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Telling Our Own Untold Stories:
Civil Rights in the National Park Service Oral History Project



Lynda Boose
February 9, 2022

Interview conducted by Perri Meldon and Lu Ann Jones
Transcribed by Rev.com
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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

LYNDA BOOSE

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Interview conducted by
Perri Meldon and Lu Ann Jones

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The narrator has reviewed this transcript.

[START OF FILE 1]

- Lu Ann Jones (00:00:00): I'm turning the record button on. Thank you.
- Perri Meldon (00:00:05): Thank you, Lu Ann. Today is February 8th, 2022. My name is Perri Meldon, and I am interviewing Lynda Boose who worked at Isle Royale National Park in Michigan from the 1980s until the early 2000s. We are conducting this oral history by phone. NPS staff historian Lu Ann Jones is also joining us. This oral history recording will be stored with the National Park Service. Thank you again, Lynda, for joining today. Well, let's start with some basics. Lynda, when were you born and where were you born?
- Lynda Boose (00:00:50): I was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1944.
- Perri Meldon (00:00:58): 1944. And did you grow up in Boston?
- Lynda Boose (00:01:01): I stayed in Boston until I graduated from high school.
- Perri Meldon (00:01:07): Where did you attend school?
- Lynda Boose (00:01:10): I went to a school for the blind called Perkins.
- Perri Meldon (00:01:15): That's a very well-known school.
- Lynda Boose (00:01:16): Very.
- Perri Meldon (00:01:18): Did you attend Perkins from kindergarten through your senior year?
- Lynda Boose (00:01:27): Yes, started in kindergarten and went all the way through. It was a residential school, so I stayed at school during the week and came home on weekends.
- Perri Meldon (00:01:42): I actually live not too far from Perkins. I live in Boston, and I've been curious about that school. Could you tell us a little bit what it was like attending Perkins?
- Lynda Boose (00:01:54): It's changed quite a bit now. If you ever get a chance to go and have a tour, I think you'd find it very interesting. Basically, we were brought to school. I would go to school on Sunday afternoon or Sunday night after being home for the weekend, and then we had a regular schedule. We lived in what they called cottages, which is like dormitories. There'd be regular scheduled meals: morning, noon, night, and classes. We had study hall, and then we had a lot of extra activities like we had a wrestling team, so there

was cheerleading, which I was one, a cheerleader. We had a track team, so we could compete with sometimes other blind schools. Schools for the blind would come, or sometimes some of the other schools were invited, so they would come and compete.

- Lynda Boose (00:03:08): So, we had various things like that, and then we learned a lot of different things. We had a home ec class where we learned about cooking and things, and various other classes like shop for the boys. Girls didn't get to do that, but we had other things like weaving and knitting and things like that. So, we had a variety of things.
- Perri Meldon (00:03:45): Sounds neat. Sounds like you had a lot of different opportunities like you described. Who made the decision for you to attend Perkins? Was it you, your parents, someone else?
- Lynda Boose (00:03:57): I imagine it was my parents, and probably social workers or people that--because I think it was a given basically at that time when I went to school that most blind children would go to the residential school, although there were options. Some people did go to, I guess you'd say mainstream school, and had special classes there. But I don't think there was much discussion in my family about it.
- Perri Meldon (00:04:40): Did you have siblings?
- Lynda Boose (00:04:42): Yes, I was one of five.
- Perri Meldon (00:04:46): Wow. You mentioned you were a cheerleader. What other activities did you enjoy as a child, either at school or when you were at home with your family?
- Lynda Boose (00:05:00): We did like camping. Our family went camping. They didn't do a lot of outdoorish-type things, but they did like camping. We all liked ice skating. That's something I did at school and at home. Later in school, I started learning about gymnastics, so I of course got to really like doing some of that. Swimming. I was definitely a fitness-sports person, so I liked swimming and running and anything active.
- Perri Meldon (00:05:37): That's fantastic. May I ask, when you were ice skating, would you have been accompanied by a sighted guide?
- Lynda Boose (00:05:45): I skated at a pond and we'd all just skate. We didn't need guides, because we just talked to each other and that was fun, so you didn't really need a guide. Now if I went ice skating, I would probably

rather skate with someone, but at that time didn't need to, which was fun.

Perri Meldon (00:06:13): It's been very icy here in Boston, and I've seen a lot of people out skating both in the woods as well as in Boston's public parks. Were visits to national parks part of your childhood? Which camping sites was your family going to?

Lynda Boose (00:06:33): We had one camp area, which was in New Hampshire. It was in North Conway, and I think that the camp was called Dugway, and my dad worked on it during World War II. He was part of the CCC, because he wasn't eligible for the Army or to enlist. So, we went there. But we didn't really do a lot of going to national parks or anything. I don't think we went to any that I can think of.

Perri Meldon (00:07:08): North Conway is beautiful, and I believe that's part of the National Forest system. Did your dad ever talk about his time in the CCC?

Lynda Boose (00:07:20): We did. I don't remember a lot, but I think he was proud of working at this camp, and I guess they rehabbed it and fixed it up, and it was nice. It was basically car camping, so we brought a bunch of stuff and set up for two weeks, and it was fun.

Perri Meldon (00:07:46): That sounds lovely. Lynda, if it's okay with you, I may sometimes ask Lu Ann if she has any questions to ask.

Lynda Boose (00:07:55): Sure.

Perri Meldon (00:07:55): Before I shift a bit. Yeah, I'll ask Lu Ann.

Lu Ann Jones (00:08:04): Sorry. I was wondering when you added skiing to your repertoire of activities.

Lynda Boose (00:08:13): Well, actually, I didn't actually till I was about 39 years old. That was the first time I had cross-country skied.

Perri Meldon (00:08:23): Where was it that you cross-country skied?

Lynda Boose (00:08:38): I think I'm getting some kind of static. I'm on speaker. Maybe I should switch.

Perri Meldon (00:08:45): I hear you okay. Lu Ann, do you hear us okay?

Lu Ann Jones (00:08:48): I'm hearing you okay now, but I had some static or interference there for a second.

- Lynda Boose (00:08:58): Do you want me to stay on speaker, or should I switch?
- Lu Ann Jones (00:09:03): I don't really know how to answer. It's sounding fine now, but when you answered the question about skiing, I couldn't understand that.
- Lynda Boose (00:09:14): I didn't really learn to ski till I was about 39 years old, so it was later in life. I did all kinds of other stuff, like always went to the fitness center and all kinds of things but skiing I didn't do till later in life.
- Lu Ann Jones (00:09:31): Thank you.
- Perri Meldon (00:09:37): Well, we'll return to that then. I'm very curious to hear about your time skiing. Did you attend college, Lynda, and if so, where and when did you attend?
- Lynda Boose (00:09:50): After I graduated from high school, my family had moved out to California in my senior year. So, I lived with my aunt. My senior year basically I wasn't there a lot, since I was at school, but then I came out to California and I went to a junior college for two years, and then onto Pepperdine College for two years.
- Perri Meldon (00:10:21): Had you considered staying in the northeast, or--?
- Lynda Boose (00:10:23): I think the colleges would have been expensive, and I think I probably wanted to be near my family.
- Perri Meldon (00:10:36): Did you live with your family while you were in college?
- Lynda Boose (00:10:39): The first two years I did when I went to junior college, and then I lived in the dorms at Pepperdine.
- Perri Meldon (00:10:47): Did you meet other blind students or students with disabilities during your time in college?
- Lynda Boose (00:10:56): There was one person who was a freshman at Pepperdine. I didn't know her real well, but I met her, but basically, I really didn't meet too many blind people in college.
- Perri Meldon (00:11:12): Did you have to request accommodations or create accommodations during your time there?
- Lynda Boose (00:11:20): Yes. I did well in my judgment, but I think it's a lot easier now, because they have specific disability services, plus we have

computers and all kinds of things. When I went to college, it makes me sound ancient, but it was challenging.

Perri Meldon (00:11:45): It was before the ADA too.

Lynda Boose (00:11:48): Yeah, definitely.

Perri Meldon (00:11:52): Could you describe some of those accommodations or some of the challenges you faced while you were there in college?

Lynda Boose (00:11:59): I think I found more challenges. First, I had to find leaders, people who would bring my texts from classes. There wasn't a lot. Some of it was [inaudible 00:12:12], but sometimes there wasn't a lot. That's challenging just to find them, and just learning my way around campus, looking for the professors. They were pretty good, but I had to do all the work, maybe so they could get somebody to read an exam to me, or things like that.

Perri Meldon (00:12:43): That sounds like it must have been very challenging. What did you major in?

Lynda Boose (00:12:50): I started majoring in physical education. I took some classes, and then I figured that probably I wouldn't be able to do much with it, and majored in sociology, which actually probably there's not a lot I could do with that either, but I did get a college degree, so I guess that helped for finding jobs.

Perri Meldon (00:13:20): Why did you say that there wouldn't have been much to do with those degrees?

Lynda Boose (00:13:26): Well, first of all, because I think it was very challenging for a blind person to be a physical education teacher. Probably if I had known more, say I might have gone towards a physical therapy assistant or different things like that, which didn't really exist at that time. I think really at that time it wasn't easy to find jobs, and I guess if I could have thought of some kind of skill that I could have learned, that would have been a better choice for finding jobs.

Perri Meldon (00:14:06): It sounds like you were thinking about jobs at the time. Were you working during your time at college?

Lynda Boose (00:14:21): No.

Perri Meldon (00:14:23): Where did you start working after college, then?

- Lynda Boose (00:14:28): It took a while to find things, and then they have some, I don't know what they called it, but helped people get placed in jobs when they [inaudible 00:14:40]. It was something like unemployment, but I don't remember its exact name. But I started finding different jobs that would be short-term, like teacher's aide for learning-disabled children was one of them. Then I became a teacher's aide at the school where I ended up becoming a teacher, and that was for severely handicapped children. That was a really good fit for me, because I had all kinds of things I could do, work with the kids. They needed a lot of help. So, it was a good fit for me, because I loved figuring out how to help people do things.
- Perri Meldon (00:15:37): Apologies. I don't know if I caught this early on, but what year did you graduate from Pepperdine?
- Lynda Boose (00:15:42): 1968.
- Perri Meldon (00:15:49): 1968, in California.
- Lynda Boose (00:15:51): Yeah.
- Perri Meldon (00:15:53): That's a big time to be there. Had you wanted to teach or work specifically with students with disabilities?
- Lynda Boose (00:16:04): I was interested in teaching. I really thought about it totally. It took me a while to figure out the best kind of fit for me and what I really wanted to do.
- Perri Meldon (00:16:22): Throughout this time, were you living near Pepperdine? Where had you moved to while you were doing this work?
- Lynda Boose (00:16:32): Well, my family lived in Huntington Beach, and Pepperdine, I think there's a new campus now, but I think it was up in Los Angeles. What years? I lived there during the year, and then I'd come home at summer break.
- Perri Meldon (00:16:51): Southern California.
- Lynda Boose (00:16:53): Yeah, Southern California.
- Perri Meldon (00:16:57): It must have been an exciting time to be in Southern California in the late 1960's, and also love the outdoors, to be by the beach.
- Lynda Boose (00:17:05): Yes.

- Perri Meldon (00:17:08): What sort of activities did you enjoy then during your twenties when you were living there?
- Lynda Boose (00:17:16): Probably things got more exciting to me when I got my first guide dog. Then I was freer, and then I loved going for walks or going to the beach. There probably weren't tons of activities that I did, until later in my California life. Then I started going to the fitness center and things. But [inaudible 00:17:46] college students do a lot. Actually, I forgot. I did, in junior college, join the swim team, and was one of the divers for the swim team.
- Perri Meldon (00:18:00): Wow. How did you first acquire your guide dog? How did it change things for you?
- Lynda Boose (00:18:08): Well, a friend of mine, a really good friend and I spent the summer together actually back in Boston, and we had an apartment, and we were both at that time using a cane to get around, a white cane. Then she had applied to a Seeing Eye, and she had gone and gotten her dog. And when she came home, I went for a walk with her, and they went nice and fast, and it just looked like, "Well, this looks pretty good." I decided, "Well, maybe that would be a good thing to do." So, when I went back to California, I applied to a guide dog school in California, and got my first guide dog there in November of 1968, actually.
- Perri Meldon (00:18:59): What was your dog's name?
- Lynda Boose (00:19:00): Pixie.
- Perri Meldon (00:19:01): Pixie. In what ways is having a guide dog different than using a cane, besides of course you have a living animal?
- Lynda Boose (00:19:14): They're living with you. Even though they can't talk to you, but they're there, and even if I got lost, I had Pixie with me. I think it gave me more confidence, and I started meeting more people after I got Pixie. Things just seemed to change as far as meeting people and doing things, because I had more—it would be like getting your driver's license for the first time and getting the keys to the car.
- Perri Meldon (00:19:52): What's a particularly memorable experience you had with Pixie?
- Lynda Boose (00:19:59): Every day with Pixie was memorable. Pixie was just a wonderful guide dog, but she had a lot of spirit. I've got to think. I did go to Europe with Pixie and a friend of mine, a boyfriend. That was one experience that was really fun. I did some fun hiking with Pixie

and friends. Pixie was just an amazing dog, so we were always doing something.

Perri Meldon (00:20:35): What kind of dog was Pixie?

Lynda Boose (00:20:39): Pixie was a Labrador retriever, a very small one.

Perri Meldon (00:20:44): I'm sure [inaudible 00:20:45].

Lynda Boose (00:20:45): Pixie used to take candy bars from stores. She would take them, and I would get outside, and then I'd hear someone say, "Oh, that dog has a candy bar!" I'd look, and there was a candy bar sitting in Pixie's mouth.

Perri Meldon (00:20:59): Were people allowed to pet Pixie?

Lynda Boose (00:21:11): Sometimes, but not always. It depended on the situation, or if I was in a hurry to get somewhere then no. But if it seemed like I had the time, and Pixie was able to handle it if people petted her. She didn't get all distracted afterwards. So, she was able to handle it if people wanted to pet her.

Perri Meldon (00:21:36): Because she had a lot of responsibility.

Lynda Boose (00:21:38): Yes.

Perri Meldon (00:21:42): I'll turn to Lu Ann now and ask if she has any questions she'd like to ask.

Lu Ann Jones (00:21:46): No, I'm enjoying the conversation. You're doing a great job, both of you.

Perri Meldon (00:21:51): Thank you. Since Pixie, have you always had guide dogs since?

Lynda Boose (00:22:01): Yes. My claim to fame now is I've had guide dogs from the same school without much interruption for more than 50 years.

Perri Meldon (00:22:12): Wow. You yourself for 50 years you mean?

Lynda Boose (00:22:17): Yep, because I started in 1968 and calculated a couple of years ago it was 50 years of guide dogs. Now it's probably about 52 or 53.

Perri Meldon (00:22:34): Does this organization know that? They must love hearing that.

Lynda Boose (00:22:36): They do. My friend who got her dog around the same time as I did, she got a trophy from her school. But we didn't get anything from

our school. I tried to get it so that people could get some kind of recognition, but nothing happened with it.

Perri Meldon (00:23:00): What do you mean by that?

Lynda Boose (00:23:06): For people who have had guide dogs from the same school for 50 years, hoping that they would do some kind of little award for that. But our school hasn't gotten into that.

Perri Meldon (00:23:23): Thank you. You mentioned you had other friends who had guide dogs. Your friends in California, were they a mix of sighted and blind?

Lynda Boose (00:23:34): I had some blind friends in California, and then some mixture of friends back in Boston that I would also see with dogs, and sighted friends too.

Perri Meldon (00:23:48): It sounds like then that you maintained these friendships after your days in Perkins, or when you moved from Boston.

Lynda Boose (00:23:56): Yes, definitely.

Perri Meldon (00:24:00): Have you continued over the years to visit?

Lynda Boose (00:24:04): We do. I haven't seen some of my friends in Boston for a while, but we have kept in touch.

Perri Meldon (00:24:13): That's beautiful. How did you end up then in Michigan?

Lynda Boose (00:24:22): I, as I say, married into Michigan because I met my husband when I was skiing. He was my guide, so we got to know each other, and he lived in Michigan and worked for Isle Royale. That's how I ended up in Michigan.

Perri Meldon (00:24:48): Back up then. When did you first begin skiing? What was your first opportunity to ski?

Lynda Boose (00:24:57): A friend of mine belonged to an organization called Ski for Light, and it's an organization that teaches blind people how to ski. They have an event every year plus regional events, but they call it the international event, because some other countries sometimes come. They had their first event--the event that I went to was in Wisconsin, in Telemark. That was my first ski year, and then the second year when I met Doug, that was in Colorado.

Perri Meldon (00:25:41): You mentioned you were 39 when you began skiing?

- Lynda Boose (00:25:45): Yes.
- Perri Meldon (00:25:48): What year was that?
- Lynda Boose (00:25:53): It was 1983.
- Perri Meldon (00:25:57): 1983. How do I want to frame this question? What is the experience like, if you don't mind describing, working with a sighted guide while being--I'm just having trouble imagining it.
- Lynda Boose (00:26:20): Basically, the guide does get some kind of pre-training before they are let loose with us, but basically, you're skiing in tracks, so that guides your skiing, and the guide is also in tracks beside you. You ski along together, and they tell you about the terrain or curves or coming downhill or just various things, and you get to learn with each other what each person can do or needs to know. That's basically it. You work together, really. But there is a lot of direction and description. As you get to be a better skier, you might need less of that and more just, "Okay, let's go. Which trail do you want to go," or "big uphill coming," simpler things as you get to be a better skier.
- Perri Meldon (00:27:29): This is for cross-country skiing?
- Lynda Boose (00:27:31): Yes.
- Perri Meldon (00:27:33): Do you also downhill ski?
- Lynda Boose (00:27:35): I've tried it, but I don't do that as much. I'm not bad. I'm okay at it, but I'm a better cross-country skier.
- Perri Meldon (00:27:47): You've described two events regarding Ski for Light, I think you called it.
- Lynda Boose (00:27:53): Yes.
- Perri Meldon (00:27:55): Did skiing become a regular activity for you, or maybe the exception?
- Lynda Boose (00:28:02): Well, when I moved to Michigan especially, Doug and I got to do more skiing. I did some skiing on my own finding guides through ski lodges and things, so I did a little bit on my own in California but got to ski more regularly when I moved to Michigan.
- Perri Meldon (00:28:34): Please correct me if I'm wrong. You met Doug, your future husband, on your second trip to the Ski for Light event?

- Lynda Boose (00:28:43): Yes.
- Perri Meldon (00:28:45): How long did it take you to then move to Michigan from California?
- Lynda Boose (00:28:50): Not very long. Let's see, we met in January, I think. It was January or February '85, and I moved to Michigan in basically the next January 1986. I did go back for a couple visits before I moved.
- Perri Meldon (00:29:25): That must have been a big leap, having lived on the coast and now living in the middle of the country.
- Lynda Boose (00:29:30): Yes, it took a little adjusting, but I have plenty of things I have to do. It wasn't that hard for me, really.
- Perri Meldon (00:29:46): Was Doug working for the National Park Service at the time?
- Lynda Boose (00:29:49): Yes, he was. He was living on the island in the summers and working and living in town in the winter.
- Perri Meldon (00:30:01): Before you started your career with the Park Service, how were you staying busy while living in Michigan?
- Lynda Boose (00:30:07): In Michigan? I pretty much just did, I don't know, regular, everyday things, and took walks and went to a fitness center. I did get to meet some folks on the Park Service that sometimes I would do things with. But pretty much just, well, not tons of things, but I guess you'd just call it every day--keeping the house going and all that kind of stuff.
- Perri Meldon (00:30:48): Great. Well, I'll turn to Lu Ann again and ask if you have any questions.
- Lu Ann Jones (00:30:55): I don't think so at this point. I am interested in hearing how you began to work for the National Park Service, how that happened.
- Lynda Boose (00:31:07): Well, when Doug and I, we got married in April of 1986. A couple days after we got married, we went out to our summer home on Isle Royale. So, I had my first summer on Isle Royale on my own. I didn't have to go to work or anything, so I would go hike every day and sometimes get together with other families, other women who weren't working either. We'd get together and maybe hike or do something. But basically, I went on this one trail on that island, that was the headquarters where we all lived, and my dog at that time, Blondie, we would hike that every day.

- Lynda Boose (00:32:00): So, the first summer I was pretty free, but then we started talking to some people about me becoming a dispatcher, or a part-time dispatcher. They had another dispatcher at the time who also, he was partially sighted. He had a fair amount of vision, actually. But they were thinking they might want a part-time dispatcher. So, I talked to the chief ranger, and he was interested, and he interviewed me, and he gave me a chance. That's how I started to become working for the Park Service.
- Perri Meldon (00:32:47): You mentioned you were not the only staff member at Isle Royale who was blind or partially sighted. There was another employee?
- Lynda Boose (00:32:58): Actually, there were a couple employees. This particular employee, he only worked there a couple years, and then there was another employee who became a friend of mine, an interpreter. She worked there a couple years also. She didn't have a guide dog at that time. [inaudible 00:33:25] the dispatcher that I eventually ended up replacing him when he left.
- Perri Meldon (00:33:39): Do you know if this was common or unusual that Isle Royale was hiring people who were blind, partially sighted or with other possible disability?
- Lynda Boose (00:33:50): Because it was a dispatch position, I think there was something about they were trying to hire disabled people in certain positions. I think that might have been one of them. It may have been around at other places also. It wasn't really talked about or discussed that much. That wasn't this big thing that they were trying to get disabled people. The dispatcher that I replaced, he was there a couple years before I came.
- Perri Meldon (00:34:32): The job of dispatcher is new to me. What was a typical day like for you at work?
- Lynda Boose (00:34:39): Basically, my main job was to monitor the park radio, and we also had marine radio, answer the phones. I would have to broadcast what they called the morning forecast. That would tell people basically what the weather on the lake was going to be like for that day. Then especially people who were out in the back country and everything, they could hear what, say, the waves were going to be like and whether rain was predicted, that kind of thing. So, I had to do a marine forecast broadcast in the morning, and I think after lunch it seemed like I had to do another one.
- Perri Meldon (00:35:38): How did you learn this information about what the marine conditions were like?

- Lynda Boose (00:35:42): We'd get that from the marine radio. I would listen to it and write down-- They had various numbers that we all knew what they meant. You'd get all the numbers and a little narrative of what they had to say about things. I would write that down, and then I would read it over the radio.
- Perri Meldon (00:36:16): It sounds like you were working with a lot of technology.
- Lynda Boose (00:36:21): My first summer I had my own technology, which was a typewriter, a Braille writer, which--a writer of keys that I could write Braille, a tape recorder, and something that's called an Opticon, which helps you read printed material. I had all these little pieces of equipment that were mine from other jobs. So, the first summer I didn't have much technology. My second summer, we got computers, and I got assistance with someone to help set up my computer with a screen reader and some other things, which was really helpful.
- Perri Meldon (00:37:18): Did I catch correctly? You said that you brought this earlier equipment with you, the Braille writer and the Opticon?
- Lynda Boose (00:37:26): Yes. I had it from my other jobs that I had. Of course, the Braille writer I had had for a long time, and typewriter had had for a long time.
- Perri Meldon (00:37:40): Had you learned how to use the Opticon and the Braille writer, the typewriter, on the job? Or was there a skill center you had attended?
- Lynda Boose (00:37:51): When I went to Perkins, we of course learned Braille, and we also learned to type at Perkins. So, I learned that. I got to go to a special training for the Opticon when I was teaching at my school for the severely handicapped. That helped me a little bit more on the job.
- Perri Meldon (00:38:21): Fascinating. How did that technology change over time while you were there on the job as dispatcher?
- Lynda Boose (00:38:28): When we got computers, it was just a lot easier to create databases for things and to write messages for people if they got a phone call or something. It just made things easier, and you could say things and keep track of things better.
- Perri Meldon (00:38:57): Did you find that people at work held assumptions about what you could or could not do on the job?

- Lynda Boose (00:39:06): They really didn't that much. When the chief ranger talked to me, he was curious of how I would get messages to people. That was probably the one question about wondering how I would do things that I can remember, which I didn't think it was a bad question. Basically, he was very supportive of me, which I was very lucky that he was.
- Perri Meldon (00:39:39): That's wonderful. Are there particular friends or supports you had while working at Isle Royale?
- Lynda Boose (00:39:54): I had quite a few friends. Well, I guess I was meeting people and talking to people, but people would stop in the office a lot. And then just working, talking to people on the radio with a question or something. So, I guess I got to know a lot of people. I had the support of, of course, my husband, who was very supportive, and if we had to figure out how to do something, he was pretty good about helping me figure out something.
- Perri Meldon (00:40:34): Throughout all this, you also had a service dog.
- Lynda Boose (00:40:37): Yes. We started with Blondie, and then we had-- Blondie and Deuce I think were the Isle Royale dogs.
- Perri Meldon (00:40:51): How did they contribute to or shape your time at work?
- Lynda Boose (00:40:56): Well, of course, getting to and from work. Then of course people loved them, so people would stop by to visit them, which was fine with me. Then of course after work every day I would run home, change my clothes and go for a hike before we had dinner. It's so nice just to have that freedom to say, "Okay, I'm going." Go off on our own.
- Perri Meldon (00:41:36): What was the hike like? It sounds like you had a particular one in mind.
- Lynda Boose (00:41:40): It was a three-mile hike. It had little bridges you had to walk on, which they were low to the ground, which was nice. But they weren't my favorite part of the hike. They had some big step ups and downs in some spots, a little spot that you go down on to the beach, and then back up. Sometimes I would take a little time, especially for Blondie, who loved the water and river, and we'd stop, and she'd have a little swim. Basically, I could get the hike done within an hour or less. But it was a challenging hike.

- Perri Meldon (00:42:29): It sounds it. What was your favorite part of the hike? You described a part that was not your favorite, so I'm curious, what was your favorite part?
- Lynda Boose (00:42:39): Of the hike?
- Perri Meldon (00:42:40): Yes.
- Lynda Boose (00:42:42): Well, I guess I loved most of it. Depending on which way you did it, the level [?] part of it was nice because you could relax, and you didn't have to be stepping down and up and things. But other than that, the whole hike was nice. It's just a nice time to go out and-
- Perri Meldon (00:43:11): It really sounds lovely, and I imagine when you had the chance to talk with visitors, they would have liked to hear about your experiences enjoying the park.
- Lynda Boose (00:43:20): Yeah, I usually didn't see on the map the trail. Since it was the main headquarters and residence, that wasn't a common hiking trail. So, you didn't see too many people on that trail.
- Perri Meldon (00:43:36): Which is also nice, and quiet. Throughout your time working at Isle Royale, did you stay as a dispatcher the whole time?
- Lynda Boose (00:43:50): Doug was on the island and worked for 20 years all around the island, and I lived there for 10 years, and then we came into town and wanted to live in town and not have to move twice a year. So, then I got to be in visitor services, helping with reservations and answering phones and questions for people, and helping out at the front desk answering questions also and things like that.
- Perri Meldon (00:44:36): What accommodations did you create for yourself at the visitor center? What did the park create for you?
- Lynda Boose (00:44:44): I was lucky. I of course had the computer with a screen reader. I had a Braille printer and a scanner that would scan and read documents for me so people wouldn't--if they were printed, the scanner could read them. That helped, and also helped if you wanted to check things, make sure something printed, which I also used my Opticon for that also. Of course, I still had by Braille writer, because high tech and low tech are always--it's good to have low tech even when you have high tech. Plus I did help out to sell things for the Natural History Association. There was some grant that came through, so we were able to get a talking cash register, and that helped a lot.

- Perri Meldon (00:45:56): Again, did you ever face resistance or support to bring in this kind of equipment into the workplace?
- Lynda Boose (00:46:04): Can you say that again?
- Perri Meldon (00:46:07): Again, as a dispatcher, did you face resistance or receive support about acquiring this kind of equipment?
- Lynda Boose (00:46:19): They were really good about acquiring things. I never got much resistance about when I would suggest something. Usually, it went through without much problem. It helped a lot. I was I guess extremely lucky, because basically I was well-supported by the park, the national park people.
- Perri Meldon (00:46:52): Great. It must have been a different experience now as well, interacting with visitors regularly.
- Lynda Boose (00:47:02): Yes, it was fun, actually. It was fun trying to help them plan trips and get out there on the island. I liked interacting with them.
- Perri Meldon (00:47:18): Did you have any particular memorable experience interacting with visitors?
- Lynda Boose (00:47:26): Sometimes I think it would take them a little bit to realize that I was blind, so I think sometimes they'd be surprised with that. Or sometimes if it was really, really busy, like on boat mornings, and we'd be having people come, and they'd be buying maps and things, and I'd have to ask them to tell me the number of the item, it was called a POU number. I'd have to ask them to tell me that so I could put it in the cash register. After a while, people just caught on, and the next person would come up after I finished with one person, and they would say, "Oh, and the number is 224," and then off we go. The people were pretty good. I thought they'd be more annoyed, but pretty much. If I really got stuck, I'd have to ask one of my co-workers to solve the mess I might get into if somebody's credit card didn't go through or something weird.
- Perri Meldon (00:48:39): But it sounds like you had a pretty good honor system. They were trustworthy, the visitors.
- Lynda Boose (00:48:44): Yes, it was amazing. I did have a little money reader thing, and sometimes I would check the money, but I didn't usually. I just didn't think people were going to give me a one-dollar bill and tell me it was a 20. And I don't think it ever happened, because we never were [inaudible 00:49:03] on that account.

- Perri Meldon (00:49:07): I have to say, I didn't realize that screen readers were available in the 90's. I think of them as just a very modern technology, but it's exciting to know they've been available for so long.
- Lynda Boose (00:49:23): Yeah, they've definitely changed a lot, but it was so exciting to be typing here on the computer, and here you're typing and read back what you wrote and use it for other things. I don't know where I would be without my computer now. I use it all the time. Now that we can search on the internet and things, it is a lot of fun.
- Perri Meldon (00:49:55): It's a really essential piece of technology.
- Lynda Boose (00:49:59): Well, and now with the iPhone, that makes things even easier. You always have something with you to look up things or tell you things.
- Perri Meldon (00:50:16): And they're really created with universal design in mind.
- Lynda Boose (00:50:20): Definitely.
- Perri Meldon (00:50:20): How was living on the mainland different from being on the island?
- Lynda Boose (00:50:32): It took me a couple summers to not feel really bad when people were leaving for the island, and I wasn't. I really liked living out there. It was just easy. I had basically [inaudible 00:50:50] every day of course going to work and doing my hike, and usually I'd do something in the morning exercise-like. I'd just make sure I got a lot of that in. On the mainland, it felt like more being in the city. Of course, it was fun because you could go out to dinner when you wanted to, go to the grocery store and not have to think about--. When we lived on the island, every week we'd put our grocery order in, and then the groceries would come out once a week. In some parts of town, it was easier in that sense, but I guess I missed living on the island. I liked the life of that. If I didn't have to pack up and unpack a couple times a year, maybe I'd want to stay there.
- Perri Meldon (00:51:46): It sounds really lovely.
- Lynda Boose (00:51:48): It was.
- Perri Meldon (00:51:53): Do you still go out to visit the island today?
- Lynda Boose (00:51:59): Now, it's sort of an expensive trip. But then once you're not working for the Park Service, you don't get discounted or anything. So, we really haven't been back out there. Let me think. We did a

couple work trips. I did with a couple with our co-workers, one was a hike, and one was a canoe trip. But other than that, since we moved off, I haven't been back out.

Perri Meldon (00:52:44): How many years did you continue to work in the visitor center?

Lynda Boose (00:52:56): I would say it was around six.

Perri Meldon (00:52:59): Six years in the visitor center. Was this through the early 2000's?

Lynda Boose (00:53:05): I think it was 2002 when I retired.

Perri Meldon (00:53:08): What made you decide to retire?

Lynda Boose (00:53:11): Well, I was about the right age, and I just thought, "Okay." I was ready for it.

Perri Meldon (00:53:26): Have you stayed in the area where Isle Royale is?

Lynda Boose (00:53:30): Oh, yeah. We still lived in our same house that Doug had before we got married. I've been in this house about 30 years.

Perri Meldon (00:53:40): And you still have service dogs?

Lynda Boose (00:53:47): Yes. Right now, we have dog number seven, named Missy.

Perri Meldon (00:53:56): Missy. You've been such an active person. Have you stayed active since retirement?

Lynda Boose (00:54:11): Yeah. Lots of walks. When I first retired, there was a really good fitness center that I would go to. They would have rowing classes and spin classes. That was a lot of fun. I did that a lot when I first retired. I'd go a couple times a week at least to the fitness center. Most times it was always go to the fitness and then go out for coffee and things. That was a lot of fun. And belonged to a local ski chalet that supports cross-country skiing. That was [inaudible 00:54:52] from the Park Service would work with visitors and help them talk about what kind of skiing to do, or what the trails are like and things like that. That's been a fun thing to do.

Lynda Boose (00:55:07): We did a big remodel in our house a few years back, and now I have my exercise room, which has always been a dream of mine, and I have quite a bit of equipment in it. Now we don't have our good fitness center anymore. It phased out. So, now I have all my own exercise equipment, and I use that almost every day.

- Perri Meldon (00:55:36): That's so important, especially during the pandemic, that you have a space where you can work out.
- Lynda Boose (00:55:48): Yes. Of course, during the pandemic I had that, and plus tried to get out for walks with Missy every day or at night, unless it was extremely cold out. We don't get out as much. But having the exercise room has been great.
- Perri Meldon (00:56:06): Have you continued skiing or staying active, especially with your friends from Ski for Light?
- Lynda Boose (00:56:16): What was that?
- Perri Meldon (00:56:19): Sorry. It sounds like part of your activity, the Ski for Light, was especially intended for people who are blind or partially sighted. Have you continued to be active with these colleagues, these friends?
- Lynda Boose (00:56:31): With [inaudible 00:56:35] were both pretty active in Ski for Light. Doug was the treasurer, and I was applications coordinator. So, we were really active. But the past couple years, we haven't gone to any events, and they've actually had to cancel a couple because of COVID. So, we've been skiing, but we haven't been to any events for a couple years.
- Perri Meldon (00:57:00): Lu Ann, do you have any questions you'd like to ask?
- Lu Ann Jones (00:57:09): Well, I was going to go back to your Park Service jobs. I always assumed that the dispatcher is just really at the nerve center of a park. You know what's going on, and I imagine during emergencies that that can be a very harrowing job. The visitor center has its own challenges in dealing with the personalities of visitors. I was just wondering, thinking especially as a dispatcher, if there were emergencies going on, just how did you keep your cool?
- Lynda Boose (00:57:52): Well, the scariest emergencies that would seem bad were, they had some group that would come out and scuba dive and look at shipwrecks that are out there on the island, and sometimes a diver would come up too fast or something would happen. And there would be an emergency where you had to be paying attention, because they'd call in. It wasn't a Park Service person on the diving boat, it was a group, so they didn't have a park radio. They'd call up on the marine radio, and you'd hear, "[inaudible 00:58:35] the ranger station." My antennae would go up like, "Okay, what's it going to be?" Sometimes it would be an emergency where you'd

have to contact the right people and get people out to give medical assistance or help. It would be like one of those adrenaline rushes where you'd be hoping you'd covered everything. Usually there was a higher-up person around to help answer questions that I didn't know what to do, because I was just the lowest on the totem pole grade-wise.

Lu Ann Jones (00:59:27): Thank you. What was your husband's job with the Park Service?

Lynda Boose (00:59:37): Various jobs, but the main one on the island, he was the head of trails and campgrounds.

Lu Ann Jones (00:59:50): Thank you. I think I have just one more question. Today in the National Park Service, we have what are called employee—

[END OF FILE 1]

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Lu Ann Jones (00:00): -- resource groups, they're advocacy, affinity groups, and one of the most active today is one that advocates for persons with disabilities. During meetings, we often hear of a variety of challenges that persons with disabilities continue to meet in the workplace. I was wondering, did you know other persons with disability at other parks or did you have any sense that you were part of a network of people who were working with the National Park Service? It sounds like you had very good supervisors, but not everybody does. Did you have any sense that there were other people who might have been dealing with not so sympathetic supervisors?

Lynda Boose (00:58): I really didn't know other people with disabilities or I didn't have any contact with any, except my one friend who worked on the island in the summers and seemed like it was okay for her. I think she was able to get around without a guide dog or anything. So, she had some more usable vision than I have, which might have made it a little bit easier for her. But I don't remember her having too many problems either on Isle Royale.

Lu Ann Jones (01:42): I think those were the questions I had. Thank you so much.

Lynda Boose (01:49): Yeah.

- Perri Meldon (01:50): Thank you, Lu Ann. And to confirm, Doug is also now retired?
- Lynda Boose (01:54): Yes. He stayed a few more years after I retired, but he is retired now, too.
- Perri Meldon (02:02): It sounds like you have a nice, it's nice that you stay active, that you stay local to the community that you've really built a strong base there over the decade. Are there any parting thoughts that you wanted to share with us that we didn't get to touch on earlier in the interview?
- Lynda Boose (02:22): I can't think of anything too much, except I really did enjoy my time. Especially as a dispatcher and living in NPS, it was just for me an amazing experience. And it was just a fun place to live. You know, we were a small group of people and so you kind of got to know everybody. I'm glad I had that in my life.
- Perri Meldon (02:59): It sounds like your dogs are equally lucky have enjoyed their time on the island.
- Lynda Boose (03:07): Oh yes! Cause they got to hike, they got to go canoeing, they got to do all kinds of things.
- Perri Meldon (03:14): Yeah. Agreed. Well, you've convinced me that I need to visit someday.
- Lynda Boose (03:20): What did you say?
- Perri Meldon (03:21): You've convinced me that I need to go visit someday.
- Lynda Boose (03:24): Oh, definitely! Come here. You can stay out all overnight and then go out to the island. We'll have to plan it.
- Perri Meldon (03:32): Oh my, I might, I might just take you up on that. There're a few parks up there I want to visit.
- Lynda Boose (03:36): Yeah, that would be really fun.
- Perri Meldon (03:40): Thank you. Well, I'm just going to then close out the interview and stop recording. So, I'll just say again, that today is February 8th, 2022. My name is Perri Meldon, and you've been hearing from Lynda Boose who worked at Isle Royale National Park. This oral history will be still through the National Park Service. Thank you, Lynda, again for your time.

Lynda Boose (04:07): Yes. Thank you. And if you have any questions that you all of a sudden need an answer, feel free. Give me a call.

Perri Meldon (04:16): I know where to reach you. Lu Ann, thank you as well for being sound engineer.

Lu Ann Jones (04:22): You're most welcome.

Lynda Boose (04:24): Yes, pleasure Lu Ann.

Lu Ann Jones (04:27): Yeah, it's been a pleasure. I'm going to stop the recording now.

[END OF FILE 2]

[END OF INTERVIEW]