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



Jackie Powell
July 5, 1978

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

[START OF TAPE]

Dorothy Huyck: 00:00 The date is July 5, 1978. I am Dorothy Huyck. I will be interviewing Jackie Powell, P-O-W-E-L-L, who is an archeologist with the Denver Service Center.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:13 To begin with, we should know that your name is spelled J-A-C-K-I-E.

Jackie Powell: 00:18 Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:19 And that is your—

Jackie Powell: 00:20 Real name.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:20 Your given name.

Jackie Powell: 00:23 My legal name.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:24 Your legal name in spite of Sears Roebuck and their Mr. Jackie Powell.

Jackie Powell: 00:27 Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:30 May I ask how you first became acquainted with the National Park Service?

Jackie Powell: 00:34 I was leaving my last class up at CU, and I said, "Well, I'm going to go work as a secretary till I find a job as an archeologist," and a lady who had worked here as a student assistant said, "Well, they're looking for someone to be an archeologist at the Park Service," and gave me Wil Logan's name, who I eventually went to work for.

Dorothy Huyck: 00:59 At the Denver Service?

Jackie Powell: 01:00 Mm-hmm. Actually, I worked for the Washington Office on a detail here for five months as a clerk-typist and then transferred over to work for Wil.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:10 And when you made that transfer, you were then taken in as an archeologist?

Jackie Powell: 01:14 Well, initially as a clerk-typist, and then a few months later my name came up on a register and they put me on as an archeologist. [inaudible 00:01:23]

Dorothy Huyck: 01:23 So you were basically waiting for your name to come up on the register?

Jackie Powell: 01:26 Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. I started out as a GS-4 clerk-typist in June of '74.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:36 Was that immediately after you had graduated from Colorado University?

Jackie Powell: 01:39 It was about six months after. I worked as a secretary for six months downtown.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:45 What year did you graduate from university?

Jackie Powell: 01:46 '73.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:47 '73.

Jackie Powell: 01:48 With my BA.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:50 What had you majored in there?

Jackie Powell: 01:51 Anthropology, and this August, I will get my MA.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:56 In what field?

Jackie Powell: 01:57 Anthropology.

Dorothy Huyck: 01:58 I see. Also, from CU?

Jackie Powell: 02:01 Mm-hmm. It's taken me a long time.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:04 You've been working throughout it?

Jackie Powell: 02:04 Yeah.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:08 Can I ask where and when you were born?

Jackie Powell: 02:09 Mm-hmm. Little Rock, 1942.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:13 Were you an only child?

Jackie Powell: 02:15 No. Oldest of two. Three. Oldest of three.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:20 Oh. How old was the next brother or sister?

Jackie Powell: 02:22 Let's see. I'm 6 years older than he is. Then my little sister is 20 years younger than I am.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:36 Did you grow up in Little Rock?

Jackie Powell: 02:39 No. I grew up all over the country. I grew up in California, Alabama, Tennessee, and Arkansas, and Georgia. Mostly Georgia—

Dorothy Huyck: 02:49 Oh, some Georgia.

Jackie Powell: 02:49 —come to think of it.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:49 In Atlanta or Augusta?

Jackie Powell: 02:53 About four years in Atlanta and three or four years in Augusta.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:59 Was your father in the military?

Jackie Powell: 03:00 No. He was with National Biscuit Company, and he was transferred a lot. Same difference.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:08 In what capacity was he with National Biscuit?

Jackie Powell: 03:11 Mostly an auditor, and then a salesman.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:16 Had your father attended college?

Jackie Powell: 03:17 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:18 Or your mother?

Jackie Powell: 03:19 My mother, yes, has a master's.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:23 In what area?

Jackie Powell: 03:25 Social work, I think.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:27 Has she been a social worker?

Jackie Powell: 03:29 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:29 And is she still?

Jackie Powell: 03:31 No, she sells real estate.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:37 And where did you go to high school?

Jackie Powell: 03:40 I went to high school in Augusta, Georgia for a year. And then Conway, Arkansas for two years.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:51 While you were in high school and thereafter, who encouraged you in the educational process? Was the encouragement from one or both of your parents or from teachers or counselors?

Jackie Powell: 04:04 All of those things.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:05 All of them?

Jackie Powell: 04:05 Yeah.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:10 Did you take courses that were more frequently taken by boys when you were in high school, such as math and sciences?

Jackie Powell: 04:19 Mm-hmm. Yeah. I took honors math and physics, but then also I took languages, which is frequently taken by women, I think.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:35 Did you play with boys as a child?

Jackie Powell: 04:37 Mm-hmm. Both boys and girls.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:40 Were you by any chance considered a tomboy?

Jackie Powell: 04:42 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:45 And then as you became a teenager, were you expected to become something of a lady?

Jackie Powell: 04:49 Yes. And even before I became a teenager.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:53 And did you comply with that expectation?

Jackie Powell: 04:55 I hope so. I like to think I did. To a certain extent, yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:01 You did not rebel against the idea?

Jackie Powell: 05:05 Not too much.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:06 As you were growing up, were there extracurricular activities that had been useful to you later, now that you're with the Park Service?

Jackie Powell: 05:12 Oh, useful only that they gave me experience in working with groups of people. Like, let's see – Oh, I belong to a lot of things like Y Teens and the Student Council. And what else? Oh, we had a high school sorority, things like that. I can't think of anything specific. Oh, I was in a cotillion in Augusta, and I had a lot of music, did singing and playing the piano. Those are just, I think, things that develop you as an individual, give you confidence in yourself, but they don't have anything to do with groups of people.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:03 Did you make a formal social debut in Augusta?

Jackie Powell: 06:05 No. I was in the junior cotillion and then we moved away before the big one came. So, I just was in the junior one.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:15 Junior cotillion would've been a strictly social—

Jackie Powell: 06:18 Mm-hmm. Dancing lessons, and—

Dorothy Huyck: 06:19 —dance. Yes.

Jackie Powell: 06:21 —then, well, learning etiquette.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:27 How did you happen to decide to come to Colorado University for your undergraduate work?

Jackie Powell: 06:32 I was living in Evergreen. I was married at the time. So, I decided it was time for me to finish my BA. I had two years. And—

Dorothy Huyck: 06:39 Where had you done the two years?

Jackie Powell: 06:43 At Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas. They were in languages.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:51 And then you dropped out to be married?

Jackie Powell: 06:52 Mm-hmm.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:00 Did you do any traveling to national park areas when you were growing up?

Jackie Powell: 07:05 Yes. I lived in Knoxville, Tennessee for a while and I spent a lot of time in the Smokies. Actually, that's the only one I really can specifically remember. Most of the ones that I went to see were not parks at the time that I saw them. They've been taken into the system since then.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:25 When were you married? In what year?

Jackie Powell: 07:32 '61.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:33 Until?

Jackie Powell: 07:33 '73.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:33 And you have a daughter, Mary?

Jackie Powell: 07:36 Mm-hmm. She's 16.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:36 One child only?

Jackie Powell: 07:40 Mm-hmm.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:43 And currently you are not married?

Jackie Powell: 07:44 Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:45 Then you are a parent while you're employed. How do you find it's working out?

Jackie Powell: 07:52 Really well. It was inconvenient to a certain extent while I was traveling. I don't travel very much now. But one long field trip I went on, she went with me, and then I've been able to make arrangements otherwise. If she'd been younger, I don't think it would've been as easy to do.

Dorothy Huyck: 08:14 I ask that because there's a certain question in any field, including the Park Service, about the mobility of women and the extent to which they are willing to be mobile or able to mobile.

Jackie Powell: 08:25 I don't think the decision should be made for any individual. I think it depends on the person and her child or children, whether or not they can cope with it. I felt better

about it than I think a lot of other people would, and at the time I felt better than I would've at earlier.

- Dorothy Huyck: 08:44 How old was she when you took her on the lengthy trip?
- Jackie Powell: 08:52 I guess she was 12 or 13. Must have been 13.
- Dorothy Huyck: 08:54 Did you have her in school during the time that you were traveling?
- Jackie Powell: 08:56 It was in the summer.
- Dorothy Huyck: 08:56 I see.
- Jackie Powell: 09:00 So that made it really good.
- Dorothy Huyck: 09:02 Were you going to an archeological dig of some sort?
- Jackie Powell: 09:04 Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
- Dorothy Huyck: 09:04 Where?
- Jackie Powell: 09:05 It was at Colonial in Yorktown. The Park Service gave me training there, so it was kind of a field school.
- Dorothy Huyck: 09:16 Was this fairly immediately after you entered the Park Service?
- Jackie Powell: 09:19 It was a year later. Mm-hmm.
- Dorothy Huyck: 09:27 When you came in as an archeologist, what kinds of assignments did you start to assume at that point? Where had you gone with it since then?
- Jackie Powell: 09:35 Well, I started by reviewing documents, mostly, and also trying to help administer some archeological contracts that had been initiated during the Bicentennial. Little by little, there's been – I really don't know exactly how to say this. When I came in, there was not a whole lot of sympathy in the Denver Service Center for archeology. Only recently had some laws and things been passed that had to do with historic preservation. Well, historic preservation, in general, it was growing more quickly than the archeological part of it. It had partly to do with some of the personnel that was involved.

- Jackie Powell: 10:21 But as we were able to identify needs and then present the case for having these things done, or at the time they were supposed to be done, then our program grew and now we have – Oh, well, when I came in there was me and my supervisor, Wil Logan, and another archeologist who was working in another office at the Service Center. Now there are, oh, I guess 25 of us, something like that. But some are back on the East Coast, but they're still attached to the Service Center. Now I'm what's called a senior archeologist for the Mid-Atlantic North Atlantic team. I don't know whether that's an official title, but I am responsible for seeing that the archeology is done for that team.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:14 What grade level are you at now?
- Jackie Powell: 11:15 11.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:20 And you're responsible for working with this team in terms of all of their archeology?
- Jackie Powell: 11:24 Right. Mm-hmm.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:26 Does this mean you review their work or initiate it or—
- Jackie Powell: 11:28 Both.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:28 What does that include?
- Jackie Powell: 11:33 Okay. I look at the program for each fiscal year and determine whether each project has money provided for archeology. If it does, then I see if it's enough, and I determine what types of things need to be done and then assign it or discuss it with the people that I work with, and we decide who's going to do what. If it doesn't have, then I make arrangements for the money to be obtained. Then, if there aren't enough people to send out, I will initiate a contract or a purchase order for the work to be done, make sure that there's clearance with the Advisory Council that it's done according to historic preservation policy and procedure. Then, I review their reports to see that they're professionally adequate and that they comply with policy and procedure, give them advice on how to run their operations and so forth.
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:32 What sites is this particular team concerned about currently?

- Jackie Powell: 12:37 Let's see. Hopewell Village, Fort McHenry, Martin Van Buren, Salem, Gateway. What else?
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:55 What's going on at Gateway of an archeological nature? I can comprehend some of the others, but I'm not sure about Gateway.
- Jackie Powell: 13:01 Well, it is different than the others because it's not a historic area. But whenever there's a development planned, it's necessary that we go out and survey the area to make sure that no historic or prehistoric resources will be destroyed. So right at the moment, we have contracts for people to go out and look, make sure that there are no sites that a road or a parking lot that's being built will be – that it won't disrupt any resources.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:29 Thus far, has anything turned up at Gateway?
- Jackie Powell: 13:32 Well, there are a lot of historic things from the old forts. The prehistoric things mostly are covered up by landfill, or they've been washed out to sea and that sort of thing. There are some 19th century sites that we know of. Then, who knows, we may turn up some early Dutch settlements at Staten Island or maybe some Indian things.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:53 Do you yourself get to these sites at all?
- Jackie Powell: 13:56 Very little. I did one major excavation at Harpers Ferry two years ago. In fact, that was the subject of my master's thesis.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:09 What was the topic?
- Jackie Powell: 14:09 It was on salvage excavations at Harpers Ferry. Mostly the traveling that I have done has had to do with administering contracts.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:26 What in particular went on in terms of the work that you did for your thesis in Harpers Ferry?
- Jackie Powell: 14:31 Oh.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:31 In that case you were doing an excavation?
- Jackie Powell: 14:33 Mm-hmm. There was a sewer line that was going to be built through Harpers Ferry, and there were three areas that

we didn't know very much about. One of them was in a main part of town right next to a building that was being restored. Well, the sewer line was going to run down the sidewalk. And beneath the sidewalk, there was another building that had been torn down years ago to widen the street. It's a mirror image of one that was going to be restored. So, we wanted to find out the measurements and so forth and find out architectural details to help in the restoration of the one that was being restored.

- Jackie Powell: 15:09 Then there was another area that we thought was a stable at one time for the master armorer's house there. Then, the third area, the sewer line was running through the backyard of an armory worker's house, and we thought it was going to run into the house. So, we had three levels of society involved here: the merchant, the master armorer, and the armory worker, and we did some comparative work on the materials that came out of each of those.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:41 All of this is spelled out in your thesis, I guess?
- Jackie Powell: 15:42 Mm-hmm.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:47 Shifting away from your thesis, I'd like to ask about supervision within your experience with the Park Service. Have you found that you've had encouragement or discouragement, or both, from supervisors?
- Jackie Powell: 16:01 I've been encouraged very strongly. I think being in historic preservation has helped a lot because I believe the managers who are in historic preservation have been educated in a more co-educational type system. So, they are more tolerant of women running around doing the same things they do than, say, would be an engineer. That's my own bias, I guess. But I think they've given me a lot of leeway and encouragement.
- Dorothy Huyck: 16:37 And have your peers also been encouraging kinds of people?
- Jackie Powell: 16:41 Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
- Dorothy Huyck: 16:43 There are certainly some people who think that the Park Service tends to be a male-oriented organization. Do you?

- Jackie Powell: 16:50 I do. I think it's changing though. Well, of course I think working at the Service Center makes a difference because I get a different feeling about attitudes when I'm in a park than I do in the Service Center. I haven't had much contact with the regional offices. So, I don't really know about that.
- Dorothy Huyck: 17:08 What difference in attitudes do you perceive between the Service Center and the park?
- Jackie Powell: 17:11 Well, I believe that the myths or whatever they are, the legends about ranger orientation are true. I don't know whether it's because I have that attitude myself when I go into a park, but I really do think that parks are more operation-oriented and more ranger-oriented or maintenance and that sort of thing, which tends to be a male type thing. Most of the females tend to be support personnel and don't have a lot of responsibility.
- Dorothy Huyck: 17:42 But you said earlier you thought maybe this was changing?
- Jackie Powell: 17:42 I think it is. I think they're working very hard to get female superintendents. I think that puts people at a disadvantage to a certain extent because they don't understand park operations from the ground up because they were never a maintenance man or whatever system you work through to become a superintendent. They take them out of a professional or an administrative role and put them right in as superintendent. I can see that that would cause some resentment in the parks, too, on the part of the people who've been there for a long time and would like to be a superintendent. I don't know whether I would want to be one.
- Dorothy Huyck: 18:18 Why do you not know whether you'd like to be a superintendent?
- Jackie Powell: 18:24 Well, I think it's for mostly those reasons. I feel like each park has the hierarchy that's been established over the years. For someone who has not been through either a similar hierarchy or that one to come in is really a difficult thing for that person, not to mention the people that work for them.
- Dorothy Huyck: 18:40 Is it possible that a woman superintendent has been through the hierarchy and one or more other parks before she's put into [inaudible 00:18:49]?

Jackie Powell: 18:49 I think that would be a lot more suitable, but I don't know how many cases there are like that.

Dorothy Huyck: 18:54 You do know people who've been put into superintendent positions without going through the hierarchy?

Jackie Powell: 19:00 As far as I know, they haven't gone through it. Now, I'm not really familiar with any. I don't know personally anyone who is a superintendent.

Dorothy Huyck: 19:08 As it is in your current position, do you feel the Park Service is using your particular talents and training well?

Jackie Powell: 19:16 I think so. Yes. I think I've been really lucky. There are a lot of places I could've been where I would've just been stuck, you know? I think one of the advantages of the Park Service is that it's a relatively small organization and there's a lot of individuality involved. You have an opportunity for people to get to know who you are and how you work.

Dorothy Huyck: 19:41 Have you been given an opportunity to take courses? You mentioned you worked at Colonial, that's a training course.

Jackie Powell: 19:46 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 19:47 Have you taken other training courses or?

Jackie Powell: 19:49 Yes, I've taken a couple that the Park Service has paid for at CU, ones that were directly related to the work that I do. Then, I've taken a couple of courses in management. I took one course in remote sensing at the NASA facility.

Dorothy Huyck: 20:09 Where was that?

Jackie Powell: 20:09 Mississippi Space Facility. It's the Park Service science center was there. I took one that I just really liked from AMR. It was management skills for women, a very enthusiastic kind of rah-rah course. That was a lot of fun.

Dorothy Huyck: 20:32 And from whom did you take that?

Jackie Powell: 20:35 AMR, Advanced Management Research. It's a private firm.

Dorothy Huyck: 20:37 And where did you take it?

- Jackie Powell: 20:39 It was at the Marriott Hotel here in Denver. They're really expensive, but the encouragement that you get from them, I think, is well worth it. A lot better than civil service courses, unfortunately.
- Dorothy Huyck: 20:57 You seem to have had a very satisfying career thus far in the Park Service—
- Jackie Powell: 20:59 Yeah. I have.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:00 Have there been any frustrating aspects?
- Jackie Powell: 21:03 Quite a few, but I think it's more because I'm working in a bureaucracy than because of anything else. I have a feeling it would be the same thing in private enterprise, though. I would run up against complications of one kind or another.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:18 Do you think that being a woman has affected your opportunities for promotion, either pro or con?
- Jackie Powell: 21:23 I think pro in this particular case. Yeah. I think that there's a real awareness in the Park Service of the lack of female management, and people are really now beginning to try to do something about it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:41 Are there any jobs in the Park Service that you think women should not undertake or tackle?
- Jackie Powell: 21:50 I don't know about what all kinds of jobs there are in the Park Service. Well, the ones that popped into my head, women do, so I guess they can do them, like mountain rescue or whatever would require some physical strength. But women already do those things. So, I suppose there's no reason for them not to do those. I can't think of any.
- Dorothy Huyck: 22:14 If, by chance, you were to remarry, would you consider staying with the Park Service?
- Jackie Powell: 22:16 Yes. Mm-hmm.
- Dorothy Huyck: 22:16 So in other words, you see this as a long-term career?
- Jackie Powell: 22:16 Mm-hmm.
- Dorothy Huyck: 22:16 What do you anticipate for women interested in Park Service in the future?

Jackie Powell: 22:16 You mean people who don't work for it now?

Dorothy Huyck: 22:31 Yes. If you were talking to a young woman just entering or considering entering the Park Service, how would you see the future of a competent employee, but a female?

Jackie Powell: 22:41 I think it would look good. I would look as good for her as it would for a young man. In fact, my daughter wants to be in the Park Service.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:52 [inaudible 00:22:52]

Jackie Powell: 22:52 Yeah. She wants to be an interpretive naturalist or an environmental scientist or something of that sort. But she's going to go to college at CSU and major in their parks and recreation or something of that sort.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:09 She's a junior in high school?

Jackie Powell: 23:10 Mm-hmm.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:13 We've covered a lot of topics, and I've asked a lot of questions. Is there some comment about the Park Service and your experience of it that you'd like to make that we may not touched on at all?

Jackie Powell: 23:29 Not really. You know, the thing I feel like is appropriate is that I don't think I've had any really bad experiences. It goes up and down. You know how jobs are. They have good days and bad days. It's been a very positive thing all the way through.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:55 Great.

Jackie Powell: 23:55 Yeah.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:57 Thank you.

Jackie Powell: 23:58 Well, thank you.

Dorothy Huyck: 24:01 After the conclusion of this taping, Jackie Powell and I discussed her professional life, shall we say, between '61 and '73. During that time she was following her husband in his process of getting a PhD in psychology. They lived in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Evergreen, Colorado. During

those times, she was in secretarial and bookkeeping positions.

Dorothy Huyck: 24:26

Following her divorce in 1973, Jackie Powell took her interest in Indians in hand and went into the field of archeology at the University of Colorado. She had quit school previously after two years at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas. At the University of Colorado, she did her BA and more recently her master's degree in archeology. She finds of course now that she's not working on Indian culture, but finds 19th century culture, which is her field of expertise, particularly delightful.

[END OF TAPE]

[END OF INTERVIEW]