

**National Park Service (NPS) History Collection**

---

NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817)  
Dorothy Huyck's National Park Service Oral History Project, 1942-1987



Erlinda R. Lopez  
September 21, 1978

Interview conducted by Dorothy B. Huyck  
Transcribed by Rev.com  
508 compliant version by Jennifer Taylor

This digital transcript contains updated pagination, formatting, and editing for accessibility and compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Interview content has not been altered.  
The original digital transcript is preserved in the NPS History Collection.

The release form for this interview is on file at the NPS History Collection.

NPS History Collection  
Harpers Ferry Center  
PO Box 50  
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425  
HFC\_Archivist@nps.gov

[START OF TAPE]

Dorothy Huyck: 00:00 The date is September 21st, 1978. I am Dorothy Huyck. I will be interviewing Erlinda R. Lopez. Erlinda is spelled E-R-L-I-N-D-A. She is a contract specialist in the Southwest Regional Office, Santa Fe.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:17 Can I ask you when you first became acquainted with the National Park Service?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 00:23 Well, when I was a senior in high school, we took the Civil Service test at the high school. And several months later, I was called in for an interview here at the Park Service. The job was a clerk-steno, GS-3, and this was in October of 1964.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:46 Had you ever been to a national park before?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 00:49 I had been to Bandelier, but I really was not aware of the whole Park Service as it is.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:58 So you came on duty as a clerk-steno?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 01:00 Right. I was a clerk-steno for about three years. That was in the Division of Resource Management and Visitor Protection. After about three years, I transferred into the Division of Finance. There was a vacancy, it was a GS-4.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 01:35 I believe the title of that one was secretary, and I was in there for a couple of years as a GS-4. There was a vacancy and the Division of Contracting and Property Management. That was the secretary in the Division, GS-5. I applied for that one also and was selected. And I guess I worked in there for about, gee, '67 – nearly four years. I believe as a GS-5. In August of '71, I went on maternity leave and during the time I was gone, my supervisor transferred to Washington and my present supervisor came in. I returned to duty. I believe it was the last week in December of '71 and shortly thereafter, my job was reclassified to a procurement clerk, GS-6. I guess about a year later, it was reclassified again to a procurement assistant.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:12 Okay. This brings us up to about '72.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 03:24 It might've even been later than that. It took a while. I don't recall. I should have brought my folder.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:40 That's all right. After, the procurement assistant stage—

Erlinda R. Lopez: 03:44 Okay. That was a GS-7. I think it took two or three years and finally got a GS-9 contract specialist, which just last year was reclassified as a GS-11. And of course, I had to compete for that.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:14 So in this year or '77?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 04:18 In November of '77.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:22 You became a GS-11 contract specialist

Erlinda R. Lopez: 04:23 Yes, Ma'am

Dorothy Huyck: 04:28 You mentioned taking a civil service test in high school. Let me go back and ask, did you attend high school here in Santa Fe?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 04:34 I attended high school in Pojoaque, which is just about 18 miles north of here.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:42 And where you born there?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 04:44 Yes, I was born in Nambe. Well, it's three small towns or several small towns combined. It's called the Pojoaque Valley in general.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:55 When?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 04:57 I graduated in 1964, May of 1964.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:03 And when were you born?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 05:04 I was born July 8th, 1945.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:08 Are you the oldest child in the family?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 05:10 I'm the oldest of nine children.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:14 How old is the next child?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 05:16 A year younger than I.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:23 What is your father's occupation?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 05:25 A carpenter.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:26 And I presume your mother was busy with nine children?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 05:29 Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:33 Had we have any additional schooling beyond high school?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 05:36 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:39 While you were in high school, was there anyone who was particularly encouraging as far as schooling concerned? Either your parents or a teacher or someone you loved encouragement or maybe no one at all?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 05:54 Further schooling beyond high school?

Dorothy Huyck: 05:56 No, we're in high School as far as—

Erlinda R. Lopez: 05:59 Staying in high school. Well, both my parents and I, frankly, I liked school as far as high school was concerned. I had always thought since I was a little girl that I would graduate from high school, period. So, I never gave it any second thoughts and I got to work on it, and I did it.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 06:22 Yeah. But I always felt that instead of going on to college for several reasons, we couldn't afford it, really. I felt that it would be better for me to get into a good job and stick with it and get experience rather than education. And I feel a lot of times that's maybe even more helpful than a degree.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:51 Was this true of your brothers and sisters? Was this route they took also?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 06:54 Yes. Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:00 When you were growing up, did you play with boys?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 07:05 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:07 There is that phrase tomboys. Were you by any chance a tomboy?

- Erlinda R. Lopez: 07:14 No, I really don't think so because there were boys and girls in the family and the neighborhood.
- Dorothy Huyck: 07:23 And since you've been with the park service, have you found encouragement coming from your supervisors or have you had some discouraging or maybe you've had both kinds?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 07:38 There were both. There were several instances. Well, actually in each incident instance that I transferred to a different division, it was because I came to realize that there was no place to go from where I was in that particular division.
- Dorothy Huyck: 07:54 You were in sort of a dead-end job?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 07:55 Right?
- Dorothy Huyck: 07:56 Which was not the fault of your supervisor, was it?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 07:59 No, not necessarily [crosstalk 00:08:01].
- Dorothy Huyck: 08:00 It's just the way the job was structured.
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 08:00 Right. It's just the way the division was structured. Right. And I'm actually, in both cases, when I worked in resource management and visitor protection, they had attempted to reclassify the job and get it a grade higher, and personnel didn't go along with it.
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 08:22 They checked it out and it reclassified at the same grade. So that's when I realized that at that point, if I was going to get ahead, I would have to leave the division. And sometime later this vacancy came up in the Division of Finance, which was a grade higher. And I applied for that and I ended up getting it. And the same thing occurred there after I had been in there for quite some time, and I had assumed a lot of duties and what I felt was considerable responsibility.
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 09:01 I brought it up to my supervisor and we attempted to get it reclassified to a five. I was the only secretary in the division, and I was responsible for several reports on my own plus doing typing and getting information for other people. And we attempted to get it reclassified and it was

shot down again. So, that was rather discouraging. Those two instances.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 09:30

But at—.

Dorothy Huyck: 09:30

In fact supervisors were trying to assist you, is that right?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 09:34

Yes, I cannot say that they didn't really, they may not have pushed it. Like I might've felt they should've, but they did take it through.

Dorothy Huyck: 09:45

On the other hand you originated the idea you went to them and asked them is that correct?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 09:51

Well, yes. [crosstalk 00:09:52] I would say yeah, that I pointed out the variation in my duties, the changes, the responsibilities that I had assumed since I had started in there.

Dorothy Huyck: 10:03

So in that regard you took the initiative?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 10:05

Yeah. Uh-huh (affirmative) Now, when I was selected for the GS-5 and the Contracting and Property Management Division, after working there several years and again, getting to where, I was doing a lot of the work on my own. We talked about, I don't recall now – I must have brought it up again. I discussed it with my boss, and we rewrote the job description and had attempted to have it reclassified as a 6. And this was in December of '71 and it was shot down. And of course, I was pregnant at the time and looking forward to having a family. And I just put everything off, dropped everything, just forgot about it for a while. Then while I was gone, they had a temporary girl in there. In fact, I think she was part-time also. She took over while I was gone. And my boss came in, in fact, from Washington office, he transferred here.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 11:23

And when I came back, I just came back, and I took right off where I left off. As far as the work was concerned, I took right over. And I went back to doing everything that I was doing before. And I feel that he really noticed the difference in his job after I came back, because I would take care of routine stuff and things that I didn't feel he should be bothered with. I would prepare the correspondence and just hand it to him for signature. And this sort of thing I think is what helped me and made him

realize that, that I was actually doing work beyond what was called for. And I feel that if you want to get ahead, you do need to go beyond what's in your job description on your own. I feel that, that you have to do it.

- Dorothy Huyck: 12:19 You've done that in each of your positions.
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 12:21 Mm-hmm (affirmative) Yes, I have.
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:25 And eventually that has been recognized by someone else.
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 12:28 Right. Of course, I feel that I have been lucky too in that it has been recognized, because I feel that there are other people who do this, and they are not recognized and they don't get the credit that they are due. And so sooner or later, you're going to get tired of that and just kind of drop everything and sit back because you do have to be recognized [crosstalk 00:12:52]
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:51 —a combination of you assuming greater responsibility, undertaking greater endeavor in the job, plus the recognition—
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 13:02 Right.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:02 [Crosstalk] Someone else may go through the same effort that you would have, the recognition may be missing—
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 13:04 Right.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:04 And then that person does not carrying on at that same level of performance [crosstalk]—
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 13:13 Right. You get disappointed and disgusted. And I can understand that too.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:21 Do you think that being a woman makes any difference in this situation or would this happen to a man also?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 13:27 I don't know. It could happen to a man also. Sure. Before I forget, I think something that is kind of, well, I think it's cute, personally, is that in my job as contract specialist, I deal with a lot of contractors and sometimes they call in on the phone and they've got questions and they'll ask for my supervisor and I say, "Well, he's out with may I help you?" Well, they don't feel that I can help them. And they hesitate

to ask me the questions. So, I'll say something like, well, Mr. Carpenter is not in. May I help you? Well, I really need to talk to him. Well, if you'll tell me what you need, maybe I can get an answer for you. Maybe I can help you. And I tried to be very patient with them and sure. I can answer their questions.

- Erlinda R. Lopez: 14:31 They just don't think that I can. And I think it's kind of cute, really. There are times when I get a little bit disgusted with some of them, but I don't know if it's because I'm a woman or not, or they feel, I really, it must be.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:46 Once you provide the answer do they accepted it?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 14:49 Oh yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:50 But next time they call back, they still want to speak to Mr. Carpenter?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 14:53 No, once I talked to them, they'll speak with me. They'll just ask for me.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:59 So, by now you've built up a clientele, so to speak, of contractors that are willing to deal with you?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 15:01 Yes, I think so. We get new people all the time and some of them, it doesn't make any difference. You know, if I offered to help. Sure. They'll go ahead and ask the questions. But a lot of them do hesitate.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:18 As a contract specialist what all are you involved in?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 15:21 Well, I prepare the invitations for bid, put all the bidding documents together. I come up with a mailing lists for each project, send out the invitations. I get calls for plans and specifications. I get calls on questions regarding the requirements of the bidding documents and so forth. They want to know why we need this or why we need that or what it means.
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 15:53 If we get questions about the technical specs, then of course we have to refer them to the engineers or technical people. Most of the questions we get to answer ourselves. I find it challenging and very enjoyable. I like working with people and I find it very interesting. It's not a boring job because

every situation is different, and you never know what they're going to ask next.

- Dorothy Huyck: 16:21 What kinds of projects have you been working on recently?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 16:24 Oh, we have had water tanks repainted, road jobs--resurfacing roads, water lines--we've replaced water lines, utility systems.
- Dorothy Huyck: 16:43 This would be throughout the region?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 16:44 Throughout the Southwest region, yes ma'am.
- Dorothy Huyck: 16:49 You probably had no preparation for this in high school. So, you must have learned a lot of this on the job.
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 16:54 No. It was on the job, as well as a training. I've attended several training sessions put on by GSA or Civil Service. They've got their week-long sessions or several days anyway,
- Dorothy Huyck: 17:12 So you been giving real opportunities to grow by virtue of taking training sessions?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 17:16 Yes, I have attended several trainings during the past seven years. Well, six years since '71. Prior to that, I had attended two trainings in say the first seven years that I worked for the Park Service, I had attended two training sessions and they were both secretarial. In '71 when my job was reclassified as procurement clerk, I started going to the trainings that they put on for contracting. And I started out with the basics, and they have advanced courses. So, I've gone on step-by-step, but mainly it has been on the job because I have worked with my supervisors and I have been willing to take on added responsibility. and they have recognized my potential.
- Dorothy Huyck: 18:17 And apparently encouraged that by virtual of letting you go to training—
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 18:20 Right. Yes. Because I feel that if they didn't, well, I would sooner or later get discouraged.
- Dorothy Huyck: 18:30 Also, of course, the secretary, a good secretary is a very valuable person.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 18:34 Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 18:34 So the fact that you were allowed to move out of that situation is also a form of encouragement.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 18:42 Right. My boss has made the comment that he doesn't have a secretary because he trained her and now, she says contact specialist.

Dorothy Huyck: 18:55 Has been particularly encouraging or helpful looking at your long-range potential?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 19:01 Yes. Yes. My current supervisor.

Dorothy Huyck: 19:11 I phrase this question a little differently earlier, but do you think being a woman has affected your opportunities?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 19:20 No, I really don't think so.

Speaker 4: 19:23 And do you think there are any jobs in the Park Service that a woman really ought not to try to do?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 19:33 Well, I really don't know. I really haven't given much thought to that. I'm not gung-ho on ERA, the way a lot of people are. I feel that as an individual, if you have the potential and the capability and you're willing to take on responsibility, that you will eventually get ahead. I don't feel that you can get up there and, and say, well, because I'm a woman I'm not getting the training or let's see, what's the word I'm looking for—.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 20:22 —Opportunity to get ahead. I don't feel that anybody can really say that or because I'm Spanish or because I'm Black or because I'm anything, you know, I feel that you have to be judged as an individual and not because you're a woman or a man, or this one I'm really not gung-ho on EEO or Equal Rights Amendment or Women's Lib. I'm not that way at all.

Dorothy Huyck: 20:54 You are married?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 20:55 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 20:56 When were you married?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 20:57 I was married in November of 1966.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:00 And how many children do you have?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 21:01 I have one child.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:03 Son or daughter?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 21:05 She's going to be seven this weekend, as a matter of fact.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:13 You've been able to mesh a family life with working—.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 21:16 Right. I have a terrific husband.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:20 And is he a Park Service employee?

Erlinda R. Lopez: 21:22 No, he's not. He works with Safeway stores and he's the produce manager and he's very broadminded. He feels that I should be independent. And he gives me the opportunity to be that way.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 21:38 And he feels that any training that I go to is to better myself and to better us both and our family situation. And I feel that it's just super, because I know that a lot of cases, husbands do mind when the wife is gone for a week or even a couple of days, and they would object. And he doesn't, he encourages me to attend trainings and learn all I can about my job. And it was funny when we were first married, he used to upset me because he used to make me do things like pay the bills or take care of this, or take care of that, learn how to do things, household things that really, I kind of thought he should have been handling. And he used to make me do it. And he used to tell me, I may not always be here.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 22:32 And you have to know about these things that used to upset me. Sometimes I would even cry at the thought that he wasn't going to be there. And of course, as I got older and more experienced, I realized why he was doing it. And he feels that if he's not around, I can hack it on my own.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:51 He sounds like very encouraging person.

Erlinda R. Lopez: 22:52 He has taught me to be very independent and I'm glad. I really appreciate it. He has encouraged me all the way. And I do feel very fortunate.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:04 That's exciting

- Erlinda R. Lopez: 23:07 On some of these trips, he's gone with me, and my little girl and I go to class during the day and then we do something else in the evening and it's been real nice. We've enjoyed it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 23:21 Is your little girl in school currently?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 23:23 She started first grade this year. She attended kindergarten last year.
- Dorothy Huyck: 23:29 So you've been able to mesh all this along with [crosstalk 00:23:32]—
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 23:32 Yes, I have. Yes. I feel very fortunate. And that things have really worked out because I know a lot of people that take their career, well, as seriously as I do – I take it quite seriously – find that they neglect their family, I guess. And then you start having little conflicts there and sooner or later things get messed up and I feel good I've been able to handle both.
- Dorothy Huyck: 24:08 When you look ahead in terms of the future for women in the Park Service, if you look ahead five years or so, do you feel optimistic or how do you feel about the opportunity for growth and added responsibility?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 24:23 Well, I think that the opportunities are increasing, and I feel that women in general have become more independent and are willing to get into these situations where they do take on more responsibility and have to work independently rather than just doing something that you're instructed to do.
- Dorothy Huyck: 24:47 Any idea why women are becoming more independent, more capable of added responsibility?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 24:54 I really don't know, but of course you see it all around you anymore. I really don't know why. Now it could be that it's very difficult for a young family starting out to make it financially with the price of everything. And I think that most women find that they have to work and help their husband. And I feel that, of course, the more responsibility they get on the job, that the more or higher grade, if you referred to government jobs, their salaries will be better and there'll be able to help them that much more.

- Dorothy Huyck: 25:43 Of course, in the past, not as much now, but certainly in the past, women have shown up largely in the lower grades with the government.
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 25:50 Right. Well, I think they find, they just have to do a little better than that. And maybe they work a little bit harder at it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 25:59 So you would expect their initiative would make a difference in their assuming greater responsibility and in turn being given better positions?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 26:09 I really do. Yeah.
- Dorothy Huyck: 26:11 Of course there are some people that think that the Park Service is a male-oriented organization.
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 26:18 I really don't think that it is anymore.
- Dorothy Huyck: 26:21 You think it has changed?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 26:22 It's changed. It's coming out of that. And I think that right here, we have several women in this office who are in higher grades.
- Dorothy Huyck: 26:37 Any idea why this is changing?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 26:43 I feel that that women are willing to take home at a job responsibility, really, because I don't think that anybody's going to hand you a grade because you're a woman. At least I hope not. Because if I felt that that mine was that way, I wouldn't want it. However, as there are people who feel that way, there are people who feel that because they're a minority, they should get better breaks than somebody else. And I don't feel that way at all. I think that, like I said before, you have to be judged on an individual basis, regardless of anything else.
- Dorothy Huyck: 27:21 And in your experience, you've obviously had people who judged you as an individual.
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 27:26 Yes, [crosstalk 00:27:28].
- Dorothy Huyck: 27:29 Quite capable [crosstalk 00:27:30]

- Erlinda R. Lopez: 27:30 I would not want anything handed to me because I'm Spanish or because I'm a woman because I feel that if something was handed to me and I really couldn't hack it, it's going to look bad for all women. And it's going to look bad for my race in general. And I feel that no one should undertake anything if they don't have the background or the ability to handle it, because it's going to reflect on not only on them, but an entire group of people.
- Dorothy Huyck: 28:07 I have been asking you quite a collection of questions. Is there something we have not commented about with regard to your experience with the Park Service that you'd like to comment on?
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 28:28 I really can't think of anything right now.
- Dorothy Huyck: 28:30 All right. Thank you.
- Erlinda R. Lopez: 28:32 You're welcome.

[END OF TAPE]

[END OF INTERVIEW]