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



Virginia Hall
April 10, 1978

Interview conducted by Dorothy B. Huyck
Transcribed by Rev.com
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NOTE: Interview is on the same tape as another interview, which is why this interview does not start at 00:00.

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Dorothy Huyck: 15:36 The date is April 10th, 1978. I am Dorothy Huyck. I'm about to interview Virginia W. Hall at the Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia. How did you first become acquainted with the National Park Service?

Virginia Hall: 15:56 When the regional office was being relocated to Atlanta from Richmond, they sent out an advanced notice for employment. I applied through this application form.

Dorothy Huyck: 16:07 You have never worked for the Park Service was previously?

Virginia Hall: 16:09 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 16:10 Had you traveled into some of the national parks?

Virginia Hall: 16:13 Before?

Dorothy Huyck: 16:14 Yes.

Virginia Hall: 16:14 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 16:15 Had you been employed elsewhere before joining the Park Service?

Virginia Hall: 16:18 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 16:20 For what organizations?

Virginia Hall: 16:21 For the federal government. I was working with the Federal Aviation Administration.

Dorothy Huyck: 16:26 Here in Atlanta?

Virginia Hall: 16:26 Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 16:27 And how long have you been with FAA?

Virginia Hall: 16:29 Five years?

Dorothy Huyck: 16:30 And that means you came to the Park Service in 19—

Virginia Hall: 16:34 '72.

Dorothy Huyck: 16:35 '72. What factors went into your being interested in working for the Park Service?

Virginia Hall: 16:43 It was a different organization and by being new in Atlanta, I felt that I'd have better chance for advancement. In the agency I was with I was in the clerical stenographic position and I found it hard to get out of that career field. I wanted to get into a better field.

Dorothy Huyck: 16:59 When you came into the Park Service, did you move out of the clericals demographic series and into a professional series?

Virginia Hall: 17:06 Not professional, but into a clerical position, which led to a technical field.

Dorothy Huyck: 17:12 And how long did you continue in the clerical ranks with Park Service?

Virginia Hall: 17:17 Actually for three years.

Dorothy Huyck: 17:19 And then?

Virginia Hall: 17:21 Then I was into the professional series.

Dorothy Huyck: 17:26 And what is your title now?

Virginia Hall: 17:27 My title is supervisory contract specialist.

Dorothy Huyck: 17:30 And what does that mean?

Virginia Hall: 17:32 That means that I work with contracts in telecommunications. Also supervise employees.

Dorothy Huyck: 17:40 You were supervising what category of employees?

Virginia Hall: 17:42 I supervise some clerical positions. I supervise the mail and file organization which of a GS-6 office services supervisor and four subordinates.

Dorothy Huyck: 17:54 You want to tell me anything more about your responsibilities currently?

Virginia Hall: 18:04 Okay. I'm actually chief of the General Services Branch, which means just that. We cover a variety of general services. We cover the mails and files, office services, records management, GSA transportation, telecommunications, the quarters program, the federal leasing of space, and any other little special projects that come up.

Dorothy Huyck: 18:34 Have you received encouragement or discouragement or both from your supervisors during your Park Service career?

Virginia Hall: 18:43 I have received encouragement.

Dorothy Huyck: 18:46 Have you been given opportunities to take coursework classes or trainings in the programs?

Virginia Hall: 18:51 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 18:52 What kinds of things have you taken part in?

Virginia Hall: 18:55 I've taken part in a home correspondence course in federal personnel management, which was given by the Department of Agriculture Graduate School. I've taken several courses by both Civil Service Commission, General Services Administration. I've also taken several contract courses from contract sources, meaning Sterling Institute for one and that type of thing.

Dorothy Huyck: 19:21 I'm ignorant. What is Sterling Institute?

Virginia Hall: 19:22 Okay. Sterling Institute is one that puts on contract courses for both commercial people, as well as government people. It teaches you all the facets of contracting.

Dorothy Huyck: 19:35 Do you think that your specific talents and your specific training is being used aptly by the Park Service?

Virginia Hall: 19:42 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 19:45 A number of people consider that the Park Service has been, maybe still is, a rather male-oriented organization. How do you feel about that?

Virginia Hall: 19:55 My experience with the Park Service has been just the opposite. Of course, we're fortunate in the Southeast

Region, we have several women in top management positions. I think my own experience is pretty good evidence that they encourage the women to advance as far as they're willing to, as long as they are willing to work hard and sacrifice some of their own personal ambitions.

- Dorothy Huyck: 20:18 What kind of personal ambitions should one be prepared to sacrifice?
- Virginia Hall: 20:23 For one thing, you've got to be ready to travel when they ask you to. You've got to be willing to do assignments that are given to you, even though sometimes it may mean long hours and not always overtime pay for them.
- Dorothy Huyck: 20:38 You've told me about a number of the satisfying aspects, where there any frustrations we should make a note of?
- Virginia Hall: 20:46 Well, I think frustrations always come to women when they get into management positions, because most of the times we like to do things quickly and I'm not a very patient person and you learn that in management, you have to be patient. You have to deal with people on a day-to-day basis. I think that's been the most frustrating.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:05 Do you think that being a woman has in any way affected your opportunities pro or con?
- Virginia Hall: 21:12 I don't really think so, no.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:15 Or do you think that women can do any job in the Park Service?
- Virginia Hall: 21:20 I don't know of any job in the Park Service that women can't do it and, in most categories, there are in fact women doing most of them.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:28 Have you yourself received or given assistance in identifying positions that could be filled by a woman?
- Virginia Hall: 21:34 Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:35 For example?
- Virginia Hall: 21:39 We have a procurement agent, which we have identified and now have a woman in it. We have property management, which at one time had a woman in it. Right

now, it's not, but we do have several opportunities for women in our division.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:59 May I ask, when you were born?

Virginia Hall: 22:02 When I was born? 1937.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:04 And where?

Virginia Hall: 22:05 In Tifton, Georgia.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:06 Did you grow up there?

Virginia Hall: 22:07 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:07 Was your father a college graduate?

Virginia Hall: 22:10 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:11 What was his occupation?

Virginia Hall: 22:13 He was a mechanic. Automobile mechanic.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:15 And your mother?

Virginia Hall: 22:16 My mother was unemployed. Just a housewife. She was not a graduate either.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:21 Were you one of several children?

Virginia Hall: 22:24 12.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:25 One of 12?

Virginia Hall: 22:25 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:27 Which one of 12? First, fifth, 12th?

Virginia Hall: 22:29 10th.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:30 You were the 10th? What were the older, brothers or sisters?

Virginia Hall: 22:36 Both. A lot of both.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:40 And your younger?

Virginia Hall: 22:42 Is a sister.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:44 Number 11 and 12. But would these children be sisters?

Virginia Hall: 22:46 One is a brother and one's a sister.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:52 Did you attend high school in Tifton, Georgia?

Virginia Hall: 22:54 Yes. I graduated Tifton High School.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:57 And did you go to college at all?

Virginia Hall: 22:59 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:02 When you were in high school, who was it that encouraged your educational effort? Was it family or teachers?

Virginia Hall: 23:11 It was an English teacher.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:12 An English teacher? In what way did she encourage you?

Virginia Hall: 23:17 Well, of course she wanted to see me go on to college and she was willing to even help me get a scholarship to it.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:25 Did you apply for the scholarship?

Virginia Hall: 23:27 I did, but it was only a partial scholarship and I couldn't afford the rest of it.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:33 Were their church or community leaders who were also encouraging factors or primarily you English teacher?

Virginia Hall: 23:39 No, I was not active in church.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:43 In high school. Did you take courses that sometimes are considered more appropriate for boys such as math and science?

Virginia Hall: 23:51 No. I took math, but none that would be considered more for boys than girls. Just regular algebra.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:58 And did you take science courses?

Virginia Hall: 24:00 The general science that was required.

Dorothy Huyck: 24:04 Did you play with boys as a child?

Virginia Hall:	24:06	Yes.
Dorothy Huyck:	24:07	Your brothers?
Virginia Hall:	24:07	Yes.
Dorothy Huyck:	24:08	And other boys as well?
Virginia Hall:	24:09	Yes.
Dorothy Huyck:	24:10	Were you considered a tomboy?
Virginia Hall:	24:12	Yes.
Dorothy Huyck:	24:14	And as you entered the teen years, were you expected to be more of a lady?
Virginia Hall:	24:18	Yes.
Dorothy Huyck:	24:19	And did you exceed that expectation?
Virginia Hall:	24:23	Tried to, I don't think I was very successful.
Dorothy Huyck:	24:26	I never did get around to wearing white gloves.
Virginia Hall:	24:26	That's right.
Dorothy Huyck:	24:31	Were you active in extracurricular activities outside of school, outside the home that had been useful to you in your Park Service career?
Virginia Hall:	24:39	No.
Dorothy Huyck:	24:41	Have you traveled to the national parks at all?
Virginia Hall:	24:44	Yes. Since becoming employed with them.
Dorothy Huyck:	24:46	Since becoming employed but not previously?
Virginia Hall:	24:47	No.
Dorothy Huyck:	24:52	Would you want to look ahead say five years into the future and suggest what you think the opportunities for women are going to be?

Virginia Hall: 25:03 I think opportunities even now for women are much greater than they realize. I think if they're willing to sacrifice some of these things, the thing that handicaps women most now is their not being able to be mobile. Women have got to learn to be mobile. I think unless the trend changes to go where the jobs are, they can't just sit in one job all the time and expect all the big grades to come to them. They've got to go where they're needed, and they've got to be willing to work hard to get there.

Dorothy Huyck: 25:35 Would you yourself be willing to move to another area?

Virginia Hall: 25:38 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 25:40 Are you married?

Virginia Hall: 25:41 Divorced.

Dorothy Huyck: 25:42 Have you children?

Virginia Hall: 25:43 Yes. I have three.

Dorothy Huyck: 25:45 And what are their ages?

Virginia Hall: 25:47 21, 18, 16.

Dorothy Huyck: 25:51 Would having three children affect your mobility?

Virginia Hall: 25:56 Not really, although I would prefer to wait until my youngest graduates from high school. She has one more year.

Dorothy Huyck: 26:03 Where are the two older children at this point?

Virginia Hall: 26:05 They're still at home. My oldest daughter graduates from nursing school this summer. My son is in junior college.

Dorothy Huyck: 26:13 So once you have the third child through the high school level, who would feel no compunctions about moving?

Virginia Hall: 26:18 That's right.

Dorothy Huyck: 26:21 Were you working for the Park Service during the interval when you were married?

Virginia Hall: 26:25 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 26:29 I've been asking you a large number of questions. Maybe there's something that you'd like to comment on that I hadn't even thought of, or I haven't asked anything about?

Virginia Hall: 26:39 I find this interesting. I'd like to know the purpose behind it.

Dorothy Huyck: 26:44 Very good. We can certainly talk about that. Is there something else that out of your particular experience, which is no one else's experience at all, that we should make a note of?

Virginia Hall: 26:54 I don't think so.

Dorothy Huyck: 26:57 All right. Thank you.

[END OF TAPE]

[END OF INTERVIEW]