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Dorothy Huyck's National Park Service Oral History Project, 1942-1987



Naomi L. Hunt
November 17, 1978

Interview conducted by Dorothy B. Huyck
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[START OF TAPE]

Dorothy Huyck: 00:00:00 The date is November 17th, 1978. I'm Dorothy Huyck. I will be interviewing Naomi L. Hunt who is a supervisory writer editor in the Washington offices of the National Park Service. Can I ask you how you first became acquainted with the National Park Service?

Naomi Hunt: 00:00:24 We read about it in the encyclopedia when we were children, and then I went to Yellowstone in 1950, and I thought about trying to get a job in the Western parks. I had always been interested in nature and resort, outdoor kind of activities. I worked at a ski resort at that time. It was just I didn't make any special effort to do it. It was just something that just happened, really, that I finally got to the park system.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:01:24 When did you first come into the Park Service?

Naomi Hunt: 00:01:27 1961.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:01:29 Where was that?

Naomi Hunt: 00:01:30 In Washington.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:01:31 In what position?

Naomi Hunt: 00:01:33 I was information officer for the National Capital Region.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:01:37 What grade was that?

Naomi Hunt: 00:01:39 Seven.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:01:42 What did information officers for the National Capital Region take a particular interest in in the 1960s?

Naomi Hunt: 00:01:48 Oh, wow. We did everything. Carol Smith was my supervisor, and I wrote about five press releases a week on activities. I worked for the National Capital Parks. Also, it was my responsibility that first six months – they had intended to hire two people, but they hired Naomi Hunt instead – and I worked and planned, Design, wrote and did the layout for a souvenir booklet on the Washington Capital Parks that the state park directors were going to – the sites that they would see on a tour throughout the city following

the convention. That was the first time that we had ever used any color.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:02:38 You mean the Park Service?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:02:40 I had to go to the Government Printing Office and sell the idea because no one in my immediate staff thought we could do it. The printing liaison for the Department of Interior, Clay Matthews, thought it was a great idea. So, he asked Carol Smith and me to go with him over to see Mr. Shanklin who was the superintendent of documents at that time. He said, sure, he thought it was a great idea. We only had the cover and then it was all – They didn't do the layout the way I wanted it. They had the artist do it. It was a fantastic experience because I literally forced my hand. I was very timid, and they redid the layout to suit me. It was a fantastic accomplishment.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:03:36 So you got the color out of it, and the layout you wanted.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:03:37 This publication – I would be a little embarrassed to talk about this now because there's been such fantastic change – but this publication was in the world – I just can't say it. In the fair, world's fair in New York. Was it in 1963 or five? '62. It was in a collection in an exhibit of government documents exhibiting what the publication's office could do. It was chosen of all the government agencies.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:04:18 Why the reluctance about color?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:04:20 Well, really, they were not spending money for color in those days. It still is a big problem.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:04:28 So basically a matter of money.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:04:30 Oh, yes. There was no color used at all in government publications at that time. Oh, and you asked what we did. Well, I wrote feature articles, I did a lot of ghost writing, I wrote speeches, I wrote a television show for Secretary Udall, and I had things written for the Congressional Record. Many times, they published in The Star, on The Post, they published my releases without change. They were happy to get them. We had no staff. They had very few people on the distribution list, and I built the list up to something like a dozen to 300 outlets and took care of the

mailing and did the xeroxing and the typing and the producing of their press releases.

- Naomi Hunt: 00:05:27 This went along for two or three years before suddenly, one time I was called over to see the chief of information here. It was something about our department release and I had to get it cleared. We usually got clearance right over there. We didn't have to go through a lot of red tape. That was a scary experience because that man scolded me and said that his child could write better than that. I had been published everywhere.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:06:06 What was he complaining about?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:06:07 I just backed out of his office and went over and talked to Carol and she was very sympathetic. She said, well, she knew Frank Kelly and I saw him just a few weeks ago. Oh, so nice and he had just completely forgotten that, but I never forgot. Anyway, I was very successful. I felt happy about what I was doing. I was asked to do speeches for Lady Bird Johnson.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:06:39 On a particular subject?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:06:40 Usually, dedication spots or dedication. We had a lot of public events and they had to do all the advanced planning, and sometimes I'd work on programs, the layout of the program. Carol usually did that. And then, I'd do PR work as well as writing, and worked with Mr. Hani on the Washington Monument Society dinner. We had so many public events that they had to have written or some kind of script or plan or something. I worked during the beautification program with Mrs. Johnson, did a booklet of plant materials and parks and listed names of the plants. That was a tremendously difficult job because it's not my field, really.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:07:40 There were several conferences held by Mrs. Johnson and sponsored—
- Naomi Hunt: 00:07:40 Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:07:47 On natural beauty and beautification. [inaudible 00:07:47].
- Naomi Hunt: 00:07:49 I wrote one. I did the first draft of a script that she did for a television show. However, I don't think they used much of

my material. I remember that I was not invited to any of those follow-up meetings. A good deal of my material – Mr. Hani. The request came down through channels and it was completely anonymous. They didn't know that I was doing this, but I have a record of it because I'm really proud to be participating. There were people who knew what I was doing and very appreciative, Mr. Jett and Mr. Castro.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:08:32 How long were you in the National Capital Region?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:08:35 About six years.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:08:38 From about '67?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:08:39 Mm-hmm.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:08:40 And then what?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:08:43 And then, I had an opportunity to go to the Bureau of Reclamation to get a promotion.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:08:49 What did you do then?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:08:49 Carol had tried to get me a promotion and they said no, that job would never be any higher than 11. I went to Reclamation and became a technical editor, and I did things like water measurement manuals and cement, concrete and bridge work, bridges, heavy engineering reports. I learned an awful lot, but it was a very tedious and unexciting job. However, I did do some future stories for a magazine at that time just on my own time because I wanted to continue.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:09:34 Were they office-related or outside of the office?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:09:36 They were office-related. They were for the Bureau of Reclamation, their recreation and their natural areas. I did one about birds nesting at Kirwan National Refuge, and such things, nature writing.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:09:53 Did you go there at 11 or 12?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:09:57 I got at 12 when I went into Reclamation.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:09:59 How long were you at Reclamation?

Naomi Hunt: 00:10:01 Two years.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:10:02 And then?

Naomi Hunt: 00:10:04 I decided I didn't want to do technical writing so I left the government and went to work for National Parks & Recreation Association.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:10:18 What were you doing for them?

Naomi Hunt: 00:10:19 I was librarian and had started the archive and I was in the information office, and I did some writing and some book review. Mostly, it was ordering books and reorganizing the library and setting it up on a more professional basis.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:10:39 [inaudible 00:10:39].

Naomi Hunt: 00:10:39 Mm-hmm.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:10:44 [inaudible 00:10:44].

Naomi Hunt: 00:10:44 Yeah.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:10:46 How long were you there?

Naomi Hunt: 00:10:47 About two years

Dorothy Huyck: 00:10:51 [inaudible 00:10:51] about '71?

Naomi Hunt: 00:10:59 Right. Then, I received about five announcements of an opening for a writer-editor in the Park Service, five different friends that knew I had no access to because I was outside of the service, and they had a tremendous number of applicants, but I got the job at the Eastern Service Center as an editor. We only had one editor and we did master plans and prospectuses.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:11:38 You were working on master plans.

Naomi Hunt: 00:11:40 And development plans and the interpretive plans. That was a planning center.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:11:48 For the whole Eastern—

Naomi Hunt: 00:11:49 The Eastern Service Center includes everything East of Mississippi, and they had a Western Service Center that

was located in San Francisco. Late that year or early the next year, they combined them. I had just gotten started when they moved to Denver.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:12:04 And you moved with them?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:12:04 Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:12:12 There were a lot of people who did not make that move, I think?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:12:16 About a third.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:12:21 The duties and functions of your office were similar in Denver, though. [inaudible 00:12:26].
- Naomi Hunt: 00:12:25 Well, it was quite different in many ways. As I said, the work was similar, but they had a whole reorganization, I had a different supervisor and they had what they called a stable of editors, and I was just one of them.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:12:49 What were you editing in that case?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:12:50 It depended on – I don't know. I did a lot of work that [inaudible 00:12:59] kind of a mismatch. One thing that I did when I started at Eastern Service Center and carried through, and it was finally finished in Denver was that Parks, Plants and People. It was a book that was supposed to have been researched and written by the president of the ASLA, American Society of Landscape Architects. They brought it to me in a bushel basket, literally.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:13:30 Literally in a bushel basket?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:13:31 There was no organization. It was very uneven. The research was very careless, and I told them I couldn't cope with it. They said, "Well, you have to." So, I called my good friend Ray Freeman and told him that there would be no way that I could do this and could we get some help, professional help. Dave Wright came over and worked with me. I spent some time up at Harpers Ferry. Elner Calhoun helped me with the organization and how you do a book. It was the first time I'd ever been responsible for a complete book. Then, Dave worked on it quite a bit. He did a lot of rewriting, but he was not an editor, and so [inaudible

00:14:27] and I completely reworked the book again and it was full of [inaudible 00:14:34].

- Naomi Hunt: 00:14:36 Finally, when it came to the bibliography, it was such an awful mess. They had not gotten any permission to use any of the citations and the citations were not complete. Again, I threw up my hands and said, "You're going to have to find somebody. You're going to have to pay somebody to do this. There's no way that I'm going to work on this because it's too bad, bad shape, and it has to go back to the researcher."
- Naomi Hunt: 00:15:06 I found something in the government manual to substantiate my argument, so they did. They hired an English major to do it and she had to go back and do an awful lot of research. It took about six months to get the bibliography and citations. We did write the letters for permission, and then in the meantime, there was the move and had to change artists. It was a fantastic job, but we got an award for it, and it was republished. It's used in a lot of schools.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:15:43 I have to admit, I don't know it at all. "Parks, Plants and People."
- Naomi Hunt: 00:15:46 Did some big book about that thick. I'll show it to you some time. It had some good stuff in it. I had shown it to other landscape architects, and they said it was really fun because it had gathered together material that you'd have to look at a lot of books for. The intent and purpose was fun, and it turned out all right, but it was interesting that I literally had to learn on the job and had this opportunity. That has happened so many times in my career. I was given a job there, hadn't the vaguest idea how to begin, and you always find help some way.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:16:31 How long were you in Denver then?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:16:34 Well, let me see. It was pretty nearly four years.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:16:36 Until about 1975?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:16:45 No. Yes. Well, in the meantime, while I was in Denver, they sent for me to work on the Alaska Task Force, and I was supposed to come for two weeks, and I stayed six months. I stayed with the Cochran's part at that time and

drove down Mount Vernon. That was a crazy job because we didn't have any boss. Nobody knew what they were doing, and we would work. I would work all day long on manuscripts, and then the next day they'd say we changed all this. We had a meeting [inaudible 00:17:18] in the Interior building and we were up on K Street, and I swear I spent 50% of my time walking back and forth, xeroxing, doing all kinds of chores, but I got along well with the staff, and they were very appreciative.

- Naomi Hunt: 00:17:40 I did some things that some other people didn't seem to be able to do. They thought they were so simple but paginating a manuscript that would be ready to reproduce, it was so funny. Those guys just could not do it and get it straight. They'd lose [inaudible 00:17:57] count or something. It was a headache. We worked Saturdays and Sundays and Thanksgiving. I didn't have a weekend off for weeks. But there's something interesting about working with a task force. You really get to know who's working and who's your friend and true colors come out. Well, we got an award for that too.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:18:24 What was the project?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:18:27 This was the environmental impact statements for the Alaska plan. We had 27 documents. They practically filled the room [inaudible 00:18:36]. That was the first go around. Then when they wanted me to come back for the second go around, it was in the summer of, gosh, '74 maybe. I don't know. I was knee deep in the sign manual. That was another ticklish job. So, exacting all this stuff, nothing very much fun or creative, but just really a lot of hard work. Nobody else wanted to do it and I just wanted it because it was such a challenge and I enjoyed working with the people who were in charge. About this time, they started asking me if I wanted to come to Washington. They needed to get a new editor. They had someone on board, but they were trying to find somebody else.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:19:27 May I back up just a minute and ask, what was the challenge involved in sign manual? This was the first manual of—
- Naomi Hunt: 00:19:36 Comprehensive plan for the whole United States, not United States. Parks and the public highway, Canada, Mexico, and all the signs.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:19:47 Was it [inaudible 00:19:48]?

Naomi Hunt: 00:19:51 Yes. The manual was every detail like the size, inches, feet, the thickness, the exact lettering. They had prohibitive signs, they had welcome signs, they had designation signs, they had trail signs. It was just tremendously complex, and then references back and forth. It was a lot like technical editing as I did in the Reclamation office.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:20:20 Once that manual was set up and established, have there been changes since then?

Naomi Hunt: 00:20:26 I think so. I don't know what the status is. Grant has asked me a couple times for my copy, and I don't know what goes on with it. I don't care anymore, really. I don't know if it's good or bad, but once something's finished, I just really have a hard time remembering how difficult it was or how interesting.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:20:48 Isn't that true of most things

Naomi Hunt: 00:20:49 I don't know.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:20:52 It has to be true of most things.

Naomi Hunt: 00:20:55 I don't know. I'm just kind of less interested in it so I don't remember too well, except some of the heartaches and griefs.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:21:04 I interrupted you. You started saying you kept hearing from Washington.

Naomi Hunt: 00:21:07 Well, they asked me that summer if I wouldn't want to come to Washington. First, I thought they wanted me to come back and work on the Alaska Task Force and I said, no, I thought that I had done my share on that. Hank Bruce was my good friend and mentor in Denver, said, "Okay. Would you do this for us because I don't think I can get anybody else to do it right?" I started on that project. Tom Wilson came out to Denver to talk to me. I thought he was looking for a job. I found out quite some time later they had heard about me, and they were trying to find the best person they could for their newsletter editor.

Naomi Hunt: 00:21:47 And then later in September, I think it was Jean Bullard asked me if I wouldn't be interested in the job and I said,

"Oh, no. I wouldn't find a place to live. I don't want to ride the bus anymore. I don't want to go back to that place." I guess she didn't give up anyway. Mr. Everhardt asked me if I wouldn't come. I said, "Well--"

Dorothy Huyck: 00:22:25 Gary Everhardt?

Naomi Hunt: 00:22:25 Uh-huh. My boss thought that maybe it'd be a good opportunity. I started two newsletters in the Denver – Three. The Exponent, and that was by the way a name that I suggested, they had a contest, and they chose that. That was a semi-technical publication on planning and planning and A&E contracts and construction and that sort of thing. We had an editorial board from each of the various areas of discipline, engineer, landscape architect, architect, and that was fun. I enjoyed that. It was a quarterly.

Naomi Hunt: 00:23:06 And then, they started an employee newsletter, but they didn't – They said that wasn't legal, and so then we had a book sale and a bake sale and we raised money and we kept this thing going. It was all volunteer. We weren't allowed to work on it in the office, but we did it and everybody liked it, but they said that Washington had told us we couldn't have another newsletter because they had a newsletter in Washington. Well, anyway, I'm always starting things.

Naomi Hunt: 00:23:38 And then, when Everhardt asked me if I would do this job, I didn't think I could do it. I was really scared, but I thought I would come to – I asked if I could come to Washington and talk to the people and talk to the staff and see if I could work with them because I'd heard such horrendous stories about – People told me, "Oh, nobody keeps that job more than a year, nobody can do that job." I came and I talked to people, and as I said, I was scared, but I spent the – It was Christmas holidays and I spent a lot of time with them, my friend Charlotte, and she had copies of the State Department newsletter.

Naomi Hunt: 00:24:24 Somehow they just envisioned what I might make of it, and I figured, well, the staff would come, everything would come as long as I was interested enough, I had a goal. In the meantime, Jean Bullard had told me about their house that they had and the [inaudible 00:24:39] that I could get in. I really had no excuse. The first few months were dreadful. I thought I surely had made a mistake, but Jean used to say, she said, "Who else can do it? Think. Who else

can do it?" So, I wrote it on a piece of paper. Who else can do it any better? And that just kept me going.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:25:00 What year did you actually come here then, that no one else can do it better situation?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:25:05 Let's see. Where are we now? I guess that was 197 – I've been here three and a half years, so it was '75. '75, I guess.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:25:22 Could anyone else have done it?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:25:27 I don't know anybody right now, but I'm sure somebody could. I'm hoping that within the next couple of years, somebody else can do it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:25:37 Were you also getting out the Courier at that time?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:25:39 Yes. We had the two papers. It was not an original idea with me that they combined them. However, I felt that I could do a much more effective job because we had a lot of overlap, not only in content, but in readership, and there was a lot of duplication. We did that with an outside contractor. We were going to Photo Data. We were going to L Street. It was just like this constant motion all the time.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:26:15 And then another thing, I don't know if I want to put this on the record, but I just felt that the Courier did not have the dignity and the attention that I wanted to give it because I was too involved with the newsletter and it was getting so much pressure from the public affairs office chief at that time, and things were just not – There was no communication at all with – I just was really working in the dark.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:26:58 You made that combination effective in 1977.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:27:02 Yes. Last fall. November was the first issue.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:27:06 Are you pleased with I the results?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:27:07 Oh, yes. Very much so. We haven't had any complaints. Everyone is pleased. We've had a couple of letters questioning why they should become a member if they can get a free copy at the office, but two out of 25,000. There's a good answer for that, but frequently through the years we had had complaints that the family never got to know what

their father or their husband was doing, and now it comes to the home.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:27:40 How many do you print currently?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:27:44 Well, it varies. In the summer it's 20,000 for employees and 3,000 for alumni. In the winter, it drops down to 17,000, but we continue the 3,000 for alumni.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:28:01 Can we go back in your own history and ask where and when you were born?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:28:07 I was born in Battle Creek, Michigan, in the old, what is now – What is it now? It's a federal building. It was the Kellogg Sanitarium Hospital. I was born there and later worked there when it was Percy Jones Army Hospital.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:28:27 And when?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:28:28 February 9, 1919.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:28:30 Were you an only child?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:28:32 No.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:28:34 Were you the oldest child?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:28:35 No.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:28:36 How much older were your siblings?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:28:39 My sister is five years older, and I had a sister in between who died at three, and I have two younger brothers.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:28:50 So you were essentially the middle child. Did you grow up in Battle Creek?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:28:58 I lived in Battle Creek until I was about nine years old. We moved to a small farm about 20 miles from Battle Creek. I went to a one-room school there.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:29:12 How many years did you go to a one-room school?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:29:14 From the third grade to the eighth.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:29:21 Was either of your parents a college graduate?

Naomi Hunt: 00:29:23 No. They both had about three years college.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:29:28 What were their occupations?

Naomi Hunt: 00:29:31 Registered nurses, both my father and mother.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:29:36 Your father was also a registered nurse. Was that unusual in that era?

Naomi Hunt: 00:29:40 I don't know. There were three in his class. I think that it was unusual, but they had more men in Adventist schools than they did. My mother and father met at school. My father had been in college before, but the men's training I think was two years and the women for three years.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:30:03 Two years of training for the men.

Naomi Hunt: 00:30:04 They usually didn't do bedside nursing. They went into laboratory work or X-ray or something like that. That's what my father did.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:30:16 Did you attend high school at Battle Creek or elsewhere?

Naomi Hunt: 00:30:18 I went to high school in Burlington. They had a small high school, probably about 10 in the ninth grade. At the end of the school year, I announced that I would never go to school again. I was finished.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:30:39 What set you all apart?

Naomi Hunt: 00:30:39 Because of our religion.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:30:39 Oh, I didn't know.

Naomi Hunt: 00:30:44 It was really religious persecution.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:30:46 Really? Were you the only Seventh Day Adventist in the class?

Naomi Hunt: 00:30:51 Yes, and the only in the community.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:30:57 Oh, you were. There was a community feeling of distaste for Seventh Day Adventists?

- Naomi Hunt: 00:31:04 Mm-hmm. Well, it was a very strange community. They made fun of my mother too because she spoke what is like a Swedish accent. We were funny. We were very peculiar.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:31:16 So it was both an ethnic and a religious [inaudible 00:31:18].
- Naomi Hunt: 00:31:18 We were very peculiar. It was during the depression. I had terrible clothes [inaudible 00:31:31].
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:31:31 Did you in fact drop out of school?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:31:33 Yes. I didn't go to school for a year, and then I went to live in Battle Creek with some good friends as a mother's helper. I had a psychiatric patient in their home. They were very, very good to me and asked me if I'd like to go back to school. So, I went half days, and there I went to the Adventist academy. I went there one year and then I transferred and went to boarding school, Broadview Academy in La Grange, Illinois. I had an aunt and several cousins who were teachers there.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:23 You graduated from high school there?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:32:25 Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:26 And this too was an Adventist academy?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:32:26 Mm-hmm.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:26 What about college?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:32:31 I came to Washington to college at Tacoma Park one year.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:36 What is it called now?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:32:37 It's called the Washington Missionary College or Columbia Junior College. I've forgotten which. It was both. I don't think the four-year course was accredited, so they took the name of Columbia Junior College, and that was as far as they were accredited.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:54 Does this mean you got a degree from—

Naomi Hunt: 00:32:58 No. I went to school about a year and a half, and then I got sick and I was out, and then I went to Michael Reese Nurses Training School.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:33:13 In Chicago?

Naomi Hunt: 00:33:14 Mm-hmm. And then, I got sick again. What did I do? Oh, I had a nurse friend whose father worked for [inaudible 00:33:32] Advertising Agency and I went to work for them.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:33:35 In Chicago?

Naomi Hunt: 00:33:36 Mm-hmm.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:33:40 How long were you there?

Naomi Hunt: 00:33:42 Oh, probably about a year or less. And then, I was offered a job at a little radio station in Louisville, Kentucky, WINN.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:33:56 What did you do there?

Naomi Hunt: 00:33:57 I was a continuity writer and general assistant. I had a program of my own with music and composers.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:34:07 What kind program?

Naomi Hunt: 00:34:09 Well, I'd just do research and talk about composers and then play records.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:34:14 So you were the disc jockey?

Naomi Hunt: 00:34:16 Sort of.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:34:17 Was this classical?

Naomi Hunt: 00:34:18 Yes. I was called continuity writer, but this was just something special they let me do. I was there for a while and then I decided that I wanted to go to Vermont. I used to read all the papers about writing and publicity and this fantastic ski resort in Vermont, went to work as publicist, and then later did all kinds of things, public relations. I worked with all the New England newspapers and radio stations. We put on ski meets and I worked with management of the hotel in the ski area.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:35:03 What area is that?

Naomi Hunt: 00:35:04 It's Big Bromley, Snow Valley, Southern Vermont. It's about halfway between Boston and New York.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:35:17 And after that?

Naomi Hunt: 00:35:17 Then my mother was very ill and I went back to Battle Creek and stayed with them a while. And then, I bought a little house, and I was doing some freelance work, but I could make a lot more money as a stenographer. So, I went to work for Percy Jones Army Hospital. Then, they closed after a year or so and I went to work as a medical records librarian at the Battle Creek Sanitarium and Hospital. I'd always had a dual interest in writing and in libraries. When I was in Washington in college, I worked in the library. I also worked in the library in the boarding school, so I had to earn my tuition and my boarding room, both in high school and in the first year of college. So then, while I was in Battle Creek, I started going to Western again about this time in the fifties. I was just taking a course on Saturday or nights, whenever I could. I had quite a few courses but didn't never expect to get a degree.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:36:43 Did you eventually?

Naomi Hunt: 00:36:43 Mm-hmm.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:36:45 Where?

Naomi Hunt: 00:36:46 Denver.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:36:48 Oh, in Denver.

Naomi Hunt: 00:36:49 Well, I was in that junky job. I went back to school and got—

Dorothy Huyck: 00:36:54 From where?

Naomi Hunt: 00:36:54 University Without Walls. I went to Denver U and I went to Colorado, and I had a private tutor, and I did some advanced work for my master's.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:37:11 Which degree or any institution gives a degree through the University Without Walls? I just don't know.

- Naomi Hunt: 00:37:17 Well, this was the Loretto Heights College, but if I had gone on and finished, I would've gotten my master's from Goddard.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:37:26 In Vermont.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:37:27 Mm-hmm.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:37:33 You still must have a bit of a gap. You were in Battle Creek for some time.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:37:36 10 years.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:37:37 10 years. Does that bring you up to '61 when you entered the Park Service?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:37:45 Mm-hmm. I was in Battle Creek first. I was at the library. [inaudible 00:37:48] Then Civil Defense moved into this Percy Jones Army Hospital where I was born. They called me back and I went to work there. The first time I worked for the government, I was a medical secretary. And then the second, I was in the medical library, and then when I came back, I was in information office, and then they transferred me to the disaster office. There, we had direct contact with the White House, and that's how I happened to come to Washington because I was working for the Executive Office and then they had an opening here. And then after I was in that about six months, I came for the Park Service.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:38:37 Had you been in any national parks prior to actually working for the Park Service? Had you traveled in some?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:38:42 Yellowstone in the fifties.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:38:47 Let me go back in history again, if I may for a minute, and ask about the period when you were in school. You spoke with his family who was encouraging as far as going back to school was concerned. Were there other persons, either of your parents or a teacher, someone who encouraged you during the educational process back in high school?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:39:05 Well, I don't remember. I think my mother always expected me to have an education. Nobody would seem to be very worried about my spending a year out. I guess they assumed I'd go back when I got ready. It was not unusual in those days for people in the Adventist denomination, for

people to take a year or two off to earn money to go back to school. In retrospect, I think I probably – Well, I never stopped going to school, but as I said, I never had really thought that I would ever be able to get a degree because, well, it was during the Depression and there was just no money. You just couldn't plan on going straight through. Nobody did.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:39:58 So as far as academic interest and encouragement, maybe you were your own encouragement, with the exception to family [inaudible 00:40:05].
- Naomi Hunt: 00:40:06 Well, no. I don't think the family lived really with that. They thought everybody should have a high school degree education. That was the standard in those days, those people, those contacts. However, my mother's nieces and nephews were growing up at the same time and they were all helping each other and struggling in becoming doctors and dentists and teachers, and the older children would help the younger children. We heard so much about that you have to have an education to amount to anything. I heard that all my life. If you don't go to school, you won't amount to anything. So, it was just part of me. It wasn't any special mentor or any special encouragement.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:41:01 Did you take math and science courses in high school?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:41:06 Oh, in high school. I loved algebra. I had an idea that I couldn't learn very well, and science was for boys.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:41:19 Science was one of those courses that was more appropriate for boys? You took algebra?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:41:27 Yeah. I loved algebra and I liked geometry.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:41:31 But you did not take chemistry and physics.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:41:35 Well, I had all those, and when I was in nurse's training, I had chemistry, physics, biology, anatomy. I did like them. Something about it that I just never really applied myself. I did like them, but it wasn't something that I thought I would ever be doing anything practical with. I loved the medical language, the Latin and the words.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:42:00 Did you play with boys as a child?

Naomi Hunt: 00:42:04 Yes, we did.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:42:06 Were you by any chance considered to be a tomboy?

Naomi Hunt: 00:42:11 Well, yes. I think so. More than my sister, yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:42:17 As you became a teenager, were you expected to become something more of a lady?

Naomi Hunt: 00:42:21 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:42:21 Did you go along with that?

Naomi Hunt: 00:42:22 Yes. A lot of pressure on that. That's not lady-like. I don't want you doing that. More by my father than my mother, strangely.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:42:35 Did you agree with that, or did you rebel in some way?

Naomi Hunt: 00:42:40 It's a very silent rebellion.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:42:43 How did you express it silently?

Naomi Hunt: 00:42:46 Frustration, tears, moodiness, go off and read.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:42:57 Were there areas of extracurricular activities that you were involved in in high school that were of any help later on when you joined the Park Service?

Naomi Hunt: 00:43:05 Well, I was very much interested in drama in high school. I used to write plays and direct them and be in them. I enjoyed that, but I don't know that it had any help to me.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:43:24 I'd like to ask about persons who have been supervisors during your Park Service career. We need not mention their names at all. In fact, it's probably best not to mention names. I'm wondering if you had supervisors who were encouraging or discouraging, or possibly you've encountered some of both.

Naomi Hunt: 00:43:43 I encountered both.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:43:44 Those who were encouraging, how did you experience their encouragement?

Naomi Hunt: 00:44:01 Oh, I think it's more intuitive. I have always succeeded with women supervisors.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:44:17 And men?

Naomi Hunt: 00:44:24 Even those who were most supportive were a little bit scary. I don't relate well to men.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:44:33 Were they discouraging?

Naomi Hunt: 00:44:38 In some cases. I can't say that it was ever verbalized. I can't. I think maybe I imagined it. I just never felt that they had much confidence in me. I never had a confrontation with a male supervisor, and I have had with women, and it was probably my inability to communicate. I imagined it was a lot more strained than it may have been.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:45:20 There are certainly some people who think that the Park Service is a rather male-oriented organization. Do you?

Naomi Hunt: 00:45:30 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:45:30 Do you see that changing at all?

Naomi Hunt: 00:45:30 Not particularly.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:45:39 Have you been given opportunities to take coursework and classes or training center programs?

Naomi Hunt: 00:45:51 Yes and no. It depends on the supervisor entirely. Since I've been in this position, I'm required to take certain courses and I haven't taken all that I should take because my supervisor doesn't want me, and I too feel that it's hard for me to be away. However, I think I told you before about how I went to a [inaudible 00:46:24] class and it was unusual that they sent a woman at that time.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:46:29 When was that?

Naomi Hunt: 00:46:32 Oh, I don't remember. Probably 1965 or something like that. I could look it up.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:46:42 That was the [inaudible 00:46:42].

Naomi Hunt: 00:46:42 Yeah. But it was called Park Service Administration was the name of the course, and it covered everything about

management. It was very valuable to me because I didn't know anything about the Park Service. I had been learning about the National Capital Parks, but I had never heard about inholdings and concessions and all those things. That was very valuable. I have never been to a training course at Albright. I have been at Harpers Ferry. I would say that I have not been as aggressive about demanding courses, but I encourage my subordinates to take all the courses they can.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:47:31 You've taught some haven't you?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:47:32 Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:47:35 Such as?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:47:36 Writing, and then another one in writing and editing publications.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:47:46 Are you member of any professional societies?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:47:51 Yeah. Let's see. I'm a member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America and the Southeastern Press Association and National Press Club. What else? Oh, I belong to some things and then I drop out.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:48:17 Do you attend meetings in these organizations [inaudible 00:48:20]?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:48:20 Yes. I'm – conservation roundtables. Not an organization, but I go to those meetings.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:48:30 Are you usually sent by the Park Service?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:48:30 No.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:48:41 Would you say that your specific talents and training are being used by the Park Service?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:48:41 Yeah.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:48:45 Has someone acted as a mentor for you since you've been in the Park Service?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:48:53 Many people have helped me, but no special person. Carol Smith really helped me when I started out, but she was only

able to help me to a degree because we had a male supervisor who didn't think we could do anything.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:49:14 That must have been helpful.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:49:16 We were talking about that yesterday. That's really the reason why I left.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:49:24 How does the woman work with a male supervisor who assumes she cannot do anything?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:49:30 I just have to go someplace else.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:49:33 Might as well give up on that particular supervisor.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:49:35 That's been my tack. Now, I've talked to other women. They say they want to break through. I said maybe I was wrong in giving up too easily, but I can't fight all the time. If they don't want my services, then I'll go where they do. I have always been that way. It's hard because when you see what could be done and you like to do it and they won't let you do it. It's taken me a long time to learn this. There is somebody who wants me.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:50:07 You might just as well work for that person.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:50:09 Right. [inaudible 00:50:12]. It takes years to build that kind of confidence.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:50:19 Would such a man attribute the inability to accomplish anything to any female do you think?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:50:24 Yeah. The ones that have inhibited me, I didn't think I was especially a special injustice or discriminated against. There are women who I have seen break through and do remarkable things, and I have great admiration from them, but it's a bit of a mystery to me. It's not that I think that I'm wrong and they're right, or the supervisor did more for them than he did for me. It's a mystery. I can't quite explain how I feel about it because I'm very proud to see women get ahead, and I would help any woman I could.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:51:10 Have you, in fact, helped any women in the Park Service or had someone who is a woman help you in during your career, maybe in identifying a job or giving you backing for a particular job?

- Naomi Hunt: 00:51:25 I think Jean Bullard may have had a lot to do with my early success in the troubled times when I came on board here this last time. I mentioned Carol Smith who was my supervisor. I was completely inexperienced in government or Park Service. That was a very key point in my career.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:51:54 Did you see anything growing up that might be an old-girl network for professional women?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:52:00 Old-girl network?
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:52:01 Well, comparable to the fact that men usually function through something of an old-boy network.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:52:06 Oh, I don't think I understand that setup. I hadn't thought about it. I don't know about it. I don't really think so.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:52:19 Are there any jobs in the Park Service that you think women should not tackle?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:52:33 I don't think of anything she can't do. I heard a man at the Outdoor Writers Conference talk about a young woman who had lifted some trees or something up. He's in the Forest Service, and she had hurt her back, and then she was suing the – No, he worked for a company in forestry – was suing the company, and the other men on the job were resentful because they had to do some of the heavier work and women got paid the same. I suppose it would be problems, but should or should not do, that's up to your physical ability. Some men can't lift trees. I don't think it has anything to do with being a woman. I think it's just that some people shouldn't do some jobs. I shouldn't be the director. I should never want to be the director.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:53:28 But you don't think of jobs that just in and of themselves—
- Naomi Hunt: 00:53:31 I think of women as people, and I wish that men would.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:53:37 Men do not always consider women people?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:53:40 No. I feel they sometimes think they're daughters or wives.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:53:46 Paternal child relationship kind of thing. Do you think that being a woman has in any way affected your opportunities or added responsibility and promotions?

- Naomi Hunt: 00:54:05 You mean I was given more because I am a woman or less?
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:54:08 Either one. Pro and con.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:54:12 There were places in the past when – No. I can't say that. I don't know. I grew up in a period that it was just the way it was. I don't think you can particularly say the Park Service had anything to do with it. I'm in a field that is largely dominated by women at my grade, I mean at my income level. They have men editors in the big magazines, but I think there are probably more women editors.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:54:51 You know why? Why are women more acceptable as editors?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:54:51 I think they're better at it. They're much more trained to take care of details. I don't know. They didn't use to have many men who were English majors, and I don't know why it is, but I've always felt that I was in a – It wasn't like being an engineer or a physicist. It's traditionally accepted, so I feel I had less, probably less discrimination than people like Kathy Cochran or Elizabeth Abro or almost any other of my female colleagues have not been editors.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:55:40 In your field, it's less likely that a woman would be experiencing difficulty getting added possibilities or responsibility and in turn, added promotion.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:55:52 Well, the thing is that they usually make men supervisors, and in the government you don't get to higher grades unless you take on supervision. As I told Priscilla a couple weeks ago, I said I was a grade 12 for six years before I had any of this stuff to deal with. She said, "Well, you should be at 13." I know that I'm doing much higher-grade work than some of the men in the public affairs office has recognized. It's partly because, well, maybe if I were 21, I would fight it. I don't know. I expect something to happen, but it's a little late now for me to be thinking about the higher grades.
- Naomi Hunt: 00:56:41 I think age has affected me, the age that I grew up in, the Depression, the war, the era that I lived in. I think I am about just where I belong. If I had been born 10 years later, 10 years earlier, had different early childhood. I was terribly beat down and shy. Really, sometimes I'm amazed

that I have done as much as I have because I had such a hard time as a child.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:57:16 [inaudible 00:57:16] Just because of your home situation?

Naomi Hunt: 00:57:16 Um-hmmm.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:57:16 So you have had all of that to compensate for. If you were talking to a young woman just out of school, shall we say, who was interested in joining the Park Service, would you encourage her?

Naomi Hunt: 00:57:35 Oh, sure.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:57:35 I do want to ask, during the time that you've been employed, have you had financial responsibility for anyone other than yourself?

Naomi Hunt: 00:57:49 Well, yes and no. I did an awful lot for my parents when they were elderly, and I've educated two nieces and a nephew. I mean, helped them with their education.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:58:13 I've asked you quite a collection of question. Is there something we haven't talked about that you'd like to comment in?

Naomi Hunt: 00:58:20 No. I don't know if I answered some of them in a way that made any real sense, but I think it's very interesting what you're doing and I'm just wondering how what I've said would relate to what others are saying, if it really makes any sense.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:58:49 You're an employee of the National Park Service just like everybody else. Everybody has a different experience.

Naomi Hunt: 00:59:02 As much as I really am loyal and like the Park Service, I don't really feel like I'm part of it. Maybe that's something I missed telling you then. I think it's probably because I'm a woman.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:59:23 It's still basically for men?

Naomi Hunt: 00:59:24 Mm-hmm.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:59:25 And men see that it's basically for men. Even though women are joining in the lower ranks, there's still not too

many women in the management. Am I putting words in your mouth?

- Naomi Hunt: 00:59:39 No. That's what I was thinking.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:59:44 Is it changing?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:59:49 I don't think so.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:59:53 You would anticipate it will be an organization for men for some time?
- Naomi Hunt: 00:59:58 Maybe 25 years. Even the visitors prefer to go to a man for questions and answers. I've heard this over and over again.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:00:14 Possibly Park Service is a reflection then of the general society's attitudes?
- Naomi Hunt: 01:00:20 Possibly. I don't think it's very much different. I don't think it's anymore that way than – But no more or no less.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:00:34 Give it another 25 years. And then what?
- Naomi Hunt: 01:00:38 I think we'll have our place. Yeah. I really do.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:00:43 Is that encouraging?
- Naomi Hunt: 01:00:44 Yeah. I think if you think of span of life, it's pretty good. Think what we've done in the last 25 years.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:00:54 Did that encourage you?
- Naomi Hunt: 01:00:57 Well, I think it's been slower, but I know how slow things change. Changes are so slow, but they're inevitable. I know of change.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:01:14 Thank you very much.

[END OF TAPE]

[END OF INTERVIEW]