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



Lorraine Mintzmyer
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Interview conducted by Dorothy B. Huyck
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[START OF SIDE A]

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:00 I am Dorothy Huyck. I will be interviewing Lorraine Mintzmyer, M-I-N-T-Z-M-Y-E-R, who was recently appointed deputy regional director for the southwest regional office in Santa Fe. Correction with regard to the name of Lorraine Mintzmyer, is sometimes seen as Loretta Lorraine Mintzmyer.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:23 May I ask how you first became acquainted with the National Park Service?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 00:29 Well, that's a rather long story in a way. What happened was that I worked in a bank after I got out of school, and I'd worked in University departments and ended up in the security department at the bank as a clerk. And the young man who ran the department transferred, he left. So, they asked me to run the department until such time as the new man was selected for the job. So, I ran the department with complete responsibility for it for six months. And if you're familiar with securities and stocks and bonds, you don't make mistakes, because you're spending customers' money.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 01:17 No problems, and they had said I had done a fantastic job. And then, one day in came a new young man that they hired fresh out of college. They walked in and asked me to train him, and I found out that he was making double what I was making right away to begin with, and I had to train him from the ground zero. So, I decided that bank was not in the business of recognizing ability of women, so I decided it was time for me to go for something else.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:45 Where was this bank?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 01:46 In Omaha, Nebraska.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:48 Were you investing in securities for—
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 01:51 Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:53 Customers of the bank.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 01:54 Right. Buying and selling stocks and bonds.

- Dorothy Huyck: 01:55 And you had carried that function out well until this person came on the scene?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 02:04 Right, mm-hmm (affirmative). And one little decimal point off, and you can cost a lot of money. And so, you really have to be very accurate. Very careful. And work under a lot of pressure, because when you have exchanges and that sort of thing, you have to be available and work very rapidly. Because if you take an order and don't get it into the market at such and such a time, then the market may change from night to morning. There are all those sort of things that really have to be considered when you do something like that.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 02:35 But anyway, to what happened then. I decided well I had heard some good things about the federal government as far as employers were concerned that they were perhaps a little less prone to be restrictive of women. But I found when I went to take the examination for the civil service commission, it was at that time difficult to get in as it is right now in certain types of jobs. And so, I had great deal of ability as a secretary. I had been doing that for many years. And so, I decided I'll take the stenographers test which I did. Got a very high score, so I qualified out at a GS4.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 03:24 And that week, after my exam came, I received five offers of different jobs in the city of Omaha. I was like a lot of other people are even now. They think that the federal government has one big personnel officer in the sky for all federal agencies, which is not true of course. But after going through the five different interviews, I felt that the National Parks Service's mission and objectives were more in coincidence with my own personal philosophies. So, I decided I'd go to work for the park service. And I did.
- Dorothy Huyck: 03:55 When was it?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 04:02 That would be in 19 – I have to stop and think. It's been so many years. 1959, July the 7th. And this was in the Midwest regional office in Omaha, which at that time the regions were much larger than they are now, which you're familiar with I'm sure. It had the parks of Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Rocky Mountain, Glacier. That was the type of park that it had at that particular time. I started out working in what they call jokingly the river bottoms, which

was a group in the regional office that did recreation planning for the bureau of reclamation. And so that's where I started as a secretary out there. And then about a year later, a job came up as the secretary to the new area studies branch. At that time, areas that were proposed for addition to the system, that sort of studying was done in the regional offices rather than the service center as it is now.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 05:09

So, I worked in that division and enjoyed that very much, because new areas are very intriguing and was a part of the creation of a lot of the parks that are in the system today as a result of that. And then as a result of what I had done there as a regional director of the region evidently got good feedback. So, one day they came down and asked if I would come up and work in the regional director's office. Well, I did and enjoyed that very much. I worked for people of such stature as Howard Baker, who became the associate director in Washington [inaudible 00:05:54]. And then it was Lon Garrison, then it was Fred Fahgren. And under Mr Fahgren, he was very good at counseling, and he was a very I think forward thinking man for his time, because whether – It was still things hadn't really opened up too much yet for women in the service yet.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 06:17

But he was very forward thinking and we got to talking in one of my counseling sessions, what do you want to do with your future, Lorraine? You have 20 years to go, and you've gone as far as you can in the secretarial field, which was true. And I said, "Well, I would really like to go into a professional job, but it hadn't really opened up for me." During the time that I'd been working in the regional director's office, you get such exposures, you can tell from verdict through the whole field of park operations. I learned a great deal about the system during that time. And then also I had gone to night school at the University of Nebraska in Omaha. I had taken the PACE exam. It was called the federal service entrance exam in those days. Trying to get everything done that if something opened up in the service, I could move into it, because I really enjoyed the service very much.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:13

You had taken up all these measures over a period of time?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 07:16

Yes, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dorothy Huyck: 07:17

But nothing had really matured that you could move into?

- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 07:21 No.
- Dorothy Huyck: 07:21 Until you got around to the session looking at long range career opportunity.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 07:25 Right, mm-hmm (affirmative). He was a very forward-thinking man.
- Dorothy Huyck: 07:28 When was this?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 07:31 Oh boy.
- Dorothy Huyck: 07:32 More or less.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 07:34 Let's see. It was in '68 – hmm. Gosh. It's terrible – the years fly so fast. Hmm. It must've been about '66 I guess when we started talking. And then the real crux of it really came to fruition about '67 I guess. So, one of the ladies in the office that was in the programming office there in the programming office for development construction retired. She had been in the job for a long time. And he knew that the business administrations was my forte. And that was a natural crossover. So, when the job became vacant then I competed of course for it. Certificate developed, and I was selected for the job.
- Dorothy Huyck: 08:43 What was the title of that job?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 08:45 It was a program assistant. Then what happened when I went into that job. It was really a fascinating field to me, because developing the parks, and making them available to visitors is an exciting business. It really is. It's just you feel like you're really doing something. And during that time the man who was in charge of the department that I was working in became increasingly more ill all the time. He had arthritis, and he was in such misery and in such pain it was just indescribable. So, because he was not well, he just kept giving me more and more of really technically his job to do, because he wasn't physically able to do it. He just would be gone some and would be in such pain that he knew that he seemed to sense that I could handle it. So, he just kept giving me more and more to do.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 09:42 There were a few ladies in the regional office who really laughingly – Or not laughingly. That's not very

appropriate. But they wondered why I was doing all this when I wasn't getting paid for it.

Dorothy Huyck: 09:58

Really?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 09:58

Technically. Well, it didn't really bother me because I was doing something I enjoyed. Just learning every day.

Dorothy Huyck: 10:05

What grade were you at that stage?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 10:08

Seven. But then as a result of him giving me more and more duties, about a year after I was in there, I became a nine, and they realized what I was doing. And separation of duties, pure and simple. And then he transferred to Great Smokey Mountains as administrative officer. Well, it was a very chain of events, because it was only two weeks after and I was put into the acting program coordinator for that region at that time because that was all they could do until they could fill the job. So, it was only two weeks after I assumed the job that there was a meeting called in San Francisco, which does happen historically in the National Park Service, wherein the regional directors and their programming officials meet in a conference to decide what jobs ... in other words what construction projects are going to be in the next year's program. What kind of planning documents are going to be produced like master plans interpretive prospectus and etc.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 11:17

At that time there was no separate office in the regional offices to the associate director of professional services as there is now. And so, all this was vested in the office of programming and development at that time. So, I went to – And Fahlgren of course had to take me as his representative. And I went out and for one solid week was the regional director of support as far as justification of all the program and that whole thing for the Midwest region. Well, I felt very good about it and apparently, he must have felt very good about it too, because when I came back from San Francisco, I can't recall how much longer that it was, but I heard the rumor in the hallway that the national parks service had decided to give the program officers job to a woman. And this was just buzzing up and down the hall like you couldn't believe. And I was, at the same time happy and sad, because I was happy that a woman was actually getting a job like this in the National Park Service. This had never been done before.

- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 12:24 And I was a little bit sad too. I thought, well gosh I'd sure like to show what I could do. But, then that's
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 12:32 So, anyway. Not suspecting anything was happening as far as I was concerned at all. But the next day I was called to the regional director's office and had informed me that they had decided that I was the person for the job because I had performed in a manner that was very acceptable. And he had just gotten through talking about it to the Director of the National Park Service who at that time was George Hartzog. And so, they put me in the job. Immediately they got a written amendment waiver to give me an 11 immediately, because this was pretty high graded job with a lot of responsibility. But what Mr Fahlgren did is to put it into a training category wherein he would assume more responsibility as the regional director for some of the decision making until such time, I could operate at full performance level which was GS13.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:26 At that time, was that a rather unusual measure?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 13:29 Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:29 I think it's done more frequently now.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 13:31 Yes, it is. But at that time, it was very unusual.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:34 Was it something he created?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 13:37 Well, you mean at concept?
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:40 It was not original in terms of the service as a whole. It was original in terms of a woman being given this opportunity.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 13:47 That's right. Well, it was originally – And that it just there had never been a woman in that type of job, in that program officer job before. And there has not been one since. I just think that he was Mr Fahlgren was a very astute judge in people. Not because he picked me, because it was my overall observation. The people that he supported and chose to work with, he was very selective that they had to be very special people. And so, I think he was very interested. He was very much a person to judge people on their ability period. That was it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:38 Regardless of sex.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 14:39

Right. And so, I'm sure that's why I'm where I am today, in addition to other people. Of course, then I was in that job for – I went up to full performance level, which was 13 level. And at that time, another regional director who was to me also very forward thinking was Len Bolt. He was the regional director at that time. In fact, he was here yesterday. We started talking about – I was immediately under the office of the regional director just like Bill Alfred is here now. And so, we had our counseling sessions, and we talked about what I wanted to do as a career. And I was very happy doing what I was doing, because it was very challenging and exciting, stimulating job. Because at the time we had the Midwest region. During the last year we had 55 National Park Service areas, so it was a tremendous workload. It was very, very demanding. There were just no other two ways about it. It was a terrific job.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 15:59

But then we talked about it, and I said, "Well, I really would like to go to a field area. I would really like to see what the National Park – Work with the park service at the field level. And what I want to be after my experience here, I want to be in the driver seat, which is maybe a very outgoing to say that sort of thing. But I felt the need to be the one in control. And so, Mr Voles then counseled me, well then to go into management, which is what the superintendents are, you'd have to have the management training. So, he counseled me and then recommended me for the mid-level management training program that the park service has. I guess, I understand I was the third woman selected for that. And I took that – And of course that's the time where they look at you to see whether or not you are management material, and whether or not ... because you do the job, your own job. But you do this on the side as well, in your off hours.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 17:06

So, it is a good test of your own initiative. Well, at the end of that two-year program, then the regional director says, "Okay, you either – We'll try to put you into management if you come out okay." At that time, right just before I entered the program, a job opened up as – Heather and I worked together. And I'd been to the area many times. It was one of the areas that I had worked on when I was in new area studies. It also one that I had been involved in the master planning for as part of my programming office job. And also, I'd always really had a secret desire to be the superintendent Herbert Hoover, because you see it was my

home state, and Herbert Hoover was one of my idols as a result of that, being the only president from the state of Iowa.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 18:00

So, when the man announced that he was going to retire as the superintendent, I went and talked to the regional director and said, "Well, if you feel that you could see me in that kind of a role, I would really like to have that job." And luckily, I got it.

Dorothy Huyck: 18:20

What year was that?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 18:26

Shoot, that would've been – Today, this is '78. 1972. And so, during the time that I was superintendent of Herbert Hoover, the first year – No, it was '73. I take that back. Let me see my numbers here. The first thing off the bat, is that Herbert Hoover's 100th birthday was on August the 10th, 1974. And the National Park Service and Hoover Presidential Library association were jointly to plan a big celebration on August the 10th, 1974 to celebrate his birthday. The library association had already invited President Nixon to be the featured speaker. And so, the first big job I was being part of that first year was getting all the arrangements made for the big celebration. Getting a lot of projects done to make the place spic and span. When you're going to have national television and all that sort of thing, well you like to have the place look very good.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 19:37

We really made at least two to three years advance in that one year. It starts the adrenaline when you have an objective to go to, and we really did make a lot of things happen, and it was exciting. Then after the centennial was over, then the second year my assignment there then I worked on other things that I didn't have a chance to the first year.

Dorothy Huyck: 20:04

I think in fact Mr. Nixon never got to the occasion.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 20:06

He did not. The declination – Well, at that point, everybody until the last-minute thought he was going to be there. The Republican Party, people around the library association, Don Johnson who was head of Veteran's Administration was part of the Hoover Presidential Library Association. The library association was composed over very, very wealthy republicans in the state of Iowa. And so, they were quite influential in the political arena. But he resigned on

Thursday night, and the birthday was on Saturday. So that kind of settled that. But the secretary of interior was actually Joyce Baker then. It was an exciting experience to be a part of that.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 20:56

Then the – Well, it would be – He’s now regional director in Seattle. And then the deputy director, Russ Dickinson talked to me one time when I was in Washington about going into the department of management training program. And I had never really seriously considered it really, because of the fact that you have to go into Washington for at least a year. And to me, the people that were part of the department of management training program were identified as being aspirants to pretty high positions, and so I really had never thought about it seriously at all. And Mr. Dickinson said that he thought that I would benefit very much from the program and so would the service. And so, he encouraged me to apply for the program.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 21:57

I did after counseling [inaudible 00:22:01], and also Dave Beal who was our regional director in Omaha, who was also a very open kind of an individual. He’s very much to try to pick people on the basis of ability and talent, period. And so, I went into the department of management training program for a year. That was back in Washington. One of the most exhilarating experiences I’ve ever had. It was tremendous. I worked at the capitol hill up in house interior committee for two months and did all kinds of things that really broadened my perspective about the other kind of forces that have an impact upon the National Park system. And at the end of the departmental management training program of course then you’re ready for them to put you in a position that they think will be appropriate.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 22:55

And at that time I was selected for Buffalo National River, which was in a way a first, because it was the first time that they had selected a woman for a major national park area. I mean, one of any size. It was 95,000 acres with a lot of very, very controversial problems because of land acquisition. It was very much of a test of everything that I knew and could acquire. Just a very challenging assignment. I enjoy that for two years.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:39

What was the status of Buffalo National River when you went there, and then when you left? What had evolved?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 23:46

Well, when I went there, up until November of 1975 the area and or court and junction to do nothing except acquire land from willing sellers, and also to operate the two state parks. Which were only – One was only 2000 acres. And the other was only 120 acres. Well, shortly after I arrived, the court injunction had been lifted, so then all of a sudden, we were bang, right in a position having to operate and to function as a park. 70% of the land, which had already been acquired, but we weren't able to do anything to it under that court injunction. So, that meant that we had to get the area under control. We had to start enforcing regulations, which we had not been able to do before. We had to start regulating the use of the river as possible under the circumstances.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 24:42

So many of the policy and the precedent same decisions about the area's future direction, and what we were going to do to actually manage the park had to be made in that timeframe, because there was no way they could be made before under the court injunction. So, we worked on – Acquired a quite a bit of land. We went into the situation for the first time where, always before if anybody started to do anything to the resource, the manager, his hands were tied. He just had to sit there and watch it happen with that court injunction. But under my administration we could not ignore it when things started happening that were damaging. I had to move. I had to say, "Okay, we're going to do a declaration of taking whatever's required to stop this kind of action.

Dorothy Huyck: 25:33

What kinds of damaging actions actually were going on at the point at which you could do something about them?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 25:38

Well, there were many people had familiars and of course this is a concept that is part of that area. Had burned every spring, had burned off their land. Of course, then, it would encroach upon the park, and upon the park land. And of course, unless you have a prescribed fern situation is just against all national parks first policy. We had to start telling and enforcing the littering of the river because it was getting to be such a very, very much of a problem. It was just pretty bad. It's an education process. You're changing people's ways of life. They've been doing these sort of things for centuries, and then all of a sudden, we come in and say you can't do it anymore because this is a national river. Cattle were trespassing. Well, it's illegal for anybody

else's cattle to be grazing on federal property without a permit. These were the sort of things where we really had to—

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 26:49

And because of the fact that you are changing people's lives. You are coming into an environment where you're the one who's different. You're the one who is quote taking their land away. You have to be much more solicits, much more careful, much more astute politically to achieve the objectives and just not inflate the whole situation. So, each decision that had to be made had to be done with a complete awareness of the environment you were making it in, and knowing what the acceptance was going to be, and you had to work out a sales program for each decision to make sure that it could be salable. Knowing full well that when you're asking your rangers to enforce regulation, that they're job was more education than it was enforcement. In other words, the citation was a last resort because we tried very much to understand the people's perspective.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 27:59

And also, in a climate where you had – Well, at Buffalo, there was a group of landowners who immediately, as soon as the area was created, filed suit in federal court, contesting the right of the national park service to exercise eminent domain proceedings for recreation purposes. This trial, or this court case, would you believe came to be held one month after I arrived at Buffalo. So, I had my first experience on the witness stand in a federal court. It would, at that time, it was rather difficult because I'd only been there one month. And the lawyer of course was aware of that fact. So, he started siting all kinds of statistics and so on and so forth about different documents. Is this figure correct? And so, on and so forth.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 28:56

Well, I was not about to perjure myself, so in many cases I said I'll wait for the record, or I'm just not certain. I don't want to perjure myself. But it was a very interesting experience. And I found out it's not what you know but what you can think of fast when you're on the witness stand. But anyway, the district court held on behalf of the National Park Service. That they did have the right of eminent domain and condemnation. The same group then appealed that decision to the US circuit court of appeals in St Louis. The court of appeals upheld the district court's decision. And then the group proceeded to take the case to

the supreme court. And the supreme court did not hear the case. So that in effect is a supreme court decision.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 29:47

But that will give you an idea of the determination and the feeling that was prevalent in the area. We knew every time we actually gave a citation that we probably would end up in some kind of court on it. And even some minor cases as a cattle trespass went to district court, because it was just a way of protesting the creation of the park.

Dorothy Huyck: 30:13

You must've spent a great deal of your time preparing court cases.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 30:18

Sure did. But I was probably one of the most fortunate people in the whole National Park Service, and I had, without a doubt, the most magnificent staff I have ever seen. They were just so devoted to the project. So, devoted to the fact that they were creating a national park. Committed to what we were doing. And even in the face of constant feelings that were not pleasant from some people, they still maintained their highest [inaudible 00:30:56]. They were willing to work unprecedented hours. And really, it's a very humbling experience to find out how much you are dependent upon the people underneath you and that you can't do a thing without them.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 31:13

So, it was a very exciting experience to have that kind of people to lead, and that's all it was, was just lead because we had very much worked on the team concept and all we'd have to do is have an agreement that this is the way we're going and away they go. They were very productive and still are. But then I guess the National Park Service that they needed me here in Santa Fe and here I am.

Dorothy Huyck: 31:44

Technically, you left [inaudible 00:31:46] when?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 31:48

I arrived here the first of August.

Dorothy Huyck: 31:52

Are you going to have any particular responsibilities in your new position here?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 31:55

Well the deputy in the regional office functions as the regional director's right hand. I'm technically executive officer of the regional office. So technically I'm responsible for everything that goes on in the office and in the field areas, just the same as the regional director is. And

when – I’m part of all the decisions that are made, and when he’s not here I make the decisions. So, that’s a little hard to explain. But it works in that particular area. And John Coke operates very much on that. Some people are less willing to delegate and to feel comfortable with this kind of relationship, but he is not one of them. And not only did he select me, but I selected him because he’s that kind of a regional director. I’ve known him for several years. I know how he operates. He is not afraid to make decisions. He is not afraid to delegate. Not reluctant to. Not afraid is not the right words. But he’s probably one of the best executives in the National Park Service, really.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 33:22

And so, that’s why I’m enjoying it at my job already, because he’s that good.

Dorothy Huyck: 33:32

Going to go back in history for a minute, and can I ask where and when you were born?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 33:37

July the 22nd, 1935.

Dorothy Huyck: 33:41

Where?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 33:41

Adair, Iowa.

Dorothy Huyck: 33:43

A D A I R?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 33:44

Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 33:44

Were you by any chance an only child?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 33:49

No, I’m one of five.

Dorothy Huyck: 33:50

Which one of five?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 33:51

The oldest of five.

Dorothy Huyck: 33:53

The eldest.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 33:53

Yep. And the only girl.

Dorothy Huyck: 33:59

Did you grow up Adair, Iowa?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 33:59

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dorothy Huyck: 34:00

And what was your father’s occupation?

- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 34:07 Well, the time that I was being raised he was the foreman of a construction company.
- Dorothy Huyck: 34:11 And your mother was busy with five children?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 34:13 Yes, very much so. Also raising a step aunt, and sending two cousins through high school.
- Dorothy Huyck: 34:20 And where did you attend high school?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 34:22 Adair public school.
- Dorothy Huyck: 34:25 And college?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 34:27 I went to Iowa State Teacher's College in Cedar Falls, and the University of Nebraska at Omaha.
- Dorothy Huyck: 34:34 Did you graduate from Iowa State?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 34:36 No. Cedar Falls.
- Dorothy Huyck: 34:43 During the time you were in school, what were your major fields of study in Cedar Falls?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 34:49 Cedar Falls it was music. And at the University of Nebraska, it was business administration.
- Dorothy Huyck: 34:57 During this educational process, both high school and the time you were in college, who was it that encouraged you—
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 35:06 To go?
- Dorothy Huyck: 35:07 To go and in terms of general encouragement as far as your future prospects were concerned? Was there someone in your family, or—
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 35:14 My mother. My mother had had two years of college, and even though she did not pursue it because of the family, she very much felt that it was good, and it would help me understand the world a little bit better. Then when I – I guess she just gave me so much encouragement when I was younger that it held over, because then when I went even later on, I just went under my own initiative. There wasn't anybody, but she was the one who—

Dorothy Huyck: 35:53 Did you play with boys as a child?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 35:56 Oh yes. I had four brothers.

Dorothy Huyck: 35:57 You had four brothers.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 35:58 And they each had I don't know how many playmates. Quite a few.

Dorothy Huyck: 36:02 Were you by chance considered a tom boy?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 36:05 No. I don't think so anyway, because I – No, I don't think so.

Dorothy Huyck: 36:12 Had you been to national parks during the years you were growing up?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 36:16 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 36:17 So, you really weren't familiar with it.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 36:17 Absolutely not.

Dorothy Huyck: 36:20 No camping, fishing trips, nothing of that sort.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 36:22 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 36:26 Among the supervisors, of whom you've had many in the years you've been in the park service, have there been those that have been discouraging, or encouraging or possibly both?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 36:40 I'd say they've all been encouraging.

Dorothy Huyck: 36:42 All of them?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 36:43 Yes. I mean, when I got to the point where I really had myself sorted out, so I knew what I wanted to do, they were very encouraging. In fact, the encouragement even went so far as to the director of the National Park Service, because George Hartzog took a very personal interest in my career also. And we're very close friends even to this day.

Dorothy Huyck: 37:08 That's very interesting, because relatively few women say all of their supervisors have been encouraging.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 37:17

Well, maybe I've just been one of the lucky ones. But when you think back through my career. You start with John Cooke's upstairs. He was in my counseling departmental management. Very encouraging. So was Gary Everhart who was the director. And then you go back to – Okay, who's before that? Joe Rumberg was the regional director when I was the superintendent at Buffalo. He was very encouraging because he selected me for the Buffalo National River as a superintendent and gave me a chance to do a job that no other woman had done before. Prior to that, let's see it would be Dave Beal in the Midwest who this last month, I helped, submitted some items for a nomination for an award for him for what he had done for the field of women.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 38:05

Prior to that was Len Volve, who you and I talked about. Fred Fahgren who was probably the one who really gave me the springboard in a way. Well, more than in a way. And Lon Garrison who was the regional director was exceptional. He really just knew what I could do, and he let me do it. He did an awful lot to help me expand my relevance in it. When he was regional director and came into the region, he'd go around to all the park areas, and he and Fred Fahgren would, dictating into a Dictaphone and come back with tapes that would be 50 and 80 pages of typing. And they expected me to have all the memos on their desk ready to sign when I came back.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 38:54

They weren't letter perfect, and in fact I had to do an awful lot of checking, so they expanded my knowledge is what they did. The only one that I would say that was less was the one who – It's kind of interesting. I learned the most from him now that I think about it. Bob Mansell who was the one who kept giving me more and more of his work. I learned more from him than any of the rest of them because I learned what not to do. That's kind of an interesting thing. But I saw things that he did that I reacted to negatively in supervision. And so, I learned not to do those things. And so, he was really not encouraging, I guess. But I guess I feel benevolent toward him because there's where my real break came.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 39:49

And then when you go back any further, Howard Baker was always very, very much help as a regional director. In fact, he wanted me to come to Washington to be his

secretary. But I went there and looked at the job and declined. I've really worked for some fantastic people.

Dorothy Huyck: 40:10 Would you identify some of these people as literally being a mentor as far as you're concerned?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 40:14 Oh yes. Absolutely. I would've not gotten to first base without them. I'm fully aware of the impact that they had, and I'm very grateful to them.

Dorothy Huyck: 40:27 You've been telling me about a number of very satisfying aspects in your career. Have there been any that were frustrating?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 40:35 Oh dear. Frustrating. You mean segments in my career that I felt were less productive or less satisfying to me as an individual? Well, I think when I became to the point where I felt that I knew a job so well that I wasn't going to benefit anymore from it, then I took steps to take some action to get myself into something else. Because I know that I'm that kind of an individual if I'm not happy with what I'm doing, if it isn't fulfilling me as an individual, that I've got to do something about it. And that's when I would take action to talk to people and get – And I didn't just talk to one person. I talked to lots of them so I could find out all the different ways of doing things.

Dorothy Huyck: 41:25 So, somehow you avoided problem somewhere being dead ended?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 41:29 Absolutely. I've not had any problem with that. I could've been. Now, for instance if I had been – I know right now I would've probably been a very disgruntled employee had I had to stay in that same job in the regional office for another 20 years, because it just wouldn't have been a challenge to me any longer, and I have to be challenged. I have to have more than I can possibly achieve to make me feel.

Dorothy Huyck: 42:00 A number of people say that, but a number of people have not found a way to break out of a certain dead end situation and to find greater growth or challenge. So, apparently there was a talent that you have for getting out of one area and assuming greater growth and responsibility.

- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 42:18 Well, I hope that that's a characteristic that I do have, because I think it's inherent, absolute requirement at the kind of job I'm in now. Really.
- Dorothy Huyck: 42:33 Of course there are some people who perceive the park service as a rather male oriented organization. Has that been your experience at all?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 42:43 I'd say it is. Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 42:45 It still is, currently?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 42:50 It's very much less so, now than it has been. Because the people of the National Park Service are now thinking. In other words, the park service is no different than the rest of society. We're all human beings just like the rest. And so, you are a product of that society. So, I really think that the National Park Service is more progressive in these last few years than a lot of places that I've seen. Actually, they're really trying very hard to move out of the enigma of the only person that can be a ranger is a 6'2" super type.
- Dorothy Huyck: 43:38 I'm always fascinated. Everybody says 6'2". There's something mystical about 6'2. Not one and a half. Not three. 6'2.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 43:47 I guess it's just again an image that was projected for many years. I think as evidence of the fact that things are changing, and that the young ladies in the National Park Service see my appointment as a breakthrough as a number of calls, letters, and so and so forth that I've received from the young ladies in the park service, many of whom I do not even know. So, they see it as a change in the trend, and that it can happen, and that it is going to happen. And it's, I think increased their aspirations in the process. And I feel a responsibility to them to make sure that it works.
- Dorothy Huyck: 44:29 It's been interesting to me that other people in other regions have referred to you and taken hope from the fact that you've been put into this position.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 44:35 Well, I'm glad to hear that.
- Dorothy Huyck: 44:35 Yeah. They see that as—

[END OF SIDE A]

[START OF SIDE B]

- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 00:00 I certainly hope that never happens, because then to me, that's not equal opportunity. I personally feel that people should be judged on their abilities and talents and not on who they know. And I will not be part of it if it does happen, that's pretty positive, but that's the way I feel.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:25 There is of course, again, an old boy network.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 00:29 I think that, if you study organizational behavior, you have an informal system that is very prevalent in all organizations of any size. And for us, the National Park Service to be any different would be very naive. Certainly, if you have a certificate with people on it and you have the same qualifications and so on and so forth of two people, that if you do have a known, it's just human nature that you're going to select a known, if you feel that that person you can relate to. And also, you're going to pick for your staff, people that you know, that you've worked with, that's just human nature. So, I don't think we're any different than any other organization. That's my personal philosophy. But...
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:21 In your particular case, has being a woman in any way, pro or con, affected your opportunities for advancement?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 01:37 Well, I guess I would be less than honest if I didn't say that when you are breaking into new ground, as I'm doing, as many minorities are doing, that sounds almost egotistical, but I don't mean it to me. That's just a statement of the fact that you have to be twice as good, twice as productive because you are, you're being watched. And I hope this doesn't come out in a discouraging way because the last thing I want to do is to close some avenues or some attitudes at this point that are opening up. The affirmative action is a delicate flower that is just opening up and I would hate to see it crushed.
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:38 Do you find that the affirmative action program is effective?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 02:41 Yes, very definitely, because it brings to the forefront of manager's minds. It juggles their perspective. It makes them think of different ways of doing the same thing. And so, I think it's very effective. It has been especially

effective under our present director who is very committed to the program, and I saw it's especially effective under John Cook, who is committed, but also judges people on their talents and abilities period. He knows what he wants in a person and the position he goes after.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:17

Are there any jobs that you think a woman really should not tackle in the Parks Service?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 03:24

No. If she has the talents, the capabilities and the drive and desire to do it, I think a woman should be just the same as a man. She's willing to make – For instance, I do not think that there can be a double standard because I think that defeats – When you accept the first rung of the ladder or the second rung, or whatever, you accept a responsibility to commit yourself to the objectives of the National Park Service, as well as your own personal objectives. So, when they need you for a particular job and it means moving in most cases, which it does, you have to say, "Well, if I'm given these kind of opportunities, I will do this."

For instance, I always counsel young ladies that I talk to, you have to slate your own objectives in a climate in which an agency exists. And if you cannot shape your life between you and your personal life, to the demands of an occupation, then it's better to just discount and not even let it upset you and not even aspire, because then you are just defeating yourself and getting ulcers in the process. So, if you can't move, you just have to recognize that your possibilities are terribly limited.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:07

This question of mobility has been one that has been seen, in the eyes of some persons, as a real detriment in the case of women, particularly, married women. I believe you're married.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 05:21

Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:21

When were you married?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 05:24

Oh my goodness. I can't remember what year [inaudible 00:05:26].

1954.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:31

And your husband has moved as you have moved.

- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 05:34 Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 05:37 Has he been employed by the Parks Service during this time?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 05:39 No. No.
- Dorothy Huyck: 05:41 Has he taken a certain career with him as he moved?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 05:44 Well, when I first moved to Herbert Hoover he, of course was a restaurant and hotel type. And so that's an easily transferable occupation. They're present in most places. [inaudible 00:06:02]. But then at the end of our assignment at Herbert Hoover, he has been very ill for a long time. He's had four heart attacks and one of those things that are very, very [inaudible 00:06:18]. So, the doctors finally just told him he would have to retire. And so, during the last few assignments that we've had, he's been in retirement. He's not been working.
- Dorothy Huyck: 06:31 I think this question of employment for married persons is also one that's becoming more and more acute in terms of couples where both persons are employed at the Park Service.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 06:31 It is.
- Dorothy Huyck: 06:41 And as you know, it's been rather traditional to see the partner female resign. At least that has happened, in many cases. There are a few superintendents who find a married couple a bonus, especially where housing is short, and you can place two employees in one house and that solves a problem. But in other instances, right up to today, there are women who are expected to resign. Do you see the Park Service facing that question in any new way?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 07:14 Well, I don't think we have yet.
- Dorothy Huyck: 07:18 By the way, it's not peculiar to the Park Service.
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 07:20 No, I know it's not. I really think that that sort of question is all tied up with social attitudes because your statement is very correct, that not only does the National Park Service expect a woman to resign, the society does. We have more and more young ladies who are very strong in themselves. They know where they are and so they are not so prone to

just do what society expects, which I think is very healthy. I'm very happy to see them be that secure for themselves. So, if they're in the kind of marriage where the other partner understands and where they can make an individual decision, each time something happens, I think it will work, but I don't see the National Park Service as solving or even being able to solve, agency-wide that kind of problem. That's a pretty big order because we don't expect private industry, like Xerox or IBM to solve that problem. Not to my knowledge anyway. And so—

Dorothy Huyck: 08:41

I think the military is tackling this problem.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 08:44

I mean, it's a little easier in the military where you have unlimited personnel [inaudible 00:08:48] and so on and so forth. But with an agency like the National Park Service where positions and money are so critical, it is really an obstacle because there just isn't that fluidity that's available. It's not for lack of wanting to, I don't think. Well, it may be in some people, but I know that there's a real concern that they don't want to lose that kind of professionalism that's available in a marriage partner and they're trying as much as they can in certain instances. But I don't think that the National Park Service with the money and the positions that they have and the forecast of what it's going to be in the near future, are going to be able to solve across the board the marriage problem, because that means you have to have two jobs.

You have to have, at the same time, which is rather difficult because most parks, you're just lucky if you have one that's open. So, it forces couples into decisions. But if they know jointly, make their life plan as a couple, then I think maybe sometimes they'll move because the man has a chance. Next time they might move because the woman might have an opportunity to advance. Of course, you're hearing my particular philosophy, but I do not follow personally the philosophy that my employing agency has to solve my personal problems. I feel like I should solve those myself at home and not bring them to the job.

Dorothy Huyck: 10:27

I think some of these persons would say that the Park Service has already made an investment in each of them and that when either one of them is required to give up that career, there is a loss of Park Service investment.

- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 10:41 I would agree. I would agree they've lost, but short of having unlimited budget and [inaudible 00:10:50] I don't see how they can solve that problem. Because most of the times, those professional marriages are both park rangers usually.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:01 If you were to look down the road in say five years, what would you see for the opportunities for women in say five to ten years from now?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 11:16 Well I think that with the way things are going that five years from now, there will be many women who are in responsible positions who will have shown and are showing today that they can do the job, that they will have done a very good job of convincing others by their actions, that it is possible, it's probable and desirable. Because most of the young ladies that we have now are pretty exceptional. And the ones who are in management positions, I know personally, because there aren't that many, are doing a good job and they're breaking the ground very well. So, I expect, I would predict that within 10 years we might possibly have a female director because of the very talented young ladies that we have and the situation I feel that the talents that it takes for management, are talents that women possess. I might have an argument on that from some people.
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:50 If you were to imagine yourself counseling a young woman, just out of college, would you encourage her to join the Park Service at this point?
- Lorraine Mintzmyer: 12:55 Yes, very much so. In fact, when I go to college recruiting, I always wear my uniform. So that, maybe if they haven't thought about this kind of an alternative, it will juggle their thoughts a little bit, because there's something about that hat that creates questions. Yes. Very definitely. I'm not going to say it's going to be an easy road because I think it's in the higher-level positions that we're still on approving basis. And that makes the challenge even more fun.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:40 I've been asking you quite a collection of questions? Is there anything that we have not talked about that you'd like to talk about?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 13:49 I think I've talked pretty freely. I guess I'd like to ask you how you're going to put this all together.

Dorothy Huyck: 13:59 I'd be glad to talk about that.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 14:00 But not yet.

Dorothy Huyck: 14:02 Is there something you'd like to put on this tape?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 14:04 Oh, okay. All right.

Well, I think I'd like to make the same offer that if you do publish this or whatever you're going to do with it, I'd like to make the offer that I've made to many young people period, across the board. That I'm very happy to sit and listen and talk and counsel and support, and I'm especially at this point, interested in young women, because one of the problems that I experienced and it was not really a very large problem, and I don't think that this is unique to me, is that it would have been very, very nice if I could have talked to another woman as a mentor and to discover that some of the things that I was experiencing were not unique to me, but they were things that across the board that most women did encounter. You can in your very beginning stage feel maybe you're the one that's out of step rather than somebody else.

And if you had a woman to talk to who had experienced this sort of situation, she could reassure you and then give you some counseling as to how you might counteract these things, to understand the informal organization, how it works, what you can do, because you happen to be a female and not one of the guys. Those are things you have to learn how to counteract, to get the job done and still make sure that you can do the job. And so, I would like to offer any young lady who wants to talk to me, I'd be very happy to.

Dorothy Huyck: 16:03 Can you tell me in a nugget, what you would tell that young lady in terms of how to get the job done?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 16:10 Well, depending upon what kind of job she was in, that counts just a little bit differently, what's your particular – For instance, in a culture of the National Park Service, which is heavily socially oriented, I think you've probably noticed that, or maybe you've talked about some feelers, for instance, a lot of the decisions are made after hours in

the travel status, in so-and-so's room or at such and such a bar or so and so forth. That's just the culture and you have to be aware of that and know how you can react in that environment. I found there were certain techniques that worked for me, things that I could counter with.

You also have with the social culture, which is, I believe one of the strengths in the National Park Service, despite what some people may think. I think it's one of the things that has made it the kind of organization it is. In my particular role as a superintendent of a park, one of the cultures is that when visiting dignitaries come from the regional office or come from other parts of the country, that you entertain them socially in your home. You have a different situation in my particular instance than you do a man because the man's going to call up his wife and say, "Well, I'm bringing so and so home to dinner, would you fix dinner?" I've had many instances where I've had to be out in the field til five or six o'clock at night tramping through the woods. And then I have to throw on a quite reasonable dinner, on the dinner table in half an hour, 45 minutes. Well see, you have to learn to adjust to that kind of environment, see what you can do.

That's just as much a responsibility of being superintendent of the park, not as much, but one of the things that was expected. So, I had to learn, for instance, I had to change my home style cooking. On weekends I would fix all and learn all these different dishes that can be frozen, put in the freezer so I could bring them out and have a whole meal ready in no time flat [inaudible 00:18:32], but that and other things that they can learn to live with the environment as a result. I had to learn by the school of hard knocks. Maybe somebody else can benefit from not having to go through that, but and also, it just helps to talk to a woman, I believe.

Dorothy Huyck: 18:51

On a sexual side, [inaudible 00:18:55]

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 19:01

I can imagine that. What have you found that makes you come to that conclusion?

Dorothy Huyck: 19:08

I have talked to people who have found that the sexual side of life, either harassment or one that they could use for the sake of advancement.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 19:21

Well, it's very interesting because I've never found it so, but I guess maybe my marital status had something to do with it, or maybe my bent is not in that particular direction. I don't know. I've just not had that problem at all. Most of the people in the National Park Service recognize, I guess, and have recognized that I'm just all business and that's it. So, when you think that when I started traveling for the first time with the regional directors and with other, they were all men, and I was the only woman. I suppose that I could have had problems, but I didn't. If I guess I thought about the possibility that there might be a jealous wife or something or other, but I felt that I would conduct myself in the manner in which I knew what I was doing, why I was doing it so on and so forth. And then to me, the job was too important. I would just discount that kind of gossip.

Dorothy Huyck: 20:33

[inaudible 00:20:33] a real concern. [inaudible 00:20:48]

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 20:50

I looked at it and crossed the bridge with my husband, of course, there's always the spouse also too of a female, so that isn't just all one route. And we talked about it, and we had a very good down to earth discussion as you can imagine, and the way we resolved it, is he is secure in me because he knows that I love him. And I said, you know, we talked about it very much. My personal philosophy is that there isn't anything that you can do on a trip that you can't do at your own home. I mean, in a motel, whatever. So, if the inclination's there to do it, it'll be done regardless of how, so the travel bit doesn't sell it for me.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:42

Okay.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 21:43

I have not had any problems with that. In fact, I have been very pleased at the respect and the helpfulness that I have gotten from very [inaudible 00:22:01] men, and it has not had nothing to do with sex. Absolutely.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:06

Any other little tidbits that you are eager to hand on to a person entering Park Service since you are a woman who might be talking to such a young woman?

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 22:30

I guess, for instance, if somebody asked me what's the easiest route to take to get into the National Park Service and to advance, I guess I would tell the young lady in the field of administration, because of the shortage category there. That'd be the kind of counseling I would give. If she

happened to be a professional park ranger, however, that's her particular bent, I would counsel her to go to as many... Not be concerned that for a while, she's going to have to lateral to get all kinds of experience she could possibly get on her forms. One thing I think is very unrealistic is that some, and this is not just females, this is also males feel that they walk in the door, the next day they'll be the director. Well, it just doesn't work that way. So, the best thing in the world is to get as many different types of experience that you possibly can because then that comes in so handy later on, when you have to make some very critical decisions. I know I lateraled three times and all to my benefit.

Maybe, sure, I guess I had some times of thinking that it'd be nice if I were promoted, but I realized that I need those kinds of experiences. They really have helped me out of some very tough spots. I would recommend to a young lady that she sit down. And I always, I guess it goes back to my business administration background, but I say put down on sheet, put down one side, your assets and the other side, your liabilities. Find out what your liabilities are in relation to where you think you want to go and what you can do to resolve them. If you find that there are things that you just cannot resolve, and that's a personal decision that you have to make for yourself, and you have to adjust your career goals accordingly.

The first thing is to know yourself, why you want to do it, where you want to go and why and then see if you've got the tools. It really helps because if you put down the fact on the right-hand side of the margin, on the liability side, that you cannot move, then you just have to recognize that and adjust the type of goal you want differently. You may be still able to do a very meaningful and a very productive and fulfilling job in the Park Service, but it probably wouldn't be a park superintendent because you'd have to move to do it. So that's just... I've got a whole speech that I usually give. I can't think of it all right now because I've given it quite a few times.

I guess one thing that in the National Park Service is an absolute requirement, in almost every job, and that's the ability to be able to speak, the ability to communicate. Not only because you have to make a lot of speeches, but because you have to think on your feet so much, no matter

what job you're in. So, I always encourage young ladies to very definitely take Toastmasters training because I think it does teach that. I found that college and high school courses in speech are not that great for drawing out those things, because thinking on your feet is an absolute requirement often times. You have to be writing speeches. You're getting up from a chair.

My goodness. That's enough, isn't it? I can't think of anything.

Dorothy Huyck: 26:35

Thank you.

Lorraine Mintzmyer: 26:37

Thank you.

[END OF SIDE B]

[END OF INTERVIEW]