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



Louise M. Hinchliffe
October 6, 1978

Interview conducted by Dorothy B. Huyck
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[START OF TAPE]

Dorothy Huyck: 00:01 The day is October 6th, 1978. I'm Dorothy Huyck. I will be interviewing Louise M. Hinchliffe, spelled H-I-N-C-H-L-I-F-F-E, who is the library technician at the Grand Canyon National Park. Can I ask how you first became acquainted with the National Park Service?

Louise Hinchliffe: 00:25 Yes, I was a tourist. I lived in Massachusetts and came out west visiting a number of national parks. I think the first trip was in 1947 and simply fell in love with the idea of national parks and working in them. I had heard of them, of course before, but didn't really know much about them and didn't really have any idea for a while if there would be any opportunities for women in the Service. Since I didn't have training for most of the occupations that are obvious to you when you're visiting national parks, it took a while before the idea of actually trying to get a job occurred to me.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:17 You were originally from the East. Can I ask where you were born?

Louise Hinchliffe: 01:22 Yeah. Webster, Massachusetts.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:27 Did you grow up in Webster?

Louise Hinchliffe: 01:27 Uh-huh.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:27 Did you attend high school there?

Louise Hinchliffe: 01:28 Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:31 Were you an only child?

Louise Hinchliffe: 01:33 No, I have two brothers. I was in the middle.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:41 Can I ask if your parents, either your father or your mother, were college graduates?

Louise Hinchliffe: 01:46 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:47 What were their occupations?

Louise Hinchliffe: 01:48 They were not even high school graduates.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:50 What were their occupations?

- Louise Hinchliffe: 01:53 My father worked doing a well, he had a number of occupations, but his last one before he retired, he was a payroll clerk in a woolen mill.
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:04 And your mother?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 02:07 My mother was, I guess, you'd have to say a housewife. She had worked before her marriage, but she was just taking care of the family most of her life.
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:21 After you graduated from high school, did you have any further academic work?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 02:28 Night school.
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:29 Where was that?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 02:33 I'm trying to remember now the name of it. Worcester Junior College in Worcester, Massachusetts. Yeah, because I went right to work after I got out of high school.
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:44 Where did you go to work?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 02:46 The American Optical Company, which was 10 miles away from us in Southbridge.
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:51 What were you doing there?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 02:54 I had a variety of jobs there. I began working in the factory, assembling, soldering, and assembly. Then I worked in a stockroom for a few years, handling progressively more complex parts of the stock operation and doing reports and that sort of thing. Then I went into the Standards Department, which was the department that handled the motion and time study operations and rate setting for the piecework jobs and that sort of thing. Worked for them for a few years. Prepared cost estimates on optical instruments and the machinery that the company manufactured. Then the last job I had with them, the most interesting one, I was the associate editor of their plant newspapers, all their house organs. That was a lot of fun.
- Dorothy Huyck: 03:55 What years were you with them?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 03:57 From 1939 until 1951, just before I came out here.

- Dorothy Huyck: 04:03 Between '47 when you became aware of the national parks as a tourist and 1951 when you came to the Grand Canyon, what were you doing?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 04:15 Right after that first trip in '47 was when I got the job with the newspapers. I came back all full of confidence and enthusiasm and decided that when this job opened up, that maybe I was ready for something different in the way of a job.
- Dorothy Huyck: 04:32 What did you say was the newspaper?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 04:35 The American Optical editing job opened up right after the first trip out West.
- Dorothy Huyck: 04:46 Essentially you stayed there then—
- Louise Hinchliffe: 04:47 So I stayed there until yeah, I stayed there. That was my only, really my only employment.
- Dorothy Huyck: 04:52 Can I go back to the high school period?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 04:56 Sure.
- Dorothy Huyck: 04:57 While you were in high school, was there anyone who encouraged you as far as the educational process was concerned? Somebody in your family or a teacher or possibly one at Worcester Junior College, a professor? Was there anyone who gave encouragement to your learning?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 05:16 I don't know just how the influences got together that got me out here, if that's what you're relating to.
- Dorothy Huyck: 05:25 I'm really thinking more of the schooling—
- Louise Hinchliffe: 05:28 My schooling was strictly practical. In high school, I took the business course because I knew I was going to have to get a job as soon as I got out of high school. I mean, economic situation demanded that I was going to have to look for a job. I also knew I was going to have the disadvantage of being pretty young to be bucking the job market. I was only 16 when I graduated. I took business courses, but I'd always had an interest in other subjects. I really regretted, I think at one point, that I hadn't been able to go on to school because I had a lot more interest in the more exciting subjects, history and science and that sort of

thing. I think perhaps an effect that I had parents who encouraged us to read a lot. I think perhaps I could say that my father was the stronger influence as far as my intellectual curiosity is concerned, but it was partly just having parents and teachers, perhaps all through school, who encouraged my desire for knowledge.

- Dorothy Huyck: 06:49 I take it from what you were saying, you did not take much math or science in high school?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 06:54 Only the sort of prescribed amounts of it. There were certain, each year you get one science course. My junior year, I remember, I had to drop bookkeeping in order to take chemistry which wasn't exactly popular with my bookkeeping teacher. I really felt that I was entitled to take one fun subject. That year I took chemistry—
- Dorothy Huyck: 07:24 Was chemistry fun?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 07:27 It was more challenging to me than bookkeeping.
- Dorothy Huyck: 07:30 Was chemistry or the math courses you took, were these courses more frequently considered appropriate for boys to take?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 07:38 I suppose so.
- Dorothy Huyck: 07:41 How much math did you take in high school?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 07:47 Nothing really beyond the basics of math. Once you got beyond junior high, pretty well went into specialized fields like bookkeeping if you were taking a business course. I didn't get into algebra or geometry.
- Dorothy Huyck: 08:05 Did you take physics?
- Dorothy Huyck: 08:07 No.
- Louise Hinchliffe: 08:10 As you were growing up as a youngster, did you play with boys?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 08:17 Equally, I'd say boys and girls. The neighborhood was pretty much assorted, but I was kind of a tomboy.

- Dorothy Huyck: 08:24 You were? As you entered the teenagers, were you supposed to become something more of a lady, little less of a tomboy?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 08:36 I'm sure I was supposed to. I don't know that my teen years were at all typical of what we'd think of today as the teen years. I was in school with classmates who were essentially about two years older than I was. I was a social misfit all through high school.
- Dorothy Huyck: 09:01 Had you skipped some grades?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 09:02 Yes. I started young and skipped a grade.
- Dorothy Huyck: 09:05 That was a year early and skipped a grade. Were there things of an extracurricular activity-nature in high school that were helpful later on in your Park Service career?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 09:20 Not really because I didn't really get into extracurricular activities as far as things of a social nature or sports. I just didn't get involved in them. About the only outside activity I had after I – In fact, I went to school one year additional after I graduated from high school because there were no jobs anywhere. A number of us that year went back for a year of post-graduate high school. That year, I worked after school quite a bit, but it was typing, mimeograph work and that sort of thing, just to get job experience. Pick up a few extra dollars here and there.
- Dorothy Huyck: 10:05 Was it after that that you started going to Worcester Junior College?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 10:10 Yeah, I started going to Worcester while I was working in Southbridge.
- Dorothy Huyck: 10:13 Did you finish two years at Worcester Junior College?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 10:15 No, this was just occasional night school courses.
- Dorothy Huyck: 10:18 In what field?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 10:21 I took one course in basic or elementary psychology, mostly because it was a subject that interested me not that I thought I was going to do a great deal with it in my job. Another one on writing for publication which had a little

more practical goal. Then when I began to set my sights on a Park Service job, I took a course in public speaking.

- Dorothy Huyck: 10:53 Once you had set your sights on a Park Service job, how did you proceed from there?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 10:57 Back there it wasn't really easy because there weren't, at that time, Park Service offices around anywhere that you'd go to. We didn't have a Cape Cod Seashore and we didn't have a Boston group and a whole lot of other things that now somebody might be aware of. I had no idea who in that part of the country to contact.
- Louise Hinchliffe: 11:28 I chiefly found out how to get onto a Civil Service register and took the shorthand and typing exams. Got myself on a register and waited for something to happen. The inquiries I got were from Washington, principally, and I did not see how I was going to get started off right by accepting a GS-4 job in Washington. I'd probably starve within the first six months. So, the way I actually got the Grand Canyon job was by writing a letter to Grand Canyon and hitting Grand Canyon at a good moment when there was a vacancy.
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:13 What was the title of that vacancy?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 12:17 I think it was clerk typist.
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:19 So you actually came on duty as a clerk. What rate was that?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 12:23 That was a GS-4.
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:28 When did you move into the library technician category?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 12:32 Just rather recently. I can't remember anymore all the different job titles we went through but after the clerk typist episode, for a while, I think it was called Administrative Aide and then I think there was another one in between there, which I no longer remember, but the more recent one was when we decided that – Oh, I was Interpretive Office Assistant, which was one we created, I think. Then I took over, during a reorganization here in 1970, I took over being curator of the study collection as well as librarian and pretty much left behind most of the other clerical duties. They decided that the nearest thing in the books to what I was doing then was museum technician.

- Louise Hinchliffe: 13:35 For a while I was a museum technician. Then some time back, and I think it's been about three years now, they again shifted some of the responsibilities and one of the interpreters now is curator and I have just the library. We decided that it was more appropriate to switch to library technician.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:02 What grade is that?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 14:02 Seven.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:03 Have your duties actually shifted also?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 14:04 Greatly. Because now I'm not handling all the division's clerical duties that I had when I first started. When I began, I was essentially the secretary to the chief park naturalist. Since we didn't have a word processing center in those days, this meant taking dictation, handling all the correspondence. The one consistent thing, aside from the fact that the library always was the responsibility in that job, but was only a part time thing at first. The one consistent thing other than that has been that from the beginning of it, I've been secretary of the Grand Canyon Natural History Association, because it was part of the job. I just inherited that along with the other.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:01 Have you had training as far as library work is concerned?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 15:06 I had some about a year ago.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:10 Was that the first time?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 15:10 The National Park Service just began within the last couple of years, organizing some training for park librarians. I didn't get in on the first session, but the second time that they had one, which was in Albuquerque last November, they sent me. [Crosstalk]. It was extremely interesting, really. It was only three days, but we concentrated on a lot of the basics. In spite of the fact that I've been running this library for almost 27 years now, I learned a few things.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:47 This library appears, offhand, to be organized on the Dewey Decimal System, is that right? Did you have somebody to work with to begin?

- Louise Hinchliffe: 15:55 Yes. When I first came, the library had either a volunteer or maybe a very modestly paid part-time helper or a wife of one of the local employees that came in and did some of the cataloging and tried to kind of keep things caught up. For a while, I worked with her and learned what I could from the way she was doing things. The rest of it, I picked up pretty much from reading. We had a couple of pretty good books on the subject, and I simply had to plunge in and do it. I am pretty much self-taught.
- Dorothy Huyck: 16:38 Have you been to other training courses in addition to the one in Albuquerque last fall?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 16:43 I do get to an occasional interagency library workshop, the one with the Department of Interior and three or four other agencies sponsor. I have gone to three of those now. It's training, certainly as well as convention to get together and discuss operations, new techniques and processes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 17:09 How large of a collection is there?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 17:12 Our current accessions are up at about 6,500. This doesn't count a lot of uncatalogued periodicals. We have a pretty extensive vertical file.
- Dorothy Huyck: 17:30 Are you given some each year, as far as new purchases are concerned?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 17:36 Yes, the Natural History Association provides my growing budget and they've lately been pretty generous. I use that for books, periodicals, supplies, equipment, everything. It has been quite adequate for adding a lot of good material. Then, a lot of our acquisitions are really not purchased. We get a lot of donations of things that are suitable from other government agencies and through the National Park Service, through the regional office, we have a Washington Office. There are quite a few things that come in through these channels.
- Dorothy Huyck: 18:14 How long has this library existed?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 18:18 It got started in about 1930. I don't know the exact years.
- Dorothy Huyck: 18:29 So it was here when you came on board?

- Louise Hinchliffe: 18:31 Oh, yes. I think I checked once and found that the library may have had something like 2,500 or between 2,500-3,000 books when I came. It's more than doubled.
- Dorothy Huyck: 18:43 Were you in fact, actually related to the study collection for a longer period of time than you've been in the library? Or did they overlap?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 18:50 They overlapped. While I was doing the clerical work with the naturalists, I was learning things about the study collection. I was cataloging things and I was mounting plant specimen, learning how to pin butterflies and various other jobs. Again, because I hadn't had any formal training in any of that work, I was learning what I could on the job. We had a professional-level curator position for a few years and then it was abolished.
- Louise Hinchliffe: 19:28 In order to provide at least basic maintenance for the collection – preservation routines and things like this and try to keep up a little bit with the cataloging – they decided to offer me the chance to take that job along with the library at the time of the reorganization. At that time, they were, of course, finding new positions for a lot of people and trying to tie together park functions that related that hadn't necessarily been handled by one person in the past. When they came up with this combined job of a curator and librarian, I know they had me in mind for it and hoped that I would accept it. To me, it seemed a better alternative than looking around for something in another park somewhere.
- Dorothy Huyck: 20:27 Since then you had that sort of job description?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 20:33 Yes, since then, right. It was recognized after a few experimental years of it, that it still was more than one job. In fact, it might seem difficult to imagine how the library, which had only been a part-time activity, could grow into such a big time-consuming occupation but we're acquiring a lot more books than we used to. We're handling a lot more information requests. Circulation has increased tremendously.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:08 Among Park Service employees?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 21:09 Yes, chiefly. Most of the use of the library is Park Service employees. I do permit a certain amount of use by other residents of the community. You get a lot of use by people

outside the Park Service who come here because they know there is a library here that is very specialized. Writers and researchers frequently come in and spend time here.

- Dorothy Huyck: 21:35 Are there things in this library that one would not readily find elsewhere?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 21:39 Yes, now don't pin me down and start saying what. Well specifically, I would say things like these annual reports that the park staff, the superintendent, the chief naturalists, particularly. I don't know whether these still exist even in the offices to which they were sent originally. We hope that Washington and regional offices still have copies, but we aren't in the same region we were a few years ago, so I'm not sure. We do have a certain amount of documentary material which certainly doesn't exist anywhere else. Correspondence relating to scientific studies and discoveries of new type specimens and that sort of thing.
- Dorothy Huyck: 22:36 As you go back over the persons who would have been your supervisors during your Park Service career, without mentioning names, have you found them to be encouraging or discouraging or have you met some of both?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 22:52 You're bound to meet some of both in 27 years. On the whole, I've worked for some pretty wonderful people.
- Dorothy Huyck: 23:00 How have they shown themselves to be wonderful people?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 23:10 I think that the majority of them have been people with the highest Park Service ideals, of service to the public, protection of the resource that they're here to work with. I think there have been very few examples of people whose motivations seem aimed in the wrong directions.
- Dorothy Huyck: 23:41 There are, of course, some people who think of the National Park Service as a rather male-oriented organization. Do you?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 23:55 It depends on whether you mean, do I see it realistically as being male-oriented or ideally? I think we're making great strides toward including women in areas where they traditionally hadn't been regarded as belonging. When I first came here, I think there were three of us working for the park. Three women in the whole staff. Now I wouldn't even want to guess how many there must be. The three that

were here when I first came were all in clerical positions, probably about the same grade as mine, so things have changed a lot.

- Dorothy Huyck: 24:47 You mentioned the difference between looking at the Park Service ideally or realistically. If you were being realistic, do you consider it a male-oriented organization?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 24:58 I think that it's still pretty much male-oriented. I think that it's just the nature of men, I think to feel that there are some areas that are exclusively theirs.
- Dorothy Huyck: 25:18 In fact, do you think that there really are some jobs that women ought not to tackle in the Park Service?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 25:31 I can't think of any at the moment that I feel strongly about.
- Dorothy Huyck: 25:37 As far as you yourself are concerned, would you say the Park Service is using well your specific talents and training?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 25:45 I think they have encouraged me to develop what I had, yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 25:51 Has anyone acted as a mentor for you during your period in the Park Service?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 25:57 Yeah, I would say definitely in the early years that I was here, that Louis Shellback filled that role very much.
- Dorothy Huyck: 26:12 Would you say that being a woman has affected your opportunities for growth and added responsibilities for promotion?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 26:21 No, I wouldn't say being a woman has done that. Any lack of growing, in my particular case, has been because I didn't want it that much. I made choices, wanting to stay in work that I enjoyed. There were opportunities.
- Dorothy Huyck: 26:52 Could you have moved to other parks?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 26:54 If I had been willing to try some other kind of work. There just have never really been very many parks with job similar to this one. When I first came here, I think there were two other parks where the chief naturalist had a clerk and probably only two or three that had a library in it of

any size and although that wasn't my sole reason for coming here, obviously, it began to be one of the things that was an important part of the job. It was always probably the more interesting part of the job, the most challenging.

- Louise Hinchliffe: 27:40 I think the longer I stayed, the more that particular part of it made it difficult to look at other jobs with any great desire to move. I realized that with the limited education I had, I was going to hit a dead end somewhere. There was going to be a limit to how many grades I was going to achieve. I figured at some early point, quite a number of years back, that if I was going to get dead-ended somewhere, it might as well be someplace where I was happy, and I do like this place.
- Dorothy Huyck: 28:19 I ask because, there are certain persons who feel that one reason women have not moved ahead, is that they're not mobile. They aren't interested in moving from one area to another.
- Louise Hinchliffe: 28:35 Yeah, this certainly is true in the case of many of the women who have worked here who were working here while their husbands are also working here. They have to be mobile when he gets moved, that they don't go transferring off while he's working in this park. In some respect, I should have been more mobile than most because I don't have family responsibilities tying me down. At the same time, I felt that some of the areas that I might've been transferred to were just a little too remote for a single woman to look forward to living in them.
- Dorothy Huyck: 29:13 I'm very interested with how single women in areas that are remote or less remote as the case may be, do you find this is not too remote for a single person?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 29:26 It hasn't been any problem for me. I survived here a couple of years without an automobile. It did limit me a little bit. I just don't feel that it's really a remote area, even though you think of it in terms of 80 miles from Flagstaff. When I say remote, I think of a place where you don't do your shopping nearby, where you have to plan ahead two or three weeks for a shopping trip to buy groceries and everyday necessities. I'm sure that a lot of women in my circumstance have adapted to this kind of thing and enjoyed it. I'm just not quite that adventurous. I like a

certain amount of convenience along with wilderness, which may sound a little inconsistent, but Grand Canyon really has suited me pretty well.

- Dorothy Huyck: 30:28 And you don't find it isolated?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 30:31 Not from anything that I'm looking for. Because one can get away – visit my family and find myself on a given day having breakfast with the family back there in Boston and being home in the middle of the afternoon. Here at Grand Canyon, after going through Phoenix and all of the changes that are necessary, you don't really feel too isolated when you think about things like that.
- Dorothy Huyck: 31:03 May I ask if you have any financial responsibilities for anyone else other than yourself?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 31:10 At the moment, not directly. My father is still living but I'm not providing support for him now.
- Dorothy Huyck: 31:19 Have you previously?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 31:21 Yeah. Before I came here, I was buying a house for my parents to live in and had to continue with payments on that for quite a while after I got here.
- Dorothy Huyck: 31:35 When you look ahead, say for the next five years or so, how do you feel about the opportunities for women in the Park Service?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 31:43 I'm sure they're increasing all the time.
- Dorothy Huyck: 31:45 What gives you that impression?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 31:52 Oh, I think the women are becoming more aware of the roles that they can play in the Park Service. I'm not really a rabid member of women's lib, so I don't have a lot of ammunition, but I think women are here to stay.
- Dorothy Huyck: 32:22 I've been asking you quite a collection about your employment in the Park Service. Quite a collection of questions. Is there anything I have not asked about that you'd like to comment on?
- Louise Hinchliffe: 32:41 Not really that I can think of. I probably will think of a lot of things after you've gone. It's just been an exciting and

constantly challenging experience. I don't know what yet may be ahead. I hope it's going to continue to be exciting.

Dorothy Huyck: 33:04

Thank you.

Louise Hinchliffe: 33:04

Sure.

[END OF TAPE]

[END OF INTERVIEW]