

RECORDED INTERVIEW OF SAM RICHERT

CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER

IN MARBLEMOUNT, WASHINGTON

APRIL 29, 2019

ORAL HISTORY 2017-01-95

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

[00:00:00]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok, this is Karen Brewster, and today is April 29, 2019, and I'm here with Samantha "Sam" Richert, um, at North Cascades National Park in -- I guess we're in Marblemount, Washington.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: We are.

KAREN BREWSTER: Is that where we are?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: In her offices at the cultural resources curatorial facility. Um, Sam, thank you for letting me come talk to you today, take you away from your work. This is for the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Oral History Project. [00:00:36]Um, before we get into you working for Klondike in Skagway, do a little bit about where you're from, how you got into this work. You said you came from Wisconsin originally?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, well, I went, um, my undergraduate degree was in political science and women's studies at the University of Wisconsin. I grew up in St. Louis and then went to school at University of Wisconsin, and I stayed there for five or six years after I graduated and worked in natural foods co-ops, and then I decided to move to Seattle. And I worked in natural foods co-ops there, and then I also -- I went to school, like a little independent film school, and, um -- 'cause I wanted to be a filmmaker. And, uh, that was an interesting and challenging period of my life where I was not making very much money, and kind of having a blast, but -- Anyway, I met my partner, Rick, and he is twenty years older than I am, and so I decided to go back to school, and I went to get -- I was interested in public history originally, and um -- 'cause I liked the documentary side of filmmaking. And, um, I just kinda happened to -- happened into the open house for museum studies, their museology program is what they call it.

KAREN BREWSTER: At University of Washington.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: At University of Washington Seattle. [00:01:59]And I, um, got my master's degree in museology and started working for the Park Service in the regional office as a student, and then when I graduated they converted me into a term. And my boss at the time -- I was all funded. All my work was funded on soft project money, PMIS projects, and so my boss at the time was like, this fund source is going to collapse. The money for these projects is drying up. You need to get a permanent position somewhere. And so, I started looking for permanent positions, and the Klondike one came open. And, um, and Theresa hired me, Theresa Thibault, and I headed up there.

SAMANTHA RICHERT

APRIL 29, 2019

ORAL HISTORY 2017-01-95

Page 1 of 51

KAREN BREWSTER: And that was in what year?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: That was February of 2011.

[00:02:48]KAREN BREWSTER: February, good time to arrive in Skagway, no?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It was horrible. Yeah, I mean, you know, all the people in the regional office were like, "Oh, you know, Southeast Alaska is the banana belt, and it's going to be totally warm up there. Don't worry about it." And then we were taking the Alaska ferry on -- you know, yeah, in the first week of February, and it was miserable cold and just really kind of bleak. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, those winds coming off the glaciers in Skagway in the winter are brutal.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: I've been there in December, and it was pretty cold.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I -- yeah. Compared to Seattle, definitely a big change.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

[00:03:28]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, and so, when you got to Skagway, what was your job? What were you --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So I was a museum curator. Um, I was in charge of -- at the -- we had just started the exhibit planning for the visitor center, new exhibits for the visitor center. And that was, like, I think like the first week that I was there, um, started sitting in meetings for that. And, um, learning the museum collection. I supervised Deb Boettcher, the museum technician, who had been there for a long time, and so, yeah, everything that museum program management entails.

KAREN BREWSTER: So how do you learn about a collection? I mean, you're brand new, and there's all this stuff. How do you go about doing that?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, I mean, it helps a lot that Deb was there because she was just kinda like the brain of the collection. I mean, she's been there for so long, and so, um, you just kinda start, you know, going to the facilities and seeing what's there. [00:04:30]I remember walking into, um, the -- what we called the SSB, the Stuff Storage Building, which was like the -- the main purpose-built collection facility that was mostly -- it was actually built to be cold storage for archeology collections because that collection was stored at the -- well, when I was there, it was stored in the Mascot Building on the second floor, and I feel like it was stored someplace else before, but Deb would know. Um, and so originally, they had -- were building that cold storage building for the archeology, and then I can't say that we received the Rapuzzi Collection because it was more that the park entered into agreement to process the Rapuzzi Collection with the City of Skagway, but that building had, um -- so they put HVAC in that would control -- you know, like it made it a really nice facility. It wasn't just cold storage. It had total HVAC controls. And then they put the history collection in there. Really, it was just the Rapuzzi Collection at first, and then later we started kinda migrating some other history stuff in there. But um, it was, yeah -- [00:05:53]So I just remember walking into that building and just seeing all the stuff from the Rapuzzi Collection and these creepy mannequins that Martin Itjen had made, and kinda just being like, you know, what did I get myself in for? This -- I don't even know what to do with this stuff, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because it wasn't really organized?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, I mean, it was organized. I mean, it was on shelves. It wasn't just a big pile of stuff, I mean, but it was just -- those mannequins are just really creepy, and -- I mean, they aren't creepy to me anymore.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Now I -- I made friends with them. But at the time, it was -- like, walking into it cold was just like, man, there's a lot of stuff in here, and what is it all? And so you just -- I mean it -- you know, I would say that it took probably a good year to feel like I had a handle on what was in the collection exactly. But, you know, because Deb was there, that wasn't really an impediment because she just facilitated the whole program.

[00:06:46]KAREN BREWSTER: So what types of things are in the collection? You said there's a history collection. What's that?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, ok. Well, in Skagway, that is largely materials from the Klondike Gold Rush or shortly thereafter. And so one of the things that I did when I was there was work on the scope of collection statement to try and tighten that up so we really knew what we were collecting. So we weren't just collecting stuff that was cool, we were collecting things that actually had to do with the park's enabling legislation and the purpose of the park existing. And generally, um, because there's so many buildings in the park, we -- I had to establish a period of significance for each building. And so, you know, it didn't mean that we wouldn't have stuff, like, from the '40's, necessarily, but it had to do with the particular history of that building. Generally, we didn't end up really collecting anything past, I would say, 1920. So really, like, 1890-1920 was kind of our window.

[00:07:47]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And then there's archeology?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: There's archeology. So that's -- those are mandated collections, so those -- that's anything that the archeologists dig up. And one of the issues that happened was, there's different interpretations of what that means. So nowadays, a lot of archeologists will collect, um, representative samples.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Like, if there's a whole bunch of bricks, like, you don't need to keep all of those bricks. You can keep one or two of them. Theresa was a very old-school archeologist, and so she really thought that we should collect 100 percent of everything, which meant that there were, like, gum wrappers and things like that in the collection. And Deb Sanders had fought really hard to be able to de-accession some of that stuff. Um, it wasn't so much of an issue when I was there, and I think part of that is that the frontline archeologists were a little more sensible about what they -- what was important to collect.

[00:08:40]KAREN BREWSTER: And was archeology still going on under some of the buildings when you were there?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, there's always -- every year, there was compliance archeology happening, and I'm trying to think of what some of the projects were. Um, I had to -- well, let's see. So, you know, when I was there, that was when we were stabilizing Soapy's, so -- or Jeff. Smiths Parlor Museum. Um, so when the building was jacked up and there was active work on that landscape, then they -- the archeologists were monitoring, and they were also doing some test units as I recall. And then I think they

were also doing some things at the Frye-Bruhn building, which had basically been moved over behind the Moore House.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right. Ok.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, so there was -- because -- and it's all kind of in preparation. I think that -- as I recall, there was so much going on at that park, but I didn't -- as I recall, the Frye-Bruhn was just kinda jacked up on blocks.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it still is.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. I'm not surprised. And so they were doing some stuff over there to kind of prepare for getting it off the blocks, I think. And, I mean, I wasn't 100 percent on what the -- the museum program was really busy, so I wasn't always paying total attention to what the archeologists were doing, but --

[00:09:53]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And now, why was the museum program so busy? I mean, it's such a small park, you'd think --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, the Rapuzzi Collection was enormous.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And so, we had -- Yeah, I would get questions like that, like, "Well, do you guys take the winter off 'cause there's nobody there?" And it's like, "Oh, my god. There's so much work to do." So we were, you know, we were doing exhibit planning for the visitor center. That took forever. I mean, it was going on -- actually, I take -- I'm sorry. I have to -- I take it back. We were doing the exhibit plannings for Soapy's when I was there, when I first arrived. And the visitor center stuff started later. I just remember sitting in these exhibit meetings, and they kind of blend together in my mind.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: But, no, no, no. It was -- so, really, like, the Soapy's project was like the total arc of my time there. Like, when I first showed up, that was when we started doing the exhibit planning, and then when I left, we were getting ready to install. And then I went back after I had been -- after I'd come to North Cascades, I went back to help complete the installation. Um --

KAREN BREWSTER: Now, you left in 2015?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm. July 2015 I came down to North Cascades.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And I'm trying to think of when I went back to install. I want to say, that fall, maybe. It could've -- it could've been either the fall or the spring. I don't quite remember. Um --

[00:11:19]KAREN BREWSTER: But, yeah, I mean, I think most people don't realize that curatorial and museum collection work goes on.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh.

KAREN BREWSTER: And how -- in a national park, you know. They think of, you know, in a museum or something.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so, that -- it's interesting, yeah, how busy you can become.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, yeah. Well, so the Rapuzzi Collection, I don't remember the numbers. I think originally they thought it was something like 150,000 objects, and then it got scaled back to something like 30,000. And it's kind of hard to say, like -- and then there was actual inventory numbers that, I think, were more line in -- at like, ten, I want

to say, like, 10,000. Um, so you know, a lot of things were lot-catalogued. Like, here's a big bucket of nails. [00:12:03]And, um, so to kinda rewind on what the Rapuzzi Collection is, that is, um -- so George Rapuzzi was -- lived in Skagway from 1898 to 1987, I think. He spent his whole life there. He worked for the railroad. Um, he was I would say a hoarder. He -- you know, so that was the thing with his collection is there was a whole bunch of -- and there was a period -- and this is, you know, kinda, I mean, I didn't live there, but my understanding is, there was a period before the park was enabled where all these buildings were kind of falling down and abandoned. And so he would go in there, and he would take stuff, um, for which later we are grateful, because that meant that a lot of these things got preserved. But he'd also -- you know, like there wasn't a broken chair that he didn't like, and so part of that collection was just sorting out that there was all this stuff. And so, some of it was total gems, and some it was kinda cool, and some of it was just garbage. And so, um, yeah, it was really hard. Like, the acquisition happened before I was there. But there was an appraiser that came out, at least, this is what the records show, um, and that was what they, you know, made the offer based on. And the Rasmuson Foundation helped, um. They basically purchased the collection and then donated it to the City of Skagway with the -- and because the NPS couldn't -- Theresa Thibault would've liked for the NPS to just take on that whole collection. But Stephanie Stephens, who was the regional curator at the time, stepped in and said, "No, no, no. You can't do that because there's so much stuff in this collection that does not have to do with your park's purpose, and it is past the scope of coll" -- so the scope of collection statement became very important. And this wasn't before I updated it. It was still pretty loose in a lot of ways, but it was clear that, you know, so much of this material was past the scope of collection. And so, what they worked out is for the City of Skagway to take it on, and then they would transfer -- you know, the two curators started out being Debbie Sanders and Judy --

KAREN BREWSTER: Munn. Munn?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yes, Judy Munns, thank you. Basically, they kinda developed this sorting process, where you would, you know, it's either park or city or it's other. [00:14:42]And then part of what my job was, because I was there near the end of the sorting, was to figure out, what do we do with "other"? And I cannot -- you cannot underestimate, like, what an enormous amount of material this was, and that you couldn't just -- You know, like a lot of times with a museum -- the standard in museum collections is, you know, you don't separate out a collection. You want to keep it all together. But there was just no way you could do that with -- It was -- it would be onerous. And there was a lot of, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and if there's two chairs that are exactly the same --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- then couldn't the city museum have one and the park have the other?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, and that happened a lot, but you know, honestly, these weren't -- like, those broken chairs, it wasn't like they had any particular -- um, I mean there was like -- Oh, gosh, there must've been forty or fifty of them. And there was certainly furniture that we kept, and furniture is a bulky thing to have in a museum collection, but there was just -- I mean, they were just regular old chairs. Like, there wasn't anything special about a lot of that stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It was just -- it was more that, like, kind of Alaska/Depression-era/poverty mentality of, like, you don't want to throw it away because you might be able to fix it. [00:15:57]And George Rapuzzi was a fixer guy, but there's sort of this point where it's like, you just can't fix everything. I mean, I think that, like, there was, um -- I think that Edna Rapuzzi had something like ten sewing machines because it's like -- I mean, there was just -- there was hoarding happening there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It was past the point of reasonableness. And, you know, like the basement of the Rapuzzi House, I was not there when they pulled that out, but there's pictures in the collection of Deb in full haz-mat gear because it was just moldy and awful, and there was all that stuff down in there, and so.

KAREN BREWSTER: And he had it in multiple buildings as well, right?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Um-hm. Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: I think he owned the buildings, or I don't know how he --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. [00:16:37]So the buildings also came as part of the collection. And so -- and those got split up. So the Park Service took Jeff. Smiths Parlor, and the 5th Avenue buildings, which is like the YMCA and Brown's Shoe Store and Meyers Meat Market. And the 5th Avenue buildings had a direct link to that Klondike Gold Rush era.

KAREN BREWSTER: And those -- they're -- the YMCA, that building, they are currently restoring?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm. Well, you know, it's a little deceptive because it's like, they're kinda all -- I mean, we'd talk about them in terms of them being separate buildings, and maybe they were built -- but they're really just like one big building that's kinda been partitioned.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, they call it the YMCA-Meyer building, I think, or something like that.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Something like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: But that one, at least that part -- I don't know about the other part, but they're -- there's a project going on in there right now.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Um-hm. Yeah. [00:17:29]And I worked on some of the pro -- some of the exhibit planning, very early exhibit planning for that. I mean, some of the discussions were that that should be -- because there's so much material, you know, should that be more spa -- there's -- so when I was there, Mike Tranel was the superintendent, and there was -- it was his favorite topic to talk about, reorganization of spaces. And, you know, part of it was that the rangers were unhappy with what they had, which is kinda legit because they just had, like, this little tiny, um -- they finally, well, they had a --

KAREN BREWSTER: That was their offices, you mean?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, their offices.

KAREN BREWSTER: In the main building.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It started out that they were in what they called the cribs, which was like old prostitution buildings that were right off of Broadway, and then the second half of the time I was there, they were down in the basement of the Pantheon -- or I mean, not the basement, but the first floor.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: There was just always discussion about space and moving things around, and so, the YMCA, we spent a lot of time talking about what that should be. And, um, should it be a collection storage facility, or should it be offices, and there was some time that we spent talking about that there would be kind of like a, um, like the front part would be kind of like a place where people could -- like a little reception area, and then the museum program and probably also archeology would be in the -- behind that, and that would be like kind of our offices, and we would sort of be available to the public. And then the -- the middle one, I think the Meyer Meat Market, like, that was going to be kind of like a library, where people could access -- because part of the concern was that there wasn't, like, a reference area where people could access oral histories and things like that, so that was supposed to be kind of like a reference area, and then the YMCA itself would be exhibits. But then there was some discussion about, oh, well maybe there needs to be more -- I mean, it just changed, kinda, all the time. [00:19:38]It was always supposed to be something to do with the Rapuzzi Collection because that building, or building complex, had been acquired as part of the Rapuzzi Collection. And I think Theresa in particular had a lot -- it was supposed to be one thing, and part of the reason -- when I say one thing, I'm kind of -- it's sort of like there's so much stuff happening all the time there in that job, and it was a really high-profile museum collection, at least in terms of the town really cared about it. There's a lot of, um -- you know, because there's so much tourism in Skagway, there's a lot of opportunities to make it available, and visitation is really -- you know, it's a cultural resources park.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So the cultural resources are front and center, and the museum collection of all of those resources is super front and center. Um, along with the historic buildings. [00:20:29]And because of, you know, the museum collections are so tied with the historic buildings that it just really is so -- it was so different from my job now. Like, my job now, working for a natural history park, I manage scientific specimens and park records. And the superintendent has been in here twice in the three, almost four, years I've been here. And when I worked at Klondike Gold Rush, it was like I was always -- I felt like I was in the superintendent's office like once a week, and there was all this exhibit planning, and all this space planning stuff happening, and then there's also this really, um, complex relationship with the City of Skagway and with -- and working with Judy, and like, that was a really a hard community relationship to manage. Not because -- I -- I got along with Judy really well, although we butted heads sometimes, but, you know, she was -- I mean, she never wanted that collection. It was thrust on her, and, um, it was -- there was just a lot of complicated relationships, and she was getting pressure from the city. The city was very hands-on, in terms of, like, the mayor and the city council. Um, everybody had opinions about that because they were all really invested in what was happening in the Rapuzzi Collection. [00:22:00]And then there was also different opinions of like, this is just a bunch of junk. I can't believe you're spending all this time on it, or all these things are perfect treasures, I can't believe you'd want to get rid of any of it. And we were just kind of in the middle, trying to walk the path between -- you know, trying to figure out, like, what can we legitimately take care of. That's always huge for museum collections is like, what can you actually take care of? Because it's very

expensive to curate something, and you have to have it in -- especially in the Park Service where we have a lot of standards, you --

KAREN BREWSTER: Climate control?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, you have to have climate control, and you need to maintain inventory, and so there's a lot of, um, duties that managing an object as a museum object entails. So um, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that community pressure, often people in the community, as you say, they're very attached and invested in -- George Rapuzzi was very important to the community.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Probably lots of people knew him, and he lived there a long time, but they don't have that professional training. They don't understand --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: What a museum specialist actually does.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. So you're always trying to educate people about what that means. [00:23:15]And then -- and one of the things that -- also is that -- is creating access for people. If you don't create access for people, they really won't understand what you're doing. And Debbie Sanders, who was the curator before me, was not particularly interested in creating access for people. And this was -- 'cause I remember when I first started working, and I was like, "Oh yeah, anybody can have a tour of the collections. I'll totally take -- " And Deb was beside herself 'cause she was like, "Well, you know, if you're going to give that person a tour of the collections, then you have to give everybody a tour of the collections." And I was like, "Is there a problem with that?" And she just said, "Well, you know -- " I mean, it really had been a dynamic that only special people got to tour the collections, which to my mind, as a Park Service curator, it's like, we manage things for the American people, and they are the people's things. And so, anybody should be able to come in and see things. And that is not -- that's a -- the old-school of Park Service curators that came up in, like, the '70's, or, you know, like, I don't know '70's, but like the '80's and '90's, that was not their attitude. And I had the same thing here, you know. Like, there were signs on the door that like, basically, this building is alarmed. Do not come in. And nobody, I mean I work with people here that have not -- I mean, they've worked for the park for fifteen years, and they've never been inside this building. [00:24:36]So, you know, my attitude was that that needed to change, and that it needed to be available to people. And if -- There was one time, you know, where it was just a bunch of guys that had been drinking coffee, and they wanted to see the pistol that had been in the wall of the YMCA, and so I gave them a tour. You know, it was like, "Ok. Well, let's do this." And, um, that wasn't all -- you know, a lot of curators wouldn't do that, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I agree with you, that the way to educate people about what's in a collection and why it's important is for them to see some of those gems.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: You don't necessarily going to show them the bags of wood chips, but maybe you do.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, maybe, you know, I mean, that's the thing is like, maybe they need to see that stuff because they need to understand what it is we're doing. And, you



know, not -- I mean, there's definitely stories about people messing with archeologists in Skagway and putting things in pits for them to find and stuff like that. I can't think of any specific examples, but, you know, there's a -- a tension in Skagway between the -- the railroad families, like, a lot of them have been there since the gold rush, and they worked for White Pass & Yukon Route, and, you know, they were, traditional Alaskan families, and then there was the Park Service people that showed up to work for the park.

[00:25:56]And, you know, there's always a little controversy about hiring positions from out of town. Like, my position was a good job in Skagway, with benefits and year-round employment, which is really hard for people to find. And why are you hiring somebody from outside of Skagway to come and do that? You know, 'cause we've got people here that need those jobs. So there's always some tension about that, and then also, you know, feeling that the park is overstepping. You know, I mean, there's a classic in Alaska is that the federal government is always overstepping its bounds, and what do you think you're doing, and so, um -- You know, and then the park people tend to be a little more politically progressive, and so, anyway, it seemed like there was kind of like, you know, the -- the old-town people that had been there. Their families had been there for a few generations now, and then there was the park people, and then there was, like, kind of the people that were making their money off of tourism, so kind of like -- [00:26:59]And one thing about Skagway is, there's naked capitalism there in a way that I have never seen anywhere else.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Like, I -- I lived in pretty progressive places, right. Wisconsin is full of co-ops and, you know, it's not about capitalism. It's full of farmers and co-ops and stuff. And Seattle is very progressive. And even, you know, like people that I knew that I thought of as being kind -- I mean, they were just there to make money, you know. And so, they had a different way of thinking about things that I wasn't used to.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, certainly the summer tourist businesses, they're there just for the season. They don't even live there.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: They're all up there to make money and leave.

[00:27:41]SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, that's one way of looking at it, but, I mean -- and there certainly are a bunch of seasonal people that -- but there's also people that are seasonal that just, um, they don't have necessarily the money to leave. They've decided to live there year-round, and finding a year-round job for them is kind of amazing. And one of the ways that I was able to, quite frankly, capitalize on that for the museum program is that that was how we were able to get volunteers to help us is that we could offer free housing. Because the seasonal workers for the park weren't using it in the winter, and so if somebody needed -- you know, housing is just a horrible issue there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And so, um, yeah. So we were able to offer winter housing for volunteers. So Tekla Helguson was one of the volunteers who -- I was able to get her some internship money, and she helped us when we had to move the Rapuzzi Collection. So the Alascom building was a building where a lot of it was being processed, and we were leasing that from Phyllis, who was --

KAREN BREWSTER: Phyllis Brown?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Phyllis Brown. Um, and then the lease came up, and we -- it was decided that we should get out of that building, and so we moved a whole bunch of stuff. And mostly, what it was housing by that time was either things that the city had claimed, or things that were in the "other" category, that were going to need to be disposed of in some way in the future, and so why was the park paying all this money to rent this building. [00:29:14]And so -- although, I mean, I think -- yeah. And that's another thing is that this building had been -- the rent was supposed to be split, but the park had never bothered to bill the city for their share of it, and so it had been paying for it. There was, like, politics there, and also some incompetence on the part of the park. And so basically, like, we had shouldered, I think, the rent for several years, and then the lease was coming up. And like, and yeah, there was just kind of like this -- there was always -- everything about that collection, there was always some complicating factor, like, oh, and by the way, you never bothered to bill the city, and so, people in the park are all angry that the city hasn't paid their rent, but oh, by the way, you've never actually bothered to bill them, and so, how are you expecting to receive that money? And then, anyway. So um, and then, you know, different fiscal year cycles, and, you know, money was obligated, but then it went away 'cause it didn't get used, and um, so anyway. The point is that Tekla was a champ and helped us move all of that stuff in the winter. You know, to these storage units on the edge of town. And, um, you know, we're wearing headlamps 'cause it's, like, dark at three o'clock, and it's icy and miserable, and we were moving this stuff. And it was --

[00:30:45]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it sounds like the Rapuzzi Collection, there was a lot of moving.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That it went from his buildings to this building to that building.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. Yeah. You had to get it out of the original buildings, and part of that was because, um, in the case of Soapy's and YMCA, the park was actively stabilizing those buildings, so everything -- and they were condemned. I mean, they were going to fall down, so it's like, you gotta get the building completely clear so you can jack it up and lay a foundation, and then bring it back down, and then start to do the work. And then, um, we ended up putting a lot of material in the commissary, which I feel kinda bad about because that also needed that work to happen, but the city was not on top of it in the way that the Park Service was. And so we knew that that building needed care, but we didn't really have any place to put this other stuff, and so a lot of things got put into the commissary, and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Is the commissary building -- was that a World War II build -- commissary?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm. Yes. The one that's right next to Soapy's.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, ok.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, and that's a World War II commissary. And that one was claimed by the city, and they were going to do, like, some kind of exhibit about World War II in Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I don't know that that's happened.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know. [00:32:00]Um, well, you're talking about the volunteers, so you were getting volunteers from Outside. Like, you know, you said Tekla was a student intern or something.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: What about community members? Were they ever interested in being volunteers?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, so I would actually kind of qualify Tekla as a community volunteer because she was -- she didn't have any prior affiliation to the park. She wanted to work for the park, but she was like a tour guide.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. So she had been in Skagway?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: She had been in Skagway for several years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And, um, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. I was thinking when you said she needed housing, it made it sound like she was coming from Outside.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: No, but that's the thing with the seasonal community there is that a lot of times, your housing is -- they're really transient within the boundaries of Skagway because sometimes your housing is -- you know, like your housing is provided by the people that you work for in the summer, but then when that job is done, where are you gonna stay? And so, you're looking for some other place to stay, and then if you can volunteer, that's free. And, yeah, I mean, it's been, um -- There was one woman, Dina, who had worked for the park, and she volunteered -- I want -- I can't remember if she volunteered for one or two winters with us. So she had park housing in the summer, and then she would volunteer in the winter, and that way she'd have a place to stay. Um, I'm trying to think of other community volunteers, um.

[00:33:37]KAREN BREWSTER: But some of those long-time railroad family people, none of them ever came and volunteered?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I feel like there might have been one, um, but not generally. It wasn't like we had a huge bucket of volunteers. One of the things that stands in the way of that is that the, um -- because of the, um, security protocols for the Park Service on inter -- you know, it's like the museum work always requires using a computer, and you have to go through this whole background check to get that done and by the -- you know, and it's hard to ask people to do that 'cause it's -- they're kind of like, "Well, why don't you just trust me?"

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And it's like, well, it's not me, it's the federal government.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. It's even volunteers --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And you fill out all this paperwork.

KAREN BREWSTER: Even volunteers have to go through that whole thing?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, unless they're not gonna work on computers, in which case, they're not very helpful as a museum volunteer. I probably could have done more to ask, but really what I needed help with was stuff that involved computers, you know, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Entering things in a database, and things like that?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I know with the Park Service, you all have your little card that you stick into your computer.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: You can't do things outside of work hours and all that stuff.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. [00:34:54]Um, although one thing that we did that was really fun that was like a very short-term volunteering thing was, we had all this stuff in the World War II commissary, um, like all these mechanical things. 'Cause George Rapuzzi was a mechanic, and so, um, there was just a lot of mechanical stuff in the collection. And so, Deb would identify things as best she could, but there was always some things that she couldn't identify, and so we had these object ID days, where we would just -- we laid out things on the table. We bought donuts and cookies, and we laid out all this stuff on the table, and we advertised it to guys, basically, mechanical kind of guys because there were all these machinists that worked for the railroad, so they were really great. They were a great asset. And so, they came in and basically, we just followed them around and took notes furiously, and they told us what they thought different things were. And we did have, um, trying to remember names. So there was Jimmy, oh, I can't remember his name, but he was an engineer, and he would come and help with identifying things sometimes, and then, um, I can't remember his name. He lived across the street. Joanne is his wife. Andrew Beierly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Who used to work for the Park Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, and he would come over and help identify things, and we'd, you know -- they were -- he was a great resource. Both he and Jimmy were really good resources.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So I wouldn't say that we didn't have any volunteers out of the community, but they weren't what you classically think of as a museum volunteer who's, like, coming in and helping.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that object ID day --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: With a lot of stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: The object ID day sounds like a great idea.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, it was super fun. It was one of the funnest things I've ever done, at least in the museum world, 'cause it was just -- those guys were great, and they were just, you know, machine oil all over their hands, and they're eating these donuts and talking. They were just really having a good time, so.

[00:36:57]KAREN BREWSTER: Now is there ever, with the museum collection -- like that machine stuff, I assume it wasn't operational anymore. Or was some of it operational?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, it's kind of like, define operational. I mean there's, you know -- it's a lot of pieces and parts, and so, it could be operational.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. 'Cause I'm wondering is, like, yeah, is there any ever a time that you might say, "Oh, we want this to work again. Here, you guys are machinists, you could put it back together for us." Does that ever happen?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Uh, well.

KAREN BREWSTER: I mean, there's restoration of, you know, old steam engines and things, but I don't know if in Skagway there was anything like that.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So that was an issue that I had to deal with as a curator, um, particularly in regard to the mannequins and in regard to the street car. And for Park Service standards, um, you would not want these things to run. Theresa really wanted the mannequins to be operational.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause they were like automaton kind of things?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Automatons, right. We call them mannequins, but they were really automatons. So originally, they were hooked into Jeff. Smiths Parlor, the building structure, and there were these pipes and pulleys and things, and Martin Itjen would get them to move as he did his tour. And we spent a lot time trying to figure out, like, what exactly they did, and like, including having them x-rayed at the clinic, and yeah. And having different conservators look at them. I had -- I ran a conservation program in the summer. I would -- For three years, I had, um, interns come, and they would do all the conservation work on the items that were going to go back on exhibit at -- at -- in Jeff. Smiths Parlor. And then some other things, too. And so, they definitely worked on all of those mannequins, and, um -- [00:38:56]Well, so there was three. So there was Soapy, and there was Dangerous Dan McGrew, and there was Lady Lou. And Soapy had already had work done at the Alaska State Museum. And this conservation program happened because Scott Carrlee was the Alaska state -- well, there's two museum curat -- conservators for the Alaska state museums. And one was his wife, Ellen, who did the in-house work in Juneau. And Scott was a conservator by training, and I think he was actually called -- I don't remember. But he was basically like a staff curator that went around to different museums.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, they have museum support program that helped --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- small museums around the state.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, and so he came -- I called -- Theresa really wanted these -- that was the first thing that happened is, you know, we were having these exhibit meetings, and Theresa was like, I really think these mannequins need to work. And everything I'd ever learned about museums was like, that's a bad idea. And so, and I had written my thesis about aviation museums, and so that issue of like, whether something should fly or not fly, work or not work, um, it definitely was salient for me. [00:40:04]But you could look at 'em and tell that they weren't going to hold up to anything. They were really -- I mean, he just built them out of, literally, out of like old pieces of wood and string and chunks of leather and whatever. Like, they weren't gonna be that. And so, I called Scott Carrlee. I had heard that I could get a free conservation assessment from him, and I asked him to come and look at them and basically be the expert to tell her that that wasn't gonna fly. And so, there was a lot of different discussions about, maybe we could have a hologram of them that we could play in the museum, or maybe we should have a replica that could be activated. Like, what is more important. Is it -- [00:40:46]And, you know, there was a lot of discussion about the concept of authenticity, which to me is a very negotiable concept. It's like, what does that really mean? For Theresa, it was a much more hard and fast thing. Like, she wanted this museum to be totally authentic, whatever that means. And so, you know, we should take the original wall coverings, and we should

put those back up. And we should take these mannequins and we should have them operational, and, um, and we were all just kinda -- you know, we're just sort of operating on these different pictures that were taken of the museum at the time, and it changed. You know, there was a certain point where you had to kinda put together a timeline, and we had to decide on what period of the museum are we actually restoring to, because things kept changing over time. 'Cause it's this guy's tourist place, and he's moving stuff around, and doing things, you know.

[00:41:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I mean, exhibits change in many museums.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Well, it was a little different. I mean, you know, there's a whole thing of exhibit planning.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, well.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know, Martin Itjen isn't planning. It's just moving. He could get stuff, and he puts it up, and he moves it around and he makes something new, and, you know, I -- I really -- you had respect for -- I had respect for that he was an inventor and a creative person, but he was more of an artist, a folk artist, than -- I mean, he was a folk artist.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So, um.

[00:42:04]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, and that's the idea of authenticity, and what do you restore to, timewise? That was the issue for the historic buildings, too, I think.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Absolutely.

KAREN BREWSTER: They had to pick a time period.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so for the Jeff. Smith Parlor, what was your decision for -- ? Did you come up with a time frame?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: We did. Uh, I can't remember the exact year, but there was a point where it was -- and one of the things is that they wanted George Rapuzzi to be part of that story, that they -- pretty much Theresa was running that thing. Originally, Debbie thought it would just be, like, Martin Itjen's -- like, we had early pictures of that museum from the '30's, where it didn't have anything in it, really. You know, like, the mannequins were in it, but that was pretty much it. And so, Debbie had like not collected every single thing that was showing in some of the later pictures, and there was some negotiation that happened with the Skagway Museum to get those few things. Um, 'cause I think we decided on, like, 19 -- it's been a while since I've thought about this, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[00:43:19]SAMANTHA RICHERT: I think it was, like, 1963. There was a point where George Rapuzzi had taken ownership because Martin Itjen had passed away. And then they moved that building from -- it used to be off of Broadway, I think. And then there was -- we had pictures of it getting moved in the '60's, and then George and Edna decorated it, and we had, like, in a -- there were some, like, things in old newspapers about, you know, advertising that it was now open, and I want to say that it was 1963. So there's a very short period where, you know, it was moved to the current spot that it was in now, and George and Edna had decorated it, and then it was open. And then I think that only was really open for, like, a couple years, and then it became open only by tour. Like, you could make an appointment with George Rapuzzi and see it. [00:44:20]And there was --

he was kind of paranoid, and so there was also correspondence about how -- I mean, I think that there was a cruise ship that offered to buy it, but then they -- I don't know, there was some thing where, like, George Rapuzzi got really paranoid that everybody was going to want to come and want to take all this stuff, and so you could kind of -- the later stories from, like, the late '60's and early '70's are that, if people made friends with George Rapuzzi, he would offer to take you on a tour, but it wasn't just open to the public. You know, so there's that little open-to-the-public window that we wanted.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that 19 -- early 1960's is what you sort of --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

[00:45:01]KAREN BREWSTER: But I would've thought you would've done it to when Martin Itjen was using it as his museum.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, um, a lot of that decision-making was driven by Theresa Thibault, and that she really wanted it to have the Rapuzzi -- that she didn't want to erase that part of the story. And I kind of -- I don't have an opinion on this, one way or another, but the thought process was, they didn't want to erase the Rapuzzi part of the story, and so -- Also, you know, there's all this stuff. I mean, when Martin Itjen had it, there wasn't as much stuff in there. And then, you know, there was all this really cool artifacts that we could put in if we wanted to.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And otherwise, people would never see them, you know. So.

[00:45:51]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, I kind of lost track of where we were -- the conservation.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, you were talking -- we were talking about whether to run things or not.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right. Right. Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And I want to circle back to that because of the street car issues. Because people really, really wanted to -- people. At least, a few people, especially, I want to say Steve, he runs the Skagway Street Car Company.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah. Hites.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Steve Hites. And I don't know if anybody else actually thought it was important that the street car run in the Fourth of July parade, but there was a lot of pressure to do that. And, um, again, we had -- I had conservators come out and look at it. I had money for a conservation assessment, and they were basically like, that's not a good idea.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because, yeah, so the -- the Martin Itjen street car was part of the Rapuzzi Collection?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm. Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: That now is in the park collection.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that's from what time period?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It was the 1930's. It's a 1908 Packard --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: -- chassis that he then took -- we have pictures of a horse-drawn carriage, and he took the carriage part and put it on the back of the chassis to make kind of a cabin for passengers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And then the engine was like a later model. Oh, I can't remember, it was like a Ford engine.

KAREN BREWSTER: I've seen pictures of the -- the -- his old street cars.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, I mean, he had several. [00:47:21]So this is the only surviving one, and it was the first one, and it was -- Yeah, so it had a later engine, not the 1908 Packard engine. And the conservators looked -- so basically, we had money first for a conservation assessment, and then to try to restore it. And again, it was like, you know, Steve Hites was like, "Oh well, you know, in the '70's we used to always run this in the Fourth of July parade, so why can't we do that now?" And we're kind of like, "Well, because it's a Park Service museum object now, and also these conservators say that it's not particularly stable, and we don't really -- " You know, it's like -- and it's that thing of like, it's the original fabric of this, so like how much work do you want to do on an engine to get it running, and is it the original artifact anymore? And I just was really uncomfortable with the whole thing. Especially because it had, like these old tires on it. And so we did -- I can't -- I don't think it was for the Fourth of July. I think it was for some other -- but basically, we had to -- because we were moving out of the Alascom, we needed to move it to -- we ended up moving it to a garage of a house that the park owned and used for, um, seasonal housing. I want to say it was, like, down on 15th or something. So, oh, this was so stressful. Luckily, I had this really great conservation intern, Nicole Peters, who was there for two years, and the second summer that she was there -- she also cleaned all of the taxidermy that's in -- I mean, like those big double-stuffed moose that are in Jeff. Smiths Parlor, she spent a whole summer, suiting up in Tyvek and cleaning that with a tiny little conservation vacuum thing to remove the asbestos from them. I mean, the asbestos isn't totally removed, but all the loose stuff has been vacuumed up. Anyway, she was there, and we basically attached the street car to -- we tried a couple different things. Because at first, we were going to try to put it up on a trailer, and that totally wasn't working. Um, it was -- I can't remember exactly, but it was definitely not working. And so, we had these little electrical truck-car things. Like, they're like golf carts, basically, that the park uses to zip around in downtown Skagway.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, maintenance guys use that -- use those, yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. So maintenance was enormously helpful during all this.

[00:49:49]And, um, so we hooked that up. We hooked up the street car, got it out of the Alascom garage, where it had been for a very long time, and then took it downtown so people could um, you know, take pictures and stuff. We parked it in front of Soapy's, and people had their picture taken there. And we parked it across the street from the visitor center, and people had their picture taken there. Steve Hites came over and knocked on it, and was like, "This old girl!" And I kinda wanted to slap him, but it was ok. We just moved along. And then we finally took it down the road, and it like, as we were doing that, as we were, you know, rolling it down towards 15th, um, the tires started to come apart. So we got it in place, but it was very clear that like, yeah, you're not running this in any parade. Like, this thing is very fragile. And so, it's hard for people to understand that a vehicle can be fragile, but it was helpful, always helpful, to have conservators come and look at these things and kind of back you up, you know. So it wasn't just my opinion. It



was like, oh, I have this expert opinion, you know. Even though I could've told you that myself, but yeah.

[00:50:58]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So these, like, the conservation intern you mentioned, Nicole.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was she a University of Washington student?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: Where did she come from?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: She came from -- so she actually was, uh, she had gotten her -- conservators have a very long road for getting their degrees, and so she was, um -- she had gotten -- I can't remember where she went to school. But she had gotten a Master of Fine Arts in ceramics, and at the same time she was doing that, she was also taking organic chemistry and other prerequisites for a master's in conservation. And then she had done, already done, like, a few internships for -- under conservators. And then she came out the first year and um -- and then worked under Scott. I mean, so Scott was my partner in all of this. Like basically, like, I supervised the conservators, the conservation interns, day to day, and, you know, gave them objects to work on and signed off on the work. But Scott would come out with them and kind of set them up and look over the objects they were going to work on and kind of talk to them, talk it over with them, and then he would also make, like, a mid-summer trip and kinda just check up on them. And um, so yeah, they couldn't -- without his oversight, we would not have been able to have that proje -- that program. But it was really great, and he did it for free. He didn't get anything out of it. He just did it because he cared about training the next generation of conservators.

[00:52:41]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Yeah, I was wondering where people who get training in conservation get their educations?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: There's only four programs in the country, and Nicole -- so Nicole did two summers with us, and then she went to the, um -- while she was trying to get in. Like, that first summer she didn't get in, just barely, and then next summer after she -- I can't remember what she did in the winter after she, um, that first internship, but then she came back for another summer, and then she was accepted to University of -- it was Buffalo, I can't remember.

KAREN BREWSTER: SUNY Buffalo.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yes. SUNY Buffalo. So they have one. There's one in Delaware. There's one in UCLA. That's through the Getty.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And there's another one that I can't remember the name of.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, it's very specialized training.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It's very -- yeah. It's very competitive, very specialized, and, yeah. I mean, it was like, yeah. It was really -- it was tough for her. Well, and then she got into, like, all the programs that she applied to that second go-round because she'd had so many internships. I mean, Scott was basically like, if they -- if you don't get in, you're just --

they're just -- you're just going to have to be a conservator on your own because you've got so much experience, you know. But she really wanted the degree.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. [00:53:56] So well, that internship program, was that something you started with the park?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Scott and I started it.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so, how was that funded?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It was funded through, um, CCM money, Cultural Cyclic Maintenance. And Theresa had put in for -- we knew that we were going to need conservation work done on these objects, and so she had put in for three years of funding, and I was left to manage that as best -- I mean, it was really, like, the -- the project statements were very nondescript. And so, I had a lot of leeway to use that money as I saw fit. So.

KAREN BREWSTER: So how do you decide what objects needed to be conserved?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, we prioritized what was going to go on display. And then, um, the paper was a big issue because that was, uh -- You know, so originally, the interior walls were covered with historic newspapers and little flyers and whatever Martin wanted to put up there. And that itself probably would've been enough without even -- if they wanted to take it back to the '30's, that would've been fine because there's so much to look at on those -- and those historic newspapers. Um, so originally, the plan was to put the historic newspapers back up, but it req -- they were in terrible condition, and so --

KAREN BREWSTER: I can't imagine pulling them off the walls and having them still be in any useful condition.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, they were all adhered to kind of a base of like an underlying carboard-y kind of stuff. And so, it was just like these big chunks that were kind of all glued together. So um, orig -- so the first thing -- there was a conservator, whose name I cannot remember, who had done the work on the Moore House, and so I contacted her and asked her if she was interested in doing this work. And she came out, um, with an in - - and we hired her an intern, Quinn Ferris. You can tell I had a whole lot more relationship with the interns than I did with the --

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: But I was supervising them and I spent all summer with them, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And so, they worked on the stuff, and it was very, very slow, and it was really fragile by the time we got done. And she was just like, you're -- you're just not going to be able to do that. And that was really -- [00:56:20] Actually, what was really fortunate is that Theresa left. And so, I had a lot more leeway on what decisions I could make because that focus on, oh, it has to be the original thing, it doesn't matter whether it's going to damage the original thing, that, I was relieved of that. And so, um, I went ahead and contracted with Harpers Ferry to clean and stabilize. And then I'm trying to remember who made -- I can't -- oh, I had to go through the Government Printing Office to have the reproductions made, and that was kind of a debacle because, like, they just hired whoever's cheapest because it's Government Printing Office, and it -- it turned out ok in the end, but some of the -- luckily they sent a proof, and we were like, no, that sucks. Try again.

[00:57:10] KAREN BREWSTER: So they were printing reproductions of these newspapers?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So, the newspapers or wall coverings, really, I think is what we called them. They all went to Harpers Ferry to be cleaned and stabilized as best they could be, and then they went to, um, this contractor that the GPO provided, and they printed out, um, reproductions for us, and that was -- that's what's installed on the walls now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. And are the originals still in the collection?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: They were conserved enough that they're not falling apart?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. I mean, they're -- well, I mean, if you leave something, a piece of paper flat in housing, it's fine.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know, it's just a matter of, if you put it up on wall and, um, you know, subject it to a whole bunch of UV light because you're in, like, a building that's open to the public, and then people wandering through with pollutants and everything, no. So yeah. So, yeah, they're in there, and they should be fairly stable.

[00:58:11]KAREN BREWSTER: But it was important enough to have the representation of them that that's why you made the reproductions?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, I think that's like the most important thing. I mean, that's what gives you at least a feel for the character of the building when Martin, you know, made that. I mean, he -- I mean, there was a lot of historic newspapers, and they were all digitized, too, I think. I'm pretty sure. And so, that was some of it, is like, you know, there's also historical information available there, right? So they're a resource on a number of levels.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So we wanted all of that, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, now, I've sort of lost track of where we were going.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, ch-ch-ch-ch. [00:59:00]Well, you mentioned that, um, working with Theresa --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, can you talk more about that? Are you comfortable talking about that?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I can talk about that. I -- she had a reputation for being, um, very persnickety, and also maybe not particularly rational. The first year that I worked for her, I really thought -- she was, um -- would publicly humiliate me in meetings, um, would be, uh, she was just really, um -- I really thought that she was going to fire me. I, like, you have a one-year probation when you come into a permanent Park Service position, and I went in for that, and, I mean, I would cry in the office. Like Deb would -- I just remember this one time, was just like breaking down and crying in front of Deb and was just like, I don't know what I'm doing here or what's going to happen, and um -- And I went in for my evaluation and she's like, "Oh, you're doing great." And then after that, she just completely left me alone. Mostly. Except for every once in a while, she would kind of check in on a project, and it was always rough to have her come by the spaces where we were processing collections because she was one of those people that thought that nothing should ever be thrown away, and so that made it difficult 'cause we're like, "Well, we can't keep everything, you know." But she would just be like, "Oh, this is so

important. And this is really great." And so, it was like, tried to keep her out of the collection spaces as much as possible. And then the issues of, you know, authenticity and -- that I've already spoken about.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Those gave me a lot of headaches, and so it was a relief when she was off of that project. [01:00:48]And I have to say, I felt kinda bad -- I mean, it was like, you know, we installed Jeff. Smiths Parlor, and I feel like there was a lot of issues with, you can't get very many people through there. Like, it's so full of artifacts. I mean, it's very cool and then it's full of artifacts, and we really -- I went with the direction that the park management gave me in that we were trying to make as authentic a reproduction as possible, but there was not a lot of -- I think -- my perception is that during that decision-making process, they did not spend very much time thinking about how that was going to actually play out with people actually going through this. When you have ten thousand people dumping off of cruise ships, but maybe fifteen people can fit into this space at one time. So it's a really different space than, like, the Mascot, where people can kind of wander in and go to the bathroom, you know. And the look on the face, I can't remember the, like, when I was there, there was a new interpretation chief -- it was Cindy Von Halle the whole time during the, um, exhibit planning, and she was really hands-off about it because she was on the verge of retirement, and I kinda think she just was like, I'm going to leave this problem for the next person. Like, because nobody wanted to fight with Theresa 'cause she could be really mean.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

[01:02:07]SAMANTHA RICHERT: And so, there was a lot of dynamics down the hallways of headquarters between different chiefs, and in a small park, you know, everybody's like packed in together there. And so, I just remember, I think it was Ben was the new chief of interpretation had just showed up, and like here's this real challenge in terms of creating public access to this museum space, and he was not a very happy camper with what had been dealt there. Because there wasn't even really, you know -- I mean, we definitely -- we put in some railings around the mannequins, but, you know, any time that there's -- we're really counting on people to keep their hands to themselves. There's so much fur in there, and people really want to touch that. You know, like, there's this whole -- there's this like stuffed dog that people can totally run their hands up and down if they wanted to. Um, yeah. So we didn't really do the interpreters any favors. I don't know how that's going.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I don't know. And I -- we should say that Theresa was the head of resources.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. She was the head of resources.

KAREN BREWSTER: So she -- she oversaw the curatorial staff and the historian and the natural resources program.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. [01:03:20]And the archeo -- most, I think importantly, she oversaw the archeologists because we had a really hard time keeping an archeologist because she was so par -- like once I was in place, and she kinda decided that I could be left alone, she went back to making the archeologists miserable. And there was a guy who, I can't remember his name. David, I think. Um, who was hired in as a permanent archeologist, and she -- I watched her not help him at all, and he was brand new to the

Park Service so he was -- there was just this huge learning curve for him to understand the bureaucracy and what was supposed to happen. And, um, she fired him. She did what -- to him what I thought was going to happen to me is that she fired him within the first year, and it was really a travesty, and people -- that was when people kind of showed up out of the community and were like, is there anything we can do about this? And we all kind of had to say, not really. Because Park Service, you know, career Park Service people are fairly protected. Um, 'cause his -- yeah, like, he'd moved there with, like, his wife and two kids, and his wife couldn't find a job because it's Skagway and it's a small town, and so she was staying -- so they were completely dependent on his income. And they were -- he ended up, like, having to move back in with -- I think they moved in with her parents, and his career was kind of ruined. But luckily, she had such a reputation that there were archeologists that had reached out to him and said, "Oh, I heard what happened to you. Do you need a job?" You know. And she -- you know, it all came down to that he -- we were supposed to give her these bi-weekly reports, which she never -- she obviously never read because you'd say, "Well, I wrote about that in my bi-weekly report," and she'd be like, "Oh, hm, I don't know. You know, ok." And it was like, yeah. So she fired him on the basis that he was not sufficiently producing these bi-weekly reports, and it was unclear whether she had ever even told him what she expected out of them, and, um, it was just -- and we just saw her badger. I mean, you look through the records of the archeology collection, and you can see, you know, just this rotating door of people coming in and out. And -- and Shawn Jones survived all of it only because he was just so meek that he just would kind of like huddle down and protect himself, and somehow he lasted long enough that he was able to finally get permanent, so.

[01:05:47]KAREN BREWSTER: And why was somebody like her allowed to stay in her position and be such a bully that -- how come she wasn't moved on?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, that all sits on the superintendents and what their decision-making -- I know I had a discussion with Elaine Furbish after the thing happened to David, and she just said that she had been the natural resources -- and this is all completely hearsay, but that she had been the natural history -- or the natural resources person when Theresa came on, and that it was clear that she was gonna be a problem and that Elaine was like -- I don't know that Elaine was let go. I mean, I think she resigned, but like, um, you know, she was just basically like, I can't deal with this, and that her feeling was that the superintendent had hired Theresa and really was invested in seeing her succeed. Ironically. And, um, so yeah. So it was really, you know -- and, I mean, we have -- there's somebody -- there's a chief of one of the divisions in this park that really should not be in a position of leadership, and he's still here, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And so, I feel like that is one of the things that is very difficult working for the Park Service is that we don't seem to be able to figure out how to deal with people that are toxic in our organization.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: If they're at a higher level.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: If they're, you know, seasonal, like, whatever. But if they're at a higher level.

[01:07:17]KAREN BREWSTER: And did a staff report -- complain about Theresa to higher-ups? Was -- were they aware? Was the leadership aware of the situation?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, I think there was awareness. I don't know. I never complained to higher-ups because she left me alone, but there was a sit -- but when she left, all of the resource people went into Mike, Superintendent Tranel's, office, and said, "We want to have some say in who's going to replace her." And it was very clear that he knew that she was, you know, a problem.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm-mm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And her departure was, she chose to move on to something else?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: She did. She took a job for the Forest Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. She had wanted to be superintendent, and that was part of it. I mean, so she had -- and that was part of the thing that was hard, too, was that she had these antagonistic relationships towards the superintendents because she, for at least the -- you know, the two that I was aware of, um, she had applied for their jobs and then didn't get it, and so then was really antagonistic to the people who were hired for that job. So, um, and I think she just finally got tired of -- like, she really was ambitious, and she really wanted to move up, and she wasn't making that happen. And so she went -- and this job opened up in the Forest Service, and her -- her partner works for the Forest Service, and she just decided to bag out. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

[01:08:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, what was I going to say about -- I totally forgot the question I was just going to ask. Um, oh yeah, I know what it was. You're talking about, you know, coming into a position that -- so as you say, Deb Boettcher had been working with the museum collections for years.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you came in as a new person. Was that a difficult transition?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It was. I mean, well, I mean, yes and no. I mean, I really relied on Deb, and she was -- she's such a hard worker, and, um, we had some conflicts during -- I mean, she has a strong personality, and we certainly had some conflicts when we were working together, but overall, I look back on that experience, and I just, um -- I wish I would've been a little more gentle on some things because her -- you know, really, of all the people that have worked with that collection, she's the one that's been the most dedicated, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: But she definitely had opinions on how things were supposed to be. And part of that was grown on the way things were before. And so, like, when I first started working, she would occasionally call Deb Sanders and be like, "Is it ok that Samantha's doing this?" 'Cause she didn't really trust my leadership. And so, that's hard, when you're a younger person who's a little unproven, and then, you know, like, your person that you're supervising is like, I don't really think you're doing the right thing.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, that's what I was wondering.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: You're the new person coming in --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- someone who's been there a long time that can often be difficult.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. Yeah. It was, but we worked it out. I mean, I think that we had a really good working relationship while I was there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Overall, So. It had its ups and down. [01:10:41]And part of being in a small town like Skagway is that you're in community with people, you know, so I would see Deb outside of work. And I always enjoyed seeing her outside of work, and I consider her a friend.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: But like here, the people I work with, I don't really -- I mean, one of, like, the fire management people, a couple of them work down -- or live down the road from me, but it's just not -- Skagway is just really like, it's very social, and it's very community-oriented, and you see people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know, like you can't just go be reclusive on your, you know, little farm out in the country or whatever.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. And you said that that was challenging for you in the community.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. I'm not an extrovert. I'm lucky that I'm married to an extrovert, so he built a lot of our -- I would come home and just be so fried from -- I'm an introvert, and I would just be so fried from negotiating all the relationships at work all day that I would not want to talk to anybody else, and he went out into the community. And he'd go to these coffee klatches that happened in the mornings in the coffee shop.

KAREN BREWSTER: With Bea Lingle.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, exactly. Yep. And, um, yeah. So he -- he networked into the community for us.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

[01:11:54]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so yeah, you had said earlier that living in Skagway was not always easy for you.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Yeah, it was, um, yeah. I mean, there was that part of the -- I'm -- I'm not a totally social person, and I was negotiating a lot of relationships, um, you know. It was really important, I mean -- the person that I first started working for in the regional office in Seattle, Kirstie Hartell, said that when you're -- when -- being a GS-9 is about achieving your skill level, but being a GS-11 is about maintaining relationships, and that was a lot of my job was like, you know, I had a relationship with Judy Munns. I had a relationship with Johnnie Powell, the chief of maintenance. Is like, you know, navigating with my boss, navigating with the superintendent, trying to keep on good relationships with everybody else in the park. It's a lot. Um, so I didn't really want to talk to anybody when I got home. And, um, I also don't drink, and like, that is, when you are in an Alaska -- small Alaskan town, that's really hard because it's like, you don't want to go out and be part of night life because people really drink there, you know. Even like a

book club, it was like the main reason of the book club was so people could snock back multiple glasses of wine, and it's just like -- so I ended up, um, I went to the birding group, and I -- there was a knitting group that started. I went to the knitting group, and that was pretty much my social outlets, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So.

[01:13:33]KAREN BREWSTER: Were people able to separate, you know, ok, maybe you had a meeting with some people, you know, and you were there, being the park person doing your job, but then, away from the job, were people able to separate you and that you were Samantha, and you're a person, or were you always having to deal with, "Oh, you're a Parkie, you're a Parkie?"

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, I mean, in the places that I actually ended up socializing, it really was not an issue. I mean, the knitters didn't care.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And the birders, half of them worked for the park anyway, so, um, you know. I ended up socializing a lot more with park people than I did with non-park people. Um, but I didn't really have a lot of social life, honestly, there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. But even, like, you know, if you would go to the grocery store or the post office --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- and you'd see people, were people friendly, or they're like, "Oh, you're the one who wants to throw away the Rapuzzi chairs."

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, no. Oh, no, no, no. People were always friendly. Yeah. It was very rare that somebody was unfriendly to me.

KAREN BREWSTER: So people didn't hold a grudge and --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: No. And --

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause I can imagine it being very stressful, that position you had.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, that would've been really stressful. That didn't happen. I don't think it was important enough to people to -- you know. There's a few people that were -- but, you know, one of the things I really value about Skagway is that -- and I don't see it here. In the place where I live now, if you are conservative or progressive, like, people don't interact. And one of the things I really valued and loved about Skagway was, everybody had this attitude of, like, you were all in it together. And it reminded me of when I lived in Wisconsin, and I think part of it has to do with the weather. Like, you don't know when somebody's gonna come -- you're gonna need help getting your car started.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Or getting pulled out of a ditch or whatever. And like, um, people could very civilly agree to disagree, and that was, you know, that was something that my partner Rick really likes about it, too. He would just -- he would go to the conservative coffee klatch, and he would go to the left-wing coffee klatch, and -- and everybody just -- you got along. And you talked to people, and you always waved at other people. I never felt that tension, which I do -- I've gotten, like, shade thrown at me going to the dump because it's obvious, like, with the bumper stickers on the back of my truck and stuff, that I'm not a Trump supporter.



KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And like, you know, and I've kind of had, like, side-eye from other people at the dump, but you never experienced that in Skagway. Like, people are really very civil with each other, and I really -- Yeah, I really valued that.

[01:16:07]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. 'Cause I know, you know, you were talking about the park/community relationships, and, you know, I've heard stories of it -- when the park first started, you know, there was a lot of animosity and negative feelings, and so I was wondering, by the mid-2000's when you were there --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- if that was still going on, if you felt any of that.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I did not feel that. And I started to really -- I mean, you would kinda hear criticisms of the park, but what you heard a lot more was people starting to recognize that because the economy had so much shifted to tourism, and even the railroad was dependent on tourism, people recognized that the park had done a lot to make that town someplace wanted -- the people wanted to go. And so, even if they didn't always agree, they -- I think there was, for sure, from the people that were operating tourist businesses, um, and from, you know -- I mean, I didn't spend a lot of time in the parts of the community that were maybe less favorable towards -- but I heard -- I have definitely heard people say, you know, without the park here, we wouldn't have all this tourism, and these businesses wouldn't exist. And so, we better appreciate that that has happened here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

[01:17:24]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so did -- talk about the visitor center exhibits, 'cause you just talked a lot about the Jeff. Smiths Parlor.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: You worked on the visitor center exhibits as well?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I did, yeah. Um, well, let's see. So that project was -- it was -- the funding came from, um, I think somebody sued the Park Service for not being, um, not providing for disability access. And so then, there was money that was allocated towards starting to make all of the parks' exhibits in all the parks universal accessibility. And we got pilot funding, and so the one that -- our park was supposed to be kind of like one of the first examples.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know, and so that was built into the project from the start. It -- because of the high profile of that, it was all run through Harpers Ferry Center, so it was, yeah. It got a little complicated because it's like, ok, the contracting officer is -- and, you know, and then there was like, a few other people from Harpers Ferry Center that all participated, and they were all keeping an eye on this, um, universal design aspect. And then, there's the contractors, and then there's the -- basically, the park people are kind of like, we're providing the resources. Like, we're helping them figure out what, you know, what the story is and what the objects are, and here's our space, and this is what we can

do. So that felt like a much more straight-ahead -- 'cause it was more -- a more straight-ahead kind of exhibit design.

[01:19:07]KAREN BREWSTER: So what was the exhibit like before?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, well. I mean, there's a guy, like a mannequin, not an automaton, didn't move, who is -- it was sort of a representation of a ton of goods, and so he, you know, he's got -- I don't think there was a sled dog there. I think it was just, like, him, and he had this fur hat that we ended up having -- I think the fur hat was stolen once, and so then they got a replica, and I think they pasted it to his head. And um, there's just all these boxes that represent, you know, the ton of goods, and then there's a few cases in the other room that were -- that had some of the objects from -- they were all from the Chilkoot Trail. 'Cause those were -- that was -- that exhibit was put in, like, right when the park was started, and so there wasn't even very much stuff in the museum collection at the time, and so, it was, you know, I think there was, like, a dog saddle and a mining pan and I don't know. And then, like the world's tiniest type. It was definitely not universal design. It was really outdated-looking. And then we had a rotating exhibit that we -- like, there was a case, also not very universal design. It was like an old jewelry case, beautiful. It was a beautiful piece of furniture, really nice wood with this glass top, and we would, you know -- so that was part of the job there, too, was like, doing these rotating exhibits every year, different things.

[01:20:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, so the previous visitor center exhibit, was it in the same space that it's currently in?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm. Yeah. Yeah. The bottom of the -- oh, and then there was the, um, the vault. So yeah, it's like the bottom of the railroad administration building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Which is also the park administration building.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And then there's the vault on the bottom, and that was -- had like, bars of something painted gold, and I think a scale or something like that.

[01:21:04]KAREN BREWSTER: So when you're doing this exhibit design, I'm curious how that works between the role of you as a curator versus somebody who's an exhibit designer versus someone who's an interpretation person.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: What are your different roles in that? 'Cause it sounds like you all worked together.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, we did. So their job is to figure out -- You know, like, we're providing them with the story and the objects that we think might help tell that story. And it was kinda hard because they were like, "Well, can you just -- " You know, typically, this happens. People are like, "Can you just send us pictures of everything?" And we're like, "No. Because we don't have pictures of everything." So they came in, and they did a tour, and I kind of walked them through objects, and they took some pictures on their own, you know. And, um, I think we went back and took better pictures later, once they'd kind of honed it down to what they thought they might use. And there were definitely some objects that we advocate for because we think that they're really cool, and we'd like for you to use it. Um, or we think it's got an important part of the story. And then, you know, they kind of come back to us with like, well, here's a script of what we -- you

know, how we think we might tell this story, and then we kind of say, well, maybe that's not accurate, or maybe you're highlighting this too much and not as much this. And mostly it was about -- like to start out with, they'd have -- so we'd kind of give them all this stuff. You know, like, we'd kind of give them all this information. Like, here's the story, and here's the resources, and you kind of go away and come up with something. And then they, um, they came up with three different scenarios, and one of them was about -- I can't even remember exactly what they were about, but they were -- like one of them focused more on people, you know, specific characters, and one of them focused more on, um, choices, like if you were trying to do the Chilkoot Trail, you know, here's some of the things -- you know, it was kind of like a game -- gaming stuff is really big now in exhibit design, so it was like, you know, sort of like, it's a roll of the dice if you go this way or that way, or whatever. Um, and I can't remember what the other one was.

[01:23:18]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, well, you said about picking objects to tell the story.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Who decides what the story is? The interpretation staff? The historian? I mean, as a curator, how do you -- you -- you guide the story?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: No, I don't guide the story. I mean, there's sort of an established history there, right? So there's, um -- I don't really recall what material -- I wasn't really part of coming up with the material to give them to learn about what the Klondike Gold Rush was.

KAREN BREWSTER: But so it was these outside exhibit designers who were sort of gonna write the script?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Well, so they do like -- so the way this happens is, we have a workshop, and so you give them a bunch of material ahead of time. And they should be kind of familiar with, you know, what the history of the Klondike Gold Rush is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And then they come and they visit, and we kind of walk them through what all the resources are and talk to them about -- you just talk to them about the park and, you know, what the resources in the park are, and somehow, they take all -- somehow they take that all away and they come back with the script.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

[01:24:26]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, and then interpretation staff, they're not doing the exhibit designing. They're doing the -- ?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: They're also -- they're probably -- I mean, everybody was participating in those workshops, but probably they're talking more about, this is what we do right now, and this is how we're gonna staff this program. And this is -- you know, you're supposed to have a long-range interpretive plan, and so you have themes set out that you are trying to teach the public about, and so, I don't know if we had that or not, but most certainly, the interpretive themes were discussed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause you'd think you'd want the exhibits to mesh with those interpretive themes.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. You definitely want that. And -- but part of what you're also talking about, I think where the interpreters were really helpful in those processes is really thinking how people were going to move through the space. This is how people interact with this building, and this is how people -- you know, like, 'cause, like, establishing the path that people are supposed to move through.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Or like, you know -- and giving them a reality check of like, ok, are there mornings where there are ten thousand people that dump out onto our doors, so you know, what does it mean if you have a sound exhibit? Like, what if you -- you know, if you're playing audio in this one corner, and you've got, like, fifty people in the room. Like, is that even worthwhile? And thinking through things like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or that every time somebody walks by, this sound is going to go off.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And if you're the staff person in there, is that -- if there's ten thousand people --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. Right. All that kind of stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Drive you crazy.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So I think they're really helpful in helping them get a real picture about how --

[01:25:55]KAREN BREWSTER: And you said for the Jeff. Smiths Parlor that that thinking about the human flow didn't happen.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: No, it really didn't. I mean, there was some discussion. The -- the exhibit design people that we contracted with for that, they were -- so that was really illuminating, to go through that visitor center process because that is not the process that happened for Jeff. Smiths Parlor because um, instead of that, you know, like, so it's like, the flow with the visitor center was like, ok, they come and we do this workshop, and they kinda take all this information away, and then they come back with some ideas, and we tell them what we like or we don't like. And then they go away again, and they come back with some more, and there's sort of this, like, you know, Phase One schematic and Phase Two schematic, and sort of there's this refining process, and then they manufacture it and install it. Whereas, you know, Theresa's attitude was, "Well, we have to do some exhibit planning because it is an exhibit, but we already know what we're doing, and so therefore, we don't really need that much from you." And so, it was a very slimmed-down contract for the exhibit planning, and a lot of the things that they -- you know, I mean, they definitely -- the exhibit planners definitely said, "You know, it's going to be a lot of people in that room," and -- but that just came down to, well, maybe we can move the bar back eleven inches. Ok, will Deb be able to fit behind there to clean, or some other, you know, museum technician who comes behind her. Who will be -- you know, will people be able to fit behind there? And like, these like, little micro-decisions rather than coming at it from this sort of, like, raw material then going into a refinement --

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Process, so. Yeah.

[01:27:41]KAREN BREWSTER: And I have heard that at some point they sort of did, like, a sign up in advance, get a ticket thing for entry into the parlor. I don't know if they're still doing that.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I don't know.

KAREN BREWSTER: That, you know, you -- you know, it's like going into some museum where they -- you can only have so many people in at a time, so you go, you get a ticket, show up at one o'clock, you know, and then those people go through, and --.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. You'd have to, because you couldn't just have anybody show up there. You know, like, you'd have to control the flow of people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, and that was the thing, is that Cindy didn't -- was just really like, "Well, the person who comes behind me will figure this out." Like, she just -- she was not very involved in that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

[01:28:19]KAREN BREWSTER: And so, the use of objects in those exhibits, you say the designers say, well, we want this or that. But not all objects can go on exhibit.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: So how are those decisions made?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, you pick objects that are gonna illustrate the story that you're trying to tell. And then, there's always a little tension there that sometimes you don't have the object that's gonna tell that story.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: But in something like the visitor center exhibit, they don't care about that so much. Like, they're not very object-focused exhibits anyway. So if you have an object, it's kind of like, you know, a little extra icing on the cake. It's not integral. They're just not like a, what you think of as a traditional museum exhibit. I mean, Park Service visitor center exhibits, it's like they're supposed to last twenty to thirty years. You need to think about the objects going on exhibit, that they might be on exhibit for twenty to thirty years, so you can't pick things that are light-sensitive or, you know, very fragile. So, um, but objects are just not a central part of that. I think that we kind of pushed on them because we had such a big museum collection that we really were like, we want to use objects in this. But ultimately, you know, I don't think it really used that many objects.

KAREN BREWSTER: Does it use photographs a lot?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I mean, I think so. 'Cause, I mean, I don't really recall.

[01:29:44]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. I was just thinking that, you know, my memory of museum -- museology is you don't want too much text.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: People aren't gonna stop and read it.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: So objects would be better.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because they would you know -- and especially those people going through that visitor center.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: They're not there for very long.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: There definitely, you know, we have a big -- Klondike has a big historical photograph collection, and it definitely got a lot of use when I was there, and it was, yeah, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: So anyway, I find it interesting that it's not as object-oriented of an exhibit.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, I do think that they -- I mean, I think you're right, that they used a lot of photos.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, but, you know, there's also things like -- I mean, I can't remember exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: I haven't --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I kind of -- I haven't thought about it for a while, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I haven't been into that exhibit recently, so I don't know what's in there.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

[01:30:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, but I was thinking, if there's some object, like your newspapers is a good example. That if there's some object that is determined to be critical to telling the story but is one that can't go out on exhibit, then a replica gets made? Is that the way to sort of solve that?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, I mean, that's one way to solve it. Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then what if you do if you don't have the object in your collection?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, you can't put it on display then.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. They'd have to change the story?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: No, they don't have to change the story, but you can't use an object to illustrate that. You know, I mean, there was things -- I mean, I don't know what ended up happening, but one thing they talked about was, um, the -- that there was going to be, like, a boat, with like, video of, um, going down the Klondike River -- or is it the Klondike River? You know, the river that goes in the Klondike gold fields.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So, you know, it's like, there -- that kind of exhibit is more about trying to give you an experience than it is about trying to show you an object, so, um, yeah.

[01:31:39]KAREN BREWSTER: And the trends in exhibit design change through time.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Right, well, yeah. I mean, so that's -- yeah. So you know, something like Jeff. Smiths Parlor, that was put together in the '30's, although not by a professional exhibit person.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: But, you know, that's all about showing stuff. Or that's like, in the '60's, and that's about, you know, really showing a collection, not necessarily a museum collection at the time, but showing a collection. And I think the kind of exhibit that they were doing was more about -- kind of like what you see at science centers and things like that. Like, we are trying to tell you a story, and here's ways to help you think about what it would be like to be a person in that story.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And so, I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. I mean I, even as a museum curator, it's like, I definitely appreciate that objects are an important part of storytelling. And one of the -- [01:32:32]O[01:32:33]ne object I would like to talk about in regard to that, which I think that they put in the collection, but I'm not 100 percent sure, is that there was a -- a horse skull, still with a bridle on it, that had been collected from -- it was in the Rapuzzi Collection. George Rapuzzi had gone and picked it off of White Pass Trail, and when I was there, there was really no discussion about all the animals that died on that trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And what that really meant. And, um, so I pushed hard to have that included, to have some discussion about, you know, that this -- that this animal cruelty had happened.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And was an important part of the story. 'Cause there was a lot of, you know, people just want to talk about like plucky stampedeers, and it's all cool, and it's like, let's also talk -- you know, and there was also discussion about, you know, they're trying to be sensitive to the Native history of the area as well, and so talking about all these people show up, completely upended the Native way of life. They were, like, killing all these animals in cruel ways by not, you know, not feeding -- like bringing them and using them as pack animals and then, like, not even providing for their food. And let's talk about that as well, that this is part of this historical event, so. That was probably the contribution I felt best about to that process.

[01:33:50]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And then you also mentioned that there were rotating exhibits.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um, how were those decided on, put together. What were some of those themes they --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, pretty much just came out of the museum. Uh, let's see, so uh, so Deb and I would just kinda come up with ideas.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And then execute, so um -- And so I think I also had some interns working on things, too, that -- so I did one on historical photography. Or, you know, like the history of photography, 'cause we had all these different types of photos in the collection. And so -- and like, some cool cameras and stuff, as I recall. And, um, I think the one that had been done before I got there was called "What's-It"? It was just like, weird little objects from the Rapuzzi Collection, and people could guess what they were. And, um, we did a natural history one one year, that -- because we had -- you know, we just took objects out of the natural history collection, and put those in. Yeah, so there was usually some pretty -- it was fun to do those little exhibits. Pretty cool.

[01:34:53]KAREN BREWSTER: So it's interesting that you as the curatorial staff chose those themes, and selected the objects and put those together. That it wasn't, you know, interpretation or exhibit designers. That that role fell upon you guys. I don't know if that's typical.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Uh, I mean, I think that varies for -- It just sort of depends on what kind of park it is and what they -- but, I mean, interpretive staff would have to -- well,

one thing is, you know, you had to do that work before it was the season, and so, that work needs to happen in the winter and spring, you know, and then install it. And we knew what was in the collection, and so it's not -- I mean it's -- in some ways, it's not so great because it -- you know, it's like very hokey and piecemeal-looking. Like, we did our best to make nice captions and stuff, but they'll always look homemade on a certain level, and um -- and that's not what interpreters want to see. But people seemed to like it, and so we continued doing it. You know, I mean, it was definitely -- it was definitely an expectation of the job, that we would continue to do that, and then also we did window displays, too, in the front of that window. Um, usually that was, like, bottles and metal things because those are things that we didn't have to worry about getting hit with a bunch of light.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

[01:36:12]KAREN BREWSTER: And what about the Mascot? That has exhibits in it, too, doesn't it?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm. Those are completely static exhibits, so they -- that was -- besides Deb cleaning it a lot in the summer, um, it's pretty low-maintenance.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Yeah, that's what I was wondering, is about, you know, do you inventory what's there, you clean it?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And the Pantheon, does that have exhibits?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, um, partway through when I was there, that turned into the junior ranger center.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And then there was a case that we put stuff in. We tried to put in things that we -- like, toys, basically. Like, historical toys.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Kids' stuff. Um, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then the -- now there's the um, what is it? It's where you go get your trail permit. The wilderness center --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, yeah. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- kind of concept. I can't remember what it's called. And I think it has a little, you know, display in the front window.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And I don't know if that's park collections, or if that's Parks Canada's stuff.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It's not -- if it's the same stuff that was there -- so we, for uh, I'm trying to remember. We made this tent. Like, we had -- Si helped, and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Si Dennis?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm. And then, uh, Elaine's buddy, who had a, um, he sewed sails, and so he had this industrial machine that would sew canvas.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And I can't -- I can see his face. He's got a great beard. But I can not remember his name. But anyway, he let us use his, um, canvas, or maybe it was kind of also Elaine's machine. But anyway, there was access to a canvas sewing machine, so we



made this little tent, and we put it in the -- and that was for the admin building displays, and then we, like, populated it with, you know, stuff that stampedeers would've had at their tent. [01:38:13] So then when that was not gonna be needed any more, we -- the wilderness center took that, and then I think we had accumulated a certain amount of stuff from the Rapuzzi Collection that was edu -- what we called educational collection that was not part of the museum collection, but could be used for props and displays and stuff like that. And I think they probably have some of that stuff to make their little front display.

[01:38:39] KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. So for people who don't know, museums' educational collections are what you use to demonstrate for school groups and things like that. Things people can touch.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. Things that you don't care about, basically. Like, it's props that are around, and maybe they're historical, but it doesn't matter 'cause you've got another one in the collection. So basically, it's things that are designated for consumptive use.

KAREN BREWSTER: And in Skagway, was there education activities with kids or school programs?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, all through the interpretive division, yeah. There was -- I don't know school programs. I mean, I think I had, maybe, some classes come through. I think, once or twice we had classes come through for a tour. I can remember doing that at least once, maybe twice. And then there's like Junior Ranger day and stuff like that, but all that's pretty much run through the -- and then there's Ranger Teacher Ranger, that program, where there's -- I don't know. It's a -- I think they run kind of like a summer camp. I don't know.

[01:39:42] KAREN BREWSTER: But I'd say the interp staff used that stuff for their walking tours, their public programs.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Things like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Things like that. Ok. [01:39:50] And we've been talking all about museum objects, but that collection also includes paper and photographs.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now, is that considered an archive, then?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: So how is that managed?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, well, uh, as best we can. Um, there's definitely -- Debbie Sanders had put everything into record groups. I don't know if we really -- I don't know if we want to get into the weeds on this, but part of my training is -- I focused when I was in school on archives as well as museum collections, and so I was trying to get it -- I found it really hard to find things. Deb found it easy, 'cause she knew the system really well, but to my mind, it wasn't standard archival arrangement. And so, we were working on integrating -- and then all the guidance came out. There was -- so there was a push in the Park Service to, um, uh, org -- there was a big backlog of archives in the Park Service. Um, I mean, there still is, but in around 2010 or so, there was, um, what we called the flexible base funding for organizing archives across the Park Service. And there started to be more guidance on how to approach that. And there was a senior archivist, John Roberts, who would look at your proposed arrangement and kind of give

you feedback and stuff. And so, I wrote to him, and he gave us some advice. And so, we started working on kind of sorting from the record groups into a more traditional archival arrangement. And um, I don't know what kind of progress happened there or not. I mean, we were kinda partway along when I left, so we'll see.

[01:41:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Because managing an archives and the arranging of those kinds of collections, it's dif -- it's a different system than when you're organizing an object collection?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. So objects, you really think about just the individual object. And that's -- it's like -- and when you orga -- you know, when you're taking care of archives and records, you're thinking about the assemblage of information, and how does that make sense. So what you see a lot, traditionally, in the Park Service is these -- like, there's a file folder, and it's individually catalogued with this, like, catalog number, and it's like, doesn't really help you figure out how that fits into the overall arrangement of information that -- in the records that you hold, and it makes it hard to find things. So, um, the traditional principle is to organize by, um, like -- I can't remem -- there's a -- it's like a French phrase. It basically --

KAREN BREWSTER: Provenance? No.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Basically, it means that you -- you keep the order that it came in. You organize it by who the record creator is, and so, um -- [01:42:57]What had happened at Klondike, it was mostly sorted by subject matter. But that made for some really weird record groups because, like, Debbie had started it for each building, and so like, you would have the archeology and the stabilization, and then whatever kind of dumped into this record group for, like, the Mascot or whatever. And then -- and that was kind of ok, because you kind of -- there's not crazy amount of records there, but then there was just this lump sum category called "Klondike Gold Rush." You know, Record Group 5, I think. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park. And it was like, everything was just dumped in there, and it was dumped in there in the order that it came in, so like, you're going from central files to interpretive stuff to -- You know, it was just kind of like, it felt to me very random. I mean, Deb, because she has sort of this encyclopedic brain, was like, "It's fine. I can find everything." And I was like, "That's fine as long as you're here, but when you're not here, you know, how are people going to find stuff?" And so, um, and I'm kind of dealing with the same thing here at this park, so it's not an unknown phenomenon. And part of the -- [01:44:06]There's history there which is that the Park Service originally was told that they should not be in charge of archives, and so museum curators came across -- and there wasn't any way -- Now, we have an archives module in the museum database, ICMS, that's set up to process archives in a fairly traditional fashion. Um, but before that was established, it was -- the only thing that was available for -- was for you to catalog it as an artifact. And so, and -- and there was instruction from DC that said, catalog it as an artifact because otherwise you have no business dealing with it. So, um, and that, you know, that all goes back to, like, relationships between NARA (National Archives and Records Administration) and the Park Service, and then, you know, back in the day, we used to have secretaries that would, like, file things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And then that all went away, and NARA still exists, but it's kind of like, if you send something to NARA, you may never -- I mean, you can ask for it back, and in a few weeks, they'll send it to you, but you don't have it, like, right at hand if you need that information.

KAREN BREWSTER: And NARA's the National --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: National Archives and Records Administration. So it's always kinda tense, and the Park Service is not on top of its records and probably won't be for a long time, if it ever is. 'Cause I was at a meeting last week with, um -- and the -- Joy Beasley, who's the associate director for cultural resources right now, you know. I was -- I asked her about it because she just -- it was like a regional cultural resources get-together kind of thing, and I was like, you know, "Am I just crazy, or are the records -- you know, like, is records management an issue in the Park Service?" And she's like, "No, this is a huge issue, and you're not crazy, and we don't know how to deal with it, and we're still struggling with that." So.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: That's it, you know.

[01:45:52]KAREN BREWSTER: And that's in terms of keeping track of the park's own administrative internal history.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And their own records and papers. But at Klondike, you have all those photographs.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And there's diaries, and letters and things as well, right?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. Yeah. Um-hm.

KAREN BREWSTER: And how are those managed?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, they're managed as part of the park archives.

KAREN BREWSTER: And oral history recordings. You guys -- they have those up there, too.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Those are also managed as part of the park archives. And there was some, you know, some work with Karl on that because it was all in the library, and the stampeder files, I was able to talk him into migrating those into the archives. 'Cause parts of the stampeder files kind of were, like, missing and went away. So we did a 100 percent inventory of them as we migrated them over, and we're like, yeah, there's some that are not here anymore. So I feel good about that, that we were able to put that in the archives and have that in the secure location. And part of that was that we digitized all of those, you know, and so they're still accessible.

KAREN BREWSTER: And what are those files?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, so the stampeder files are, um, people -- so Karl had a form. If you had an ancestor that was in the Klondike Gold Rush that you could -- it was basically just looking for genealogical information and there was a part on the form, like, do you have anything that you would like to send us, like copies of letters or, you know, collections, or whatever. And, um, so those files mostly don't have anything original in them, but they have copies of -- so it's good information, and I think there was like a thousand of them, I think, when I left there. So that's a lot of, just, first person primary source kind of history from, you know, stampedeers.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And sometimes it was somebody had given their family an oral history, and a family member had typed it up. And sometimes it was copies of letters. And sometimes it was, "Hey, I remember my grandfather telling me this story." And so, it was kind of like a wide variety of material.

[01:48:05]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And then you mentioned digitization. How much digitization was done in the time you were there?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um.

KAREN BREWSTER: If any.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: No, I definitely -- so, I recall that we digitized all the stampeder files when we pulled them over. And I also had interns or volunteers working on, um -- I think we just re-digitized all of the historical photographs, as I recall, because it was really kind of piecemeal, and then they weren't standards. You know, it's like, so I'm gonna probably do that here, too. Because it's like, early digitization, like, it's kinda like, a lot of times a low image quality, or maybe it's not like 100 percent of the collection, and so I think we -- as I recall, we went through and just did every -- every historical photograph.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's a lot of photographs.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know what? And actually, I don't really think it was.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, really.

[01:49:05]SAMANTHA RICHERT: I mean, well, I'm about to have two interns come in and digitize, like five thousand aerial photographs and then a whole bunch of slides, so what I thought was maybe a lot of photo -- historical photographs at the time, now that I'm, uh, doing resource management records, and the, like the amount of information that can be generated in like, by, like, one aerial flight, um --

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Really puts a perspective on it.

[01:49:31]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, and you mentioned public access to the objects. What about to the archival collections?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, you know, the archives are always available to whoever wanted to come and look at things, and we did have some researchers that came, um, and we did sometimes have requests for the stampeder files. A lot more of the requests usually came from interpreters that were developing their tours. Um, we had a lot of requests for historical photographs, and that was one reason why that collection became a priority.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And that definitely was something that I started to really specialize in while I was there. Is just, you know, understanding and managing historical photographs. [01:50:16]I used to -- I taught a workshop a couple times about -- just for people in the community, if they had, you know, photographs that they wanted to, um -- that they had at home and they wanted to preserve. So, um, yeah, we regularly got reference requests for those. And that was -- so what we did was, we digitized them to TIF, uncompressed, and then we put a jpeg on -- And then there's a web catalog, so we made that available on the web catalog. You know, and that was where it was actually handy that every historical photograph was actually individually cataloged. And as I recall, we also put that all on the park server as well, so that interpreters and people, park staff, could easily access those.

[01:51:05]KAREN BREWSTER: I mean, that's the whole thing with a collection is how it's cataloged so you can go back and find. Like, oh, I want a picture of, you know --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- a horse pulling a wagon.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. So the -- the metadata or the cataloging information is always really important, 'cause how do you sort for, you know. And there was one, so Margaret, um, gosh, I can't remember her last name, but she was a volunteer who came. She started coming when Debbie Sanders was there, and she kept coming, and she was in her 80's and would show up. And she had cataloged a lot of these photographs, and she would often put "dog-eared," and so any time you, like, if you were searching on "dog," you would come up with all of these images that had dog-eared in their description. So, you know, there are pitfalls there, yeah.

[01:51:54]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. And you have to know what terms to use.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. Right. So that's one of the things that you learn along the way is that it's better to have some kind of structured lexicon for your description. And we never did. We talked about it a lot, but we didn't really -- and well, mostly, I think 'cause everything had been cataloged already, so we weren't really gonna -- we didn't have time to go back and re-catalog or anything like that. It was mostly about, like, digitizing it so that there was consistency, and then we could put it up on the web catalog and have it available to people.

[01:52:31]KAREN BREWSTER: So while you were there working on the Rapuzzi Collection, did it get finished, cataloged -- accessioned, cataloged while you were there?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: We got to the point where, um -- definitely not everything was cataloged. We finished the processing. And what I mean by that is that we had -- Judy and I had gone through -- we'd gone through the selection process, and we'd come out the other side with, these things have been transferred to the park, these things are in the city collection, and then we have this other batch of material that we need to figure out where it's going. And, um, it's -- and that was difficult because then it's -- that was where things got really hard for Judy because -- because all of it was city property, and there was a new city manager as I recall, um, who, you know -- so there's all these ethics in the museum world about how do you dispose of property? How do you de-accession? Technically, none of it needed to be de-accessioned because that group --

KAREN BREWSTER: It hadn't been accessioned.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It hadn't been accessioned. So it was technically city property. But then there was also, you know, the Rasmuson Foundation is also really powerful in Alaska, and part of how Theresa was able to leverage purchasing this collection is that she had a buddy who was a head of the Rasmuson Foundation who also really wanted to see the street car run in the Fourth of July parade, so that was part of the heat there. And then, um, you know, it's kind of like, "Ok, well, you guys gave us all this money to buy all this stuff, and now we're gonna auction it off." You know. And so, that didn't look very good, and so that was kind of a weird situation to be in. And so, there was a lot of just -- there was supposed to be -- [01:54:24]We had a committee where we discussed different options about what that process was going to be, and I don't know where it is now. I don't know what happened, but there was some discussion about having an auctioneer, or having it, you know -- I mean, definitely there was sort of an idea of like,

the city should get some money for some things, but then it's kind of like, well, and then if nobody wants it, do we just take it to the dump? Like, what do we do with it then? You know, and um --

[01:54:50]KAREN BREWSTER: Right. So what's standard museum practice on something like that?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you just take things to the dump?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: In the Park Service, there are -- Yeah, you can de-accession something and destroy it. Um, you can transfer it to another museum. And I did a lot of -- I did some of that reaching out to different -- we photographed a bunch of stuff, as I recall, and then, um, actually Kari Rain did a lot of that. She was -- she runs the wilderness center now. She's a trail ranger. And in the summer -- in the winters, when she was -- 'cause she's seasonally employed, she would -- I picked her up for some pay periods to do some -- she photographed, actually, quite a few objects for us, as I recall. Um, so I sent out -- and so, we were kinda like, ok, what are the steps that need to happen? Offering it to other museums is definitely one of the steps. So I sent out CD's to other museums in Alaska with pictures and, you know, spreadsheets of stuff to see if anybody wanted anything. And the Hammer Museum came over from Haines and -- and took some things, which was kind of really, really fun, actually.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, those guys are cool.

KAREN BREWSTER: It's a fun little museum.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It's one of my favorite in the whole world.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

[01:56:16]SAMANTHA RICHERT: It's really -- I love the Hammer Museum. So that was really cool, having those guys over. And, uh, yeah. So yeah, I mean, you can transfer it to another museum, or you can destroy it, or you can, um -- I mean, it's very controversial to sell something that you're de-accessioning. Usually, that's like, in the art world though. But there was a period where people -- or people. Museums were balancing their budgets by selling off artwork and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: -- that's definitely frowned on. But I don't really think that this material was in that same category 'cause it's like broken chairs and stuff.

[01:56:51]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. So it's still sitting in a ware -- the stuff that wasn't acquired by the park and the city is just sitting in a warehouse somewhere in Skagway still?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, it was when I left. I don't know what's happened in the last three years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I don't know.

[01:57:07]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, well, you were saying, you know, all these things you did where you were able to hire so-and-so for a while, you interned, it seems like you were able to get a lot of funding for the collections. Is that typical in a park?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, um, I mean, I'm not going to toot my own horn, but I'm pretty good at working things out, and um, I -- I mean, some of that funding was already formulated before I ever got there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Like, the conservation stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Sometimes, it was like, "Hey, we got a little bit -- " "Hey, you know, do you think you guys could spare, you know, seven thousand dollars and pay Rain for four pay periods to photograph stuff?" I mean, I don't know, like you just kinda find money places.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. [01:57:56] Well, and I was wondering if because Klondike, you know, as you said, the collections are so much a part of that park, that --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: They're very high-profile, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: They're very high-profile, and that the leadership and administration is more willing to listen to those things and say, "Oh, yeah, yeah. Here, we'll find you some money."

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yes, definitely. Yeah. I mean, yeah. That -- that museum collection was very high-profile.

[01:58:21] KAREN BREWSTER: Now, but you did also have -- there is a natural resources component of their program. Did you have to fight within resources for pots of money?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: No, I never did. I, um, I'm trying to think about how -- I mean, like, with park housing, that was always usually pretty easy to absorb into our budget, and then I think we just kind of put in budget requests. And, I mean, I will -- I'm not trying to say in any way that I think that the natural resources program there was well-supported, because for most of the time I was there, there wasn't anybody even in that position.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right? Um, so it just, um, I mean, I think one thing is, I tend to make reasonable requests, and then, you know, some of it was like, "Well, ok. If we're gonna" - - like, for example, with the Alascom, I think the reason I was probably able to get money for Rain to photograph objects is probably because we were gonna move out of that buildings, and there were things that we needed to do. And then also, "ok, well, if we're not going to be in that building any more, we're going to save a certain amount of money, so can I have some of that money?" You know, things like that. I mean, I don't really remember how that worked out, exactly, but it just sort of always seemed to -- And, you know, I don't usually ask for a lot, and I usually, when I ask for it, I have a reason.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So.

[01:59:48] KAREN BREWSTER: But you felt like, overall, the collection program was well -- well-enough funded?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I did. I will say, though, that when I left, they switched my position to subject to furlough, and I found that shocking because there was so much work to do all the time that there was no way that that position should be subject to furlough. And they - - when they, um, they -- but when Deb was, um, you know, she was term the whole time that I was there, and then that position was advertised as permanent. So in a way, yes, and in a way, no. Because like, for example, you know, when we received the Rapuzzi

Collection, there was a base funding increase to cover not just one, but I think two museum technicians, and that should've immediately turned into a permanent position. But it never did, and Deb stayed on a term appointment. We were able to get her a second term appointment, which you can't even do anymore. I was really lucky that I kinda got on the tail end of that. Um, and then that was running up, and so then it was decided that, "Ok, well, we can have a permanent museum technician." And -- but they made it subject to furlough. And I was like, you guys, like, you know. I mean, there's so much work that needs to be done. And before, when she was a term, you're able to like keep her completely funded all the time, but now suddenly, you don't need her all the time? Like, you know, whatever. I mean, so.

[02:01:25]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, was it because, "Oh, we got this big collection coming in, the Rapuzzi one, we gotta deal with it?" And now they think there's not as much work to do because that's sort of been finished? Quote/unquote "finished"? I don't think you ever finish.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I don't even think -- I don't even think it had to do with that. It probably had to do with other things, like, the park perceiving more of a need in some other area or not being able to balance their budget or whatever. You know, I mean, it's like, um, yeah. That's just a thing that happens in the Park Service.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It doesn't necessarily depend on whether the perceived need of work flow, you know. [02:02:04]Park administrators often don't make their decision based -- because everybody will say, I'm totally overworked. There's so much to do.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And they're all right. So I think they've just gotten hardened shells, and they make their decisions based on other things.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, as you say, like, "Oh well, we need to put money into the natural resources program for a while, so we're not gonna fund the curatorial as much.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Or --

KAREN BREWSTER: Or there's some, you know, crisis management that has to happen or whatever.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, I think what might be very likely is that they were like, well, now we've got to have an interpreter completely dedicated to letting people in and out of Jeff. Smiths Parlor, so you're gonna have to give us some money so we can do that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: That's not out of the realm of possibility.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Or now, we're gonna restore this building, and we need a little bit more that -- but that's different money.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, the building comes from fund sources, yeah. The OMPS is what's paying those permanent salaries, so. And seasonal salaries. Yeah.

[02:02:58]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, well, and I was reading, the Rapuzzi Collection was so huge, did that come with any funding to process it?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, yeah, like --

KAREN BREWSTER: 'Cause the Rasmuson helped purchase it.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So did they also provide --



SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, no.

KAREN BREWSTER: No.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: No. But there was an increase to the base funding --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: -- that was supposed to pay for museum technicians.

KAREN BREWSTER: The park did recognize that they needed to step it up a bit.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. And it did, but they didn't commit to a permanent position for it. Even though any museum person's going to tell you, like well, once you have it, you're going to have to take care of it forever. Um, and I mean they did -- you know, we did -- I mean, Deb was funded off of base accounts, but they didn't ever commit to, you know. So, um, no. There was no funding that came for the Rapuzzi Collection for processing it. That was all just purchasing it.

KAREN BREWSTER: And that --

[02:03:51]SAMANTHA RICHERT: And then there's a lot of expectations about what's supposed to happen there.

KAREN BREWSTER: And is that typical? Collections come in without funding?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, yeah. It happens to me all the time. Mostly, though, what I receive is collections that are, you know -- mostly I receive collections that are generated from the park here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: But no, I think generally, it's not -- you don't really generally consider that to be a thing. You know, the Rasmuson Foundation is not in the business of funding park personnel.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. [02:04:25]Um, during your tenure in Skagway, were there other collections that came in besides Rapuzzi, other interesting things you worked on, or were you 100 percent focused on Rapuzzi?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, there were small things that came in, and there's always mandated collections, like archeology stuff comes in every year. Um, there was a collection of bottles that we received from Alvin Gordon. Um, where his dog bit me when I went over to get them, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was going to say, risk management.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I know. Yeah, that was kind of a thing, so. I mean, I felt really bad. Well, yeah. It was funny, because I came back to the office and Deb was like, "Yeah, that dog's really bite-y." And I was like, "Really? You couldn't have told me before I went over there?" Because I just walked -- reamed down and was like, "Hey, puppy." And he was like, ert, like, bit my hand. I mean, it wasn't terrible, but it was just kind of like, oh. [02:05:20]But yeah, he -- he and his wife had been -- they had -- they went to -- they would go to the Yukon and dig up bottles, basically, which is not anything that we want to encourage in any way, but he's really sweet. She's really sweet. And his kids didn't want the bottles, and what was going to happen to the bottles, so we took them on, thinking that um, you know, we could use them for displays in the front and things like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know, 'cause there's -- yeah, it's like there's so many buildings, and there's so many windows, and, um, so. And yeah, the park has a big bottle collection anyway, so.

[02:05:58]KAREN BREWSTER: Did, um, people, tourists or other visitors come and just knock on the door, say, "Hey, I found this in my grandfather's attic. Do you want it?"

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Not generally. No. I mean, there are collections that have come in in that way. There's a cool collection that we received kind of like that. I mean, it was a little bit more arranged than that, but it was like, um -- and I think we maybe ended up using -- this was one that we recommended that the exhibit designers use in the visitor center 'cause it was like, we had his trunk that had, like, people had signed, you know, like when he was getting ready to leave to go to the Klondike. And we had his gun, his rifle, and we had, um, like a necklace made out of some gold that he had collected that he had given to his wife, and there was a couple of postcards written on birch bark.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So that was a cool little collection that came in -- it came in before I started working there. I think Deb actually processed it in between when Deb Sanders left and before I showed up.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you remember the name of that collection?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I don't. She would know. Yeah.

[02:07:03]KAREN BREWSTER: And what about things from the Chilkoot Trail or the White Pass Trail? Did people bring things in?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: No, not at that point. I mean, you know, by the time I was there, there was not very -- you know, it was interesting, like, the first time I hiked out on the Chilkoot Trail, I expected to see all this material everywhere, and, um, there just really wasn't that much. The forest, I think -- well, I mean, it's possible that people picked things up, but the forest also had swallowed up a lot of stuff by then, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: So.

[02:07:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I've heard stories of, you know, in the old days, just like George Rapuzzi would go into the old buildings --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- anybody who hiked the trail would pick up something and take it home with them.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. And I think probably things got sent back.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, I don't really recall any instances particularly.

KAREN BREWSTER: But there was stuff in the collection that that had happened. People sent things. I mean, you must -- that collection must have a lot of things that used to be out on the trail.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um.

KAREN BREWSTER: No?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Not necessarily. There was kind of a whole thing where there was a --  
[02:08:07]So early on in the park's history, there was a time when, um, they were starting to accession and catalog things out on the trail.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And then Debbie Sanders put the kibosh on that and was like, you can't catalog something that's not -- like, there's a certain level of control you have to have for museum collections, right? Like, you need to actually -- the idea is that you're pulling them out of the stream of time. So having something that is just, like, sitting out on the ground and unsecured and is just disintegrating, like, don't have that in the collection. So there was a bunch of stuff she de-accessioned then.

KAREN BREWSTER: So they -- they accessioned it and put a number on it out there --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- on the trail?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yep.

KAREN BREWSTER: And just left it out there?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, that's interesting.

[02:08:49]SAMANTHA RICHERT: And then, there was -- there were several, um, projects to like, you know, like, locate and kinda survey objects. We had records for that. And none of that happened when I was there, but that, I mean, like I say, by the time I was there, there really wasn't that much stuff left out there. So, um, I mean, I'm sure that there's -- there definitely is stuff that -- but, you know, the thing is that, like, if it's off the trail -- I mean, there's like all the land ownership issues there, so if it's not directly on the trail, like, we -- the Park Service really only owns like a narrow corridor of that trail. And so, then it's State of Alaska stuff, and then that gets more complicated. And that was always an issue because we didn't have a Memorandum of Agreement with them, but there was stuff that we had in the collection that we were pretty sure was off of State of Alaska land, or people would bring stuff -- what people would bring stuff from is the barque Canada, because then when there's low tide, that shipwreck is available.

KAREN BREWSTER: Out in Dyea?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. And I know that was a thing when I was there because people were like, "This is just disintegrating in place." And it's kinda like, "Yeah, it's a shipwreck. It's gonna do that." You know. And so, there was definitely some stuff that was brought in, I think. And, um, it's kinda like, "Hey, don't do that. You know, we don't own that. We can't take it on, necessarily." And, um, yeah, I mean, I know that the stuff that was in the -- that was -- yeah, there was -- so I know, some of the things that were from the Chilkoot Trail in the collection if I think about it is, like, we had some of those wooden boat bundles. There's like a stash of them kind of near the summit.

KAREN BREWSTER: Hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And so, we had a few of those that had been brought in, and there was definitely some, you know, kind of like the things that were on display. But I think that -- I mean, generally, the idea was to leave things in place.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. [02:10:41]And I think over the years they did surveys and inventories --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- to say what was out there, and then --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- now, what's still there. And so it's still being kept track of, but just not in a museum way.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. Which is, yeah. That would be appropriate 'cause it should not be -- none of that stuff, if it's out there in the weather, should be museum property.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yep.

[02:11:04]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, is there something that you can look back on and say you're the most proud of that you succeeded at doing during your tenure up there? Something you accomplished?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, I feel really good about the, um, the intern programs that I facilitated. You know, having those conservation interns. I mean, I feel really good about Jeff. Smiths Parlor Museum. I mean, that -- I spent my whole time there working on that project, and so it was really gratifying to be able to install it and see all that stuff come to fruition. And honestly, like, you know, that -- every project was a partnership project that was -- I loved working with the maintenance crew and working with them on the buildings and building those relationships and getting everybody involved and having them all feel like they were invested. Um, that was really fun. So and, yeah, just gratifying that it was about -- that we were all managing this resource together, um, and everybody was a part of that. So that, I think, was probably the thing that I really, really liked about working there.

[02:12:22]KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm. Something that was particularly challenging or an obstacle that you had to overcome?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, it was just -- it was a very challenging work load, and, I mean, you know, the things that I've spoke about, you know, in terms of negotiating all of those relationships. I mean, those were -- so it was kind of like, there's a batch of relationships that was really stressful to negotiate, like with Theresa. And I really enjoyed working with Judy, but she was under a lot of pressures, and sometimes, you know, that was -- she was coming from a different place and thinking about her institution and what she was going to be responsible for, and so those things were, you know -- and then working with the superintendent. Um, those things were always really stressful. And so, what balanced that was getting to work with, you know, like, the maintenance crew and Deb and these interns, and like, kinda the -- the not head honchos.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know, and getting to, like, go out and actually get something done instead of being in meetings talking about getting something done.

[02:13:27]KAREN BREWSTER: And do you feel like you were, um, listened to, that you had a say in things, when you were talking with the superintendent?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or in those decisions, or with Theresa in those decision-making processes?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I definitely -- I felt that I was respected, that my viewpoint was gonna be heard. It wasn't always going to be agreed with or acted on, but that I had, um, I definitely had a lot to bring to the table. So I didn't feel -- you know, I mean, initially, it was rough, but by the time I left, I was definitely, you know, an influencer or whatever. You know, that I -- I was somebody that people were listening to when we were talking about that stuff.

[02:14:06]KAREN BREWSTER: And that being in the fishbowl and that being so stressful, that is unusual for a curatorial position? Or is that typical?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Uh, I would say neither. I mean, it just sorta depends on your park and how profile -- how high-profile your collection is. Like here, I'm definitely not in the fishbowl at the museum collection. I have to struggle to make it relevant, and so, that's a different kind of challenge. It was never any question when I was in Skagway about whether the museum collection was relevant. And, I think, honestly, you know, in a historical park, you would expect the curator -- the museum collection to be front and center.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know, um, so it just sort of -- it depends. Every different -- every different park is different.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. But it does sound stressful.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: It was for me.

[02:14:55]KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Well, I was also wondering if it was sort of like because you were there with the whole Rapuzzi thing, and it was this big collection and all this stuff in motion, if it was extra pressure and stress on you than a curator in a different time?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, yeah. I mean, well, I think it was a lot of pressure on Debbie Sanders. You know, 'cause they started that whole process. I mean, I was fortunate that I kinda came in in the middle, and they had already established how they were gonna do things, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: But that -- there's -- I mean, that is -- definitely in terms of dealing with a historical collection, that was a very unique situation because you have this mass of material, you have a bunch of politics involved with it, and then you have a bunch of material in the collection that you know you aren't going to want, and that makes it really complicated. And then you have this partnership, you know. And did I mention all the politics of that in, like, small-town Alaska? But not just small-town Alaska, it's like the Rasmuson Foundation. So it was like, but then Alaska kinda feels like a big small town, like --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know, that everybody knows everybody and what's going on. [02:16:00]And then -- and then you also have the layers of Park Service professional standards. So when the regional curator comes in and looks at what's happening, she's got a whole different set of concerns than what the Rasmuson Foundation lady says. And then -- you know, and then like, Judy having to cope with the city council. And that, I think, is particularly hard because they don't know any -- you know, at least in the Park Service, we're in the business of, you know, historic preservation. But the city council is not. I mean, they're thinking about, like -- most of the people on the city council own some kind of tourist business, and so they're very much capitalists, and they're not really thinking about the public good of historic preservation. They're, like, just operating on a whole different level, and so. I mean, I know that she has kind of like an advisory board and that they were helpful, but I heard a lot of criticism of her when I was there that I sorta thought was not seeing the whole situation. And that she had never asked to be in

that situation, and that it was kinda thrust on her. And I think that was -- I think she got the short end of the shaft in that whole thing, I really do, so.

[02:17:07]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I was thinking, you in your position, that you pulled by all those different players.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: As you said, you -- you know, you have the Park Service that you're reporting to who has certain standards or a certain bureaucracy, too. There are things you had to do a certain way.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: You couldn't just go out and buy things.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: And then the city and then Rasmuson, that how you negotiate all that to feel like you have any decision-making power?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, the flip side of that is that you can always kinda go back on, "Well, this is the Park Service standard, and this is what the policy says." That was really helpful. Whereas if you're in, you know, Judy's situation, and you have the stand-alone city museum, you can -- all you can say is, "Well, the best practices in the field are -- " You know, like, you don't have -- I mean, I was -- it was very helpful to have the structure of Park Service policy to kind of be like, we don't do it that way. We do it this way. You know, so that -- yeah, helped.

[02:18:03]KAREN BREWSTER: Were there times that being part of the Park Service bureaucracy were a hindrance?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Not for me. I mean, I feel -- I'm pretty good with bureaucracy. It's kind of fine, you know. I mean, it's like, when you can figure out what the pathways are and negotiate them, I was -- I really was fine with it. Well, you know what you're getting into. It's like I -- you know, yeah. My thought is, ok.

[02:18:28]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I just can't imagine organizing and cataloging such a huge collection. Like, how do you even know where to start?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You start with the first thing in front of you. You know. You just, yeah. Like, you just go one at a time, and you just keep do -- I mean, Deb has cataloged tens of thousands of objects, and it's like -- and it takes a certain personality. Like, there's a certain detail-oriented personality that really just likes doing that and finds it very relaxing. Because you aren't thinking about, you know, oh god, you know, the last polar bear is dying or whatever.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You're just like, I'm just cataloging. It's all -- you know, and we had a very cozy office. Like, we'd listen to KHNS, have that on the radio, be puttering along, you know, on what we were doing.

[02:19:13]KAREN BREWSTER: So were you doing some of the cataloging, too, or mostly it was Deb?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I did some. Um, I did a -- I mean, not as much as I would've liked to. I did a very little bit. I did spend a lot of time re -- I would spend time rehousing things. Um, because one of the benefits of having Scott Carrlee come is that he, um, taught us how to make housings and, uh, for artifacts, and so --

KAREN BREWSTER: Like the acid-free boxes and the foam pieces and -- ?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, and like yeah, little, yeah, like little inert foam bumpers and stuff like that. And I spent some time -- I really enjoy doing that. It's very relaxing. And so, it's kinda like arts and crafts stuff. And so, I would tend to do that, and then have -- and then, um, Deb did probably more of the cataloging. I had her working on archives a lot when I was there 'cause it -- I was -- Well, actually, part of the reason that she had to work on archives was that was how we were able to work out her second term is that we advertised it as an archives technician rather than a museum technician. So she was doing a lot of archives, partly because of that. Um, yeah.

[02:20:29]KAREN BREWSTER: And so, you were doing a lot more of the management, going to meetings, planning?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, most of my job --

KAREN BREWSTER: Budget.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Most of my job was being the program manager. It was nice when I had time to go and actually spend working hands-on with the collection. That was always a pleasure. You know, I would get to do that in the winter sometimes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: But like, I was definitely a program manager. And that was one of the reasons that I like this job that I have now is that I spend most of my time hands-on with the collection, and it's completely opposite of what it was in Klondike.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

[02:21:02]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, is it certain -- you mentioned the horse skull. But are there other things that stand out to you as favorites in the Klondike collections, whether it's photos or objects?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Mm. There was a candy mold that they actually ended up making candy out of -- with.

KAREN BREWSTER: Really?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, like after I left, um --

KAREN BREWSTER: You were allowed to do that with an object?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, I kinda don't think they really probably should've done that, but it was sort of cool that they did it. I probably would not have had the guts to send it out to do that, but, um, it was kinda cool that that happened. They sent me a bag of candy. The candy mold itself was this beautiful brass. I love shiny brass stuff. And the mannequins I actually became very good friends with, so I was kind of fond of them. And, um, that big moose mount, that double moose mount -- oh, actually, my favorite part about that taxidermy was these two little ermine that had, like, these crazy, crazy faces. And, um, I still have a picture of them on my, like, my desktop slide show because they were totally like, they were just nuts-looking. And they're just, you know, a lot of the George Ra -- or the Martin Itjen stuff is just so wacky that it's just -- I -- I liked working with the stuff that came from him because you could see that there was this really creative brain that was just kinda, you know, making found -- found object art, really.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And so that was fun to see that.

[02:22:21]KAREN BREWSTER: So why did you decide to leave the job in Skagway?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, I really missed Puget Sound. Um, I -- you know, I lived in Seattle for fifteen years, and I loved being here. I had a community. I'm a queer, and I had a queer family, you know, a made family here. Um, a chosen family. And I just really missed them, and I missed being in this place. And when North Cascades opened up, you know -- I came down and looked, uh, because I had moved to Skagway sight unseen, and I didn't want to do that again 'cause I knew wherever I was gonna be, um, I was gonna be there probably -- and I -- I mean, right now, I plan on living here the rest of my life. And I wanted that. I didn't -- some people in Park Service will move from park to park really easily. I'm not that kind of person. I really wanted to buy a house and just be somewhere. And my partner is twenty years older than I am, and he -- so that was really I think the pushing factor was, he you know, his health is not great, and we were having very poor experiences with the hospital in Juneau, and I really wanted to get him back down to the 48 where we could have better, you know, health care for him. So that was big, and I was ready to own a house, and -- I would never have been able to afford a house in Skagway. And I just -- it didn't seem like a long-term plan. [02:23:49]So I just started keeping my eyes open, and, um, there really are only a few parks that I really wanted to move to, so I was just lucky that, um, North Cascades opened up when it did. And so, I came down here, and my supervisor, Kim, I introduced myself to her and was basically like, you know, I'd really like to work here. And then when I was here on that trip, I also looked at houses, to try to figure out, like, you know, is this a place that I could afford to buy a house. And that all just worked out. And the park is so beautiful that I just really -- you know, it's funny because in Skagway, one of the things I loved about Skagway is that there's so much wildlife. You know, there's seals and there's all these birds every year, and I thought, "Wow. There's so much wildlife here." And it's like, that's got nothing on the Pacific Northwest rain forest. Like, there is so much wildlife here. And I -- I mean, I miss the seals, and I miss being close to the -- the saltwater, but this is good. I have rain forest now instead, so.

[02:24:48]KAREN BREWSTER: Um, looking back at your time in Skagway, are there things you wished you could have accomplished that you weren't able to?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Um, you know, you just kind -- I don't feel that way. I kind of wish that I would've seen -- it would've been nice to see that visitor center exhibit get installed just because I was in part of the process, and I didn't get to see the end of it. Um, it was really gratifying to be part of installing Jeff. Smiths Parlor and get to see that project come to fruition.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Like, I really enjoyed that. Um, so, but, you know, with curation, it's like you just plug into a workflow, and you don't really -- it's nice if you can ever see a project get finished, but the projects take so long and there's such a -- you know, you just kinda show up to work every day, and you get done what you can get done. So.

[02:25:39]KAREN BREWSTER: So in curatorial, yeah, there isn't -- there often is not, "Oh, we -- we cataloged this whole collection. We're done."

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: "We re-housed it. We're done." That's -- doesn't happen so much?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Well, I mean, every once in a while. But with that -- I mean, with the Rapuzzi collection stuff, I knew I would never see it completed, whatever that means.



KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: And, you know, you're always trying to figure out, you know, is there a, you know, an interpretive product you can make out of this, or can we digitize this and make it more accessible? Like, yeah, I don't -- There aren't -- there aren't very many things that I think of as, ok, we're done.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know.

[02:26:16]KAREN BREWSTER: And also, with museum collections, you have to go back in -- I don't know if you do it every year or periodically, to check the material, and condition reports, and all those kinds of things.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, I mean, uh, condition reporting is not something that happens very often, honestly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Really?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. I mean, yeah. I mean, there are cycles set up into the -- in the, you know, museum database, where oh, you know, this is something that should be looked at every two years, but honestly, that's probably not really gonna happen. I think that Stephanie Stephens had recommended doing 100 percent inventory of the collection, and I think that would be really smart. Like, now that the processing from the Rapuzzi Collection is done, I think 100 percent inventory there would be -- you know, 'cause I know there were things, and this is my fault, things that Deb couldn't find, and it was probably because I'd been in re-housing something, and then moved it and not made the note in the right location or whatever. [02:27:16]But some of the systems at Klondike were not very efficient, and so it was like, if you moved an object, you'd have to, like, change the location in this database and that database and that database, and that just became, you know, I'm not -- I will be the first to say that I'm not as good at that kind of documentation as Deb is, and so I know that was probably frustrating for her.

[02:27:39]KAREN BREWSTER: So was -- did you ever make an attempt to change those systems to be more efficient?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Not for the Rapuzzi stuff, 'cause my thought was like, well, at some point, this will be cataloged, and then we will track it in the -- you know, once it's cataloged, you just track it in ICMS. And I think that was where things got confusing sometimes is that -- that was my attitude is like, all these other databases are temporary, and ICMS is the final database. So if it has the correct location in ICMS, we don't have to worry about anything else. But for Deb, I think her attitude was more like, oh, all of these other databases are live, and we need to update this and everything else. That is probably where things went wrong, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: And what does ICMS stand for?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Interior Collection Management System. And that's the museum database that's used by the whole Department of Interior.

[02:28:36]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Yeah, so that inefficiency of the system, it's still kinda there?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: I mean, I haven't been there for three years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: But maybe.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Probably.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it's a lot of material to keep track of.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. So the thing would be to get it all cataloged. And then you would have -- then it would be in ICMS, and it would be part of the random sample inventory, and you would have it all cataloged, and ideally, you would have a photograph that you could make part of the web catalog, and so people could then see it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Um-hm.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: You know, that would be a good goal.

[02:29:09]KAREN BREWSTER: And so the idea is if, like as you say, like if you re-house something and you moved it, you'd have to go back to the computer and say, this is now on shelf such-and-such in row whatever.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah, and I think it was all in an Access database. But I think you could also argue that maybe the thing to put in the Access database is, cataloged in ICMS, see ICMS for location. But yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. But that's what your --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- but what I'm saying is that with the collection, it's -- the inventory includes where it is physically located.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: On a shelf, like a library book or something.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so, if it changes location --

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- you need to indicate that, or nobody will ever find it again?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Right. And that might be a good reason to do 100 percent inventory is to make sure that all those things are updated, and you really know -- or you could also argue that that energy might be better spent by just cataloging as much of everything as you possibly can, so that you actually have things cataloged. Because that's the thing --

[02:30:08]KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's the other thing. Is the collection all cataloged?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Oh, no. Not by a long shot. There's no way. I mean -- I mean, I've been gone for three and a half years, but there was so much material, there's no way that it's all cataloged.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So, yeah. That sounds overwhelming.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: One object at a time.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah.

[02:30:32]KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Um, well, um, are there other things that you had in mind you wanted to talk about when I brought up this idea of doing an interview?

SAMANTHA RICHERT: No. I feel like this was very thorough, and, honestly, I'm kind of running out of --

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: -- words. Yeah, so.

KAREN BREWSTER: Ok. Well, thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

SAMANTHA RICHERT: Yeah. Thank you.