

INTERVIEW OF BENJAMIN SHAINÉ AND SALLY GIBERT
INTERVIEWER IS KAREN BREWSTER
SEPTEMBER 2, 2016
IN MC CARTHY, ALASKA
PART 1

KAREN BREWSTER: Brewster and today is September 2, 2016 and I am here in McCarthy with Ben Shaine and Sally Gibert and this is for the Wrangell-St. Elias Ethnographic Project. I am going to talk a little bit about them and their lives and experiences here in McCarthy to see where we go. I will start with a few questions if that is okay with you guys?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Can I finish my train of thought that we had --

KAREN BREWSTER: Sure.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: That we had before you turned on the camera?

KAREN BREWSTER: Sure.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Let's see -- remember where --

KAREN BREWSTER: Economic model of how we categorize life. Is that where your train of thought was?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Well, I truly thought I had gone somewhere else, but have lost the train now so maybe you could -- we will come to it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: If the questions will allow that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, we are quite -- I am quite free form in my questioning.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Okay.

KAREN BREWSTER: So, yes, anything is allowed.

SALLY GIBERT: You are free to segue.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yes.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Okay, I will try.

KAREN BREWSTER: And you're free to say even though this is funded by the Park Service, you are free to say whatever you want.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Oh, absolutely.

KAREN BREWSTER: There is no censoring here. That is just fine.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah. The one I might do a little self-censoring for since I do ANILCA training.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SALLY GIBERT: That I have to be even though I no longer working I have even a higher standards in some ways for neutrality when it comes to training, but I may throw that out the window. We'll see.

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: So wise speech when she talks about how -- the ways of saying things I think are possible.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Right. And it is you. It is for the public.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Of course.

KAREN BREWSTER: Eventually so, you know, I always give that caveat.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: But please feel free to express yourselves. Just I know we have been talking here for a while off camera but just to sort of get people familiar with who you are maybe Ben, why don't you start and tell us a little of your personal background, where you were born, growing up, that kind of thing.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: The question you just asked raises right away the key question that we were talking about before you turned on the camera because the question is how do I answer that as there is an whole array of answers that could be given. I could talk about what job I had, what education I had and so forth or I could give a different kind of an answer and so --

SALLY GIBERT: About who you are?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: About who I am and so let me try and make a different stab at it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Which was when I was small enough meaning young enough and small enough that the grass in my backyard was over my -- above my eyes in western Michigan, I would get lost in the big backyard we had wandering around in the grass and among the trees back there. And by the time I was nine or ten I would be wandering around with friends in the swamps collecting frogs and bringing home mosquito larva to raise. So that evolves by the time I was in college to wandering up here, ending up by chance in the Wrangell's on the north side of Nabesna. In July of '67 when I was 20 traveling with three other guys from college in an old VW bus. And we drove up the Alaska Highway, turned off onto the Glenn Highway, but then turned left out the Nabesna Road because it was there. Went out most of the way to Nabesna, found ourselves -- there was no other traffic on the road at all. It was July before hunting season. So there weren't people, except the locals and the only locals was the Ellis Family at Nabesna. And we turned into their driveway and they put us up in their home. They had never had as far as I know they never had like visitors just drop in and then they let us use a cabin they had up Wait Creek up the Jacksina. We backpacked into there. And I don't know we might have been the first like recreational backpackers that ever went into there cause nobody, you know, prospectors and hunting guides and stuff. And I was hooked and I have gone other places, done other things, but never really left inside. And that will be 50 years -- this is the 50th summer. It will be 50 years after this year.

KAREN BREWSTER: Great. And did you go back and get your college degree?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: I got a college degree and then I got other degrees and I helped start the Environmental Studies Program at UC Santa Cruz where a key part of my job was putting together a summer -- putting together field research programs for undergrads and our main project was turned out to be looking at the wilderness and recreation potential of the Wrangell Mountains and that brought me to McCarthy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay. We'll stop there now and let Sally tell her little bit of background before we move into liking McCarthy.

SALLY GIBERT: Okay. Gave me a little bit year calculation. Seventy-six was that 50 years ago?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Mine was sixty -- my first year at the Ellis' was '67.

SALLY GIBERT: So I am 40 years then, okay. Okay. I thought it can't be. Anyway, okay, so my story. I grew up in California in Silicon Valley before there was such a thing. It was more like strawberries and walnuts and --

KAREN BREWSTER: Apricots.

SALLY GIBERT: Apricots and yeah, my house was in a walnut grove. A subdivision was put in. It was the beginning of the gentrification of the agriculture. Anyway, but so I grew up in California and was involved with a program called Youth Science Institute (YSI). It is still there and it was kind of a glorified co-ed summer camp that was pretty sophisticated science wise and spent, you know, like a month in the -- tramping around the High Sierras and backpacking and things. And then so I was definitely outdoor oriented and went to Santa Cruz. That was my dream school. I wanted to go there. I didn't care about anything else I wanted to go there. And got in and Ben showed a slide show about McCarthy. It was just sort of like a random thing posted on the bulletin board. Oh, pictures of Alaska slide show, you know, come see pictures of Alaska. So I thought oh cool. So I went to see the slide show about Alaska and it was all about the Wrangell's and McCarthy and I was like, oh, my God, that's -- wow that's amazing. And so the punchline at the end of the show was oh and if you want to know more, Dick Cooley (phonetic) is offering this Alaska seminar series and this is basically a recruitment video. And that if you take this series and, you know, the three quarters in a row and survive the whole thing that you have a good chance you might get an internship in Alaska. So I went okay sign me up.

So did that, came up here for an internship to Anchorage and my internship was with Jack Hashem (phonetic) with the Sierra Club, although I didn't, like I said earlier, I didn't have much interaction with him. I mainly hung out at the Alaska Center for the Environment and worked on my thesis. But he did engage me to come out here and fly the Copper River Highway. At that point the state was trying to build and the federal government had essentially shut down the project, but the state was continuing -- DOT was continuing to try to build the road in secret. And it always kind of baffled me that that would even be possible and so I was sent out to take pictures of the road from the air posing as a tourist which was certainly easy enough. And so flew with Jim Edwards who was the mail plane pilot out of Chitina at the time and well connected with this place for decades. Anyway and he was in on the dual purpose tourist/look down occasionally and take pictures. So anyway took pictures and took them back to Anchorage. Anyways that was the closest I got to the Wrangell's at that point and that was in '73. And then didn't get out again until when I moved to Alaska in '74 after I graduated and then had come to know Ben and his wife Marcie and went to go visit them with some other friends when they were living in Spruce Point which is --

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Seventy-five, '76.

SALLY GIBERT: Seventy-five, '76.

KAREN BREWSTER: Where is Spruce Point?

SALLY GIBERT: At the mouth of the Chitistone, confluence of the Chitistone and the Nizina Rivers so up there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Up there.

SALLY GIBERT: Up there, yeah, and went out there in March. Took the mail plane in, landed at May Creek and Loy and Curtis or just Loy, Curtis too I think. I think they both went

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up, maybe not, maybe just Loy. Anyway, but anyway for sure Loy cause he had this huge hauling snowmachine, a big alpine snowmachine with a giant sled. We loaded all of our stuff and everything, including our cross-country skis, on the sled and then we, yeah, I guess we rode up too. Anyway, so we all expeditioned from May Creek up to their cabin at Spruce Point and hung out there for a week. And in March it was so, so cool, so sunny and beautiful and spectacular and great skiing and it was just quiet, nothing going on.

So that was kind of my first time kind of in the Wrangell's and didn't actually get to McCarthy until '70, summer of '76, for the bicentennial where I really wanted to get out of Anchorage for the bicentennial cause Anchorage was like way too new to be anywhere for the bicentennial. So I wanted to go somewhere older. So came to McCarthy, stayed at the old hardware store next door and Loy had set me up to do that and I thought the hardware store was just a bizarre place. It was like a fun house. It was all upstairs was falling apart and leaning this way and that, but I really liked it. And then Loy was living in it at the time. He would -- yeah, he was living in it during the summer and then it turns up the owner wanted to sell it and it was really important to Loy to know who owned it because he was living in it. He certainly didn't own it and he wasn't ever about to. So to make a long story short which is the whole story in and of itself but I ended up buying it in the fall of that year, '76. And it was like I was the last one to know I was going to buy it. It's like everybody in town knew I was going to do it before I realized it was going to happen. It was like inevitable. And everybody was offering to help and had suggestions and it was sort of like a -- it was like I didn't have any choice. It was in this fate thing. And so ended up spending the next six or seven summers out here working in Anchorage to pay it off and pay for supplies to fix it up and then this interesting sort of room and board for labor thing for a long time, six or seven years. Sort of like a hostel and hundreds of people helped in those summers, hundreds of people, many of them from Santa Cruz. They would come up and do an internship and then they -- but they would save a week or two to come out here and help out. And it was so popular I had to take -- I actually eventually had to take applications for people to come work for free. And it was just outstanding. It was so much fun.

And then started to -- got the place paid off and kind of had myself set up a little bit more. Wanted to spend the winter out here. This place was down there at the other end of the lot and it was just falling apart, really literally falling apart. No floor, ceiling was collapsing and so another long story ended up buying it from the wife of the miner, prospector or whatever that built it, yeah, John Taylor, built it in 1925 and so when he left in the late 30's, he went to Los Angeles and married a much younger woman and told her stories about how wonderful McCarthy was and she would have never come here anyway. So when I bought it from her in -- that would have been in like '79 or so, maybe '80, she was about ninety and so I actually bought it. I mean I don't know anybody that bought a building from --

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Original.

SALLY GIBERT: From the original builder, yeah.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Mostly buy from Barrett's (phonetic) who found it.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah, yeah, yeah and actually Barrett (phonetic) actually quiet titled it not knowing of that piece of history so he quiet titled it. So I bought it from the owner and Barrett had quiet titled it, Lawrence Barrett.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

SALLY GIBERT: And so when I found out he had quiet titled it, I contacted him and he said, oh, oops, sorry and he just, you know, gave me a quit claim deed, so yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Most of the property in McCarthy was Barrett's Homestead and then people had to buy it from him?

SALLY GIBERT: It was all abandoned, yeah. Well, Lawrence Barrett gave it for people that seemed to have a, if not a paper trail sort of a moral historical trail. He would just -- he just gave them quit claim deeds. He kind of did it as a favor. Just quiet title the whole place and then give people real deeds that they could, you know, to the bank so to speak and so.

KAREN BREWSTER: But were people able to buy private property? Like the land -- I mean you bought the cabin, but the land that it is on?

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: And the lot too?

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah, right, right, yeah cause the townsite was carved out of the homestead so all the lots and everything were, you know, they were all owned by other people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay. Yeah, I was just trying to figure out how it got from Barrett's Homestead to people being able to have individual --

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Well, the Barrett's -- the Barrett's subdivided. They created the townsite out of their homestead.

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay. Okay

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And then sold lots.

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay.

SALLY GIBERT: Back in the early 20's.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And then a lot of those records were lost so that they -- the Barrett Family again then quiet titled, but they have a long history of individual ownership.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right, okay. So what you said was in the twenties or thirties when they subdivided it into the townsite?

SALLY GIBERT: Or teens probably.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Before, yeah.

SALLY GIBERT: And it would have been the teens or even before that.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Even before that. Yeah, before the route, I don't know the exact year, but.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: 1910 plus or minus.

SALLY GIBERT: It was whenever McCarthy started it so. And then there are more -- the homestead was bigger than -- the townsite was a piece of it. Anyway, so this was an original townsite lot and so anyway. So then I spent the next two, well two years, two winters or two and a half years total living there full time. First year it was with my sister and the next year on my own and so I lived here full time and really, really liked it. I mean, just, it was the high point of my life. Well, that and the Harper's tour saga. But I just really loved it and went to town to -- I had run out of money. Went to Anchorage to make some money so I could come back and got this really cool job doing this -- being the state ANILCA coordinator and that was a really cool job. The reason I was willing to take it is because I had just met Dick. And I thought well, do I -- I had to make a two and

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a half year commitment to the end of the Sheffield governorship or administration. It seemed like an eternity and I thought, oh, man, do I really, that's a really cool job, but do I really want to commit for two and a half years, full time work, it's like big deal. Do I really want to do that? Well, I just sure (inaudible) I'll do that and see what happens, anyway.

KAREN BREWSTER: And is Dick Miley (phonetic) is your --

SALLY GIBERT: Dick Miley is

KAREN BREWSTER: Your husband?

SALLY GIBERT: My husband, yeah. So we got married, the job continued through multiple additional governors and so. So then I became the state ANILCA coordinator, but I was still coming out here until I retired in 2011 so, anyway, kept this place, still come out here.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: But if you look at the threads, an interesting thread in this is that when you were -- when you buying -- when you bought the hardware store and were first working on that with the idea of you are a gregarious enough person that you needed an entire hardware store building to house all your friends basically.

SALLY GIBERT: Especially, yeah.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And you figured that that would be like some kind of hostel like that could be your income as well.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah, right, right.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And while you were -- I may fill in some things here as I think it is part of the story and I will tie in a little bit of my own. While you were doing that, you were working the seasons other than the summer in Anchorage for the Joint Federal State Land Use Planning Commission.

SALLY GIBERT: Right, or ANILCA, pre-ANILCA work.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: So you are getting both of us this --

KAREN BREWSTER: You worked for the commission as well, didn't you?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: No. So I worked for -- I worked at Santa Cruz for five years bringing the student -- a big part of my work was student -- undergraduate student projects looking at proposed conservation areas in Alaska with the Wrangell's being the biggest one. We also had stuff going in southeast and eventually at Lake Clark.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. I know you did the big report in '73 right?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Yeah and that was the result of two years fieldwork in '71 and '72 and so my career was then from there once I left Santa Cruz I started doing -- I sort of ad hoc'd it in with various organizations. I was the Friends of the Earth representative for a while and then I was working directly for the Alaska Coalition commuting between Alaska and Washington, DC on the Lands Act working for the Environmental Coalition. So that similarity with Sally is the accommodation of being in McCarthy and in the Wrangell's with a policy -- political involvement goes all the way the back to the beginning.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah and that's true, yeah, and that's true for me too that because I had taken those Alaska seminars that got me interested in the kind of the policy side through the slide show of McCarthy so that's where my interest came and then I came out here and

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being out here set me up with local experience which was very central to me getting my job because I had sort of an academic familiarity with some of the lands issues and I had been working for the Joint Federal State Land Use Planning Commission and I was a local resident and so I had this sort of perfect storm of experiences that went so in the state -- plus I had worked for the state in their planning section too, so it was a perfect storm to get hired.

KAREN BREWSTER: It sounds like a little -- let me make sure I am understanding that being out here in the Wrangell's and coming to appreciate the beauty and the wilderness qualities of this place you took that love and fought for it to be protected. Is that kind of what you are saying?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Well, I think the two evolved together. Like I was -- when I started I was seeing it from the time I was like five years old. This was -- I was probably born this way. And when I was a little kid I had a care for animals club that would have been the equivalent now for an environmental club when I was like in the third grade. So I was born that way. Looking at my own daughter who -- my own daughters and recognizing what they were like when they were two months old and how similar that is what they are now. I can see that pattern in myself. Another piece to realize here is the lineage goes back -- Sally's and my lineage both and yours as well, goes back through that extraordinary professor at Santa Cruz Dick Cooley who is the one who provided the opportunities for us to come to Alaska and do these things that oriented us to behave this way and do these things and he goes back with his friends, people like George Rogers and goes back.

KAREN BREWSTER: And Bob Weeden.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And then Bob Weeden, the next one we mentioned Bob Weeden, a little bit younger. George Rogers a little older. This goes back to statehood. The period of statehood Dick overlapped in the period of statehood. He was a young man then, but George Rogers was very much into it and their other friends. So you have the cultural political lineage of Alaska through -- there is that line of it that went through Dick Cooley and Bob Weeden and us that is expressed here now in activities like the Wrangell Mountain Center at the old hardware store and it is this combination of the really living in the place, plus being involved in the issues. And you can see it going all the way back through to the time around statehood when the people who taught us were very active.

SALLY GIBERT: And it is not just about, you know, protection and preservation.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Uh-uh.

SALLY GIBERT: It is definitely not. And that's -- I mean that's a part of it, but it is definitely not the focus and it is kind of maintaining that sense of place which is an overused term, but it really fits out here and that is -- doesn't cleanly fit anything else. It doesn't cleanly fit any of the normal ways you describe places.

KAREN BREWSTER: What does it cleanly fit? Life in McCarthy doesn't cleanly fit?

SALLY GIBERT: The Wrangell's.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: The issues.

SALLY GIBERT: The Wrangell's, the issues, the, you know, all the inholder stuff, all the use issues, the history of use. I mean this place has a his- -- a long history of very intense uses. It is not a piece of remnant of unused part of the Lower 48 that happened to, you know, get passed by after the miners and the ranchers came by and okay, there is a couple

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little peaks left we'll make that a little bonus area. I mean this place had, you know, had mining and all kinds of stuff going on. You know, roads, there was interest in timber and people living every place and wandering around doing all kinds of stuff for a long time. So how do you, how do you deal with into the --

KAREN BREWSTER: Policy part?

SALLY GIBERT: Into the future.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: But this is marvelous paradox.

SALLY GIBERT: Uh-huh.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Because I flew yesterday. It was a beautiful sunny day like it is now and I flew from Anchorage to here straight line and I had never done that before because to have the weather. We could see -- we could see Foraker and Denali and then all the way out past Prince William Sound while flying through the Chugach and through to here. It is both what you described and I don't know whether it is the most maybe it is wild, uninhabited, unchanged terrain.

SALLY GIBERT: Wild terrain.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Wild terrain, both occur at the same time most of the place -- most of the -- if you are sitting in downtown McCarthy it looks inhabited, but if you're flying in a straight line from Anchorage to here, it is not. And the other interesting thing that I noticed yesterday is really interesting to me -- I never felt it this way before is that the land management boundaries are not related to the landscape.

SALLY GIBERT: Uh-huh.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Because between Anchorage and here there is sort of an integrity to the whole topography and the terrain and you cannot tell from the terrain which is national park, which is private land, which is Native land, which is state land. There is no sense to it. And it is this whole series -- it is this array of paradoxes and complexities that makes it so interesting. My own background -- my early experience was in the quite traditional Sierra Club wilderness preservation political movement starting when I was in college and then coming out of that and into Santa Cruz, but -- and the people who -- the person who was responsible for bringing me to the Wrangell's who funded the environmental states program at Santa Cruz so that I could bring students here was Ed Rayburn. So the lineage for what is going on here runs through Ed Rayburn and it is interesting to note that he was both one of the leading figures in the American wilderness preservation movement in the 20th Century. But also responsible -- two other pieces that are really interesting in this that I think feed into the cultural tradition that you are talking about that Sally and I represent is that Ed Rayburn was also a leading figure in enabling the Sierra Club to work through its own internal conflicts. He was able to bridge between David Brower and Ansel Adams and all of those conflicts and from that without being dogmatic to move an organization to success through its own internal trauma and he was committed to his own home place right around where he and Peggy and their kids lived.

KAREN BREWSTER: In San Francisco?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Marin County and so his twin accomplishments were Alaska and Marin and the Golden Gate.

KAREN BREWSTER: The Golden Gate Recreation Area?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: GGNRA, Point Reyes.

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KAREN BREWSTER: Redwoods probably, maybe.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Well, his --

KAREN BREWSTER: Is Redwoods State Park maybe too far north?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: His -- he was a key figure in the preservation of natural lands in Marin County and in Alaska. So you have what is expressed in three of us is this lineage that runs -- one piece of it runs through George Rogers, Bob Weeden, Dick Cooley and another lineage runs back through the Wilderness Preservation Movement and Ed Rayburn and those combined. And then you take that and you combine it with the experience, including the place and the culture of McCarthy and the Wrangell's well we came in right at the beginning of the re-inhabitation after the ghost town area. We were the first wave in that and so it is that --

SALLY GIBERT: Re-inhabitation, that's a good word.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: The -- the time when this place was outside the web and the network of such -- it was outside such notions as jobs, work categories, income, professional reputation, career tracks. People came here to find an option that did not include those. That's what we came into. That is what I definitely came into in the 70's here and there is still remnants of that here -- not as much as there was, but it is still that way. And it is the combination and the physical place contributes to that and I have a whole spiel on that I give.

KAREN BREWSTER: And a physical place contributes how?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: This is something I will be talking about on Monday with the National Geographic group that is going to be here. Everything but what to say to them.

KAREN BREWSTER: This is practice.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Well, fundamentally this place is unstable and out of equilibrium and it shows up on a massive scale physically and can be felt with all the senses and that is why our -- well, another piece of Sally and my lineage is Curtis and Loy need to be brought into this picture too.

SALLY GIBERT: Yes.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: It is not just a scientific description or a mathematical description it also can be described poetically and artistically and narratively. And the two ways I think about it are that the landscape is out of equilibrium meaning the topography itself. The creeks, the glaciers, the mountains, the uplift, the erosion and everything that lives on it is not -- it is very little around here that you will find in a stable state. That is different when I visited my daughter and son-in-law when they were in -- at the University of Illinois and would go through the cornfields between Chicago and Champagne, Urbana. That place has had -- every place has changes and in fact, nothing is really stable, but for the last 10,000 years or the last several billion years there has been a certain stability there. Here I look out the window right here now that creek was not located where it is last week.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. We were talking about that.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Okay. And there is no saying that creek won't be running through where this house is well in conceivably in two weeks, okay.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

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SALLY GIBERT: Let's hope it doesn't.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Let's hope it doesn't, probably not.

SALLY GIBERT: Is why they moved the house because it was down there and --

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And had to move the house.

SALLY GIBERT: We had to move the house.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Because the creek is moving.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And that is fundamental to this place. It is true physically.

SALLY GIBERT: Whole, the whole, yeah, just not this creek, but the whole river is like nearby Kennicott Bridge over the river there is no river there now, so yeah.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And in the bigger sense what is going on is you have got an entire piece of the earth's crust that is ramming into the coast not that far from here about as fast as anything an ram in this world in that sort and the whole thing is out of whack, out of equilibrium big time and that is reflected all the way through to the --

SALLY GIBERT: And you add in, you know, climate change and --

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And then if you look at it in economic cultural terms we were way -- who was originally talking about this way. I think Ed Lashenbell (phonetic) talked about it.

KAREN BREWSTER: Glaciologist?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Glaciologist, avalanche guy who lived here in town for the latter part of his life who was a very wise person. He talked as being it is like a bullwhip. When you are out here and you are at the far end of the tip of the whip, anything that happens elsewhere in the world is a small change elsewhere is going to have a big effect here. So what seems to be stable here whether it is the road -- let's take the road for example. The road that comes in here from the other side. It can look stable. You drive on it at 60 miles of road. You think the roads are here today, they are here tomorrow. Well, there are two things that could make it that the road won't be here tomorrow or next year. One is physical because there is floods and there is earthquakes and there are forest fires and you could have all of them in one year you know.

SALLY GIBERT: Melting permafrost.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Melting permafrost and climate change and a slight tweak in federal budgets, a tweak in the price of oil, well, the price of oil dropped because of something that had nothing to do with here and the maintenance station in Chitina is closed.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Okay. People who moved here in the last five years or so moved here with the experience that that road is maintained and is maintained all year round and that's the norm for them, right?

SALLY GIBERT: Didn't use to be?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Didn't use to be.

SALLY GIBERT: And it may not be again.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And it may not be again and so that the slightest little something goes on somewhere else, you know, there is a war in the Middle East or oil prices go down because of whatever and then basic parts of human infrastructure here and the way the people too it just changes. The opposite of that, okay. There is number of people in this

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town now, including myself, who telecommute. At Sweet Creek near Kennicott where I live there is four families on Sweet Creek. This summer three of us, three of the four were professionals telecommuting from Sweet Creek near Kennicott.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow! So that means internet.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: High speed broadband internet here.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so forth.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Is better than it is for me when I am in Washington State due to a multimillion dollar subsidy, part of which was well the construction of a set of multimillion dollar microwave relay towers all the way into here.

SALLY GIBERT: Which was part of the stimulus package which was a result of the failing national economy, the crash of the national economy so the crash of the national economy caused this little anomaly of these, you know, few million dollars which completely changed -- made this place connected which it was not before.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: The central piece of living here was being off the network. Just what I said at the beginning. People -- we came. What was so amazing about it, it was off the network. You came here you were not in that world. It was more out of the world than if you had gone into a Trappist monastery. And to me and I wrote a whole book about some of this stuff, but I didn't get to cover all of what I was thinking. There really was a lot of similarities. You left the modern world when you came here. Now, through these weird web of subsidies and including but not limited to because we had some -- we had phone service before that, all of which was ridiculous. I mean in economic terms ridiculous subsidy. Thank you very much I deserve it. But the failure of Lehman Brothers resulted in I teach on Wednesday mornings. I have to get up early because class starts at 6:30 here. It is 9:30 in Nashville. I teach at the Vanderbilt Law School on Wednesday mornings from the hillside just south of Kennicott.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now that brings up the point of change and now obviously how this place has changed and what that means for you guys living here, you know. It is now on the grid. It is not that off-the-grid place that you came to originally.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: But at the same time there was last week's wind storm. So I had been away for a couple of weeks. I got home last night, got home in the dark, still had to get home I have walk up the equivalent of 25 or 30, well, if you were in the city be like a -- I describe my house as like a 30 floor cold water flat walkup with no elevator. I got home and a tree had blown over in the yard and went across the bear fence. There is an electric fence to keep the bears out of the yard and broke three of the wires. So now in the next few days what I need to do and I can't like just call the local tree management company. So my chainsaw that I am not really good at small engine repair. I can keep it going for a while, but eventually I needed to get maintenance done what I could do. So I mailed it out and was able to get it mailed out and mailed back because of the subsidy for the --

KAREN BREWSTER: Mail plane.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: The federal subsidy for the mail plane.

SALLY GIBERT: And you were lucky you just got it back just in time to clean up from the --

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: I am going to have to -- I am going to have to cut the tree out of the way and repair the fence and I can't hire anybody else to do that cause it is not available.

KAREN BREWSTER: The point is there still that element of --

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: It is all that way.

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SALLY GIBERT: There is self-sufficiency and make do and, you know, baling wire and duct tape or solar panels or, you know, it is a combination of baling wire and duct tape and high tech.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Low tech.

SALLY GIBERT: High tech and baling wire and duct tape, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So even though it is now more connected it is still home do you still place you want to be?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Well, it is this interesting mixture of connection and wildness and also you were talking about this extreme unstable environment, extremely unstable place that we still are choosing to live in the middle of. It is not -- you don't have the services that we have elsewhere, but also the place. Just look, so yes, we're talking about look at the instabilities. The internet service is based -- the phone company, I was hearing yesterday just completed helicopter and tons of cement, concrete, up to the --

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah, you can see it.

KAREN BREWSTER: To the towers.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: To the cell tower up there.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah, it is right up there.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Okay.

SALLY GIBERT: You can see it on the ridge.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: So that -- the maintenance of that is dependent on very expensive, therefore subsidized and it is paid for from the outside. We are not going to pay for that.

KAREN BREWSTER: What's the --

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And it can quit anytime, anytime that subsidy stops the services stops.

KAREN BREWSTER: And the population changes extensively between summer and winter here I know, so what's like the summer -- average summer population and average winter?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Nobody even knows and how do you count it because even in the summer --

SALLY GIBERT: It is really hard to count.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Are you going to count the tourists? Are you going to count the lodge staff?

SALLY GIBERT: I think that if you count of the summer employees.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

SALLY GIBERT: You know, that are here either for one summer or maybe for five summers in a row maybe they eventually, you know, move here, but if you count all those, it is probably 200, 250 people here in the summer.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right and then in the winter?

SALLY GIBERT: And then in the winter it varies too.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Forty or 50 maybe.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah, at most really.

KAREN BREWSTER: My point being --

SALLY GIBERT: And the winter population hasn't changed that much cause back -- back in the old days it was sort of like tended to be around 25.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: I remember 38 people I think it was at Thanksgiving in the 70's.

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SALLY GIBERT: Oh, okay.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Or early 80's.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Might be like how much money is spent on all this technology to service how many people?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: It makes no sense at all.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah, all right.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: I am really glad for it for me, but happy with logic absolutely no.

SALLY GIBERT: Right.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: When they put in the microwave relay system for the phone, I was one of the few people who questioned it. I probably am one of the few people that uses it the most. Thank you very much, but for the cost of that system you could have purchased like 2,000 satellite internet systems and the difference between the satellite internet and what we have now is being able to stream.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Which is two things. Everybody can watch Netflix and those of us who are professional telecommuters can Skype. But that ability to Skype and do Netflix cost the American people four or five million dollars.

SALLY GIBERT: Well and then the ongoing subsidy of the mail plane, right and the subsidized mail system.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And the mail plane. There are so few of us.

SALLY GIBERT: And you know the irony of it.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: The mail plane now, nobody has first class mail. Who uses first class mail? It is all Amazon Prime.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, that is all around Alaska in the villages.

SALLY GIBERT: Yes, that is true. Yeah, but it is huge. It is really important and if that subsidy ever ends or even gets cut back there are huge amounts of Alaska leaders like whoa they're on the edge.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, it ties into what you had mentioned before I want to get back to which is this sort of the duality of this place that it is people and history. People have been here a long time and wilderness and how you balance those two and how that applies to what you guys did with D2 lands and ANILCA and protecting the Park and protecting a lifestyle, how that came together.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: The concept of balance implies a compromise or weighing, right, literally.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Literally a weighing and as soon as you start thinking about it as a weighing or a balance then I think you have restricted your ability to understand -- to see what is going on. Because what is going on is not so much a balance, but a combination or an intertwining and sometimes in that there will be places where you want to balance things, other times they just synthesize together. And what makes this place so interesting to me is that all kinds of cool new stuff happens when you put these together and on forecasting of paths and any of that. It is like that so you don't know what the creek is going to do. You don't know what the town is going to do.

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SALLY GIBERT: There is in the larger sense that at the national level I think there was definitely a balancing act going on of -- at least this is what I teach at ANILCA training. But that, you know, that if you are going to this is the little shtick from the ANILCA training, but basically it is ANILCA ended up being an unprecedented size of huge amount of acreage put into these various conservation categories well beyond what was envisioned in the -- when so-called D2 was set up and which was already pretty awesome, but even went beyond that. So it was huge amount of land that was put into these categories and in order to do that because it was going to encompass so much, including whole communities like McCarthy so much was being encompassed in these areas where people were living, doing stuff, tying up millions, millions and millions of private land and economic activities and just stuff. So you couldn't just take a pure park or a pure refugee model and plunk it on top of that. And so there was kind of a compromise in terms of from the people that were, especially from people in the Lower 48 that had that sort of built bash in like save everything or save Alaska from itself or something that you had to figure out how to accommodate some of this stuff and still have liable ability to live here and within these areas. And so that was perceived by many as a huge compromise. So at the larger scale there was a compromise and when it worked which I think it largely did in many areas, including out here at least initially where you can integrate it and it is really cool. It is really cool when it works and but it is hard for people, some people, to kind of get their heads around it unless they have kind of been out here and can kind of be here long enough to kind of see how it works. And but it is not traditional, not traditional stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: And well, you two, you know, getting into that policy thing as local residents you were able to present that perspective. In ANILCA issues you said that you were in Washington, DC, is that sort of what you did is you presented the pay attention to the people and lifestyle?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: The major issue for Wrangell's during the ANILCA political controversy was over mining. The basic -- it is hard to remember that now because it is decades ago and the mining issues because -- partly because of larger economic conditions, but significantly because of the Lands Act the mining issues are not central anymore, but the issue in Wrangell's was mining. And that was resolved in a simple black and white political choice way that there would be basically was resolved in favor of wilderness instead of mining. That was the crux of Wrangell's in the 1970's and the decision that made. Once that decision is made then a whole host of issues that are also important but this is my personal description of it now, but secondary to that start becoming primary because the underlying issue is resolved.

SALLY GIBERT: Right.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: But the issue that I knew in the 70's in the Wrangell's, the primary issue, was between two visions. One is call it wilderness, however, there is multiple ways of looking at it defining it legal and cultural.

SALLY GIBERT: Not necessarily a capital.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: It is capital government, but --

SALLY GIBERT: But very well --

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Whatever, it is a whole lot of those things.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah.

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BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And then basically large scale industrial commodity extraction. That was the decision. Then so my take on the Lands Act is that as a call it a wild land success. It was of historic proportions in the Wrangell's where you took one of the, if the most mineralized zones of Alaska and declared the entire thing off limits to the mining claims and effectively to new mining on a major scale. Then so that was the crux of the D2. That was what I was working at.

KAREN BREWSTER: Uh-huh. Okay.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Then within that --

SALLY GIBERT: Then that is not a compromise.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: That is not a compromise. That is a his- -- and for me -- this goes back and when I think about this I go back to Ed Rayburn. He is my -- he is the one who is speaking to me when I say, okay, what this matter? I can hear Ed say that. Yeah, that is what mattered. You don't know it anymore. You don't think about it anymore because it was resolved. Okay. That resolved then that leaves the space for all this other really interesting stuff which is okay you have resolved that, but that doesn't take all the issues off the table. You still have all these things that Sally has been talking about, I've been talking about.

SALLY GIBERT: And which for me became more important. I wasn't involved in that -- that first -- the leading up to D2 was not what I was involved in. I came in above and later with implementation which had to do with all these other things, about these --

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you have examples of all these other things what you mean?

SALLY GIBERT: All the things like inholder, inholder access, all the access stuff, subsistence, you know, cabins, trapping, you know, hunting, you know, there is just so many -- so many things that are different and so that is where I got involved. So when I think of ANILCA, I think of it as the -- that is where the compromise is because that is -- and there still -- there is still active stuff happening in those -- it is not settled and it never really will be. There is always going to be issues around these things because it is unique up here.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well you said before about there were things that worked at the beginning with some of those issues, you have some examples of something that was working and maybe now is not working?

SALLY GIBERT: That is where it hard for me. That is where I would rather not get into current events.

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay, how about -- I will rephrase it. An example of when it was first started and you said there were things that worked in this unique situation of people and parks. Do you have an example of what worked?

SALLY GIBERT: Well, out here and cause this is where I was living out here at the time when the Park was first created there was just the fact that it was a Park was already so dramatic for people living out here. It already was just like such a mindbender that, including for the Park Service that nobody did anything. I mean there was no really very little Park management. The Park managers were kind of like didn't want hang out and manage the Park. It was like they didn't really -- didn't even really know it very well and so and they were kind of afraid of being out here and all these crazy locals anyway. And so there really -- there wasn't a lot of park-ness out here and there was a lot of resistance

by many people to having any really Park presence out here and I've got some interesting stories about that, but we won't tell them.

KAREN BREWSTER: That was one of my questions answered.

SALLY GIBERT: Okay so we'll tell one, okay.

KAREN BREWSTER: Go ahead.

SALLY GIBERT: So the -- let's see, this would have been it was when Jim Hanna was around here. He was the first district ranger. And I can't remember which winter it was. It was either '81-'82 or '82-'83. I think it might have been the next one '82-'83. Anyway, the Park Service had bought -- had been sort of browbeaten in to buy the property over at May Creek.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: That is a story in itself. Oh, man is that a story.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: It was a mine, old mine?

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: No. No.

SALLY GIBERT: No, geez. The guy that owned it he was just, oh God, he was talking about a storyteller.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: He makes the apple of the story. I might as well tell the story.

SALLY GIBERT: You can tell your story and then I will tell my story.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: I will just fill in that little piece. This is a little side. You were going back to side. I will just illustrating the story. So there was a couple, a woman a Native and a man Caucasian.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah, Ahtna Native, yeah.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: And so they got an allotment through Native allotment they got the land and then the guy built a great big log house on it saying, you know it was against the Park and he was for independence and freedom and he didn't believe in government, but this cabin this house I just built would make a great ranger station. He ended up selling it to the Park Service for some ungodly high price.

SALLY GIBERT: After he threatened to subdivide the 40 acre Native allotment along with some other private land I think he had. I think that is --

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Was that part of it?

SALLY GIBERT: I'm not sure. I think he had some -- also had some Native allotment land or non-Native allotment land. Anyway, he threatened, yeah he threatened to chop it up in one acre parcels and do a subdivision. And so he said you either buy this property or I am going to subdivide. And he went back to DC, you know, he was a deal maker. He was what is -- there is wheeler dealer.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: What did he get like \$600,000 for that?

SALLY GIBERT: I don't know what he got, but he got a lot of money and anyway so here all of a sudden now the Park Service owns this remote cabin in the middle of nowhere that they can't get to.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: That they wanted to be their headquarters. They needed it. They wanted it. They liked it.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah, they liked it because it was remote. They weren't welcome in McCarthy so they couldn't -- they weren't going to be able to set up any headquarters in McCarthy. And so, yeah, so they got this place, but anyway so it was the middle of winter and so Chuck Budge, the first superintendent and Brad Sulla (phonetic) and --

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BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Jim Hanna.

SALLY GIBERT: Yeah, Jim Hanna and there was another guy. I can't remember his name.

There were four of them. Anyway, they were snowmachining back to -- they had their snowmachines (inaudible) anyway, as far as you could drive and so they were snowmachining in from May Creek back to their cars, through McCarthy and the weather had been sloppy wet snow and then it cleared off and was getting cold, like cold, cold and so and they had been wrestling all this wet snow and they were wet. They had been wet from wet snow and sweat and wrestling the snowmachines. They came in and they were drenched. They were wearing these old polyester snowmachine suit things. Anyway, they were soaking wet and Brad was sick. He had a cold and he was like really blah. Anyway, so they got here and until that time no Park Service person had ever spent the night in McCarthy. It was like not allowed. Not (inaudible) just like, you are not welcome here, you know. McCarthy was not part of the Park. McCarthy is an inholding. If you want to go spend the night in the Park, this is your Park, you go spend the night in the Park, but not in McCarthy was kind of the attitude for most people. And so they knew that I had a little bit broader perspective than some folks out here and I had been in town. I was kind of aware of some of the bigger picture stuff. So anyway they were cold and so it was after dark and it was in the middle of winter. Anyway, they came by.

BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: This house.

SALLY GIBERT: This house here, yeah, back when it was down there and yeah they snowmachined by and stopped and they said hey, can we come in and, you know, warm up for a few minutes and maybe get something hot to drink cause we have a long way to go. I said sure, you know, come on in. So they came in and they were cold and they were close to hypothermic. They were really cold and they were really wet and I said you guys you can't -- you can't go out again. It is late. It is cold. It was getting -- I don't know how cold it was getting. It was going down to zero or something and maybe colder. And so I said you guys can't do that. This is like life threatening. Oh, no, we can't stay here, you know, we can't stay in McCarthy, you know. We don't want to -- we don't want to put you in a bad position or we don't want to put ourselves in a bad position. And I said, no, no, this is not a choice. This is a health and safety issue. You need to -- you need to stop and I got lots of blankets and floor space and sleeping bags and anyway, so Chuck finally said well, and he was looking at Brad. Brad is definitely sick and so he is going well, okay, but, you know, we'll take off first thing in the morning. I said don't worry about that. The point is you can't go now, you need to dry out. Anyway, so they spent the night, took off first thing in the morning. Didn't see anybody else, you know, just cruise on in and then about oh about ten o'clock or one o'clock in the morning one of the other locals kind of wandered over, you know, a friend, and said, hey, Sally, I understand you put up the Park Service last night. What are you doing? What the heck are you doing? Now they're going to think -- be thinking they can just stay here whenever they want. It is like you screwed up. And I looked at them and I said, no, no. I said if they had come to you and you had seen their condition you would have done the same thing I did. This was a life threatening situation. This wasn't just a matter of convenience or what the heck. They are going make a statement. I said no, no, this was a health and safety thing. This was real and I said you would have done the same thing. And, you know, he didn't have anything to say.

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BENJAMIN SHAINÉ: Because he would have.

SALLY GIBERT: Because he would have. Yeah, because he would have, you know, this – yeah, he is not mean. And so, you know, and it didn't really change anything. They still didn't set up -- Park Headquarters the next day. They knew that, you know. So it didn't make any difference, but it was an example of that sort of that whine. You know it is like all the angst out here. It was just an example of it. And so anyway that was my story.

KAREN BREWSTER: I have to change tapes.

End of Part 1