

INTERVIEW OF THELMA SCHRANK
INTERVIEWERS ARE KAREN BREWSTER AND BARBARA CELLARIUS
SEPTEMBER 1, 2016
IN SLANA, ALASKA
PART 2

BARBARA CELLARIUS: Well, we were talking about animal populations and –

THELMA SCHRANK: Mentasta herd went from 3,000 or so back in the 70's and 80's to where for a while it was down to 300. The calf survival rate was 1.3 calves per hundred cows. The cows that they were collaring were like seven years old so and that is long in the tooth for a calf bearing cow. They had drought conditions so the lichen was not good and there is always the controversy about predator control and/or lack of within the Park and Preserve. And there was just a lot of things so that herd has really diminished. Moose is pretty much remained stable along the Nabesna Road corridor and what people hunt be it subsistence or sport hunting. With the permit that we have now that we are issuing, the last three years it has been 20, 20, 19, so that is pretty stable about they are taking, you know.

The sheep population, a lot of people are worried about that, excuse me, because there is not as many legal full curl sheep rams as there have been. This is the first year in probably five years that I have actually heard hunters come in to the ranger station and say, geez, we saw a lot of sheep. The sheep have had bad winters. They have had bad winter kills. A lot of different things that affected their population whether it was heavy snow. What affects what I understand affects them a lot is the fact that the mild winters that we have. We have had rain and the rain will land on their grazing cause they like the open spaces to where they can actually graze and it will ice over and they can't graze like they should. So that the survival during the wintertime has been tough on them. So I think the sheep population, sheep and the caribou, are probably more affected than some of the other stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you are saying there aren't as many legal full curl sheep anymore. Is that just because as you say the whole population is struggling or is there another reason for that?

THELMA SCHRANK: Well, I think it is the whether it be hunting pressure or it's the grazing or, you know, again predators or whatever I think that and hunting pressure is a lot of it. And I think that that makes a big difference. There is not as many big rams breeding as there had been and I think that that makes a big difference. And I think the people -- there is a lot of people in Alaska that want to sheep hunt every year and think that they should kill a sheep every year. And I think with our population expansion and the number of hunters that are out in the field that they should be thinking about the resource and probably like well, maybe I don't need one every year, maybe one every other year, but adamant, avid sheep hunters don't want to give up that sheep hunting every year. And for the most part that is a heck of a lot of work. I have been on more sheep hunting than sheep getting. You climb up to the top of the mountain do you want to bring something home, you know, cause it is a long way to the top. But I think that there is just a teeny tiny bit too much hunting pressure on the sheep. And I think that people that are avid sheep hunters should go, okay, well, you know, I don't need sheep number 23 or 24.

There is a lot of people that has killed up into the 20's and 30's sheep cause they go every year.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it is interesting you say the big ones aren't there to breed than they are not passing on that genetic --

THELMA SCHRANK: Correct.

KAREN BREWSTER: Material to become big large sheep and you have to live a long time to be a big old sheep I would think.

THELMA SCHRANK: Well, you have to live at least eight years. That is the regulation is eight years full curl or ringed on both sides and the state -- I think it has helped a lot with the state plugging sheep horns now to what they were because people would get a sheep and I think they tended to fudge on the curl size, but now you have to have it sealed by the state and they actually get a good measurement off of that and they didn't have that information before. But I think that they -- that eventually if the sheep population doesn't rebound pretty quickly that it is going to be to where I can see them putting it on a permit.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you have chosen to stay and live here in Slana year round, correct?

THELMA SCHRANK: Pretty much. I like to go out and visit my sister during the winter for a couple of months or so.

KAREN BREWSTER: So what is it that you like about this place that why you stay around?

THELMA SCHRANK: Oh, I like the mountains and it is quiet and I'm the type of person that can entertain myself. I don't have to go to the grocery store every day. I can go once a month or every six weeks or I just like it. The only thing that I'm getting to where I don't care for is the total darkness and the dead of winter. And after 44 years, you know, it is sort of like well, four hours a day lightness. I'd like to have a little bit more daylight.

KAREN BREWSTER: The mountains block the --some of the sun?

THELMA SCHRANK: Well, the sun goes down in the dead of winter you get four hours of daylight around here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I mean that is what we get in Fairbanks, but I think you're farther south so I was wondering if the mountains affected?

THELMA SCHRANK: All I can tell you is it is dark. I need lights. I'm like the -- my favorite time of the year actually is starting in February, March because it is a lot more daylight and that you can get out and the sun has got some warmth in it and it just feels good and you know that spring has come in and everything is going to turn green and people have flowers out. You can do your garden or you can smoke fish or I like to see spring come and I like it when the trees first bud out and everything is bright green and pretty.

KAREN BREWSTER: So what do you do for recreation and entertainment?

THELMA SCHRANK: Oh, --

KAREN BREWSTER: Or what have you done over the years?

THELMA SCHRANK: Oh, I can read. I find stuff or putz around.

KAREN BREWSTER: You didn't have a dog team?

THELMA SCHRANK: Oh, no. I used to have a little dog. I had her for sixteen and a half years. She passed away a few years ago and then I travel with my sister for a while during the wintertime working with her and now I just go out for a couple months and travel around.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, people around here would you go snowmachining or skiing or dog teams or --

THELMA SCHRANK: I never did do skiing. I did -- the one thing that was a lot of fun is being pulled behind a snowmachine on downhill skis cause it is just like water skiing. You get fresh snow, you know. And we would go up and down the airstrip at Duffy's and it was like you were (laughter) water skiing. Well, I find stuff to entertain myself.

BARBARA CELLARIUS: Sounds like you have been hunting?

THELMA SCHRANK: Yep, I have been out hunting. I killed a caribou, a moose, a sheep, a goat, and a muskox, so. Haven't done the bear and there was a neighbor he says they don't come in the bar after me and I don't go in the woods after them. That is kind of my theory too, you know. I am not going to go looking for them. I go walking every day during spring, summer and fall and I pack my pistol. I don't use bear spray, but I pack a pistol. Never had to use it thank the good Lord.

KAREN BREWSTER: And did you raise a family out here?

THELMA SCHRANK: No, I am single.

KAREN BREWSTER: And it has been okay living out here in the middle of nowhere single?

THELMA SCHRANK: It has been okay, yeah. I'm, like I said, I can entertain myself.

KAREN BREWSTER: Have you had to do -- be your own home repair person?

THELMA SCHRANK: Oh, I can usually find somebody. I try to get one of the rangers that will come over and work on stuff for me in exchange for fixing dinner or something.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cause I know for some people -- Mary Frances was talking about how she fixed a generator and, you know, she was the plumber.

THELMA SCHRANK: Well, she is more handy dandy like that. I have got a neighbor that does the same thing and there are some things that I can do and other things I know that I am not good at and I just get somebody to do it for me and I'll either pay them or I will cook for them. You know, come over and I will make dinner or I will pay them, you know. Be fair with everybody and then whenever I need something they don't go oh, God, it is her calling again, you know. So you try to be fair with your neighbors because you never know when you might need them and likewise if I'm going to town people usually know and I go I'm going to town can I bring anything back for you. And they will do the same thing for me if they're going to Tok or Glennallen or Anchorage, you know, do you need anything brought back?

KAREN BREWSTER: So there is still a bit of a sense of community?

THELMA SCHRANK: Uh-huh. You know, there is certain ones and I try not to be snobbish, but there are certain people that I get along with or communicate with or socialize with and others that I don't because we don't have things in common whether it be little kids or dogs or whatever, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: So what has been the hardest thing for you about living out here all these years, besides now that it gets dark?

THELMA SCHRANK: Maybe it is not being -- having my immediate family, my sister close by. I would like that a lot better if she lived close by, but she lives in Missouri now and that is where she is most of the time. She is coming up next week so I am going to take off four days just so I can be with her, but that would be the most part. But we talk on the phone two or three times a day sometimes. We're close that away, but I would like it if my sister was close by or closer because there is just out of my immediate family it is just my sister and I now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, but it must have been good enough that you stayed for 44 years?

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THELMA SCHRANK: Like I said, Alaska gets a hold of your heart and doesn't let go and I can't imagine going back and living in Texas again. I went to a 50th class reunion the first of August and when I left here it was 60 degrees and when I got off the airplane at Dallas it was 105 and I thought I was going to pass out walking to the truck. It was hot and there is so much traffic and that now that just drives me crazy with all the traffic. I'm just not used to it. I can drive in Anchorage and that's fine and dandy, but getting out on freeways and driving 80 miles an hour just ow.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you had talked about at the beginning working for the Park Service how, you know, people in the community weren't so excited about that and how do you feel about this career you have had with the Park Service?

THELMA SCHRANK: The Park Service has been very good to me. I don't have any complaints at all. There are issues sometimes that come up that as a local don't care for, but I don't ever go around bad mouthing the Park because they have been really good to me. I had cancer in 2012 and I got the diagnosis and I said I'm sorry I'm not going to be back, not going to be back this year. Not a problem. Take care of yourself and there was a waiting line to -- if I needed donated time they would have donated. I had people call me going let me donate some time to you. I don't need it. I've got plenty, but thank you anyway. I have got a retirement that I can depend on when I decide I am too old and crotchety to work and they have -- the Park has just been really good to me.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you have an example of one of those issues that you as a local person experienced differently than you wearing the Park hat?

THELMA SCHRANK: Well, sometimes we have a difference of opinion about predator control for one. I would like to see it on some things. The other thing is that as a person working at the ranger station, we have people that want to fish. I would like to see the Park be able to stock Twin Lakes with grayling or something like that to keep an abundant amount to where people can fish and for the most part the people that usually fish do catch and release. They just want to catch and throw them back or whatever. I would like to see us do that and that's kind of -- that is really the only issue. The management of game sometimes I'm not real hip on, but that's okay.

BARBARA CELLARIUS: Have you seen changes in how the local community sees the Park in the time that you have lived here?

THELMA SCHRANK: Oh, yeah, they tolerate it now and that was not something that anybody was happy with because it did change a lot of people's ways of doing thing -- doing things whether it be guiding or mining or whatever, fishing or trappin'. That did change and I've seen over the course of the years ATV's or ORV's. I have a problem with that because of the lawsuit with the Park Service and the environmental groups. We no longer allow recreational ATV use in the Park and I don't think that's fair to people who are not subsistence users. Whenever they were talking about creating the Park years ago and there was so many in Alaska that was opposed to Parks in the whole realm of things. It was like it doesn't make any difference if every man, woman, child and dog was against Parks in Alaska or D2 land or whatever. There is millions of people stateside that like National Parks and want National Parks. So it really doesn't make any difference what you think. And now here we have excluded a user group from being able to utilize ATV's. Out of all the trails that we had to begin with and I'm talking about years ago there was like 13 different trails along Nabesna Road that people could actually utilize

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and do and now we are down to three for sport users and there is only a couple other ones – three or four other ones that people who are subsistence users can use. So I think that that is really unkind and unfair considering we have 13.2 million acres. I don't think that hundred miles of ATV use is so critical. That would probably be the biggest both in the road for me and the Park because I think that we should allow recreational users to use the trails also. And the two trails that they stopped use on are the ones that go where there is the best deep water lake fishing that we have in the Park that is accessible by ATV. You can still fly in there and you can still walk, but who is going to walk 16 miles to go fishing. I think the ATV use is probably the -- my biggest bone of contention.

KAREN BREWSTER: What about some other -- other local people as you said when the Park was first being established people were against it around here. How has that sentiment changed?

THELMA SCHRANK: Oh, I think they have gotten used to it or the ones that were really opposed to it have died, you know and now it is the "newcomers" that have been here since 1984 or '85 that you are dealing with and they are just glad to be able to have a place to hunt plus they can hunt in the Preserve or they can hunt in the Park. So it doesn't affect them like it did some of the original users' way back when in the 70's.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know about for here. I know other Parks when Parks introduced the local communities put up signs and were very unfriendly to Park Service employees. Was that happening around here?

THELMA SCHRANK: Do you want to open that can of worms now?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes, please.

THELMA SCHRANK: Okay. When the Park came into existence in the valley, the businesses would not serve the Park rangers otherwise. They couldn't buy groceries. They couldn't go to the restaurant. They wouldn't serve them. You couldn't get plumbing supplies. They wouldn't sell you gas and their mentality was that if they showed the Park that they weren't welcome that they would leave. My cousin Lynn who is now a Park pilot was beat up in the bar one night because he flew for the Park and sold them gas for their airplane. The first Park Service office was in the back of Ellis Air Taxi's office because nobody would rent to them. They did find some apartments. Harry Fearstir (phonetic) rented apartments to the first rangers that came and then he got a call one night that said if you don't move those dirty SOB's out of there, your place is going to burn. So Harry said sorry, but you guys are going to have to leave which was good rent for him because he was rentin' three or four places. So they had to move 30 miles outside of town toward Anchorage in these little eight by ten cabins that I don't even think had a window. They had a door, but I don't think windows and that's where they had to stay. Thirty miles from Glennallen, they found somebody that would rent to them. They set the airplane on fire. Fortunately, they got to it before it did any major damage, but whoever had done -- put the flare in there -- they put a roadside flare in it knew what they were doing about airplanes because they took the hinge pins off the door cause the airplane was locked. Ellis had a building that they were going to rent to the Park at Mile 26 that had no electricity, no heat in it, no nothing and that burned because Ellis were going to rent it to the Park. Somebody burned the bridge. Somebody burned the Park Service office. Somebody burned the BLM office or BLM lookout up at the top and it was years before the community of Glennallen finally went well geez, they ain't going to leave and started

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going well, okay, yeah, we'll sell you gas or we will sell you groceries, but they went quite a long time that they couldn't get any service at all. So it was hard on the first rangers that came and on their families too.

KAREN BREWSTER: And what year did Clarence Sommers work here?

THELMA SCHRANK: Clarence was in -- Clarence was one of the first rangers. Clarence, Ross Rice and Tim Hanna were the first ones so 1982 probably.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cause I know Clarence was in Yakutat first.

BARBARA CELLARIUS: He was mostly in Yakutat.

THELMA SCHRANK: He was always in Yakutat. He didn't work any other place for Wrangell-St. Elias.

BARBARA CELLARIUS: Here --

THELMA SCHRANK: He wasn't in the interior.

BARBARA CELLARIUS: But did he sometimes come and visit?

THELMA SCHRANK: Some -- if they flew down there to get him or whatever, but he was hardly ever up here that I can remember. He might come up for a meeting or something like the SRC meeting or something like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: But he had a hard time in Yakutat?

THELMA SCHRANK: He had a hard time in Yakutat just because it was the Park Service and nobody wanted him in Yakutat either. Same way with groceries. He finally found somebody to sell him gas, you know, but that was it.

KAREN BREWSTER: And what about Duffy's? Did you sell to Park Service people?

THELMA SCHRANK: Sure. Their money is green and I wound up or we did, the Ellis and myself, wound up being -- getting to know the superintendent Chuck and Chuck is the one that came to me and asked me why I didn't go to work for the Park. I go well I don't know I guess I could do that and so when I filled out my application, they asked for the references and I put Charles Budd, Superintendent. I never competed for the job, but, of course, there probably wasn't anybody that would have taken it either so.

BARBARA CELLARIUS: Nobody else locally?

THELMA SCHRANK: Nobody else locally would have taken the job. So it was pretty easy and we always got along with them. They treated us with respect and likewise and like I said, there was issues on both sides where neither one agreed, but it was sort of like they were still civil to one another.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well and it is interesting you said the Ellis Family, you know, they sold property or made available that -- were they supporters of the Park's coming in from the beginning or what?

THELMA SCHRANK: No, but they also realized that the Park wasn't going to go away and it is better to get in there on the ground floor and make hay while the sun shines or talk to them and tell them your feelings and what you think and what you'd like to see rather than just coming in and making a split decision by the Park and then being affected by it. Let's get some input into it.

KAREN BREWSTER: And it is my understanding that the Ellis Family they had been flying out hunters.

THELMA SCHRANK: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: And once they couldn't do that, they were able to shift to flying out hikers and photographers and --

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THELMA SCHRANK: Well, they have changed their --

BARBARA CELLARIUS: Business model?

THELMA SCHRANK: Business model, yeah, sure, for a couple reasons. Number one, they are getting older. Number two, the game is harder to come by. Number three, there are so many rules and regulations, transporters and transfer game and whatnot and paperwork involved like crazy. When you can haul out a photographer or a hiker and he is going to take pictures, but boy, you don't have to pack the moose. You can come back in seven days and pick them up and they're happy and you can haul another guy out there. He can take a picture of the same moose or bear and he is happy. It is just a lot easier now to kind of get away from the guiding situation and haul out backpackers or even resident hunters you can take a couple three of those. But they haven't had near the larger seasons as they had years before.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well and certainly when Bill Ellis and Lorene came and started there weren't all those rules and regulations. It was probably --

THELMA SCHRANK: There weren't and you could -- back in their days when they first got here in '54 and you could fly and hunt the same day airborne so you could take a couple sheep. Game was plentiful.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you could go anywhere.

THELMA SCHRANK: You could go anywhere, you know. So, yeah, there was a lot -- there has been a lot of difference in that last fifty something years with game availability and then also competition. A lot different. And now there are more people that is wanting to hike rather than hunt. There are still hunters for sure, but there are more people that want to hunt or want to hike. Hunting costs a lot of money and there is not as many people that can pay that price that a guide has to command whether it be the Ellis or the Clausers (phonetic) or whomever. When I first come to Alaska, they hauled out guided sheep hunters for \$500. Well, it is like 15,000 now. Of course, that is 44 years, but that is just inflation and airplane parts. First airplane parts propeller used to be 300 bucks. Well, now it is like five and six thousand dollars, you know, just --

KAREN BREWSTER: And then if they weren't using airplanes and the ones who used horses they didn't have airplane time either.

THELMA SCHRANK: Well, that's true, but horses were another hard thing to take care of because too you have to feed them in the winter or you should feed them in the winter. That's now the only way that you can have horses on Park land is to have a guide concession.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

THELMA SCHRANK: Or you have to keep them on your private property, but you have to feed them year round. If you are using them in your guide business, there is only a couple of months that they are paying their keep and then there's 10 months that you got to feed them and horses are expensive. Hay is expensive. Ellis hunted with horses for a good long time and they used airplanes too, both of them. It depended on what they were hunting and where they were hunting, but they used both horses and airplanes. There were some guides in the olden days that didn't feed their horses in the winter and so if they starved or died they just left them lay and then they would go over to Canada and buy another load of horses and bring them in.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Were those ones they would leave just loose around Horsfeld and Shoshanna?

THELMA SCHRANK: Yeah and Nabesna Bar, yeah. And they just leave them and then what would happen is in the springtime I mean they would be just skin and bones and then in the springtime the pea vine grows down on the Nabesna River bar and that is the first thing that greens up and a horse will just eat that stuff and then just -- they just fill right out. That you go to pack them or something like that and they don't have any bottom to them. They don't -- it is not the nourishment. It's quick, quick gain and not something that will sustain them during backpacking or a packing trip whether you're guiding or just out for a trail ride or something. They just don't have that belly to them.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, I can't imagine going out or losing your horses in the winter and going out and buying more is more economical than feeding them.

THELMA SCHRANK: Oh, it was because you could buy horses in Canada for a couple hundred bucks. It cost a lot to feed a horse, plus there is a lot of people that didn't have water available for their horses either and for the most part the Ellis' horses because they fed theirs and I happen to know they also watered them twice a day and for the most part they would drink five gallons in the morning and they drink five at night and they kept their water warm so that they weren't drinking just really cold water and it was a way that it helped sustain them and they didn't get as chilled from drinking cold water because a horse can't get enough moisture out of snow.

KAREN BREWSTER: I don't know -- you're such a good storyteller I just feel like there is --

BARBARA CELLARIUS: There is something in there. Any other memorable stories from your life here in Slana that we could end on?

THELMA SCHRANK: Oh, geez. I can -- my one hunting story is the first time that I went caribou hunting and I came from Texas and I had never shot anything at all. And so Bill and Lynn wanted to take me caribou hunting. And I go, okay, yeah, I'd like to go sure, you know. So we got over and we were over on the slopes of Sanford and we were walking along and all the time I'm thinking oh I don't know if I can shoot this animal, oh, boy. And I was all kind of boo-hooey. Well, after I had walked across the tundra four miles it was more like something is going to die.

BARBARA CELLARIUS: You were ready.

THELMA SCHRANK: I was ready.

KAREN BREWSTER: Even the animal.

THELMA SCHRANK: And I shot that caribou dead and I was proud of myself. It was a long pack back, but I was glad to see it done.

BARBARA CELLARIUS: So this is your only hunting experience was here in Alaska?

THELMA SCHRANK: Uh-huh. Well, no, I have hunted in Texas.

BARBARA CELLARIUS: Okay, but before you --

THELMA SCHRANK: Yeah, but I had never hunted before I come to Alaska. It was like yeah we had twenty two's where shoot at tin cans or something, but never anything that was breathing. But I have cut up moose meat. I have cut up sheep meat. Haven't done the bear stuff. I did have two grizzly bears at my -- right here at the corner of my house one night. And they came -- it was during winter and I looked out and I see this head looking around at me and it was like it is a bear. So, I backed away from the window cause he was looking right at me or what I thought. So I come around -- was coming around the corner

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and I looked back again and here is this other head. And I go oh my gosh. So I went in and I got my gun and they kind of meandered around and walked off. Never have had anything else.

We did have one time that I believe it was Karen Wade and people from Harper's Ferry stop at the Park Service office and we had -- when I went to work I walked to work and when I got to the office I could see this black out by the garbage can at the back door. It was the old office and there was a black bear and he was licking something. I go son-of-a-gun. So and he didn't want to leave and so Bill actually went over there and he went trying to spoof him off, you know, go on get out of here and he come right up the back ramp coming into the office and Bill shot him. And then he and George were dressing him out when Karen Wade and the people from Harper's Ferry got there. I go it can only happen to me and Harper's Ferry people had been told that there wasn't any problem with bears in Wrangell-St. Elias. And he goes well, how come you had to shoot one off the back porch? Well, because he was trying to come in the door. That was the weirdest experience I think was that.

KAREN BREWSTER: And Bill who shot was Bill who?

THELMA SCHRANK: Bill Ellis.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, that Bill.

THELMA SCHRANK: Uh-huh. And that was sort of like son-of-a-gun, woof. So anyway then they left and they went over to Kennecott and McCarthy and they had a couple of instances with black bears around there. And they were sleeping in tents there. But it has been pretty mild. We have had search and rescue that we had to do. Actually had one sheep hunter that used to be able to ride their four-wheeler in the Tanada Lake Trail, stop at the wilderness boundary and then they could walk toward Sheep and Grizzly Lake and sheep hunt. And this one young guy fell off the side of the hill and landed in the creek and his dad was like an hour and a half away from him hiking, but had seen him with his binoculars. And he went charging over there and it took him an hour, hour and a half to get to him and he was out cold and his eyes were open, wide open and the dad got his wet clothes off of him and got dry clothes on him. And the kid is still unconscious and his eyes are open and he had him out, wrapped him up in a sleeping bag and stayed with him, holding him during the night. And he would have seizures, you know. Well, it got to be daylight and the dad goes I got to go get help. What if he dies while I'm gone? Well, if I don't get help then he is going to die. So the dad got on his four-wheeler and it took him 13 or 14 hours to get out the trail cause he got stuck and he didn't have hardly any clothes on. He had covered the kid up with a blue tarp because he didn't want the birds or anything to be pecking on him. He got to Tom Trams (phonetic) house and that is where Tom had a phone, but they drove out to where they had cell coverage and they called the troopers and the troopers called here and Marshall Neet (phonetic) was here and he happened to be the chief ranger at the time. And he goes -- they go well we have this rescue. Mark Thompson was the district ranger, but Marshall was here for hunting season. And so all of a sudden it is ten o'clock man we kick into gear and we're getting ready to do search and rescue and they wound up that the guy -- I got a coat for him and gloves and RCC came. And they landed up at Duffy's, picked up the dad and this is like three o'clock in the morning by now. They picked up the dad. They flew out there to the area he was at. They found where he was with the blue tarp and they hiked up there and

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they got this kid. The paramedics were so worried about him. He was still unconscious, but his eyes had been open for 36 hours or so. So they put cream or gel or something in his eyes, got him loaded up, transported him to Anchorage to Providence and probably three weeks or so later there was a nurse that came into the office and we were kibitzing, you know, what do you do? Well, I am a nurse. Where do you practice? Well, I'm a Providence. I'm in ICU. Really, I go well we had a guy, a sheep hunter. Oh, that is our special child. He goes he was like he was so sick and so out of communication. He goes that's a miracle child and they saved him. He lived and then like a year or so late -- two years later he was -- his -- my sister was in Liano, Texas and somebody saw their Alaska license plate and flagged them down. And they said that they were there with their grandson who was on his honeymoon and my sister happened to mention that I worked for the Park Service and that I lived on Nabesna Road. Oh, that must be Thelma. Yeah, well he saved -- she saved my grandson's life. And so my sister she has got to call. Thelma, there is somebody that wants to talk to you and handed the phone to this young guy. Oh, hi, Thelma, this is, whatever his name was, and thank you very much. Small world. That was probably my best night was helping to save that guy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

THELMA SCHRANK: And it is like I worked until 5:30 in the morning, came home, slept for an hour and a half and went back to work and worked all day long. It was like I would say my wagon was dragging at the end of that day cause I had only had an hour and a half worth's of sleep. But that was probably my best day with the Park was helping to save that guy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Very fulfilling sounds like.

THELMA SCHRANK: It was. It was. It was nice and to have this circle.

BARBARA CELLARIUS: Right and then to hear from him through your sister.

THELMA SCHRANK: From Liano, Texas and he is coming back and he coaches basketball at Wasilla. Of course, his dad and them never come back hunting here cause they couldn't use the trail to get to where they had traditionally hunted all this time. So that's one of those things you can go, hey (clap, clap) I feel good.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that's a good note to end on, shall we?

THELMA SCHRANK: I'm --

KAREN BREWSTER: Anything else that special memories or stories you want to share that we haven't asked about?

THELMA SCHRANK: Oh, probably better not. (Laughter)

KAREN BREWSTER: I know once I turn this off you are going to come up with a doozy I can tell.

(End Part 2)