hadn't been for that. And I mean, I was devastated.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, of course.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But you don't stop, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: You didn't realize how you could succeed independently' til you have to.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Exactly. Well, you -- I did. I mean, I wasn't about to do anything else.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, I wasn't going to move in with my parents or, you know, that's not -- and that's what they taught me. You know, you take care of yourself. You learn how to do that. [01:45:34]And all of our kids are pretty, pretty good. Our daughter, Sherry, has a tour company, and she's running that. Our son, Scott, now is helping with the commercial real estate since Dennis isn't as active in that as he once was. So we do have eight kids, and that's a bunch to --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Eight kids! Wait a minute!

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yes, eight kids, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's a lot.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And seventeen grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, and one on the way, so.

[01:46:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it's been wonderful talking to you guys.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, it's been a pleasure talking to -- there's so much to say.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, and what I was going to say, is there more? Other things that I haven't kind of brought up about being here in Skagway, either the community or being a businessperson or getting along with -- getting along or not getting along with the Park Service.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I -- I don't think -- I wouldn't say we don't get along with the Park Service. I would -- I would just say that we probably have -- we're less government, more -- we like to see people have an opportunity. And, I mean, we've tried. In fact, we tried over here on Seventh Avenue. That was another thing that got shot down by the HDC, and that was Dennis wanted to build incubator businesses. So he wanted to build a façade and in the middle, have a courtyard, and have stalls rented out to individual artists so they could afford to --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- I mean, and that wasn't -- it wasn't totally altruistic. It was thinking, ok, if these people can make it here and get a good start, then they can rent some of the properties we're building later on.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Down the street.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So it's not like, you know, oh, we just did this because out of the goodness of our hearts, but part of it was, wanting people to succeed. Wanting people in Skagway to be able to stay here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And see that there was something other than going to work for the Park Service or the train. You know, that there could be something else. There could be other opportunities. [01:47:49]And I mean, there's nothing that makes me more excited than to see somebody open a business and just really rock. You know, I think that's the neatest thing that can happen, to see somebody really succeed 'cause they're working hard, you know.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It's a different kind of a smile.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It is. I mean, you just, you feel proud for them. You know, like, that's neat.

[01:48:10]KAREN BREWSTER: So that incubator did not get passed?

NANCY CORRINGTON: It didn't fly because of the HDC. They said that it would -- let's see. The façade -- I have a picture. It was beautiful. It was all -- well, almost like it is now on the outside, with the different buildings, but they were all facades, and then the back of it was uh, tent frames and -- that we would put canvas over in the center.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And then that didn't go, so then we built another -- we did another plan with a -- the cost of the one that would've been all enclosed was, I think the bid came back at \$2.8 million.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, no.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And you could never make that back. Not in that kind of thing, you know, 'cause you'd be charging these people --

[01:48:58]KAREN BREWSTER: So they didn't like -- the Historic District didn't like the look?

NANCY CORRINGTON: They didn't like -- they didn't like the idea of tents.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, Gold rush?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Of course.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I know. I know. But it was --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: But it depends on who's on the --

KAREN BREWSTER: The commission.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But they wouldn't do that to you now.

[01:49:15]KAREN BREWSTER: So it wasn't a question of the incubation type of business. It was the building that was the problem for them? Or it was both?

NANCY CORRINGTON: I think it was the building. I think it -- but anything. I mean, anything we did was met with -- I mean, awnings. Uh, gosh, what we went through for awnings. It was just crazy. And even when we wanted to put -- we had problems down on Third Avenue because SMART Bus drops off, and people were standing in our doorway 'cause it was recessed. And people that were trying to shop couldn't get in 'cause the bus stop was there. So we said we wanted to put awnings on the building, and that way people had something to stand under, and it took us two and a half years to get that passed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Just 'cause of how they were gonna look?

NANCY CORRINGTON: They don't want you to cover an architectural -- an architectural feature. The corbels were massive, and -- but yet, then they -- so we didn't want to cover

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them either. We thought it would be better if they stuck out. Well, they wanted -- I mean, it was one thing -- it contradicted itself, actually, because the code says you can't cover an architectural feature. The head of the HDC said they had to be covered 'cause she didn't like the way it looked. It was -- I, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Sounds very frustrating.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, it was very frustrating.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

[01:50:45]NANCY CORRINGTON: But when we finally got the awn -- we had the awnings approved on this building over here, and it took forever to do that, too. Not quite as long -

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah. It took a long time.

NANCY CORRINGTON: As it took for the ones up the street, but by the time they made their decision on the ones up the street, I couldn't get the fabric. They -- but I tried. I said, I'll just use the same approved fabric that they have down here. Well, by the time the two and a half years had passed, couldn't get that fabric anymore. And so, but when they were looking at the fab -- I said all you have to do is walk down to the corner. I had a picture of it, but they wanted an actual sample of the fabric. And I had a big picture, and I said, it's on the corner. Well, we're sitting here in City Hall. We're not walking down the streets -- I mean, it would -- they have to pass it to -- it was just silly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Just silly. And you know, it's just -- I mean, I can't tell you, as I said before, how nice it has been. And even the Park Service. I mean, they're -- they'll help you in any way they can. You know, they really will. And I don't think they mean to encroach upon private business, it just developed.

KAREN BREWSTER: It just developed.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, it just developed.

[01:52:01]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, so in previous periods, there was more difficulty with the Park Service than there is now?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Probably. Probably so. Um, I think there -- there was an issue when some of them started carrying guns. I think a lot of people complained about that. I didn't have a feeling one way or the other about it, but I -- I don't honestly think --

[01:52:26]KAREN BREWSTER: Was it particular individuals or superintendents that made a difference?

NANCY CORRINGTON: The superintendents do make a difference. Sandra Badoras, or what was her last name? She was easy to work with, real easy to work with. Um, the original, Doug -- gosh, why can't I remember his name?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Doug something, yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Sims. Doug Sims. (Actually is Dick Sims)

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Doug Sims, right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Sims.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um, he was fantastic to work with. There -- but my goodness, it was so small at that time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:52:59]NANCY CORRINGTON: Um, then -- but we did -- like they did an archeologic -- archaeological dig on the lot next to us after we had it gardened with one of the park superintendents, and so the whole tourist season, it was roped off with orange --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: That stuff. So anyway --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Schmuck.

NANCY CORRINGTON: We -- they found a chicken bone and a dime, I think, is what it amounted to. That whole huge dig, you know, our tax dollars at work.

[01:53:31]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it's -- some of it, I know with the building restorations and moving, some of it they have to do for compliance work. An empty lot, I don't know.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Right, but they weren't building.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: What do you mean, compliance? They make up the rules, and so, "Oh, we have to --

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it's like if you're gonna build a road through an area --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Ok.

KAREN BREWSTER: Like when they built the pipeline. When they built the pipeline, they had to have archeologists go through first to make sure there was no disturbance of, you know, traditional Native sites, and if there was anything, the archeologists removed it so the construction wouldn't damage it.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's compliance work.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Hm.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So the Park Service in some cases is under government rules, they have to do those kinds of things.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But -- yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: When they are reconstructing or moving.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But they didn't do one thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: But not on your empty lot.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I mean, it didn't make sense for that. It was almost like it was a retaliatory thing at that time.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

[01:54:29]NANCY CORRINGTON: And not because the Park Service was trying to get even with us, but the wife of the superintendent at that time worked for us, and he -- the superintendent, I think, had a little burr for some reason. And it wasn't -- I mean, we treated his wife very well, but he just had kind of a -- [01:54:53]I think a lot of people that come to town think, oh, Corringtons. They own the whole town. You know, that kind of attitude. And I think that for some people, that's a problem. You know, some people are -- take offense at someone's success or they assume. They don't know you and assume that you're not a nice person. And that you're -- they don't take -- they don't think, well, perhaps they're shy, you know. [01:55:20]When I first came to town, everybody knew who I was because they knew Dennis, and so they would say all -- they'd say, hi, but they'd never say, hi, I'm this person, or whatever, so I -- you know, I didn't know people by first name. And a lot of times, I would say hi and smile, but I

never used their name 'cause I didn't know who they were. And then I'd ask Dennis who they were, and he'd say, I don't know.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I don't know.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So that didn't help.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Give 'em all name bags (badges), you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's right. Name tags. Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Name tags, for sure. But anyway.

[01:55:53]DENNIS CORRINGTON: So the question is, how much is going to happen with the -  
- the group that we're talking about.

NANCY CORRINGTON: The Park Service?

KAREN BREWSTER: The Park Service.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: The Park Service, yeah. Are they gonna stop right now, or are they going to keep growing and getting bigger and have more and more buildings --

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: That they can leech out -- leak out.

KAREN BREWSTER: Lease out. Well, we'll have to ask the Park Service.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't work for the Park Service, so I can't answer that question.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: No, I know. But you can ask questions.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes, you can. I mean, just like when they came in 1976, and they said, we're gonna do --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Two buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Two buildings, and now they've got twenty. So who knows what their plans are, if they have plans for more or not. I don't know.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I don't know. [01:56:34]The city does a few things, like they have the Rapuzzi House, and a few things like that. Which I think the city has no business being in that business. They need to sell that, and take the money, and use it for some good.

KAREN BREWSTER: Is the Rapuzzi House the -- it's George's old house?

NANCY CORRINGTON: George's old house, yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because I know the park got his collection of -- or some of his collection of things.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Right. Most of his things.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Everything in the basement.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, actually Dennis did the appraisal 'cause he's a certified appraiser.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, he did?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Long time ago.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And he did --

KAREN BREWSTER: I know that's a whole nother story.

NANCY CORRINGTON: That is another story, but --

KAREN BREWSTER: But I didn't realize that his house was a historic house.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I don't think it is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, they just own it.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It -- it -- it went to the --

KAREN BREWSTER: The city.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: To the city.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It did go to the city 'cause they have a Rapuzzi committee, and, you know, they're working on -- on restoring that. And same thing for the old city hall, and, you know, the city can't afford to keep doing things that don't pay back.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Generate money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: That don't generate money. For some reason -- [01:57:38]I mean, why is it the city's responsibility to do a nursing -- or retirement home?

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: That's taking away from private people -- I mean, I don't want to do a retirement home, but maybe somebody does, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [01:57:53]I would think that the Rapuzzi House, the Park Service would be interested in because it fits with them having some of his collection, like why not --

NANCY CORRINGTON: But it might be not because of the -- it could be just simply because it's not an historic house. I don't --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I'm not sure it is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or maybe how that family donated it? I mean, you don't know how --

NANCY CORRINGTON: It could be.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah, it could be.

[01:58:18]NANCY CORRINGTON: Or how Phyllis Brown -- she inherited everything. We had -- when Dennis did the appraisal, in fact, I remember exactly when it was. It was the summer of 1989, and he did not want to do it because we were too busy. And Phyllis kept calling and calling, and I was pregnant with our last child, and I'd go over there every Friday. We would start with this dig, and we'd have to -- I'd take all the -- the voluminous notes of -- oh my goodness, it took forever to do.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I've only heard that it was a lot of material.

NANCY CORRINGTON: A lot of junk.

KAREN BREWSTER: That he had collected.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It was nasty.

KAREN BREWSTER: And some junk and some valuables.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Some good stuff. Some good stuff. I think a lot of the good stuff is in the Golden North Hotel, though. I don't know how we lucked out with that. I mean --

KAREN BREWSTER: How did you acquire it? Phyllis gave it to you, or it was already there?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, no, no, no, no. Not theirs. It's just -- people donated. At one point, they donated furniture, not to us, but to the previous owner. And I think it was probably Edie Lee that got the most, and the Knorrs, 'cause they lived in town. And I think they just -- and you know at one point, people didn't like old things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: They wanted new and modern stuff.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: They wanted new stuff.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So they gave away their brass beds and their highboard --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- beds and uh, so it's kind of interesting all the pieces of furniture I kind of take for granted because they've been there forever.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But we refinished almost everything. I mean, some of it was in pretty bad shape.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:59:54]NANCY CORRINGTON: And so, we did a lot of refinishing, and but it's -- it's pretty neat. We have the bed that, what's his name, the president that died here?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Oh, Harding.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Harding.

KAREN BREWSTER: Harding.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah, that he slept in --

KAREN BREWSTER: He slept in it?

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- at the Pullen House.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, neat.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So there's a bunch of stuff like that.

[02:00:14]KAREN BREWSTER: Who owned the Golden North before you guys?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Before us, the Whiteheads. That was -- the Whiteheads, and then prior to them, Edie Lee, and the Knorr family.

KAREN BREWSTER: And they all operated it as a hotel?

NANCY CORRINGTON: As a hotel, yes. And I -- I guess they had a restaurant, too. The restaurant was very small at that time, but it was good. But they just -- the Whiteheads, from the period of, I think, '71 or '77 when they bought it, didn't do any maintenance whatsoever. I mean, it was just unbelievable. We took it down to the studs on the inside, and, in fact, there were no studs in some places. And shiplap and paper. You know, no drywall. We had -- I forgot, 2000 pounds of drywall, we used --

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

NANCY CORRINGTON: In the parlor upstairs, and Dennis said, I don't know if the building will hold it.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I'm not sure it was holding it up.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But he -- once we had all the floors out and the whole thing gutted, he went outside and he said, "Nancy. Come out here." And he had his finger on the building, and it moved.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Spooky.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Ahhh.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's a little scary.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It was a little scary, so.

[02:01:28]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, with the historic buildings that you do own, like that one, if in the future you want to sell it, would you consider selling it to the Park Service, or would you prefer to sell it privately?

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, probably we would. Now one of the things that we did do at one time with one of the superintendents, and it's been probably ten or more years, is we invited him to turn it into a tour.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.



NANCY CORRINGTON: That they could do it themselves. You know, we wanted some kind of back tax benefit for just -- for losing the business, the revenue, but, you know, we weren't asking for a lot. And at one time, we tried to donate our museum to the city, and it was at one time that we were really one of those, "Why are we doing this, let's just quit." And uh, so Dennis talked to the city manager at that time, and he said -- Dennis said that the only thing we want is two things. And we had it appraised, and it was appraised at \$850,000, and that was twenty years ago, twenty-five years ago. And Dennis said, "The one thing I would like is that if you ever de-accession the museum, that our kids have the right of first refusal to buy any piece back at fair market value." Not today's value --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But whatever the future value is. And they wouldn't do it. So they didn't get the museum.

[02:03:00]KAREN BREWSTER: So if the Park Service came to you with a fair offer, you know, at market price for your building, some day in the future, they'd have just as much chance as a private person?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. I -- we let our son handle the real estate now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And he would -- I mean he's got the numbers down, what it would take, and what -- But you know, one of the things, again, to prove my point that we weren't doing this just for the money, is that building makes so much more money now that it's retail.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Than it ever did as a hotel/bar/restaurant.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm. Interesting.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And it's --

[02:03:36]KAREN BREWSTER: I was just thinking, there's probably some people in Skagway who would never consider selling to the Park Service 'cause they have issues with them. I don't know if that's still the case.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I don't know. I --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I don't think I've had any --

NANCY CORRINGTON: I've never heard --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Any discussion with anybody.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I've never heard much negative --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

NANCY CORRINGTON: About the Park Service. The only thing -- I mean, anything that we've said negative has to do -- well, first of all, the one time we tried to rent --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And they wouldn't believe us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And that's -- that's the same superintendent who dug up the property. But anyway, the -- I -- I -- you know, I think they've done a nice job. I do think it's a little much, at this point. I'd like to see something but the Park Service providing jobs in Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I'd like -- And it's not the Park Service's fault, necessarily, I guess. I don't even know why -- why they have so many people, so many interpreters.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: 'Cause they're giving tours in groups of ten. And then somebody goes.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I know, but it's like making -- making work.

KAREN BREWSTER: Make work.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, and that's --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah. Make work.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- that's ok, but it brings on a lot of government that, you know. It's -

[02:04:54]KAREN BREWSTER: And what's the percentage of local people who work for the Park Service?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh my, I think a lot. I think -- I mean, I couldn't tell you exactly how many.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I don't think a lot. I think that they bring in their own people.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, they do bring in some, but gosh, it's got -- it's given locals jobs, which I think is a good thing, to get the locals job.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Well, true, for that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um, but it brings in a lot of people that have -- it seems like a lot of the people that are strong environmentalists that lean too far over the other way, in my opinion.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Come with the outsiders that come in from the Park Service. But you know, that's my opinion.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I mean, I'm kind of middle of the road on a lot of things.

[02:05:42]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I was thinking, you know, that you hire people to work in your stores who come and then leave, and the Park Service has some people who come in the summer and leave. Are those the same issues, or different? How is that different? That --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Mmm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Tour businesses have people who aren't local employees, as does the Park Service.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, our tax dollars are paying for those. Those workers. You know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, I see. Ok.

NANCY CORRINGTON: That's the difference. Because it's not a lo -- and not us, it doesn't matter who it is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right, right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, they're competing for -- well, they're also competing for employees, and I don't know what their wage -- what their rate is, but I'm sure they pay better.

[02:06:25]KAREN BREWSTER: In your mind, the difference is that those are tax dollars paying those people. Yours is private dollars.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Exactly.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Making work that isn't absolutely necessary. I mean, I -- you know, when you talk about trimming the fat, that's where I think if you're gonna trim, you have to figure out where to trim. And you don't have to cut things out completely, but sometimes you just have to. I mean, we have to.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: We've cut -- since our business has gone down because of the competition, we've cut advertising. We used to spend a fortune on advertising. And we -- you know, it just makes you examine things more closely.

[02:07:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Where would you do that advertising?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, there were magazines, and we'd do it on the ships, and, you know, it was quite expensive. There were times, I'd say, when we were spending up to \$200,000 a year on advertising, which is a lot for a business our size.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And we just -- it doesn't work anymore. And I think it doesn't work as well now. You don't get the right kind of people. When you're advertising a free train whistle or a free charm or whatever, you get people that come in for the free train whistle and charm.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Walk in, walk out.

NANCY CORRINGTON: They don't come in to shop.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And they clog the registers, asking for their free piece, while everybody -- the people that are actually trying to buy something can't get to the registers. So um, it doesn't -- and so often people don't even know -- there are hordes of people that come through, and they don't know where they are.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: They -- I mean, the people that come in the museum are so much more fun because they care about the history.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: They want to know something about what's going on, and they -- they really take the time. Some of them don't. Some of them go through it in five minutes, and some of them come and stay for three hours and talk to Dennis as long as they can.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: As long as they can do it, yeah.

[02:08:21]NANCY CORRINGTON: So, but, I mean, in general, I think -- I don't think the Park Service has harmed Skagway. I think you'd have to say it's on the plus side of what's been done, I think. Don't you, really?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I'm, uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: Dennis is on the fence about that.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah, he's --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah, I'm on the fence.

NANCY CORRINGTON: He's got his real estate hat on. That's -- but --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that's the competition of them buying up buildings?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That bothers you?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Not that he wants to buy.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But it's the leasing of the buildings that is the competition.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's competition and limits private industry?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Well, if it takes -- if they take it out of the market --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It's not there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: But --

KAREN BREWSTER: And if it stayed in the private --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: That one across the street, I could, you know, we could buy it and make money out of it, that makes sense, but the Park Service could do it and say, "Oh, it's old. So we're gonna take it, and da-duh, da-duh, da-duh." And it belongs to them.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then they take it out of circulation, so that -- ?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Like you bought your buildings from somebody else, and then you'll sell to somebody else. And the Park Service does it, that's it. It's out of the pool?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It's gone, yeah.

[02:09:33]NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, and even the hotel, I feel like -- I mean, if you have a chance to go through the hotel and museum, you'll see that it's -- it's -- it's pleasing to the eye.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And I did everything I could to make sure that the wallpaper was close to the colors and the patterns used at that time. I used Bradbury & Bradbury on the first floor, which is a real expensive reproduction of wallpaper, but then when we turned it into retail, the people that rented the store covered it all with wood paneling, and it's like, what happened to my wallpaper? But the upstairs has a little less, but very Victorian, and very -- but the Park Service wouldn't be satisfied with that because it wouldn't be 100% authentic. You know, it would be a reproduction of this or that or the other. And so, I think that maybe they wouldn't appreciate it as much as -- and we couldn't do what it would take. I mean, that's one reason --

KAREN BREWSTER: Financially, you can't --

NANCY CORRINGTON: When we bought the hotel, it's -- we paid over a million dollar for it, and we put more than a million dollars into it. And we could not get financing for it because the banks were not looking favorably upon small hotels, and we had to carry that paper.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And pay for it out of our retail businesses for a full year and a half, which was painful.

[02:11:01]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's what I said, it shows commitment that, you know --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, it was unbelievable.

KAREN BREWSTER: Other -- lesser people would've walked away.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And we knew that to do the hotel the way that it would make it into a modern hotel, not necessarily looking modern, but have all the updated plumbing and everything, would've been another million dollars. There's no way we could've ever gotten it out of -- you can't make decisions like that when you're not the Park Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or a millionaire.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[02:11:31]NANCY CORRINGTON: And it's just -- you know, and everybody always thinks, "Oh, you just make tons and tons of money." But we even tell our employees, "Ok, you buy something for \$100. You sell it for \$200. Your freight is a couple dollars. Your credit card charge is 2.5 percent. You know, when you add everything." Your -- your -- I mean, if you make \$1000 a day in a store and you've got two employees, you've lost money.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, you're just not -- there's a break-even point.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And I -- I mean, we're able to pay off our loans on the buildings, but the ex -- there's not a lot of excess there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: There's not -- once you do that --

[02:12:13]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I was gonna say, you invest in inventory, and you invest in employees, and you've invested in the buildings.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And we pay well. I mean -- I just heard today that Amazon, did I tell you, went up to \$15 an hour, and that's what we pay.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So it --

KAREN BREWSTER: That's pretty good.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, it makes for a big payroll.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Because not all of 'em are at \$15. Some are at \$30, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um-hm.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And it's -- you know, it's quite a bit.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's a lot to manage.

[02:12:44]NANCY CORRINGTON: In fact, we always laugh when we look at our salaries, 'cause our salaries are less than our employees'.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I keep wanting to get a job. She won't give it to me.

[02:12:53]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I was gonna say, you know, you work such long hours, that, yeah, it probably comes out to pennies on the dollar if you figured it out.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. But it's -- it's a labor of love.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I mean, if you love doing what you're doing, and there are lots of parts of it I don't, but you know, if you like it, and if you -- You know, I'm excited about doing the hotel, and then I kind of run out of gas, and I think, boy, I'm not like -- I don't have the energy I used to have, you know. I used -- and you don't have the help here. You know, it's -- it's hard to get anybody to do anything during the regular tourist season.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: 'Cause everybody's so busy with everything else, and then you've got this little window of October where it's really nice --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And if you don't get it done during that time, it's pretty hard to do it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm-mm.

[02:13:41]NANCY CORRINGTON: So there's a lot of challenges, but, you know, you've made it fun.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Something to do.

KAREN BREWSTER: As I say, you seem to have enjoyed it, so that's worth something.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Hm?

KAREN BREWSTER: It seems like you've enjoyed what you've done.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Oh. Oh, absolutely. Well, I get to do it with her. That's the important part.

NANCY CORRINGTON: That's a good thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's very sweet.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Is that the right answer?

KAREN BREWSTER: That's the right answer.

NANCY CORRINGTON: It's been a -- quite a journey. It's just -- and it's not over yet.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, it keeps going.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: It keeps going.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Yeah.

[02:14:15]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I know you're getting ready to leave town, so thank you so much for so much time this afternoon.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

KAREN BREWSTER: It was really a pleasure.

NANCY CORRINGTON: We're delighted to be able to do it. It's kind of fun to be able to -- to talk about all these things. To refresh your memory and kinda go back and, uh, what all we've done and what all other people in town have done. As I said --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: -- like Steve Hites has really added a lot to the history of the town.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And he's been interviewed before.

NANCY CORRINGTON: He's -- he's really good. He's a walking encyclopedia of Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes. Yes.

NANCY CORRINGTON: He really is.

[02:14:50]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and as you said, you know, you don't get awards for doing what you've done, so this is a little bit of documenting your legacy of what you've contributed to Skagway.

NANCY CORRINGTON: That's -- there you go.

KAREN BREWSTER: So, that's a good thing.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Good way to think of it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: I always said, everybody would say, that's Dennis Corrington's wife. They never say this.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now they're gonna say, that's Nancy Corrington's husband.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: That's probably what it is.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Not really. Not really. I'm always the background. I like being in the background. I don't -- I've never -- Dennis always was quite a showman, and I'm -- I've always been kind of oh-oh, you know. But I've gotten more aggressive in my -- with all this political stuff that's come up with the railroad and everything. You got -- you know, you have to kinda look at what's good for the town.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And not just good for you. You know, it just -- and that's -- I don't want the town to short-sell itself. You know, it's capable of lots of things in cooperation with Park Service. And with the railroad.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And you know, it -- it can be done, it's just that you have to have pretty smart people on the city side running it in order to make it work.

[02:16:07]KAREN BREWSTER: And people in all the organizations being willing to cooperate and work together, and you say, not the power trips.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Everybody being in it for the same goal, maybe?

NANCY CORRINGTON: There's a little bit of -- of, you know, you leave in the winter. You know, that kind of feeling about things. And it's funny because the two people that were the hardest to deal with in town are gone. They left. They moved. So I don't know. But anyway, it's -- it's an interesting little town, and I think it's -- I hope that it can hold its historic value because -- and I think that's why a lot of people were opposed to the road.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, they were so afraid that it would open it up. But honestly, I think -- I think it could only make it better, really, in the long run. And it would keep people here longer.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Because being able to have options. I mean, we've been stuck in Juneau for four days at a time, and when you're here and you're sick -- and Dennis had to be flown out. He had a stroke in 2007, and there weren't any options.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, and if they wouldn't have been able to fly, he'd probably be dead.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Hm.

NANCY CORRINGTON: So that's always a tough thing for people to get older. So even if you have a retirement home, it doesn't help that much 'cause you can't get to a doctor.

[02:17:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Is -- driving to Whitehorse is not an option for those kinds of things?

NANCY CORRINGTON: You could. It's what, is it two and a half hours, about?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Two and a half hours, and then you have to find a doctor.

DENNIS AND NANCY CORRINGTON

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NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah, that's --

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause they have a hospital there, don't they?

NANCY CORRINGTON: I -- I don't know if they do or not.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: I've never --

NANCY CORRINGTON: I know they do in Juneau.

KAREN BREWSTER: I know they do in Juneau.

NANCY CORRINGTON: But most stuff that happens in Juneau gets sent to Anchorage or Seattle, if it's --

[02:17:58]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, but I was thinking, it might be closer to drive two and a half hours to Whitehorse than to try and get to Juneau, but --

NANCY CORRINGTON: If, yeah, if there's no ferry or the planes aren't flying. But if there was a road. It's only ninety miles.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, I see. A road to Juneau.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And that's -- that would be --

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Excellent.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Excellent for the -- I think it would just open this community to -- first of all, it would open it to competition that people don't want. Just like, don't wash your windows, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And I think that it challenges people to -- people -- some people like challenges, and other people don't, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

NANCY CORRINGTON: And I think if -- if it's a less ambitious person is challenged, they take it as a personal affront, whereas someone that has vision sees it as an opportunity, you know. And I think that so much could happen here. It would challenge people to clean up their junk, you know, and get a lot of stuff -- it looks great right now, but boy, when you come here in April, and you look at all the garbage and the trash and the stuff that's sitting around.

KAREN BREWSTER: Under the snow that's melted out.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh.

[02:19:18]KAREN BREWSTER: So if there was a road to Juneau, do you think it would bring in more tourists, or you think it would be more just a local access?

NANCY CORRINGTON: I think it would probably be like Carcross is, that people will drive to Carcross. So maybe people that only go to Juneau, there are ships that don't come here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

NANCY CORRINGTON: You know, they may come here. Um, it would increase bed and breakfast traffic. [02:19:43]Um, there's a really lovely place out in Dyea called the Chilkoot Outpost, and the people that own it, Kathy (Hosford), is a good friend of mine, but it -- they don't get the traffic.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it would increase independent travelers and stuff?

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.



NANCY CORRINGTON: I think. I do. And I think people that would come and stay in town and really get to take advantage of the fact that it's a national park. You know, I just -- I can't see any down side. It used to be, "Oh, you're going to ruin our hiking trails." How can there not be a hiking trail? I mean, look at this country. You know, there are enough hiking trails to go around for a town of 800, so.

DENNIS CORRINGTON: It would be nice.

[02:20:23]NANCY CORRINGTON: Well, it just would be. I -- I just -- I don't know. Progress isn't always the best thing, but I think -- I think when it raises the bar, and I think that's what the Park Service has done. They've raised the bar for the town. Um, I think that's real important. So, you know, not everybody feels that way, and everybody kinda wants to keep it all to themselves and let it be a little -- the best-kept secret, but you can't.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, there's always the, "I was here and I did my thing. I don't want anybody else to come."

NANCY CORRINGTON: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: That happens in every town.

NANCY CORRINGTON: Oh yeah. Absolutely.

KAREN BREWSTER: So, it's some of that, I'm sure.

[02:21:06]NANCY CORRINGTON: But anyway, it's been quite a run, huh, honey?

DENNIS CORRINGTON: Something to do. Ain't over yet.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ain't over yet. All right. Well, you've talked a lot, so --

NANCY CORRINGTON: Yeah, we've talked way more than we should.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, no, no. It's great. I'm going to turn it off, though.