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



Marietta M. Sumner
October 16, 1978

Interview conducted by Dorothy B. Huyck
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NPS History Collection
Harpers Ferry Center
PO Box 50
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
HFC_Archivist@nps.gov

[START OF TAPE]

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:00:00 The day is October 16, 1978. I am Dorothy Huyck. I will be interviewing Marietta M. Sumner, spelled S-U-M-N-E-R, who was a park naturalist in the branch of Natural History Washington DC. And then in the National Capital Region from 1960 to 1966.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:00:26 I want to ask you when you first became acquainted with the National Park Service?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:00:38 It probably was about 1916.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:00:41 Okay, where was that?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:00:43 In Yellowstone National Park. My family went through there on a tour and so I was with them. Of course, I wasn't too old. I was six years old at that time, but I was familiar with all the wonders that Yellowstone had to offer everyone. I had that first indoctrination into the Park Service.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:01:17 And then, over the years, even though I didn't work for the Park Service in my early life, my family lived in the West so they visited every park that they ever were near and it made it nice because I really was very much interested in it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:01:36 Do you remember something of that 1916 trip?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:01:38 Oh, yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:01:39 What do you remember?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:01:41 I remember we spent one night at Mammoth and the hot springs there. I even have pictures that were taken at that time. In fact, Freeman Tilden's last revision of the National Parks, there is one picture in there of my father and a young doctor from Colorado Springs – No, he was from Grand Junction – and myself sitting up there at the edge of the hot springs at Mammoth and I remember that very distinctly.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:02:23 Then of course, I remember at that time the two men had their camp out and they put their tent up but they put all their food in a great big can and tied it up in this tree, hopefully so the bears wouldn't get to it. They took it out of

the car purposefully because they didn't want it torn up. It was a Ford touring car.

- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:02:53 So anyway, mother and I stayed in one of the Wylie camps that they had and those were wooden at the bottom. They had wooden floor and they were about two or three feet high, wood all around it with a canvas top. Most of them had a stove and they had a little bit of wood in there. So, mother and I stayed in there. I remember that very well.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:03:18 And there was a great deal of fishing done by the family and I remember the pretty bridges and I was really very impressed with it. I thought it was really one of the wonders of the world as far as I was concerned.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:03:37 You went also to Old Faithful?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:03:39 Oh, yes. We did the whole tour of the park, and I don't recall exactly how long we were there, but I expect we were there almost a week. And of course, there weren't too many people there. You could take your time and see and do what you wanted to.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:04:00 Many of the old buildings, of course, were there at Mammoth and the original early buildings that were put there for Park Service.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:04:13 Did you encounter much wildlife?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:04:17 Yes, and many of an evening we'd go out to where they would take the food to the dump and watch the bears come in. That was one of the big things that – sources of entertainment of an evening.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:04:36 I don't think they had as many interpretive programs and things like that. I think that was something that was developed in later years.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:04:43 In 1916, Yellowstone must have been still in the hands of the military.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:04:50 No, I don't think. As I recall, it wasn't. I just don't remember, Dorothy, whether it was or not. I don't remember seeing any military. But I think maybe some of those big buildings there at Mammoth may have been

originally military buildings. Maybe they were not built by the Park Service.

- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:05:17 But there was that wonderful experience.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:05:24 You got back to Yellowstone much later on in working for the concessionaire, is that correct?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:05:28 Yes, right.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:05:29 Can you tell us about that?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:05:32 The year I graduated from college in 1932, I went back there and I worked for Mrs. Pryor.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:05:41 What was her first name?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:05:48 She had a sister, Mrs. Cushman. Anna. Anna Pryor.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:06:01 We got there by a fluke. Sally Norbeck, whose father was a senator from South Dakota, before Sally and I graduated we had decided it would be fun to work in a park. So, we sent our applications in. Of course, in 1932, that was in the middle of the Depression and jobs weren't easy to find any place and we got very nice letters back but most of them were saying they had their staff. Most of them just hired from the year before and they weren't taking on new people. So, we were really quite disappointed. I don't know whether you want to put this in there or not but anyway, you can take it out if you don't want to.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:06:53 Sally said, "I'm going to write to my dad and see if we can do anything about this." So, he was a very good friend of Horace Albright's. So, it wasn't very long until we heard from him, and he said that he thought—
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:07:11 From her father?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:07:12 From her father. And he thought that it was possible that we could find a job with one of the concessioners up there. And I presume Horace Albright had gotten in touch with Mrs. Pryor and so she said all right, it would be all right for the two of us to come.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:07:33 So, she sent us our applications. We were still in school, and we filled them out and we were supposed to report out

there the 15th of June 1932. Well, we graduated. There was a period between the time that – but she also said in this communication that we got from her that we would be hearing from her again. Okay, because we didn't know whether we were going to Mammoth or Canyon. She had concessions at several different places and so we didn't know exactly where we were going to work.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:08:12

So, we graduated and we had still gotten no communication whatsoever from Mrs. Prior. So, we left a forwarding address, and we went out to the Black Hills. The Norbecks had a cabin out there and we spend a few days out there. And then it was about time that if we were going to get to Yellowstone, we had to leave. So, we had our reservations on the train, and we went on out and we had never heard anything from her other than the fact that she wanted us to report by the 15th of June.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:08:59

So, we got on this train and it was filled with college students from all over Minneapolis. It was a real gay time. There were people renewing old friendships but of course, having this friend with me I wasn't alone and so we soon made other contacts and we had a great time.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:09:25

On the end of that train was a private car and I was one of these terrible persons at that time. I smoked and so did Sally and of course you couldn't smoke in the Pullmans or any place, so we decided we'd go back to the observation cart, have ourselves a cigarette after we'd had our breakfast. And we started back there, and we got stopped at the door. It wasn't the observation car; it was a private car. The president of the company had his own private car tacked on the end of our train. And this little Chinaman came out there, "No, no, no come in here. No come in here."

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:10:14

So, we stood out between the two cars and had our cigarette. Well, about that time these two fine looking men came through. They said, "What are you girls doing standing out here smoking?" We said, "Well, we were hunting for the observation car. We thought maybe we can have a smoke." "Well come on in, don't—" so they invited us in to sit down in their living room and have a smoke. So, it was really very interesting, and the little Chinaman looked at us and he thought, well—

Dorothy Huyck: 00:10:50

Was this the president of the railroad?

- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:10:51 I think it was. I don't—
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:10:53 This was the Great Northern?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:10:54 Mm-hmm (affirmative), that goes into Gardner and I don't recall his name or anything but I know that it was the president's private car. We found that out.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:11:08 So, we got into Gardner and at that time, 1932, they had these great big buses and they had big labels on them, Canyon or Mammoth or the different stations around over the park. So as the train unloaded, everybody who was going to Grand Canyon, to Canyon or to Mammoth or whatever part, they departed and got on their buses and there never was anybody that said anything about Mammoth or Mrs. Pryor.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:11:57 So, we stayed there and finally these men came off of this private car and they said, "Are you girls still here?" And we said, "Yes. We hadn't been able to find Mrs. Pryor and there didn't seem to be anybody there to pick us up." So, they said, "Well it's about lunchtime. If nobody comes, you all come in and have lunch with us."
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:12:20 So about that time there was a great big real [sp?] truck that drove into the station and wanted to know if there was any – How did they say it? Is there any – What's it called? You know, like express or anything to take into Mrs. Pryor. Well, that was the first time we'd heard her name mentioned so we immediately went up to the boys and asked them if they worked for her and they said that they did and they were going back to Mammoth. So, they said they'd take us. We didn't make a grand exit into Mammoth. We went in by way of this old truck with all the rest of the baggage and luggage and produce that came in for her concessions.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:13:25 They took us right up and we were introduced and we had – She was very, very calm, cool and collected when she saw us. So, she told us that we would be working there in Mammoth, and she told us where our quarters would be. It wasn't until around the 4th of July we got a letter that had been sent to school, forwarded to the Black Hills and then finally reached us out in Yellowstone, saying that she really thought that maybe we should wait until around the 1st of July to come to work.

- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:14:13 Well, we were really pretty upset with ourselves to think that we had gone ahead and come but we felt like we should in view of that first communication from her. So, we went ahead and found her and showed her the letter that we had just gotten. She said, "Well, it had all worked out all right." She had had quite more business than she had thought she would have and so we—
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:14:45 What were you doing for her?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:14:46 We worked in this general store and the gift shop and we worked long, long hours from about 7:00 in the morning until 8:00 at night but we had two hours off during the day. And we worked for \$25 a month. But our quarters, we had a very nice room, and food and everything was furnished. I mean, all that \$25 was ours to spend as we chose so that was—
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:15:20 How long did you stay?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:15:21 We stayed until the middle of September. There were a great many of them that had left earlier but she finally had told us that we could stay and pretty well close up the place. So, we spent the entire season.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:15:38 I have never been back to Yellowstone since then but of course during the time that I was there we did a lot of — once in a while we'd have a day off and we'd go out and visit some of the other areas. So that was quite a nice experience.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:15:55 And at that time I really felt like I would like to work for the Park Service because I had had geology courses in college and to me, it was just fascinating, the whole geology of Yellowstone. My major was biology, so Yellowstone had a combination of everything that I really was interested in.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:16:29 So then after I graduated, it wasn't too long, I came back down here to Fort Bayard, New Mexico, right outside of Silver City.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:16:37 You had lived in this area previously in New Mexico?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:16:41 Yes. I lived in Santa Fe when I was four years old.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:16:44 Maybe I should go back and ask you where you were born.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:16:48 I was born at Warden, Montana on a homestead. My mother and father homesteaded out there.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:16:59 Were you an only child?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:17:00 I was an only child for 20 years.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:17:02 And then you had a brother or a sister?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:17:08 I had a brother. One brother.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:17:12 Where did you then grow up?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:17:16 Mother and father worked in the Indian Service. As I told you, I was born in Montana. Father taught school up there and at that time, he decided he had seen these civil service openings and there were some that were open for teachers in the Indian Service. And he applied for them, and he got this position in Santa Fe. So that was when I was four.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:17:54 They still had the homestead in Montana so they decided they would go back up there. They transferred back up there to Crow Agency, Montana and that was when I started school. And the first school I went to was a little old log schoolhouse, dirt floor and I was the only white child. The rest of them were all Indians.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:18:28 From there, it was about that time that World War I got started and father felt like he was sort of shaken with patriotism and he thought that he should go into the service. He and mother were both from Indiana and he enlisted in the Navy. They had sold the homestead. They had decided that they liked the Indian Service and probably this would be their life's occupation.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:19:02 So, we all went back to Indiana. We really didn't have any ties out there after they sold the place and he enlisted from Indiana. So, mother and I stayed with the grandparents there for a while and they went to Florida one winter. I went to school down there.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:19:27 And then, after the war was over, father was discharged and came to Florida. And then the three of us drove back up to Indiana. Well, they wondered if this southwest or western

country was the right place to raise a daughter. They didn't have the advantages out here. They thought probably maybe they should settle in the Midwest.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:20:00

So, they bought a piece of property right outside of Indianapolis and built a house on it but they had five years from the time of his discharge to make up his mind whether he wanted to be reinstated in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. So, occasionally he would get these offers in places and they managed to turn it down all the time until almost the time that that five years was up. They offered him a job, well and mother too for that matter, both of them, to open up the school up in southwestern Colorado on the Ute reservation. And that position was at Ignacio.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:21:00

And I went to Ignacio – No, I didn't go to Ignacio High School, I went to Durango the first semester. The second semester I came back to Ignacio, and I went to school there a year and a half. And I rode horse back to high school, had my own pony. And then father was transferred over to Towaoc, Colorado which is still in that Four Corners area. And he was in charge of that school there. So, I went to Cortez for a half a year and then I went to – I went to four different high schools. It's a wonder I was able to read or write or do anything.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:21:53

And then I went to Fort Lewis which is at Hesperus, Colorado and at that time it was a branch of the State Agricultural College. They had two years college and four years high school and I graduated from Fort Lewis High School.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:22:18

Well then, father was transferred. I was a government gypsy, believe me. Father was transferred to South Dakota up on the Rosebud Reservation. And they had spent a summer over at Flagstaff going to school, he and mother. We went to Grand Canyon. Had a goodie old time up there and came back to Sunset Crater and climbed to the top of it.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:23:02

But when we went to South Dakota, it was the summer of 1928 and they wanted me to go to college and I said, "Well, that's fine but if I go to college I don't care where you move to, I'm going to stay there four years." Well, that was all right with them.

- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:23:27 So I was enrolled at the University of South Dakota at Vermilion, and I did go my four years to school there and graduated in 1932. Then this experience in Yellowstone and all of that took place.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:23:45 At any point did you do graduate work?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:23:47 No. I came back down here because my family, in the meantime, father had been transferred to Yakima, Washington and then he transferred over to the Veterans Administration, and he got this appointment down here at Fort Bayard. And after I left Yellowstone, I came here and there was a notice in the post office in Fort Bayard that there was a park naturalist position that was being posted for Civil Service exam. I had to drive to Las Cruces to take the exam and I did take it. I don't think that was until actually 19 – I can't tell you what that date was. It was late '32 or early '33. Maybe it was in the spring of '33.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:24:47 I did pass the exam. I didn't get a terribly high rating, but the interesting part of that exam was that most of the people that I worked with – and men in Washington – they had all taken that. Howard Stagner and Gunnar Fagerland and all those people, they all took that same exam.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:25:15 But anyway, father was then transferred back to Ohio – Chillicothe, Ohio – but this brother of mine had been born in South Dakota. So, I went back there with them, and I worked there for quite a while. I worked in a – Oh, I had several different jobs. And I never heard anything about that park naturalist position that I had taken the exam for.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:25:55 So finally one day I got this letter from Civil Service that had been sent to Fort Bayard and then forwarded to me back there. That's the story of my life. And they said since I had not accepted the position of White Sands Alamogordo, did I still want my name left on the register.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:26:15 You had not known until that letter arrived—
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:26:17 I did not know up until then.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:26:19 That there was a position that they offered you?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:26:21 Right. This same friend of mine, Sally Norbeck, was in Washington so I got in touch with Sally, and I said, "See

what you can find out about all this." That was a \$2,000 job a year. So anyway, that's what they found out. But they also found out that in the meantime, that register was being closed to women.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:26:57 Yes. Now, you did not know about the White Sands position offer until the letter was received?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:27:05 Right.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:27:06 And Sally ascertained that, what? I'm not sure we caught it because of the clock.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:27:13 Oh, I see. She made some inquiry there. I don't know whether it was Civil Service, I presume it was, and that this register had been closed to women in just that – But I think it had been almost six months probably. You know how it takes from the time – But during that time, those jobs were closed to women.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:27:42 [crosstalk 00:27:42]
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:27:42 So women that did get jobs had gotten them prior to the time that I got this letter that reached me.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:27:53 So, as far as you know, the register was open for a period of time to women.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:27:56 It was.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:27:57 And presumably, some women got a job.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:27:58 I think Jean Pinkley was one and she happened to be about the only one that I really knew about but I'm sure there were others. So, I think there was a period in there when it was open.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:28:11 [crosstalk 00:28:11]
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:28:12 These were for professional jobs.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:28:14 As park naturalists.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:28:15 Mm-hmm (affirmative). Or, she was actually, I think she went in and was an archeologist. I don't know whether there were historians, there could very well have been.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:28:24 But as far as you know, some distinction was then [inaudible 00:28:28] as far as you know they'll be position for that register?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:28:32 Mm-hmm (affirmative), right. I think the war was over, very much over. The Depression was still—
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:28:39 The war was over?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:28:41 Well, what did I say? I don't mean war; I don't mean war. I mean the Depression was over and I think they were basically trying to employ unemployed men as much as possible. It was back in those days when they had, they wouldn't let two members of the same family work for the government and so things were changing right at that particular time.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:29:09 So my father was still—
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:29:10 What year do you think this was?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:29:12 This must have been about—
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:29:25 During [crosstalk 00:29:26]
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:29:25 It must have been about 1935 or '36.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:29:30 So it had been a couple of years at least since you had taken the exam?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:29:33 Right. It had been about a couple of years.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:29:35 And sometime that [crosstalk 00:29:37] they had reached your name on the register?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:29:39 On the register, right. And I don't know, maybe in those days they used them according to regions. Now, if there was an opening in White Sands and I was from New Mexico, they would send me there rather than send me to Timbuktu. I don't know that they're that thoughtful at the moment, but I think maybe they did at that time.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:29:59 Because, you'd never heard of the position at White Sands until they informed you that you had not accepted it?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:30:07 Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:30:08 They had not communicated with you in any way [crosstalk 00:30:10]

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:30:10 What they had done, Dorothy, was send a telegram to Fort Bayard and whoever was in the telegraph office was somebody new and they did not know me. So, you see, if they had sent a letter, it would have been forwarded and I would have gotten it, but they sent a telegram. The telegram was sent back unclaimed. So, then they sent the letter.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:30:32 How did you find out?

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:30:35 Well that's just the way they did things in those days.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:30:37 So you assume that the telegram was sent out.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:30:40 And that was where it happened that I didn't get it.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:30:48 So then I took a Civil Service, though it was clerical and just for most anything they had general – It was back in '39 I think. And that appointment I got, and I went to Washington in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:31:15 In 1941?

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:31:22 Mm-hmm (affirmative). So, I worked there and then I was in the payroll. I went as a printer's assistant at that time.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:31:36 What grade was that?

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:31:38 It was a GS-2 and I think it was just next to nothing. You have the salary?

Dorothy Huyck: 00:31:45 I have the salary here. Sixty-six cents per hour.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:31:47 Yeah, that's right. That's what they did, they paid you by the hour. I had forgotten that, Dorothy.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:31:52 Actually, that's very good pay for that period. That was above the minimum wage. It was forty cents an hour, I believe.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:31:59 It could have been.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:01 [inaudible 00:32:01]

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:32:03 Well, anyway—

Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:04 It says here you were a CM-1. Do you have any idea what a CM-1 is?

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:32:10 Well I think that was just a different classification and that was they paid you by the hour. See, the printers were paid by the hour and most everyone at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing was paid by the hour, except clerical. Then when I went in the budget—

Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:27 Then you were CAF2.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:32:29 Yeah.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:32 Which brought you \$1560 dollars a year and in 1943, does that seem right?

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:32:45 I don't have that one with me. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:46 [inaudible 00:32:46] you stayed with the Bureau of Engraving and Printing—

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:32:47 And I went over to the—

Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:51 Through 1951 is when you went to the Geological Survey.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:32:55 Right, in the payroll section for them.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:32:59 Now, why the transfer to the Geological Survey?

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:33:01 It was one step closer to Park Service.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:33:04 Just that simple?

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:33:05 Just that simple.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:33:06 There was no—

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:33:07 I still wanted to work for the Park Service.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:33:11 Why was it one step closer?

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:33:12 It was an Interior.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:33:16 In the same—

- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:33:17 They were in the same building in the same department.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:33:17 Had you been eager to get into that building for some time?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:33:20 Yes. And I had a friend that worked over there, and she was leaving, and she was in the payroll section at Geological Survey, and she said, "Marietta, why don't you transfer over here?" So, I went over, and I put my application in, and I got the job.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:33:43 In what way did that put you closer to the National Park Service?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:33:46 Well, it's easier to transfer from one agency to another in the same department.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:33:59 Did you know anyone in Park Service at that stage?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:34:02 No, but then one day I had some leave I was taking so I went down to the Park Service, and I interviewed John Dorr or John Dorr interviewed me. I went in and I talked to him, and I told him the plight, a little bit about this. He said, "This is the most fascinating thing I have ever heard." He said, "Half of the people that work for me took that same exam that you did, that park naturalist job." And he said, "I don't see why you couldn't be made a park naturalist." But he said—
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:34:49 What was his position at that time?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:34:50 He was the chief naturalist for the Park Service. So anyway, he said, "Why don't you fill out form 57s and bring them into me." Well, I had lived in Washington long enough then and Washington was beautiful. I loved it. I loved the things that you could do there, the theater and it was just a fascinating place to live. So, the longer I filled out form 57s, the colder it got in Yellowstone during the winter.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:35:31 So finally I went back, and I told John Dorr, I said I just am not sure whether I want to go – You know, you lose track of what life might be like back in those places and I can think of all the advantages that I liked about living in Washington. He said, "I don't blame you." He said, "I am going to have a job that's going to be vacant here, a clerical job." He said, "Would you like to apply for it?" I said I

really hadn't done much clerical work and he said, they had an awful lot of work that needed to be – They had moved back from Chicago and there were a lot of things that they had brought back with them. They hadn't had people to go through a lot of their files and a lot of their library and pamphlet collection that they had so he said—

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:36:33 These are things they had brought back from that World War II period when the Park Service was primarily in Chicago.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:36:39 Mm-hmm (affirmative) and when they had moved out there. So, he said, all these things are in rooms, and he said they needed to get some kind of order out of them. And he said, "If you'd like to transfer over," he said "it probably would be a clerical job." And I said, "Well that would be fine, it wouldn't make any difference to me."
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:37:04 So I put in my application, my form 57, with the Park Service after how many years and I transferred from Geological Survey to the Park Service.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:37:21 In 1957?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:37:26 Mm-hmm (affirmative). There was a long time there that I did not do anything because I had an invalid mother, I had this young brother, and I just didn't feel quite secure enough to do too much.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:37:47 You didn't do anything about—
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:37:49 About transferring.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:37:50 You were working.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:37:52 I was working all the time, but I mean you can feel rather insecure sometimes when you go to a new job, and I just didn't feel at liberty to go ahead and take on something new. So, I really didn't work at it as hard as I did until I was all alone and then I really put all my efforts into this, to transferring.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:38:24 So I worked there in the natural history section, and I was under the direct supervision of John Dorr as long as he was there and then Howard Stagner came in as the chief naturalist. But during the time that John Dorr was there,

they had pamphlets, publications and they were just scattered everywhere in this one room. So, I went through all those and I cataloged them, and I put them by parks because if somebody wanted to know something about – I had talked it over with others and they thought that the most advantageous way to be able to look for something was by parks. I divided it by history, geology and – What else did I have?

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:39:33

But anyway, I had these big boxes on parks. I got those and went through all of that, or most of that material and got it all cataloged and I made up books for the men upstairs and if they wanted to know something, all they had to do was look and see if it was downstairs. They didn't have to spend much time doing that. I got an award for that.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:40:06

So then, John Dorr was transferred but Daniel Beard who was an assistant, well he was chief of Division of Interpretation I guess, and he called me in one day and he said, "Marietta," he said, "I don't see why you couldn't be a park naturalist." And I said, "Nothing would please me more." And he said, "If it's all right, I'll start processing your papers." So, they did. I had to go in as a GS-5 and he said, "Now, you may have to do some interpreting work." And I said, "Well that would be fine with me."

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:40:53

So then I did some work with National Capital Parks. I would help them with their bird walks and different interpreting programs that they had.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:41:07

Where did you do bird walks?

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:41:09

Oh, it was in Rock Creek Park or out along the canal, just various places and it was all very interesting, and I loved it.

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:41:24

Then Lowell came to Washington.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:41:27

Your husband?

Marietta M. Sumner: 00:41:27

My husband. And we knew each other for a while but nevertheless, after we decided to get married, I said, "Well now there just one thing." I did a lot of this work on weekends because that was when the children were out of school and when they needed help the most. So, I didn't feel like after I was married, I had never been married before, that I really could conscientiously give up my

weekends. So, I brought that up and they said, "Well that'll be all right." So, I never really did do too much of that after that.

- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:42:17 Then I worked with Freeman Tilden on this last book that he published, and I guess—
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:42:25 While you were still back in Washington?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:42:26 Oh, yes, before I retired.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:42:32 Which book was that?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:42:33 It was this – The National Parks.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:42:43 You worked on one of the early editions of this?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:42:50 No, this one.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:42:54 And that was published, when?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:42:56 This was our 50th anniversary. Well, it's 1968.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:43:03 1968 edition. All right. What did you do to help him on this?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:43:09 Oh, I helped him with his photographs. I'd look up photographs and cataloged them for him.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:43:19 We're about to read what Freeman Tilden has written in the front of your copy of his first edition of National Parks. He says—
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:43:32 "Only I know, dear Marietta, how much your help went into making of this book. I am sending you one of the first copies with my thanks and appreciation. Greetings, Freeman."
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:43:44 Thank you. So, you researched photographs?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:43:47 Photographs and I always did a lot of leg work for him. He would need something in some other part of the building, and I would – he and I were in the same office – and I would track that down. Well then finally—
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:44:04 How did you initially start working with Freeman Tilden?

- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:44:07 Well, he sort of needed somebody in there to help him so they asked me if I'd like to and I said I'd just love it because I felt it was a great privilege to work with him.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:44:20 Did you spend full time with him or were you also working as at the National Capital Region [crosstalk 00:44:27]
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:44:26 No, I was also working with the National Park Service in the interpretive division. There would be a lot of inquiries and I would answer correspondence.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:44:38 How much—
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:44:38 Well, it was just anything anybody wanted me to do, I would do it. A lot of times people would call up and they would want books and I would try to get them from the Library of Congress for them, just sort of a jack of all trades.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:44:55 So anyway, then it came – Of course at this time I was married to Lowell. Every year you would have your evaluation period with your supervisors, and they ask you – This shouldn't be in there but I'm going to tell it to you anyway. They would ask you what your ambitions for the Park Service, what your goals and visions and what you felt like you could do. And I said, "Well just abolish my job after I've had 25 years' service."
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:45:38 So finally after I had had 25 years' service one day, Bill Everhart was my supervisor at that time, Bill said, "Marietta," – they had a professional man that they wanted to bring in from the field that they wanted to do something, which was fine with me – he said, "Would it be all right with you if we abolish your job?" I said, "Nothing would please me better." So, they abolished my job, and I retired a year before Lowell did which I couldn't have done. And I had a chance to get my house in order and then when he retired – Otherwise I would have had to work a couple of years longer than he did, so that wouldn't have been too good either. So, this way it all worked out and I was able to start growing my retirement and then we went to Maine.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:46:33 We had bought this place down here and we had bought the one in Maine and we had hoped to migrate between the two.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:46:40 You had bought this place in New Mexico?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:46:42 In New Mexico. And we thought it would be fine or great to spend our summers in Maine and our winters down here. But we soon found that that trek between – the birds can do it but the Sumners tired of it very quickly. So, we only went back up there two years and then we sold that place.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:47:07 And you've been here living in New Mexico since?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:47:11 We actually, we can here when Lowell retired. He retired in July 1967. We had this place, and they were working on it, trying to get it livable and we spent the summer in Maine and then that fall we came down here and we stayed her until the next spring and then we went back to Maine. So, we did that for two years and then we sold.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:47:34 And you were married, when?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:47:42 June 20th, 1961.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:47:50 Have you stepchildren?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:47:52 Lowell has one daughter. And then I have no family at all except this one brother and he lives in Virginia.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:48:06 You referred to your invalid mother. Was your mother at one time dependent on you financially?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:48:08 No, not really but she was for livelihood because she had arthritis very badly and she needed someone to care for her.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:48:22 Was anyone dependent on your income from Park Service?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:48:25 No, not really.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:48:28 One or two little details I'd like to fill in.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:48:30 Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:48:30 Were your parents college graduates?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:48:33 Father went to normal school back in those days. My mother graduated from high school, but she was not a college graduate. She did take a tailoring and sewing advanced course in Indianapolis when she was growing up

as a girl and she was an expert seamstress, but she never did.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:48:59 When you were going to high school and college, I'd like to know who, if anyone, encouraged you in the educational process. Maybe your parents or a parent or a teacher, a professor, somebody in the community? Did someone provide encouragement during that educational process?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:49:17 Well, my parents were always very encouraging and they were extremely pleased when I thought that I wanted to go to the Park Service because they thought – they had admired and visited so many parks that they thought that that would be very fine.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:49:39 You went to a number of high schools. Did you take math and science in high school?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:49:44 Yes, mm-hmm (affirmative). And then when I was in college of course I took the two years basic things that you have to take, history and English and everything but I took as much science as I could. So, when I graduated from college, I had a major in biology and a minor in geology, but I also had a teaching certificate and I had taken practice teaching at the University of South Dakota, but those kids, I couldn't stand them. I think the students that you have that they send into college classes for practice teaching, they seem to think this is a great time. They're smarter than teachers believe me and "We'll fix this new teacher." And they were just the – Well, after I got through with that practice teaching class, I thought this is really not what I want.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:50:49 Can I go back to your high school period now and ask again about the science and math courses. Did you take math and science courses in high school?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:51:02 I did not take a biology course when I was in high school and – Let me see, what would they have had for science at that stage of the game?
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:51:12 I don't know whether they had chemistry, physics, algebra, geometry.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:51:16 Well, I took geometry, and I took algebra and I took all of the math courses.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:51:21 Were these courses that were more frequently taken by boys?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:51:26 Not that I know of. No, I don't think so, Dorothy.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:51:30 But you got good grades?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:51:32 Yes, mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:51:34 Were you, by any chance, considered to be a tomboy?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:51:39 Not particularly.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:51:41 You were more of a lady than a tomboy?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:51:44 Well, you can't live out west and not be a tomboy for all those years because your life is so different from what it would be in the metropolitan areas and you had to wear pretty good sturdy shoes or you'd be walking around with rocks, if you had little sandals on mother would have to take care of you.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:52:15 Were your activities such that they might have been considered those of a tomboy?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:52:25 Well, I had my dolls. I had things that – My mother and father took me every place they went. I was interested in what they did. I was an only child, you see, during the time that I was growing up and they included me in whatever they did, and I don't know that I really was particularly. I used to ride horseback. As I said, I rode horseback to high school, primarily because they did not have buses and I was a little – And they had stables and everything where all of the youngsters that lived out away from school rode their horses to school. So, I was just doing what everybody else did then.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:53:16 Can we stop and think about just that period of your employment when you were with the National Park Service. And, for the moment, forget about everything that came before the Park Service. Did you find your supervisors in the Park Service to be encouraging or discouraging or did you encounter some of both?

- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:53:44 You couldn't ask for anybody to have been more encouraging than John Dorr was, Daniel Beard, Mr. Lee – What was his first name?
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:53:55 Ronnie Lee?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:53:56 Ronnie Lee. I would say those who – Howard Stagner wasn't quite as helpful. I think he resented a woman being a naturalist [inaudible 00:54:10]
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:54:11 How would that have been shown. How would a person who wasn't accustomed to having woman naturalists have evidenced his feelings?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:54:29 He just, if you know him – Do you know him?
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:54:32 No, I don't, not at all.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:54:35 Well, he's sort of a noncommittal person and I just don't think he was. Well, it's hard to explain. I know Lowell and I, before we did anything, we decided to go in and tell him that we were going to get married and I think he just said, "Oh." He didn't say that's fine, I'm glad or, you know he wasn't very outgoing. But he didn't disapprove, or he didn't encourage you or say "that's fine" or anything.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:55:16 In what way was encouragement shown by other people?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:55:20 Well, I think the fact that whenever I did anything that they thought would help the service in any way, they just were very complimentary and wanted to help out.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:55:40 There are, of course, some people who think of the National Park Service as a rather male oriented organization.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:55:47 Well, I'm sure that it probably was there was a period there, you and I both know, there was nothing but men except the clerical work that was done. Dorothy, I never had anybody that really, even Howard Stagner, that was really real critical or anything like that, but you didn't feel that he was as outgoing and felt that you had done a real outstanding job as some of the others.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:56:34 After you went on duty with the Park Service, particularly as a park naturalist, did you take any further training under

the supervision of Park Service, what we would not think of as training center courses?

- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:56:44 No, they hadn't even started doing that.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:56:48 So there were, presumably, none available.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:56:50 Mm-hmm (affirmative), yup.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:56:51 Do you think that being a woman affected your opportunities or added responsibilities and advancement?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:57:05 As long as I wasn't particularly interested in going to the field. I wasn't interested in being transferred out because when they would ask me if I wanted to be transferred away from Washington, I really didn't, and this is particularly after Lowell, and I were married. Had I wanted to take a transfer, why I hadn't any idea. It's possible that there could have been promotions, but I just never wanted to take one.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:57:38 Were you offered specific jobs elsewhere outside of Washington, in a particular location?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:57:43 No, and I would tell them, "I don't want any." So, I never was offered any.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:57:50 Do you think that affected your opportunities?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:57:57 I don't know.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:58:00 What about the possibility of your taking on added responsibilities in Washington? Do you think that being a woman affected that?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:58:13 Well, there were some of the men that had gone on and taken – They had really a lot of those people, after they had gotten their original jobs, they had their Master's degree in some specific field or were really better qualified than I was because I had not had any special training. So, in view of the fact that I had not had any more training than I had, I possibly went as far as I could have gone and as far as I know there has never been another park naturalist that has stayed there in Washington like I did. Those jobs just didn't appear anymore. I just had it for that brief interim period.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:59:06 Do you think that your specific talents and training were well used by the Park Service?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:59:13 I think they were.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:59:15 Did anyone serve as a mentor for you during the time you were with Park Service?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:59:23 No, I don't think so.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:59:26 Are there any jobs in the National Park Service you think women really should not tackle?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 00:59:36 Well, I don't think they should be mechanics or – I really feel so strongly about the Park Service. I think people that are dedicated or trained in some particular line should be doing that type of work. I don't think somebody that is a real fine biologist, for instance, I think they should be in the field or an advisory position, giving advice in the particular job that they've been trained in.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 01:00:27 So I don't think they should be put with the maintenance in that group or architects or what have you. And what I'm saying is I don't think women should be either. If they have had some special training in history, I think they should be in that field. If they have been archeologists, they should be in that field and then, if they are capable, advance. Hopefully they would be in a position where they could move up.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:01:07 What about a woman who has been trained as a mechanic?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 01:01:12 She might not be interested in the Park Service, but if she got a job there, why she probably could maybe do as well as a man that had – I don't know. I'm not really very mechanically inclined so I'm not – You'd certainly have to have training.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:01:34 Of course.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 01:01:36 And not having had any I just would hesitate to answer that.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:01:41 Well, you mentioned mechanic.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 01:01:42 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

- Dorothy Huyck: 01:01:44 But there are women being trained in such a variety of occupations.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 01:01:46 I know it. And not only that but we have seen women that have excelled in some things, particularly when for some reason or other they had some natural talent in that particular line and when they were put in the service they could respond and do a superb job.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:02:06 Have you any thoughts on where the opportunities for women in Park Service may be, say five years from now?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 01:02:23 Well I certainly don't see why they couldn't be in the interpretive field. There are some jobs that I think would be a little bit difficult if they – Like, superintendents of the big parks. There are so many problems, law enforcement and everything that maybe a woman doesn't have quite as much – Isn't quite as forceful and couldn't do the job quite as well as a man and I think people, a lot of times, would have tendency a lot of times to have more responsive to a man than they would a woman.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 01:03:13 But other than that I think that if the women were trained, I see no reason in the world why they couldn't do a lot of the jobs in the Park Service. It's [the clock] going to ding again.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:03:34 Did you keep a journal or a scrap book or a record of any sort with regard to your period of employment in the Park Service?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 01:03:41 No. I just had my personnel folder and that was about it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:03:51 If a young woman just out of school came to you for advice, would you encourage her to consider employment with the National Park Service?
- Marietta M. Sumner: 01:04:02 I think a lot would depend on her interests. If she seemed to be more artistic and had temperaments in that particular – and interests and knowledgeable – in that particular thing, maybe not the Park Service. There's other fields. Museums.
- Marietta M. Sumner: 01:04:26 But if a person is interested in the real philosophy that is back of the Nation Park Service to preserve these beautiful areas that we have, and is knowledgeable in some field where she could be of assistance, I think she should be encouraged. Particularly, if she likes the outdoors, if she is

interested in people. You have to like people to be in these jobs because most of them you're in contact. You have to learn to live with other people, you have to learn to be communicative.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:05:19 I've been asking you quite a collection about your experiences in the Park Service. Is there something we have not talked about that you would like to comment on?

Marietta M. Sumner: 01:05:32 Well, I think we pretty well covered everything and this has really been a very, very interesting experience and I do appreciate you making the effort to come, believe me. And this has been a very, very – Those years that I worked in the Park Service were great.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:06:07 Yeah. Thank you so much. You were commenting briefly about your relationship with your mother in terms of financial responsibility and that you maintained the home in Arlington, Virginia that you and she lived in, and you paid for—

Marietta M. Sumner: 01:06:28 I made the mortgage payments. Now, they weren't very much, believe me but I did take care of those and then she contributed some to the groceries and things like that, but I certainly did more than my part. And the electric bills and those things I paid, and the water bills.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:06:49 So, to a certain extent, we're correcting what [crosstalk 01:06:53]

Marietta M. Sumner: 01:06:52 Yes, we really are. I'm sorry about that.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:06:55 That's all right. I'm just glad we can make this correction because then you were in a situation where [crosstalk 01:07:02] you had some responsibility for your mother.

Marietta M. Sumner: 01:07:04 Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:07:05 And for your brother?

Marietta M. Sumner: 01:07:09 Well, even when he was in high school he worked and if I say he did have this policy so he paid for his own clothes and things like that. Things were so much cheaper than that it's hard to realize that a youngster could even do things like that.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:07:31

So essentially—

Marietta M. Sumner: 01:07:32

And he had a paper route and he was pretty thrifty.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:07:39

Essentially then your responsibility of a financial nature was for your mother?

Marietta M. Sumner: 01:07:42

Right. And he lived with us, so I mean it was all, the food and things like that were all included.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:07:51

Well, thank you for [crosstalk 01:07:53]

Marietta M. Sumner: 01:07:51

Right.

[END OF TAPE]

[END OF INTERVIEW]