

RECORDED INTERVIEW OF VIRGINIA LONG

CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER

IN SKAGWAY, ALASKA

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

[00:00:00]KAREN BREWSTER: All right. This is Karen Brewster. Today is October 8, 2018, and I'm here with Virginia Long at the Portland House in Skagway, Alaska. And this is for the Klondike Gold Rush Historical Park Oral History Project. Thank you, Virginia, for having time today.

VIRGINIA LONG: Certainly.

KAREN BREWSTER: And we just finished a walking tour of the building, so I've got lots of questions. But before we do that, I'd like to know a little bit about you before this building, and how long you've lived in Skagway.

VIRGINIA LONG: A short history.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[00:00:39]VIRGINIA LONG: I came here in 1994 from the Midwest. Raised a family of five children, put them through college as a single parent, and then I said, "Goodbye, I'm going where it's peaceful and quiet." And I came up here and have been here ever since.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, why did you pick Skagway?

VIRGINIA LONG: I had a sister and a brother up here that had gift shops, and I was making some gifts for my brother's gift shop, so I came up to, um, see how it was. And we ended up buying land together and staying because I love it.

[00:01:21]KAREN BREWSTER: All right. And where did you grow up originally?

VIRGINIA LONG: Illinois. I was born in Illinois, the Quad Cities, or East Moline, and then I raised my family, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio.

[00:01:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Um, and did you -- what kind of an educational background do you have?

VIRGINIA LONG: Mine was in math.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

VIRGINIA LONG: So I had three years of college.

KAREN BREWSTER: In math?

VIRGINIA LONG: In math and did a lot of tutoring, and uh, but never really taught in school 'cause I never finished my last semester, but uh, I raised five children, and they all knew their math.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

VIRGINIA LONG: And so I did bookkeeping.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[00:02:06]VIRGINIA LONG: And then when I came up here, then my brother ended up going to work at the ferry, and I bought the little gift shop from him, and I ran the gift shop.

KAREN BREWSTER: And what was that gift shop called?

VIRGINIA LONG: The Brass Pic, and that now is a historical building with the Park Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: One of the little cribs.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok, ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: So you can see it over there between Fifth and Sixth, I think, in an alley.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah. That little alley where they have the crib display?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes. Yes. The one that's called The Brass Pic. That used to sit where the big buildings are on Broadway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

VIRGINIA LONG: And for six or seven years, I had a shop from there.

[00:02:46]KAREN BREWSTER: And what is your brother's name?

VIRGINIA LONG: Ralph Aten was his name.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Just so we have the connection.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes.

[00:02:54]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so when did you acquire this --

VIRGINIA LONG: Building?

KAREN BREWSTER: -- building here, the Portland House?

VIRGINIA LONG: I met my partner here in Skagway, Howard Smith. Uh, I was doing books, and I was helping him with a gas station, and we ended up buying this building in 2001 because the people who owned it had a restaurant in here that was called the Portland House Restaurant. And -- from Anchorage. And he passed away, and so his wife, who spoke very little English, was trying to run the place and leased it out, but wasn't having very good success. [00:03:52]But we had watched over the building for her in the winter time, and so then they put it on the market, too, because she just couldn't make things, um, work. And so she decided to sell it, and she put it on the auction block. So we ended up buying it from her. [00:04:13]And with the idea, my partner said, with the idea, "oh yes, we can just um, demolish the place and sell the land and make a profit." And I thought -- I've sat on the -- I had just gotten on the historic board at that time, and I thought, "Oh gosh, that's a historic building. That's kinda -- " I think we should maybe at least look into maybe restoring it. But he didn't agree. So he didn't say anything, but when I went to the next meeting, there was a paper at the meeting with a request to demolish the building. And I said, you realize I'm going to vote against that. And so that's how we acquired it. [00:05:03]And I got the Park Service involved, and so Grant Crosby was my junior project -- he was the junior architect in Anchorage. I can't remember -- Peterson was the senior architect. And he had been down here several times, too. But they encouraged us to restore the building. [00:05:32]So we worked under three different federal grants. And I can't remember -- starting 2001 and however long it went. And then one state grant also that helped us. It was a little five or six thousand-dollar one, but that helped us to put that top knot back on there. And so that was really awesome to save a historic building in town or in the state. [00:06:05]So with all of those, then after that, we were on our own. And uh, but they got it started and most of the structural work

and the outside work and the windows and doors outside, but then all on the inside was all our doing.

[00:06:25]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. So how did you know to go to the Park Service for assistance?

VIRGINIA LONG: Well, I was on the Historic District.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: So the whole thing with the Historic District is, you try to save buildings if you can. And I thought the building should at least look into being saved. Although you saw the picture of it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: It was -- because it was the oldest two-story commercial building in town. It was actually built by Captain Moore himself before the gold rush.

[00:07:04]KAREN BREWSTER: Do you know when he built it?

VIRGINIA LONG: Probably 1896 or 1897. Because like I said, we have a picture of it completely built, and they're just building the one that the Park Service is working on on the corner.

KAREN BREWSTER: Across the street.

VIRGINIA LONG: It's going up, but this one's complete.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Completed. So we know that, and his -- his house sat out here, and they -- that moved -- got moved when they were redoing the streets and that, years and years ago.

[00:07:38]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and that's the house that's now part of the Moore Homestead?

VIRGINIA LONG: Correct.

KAREN BREWSTER: On the other end of Fifth Avenue?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, correct. So this was his business block, and he ran his businesses out of -- out of here. So I thought being as it's the oldest commercial building in town, it should be saved if it could be.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: So.

[00:08:00]KAREN BREWSTER: What -- what got you interested in history so much and the importance of saving these kinds of things?

VIRGINIA LONG: Well, first of all, when I came here in '94-'95, my brother had The Brass Pic, the little --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And then he went to work for the ferry terminal, and he didn't care for having a small tourist shop and dealing with tourists. And I made a lot of things for his shop, so I bought it from him and started -- I ran that shop for about six years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[00:08:35]VIRGINIA LONG: So I got into tourists and the history because that was a historical crib.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And we had dug out a lot of the history on that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: So that was of interest to me. [00:08:49]And then I ended up getting on the historic board because the Historic District has all these rules.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: More rules than a king. So I didn't think they were always consistent with their rules, so I decided to go on the board to -- to make that point and say, "If we do something, then we need to be consistent with everyone and do it for everyone." And that's what got me started. Then I met Karl Gurcke. He was on the board, too, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: He's the park historian.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:09:30]VIRGINIA LONG: So you just kinda -- it starts into your blood. And when I was -- when I finished high school and started college, I either wanted to be a surgeon or a carpenter.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

VIRGINIA LONG: I think I ended up the carpenter.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, surgery and carpentry, sort of similar.

VIRGINIA LONG: Correct. So I've always kinda liked that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[00:09:53]VIRGINIA LONG: But it was a big project, and maybe if, looking back at it, I'm not sure we would do it again 'cause it's been seventeen years of our life.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Um, well, I'll get into the details of the building in a second. The Historic District Commission.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you remember what years you were on it?

VIRGINIA LONG: Well, it would've been 2001.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Then, and I can't -- I don't have the -- in front of me.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

VIRGINIA LONG: But I'd say around 2011, then.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: 'Cause it was about ten years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ten years. Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: But --

[00:10:23]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, do you remember any of the particular issues that were --

VIRGINIA LONG: Done at that time?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, or that were --

VIRGINIA LONG: For instance, one of the things, and Grant Crosby was down here for that, is when the -- the little -- Brass Pic and the little cribs --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: -- the other ones weren't historic. The Brass Pic was the only historic one of the three or four that were along that -- got sold, and the big buildings went up.

[00:10:55]There was a building right behind it that was called the Ice House, and that became an issue with the Park Service and the people who bought it that who just wanted to destroy that building. They had no interest in it, and the Park Service, who wanted to save it. [00:11:15]So that was one of the things that came before us, one of the bigger

things that came before us. And it ended up getting saved and moved across the street, so that is the building that's across the street, just behind -- where the homestead is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: Then to the west. Between that and the Kirmse's.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, there's an old wooden kind of falling-down building.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, that's the Ice House.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. That's the Ice House?

VIRGINIA LONG: And so it did get saved, and the Park Service has that. And I don't know what they're ever going to do with it, but that was one of the projects. [00:11:56] And then just anybody in town, um, were specifically wanting -- we have the wooden boardwalks. No merchandise outside hawking on the streets, so we have all kinds of rules like that and what can be in the windows and what can't be in windows, so to keep it looking historic. And uh, so that tourists enjoy coming and have a pleasant experience here. So that was part of the thing.

[00:12:29]KAREN BREWSTER: You said that there were some rules that you found inconsistent or frustrating. Do you have some examples?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. For instance, in my shop, my door swang in, and I'd hang a couple -- merchandise couple, like a sweatshirt or a t-shirt on the door. But maybe the little arm might stick out just past the doorframe, and they'd want to come and give you a warning on this. I mean -- [00:13:00] And other people, you know, not necessarily. It was -- and like flower pots sometimes outside. Oh, you know, you can't have plastic. It has to be wood. And uh, but then there's other ones. Some people had um, statues in front of their things. And some were ok, and some weren't ok. So it got kind of -- kind of hairy because those are things, you know, like somebody saying, ok. We have half off of our stuff, and they have it clear in July.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: You know, and trying to make that kind of stuff consistent with everyone so it helps everybody in town, you know.

[00:13:51]KAREN BREWSTER: Did -- do you think the shop owners felt like the Park Service or the Commission were being arbitrary with their decisions and playing favorites?

VIRGINIA LONG: I think that a lot of people enjoy -- liked it in the fact that, you know, they wanted the district to be uptown and one that tourists could have a good --

KAREN BREWSTER: Experience?

VIRGINIA LONG: -- experience, yes. When they came, you know, and would talk it up. And others, yes, felt like, ok, you know, you're getting a little picky here, and that doesn't -- and so you always have some of that. [00:14:36] But the Park Service was on the board, and then it ended up -- and I went through several Park Service people that was on the board, because I'm trying to think of my girlfriend then that was on there, and then she ended up moving out. I can't remember her name now. Theresa.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. Thibault.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes. So I sat with her also. Very wonderful woman. But then the Park Service ended up saying that a Park Service could not sit on the board and be a voting member, so they could just be advisory.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: But at the beginning, and for several years --

KAREN BREWSTER: They were voting?

VIRGINIA LONG: -- they were voting and that. So then it ended up that Karl just kinda came to the meetings and offered advice and so forth to us. But at the time, you know, they were -  
- So they -- so they had some input there, and then afterwards, it was mostly advisory. So.

[00:15:36]KAREN BREWSTER: So do you think that with them being voting members, the other businesses felt like the Park Service was -- had too much power and in control too much?

VIRGINIA LONG: Uh, I think not any more than they did afterwards. There's some people in town that think that whether they are on the District Commission or not, because they own so many of the buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: And so, some people see it as a -- a negative, and some people see it as positive. So I think it didn't have so much to do with them sitting on the commission. But -- but in actuality, because they are the Park Service, they did not have to follow the rules if they did not want to. They did, 99 percent of the time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: But they actually do have that option.

KAREN BREWSTER: Really?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah.

[00:16:31]KAREN BREWSTER: Even though all of their properties are within the district?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Because they're federal. And they --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. That seems -- I think if I were a business owner, I might be a little perturbed, too.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. But I don't think people -- it bothered people too much because they -  
- they usually had more stringent rules than what we did.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: So that solved that problem.

[00:16:56]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So there wasn't an instance where the Park -- where the board said, do this, and the Park Service said, no?

VIRGINIA LONG: I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, while you were on it?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Not that I know of. There wasn't anything big.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: But there was -- there was that, where you know, it was --

[00:17:14]KAREN BREWSTER: So who decided that the Park Service should change from voting to advisory?

VIRGINIA LONG: I think it was the Park Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Themselves.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: I think, that decided that. I'm not sure, but that's how it came down, that they would no longer be one of the actual voting members at the table, but we'd use one for advisory.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because they have so much of the history in there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And I mean, you know, there's different historical buildings. That's where, when they do it really deep, restoration or not really restoration, just a remodel.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: That that's where a lot of the problems came in because people would want it to be this way, and we'd say, "No, that's a historic building. You gotta keep the front and the sides, you know, the outer historical. Because that's what makes the town the town." So there would be some frustration there.

[00:18:14]KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh. So some of the buildings then on Broadway, yeah, they're the old, original buildings that have been restored.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: But then there's others that --

VIRGINIA LONG: You wouldn't really call a restoration because when you call a restoration, it's even more stringent than a rehabilitation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: So they actually call this one a rehabilitation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because a restoration is even deeper.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: In -- in its rules and regulations.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And that's what the Park Service does a lot, where it's restoration?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes. Exactly.

[00:18:47]KAREN BREWSTER: But, then some of the buildings on Broadway, then, are new, more recently built?

VIRGINIA LONG: Oh, yes. But exactly. All of the ones that went where the little shops were on Broadway there, those great big ones, those are all brand-new buildings. But they have to put their plans before the Commission, and we're not so interested in the inside, only the outside, what appears to the person. So their fronts have to meet historical guidelines for the period back in the 1900's.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: So the --

KAREN BREWSTER: The façade, the front --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, the facades and the false fronts have to be of that period.

[00:19:35]And so some things are denied, and some things are -- and also, the other thing is signs. So signs were very stringent. Well, they did not use that kind of lettering on signs, or there was no sign that large or made from that material. So signs were a big -- because everybody wanted signs, and everybody had different ideas.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And then how they were fastened on the buildings, so there was a lot -- signs took up a lot of -- because people would have a building. New person would take over the building, so then they wanted a different sign, and even now and then to paint on buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And that -- these things all had to be approved.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Through permits.

[00:20:25]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And well, in the old days a lot of buildings had the thing written right on the building, the hardware store, or something.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes, they did. And so if you could -- if you could show historic --

KAREN BREWSTER: Like an old photo or something?

VIRGINIA LONG: Photo of that period, so you'll notice there's a couple buildings in town that have the -- the signage and the words printed right on the building, just plastered on the building, because they went through historic pictures and found some. Then they bring 'em, and that's a good way that you could probably get it approved then.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because you've got proof. And Karl Gurcke would help a lot, or --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because he has all that --

KAREN BREWSTER: All those photos.

VIRGINIA LONG: So he was very helpful to everyone in town.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: As much as he could be with the history.

[00:21:18]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And well, you said, you know, there's rules about what you can hang in the windows.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you know --

VIRGINIA LONG: What you can for signs, whether they're fastened to the window or they're, um, on the outside or the inside, what lettering it is, what style. Uh, all of that falls under the purview of --

[00:21:43]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, but, you know, now, walking around this last week, I noticed a lot of, you know, because it was end of season --

VIRGINIA LONG: It was boarded up.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, but end-of-season going out of business -- you know, end-of-season sale. That there's, you know, what looked like modern signs hanging in the windows.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, if they're not fastened to the window, maybe, just hanging back.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

VIRGINIA LONG: There's really specific rules.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, or some of those jewelry stores that have, you know, a picture of a beautiful woman with her jewelry. That doesn't seem historic, but --

VIRGINIA LONG: No, but you'd be surprised what some of those old pictures looked like, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes.

VIRGINIA LONG: But yes. But if it's fastened to the window, that's different.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's the difference. Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: You know, inside where you can look through the window.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: Those are two different things. So there's some specific rules. I've been away now for quite a while.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I know.



VIRGINIA LONG: Because it's been about seven years.

[00:22:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Um, so is there anything, while you were on that commission, that you are particularly proud of that you were involved with, that you made happen?

VIRGINIA LONG: Well, it was really helpful for my own building here because I learned all the code. I knew the code backwards and forwards, so I didn't have to try to get a permit for something and say, oh no. That's not going to fly because I knew so much. So it was very helpful, um, just working with this building and having my own store for a while. Not too long after I was on the Commission. Just a little while, but --

[00:23:24]KAREN BREWSTER: You said you made things for the store.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: What did you make?

VIRGINIA LONG: I made, like, um, certain like, stuffed animals and like, hot pads, but I'd have Alaska themes on it, you know. Like, whales or otters or did a lot of embroidery and cross stitch and homemade things that I made.

[00:23:46]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, neat. So why did you decide to go off of the Commission?

VIRGINIA LONG: After ten years, I was kind of tired of doing it. It was a long time being on the Commission, and I just said, I need a rest. I was getting old. And trying to slow down my life somewhat, but again, then I'm, you know, trying to finish this building.

[00:24:14]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, let's talk about this building 'cause it's an amazing project and accomplishment.

VIRGINIA LONG: Thank you.

KAREN BREWSTER: So tell me what it looked like in 2001 when you bought it.

VIRGINIA LONG: You saw that one picture.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes, can you describe it?

VIRGINIA LONG: So that would be -- oh my. Um, be the closest. So the top knot was off of it. The, um -- any of the elaborate trim on the windows and so forth were off, and it was covered with, they call those asphalt tiles, didn't they?

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. That were rectangular tiles that was put all over the, um --

KAREN BREWSTER: The outside?

VIRGINIA LONG: The outside wood, yeah. So it was just nailed onto it. And that was something that a lot of the buildings did at that point. [00:25:05]And in fact, the um, Ed Fairbanks, that owns Fairway Market, said, "Oh, I did that. That was my first job after I got out of college. Uh, putting that asphalt tile on that building." I said, "What did you get paid, per nail?" Because --

KAREN BREWSTER: There was a lot of nails?

VIRGINIA LONG: There was a lot of nails.

KAREN BREWSTER: And what color was it?

VIRGINIA LONG: It was kind of a grayish.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. About what year would that have been when -- ?

VIRGINIA LONG: I think -- I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: '50's, '60's?

VIRGINIA LONG: Might have been in the '50's --

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: -- something like that, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: I could look that all up for you, but --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah. [00:25:41]It's good to hear what your perspective on --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- buying it and what it was like. And so --

VIRGINIA LONG: Because it used to be Captain Moore's, and then a lot of different things were in the building at different times. There was a bank in the building at one time, there was a, um -- during the time when he had it, he had like, merchandise. Not merchandise, but like --

KAREN BREWSTER: Like a general store?

VIRGINIA LONG: Groceries, yeah. Groceries and that, probably things that he used for his own business and so forth. I don't know if he sold. There was a dentist at one time up -- upstairs, because you could see a sign from the window. So there were all those things. But then many, many years then after, I would say, the 19 -- 1914 or whatever, it became a hotel.

[00:26:39]KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, it was actually officially the Portland House Hotel?

VIRGINIA LONG: It was Portland House, always called the Portland House. Clear back in the -- early 1900's.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: I don't know exactly when that name. But so, people have lived in it, and then later on, the people that bought it rented. It was rentals.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

[00:27:01]VIRGINIA LONG: So I have some people in town, for instance, the lady that's my dear friend, Bea Lingle, whose husband, who's passed away, they owned the hardware store.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And she's ninety-some years old now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes.

VIRGINIA LONG: A dear friend of mine. She lived in four different places in this building at one time in her life.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. Wow.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. So, and then, like, Jim Hamilton was here. These are people from the town. And he said, "Oh yes. I lived all along the west side there." That was one big long apartment. And there was, like, fuel tanks that were on legs."

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

VIRGINIA LONG: "You know, that's how we got our heat. "But that was my apartment."

[00:27:47]And then other people would say -- so I think half the town lived in this building at one time or another. And I said, right there is a reason that it should be saved.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: It has so much history.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: To the town.

[00:27:59]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and on that sign on the -- you have on the front window, there's a photograph of it with this big group of people standing on the street.

VIRGINIA LONG: Standing in front, yes. The historical picture.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: I think that was a -- a military picture, one of 'em was.

KAREN BREWSTER: Mm. Yeah, I don't remember what it said, but um, so having all those photographs --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- of the building helped you?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, definitely. And Karl Gurcke, again, and the Park Service did all they could to find me pictures. And then one of the dear friends in town, Mulvihill.

KAREN BREWSTER: Carl Mulvihill?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, Carl Mulvihill. Found the picture after we had done the front, an even earlier one that actually had a diagonal on the corner there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

VIRGINIA LONG: Which no one else had had before. And he brought it to us. Oh, we might have done that, you know. 'Cause that was right back in that period.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

[00:28:57]VIRGINIA LONG: But the Park Service liked the one that we did. But that was interesting. So yes, you worked off of photos, and then you worked off of taking all that asphalt tiles down very carefully. This is why we've worked on it for seventeen years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because we didn't just rip it off, and we were taking it off to preserve the boards underneath it, if at all possible. [00:29:28]And that is why we've got enough boards on the outside that we could restore, and um, use, those 100-year-old boards, because you're never going to get those again. [00:29:41]So that took a lot of time. Then we would feed those -- Some of 'em are seventeen, eighteen, twenty feet long. We'd feed 'em in the windows. Like upstairs, and we stored 'em before we, you know, were doing anything on the inside. And so some years, you thought you would never get finished.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because it was mostly Howard and I doing the work, and Don Corwin helped us with -- with windows and doors.

KAREN BREWSTER: And he was with the Park Service at the time?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes. He -- no, he wasn't actually working. He was working on his own, I think.

KAREN BREWSTER: But he'd gotten training for --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: As a carpenter --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Definitely he was talented.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- with how to build windows and doors in that historic style.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Exactly.

[00:30:31]KAREN BREWSTER: So tell me about, when we were walking around, you mentioned the green boards on the outside versus the pink boards.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes. So we have green and red and blue. The colors. And so, I did that because all of the green outside, and that profile, was unique, uh, were boards that we

took off the building. And some also of the wainscoting that was under the windows in diagonals.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[00:30:58] VIRGINIA LONG: All of the 100-year-old boards, then, we paint -- we restored. And to restore those boards, then you took them, and you had to first strip the lead paint off. And so you wore a mask, um, and you saved all the lead paint, put it in cans, and then took it to the hazardous waste dump once a year. Um, you didn't throw it in the trash. [00:31:25] And then after you got that all off, then you would strip down the wood even further with stripper, and then you started sanding. And then you started repairing any cracks, gluing cracks, filling nail holes, sanding that all down. And finally, then you get to the point where you can put, um, primer on, and you put primer on the back and the front.

KAREN BREWSTER: Mm.

VIRGINIA LONG: And then you give it two coats of paint. And we've done that. Some of those are 2002, and this is 2018, and that's not been redone.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And they look brand-new.

VIRGINIA LONG: Exactly. [00:32:09] Now just this last year, we did a little bit of -- of touch-up on the west side, a little bit on the north side. But the rest of that is like, ten, fifteen years old.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And you see, there's other buildings in town that have been painted three times now since we painted ours.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. [00:32:29] Well, and I just can't believe that 100-year-old wood is still usable.

VIRGINIA LONG: Isn't that amazing?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And some of it isn't, but some of it -- some of it was also a challenge because I'd need -- if I was getting down low on the pile and I needed smaller boards, I would reconstitute it with some wood stuff. But most of the time, maybe part of it was that -- that the asphalt tile did protect it in a way.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: It made holes in it, but it might've protected it somewhat. Plus, wood back then is not like wood you buy today. Truly. We know this because when I ordered all the cedar in the same profile, that's all the red on the building because we put -- we used all we that could, you know --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: -- of the 100-year-old, then we had to go with -- we selected cedar because it -- of its durability and had it fabricated in that exact profile down in Seattle and had it shipped up. And we ended up shipping a whole batch of it all back because it was chattered on the edges.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

VIRGINIA LONG: And had to go all back and be resent, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

[00:33:55] VIRGINIA LONG: So -- so yes, I almost rather to work with the old than the new, except for having to remove all of the -- all of the lead paint.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And that original wood, do you know what kind it is?  
VIRGINIA LONG: Howard can tell you.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.  
VIRGINIA LONG: I think it's fir or spruce. One of the two.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Because I was wondering if it was locally processed.  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, I'm sure it probably was back then.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
[00:34:21]VIRGINIA LONG: And you can tell then on the west side of the building, or the east side, I mean.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right.  
VIRGINIA LONG: The 1x12's that are seventeen foot long, tall, one piece. You can see the big saw marks of the huge saws that they used.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
VIRGINIA LONG: So that was -- was done right here.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Yeah, so that -- the east side of the building?  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. I get my directions.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So the west side and the north side are the decorated sides.  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes.  
KAREN BREWSTER: And the east side is just plain --  
VIRGINIA LONG: Right. Right.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Seventeen-foot boards standing up?  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.  
KAREN BREWSTER: And those are the original?  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, and we had pictures of just going around the corner, and there was a building close by, but there was a little walkway. And you could tell it was just the, um, un --  
KAREN BREWSTER: Unfinished.  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, it wasn't the elaborate that you saw on the facades of the --  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
VIRGINIA LONG: The ones that face the street. [00:35:21]So they were interested -- because they went up fast.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
VIRGINIA LONG: And they wanted to sell or use the building, so that's what showed to the public.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.  
VIRGINIA LONG: That's what you did. And the rest you didn't care about.  
[00:35:34]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Those boards on that east side are pretty amazing boards.  
VIRGINIA LONG: They are. And some of them then were also -- because, like I said, it was three quadrants.  
KAREN BREWSTER: The building was?  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. And so, some of those were on the outside, but when they brought that fourth quadrant in and pushed, then these were stuck in the wall.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, they just added on? Oh, I --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, they just added on. So we fished those out of the wall. And some of those went from the second floor down, through the wall, and into the crawl space.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

VIRGINIA LONG: And we wiggled those out and saved them so we would have enough, come ten years later when we wanted to do this project.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: So a lot of the -- we bought a container, a forty-foot container.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And I had all this stacked in there. So it's no little project.

KAREN BREWSTER: No, it is not.

[00:36:29]VIRGINIA LONG: It is a -- and that's what I said, I think if we looked back on it, we might say, "Oh, we'll let someone else do that one next time."

KAREN BREWSTER: And --

VIRGINIA LONG: You know, we're proud of what we've done, but it's taken a lot of our -- a lot of our life.

[00:36:47]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And you were showing me before the -- all the old wainscoting, you've made doors and cabinets.

VIRGINIA LONG: All the old wainscoting, yes. Yes. Because there was wainscoting in the building, and again, we measured it to get the right height that they had because the ceilings are like ten, ten and a half feet on the first floor. So you get that good proportion and that. But then all of the, um, ceilings on the first floor were wainscoting.

KAREN BREWSTER: Like tongue-and-groove? Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Well --

KAREN BREWSTER: Or just the wainscoting?

VIRGINIA LONG: The wainscoting. That's the exact boards that -- well, it was tongue -- I mean, they're fit like tongue-and-groove.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:37:31]VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. And so some of 'em would be twenty feet long. We've got some that were twenty-five feet long.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

VIRGINIA LONG: But we'd try to take them off, save as much, but those were all covered then with wallpapers. So again, if I could live another twenty years, I have a collection of wallpapers that the Park Service helped me with a little tiny grant to -- to label where they came off in the building --

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: -- so that I could go -- but they said that could possibly be one of the largest collections of wallpaper in Southeast.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

VIRGINIA LONG: Alaska. So I've got tons of that around.

[00:38:21]KAREN BREWSTER: So if -- if at some point you wanted to go and put wallpapering in all these rooms, you --

VIRGINIA LONG: You could at least --

KAREN BREWSTER: -- you could copy it?

VIRGINIA LONG: You could copy some of those.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, cool.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because right now you've just paint -- you have the wainscoting and then you painted?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Right. Right. Exactly. And some of them were, you know, old, like pineapple print.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh really?

VIRGINIA LONG: And yes. But all the rooms had different, and sometimes there was three and four layers, of course.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: So to get down to the -- to the -- all those holes you see in the wainscoting and that?

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: A lot of those are from wallpaper tacks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, so it was wallpapered over the wainscoting?

VIRGINIA LONG: Oh, yes. A lot of -- a lot of the wood had --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

[00:39:06]VIRGINIA LONG: All the ceilings were wallpapered over. And like, going up the stairs, then there was, you know, there was a lot of wallpaper on a lot of the wainscoting because they just covered things up. So you found things buried in the wall. And we got a lot of those photos, too. And someday I need to try to make photo albums of all that. But I probably have two thousand, three thousand pictures.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, wow.

VIRGINIA LONG: Of -- of the building in progress.

[00:39:35]KAREN BREWSTER: So -- yeah, so you took pictures all along the way?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, that's great.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because we'd open -- we'd open a wall. Oh my goodness, there was a fire here at one time, because there'd be some charred 2x4's. And the 2x4's that you took out of the -- that were there, the few that you did find, not on the outside, were actual 2x4's.

KAREN BREWSTER: Which they don't make anymore.

VIRGINIA LONG: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: They call them 2x4's, but we know.

VIRGINIA LONG: Exactly. Exactly.

[00:40:07]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, yeah. You were talking about the outside of the structure, that um, an engineer said it doesn't make sense that this building is standing?

VIRGINIA LONG: Correct. But it is, so it deserves to be preserved.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. So how it is that they built it that's different?

VIRGINIA LONG: Well, they took the 1x12's, and they doubled 'em, so they're, I guess, seventeen feet. And I don't know, I guess they had people standing out there and holding them up, and they -- they would put a 2x4 across, so that they could set the second floor on those.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. So there was --

[00:40:41]VIRGINIA LONG: So there was -- there was the -- there was the 2x4 that would hold those together, but there weren't really studs in the walls. The walls, the outside walls, were only 1x12's.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. So yeah, no framing, really?  
VIRGINIA LONG: No. No framing.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Even on the west and north sides? It was all that same --  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.  
KAREN BREWSTER: -- double wood --  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Yeah. Well, then there was the -- the siding, you know, so -- on those.  
So there wasn't all that -- there wasn't all that 1x12 on those.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.  
VIRGINIA LONG: There was the -- the other, but oh, it's been a long time, so I can't  
remember. But I just remember being so shocked 'cause we're trying to find 2x4's, and  
they weren't there.  
[00:41:32]KAREN BREWSTER: And then the, um -- Yeah, how the second floor stayed on? I  
mean, they had beams, you said.  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, you -- you wondered. Well, yeah. They just hung 'em on the -- or  
they just -- they laid on the 2x4, the joist.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.  
VIRGINIA LONG: The joist. And then the -- the ceiling came down, or the roof came down,  
and then it just sat on a 2x4 ledge.  
KAREN BREWSTER: At the top of those 1x12's?  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. So that was not acceptable.  
KAREN BREWSTER: No. [00:42:06]Yeah, so that's the other thing. What did you have to do  
to meet -- you had to meet current code, you said.  
VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes. There -- there's a few things that they say because this is a -- um,  
an historic building that they allow you, very few things. But it might be, you know, that  
uh, the wood that your steps are made out of, or maybe they could be a little bit narrower  
than the -- what they would like it now. [00:42:35]But most of it, you had to meet the --  
had to meet codes. So to do that, you just got yourself a code book, and you used it for  
your bedtime story for several years. And I could quote you about anything out of there.  
Because you also have to go, not only the city, but you have to have state permits.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right. [00:42:58]Well, and I would think, you know, an historic  
building, it would be grandfathered that you could just keep it the way it was. I didn't  
realize you had to --  
VIRGINIA LONG: Some things you can if you don't do any remodeling. Once you start to redo  
it, then you have the meet the code.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.  
VIRGINIA LONG: If you just bought the building, and you didn't -- then there's more leniency.  
You know, you didn't have to say, ok, no, you bought this building, so now you have to  
change all this. [00:43:27]But again, that didn't hold true for everything because another  
thing that we put in in the Historic District is sprinklers -- required sprinklers in the whole  
Historic District.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Right.  
VIRGINIA LONG: The people outside the Historic District, no. So your neighbor right there  
across the street doesn't have to have one, but if you're in the Historic District, you did.  
And they -- they did offer grants.  
KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.



VIRGINIA LONG: Which they helped pay for um, a percentage. Then the next year, a lesser percentage, encouraging people to have them. So people were getting them, but then, some of the early sprinkler systems that went in were done with shabby material, and --

KAREN BREWSTER: They leaked?

VIRGINIA LONG: And Chinese pipes that rusted, and I'm sorry, but they did say "Made in China." But so, it ended up, they kind of had another round of -- to update a lot of the sprinkler systems.

[00:44:35]KAREN BREWSTER: So did this -- did the Historic District, or even all of Skagway, did it ever burn? Because it's all so close together.

VIRGINIA LONG: No. No.

KAREN BREWSTER: In its whole history, there's never --

VIRGINIA LONG: Exactly. They'd never had -- I think they might have had a couple burns.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: But not any big, huge -- no, they were -- they were fortunate in that way.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: That they didn't. And they were trying to keep it that way, you know.

[00:44:56]KAREN BREWSTER: And so here on the corner of Fifth and State, you are in the Historic District?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, correct. This is right -- the very edge. Well, and that across, because this is where Moore's property was when he first built, and his cabin sat out there.

KAREN BREWSTER: So if this building had been another block away --

VIRGINIA LONG: Oh, yes. Yes. Correct.

KAREN BREWSTER: It would've been totally different.

VIRGINIA LONG: And across the street to the -- on the west. Across State Street, the Park Service is restoring the old YMCA. Just to the south of it is -- used to be an old café, Corner Café, and now it's Happy Endings. That's outside the Historic District.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: They don't have to follow the same rules that we do.

[00:45:41]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Ok. So I was thinking about some of those code things you had. So the sprinklers. Um, there was something about lighting you told me before.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, there's -- and now some of that code is just code that any new building would have to have, and some -- it's not just that it's for the Historic District.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: If you were putting in a new building, you would have to. But there's code with -- with the size of the apartments, the amount of light that enters each apartment. There's minimums for this type of -- of things.

[00:46:17]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And you had a creative solution for the light. What's that?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. So we used the solar lights from the --

KAREN BREWSTER: Like a skylight.

VIRGINIA LONG: Sky -- yes. That uh, solar tubing that came down through -- through the roof top.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And through our cricket, so for inside bathrooms that didn't have any windows.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[00:46:45]VIRGINIA LONG: Or one apartment that has the kitchen and living room all in one long section, twenty-five foot long, it only had one window in it, so we have a solar tube coming through on that, and we also put transoms, glass transoms in the windows --

KAREN BREWSTER: On the top of the door?

VIRGINIA LONG: Leading out of the rooms because that gave more light. So then that would qualify for enough light.

[00:47:15]KAREN BREWSTER: Hm. And then you said the staircase, you were able to keep it that width?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, we were. We just couldn't make it any narrower, but then we had to, um, cut back the overhang because it wasn't quite --

KAREN BREWSTER: Tall enough?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, headroom enough. Because back then, people weren't as tall, I guess. And so we did have to do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Which is -- so there's a lot of those little things like that, that --

[00:47:45]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And then you said that other apartment, which has the outside entrance on the east side --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because of -- you could only have so many people.

VIRGINIA LONG: Correct. We were going to -- the original building -- well, when we bought it, had a staircase that went out and a hallway. So there were two -- there were two entrance/exits.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Ok. But it had the long hallway. So we didn't really want to have the long hallway because we wanted to put that room into the apartments. Uh, because the -- when we bought it, there were about nine rooms up there, and they just rented rooms with a shared bath.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: Bathroom, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Two or three bathrooms and like, nine rooms. [00:48:28]And we ended up with four apartments up there and their own bathrooms and that. But we are all having them come off of a central hallway and steps, but there was a code that said, for a single exit/entrance, even though we have sprinklers and so forth, you could only have so many people. And so, we couldn't have the four apartments coming off that one, so we put a stair, an exit, on the other side of the building, and have one apartment on there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: A little bit larger apartment that way, and then three coming off the other way. So again, it was a choice. You could've had a hallway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: But these are all things you gotta get decided before you start building and you have to rip it out and start over again.

[00:49:20]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And did you guys -- you and Howard do all this design?

VIRGINIA LONG: First of all, the Park Service, um, because Grant Crosby was our project manager, did so much help with. And then Karl Gurcke from the Park Service uh, they did so much help with what was required and what wasn't required. And, uh --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Did they help --

VIRGINIA LONG: But they didn't do the design work. I hired an architect from Ketchikan.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Good grief, I can't think of her name.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's ok. So --

VIRGINIA LONG: And she was awesome. Just awesome. She came up and spent some time here, and she did all of the -- all of the outside structural work, and um, all to meet code and everything, and she knew about historic buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: So she -- the Park Service hooked me up with her.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And she helped with the floor plan?

VIRGINIA LONG: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: No?

VIRGINIA LONG: She actually didn't. [00:50:24]She did a floor plan, but I wanted something really unique, and so I spent about two years designing the whole upstairs myself.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Yeah, and then downstairs, you have two sort of storefront areas.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, yes. And we're just -- we just started. We have four quadrants. So the front two quadrants are not finished yet.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: But we finished the back two. And the one quadrant on the southeast is -- has a laundry for all the apartments upstairs, they can use it. An ADA bathroom, what we called a breakroom kitchen if we ever did open up for commercial rentals.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: That that would be a bathroom and a breakroom that everyone could use, and a little office on the back for us. And then the southwest quadrant could be a commercial rental or an apartment.

[00:51:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Um, and then that hallway with the pretty floor decorating, you designed that?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. We put in oak flooring upstairs because we didn't want to work with carpeting. There was carpeting up -- some carpeting up there. There was old linoleums up there, and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, the stairs you can still see where they have that carpet runner like the old style.

VIRGINIA LONG: Exactly. Yes. Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And there was -- oh, excuse me. Part of my (inaudible) are broke.

[00:51:55]KAREN BREWSTER: So that flooring in all the apartments is still --

VIRGINIA LONG: Is all oak. We went with oak because we thought that would be more durable. Because there were -- there was flooring.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Ok, tongue-and-groove boards.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Like kinda out there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Down, um -- couple of the apartments had the 1x12's underneath that. Some just had that stretched over those joists that were two feet apart, so it wasn't --

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

VIRGINIA LONG: So something had to be done.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it kind of --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, so you couldn't --

KAREN BREWSTER: It kind of moved with --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, yeah. You know, and so when you got down -- So then we ended up, to make it meet code and be sturdy, we put all tongue-and-groove plywood.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And so, you had to put new flooring?

VIRGINIA LONG: So then, we had to do something above the plywood.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And uh, so we chose to use oak.

[00:52:55]KAREN BREWSTER: You didn't recycle the old 100-year-old wood for the flooring?

VIRGINIA LONG: No. No. There was some of it up there, but it was in such poor -- it was in pretty poor condition. And we -- we recycled what we could where we lifted it, and that's what's running between these two buildings.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, I see.

VIRGINIA LONG: That's 100-year-old there. And uh, we also used it to patch the floors down on the first floor.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: So that one apartment, or that --

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: The southwest? That's all the original 100-year-old flooring.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, it is? Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yep.

[00:53:27]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, and that um, out in the hallway with that bear claw quilt design --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, and I used the leftover strap -- scraps from the flooring, oak flooring we put upstairs, which were just kind of small pieces.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: But you have lots of 'em left over. So I made a quilt pattern so that we could use all the little pieces.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And I put bear paws, then, design in the wood pieces going down the hallway.

[00:53:59]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. It's very pretty. And yeah, I mean, like, you were showing me all the cabinets and the counters and everything that you've -- re --

VIRGINIA LONG: All from the --

KAREN BREWSTER: -- mainly recycled.

VIRGINIA LONG: All from the wood that came out of the building. And that is the whole reason that the building has taken seventeen years. Because almost -- we could not

duplicate this building because there's so much of the wood that can't even be replaced 'cause we've used almost all of it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[00:54:25] VIRGINIA LONG: But the hard part also is, if you look at all -- like this is all the wainscoting that's natural. Upstairs in the apartments, it's painted.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because we used the lower quality ones where, you know, we couldn't get as nice a-looking boards.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Then we worked those down and sanded them and painted them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. [00:54:51] But you also used some of the wainscoting in cabinets?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. So all of it we used for cabinets and any board that we found, you have to store it. So that's so much. We had that front half was -- there was wainscoting stacked up, you know, five deep --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And up, you know, six feet high. And then on shelves. And you gotta store it 'til you have time to use it. That's a lot of your problem.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: You're working along, you know, with your -- with your --

[00:55:26] KAREN BREWSTER: At least you weren't trying to live in the building.

VIRGINIA LONG: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: While you were working on it.

VIRGINIA LONG: No, that's true. That's true. We didn't have to do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Some people do that, which is even harder.

VIRGINIA LONG: Oh, my goodness.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, your -- your front work room and then Howard's shop --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- are filled with piles of wood.

[00:55:40] VIRGINIA LONG: And we wished we would've built the shop earlier.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, that --

VIRGINIA LONG: Because the shop was an old crib, kind of like fastened on there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And it was in horrible condition. You couldn't even store anything much in it 'cause it was very moldy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And, you know, just really, really old. [00:55:58] So when we think about it now, we should've probably torn that down and built the shop building earlier because we'd've had more space to work.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Because otherwise, you had to do everything inside?

VIRGINIA LONG: Exactly. We were working inside. But the first floor, uh, is the original flooring.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: So even on that front half.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: We repaired all that flooring, and so that'll all be just like the southwest quadrant.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: Will all be refinished.

KAREN BREWSTER: Nice.

VIRGINIA LONG: Like the hardware store. That's all the --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: So that's all the 100-year-old. So wherever we could, we saved.

[00:56:34]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, it's beautiful using that old wood and the new cabinets and then the -- the countertop down here in this breakroom kitchen, you told me was --

VIRGINIA LONG: Well, the -- the building was used as a restaurant for several years, called the Portland House, and it was a pizza -- They had Italian food and pizza, and they had the great big old pizza ovens with the great big stones in it. So when we took those down -- because they had a furnace, an old, old furnace that was wood and oil, a heavy, heavy thing, and then all the pizza ovens, that actually, this quadrant was sinking down into the basement.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

[00:57:22]VIRGINIA LONG: And so it would've -- had gone down about eight inches. So um, Grant Crosby and Howard and all the rest of us had to move all that stuff out of there just to take some weight off.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because the -- also the west wall -- or the east wall was swinging in the wind 'cause it had rotted.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, along the ground?

VIRGINIA LONG: Along the ground. And so when the wind -- so we did have, like an earthquake, and people said, "Did you feel the earthquake?" But we didn't 'cause the wind just kinda went through our building. So we never felt it.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause you were used to the --

VIRGINIA LONG: We were -- yeah, yeah. There were breezes in our building all the time.

KAREN BREWSTER: So, did that mean you had to --

VIRGINIA LONG: We had to prop the whole side of that building up, and we had to also push it in when they did do it, but we had bought great big, um --

KAREN BREWSTER: Like scaffolding?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, like that, metal-like jacks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, jacks. Yeah, yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, floor jacks. And --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And built it all to hold it up 'til we could work on that side.

[00:58:32]KAREN BREWSTER: So did you have to end up raising the whole floor of any part of the building?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. So this side of the floor, this quadrant of the floor, which is that fourth quadrant that was added in here --

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: It took -- it was the one that sank down. This floor had to be replaced.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: The other three quadrants of the original building --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: -- is still the original floor.

[00:58:55]KAREN BREWSTER: Now, so you didn't have to raise the whole thing up on a new cement foundation?

VIRGINIA LONG: No, we put -- we did do the whole foundation, but we did it in, um, treated wood.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok. Treated lumber, yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, treated lumber.

[00:59:09]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, and you said that this other quadrant they built on, the rooflines don't match.

VIRGINIA LONG: Correct. Correct. Because it was -- they -- back then, it was kind of a time when there wasn't a whole lot happening in Skagway, and it was -- the population was really getting skinny and no longer was ten or twenty thousand people from the gold rush and every -- You know, seven hundred people. And so, they scavenged anything they could to put things together. They were very resourceful. [00:59:45]Many times, you'd open a wall, and the boards that they had put in the wall said "White Pass Yukon Route," so they were things from the railroad that they had scavenged and put in the walls. So there was a lot of -- of that going on. So you know, they saved what they could. They were very resourceful.

[01:00:08]KAREN BREWSTER: Do you know what years these other quadrants were added on?

VIRGINIA LONG: I do, if I went back and looked in the -- I can't remember, but I think I want to say back in the '30's --

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Maybe this one quadrant was added? But it did have to be rebuilt and a floor put on it because the -- but the old pizza ovens, we were talking about that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: So I saved the stones out of those. So when I built the breakroom galley kitchen, which is long, I used two big pizza stones for the counter tops.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: You're very --

VIRGINIA LONG: And the triple sink that came out of the restaurant, I used that on the other side.

[01:00:50]KAREN BREWSTER: And then upstairs in the one of the apartments, besides the -- one of the cabinets, it was old bedrails?

VIRGINIA LONG: Oh, yes. That was in the bathroom.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: So I took two cabinets that I bought that had some metal on them, and then I used bedrails to -- to join them together to make it look at one unit before I put the -- the sink top on it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And then made shelves underneath of it.

[01:01:17]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And then the other one, it was shelving made out of all the old wainscoting, and -- ?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, one of them, we saved -- or we -- we got a company here in town that was taking out their jewelry cabinets and taking them to the dump, we salvaged, 'cause it was beautiful wood.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: We salvaged the wood and then made the counter -- counters for the bathrooms.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: Out of that.

[01:01:44]KAREN BREWSTER: And then that one shelf you showed me, it still has the square nail holes.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Yes, some of the wood that we have, we have -- we have several, and in fact, some of the bigger square nails that we found in the building, I saved, and then I made, um, coat racks, then put those in to hang the coats and the hats on. So there's one in Howard's shop.

[01:02:11]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you're very creative and resourceful.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, I don't like to throw anything out because it has a use.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And so much of that is not only useful, but it's very durable. It actually lasts longer than some of the new stuff you can buy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: So the problem with doing that is it takes time to save it, and room to save it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: You can't just say, "Well, I don't have time." So you take this to the dump. And then two years later, you say, "Oh, I wish I had that." So it takes time, and it takes space. And uh, that's why we have years in our building, but.

[01:02:55]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, and how did you know how to do all this stuff?

VIRGINIA LONG: Um, I learned a lot along the way, but I grew up as one of seven children, and we mostly did all of our own work because we lived on a farm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: And did a lot of our own building, and then my partner is a fantastic builder.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:03:19]VIRGINIA LONG: So he -- he does a lot of the building, where I did a lot of the refinishing and all the painting was my part of the deal. And I'm a saver. So I saved. I did the restoration on all the wood and the painting, and he builds.

[01:03:38]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and then you mentioned the tile in that one bathroom upstairs.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. That came actually out of the, um, out of the restaurant again. It was all the tile behind the stove in the kitchen of the pizza station, so all the white tile that was behind there, we chipped off the 1/12" squares. We took them off the wall and then had to work a lot to get the grease off the front and the drywall glued on the back off. And, but then we ended up using that all for the tub surround in the one bathroom.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.



VIRGINIA LONG: But it looks nice.

KAREN BREWSTER: It looks nice.

VIRGINIA LONG: It looks brand new.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: It also takes a really lot of time.

[01:04:25]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And then here, down here in this room, the sliding doors --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, the pocket doors.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: We decided -- I wanted to have a set of pocket doors because I grew up in a house that had pocket doors.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: That was built on the turn of the century. And I've always loved 'em. So we had a space where we could have pocket doors, and they're so nice because they don't swing out into your room.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:04:50]VIRGINIA LONG: But uh, Howard had found a couple pieces of wood that had, um -

KAREN BREWSTER: Those holes in 'em.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, like natural holes in 'em. Long, um, holes in 'em that kinda matched, and so he used those as the panels in a couple of the door things, and we used those for our handles on the door.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [01:05:12]Now is the wood that's in those doors is from the building?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, that was also from the building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

VIRGINIA LONG: All of the wood here came out of the building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and then you --

VIRGINIA LONG: Someplace or other.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. And then you said the paneling around that door and the cabinets --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, we used the back of the wainscoting, 'cause we didn't want the little bumps, see. You know how --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: So we turned it flat, and -- and to cut those off.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: We wanted the -- we wanted you to see -- if you notice, see all of the saw marks?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: That's all saw marks because their saws weren't sharp. They didn't care. They just got the boards made and got 'em up and used them.

[01:05:54]KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. Yeah, it is -- and they have kind of a brownish color to them.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, they do, and so we wanted to show that, look at all that -- you know, it almost looks like a design, but that's all from the saw blades.

KAREN BREWSTER: Neat. And then you told me why you built them all the way up to the ceiling.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Because if you don't, then it's just a ledge for dirt and grease and grime to settle in, and then you gotta get up there and clean it all the time. In kitchens and in apartments. So I always take 'em all the way to the ceiling, because then you've got more storage room. And there's pipes back in there also that it covers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: From the sprinkler system and so forth. And then you don't have to do that cleaning.

[01:06:42]KAREN BREWSTER: There you go. And I -- just looking at them, I noticed that the pulls on the door are offset. The handles.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes, just for a different look.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Do that. And those handles just came from a shop, but those are handmade by someone. My girlfriend had a shop here in town, and she sold those. But those are bear paw and moose paws, all hand-fashioned.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, cool.

VIRGINIA LONG: Handles.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah.

[01:07:09]KAREN BREWSTER: Neat. Well, I say, you definitely have the eye.

VIRGINIA LONG: I like that part, yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, the creative eye.

VIRGINIA LONG: Thank you.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was wondering, where does that come from? I mean, it's not like you got trained in interior decorating, did you?

VIRGINIA LONG: No, I didn't get trained. I just like to do it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:07:24]VIRGINIA LONG: Just, I like unusual, you know. I think if you walk into a room, you can have a beautiful room, but you need one or two focal points that draws your eye to that focal point, and you say, "Oh, this is awesome." People will come into the building, and they will say, "Oh my god, I just love this." But they don't know why they love it necessarily, but it's all those little details.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:07:52]VIRGINIA LONG: Little details make it look so different. And the other thing is, people will walk in, and everybody sees something different. Somebody'll come in, and they'll say, "Oh my gosh. I really like those cupboards or the wood on the side." Or somebody'll come in, "Oh, I like the glass in the cupboards up above in the galley kitchen." Or "Oh, I like the pizza stones or cabinets."

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Everybody sees something different.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. [01:08:22]And like that kitchen upstairs, I said the angles --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- and it's a low ceiling, I thought it reminded me of a ship.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, they ship galley. Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you said somebody else --

VIRGINIA LONG: Said it looked like a church. That reminded them of a church.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And they said, "Oh my goodness. You should call a magazine and have them put the pictures in because it's so awesome."

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: So that's what makes it kinda all worthwhile. And people see different things.

[01:08:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And then that one countertop kinda came to a point, and then the other apartment you had the part of the countertop that folds down.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Fold down and then flip up when you wanted more counter space.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: So.

VIRGINIA LONG: So, and then the other one, yes, we had the, uh, square nails.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: We left it in the -- the wood so you could see that there were --

[01:09:11]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And then the efficiency, you have that awesome Murphy bed.

VIRGINIA LONG: Oh, yes. And we designed that Murphy bed, and that was my construction fellow helped me find somebody that could help design that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because I -- it didn't have room for a -- to be a one-bedroom, but we did have this one space. But it was just a tiny bit smaller than a full-size bed, so we had to make a custom bed mattress afterwards.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

VIRGINIA LONG: But we designed it all so that it looked like a cupboard with a desk out front.

[01:09:50]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Yeah, and then when you folded it down, the desk just stays there. Now it's on the ground underneath.

VIRGINIA LONG: Exactly. You don't have to remove anything off the desk.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. It was very cool.

VIRGINIA LONG: So that's nice, yes.

[01:10:01]KAREN BREWSTER: And then the bathtub in that apartment, too?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, there were two -- two bathtubs that came out of this building, we found out later. Because the people who bought it in the '90's to make it a -- the Portland House Restaurant, pizza place, were from Anchorage. They took these bathtubs out, and they actually hauled 'em to Anchorage, and they were in a garage there. They were going, I don't know, use 'em someplace or sell 'em or whatever. But they ended up never doing it. And when we started working on the building, and the two -- 2000's, the Park Service found out that they were there, and so they shipped one of the bathtubs to me as a present.

[01:10:50]KAREN BREWSTER: Nice. But it doesn't have the feet?

VIRGINIA LONG: But it didn't have -- yes. It only had two of the feet, unfortunately, which doesn't help balance.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

VIRGINIA LONG: What do we call those tubs?

KAREN BREWSTER: You -- so you built it on --

VIRGINIA LONG: So I made, uh, cradles for them to sit on, wooden cradles for them to sit on, because I've seen it in, you know, newer things, so then we set it on that, which actually works a little better.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. So.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. [01:11:21]And then you put in a shower head that looks old-fashioned.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, we did it all with copper tubing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, we designed that with copper tubing.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it all looks authentic.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes. Yes.

[01:11:33]KAREN BREWSTER: So, I say, you and Howard did a lot of this, but it sounds like you hired some people to help you?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, for the inside. For the outside, mostly Howard and I did it except we had a couple construction people who had to put the floor back together and build this bottom here. We had a construction company that put the foundation back in early on, and then Don Corwin helped us with the windows and the doors.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because he had all that knowledge, and uh, did a wonderful job. And taught me a lot about doing that, so I learned a lot from him about refinishing wood and so forth.

[01:12:16]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And the windows, you used the same frames, but you -

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes, we used the same -- and we did put in the original, uh, single-pane windows. But then upstairs, I decided, um, it's the original 100-year-old windows and window frames. So we took all the putty off, and you have to try to take the putty off without cracking the glass, and 90 percent of the time you do, but you have to be careful 'cause those little metal points.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

VIRGINIA LONG: If you heat that up too much, that just cracks. [01:12:51]And then I learned how to putty glass back in, which I don't like to do 'cause it takes me forever, and some people can do it really great. But yeah, we -- those are all the original windows upstairs. Some of the ones downstairs in the front had to be built from photos.

[01:13:15]KAREN BREWSTER: But the glass is now all double-paned?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, but we -- then we did put in double-pane upstairs. We've still got the glass. We could put it back the other way, but because we were afraid that it wouldn't be warm enough for apartments for the winter time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:13:35]VIRGINIA LONG: And our other choice is, we could've made storm windows, so you had that option. So both of them are not exactly historic. And so, you know, that's where it's the difference between a restoration and a rehabilitation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and storm windows, you have to take on and off.

VIRGINIA LONG: Exactly. On second floor.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And we were getting older.

[01:13:59]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And you said you put in floor heating?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, we put in-floor heating. We went with that off of a boiler. And well, we didn't know if that was going to work, but we've been so pleased with it. It's been awesome because we don't have all the radiators eating into the 100-year-old wood.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And hard to clean, and always dusty and get dirty and greasy and cut your hands up. I've cleaned enough of those in apartments. So the floors are nice and toasty warm.

[01:14:33]KAREN BREWSTER: And the electricity bill would be huge.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, electricity is expensive here in town, so um, so it's worked out really well because even in the winter, the apartments stay toasty warm and everybody's got their own thermostat, so --

KAREN BREWSTER: That's good.

VIRGINIA LONG: It's worked really well.

[01:14:51]KAREN BREWSTER: So you're using fuel oil, diesel oil?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Fuel oil, yeah, in the boiler for the hot water and the -- and the in-floor heating.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And then we, finally, just in the last several years got the in-floor heating on the first floor, which was a lot of a challenge, too, because you're under three quarters of the building that it's a hundred years old.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And some of the stuff they used to put the building up is not things that you went to a store and bought everything that matched.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: It's just hodge-podged in there and set on stones, and another old piece of two stones together, and working around that was quite a challenge.

[01:15:37]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I'm surprised you could get in-floor heating upstairs, that it's strong enough floors up there.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Yeah. Because we -- remember, we rebuilt all those floors up there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: We put tongue-and-groove plywood.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Besides what was there, so. [01:15:53]Because the joists -- the joists are -- between the two floors are -- was wonderful. They're two feet apart, but they were big. They were fat lumber, not skinny lumber now. Strong lumber. They just didn't hang 'em on much, so we had to redo everything.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: So they, you know.

[01:16:14]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, I was going to say, some of the -- besides Don Corwin, what other carpenters who helped you -- it must have been really expert carpenters?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, then our main, um, carpenter was Michael Yee, who does fantastic work. There's nobody that does better work. And Charles Dolan also did -- uh, a lot of the framework upstairs and the floorings, put all the floorings in. But then Michael Yee came on board, and he's the one that has put in all of the cabinet work and all of the wainscoting and the flooring upstairs. And there's nobody that does better work than he does, as you can tell.

KAREN BREWSTER: And is he the one --

VIRGINIA LONG: We did all the work to prepare it for him.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: So he doesn't -- you know, when he goes to do it, he's got all these boards ready for him.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: But he has the knowledge to make it look --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Wonderful.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now is he the one who was out front working?

VIRGINIA LONG: That was one of his helpers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Yeah. [01:17:19]And then the other thing historic is the paint color on the outside of the building. How did you know what color to paint it?

VIRGINIA LONG: Well, we didn't -- they had -- they did not have these colors.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Ok. So you had that choice. There was a couple pictures we saw at different times. One was kind of a -- a maybe kind of a, I think a creamy golden yellow or something, was one that we found, you know, when we were stripping off --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

VIRGINIA LONG: -- the different uh, layers of paint on the wood. [01:17:54]But there's so many buildings that had that, and we wanted something that would be unique, so we selected colors that were used historically, which again, as you know, something do not destroy a building by, you know, like using fluorescent pink on your building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And passed that by my architect, and uh, so forth.

KAREN BREWSTER: It got approved. The Commission said it was ok?

VIRGINIA LONG: It got -- yes. And then it got approved. Yes. And then people have loved it, the three colors, because they're -- they look awesome together.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And it's striking, you know. It catches people's eyes.

[01:18:35]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and I think it's -- I think it's great how you did the one kind of wood in one color, and then the other in a different color to distinguish --

VIRGINIA LONG: To kind of distinguish 'em. Yes. Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. It's very cool.

[01:18:48]VIRGINIA LONG: And then if you go up those attic steps, which are very, very tiny --

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: And at one time, they had somebody in the southeast quadrant, that one that was added on.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because it has -- it doesn't have the slanted --

KAREN BREWSTER: Roof.

VIRGINIA LONG: Ceilings --

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: Like the other rooms that came straight up. So they had somebody living up there, as far as sleeping up there at one time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, up in the attic?

VIRGINIA LONG: But -- yes. But we've got -- nobody could do that now because we've filled it with insulation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: The flooring and that, and had the sprinkler pipes and everything.

[01:19:23]But one thing we did find when we went up there, when I was going from the kind of, a little bit of, like, finished room into this one, where you just would walk along the joists, just as you went in the kind of the doorway, pasted on the wall was some 1898 music.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cool.

VIRGINIA LONG: That I've got saved, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's cool. Yeah, that's the fun part of old buildings.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Finding those --

VIRGINIA LONG: We didn't find a whole lot of that, but --

KAREN BREWSTER: Those treasures.

VIRGINIA LONG: -- yeah.

[01:19:52]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and you said that the -- you knew that it had been a bank because you'd seen the --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. When we tore out this one division in the flooring, got down to the flooring, you could see that there was the, um -- the three teller windows, where they would've been.

KAREN BREWSTER: You could see it on the floor?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Yeah. You could see it on the -- the print.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: 'Cause we knew that there was a bank.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, you did know that, ok?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. So then he said, yeah. Here it was. Yeah.

[01:20:21]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, then you also mentioned -- so you had to tear out internal walls?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Some of the walls that were here were just, again, built with, like, 1x12's. But the people who put in the restaurant, just took like a chainsaw and cut arches in it, so they ruined all those boards. There was nothing strong about it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Or anything, so they -- Yeah, some of those had to come out or else, like the one between that quadrant and this quadrant, we had to rebuild.

[01:20:52]KAREN BREWSTER: Hm-mm. Well, you mentioned somebody who had grown up here who walked through the building?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, yes. Someone that, uh, their family had owned it for years. And so she'd come and visit us, but as she had gotten older, you know, she was kind of losing some of -- of her, um --

KAREN BREWSTER: Memories.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, memories. But there were some memories that were there. Whenever she'd go to say goodbye, and she'd go to leave, she'd go -- she'd pass the door that we go in and out, and try to walk into the wall. It was kind of like confused. And we'd kind of just guide her to the door. But when we redid that whole outside wall, we found the framing for a door there.

KAREN BREWSTER: That had been covered over?

VIRGINIA LONG: That had been covered over and was in the wall. So she knew exactly. 'Cause she kept saying, "Well, yeah, because you know, once somebody lost their keys in the garage, like, and by this door, and I found them." So she knew there was a door there. That's just so interesting.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's really cool.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Yeah.

[01:22:04]KAREN BREWSTER: And any -- any ghosts?

VIRGINIA LONG: There was someone that said they lived in here, and they swore there was a ghost because this rocking chair would rock itself at times. But uh, not that we know of.

KAREN BREWSTER: You've never experienced?

VIRGINIA LONG: But we did have lots and lots of people in town have lived in this building at one time or another.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: So that's -- that made it kind of special.

[01:22:28]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, you said Bea Lingle lived in four different places?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, she said four different places in this building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow.

VIRGINIA LONG: And then her one son said, yeah, she used to go up with her friend in the cricket -- up those and out on the cricket. There's a cricket between this floor and this --

KAREN BREWSTER: What's a cricket?

VIRGINIA LONG: It's a flat area.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. In between the quadrants?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Yeah. So.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you can get out onto it?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Yeah. They used to sunbathe up there. And you can see the ships and everything. Yeah. We had to rebuild that all, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: How fun.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah.

[01:23:06]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so the Park Service helping you with those grants, --

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- that was all because you were on the Commission and you knew?

VIRGINIA LONG: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: No?



VIRGINIA LONG: No. They would do that for anybody that would -- they would help anybody that would -- if it was a historic building, they thought it should be saved.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And uh, I think that maybe -- I'm not sure how we hooked up together. It might've been through Karl Gurcke. I'm not sure.

[01:23:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's what I was wondering is, how did you know to go about those grant?

VIRGINIA LONG: Well, I think they might have gotten ahold of me, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: I just -- because -- because my partner wanted to demolish the building and just sell the land.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And uh, I wanted to save it, so um, I might have talked to, um, Karl Gurcke.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And he said, let me get you in touch with, you know.

[01:23:59]KAREN BREWSTER: And so they helped you write the grants?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, they certainly did. They helped -- you see, because they would be -- end up -- they're quite stringent, so you'd end up with thirty, forty pages.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: You know. You had to do quarterly reports.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and also --

VIRGINIA LONG: And you had to take care of all the money. And it was like a 50/50 grant.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: It basically turns out to be 60/40, but still. Um, but you have to -- you have to have time cards for all your help or whatever, you know. [01:24:30]And you don't really pay yourself, but uh, you know. But then the cost of everything and then pictures of all of it. And before and afters. And I couldn't'a done it without the help from them.

[01:24:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So did the Park Service get the money, and you --

VIRGINIA LONG: No. They --

KAREN BREWSTER: Did they give you the lump sum, and you controlled it?

VIRGINIA LONG: No, you get it afterwards.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: I mean, after you get the -- after you turn it all in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: I think. Or you might've gotten some along the way?

KAREN BREWSTER: So you had to do paperwork along the way?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. There's, yes, quarterly reports for -- 'cause I think they might've been a year grant.

[01:25:12]KAREN BREWSTER: So what did the grant pay for? Paying your helpers?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. They would -- yes. And materials and helpers. Yeah. Yeah. Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: And --

VIRGINIA LONG: That would be it.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then they --

VIRGINIA LONG: Because Grant worked, you know, free.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, he got paid by the Park Service.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. And we just worked on our own 'cause it was our building, so that -- you could hire people, um, like Don Corwin.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: They would -- that would go, so we were splitting his, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Like, at the end, you know, then they would pay, like I said, this percentage, and you'd pay this percentage.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

[01:25:55]VIRGINIA LONG: But part of it is just the, um -- you know, it's helpful, yes, that they're paying, you know, 40, 50 percent. But the biggest help is the knowledge that they give you, so you learn a lot.

[01:26:11]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, you had to have learned a lot. It's a very impressive project.

VIRGINIA LONG: Thank you.

KAREN BREWSTER: I can see why it took seventeen years.

VIRGINIA LONG: Years. But it's starting to look pretty nice.

[01:26:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. And um, I can't imagine how much money you guys have had to sink into this building.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. And you know --

KAREN BREWSTER: Even with grants.

VIRGINIA LONG: But here's the thing. So we worked under the grants, but I'm very frugal at saving things and so forth, and it took seventeen years. We could have done it in five years doing -- using a different alternative.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Not saving, just saving what you wanted to to make a few things that look, you know, here's a historic corner, you can see what used to be in here. Not saving every single piece. Not doing all the work ourself. Hiring someone else to do it. [01:27:00]We went the slow, long route because we did not want to have a big bill, so we don't owe on this building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow. And the rental -- your rentals are helping cover that.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. Well, and that covers our workmen now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: You know. 'Cause we only started renting about four or five years ago.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you --

VIRGINIA LONG: The one apartment.

[01:27:21]KAREN BREWSTER: And you and Howard have been retired from other work during this time?

VIRGINIA LONG: Uh, no. Well, no.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because we had a gas -- we were running a gas station, um, over here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: And then Howard had the propane business for years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

VIRGINIA LONG: And I did bookkeeping. So we were working.

[01:27:44]KAREN BREWSTER: That makes it even more impressive.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. We were working full time then, and then we -- and then, he and his -  
- Howard and his friend built an apartment house, and so we -- we were -- when I met  
him, that was built, so we were running the apartment house.

KAREN BREWSTER: Nice.

VIRGINIA LONG: I was the one that was -- did all the books for it, and um, rented out the  
apartments and cleaned the apartments and changed them over, so and then it looks --

KAREN BREWSTER: So you had some experience?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yeah. [01:28:16]Should've known better then. So yeah. So and, yeah,  
he had the propane business for years and years. But then he had to have a heart valve  
replacement and so then ended up selling it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

VIRGINIA LONG: So we keep saying we need to retire because we're in our 70's, and um.

[01:28:42]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, as it seems like this building, as I say, a labor of love.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, it is.

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

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah, oh yes. It is. Yes, that it is.

[01:28:52]KAREN BREWSTER: And any regrets?

VIRGINIA LONG: No. I mean, you know, we look around and we just dearly love it. The thing  
I guess I would have to say that I regret is that I'm the age I am. I wished I would have  
done it -- could have done it -- had the opportunity to do it thirty years earlier.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: So I could've had a lot longer time to enjoy it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. It does seem like it's something you're proud of.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, definitely. We both are. And -- and it's fun because people come in  
and they love it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: You know, people go, oh, excuse me. People will come in, and they'll go,  
"Oh, I'm going to go home and do that."

[01:29:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, the apartments are beautiful.

VIRGINIA LONG: Thank you.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, I think they'd be popular rentals 'cause they are lovely.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Well, they're not the cheapest rentals, though.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

VIRGINIA LONG: You know, because there's a lot of money in 'em.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. You have to cover your costs.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. And then just the -- you know, just the um, taxes on it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Because you sit in the Historic District.

[01:29:58]KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, the taxes are higher in the Historic District?

VIRGINIA LONG: Oh, yeah. You know, commercial. Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh. Ok. I didn't know that. Well, also --

VIRGINIA LONG: Well.

[01:30:05]KAREN BREWSTER: The location is so good if you're a summer worker here.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, it is. That part's nice because they can walk to almost anything.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And then that makes the rent a little bit, you know, up a little bit because it's an attractive building.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes, because you're close to things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:30:22]VIRGINIA LONG: And like I said, the hard part about renting here is, you know, you've got high insurance. You've got high construction because you have to follow all the code and the upkeep. And like the sprinklers, they have to be --

KAREN BREWSTER: Inspected?

VIRGINIA LONG: Inspected every single year, and new things done, you know? And just the upkeep on the building. And we haven't even finished and in that. But the hardest part about renting is this town is that everybody wants to rent in the summer, but in the winter, every -- you know, three-quarters of the people are gone.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: So then there's lots of places to rent in the winter for very little money. So um, that's difficult to keep a -- a -- you know. We certainly -- there's certainly a lot of other things we could do that we'd make more money at.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So, it's not always --

VIRGINIA LONG: And easier. You know, because a lot of jobs, when you leave the job, you're done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: This one, you aren't.

[01:31:31]KAREN BREWSTER: No. Well, it's clearly, it's not always about money.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah. That's true. And, you know, we -- we both -- Howard loved to build, and -- and me, too. Liked to refinish.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: I like to design stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: I like to -- so, uh, we were both doing things that we loved to do, but the time got away from us. It would've been easier if we -- would've done that. He had five children. I had five children.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: When we met each other, so.

[01:32:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and it sounds like the Park Service was very helpful.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. They certainly would. We could not have done it without the Park Service getting us started and helping. Yeah. We probably would've demolished it and sold the land. Like Howard -- Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:32:21]VIRGINIA LONG: So that's kinda the crazy part. But I, you know, I'd raised five children. Put them all through college, all five of them, as a single parent.

KAREN BREWSTER: Woo!

VIRGINIA LONG: And I think one, two, three -- three of them have master's. All five have BA's. And then I said, "Ok. Now I need to just go do something myself."

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: And so I was looking for another --

[01:32:54]KAREN BREWSTER: What kind of work did you do as a single mom to put five kids through college?

VIRGINIA LONG: Uh, well, I'm very frugal, like I said.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: And I probably raised five children on less money than you could raise one person.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Or yourself. So um, I did books and did books at night, and that, and I worked -- we delivered newspapers at the time, and I was a man -- one of the distributors of the newspapers, so we worked nights, seven days a week. Sunday mornings and rural routes, and --

K[01:33:34]AREN BREWSTER: Sounds like you were raised with knowing hard work.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes. Yep, that's -- that's for sure.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yep. So, you know, sometimes I don't know how to relax unless I'm working. Work is, I think, is enjoyment, so.

[01:33:50]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's good. Well, I appreciate you taking a break from working to talk with me.

VIRGINIA LONG: Oh yeah, well, no kidding. I'm trying to slow down, so that's just wonderful. I hope that you got some usefulness out of it.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's been great to hear the story.

VIRGINIA LONG: Oh, good.

KAREN BREWSTER: To see it. I don't -- do you think we got all of it, from what we did outside?

VIRGINIA LONG: I think so.

KAREN BREWSTER: I think so.

VIRGINIA LONG: I'm trying to think of -- Because we talked about redoing the wood and so forth.

[01:34:20]KAREN BREWSTER: And the, um, windows, and the designs around the windows.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes. Because a lot of it -- a lot of the history, if you don't find it in pictures, you're going to find it when you open a wall. Or you take three layers of -- of material off of something.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: So like, we might be doing the ceiling, and we took three layers of wallpaper off, and then you say, "Oh look. Here's the wainscoting. We're down to that. But look, there's a line here. There was a wall here at one time." Or when we got upstairs and we opened a wall between these two rooms, there was newspaper stuffed in it. And some of it was like from 1950.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: So you know that something was done, and that was put in there in 1950. So you find a lot of clues that way. You know, if you take your time.

[01:35:21]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And wasn't it on one of the front windows that some of the decoration was covered up by the tiles, the asphalt tiles?

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes, they were, and so when you took that off and got down to the siding boards that you're actually go -- hoped that you can use, uh, then you would see the shadow of that exact design of the -- the window trim.

KAREN BREWSTER: So the trim was gone, but you could still see the shadow?

VIRGINIA LONG: The trim was gone, but we could trace that off of there, which was kind of exciting, because you'd say, "Look. We can't throw this board out. We've gotta save this."

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yeah.

[01:36:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that definitely sounds like a fun -- that you've had fun with it even though it's been hard work.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. And then we'd take pictures of that, you know, and have it. So -- You know, like I said, I wish I had thirty more years and that because I've got all the wallpaper that I could catalog.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

VIRGINIA LONG: I got, um, all the pictures to -- out there in the hallway that you saw.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

VIRGINIA LONG: I've got three window frames, about three feet by maybe, you know, two and a half feet that have six panes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

VIRGINIA LONG: Or nine panes that are each different. And I want to put historic pictures in those and hang 'em on the wall in that hallway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, that would be nice.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes.

[01:36:45]KAREN BREWSTER: I think it sounds like a project for like an intern from the Park Service to do.

VIRGINIA LONG: That would be wonderful.

KAREN BREWSTER: To help you.

VIRGINIA LONG: Oh, I would love that. That would be great. Oh, gosh.

[01:36:56]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, thank you, Virginia. I really appreciate it.

VIRGINIA LONG: Certainly. We love talking about our building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, good. It's great to have it documented.

VIRGINIA LONG: Yes. Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: All right.

VIRGINIA LONG: So we appreciate that. Thank you.

KAREN BREWSTER: Thank you.