

INTERVIEW OF KENNETH "KENNY" SMITH
INTERVIEWER IS KAREN BREWSTER
SEPTEMBER 6, 2016
IN ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
PART 2

KAREN BREWSTER: About correcting something?

KENNY SMITH: Oh, well, part of what I am leading up to here is on the misspelling, you know. So it is kind of cute, you know, and we look and some people argued that well, the railroad actually had it spelled Kennicott with an "i" on their signs, but I think about 1919 as near as I can tell they started changing all their signs to an "e". And see there was -- the syndicate had Kennicott Copper Corporation. They had Copper River Northwestern Railway and they had Alaska Steamship Company. Three big enterprises and if you look at the letters and the stuff back and forth. Those three were competing among themselves, you know. They were, you know, you lost this freight for us you owe, you know, and stuff like that. So I can see where the railroad named the Kennicott because there was -- they had spelled the Kennicott with an "i" because the government maps for the most part showed as an "i" and that is understandable. To this very day USGS has loath to name a place named after a corporation.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, as you say, it is named for Mr. Kennicott.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: The river and the glacier.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, well, so even to this day it will see on the government maps K-E-N-N-I. I am told that the Reserve air maps that showed it with an "e", but I have never seen one. I have seen some pretty early maps and they always had an "i". So here the railroad put their, but for the most part it was with an "e". It was Kennicott, you know, starting about eight, Kennicott Mining Company spelled their company name with an "e". It was their town. They named and spelled the town the way they wanted to. So any rate we got that. Now, all the years of operation there was newspapers galore. Cordova Daily Times, Chitina Breeze, you know, I can -- two or three in McCarthy. A lot of those survive today. My mom who is really a latecomer, you know, '38, she has got all kinds of articles. But, you know, there was so and so arrived off Alaska Steam in Cordova yesterday and is on his way to Kennicott today with a load of supplies. He is going to go prospecting, you know. One article after -- hundreds, hundreds and hundreds of articles. The Wrangell-St. Elias News they did two pages on every one of their editions I think with excerpts from years gone by.

KAREN BREWSTER: I also thought it interesting that Wrangell-St. Elias News at least some editions they put a little blurb about this is what so and so is doing and this is a newcomer to town and so and so is out for the winter doing this and that.

KENNY SMITH: That is exactly.

KAREN BREWSTER: Kind of a little bit of reporting on your neighbors.

KENNY SMITH: Okay. So, you know, you got all those old newspapers, you got them all up, plus you got them beyond '38, you know. All these articles about Kenni -- there is a lot of people, probably including my dad that thought Kennicott would come alive again, you know, they were writing articles. Any -- okay, always spelled with an "e". Always, I have

never seen one where they spelled it with an “i”. Until after the road got in and there was a school of thought among the really hardcore environmental types that the whole area should revert back to the way nature had it to start with. Let the buildings collapse, so on and so forth, you know, let nature take its toll, let the grass come up. Like they did in Australia at Ayers Rock. And along with it let’s stick with the original name get rid of this “e”. That is the corporate master’s. So where I disagree with this Kazey (phonetic) on his book he uses as an illustration of how the Park Service come in and had its overbearing attitude and they told the locals that the way you are going to spell Kennicott is with an “e”. And Kazey in his book says and the locals had always spelled it with an “i”. And so you disagree with that. Don, I can show you a thousand articles you never see it. So which locals are you talking about? The hippies that came up here in 1974 or them were real locals.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, that is a good point is what makes somebody a local?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, right, right. So any rate it is kind of a funny one.

KAREN BREWSTER: So I don’t know how would you answer that? What makes somebody a local?

KENNY SMITH: They are all local. You know, when somebody comes in and stays, you know, for a while, builds a cabin, even though they are only there two or three years they are a local.

KAREN BREWSTER: All right. As long as they walk out alive they are still locals?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, I don’t -- everybody.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I have a question about Chitina since you lived in Chitina. Like McCarthy it collapsed, just died out?

KENNY SMITH: Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: You know, Chitina continued and survived. How is it that community of Chitina kept going?

KENNY SMITH: Road. They had a road and they had an old fellow there by the name of Ole Nelson. He actually wasn’t too old.

KAREN BREWSTER: I personally had known --

KENNY SMITH: And he had acquired the entire town almost and he had -- he got one of the generators out of Kennicott. He was a genius, engineer type and he brought it down to -- I think he was originally a schoolteacher, but anyway he brought it down to Chitina and he set it up down below the river. And he had already had a tunnel from the Town Lake down through underneath the gap there, you know. And so he had a Pilton wheel or a turbine and it spun that thing and it was a huge generator. So he was able to have hot and cold running water even while he didn’t have to bury the lines very much, you know, because he would run a hot water line heating with electricity to the cold water line in the winter and stuff like that. He had electricity all over, transformers and all that.

KAREN BREWSTER: And did the railroad keep going to Cordova after Kennicott closed down?

KENNY SMITH: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: I mean to Chitina.

KENNY SMITH: No, the last train pulled out of McCarthy -- the last train ran in November of 1938.

KAREN BREWSTER: Thirty-eight, yeah.

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KENNY SMITH: Okay, now where a lot of confusion comes in is that you will see people -- historians write articles about after the railroad closed down then the Army came in and took up all the tracks and used them in the war effort. Or the one I like best is that the railroad sold all the rails to the Japanese who shot them back at us. None of that is true. None of that is true.

KAREN BREWSTER: Local people used them to build cabins probably?

KENNY SMITH: No, actually for the most part most of the rail is still there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, under the developed road.

KENNY SMITH: Between ship and Cordova and the Million --

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah, no, but I was in Chitina to McCarthy that is all people used those?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, well, let me tell you, okay.

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay. Can you pause a second? (Pause)

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: The story about --

KENNY SMITH: Oh, the rail.

KAREN BREWSTER: We were talking about the rail and pulling up the rails and stuff.

KENNY SMITH: Right, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So the people used those old rails, the old ties?

KENNY SMITH: Okay, yeah, the ties are the wood, you know, they --

KAREN BREWSTER: Right.

KENNY SMITH: They used ties, but they rotted out. They weren't created for the most part, so but the rails, you know, this Haycox, the Professor Haycox from the University here.

KAREN BREWSTER: C. Haycox, yes.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, he wrote a -- he was writing about something not about the rails, but he touched on the rails he pretty much said that same stuff about they pulled them up for the war effort. And I wrote him and told him what -- at that time what I knew about the rails was quite a bit, but it is really interesting. No, what happened what got us into this is that they actually ran the railroad from Cordova to Mile 13, the airport, for about five years, not quite, after -- after the war started, four years anyway. Actually they started to run -- they started running the locomotive out there periodically after '40.

KAREN BREWSTER: So after Kennicott shut down in '38, the train continued to run from Cordova to Chitina?

KENNY SMITH: No, to Mile 13.

KAREN BREWSTER: Just over to Mile 13.

KENNY SMITH: Because they were bent -- they started building the airport at Cordova then out there.

KAREN BREWSTER: That is right. They were on the flats.

KENNY SMITH: It wasn't the military that was doing it. It was the Civil Aeronautics Board I think put out a contract. It was part of FDR's knowing that the war was coming, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: So there wasn't a train anymore to Chitina, but Chitina survived as a town whereas McCarthy --

KENNY SMITH: Because of the road.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because of the road.

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KENNY SMITH: Yeah, the last train that was it, November of '38.

KAREN BREWSTER: So what other things --

KENNY SMITH: Except for Cordova.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right, so for Chitina to keep going as a town, what did people do who lived there? How did they continue to make a living?

KENNY SMITH: There was very little. There was, you know, I told you a lot of the old timers from Kennicott and McCarthy lived there year round, but they had, you know, they had pensions or you know stuff like that. And there was some trappers worked out of there and trapping, not anything. You weren't making money in prospecting, but there was a few people. So trapping. There was -- it was good dipnetting spot even back then.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was going to ask you was the dipnet fishery going?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, right. They were coming down from Fairbanks, not from Anchorage because Anchorage had the Kenai and everything. So there was quite a few. Then in the fall there would be the hunting. So Ole Nelson had a going concern of a hotel there for all them years, you know, until he died. In fact, another one moved in in the 50's, a fellow from Cordova went up there and started another hotel too, so there was two hotels running.

KAREN BREWSTER: Who is that?

KENNY SMITH: Wes Kennedy was his name. He was a hotel here. He ran the Windsor Hotel in Cordova and then he bought the brother, the Native Brotherhood Building which is now the Hotel Chitina. But he had fixed that up, him and his sister, and they had a liquor license and whatnot and a nice hotel.

KAREN BREWSTER: So what years did you live in Chitina?

KENNY SMITH: Six -- well, I didn't live there all year round, but --

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you were flying out of there?

KENNY SMITH: Sixty to '78. I mean '60 to '68.

KAREN BREWSTER: Sixty to '68, okay. And so dipnetting was starting up as a --

KENNY SMITH: No, it had been going long before that because I would spend a lot of time in Chitina in the 50's. Dad would send me up when I was a kid to help gas airplanes and everything for the sheep season and everything. So I would spend a lot of time there in '54 to all the way through. Well, when I started commercial flying that was my first, so I was in Chitina a lot. In fact, he sent me up to McCarthy too to help fix tires on those Model T's and A's and everything.

KAREN BREWSTER: What year was that?

KENNY SMITH: In the 50's, same time I was in Chitina.

KAREN BREWSTER: In the summers?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, after I got into high school I would work in the hangars in Cordova, but in the fall dad would try to get me up there to help out.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now did your dad fly hunters out for it is like sheep hunting?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah. Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did he guide them or he just --

KENNY SMITH: No, he just flew them transport. The airline never did any of that, they just, but they really specialized in sheep hunters, especially Howard when he came along. Anyway, the rails, the rails for the most part were early in the 50's, about '52 or '53 there was a guy by the name of Gordon Hize (phonetic) that cut some sort of a deal with the

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federal government and got the rails between the west side of the Kennicott and Long Lake. And he picked those up over a couple year period. Howard worked for him, Howard Knutson, and then he would come up and he would -- in the winter with a track deal and he would take them down to Chitina, truck them to Valdez I think and then he sold them to Peru or Chile or something as reused rail, but that was only that stretch. The rest of the rails between Chitina -- I mean between Long Lake and Chitina were still there with the exception Ole at taken some out to the south and taken some out to the north over the years. He built a warehouse out of them which you might have got from this house idea. But they were there and then in 1960, our first good year as statehood the state put the rest -- the rails between Chitina and McCarthy -- I mean Chitina and Long Lake out for bid and a fellow by the name of Lynch in Juneau bid them and got them. So for '61, '62, and '63 he had crews and he was picking them up and he -- and then taking them down to Valdez and stockpiling them down there and they were -- he was -- cut a deal with one of those governments, Peru or Chile, I don't what. And so they were all stockpiled down there at the end of '63 he was done and he got them all out.

KAREN BREWSTER: Before the earthquake?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, you know what happened then with those rails. They were setting on the beach in Valdez, still there.

KAREN BREWSTER: So he didn't get them out before the earthquake?

KENNY SMITH: That is right.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, he lost it all.

KENNY SMITH: All of the rail, copper and then between Cordova they had the rails out -- they had all the way up into '45 they were running locomotives out for the airport because what happened once the Japanese hit Pearl then they moved the Army Corps of Engineers into Cordova and they started running the railroad, big time, and building an Army base at Cordova at Mile 13 which they did. And so it was a big deal going so it was running -- when I was a kid I wasn't even five years old I remember the railroad -- the Copper River Northwestern Railroad so to speak. Okay, the only rail that the military took out of there was prior to the Japanese was they apparently took a couple miles of railroad up between 13 and on up, maybe two miles worth and took them to Fort Richards because when the Japanese hit Pearl then the Army Corps of Engineers were in there and everybody was sweating blood in Alaska. The Japanese are going to cut the Pacific off for trade to Alaska. So they got the Corps of Engineer guy -- he wrote a couple of articles about some of this for the Wrangell-St. Elias News. They -- he -- they got him to do a recon all the way up to Chitina because they were punching the Alcan Highway through and to get the route going to Chitina again to the road so that you could have a connection from the coast to the Lower 48, you know, and the rest of Alaska. So he did that and when he was at it he chartered -- he got to Chitina and chartered Cordova Air -- no, he chartered Cordova Air Service to Chitina then he got Ole Nelson to take him -- Ole -- the tracks were still running for a few years, you know, and he got Ole on that autorailer to take him to McCarthy and then he flew back to Cordova. That is how -- and the rails were all the way in, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, so in your time in Chitina was there a Native Ahtna population of people living in Chitina -- two people?

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KENNY SMITH: Susie Bell and her brother Paddy King. They were year round and there was -
- well, there was a couple more that were year round, but a lot of times the folks that had roots at Taral which is across the way, they would come down and spend the whole summers down there. So there was maybe a dozen or so. There was even more than that actually, probably -- most of my time I was used to Susie and Paddy. They didn't live together. They had different places. Susie was married to a railroad guy and he died so she had a pension or something from him, but they were both born in Taral, but there was a fellow by the name of Billy Butz (phonetic) spent a lot of time there. There was quite a few Natives, you know, some of them lived there all -- I know back in the early 50's there was another fellow that lived in Chitina Heights. He was a Native.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was wondering if -- how much interaction there was with those Native people and the non-Native parts of Chitina?

KENNY SMITH: Well, quite a bit because Ole would trade with them and he would buy furs and everything and he had the grocery store. He called it the Chitina Cache Store. It was a great big store. So they would buy all their stuff back, you know, there and that. And --

KAREN BREWSTER: Was there any socializing between the two groups?

KENNY SMITH: There wasn't much in the way of -- there was no church. Well, there was a church, but it was down toward the village, you know, where you go to the village?

KAREN BREWSTER: And there was a bar. Was there a bar in Chitina still at that time?

KENNY SMITH: No, they didn't really have a bar. Ole didn't liquor so there wasn't any -- a bar in Chitina until Wes came up with the bar and he would only open at certain times. And then the first bar came in about 1960.

KAREN BREWSTER: Cause that is the place where people come together?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: It seems like in McCarthy the saloon is the place to be.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, well, that is after '60 you saw quite a bit of action in the bar there. The interaction between the Natives and the -- I never saw -- I never saw any negative. Once in a while you would hear one of the Natives say something, but some of the guys like Finessin. He lived to 104 or something.

KAREN BREWSTER: He was one of the early homesteader kind of guy.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, he was kind of -- he was a prospector really. Him and his brother came in from Finland. I am trying to think of his first name.

KAREN BREWSTER: Neal?

KENNY SMITH: Neal Finessin. Yeah, he had kids, but the Native wives, one Native wife I guess. The oldest one was Adela Triper (phonetic) who married Casey Triper in Cordova and her oldest kid -- one of her -- Merle Triper was my age, maybe a year older and Roy Triper was three or four years older. I remember that and then there was -- boy there was a lot of kids that Neal had. So Martin Finessin lived in Chitina there a lot with his dad. So there was quite a few. But Howard always thought that Ole didn't treat the Natives right, but I don't, you know, Howard probably has good reasons for saying that. But I remember one funny thing. Susie, she always liked to call herself grandma of Chitina. One time Ole had a heart attack around 1959 I think and he went to Seattle. He never did really fully recover from it. But he did come back up once. I think it was in '61 the first time I saw him, maybe it was in '60, but then he -- and he married his nurse and then he dies around that time. But I remember one time Howard and I were sitting in the hotel

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and Howard's wife wound up running the hotel and we were sitting in there. And Susie comes in. The post office was in there for a while. And Susie comes in and she says Ole two day out. And well where did you get that, Susie? On the radio. Ole is two days out, you know, that is well, her thing was, but she didn't dislike Ole. They were (inaudible), you know, there wasn't not that much animosity between the Natives, you know. Judging from Susie he was like a God coming back to Chitina.

KAREN BREWSTER: It sounds like he kind of kept the town going for some years when it otherwise might have collapsed.

KENNY SMITH: I think so. I think he probably gave a lot of credit to people, you know, and kept them alive, you know, stuff like that. Howard had some reason to believe that maybe Ole wasn't fair to them, but.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, how did Chitina and McCarthy kind of relate to each other? Did they think of themselves as connected communities or?

KENNY SMITH: No. No, because there was hardly anybody in McCarthy. You just couldn't even. They were -- they were -- the way they related to each other is that you would use -- a little later you would fly to Chitina to get out, but for the most part for a whole bunch of years they would get their groceries at McCarthy from Cordova or they would get their mail and then they would come to Cordova to get out.

KAREN BREWSTER: They would fly between Cordova and McCarthy?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah. Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Because I was thinking McCarthy and Chitina all are part of that same region, the valley, the same kind of resources. You were talking about the bigger picture. They don't see themselves that way.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, but by '60 it had evolved into a deal where they getting their -- at McCarthy and Chisana too, they were getting their groceries out of Chitina, not Cordova. Because Cordova had the weather problem, you know, where Chitina didn't.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do they see themselves as all part of the same valley and connected by the road or?

KENNY SMITH: Oh, I don't -- I don't think so because of lot of, you know, there was groceries coming down from Gulkana too, but not that many. But a lot of people would go from McCarthy to Gulkana because and Chisana would work through Northway a lot and we flew all the way to Northway.

KAREN BREWSTER: I know the old days the trail went from McCarthy to Chitistone up to Chisana, but that was a long time ago.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah. For many years after it closed down though Cordova was the hub, I mean the go to and then it started to evolve where it made more sense, you know, Chitina was more feasible, you know, and even Glennallen, so it kind of evolved. And Cordova sort of just lost out.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Are there other things you can talk about the changes in McCarthy and Chitina and that region from your first memories in the 50's to now?

KENNY SMITH: Well, the biggest thing is it was isolated, you know, and there was hardly anybody around. It was really a trip into the past, you know, to go to McCarthy even up until the 60's, well I'd say Trubshaw kind of screwed it up a little bit, but it was for the most part a really -- you were just -- you were really just going back into the past. I always laugh about the Rowlands. Have you heard -- the Rowland Family up there?

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KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, they built a freight bridge.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, they got the freight bridge up. Old Ken Rowland they are a Palmer family originally. Old Ken Rowland, he has got a lot of dementia now, but he was big in that Palmer Museum and stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, yeah, the Transportation Museum.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, yeah, and he was getting historic cars and everything. At any rate, after the road was in sometimes I was going up there a lot, but I would still work in Anchorage and I wound up by myself sometimes and instead of up on the ridge where I got the place now I would a lot of times just go down out on the river bar with the camper because of less mosquitoes and whatnot. So I was by myself one time and there was nobody up there, you know, it was probably early 80's and I finished dinner in the camper and I am kind of wandering around, you know, and there is nobody on our side of the river except Edwards probably. At any rate, every time I go up, especially back then I would get into the nostalgia of the railroad days. You know, you could almost hear the locomotive come down the grade and whatnot and so, you know, that is the way it was with me. So there was this one day -- I'm -- there not too far away from my camp and I see this guy come out of the woods. And I'm looking at this guy and I am thinking I am going out of my mind. Am I in a time warp? This guy had those long shoe packs on, laced up almost to your knees, you know, from the old days. He had a handlebar mustache. He had a wool shirt on. He had the same garb on that they wore in 1915, 1925. It was Ken Rowland. He was up something to do with a vehicle that somebody was supposed to bring over from Dan Creek or something. And I told his boys -- he has two sons, and you said you got to tell our dad that, he would love it.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that is part of people were kind of purposely maybe maintaining the old way?

KENNY SMITH: I don't know if Ken did it because of that. He was -- he fell in love, he bought the Gilmore place over at McCarthy, but perhaps he was, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: And there were people like Jim Edwards, who you just kept the same stuff you had and made do and --

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, well, yes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Sewing on buttons or whatever cause there was no place to go buy something new.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, right. I was just trying to think of there was something came to mind about the changing times.

KAREN BREWSTER: Changing times, different people there, different --

KENNY SMITH: Well, the biggest change in my mind I've already mentioned it, was the road coming in.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right, right and you said you didn't feel like the Park made too many changes to the life there other than you said the improvements.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, to Kennicott, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: But to McCarthy and --

KENNY SMITH: No, they -- it was all positive, you know. And actually it gave employment to people out there. You were asking about employment. Well, once the Park Service become established up at Kennicott with those crews and whatnot, man I think they were

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running five or six crews there. Good summer employment. Even some had year round work.

KAREN BREWSTER: But in some cases that employment it brings in outside people. It hires local people also?

KENNY SMITH: I think just about anybody who -- that was skilled enough or capable enough to take a job got a job out there. You couldn't, I think, they did do background checks so if you had some sort of a criminal wrap or something you had a little problem, but you would have probably with anybody.

KAREN BREWSTER: Now do you think because McCarthy is at the end of the road it attracts people like that, you know, suspicious characters?

KENNY SMITH: End of the roaders?

KAREN BREWSTER: End of the roaders more than any place else in Alaska?

KENNY SMITH: Well, we all laugh, you know, we had that one dude that came up there, but he wasn't living there or anything, but he bought a place up at Kennicott and then he wound up shooting everybody. But the only reason he shot people in McCarthy was because he just happened to (inaudible), a hit list for right here in Anchortown. He was going to knock off the mayor and the chief of police and a bunch of other people.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, he was a bit of an anomaly?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: But it is not unusual in these small towns, end of the road, people were kind of --

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, right, right. Yeah, I think you do get end of the roaders. Yeah, like I said to my wife one time. I says I think everybody in McCarthy is going crazy. And she says you're leading the parade.

KAREN BREWSTER: You mean they are going crazy or --

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, they are going crazy.

KAREN BREWSTER: More crazy than in the first place.

KENNY SMITH: Many a little of both. So at any rate I -- I was going to -- trying to -- there was one. I told this story about the rails.

KAREN BREWSTER: Something about how it has changed or.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, it was about.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was it about how many tourists there are now? Is that an issue for anybody?

KENNY SMITH: Well, it is, you know, some people want more tourists, some people want less. You know, personally, personally I am a little worried about Alaska's general economy for good reason, you know. We have been relying on the black gold for so many years, you know, and now we have got our infrastructure so built up there is no way we are going to sustain it because we -- even if we tax what we were taxing before, you know, the same rate, we -- well, I'll give you an example. If we tax even hit the oil company for a little more and that, we maybe would get 1.2 billion dollars as near as I can figure. And that is going to the same highest tax we had before -- for income tax and I don't think any sales taxes. So 1.2 billion, but we are three and a half billion dollar deficit. You still got two and half billion to go. I mean, yeah, and so people will say, oh we shouldn't pay an income tax is because they will just go on a spending spree. I mean how are you going to go on a spending spree when you are still two and a half billion dollars in the hole. You

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know it is crazy. The people who don't want to have an income tax are the type that came up here and there were some of those that came to the Chitina area. They came up because we got a permanent fund, you know, and things were pretty cushy in Alaska, no taxes, no. You know, Anchorage, maybe it is still today the most tax friendly city and the most tax friendly state in the nation. And you listen to some people talk here it is like they drowning in debt because of their tax laws.

KAREN BREWSTER: So your point is that tourism could help, is that what you are saying?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, I think now it is -- so but far and wide tourism is the next best industry we got. And so it is increasing every year too and we travel the world and mostly on cruise ships nowadays, small one. So we -- everybody likes Alaska. You really find somebody, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Do you think it has negatively affected McCarthy having the tourism there?

KENNY SMITH: No. No, I don't think -- I don't think so because, you know, if you are going to be a cynic then you would say well, all the people coming in, you know, in '74, you know, negatively affected McCarthy, but I don't -- I am not inclined to go with that no more than I am inclined to say we couldn't stand a lot more in visitation. But I think Alaska needs more in visitation because of this. Most of the visitors to Alaska come in cruise ships. Two-thirds of them go round trip, Vancouver to Vancouver or Seattle to Seattle. Now they drop money in the obligatory stops down there in the panhandle, but those are saturated or darn close to saturation. The cruise ships going to -- it is almost like the Caribbean in some of those ports. Ketchikan, Juneau, Skagway, Glacier Bay and Denali National Park are saturated. Yeah, we have places like the middle of the Nation's largest National Park available and, you know, we butt up against Kluane National Park, which is one of the largest masses of land on the face of the earth in conservation status. Mt. Logan, Mt. Elias they are all closer guarded secrets. Mt. Logan is the largest massive mountain on the face of the earth including the Himalayans which start out in the Himalayan Plateau. So, here we are, you know. Well, how are we doing in -- what's -- what are we doing to enhance more people coming to McCarthy? I don't see negativism about that in McCarthy. I see it in the people -- the residents in the state not being realistic. They are closing the Chitina Maintenance Station which has been in existence for over seventy years.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right and that is kind of interesting. Is it going to go back to the old days when the road was so bad and people couldn't get in there?

KENNY SMITH: Well, that is it, you know, that is it. So you see the note like that potato, see Kennicott Glacier Lodge, you see McCarthy. You know those are huge investments up there and you got and then those guiding services. They can't have the road shut down. Right now coming out yesterday the Kotsina has moved in against the Kotsina Bluffs, you know. That is going to start shuffling. You know we had -- we had -- we were going to have an upgrade in the road all the way to McCarthy. Now that wasn't all that popular because people had paranoia over well it is going paved. But the thing is what we want to do is get it upgraded so it will stable. The Lakana River which thank God we just got finished, the bridge, but we got the mudslide at McCarthy and we got the sliding of the Kotsina. If that Kotsina lets go, it is going, you know, it is just going to shut down the road.

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KAREN BREWSTER: And McCarthy will be like it was in the old days?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: You could only fly there, right.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, you could only fly there so I tell them the story of my dad. See my dad and my ma lived in Cordova -- in McCarthy and the railroad shut down and everything and dad had this idea which is this is (inaudible) that once when the railroad does close down the flying business is going to boom. He was really off because what happened? It went boom too for 20 years, you know. And so if people think they are going to fly back and forth, you know, in Cessna 180's and 206's, is there going to be some of that, you know. All these people with these Taj Mahal's out there, you know, with six to seven hundred thousand dollars in the cabins and that. I mean it is just not going to happen. Like me I try to get people to visit McCarthy on the cruise ships, you know. Well, the drive in now is with the van from the Copper Center Princess is pretty grueling, you know. And you spend the entire day going in and coming back out, very little time to spend up at Kennicott Mine. Okay, but the way to go is to Wrangell Air which is a nice package. They pick you up at Copper Center I think and you get a flight see in. You get a whole day, you know, lunches and that. You get a tour of McCarthy, a tour of Kennicott, (inaudible), and then you fly back to Copper Center Lodge. Nice lodge too. Okay, but the problem you have when I -- is that say you get -- I have two couples and they want to get to see Kennicott and they are asking me well how, what's the best way to do it? I explain to them fly. Don't take the van. Well, it is not the money.

KAREN BREWSTER: It is not the money?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, because you are talking -- the cruise ship people and actually it is pretty darn reasonable for an all day tour like that with the airplanes.

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay, the cruise ship people have the money.

KENNY SMITH: No. Out of four people, one of them has got a fear of flying.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, right.

KENNY SMITH: Maybe they get on the jet you know from New York to Chicago.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was also thinking weather can go bad. You could fly from Copper Center and it is nice, but by the end of the day when you want to fly back it could be bad.

KENNY SMITH: No, they can always -- when it gets like that, they can always throw in the van, you know, and try to make it up a little bit. But for the most part the weather in the interior is pretty good. It is not like going down to Cordova.

KAREN BREWSTER: Right. Well, I was wondering about you as a pilot flying in and out of McCarthy and Chitina, was that difficult flying, challenging?

KENNY SMITH: No, it was pretty easy. Actually, the only thing you had was if you had a turbulent windy day at McCarthy because the McCarthy runway was cross wind in those days. But once in '65, you know, the new runway was straight into the wind.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that is the current runway?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Was put in '65 and then they took the hump out?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah and then he made it better and everything else. Uh-huh. But, no, so I think that the future of Alaska is not in the Klondike coming around or another Prudhoe Bay or another Kennicott find, it is in visits. But that doesn't cut it see with I go to

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Chamber of Commerce meeting, fly, look at the people on the side of the hill where my kids live now.

KAREN BREWSTER: Up on the hillside?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah. Yeah. They got a two million dollar homes. You aren't going to pay for a two million dollar home driving a tour bus for \$40,000 a year at the most. You got to have one of these \$450,000 a year jobs in there and they are going away. So, yeah, I don't know what I can say, but other than that.

KAREN BREWSTER: You were trying to remember something you were going to say about change.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, I had a story there about that dealt with that. About -- I will think of it the minute we leave here. About --

KAREN BREWSTER: We could take a pause if you wanted to think about it.

KENNY SMITH: Okay. (Pause)

KENNY SMITH: A pressure on the developer types where it used to be really sloppy. Like we have one guy had crap all over the Kennicott River, you know, and just a general attitude of the area. Developers and non-developers just kept pressure on him, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: By having the Park Service there?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, well, Park presence helps a lot, you know, because Park Service of course hates that too. But for some -- heretofore, you know, prior to the Park, people would just take and slap crap out there, you know, a piece of junk and --

KAREN BREWSTER: You mean for a cabin or whatever?

KENNY SMITH: No, no, like equipment or something that broke down and just leave it there. You know and it is just an eyesore in the middle of a pristine environment, you know, where somebody could take pictures and stuff like that.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that has improved. People --

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, that attitude.

KAREN BREWSTER: Clean up their yards.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, they have cleaned up their act a lot. The guy -- the folks who are real sloppy don't get away with it as much as they used to and that's good. And that is I think generally an attitude of the population at large. Park helps bolster, you know, the spirit you know. But that is kind of the way it is anywhere you go, you know. People used to throw cigarettes on the street. You know, you don't do that so much anymore.

KAREN BREWSTER: I was thinking any issues, try to help you remember like would it be about pressures of a town being inside a Park and what that means or other changes you were talking about?

KENNY SMITH: One of them on the rails I was going to tell you down in Cordova. They were always big on the Copper River Highway, you know. And they originally got out to the Million Dollar Bridge about 1957 I think it was. And, but they were using the old railroad trestles too there. They had the steel bridges that they could use and then after that they started replacing those railroad bridges with regular highway concrete types you know. Except one of the big things is the steel pile, the big expense. So somebody in the highway department, this was the highway department because it was DOTPF didn't come along until '77. So they decided well they would use all these rails and you would cluster the rails together and then drive them down and then you put a conventional poured highway bridge across the top. And they did that. All the way from not the Mile 5

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bridge which goes across the Yak River, but all the way out to the Million Dollar Bridge. And there was quite a few bridge projects, you know, and got regular contractors do it and whatnot. All the Copper River Northwestern Railroad, then the earthquake happened and you know what happened? Every one of them rails shattered. They were too brittle for --

KAREN BREWSTER: They were too old.

KENNY SMITH: And so all the bridges came down and you couldn't even get to the airport.

KAREN BREWSTER: That was the end of that.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah and so they didn't get back out to the Million Dollar Bridge 'til I think it was must have been 1990 or so. And then they put some not too many years back they put seventeen million into the Million Dollar Bridge to lift up the span that was down and repeat -- because it looked like they might lose it. So they did that. That's nice. So then the 36 Mile Bridge washes out here about four years ago. And not only that it washed out a great big -- the Copper River went right over that.

KAREN BREWSTER: So McCarthy and Chitina you didn't spend time there when you were a boy when you would go out with your dad and fly around out there or land?

KENNY SMITH: In McCarthy and Chitina?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, that area?

KENNY SMITH: Well, you know, we first went there in '52. I was 12 and then by '54 we got -- the deal was we took some relatives up and did the tour and that is why I got into Kennicott. And then after that he was sending me out -- he was taking me up to work either at Chitina or McCarthy or both in the fall during the busy season to do stuff, grunt work you know. Fix tires.

KAREN BREWSTER: So what was Chitina like as a community in those summers when you or those falls you went out there?

KENNY SMITH: Well, we would stay in Ole's hotel, The Spook's Nook, or if it was up in McCarthy we would stay at Cordova Air Service -- Airlines deal. But in Chitina it was really quiet. For a teenager it was --

KAREN BREWSTER: Boring?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah. And you think there was a lot of little girls running around there. There was no women.

KAREN BREWSTER: And McCarthy too?

KENNY SMITH: Same.

KAREN BREWSTER: Same way?

KENNY SMITH: Same, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, so you didn't like going up there?

KENNY SMITH: Well, pretty boring. It really was.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did you ever go out hunting with your dad?

KENNY SMITH: No, dad liked to duck hunt down in Cordova. We had a duck cabin down there. I did get -- the year I got out of high school me and my high school buddy and his dad and a couple other guys. One guy was a real good sheep hunter. We came up on the Upper Chitina River and we sheep hunted for about two weeks up there. It was really fun. The only time I ever got a sheep, but I flew sheep hunters after that, but I never could get away to sheep hunt again.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, you were busy. You were flying.

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KENNY SMITH: Yeah, yeah, right. Actually it is kind of strange because the place we were sheep hunting this fellow that was really used to hunting right there was a guy by the name of Bob Yelley (phonetic). He was a Cordova fisherman. So a few years ago Wealthy (phonetic) was one of the pilots for Wrangell Air, a friend of mine, he wanted me to ride along with him up to Mt. St. Elias with some people. And on the way up -- I hadn't been up there for years on the Chitina. What's that? And that is Utlima Thule. I thought Ultima Thule was way on up there. And that was just about exactly where we hunted that time in '58, yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: So they have a regular lodge built out there?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, oh, it is one of those \$3,000 a day deals, you know. You know, it is real high end. In fact, my brother owns Tebay now and he leased Tebay to the youngest Jay Claus (phonetic).

KAREN BREWSTER: What is Tebay?

KENNY SMITH: That is T -- if you look over toward the Chugach Mountains when you are up in that country, you know they run parallel the Chugach run parallel to Chitina River. I think all the way into Canada, you know, and then almost, you know, the St. Elias -- the Wrangell's run into the St. Elias, St. Elias and the Chugach blend into the St. Elias Mountain. But if you look, you know, on your way up to Chitina -- I mean McCarthy, you look over there that is all Chugach out to the south. Okay, if you would go over to those hills or mountains and that sort you jump over those just up and over there is a valley that runs the whole length. It is the Hanagita Valley and there is three lakes in there. They are not all that big. Lake Hanagita, Melangita and then the Upper Hanagita's, but it is a long stretch. Then the Hanagita flows into a river that runs north, south that you can see right up it. It is called the Tebay Valley. Tebay means white sheep in Athabaskan.

KAREN BREWSTER: So T-E-B-A-Y?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah. Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay.

KENNY SMITH: And so that is a tributary to the Tebay River, which comes out of Lake Tebay is a pretty good size lake. So the Tebay Lakes have got a pure strain of rainbow and then Hanagita has got fish in it too, grayling and that.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that is where you said you used to fly fishermen in?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, right. Uh-huh.

KAREN BREWSTER: And so your brother still --

KENNY SMITH: He -- my brother wound up owning both camps. It is just a little tiny place at Hanagita, but it is fairly good spread at Tebay and it is in the middle of National Park Wilderness. So he has leased that to not Paul Claus, but to his son Jay Claus which he is working it through there, Ultima Thule. Mostly in winter stuff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, I was going to say. They could still fly in there and go fishing?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah. Uh-huh. You can land on a lake in the wilderness. You can land, but you can't land on land unless you -- it is private property.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh, unless there is an old airstrip there.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, right. You can't land a helicopter even though there is an old airstrip.

KAREN BREWSTER: No. So what --

KENNY SMITH: If it is private, you can.

KAREN BREWSTER: So have you flown all around and landed on all those old airstrips?

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KENNY SMITH: You mean over the years you mean?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

KENNY SMITH: Not all of them, you know. Some of these deals they got up there that they weren't even in existence. Like a place called Wolverine up on the Chitistone pass up high. That -- I didn't even know what they were talking about a lot of the time. I went up there one time with Demeret Wilton (phonetic) and they land right up on top there at the cliff. People get out.

KAREN BREWSTER: Wow, that sounds nasty.

KENNY SMITH: I don't know when that started, but it was after my time.

KAREN BREWSTER: It sounds like pretty risky.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, it is, it is. He kept -- as a matter of fact, he was picking up a couple up there and there was a lot of mist on the windshield and there was no identifiers on the strip and he got it on the ground a couple times, laid the whip to it. And he tried it twice and said, hell, if he overshot you were just a mile high cliff.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I don't know have we covered.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, I can't think of what I want.

KAREN BREWSTER: Your memory of the stories.

KENNY SMITH: There was some story I wanted to say, but if I thought of it, it wouldn't be that interesting probably. It had something to do with rebellions.

KAREN BREWSTER: Rebellions?

KENNY SMITH: There were rebellions of locals with respect to something, but I can't.

KAREN BREWSTER: To the Park or to the --

KENNY SMITH: Not --

KAREN BREWSTER: To mining or to the bridge, what would they have been rebelling?

KENNY SMITH: Well we had, you know, the vehicle bridge was always a source of contention, even today it is.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I will pause it again. (Pause)

KENNY SMITH: But the Pilgrims was an interesting story, you know, cause I did a -- I disagreed with him on a couple of points of the book, Kennicott versus and then the Park. But what he wanted to do is paint the bad old Park come in and was going to chase the name and that was not right. But I think he was trying to throw -- most people think that Tom is more environmentally inclined so he probably tried to throw bone to a developer.

KAREN BREWSTER: The recent story of that Pilgrim Family is they are using a Cat to get up to --

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, yeah, that is -- so that there is something that irritates me too because the Mother Lode Mine is what they bought. It wasn't -- it wasn't part of the Kennicott Copper Corporation complex. It was an independent mine. What happened in 1919 the Mother Lode which is a viable concern they had a tramway taking ore down, all the way down. They had the power plant in McCarthy was not the McCarthy Power Plant, it was the Mother Lode Power Plant and they transmitted their power up from there. They had a warehouse on a siding. The siding is still there right alongside the museum. And so they would bring their copper ore down, truck, wagon, however. And then they would put it in the warehouse and then the railroad would put in boxcars and they load it on. Okay, but what happened in 1919 the two enterprises went into a joint venture. So Kennicott drove a tunnel all the way connected up to the Mother Lode and that ended all that up there.

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Okay, so in 1919, but downstream a ways on McCarthy Creek there is another mining prospect called the Green Butte Mine. But it never became a producing mine. Maybe you come along when I was I was trying to explain that to --

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, I have read Tom's book so I know that the Pilgrim Family were out that way.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, yeah, and I think the benefactors of the Pilgrims really took a lot of liberties in exaggerating the type of road that was and the importance of it because what - - after -- with the exception of the Green Butte effort which never became a producing mine. They were going to use the power plant in Chitina and the warehouse, in fact, in Galata.

KAREN BREWSTER: In McCarthy you mean?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: In McCarthy?

KENNY SMITH: In McCarthy, yeah. But as near as I can glean that the most they took a lot of ore down, but it was only for assay purposes. It never became a viable concern.

KAREN BREWSTER: So you think that the Pilgrim Family didn't really have --

KENNY SMITH: No.

KAREN BREWSTER: A leg is stand on their claim?

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, I don't agree with them saying, you know, they are benefactors, especially Ray Craig and who is kind of a friend and old Rick Kenyon, the late Rick Kenyon. They were really -- they were going -- they are exaggerating the facts because I was up there throughout the 60's and the 50's, nobody was going up McCarthy Creek.

KAREN BREWSTER: That old road.

KENNY SMITH: It was closed. For the most part as near as I can tell it pretty much shut down. They did keep it going for a while for the Green Butte, you know, but it was like 19, it was 17 miles of road. I don't know if it was that long, but it was -- it had 17 bridges on it.

KAREN BREWSTER: And all those bridges washed out.

KENNY SMITH: Yeah, they washed out. They all washed down (inaudible). And then there was the state acquired that property at the Mother Lode. Without going into that whole story they acquired it in the early 60's and in fact, they sold it to a guy at an auction. They did some other stuff that they had taken back. They had taken possession of it legally and so a guy by the name of Wiger (phonetic) up in Fairbanks he bought the Mother Lode. Now I never heard of Wiger until the Pilgrims showed up. But I was out of Chitina by the 70's. I was in Anchorage then back down to Cordova. I never heard of this guy. He came in -- he had this in 1961, but he never did anything with it all the years I was there. And then he started kind of playing around going up McCarthy Creek a little bit. In fact, he made it all the way up to his mine. He was going to -- and then that lasted maybe two years. And another guy by the name of Gordon Burdick who was there he was driving a road up there too with dozers. You know everybody was driving them, but they were on the -- because Wiger I guess put in a couple of bridges or at least one of his own, but other than that there was no road. There was no road. So you listen to those -- when the Pilgrim show -- when the Pilgrims first showed up, Papa Pilgrim wrote a big proclamation that was over that everybody tends to forget about this that said their access is through the Bonanza site. They were going to force the Park Service hands to say they

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could go up to the top of the Bonanza and then go through to the Mother Lode. Well, that was -- that was -- didn't make any sense.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that was another issue where the community was split.

KENNY SMITH: Well, they didn't -- people didn't really, you know, what are you talking about? The benefactors of Pilgrim, oh that's a great idea. Anything that Pilgrim said was a great idea. Okay, but that was fantasy so it didn't last. The next thing you knew Papa Pilgrim took it on his own to fire up Wiger's Cat -- Caterpillar which he wasn't supposed to use and they walked that thing up there on Park land. Okay. The Park Service went berserk and rightly so. You know, you can't just take a dozer and make a new road. Well, the benefactors, including Rowland and my friend, they said, ah, there was trails and roads going up there all over the place in the old days. Well, that is not the case. You know, in fact, hardly anybody ever went up McCarthy Creek in all the years, all my years and I was a lot older than those guys are. And so you had this going on and then the Park Service was all bad because they were dumping on this fine family of Christians and all their singing all their beautiful music. And then the whole sordid story breaks up.

KAREN BREWSTER: Probably didn't, find out later.

KENNY SMITH: And then all of sudden, but was there any apologies to the Park Service? No.

KAREN BREWSTER: From the people who supported.

KENNY SMITH: Well, the people was condemning the Park Service. In fact, a guy by the name of Candelaro (phonetic) was superintendent and I really feel sorry for Gary Candelaro because they were just unfair to him, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it kind of comes full circle. Back in 1980, nobody liked the Park Service and then.

KENNY SMITH: I hate to support the Park Service in those days, but I just even at the time I never did like Papa Pilgrim because I thought he was a biblical manipulator and I read my share of the Bible too and I just stayed away from him. I did like a couple of the boys. For some reason, he thought that I never hardly ever talked to him. For some reason, he thought I was his bosom buddy or something because after he got in trouble then he was always getting subpoenaed by his friends.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, Kenny, thank you so much for your time today. I don't know if you have anything else you want to share. If you do, I will put in another tape.

KENNY SMITH: No, no.

KAREN BREWSTER: Or I may have talked to out.

KENNY SMITH: Nah, we could keep talking forever. I just don't -- there is a couple other points that I am going -- missing here, but, you know, with respect to the specifications you are talking about. But I, you know, I have told you why I like McCarthy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah, Okay. Well, we will turn it off for the moment.

End of Part 2