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



Olive Johnson
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Interview conducted by Dorothy B. Huyck
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[START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:00 Dorothy Huyck. I will be interviewing Olive Morris Johnson who was chief of visitor services at Carlsbad Caverns and retired in 1974. Can I ask how you first became acquainted with the National Parks Service?
- Olive Johnson: 00:22 Yes, actually it was rather accidental. We had moved out here from Pennsylvania. And I didn't really know anybody out here. And there was another family that had also moved at the same time, and we were started looking for something to do on weekends, a little extra something. And we finally got the idea after visiting the caverns that it would be a lot of fun to work out there on weekends. And we had heard in the meantime that they needed help. It was during the war. And there was a great scarcity of men at that time.
- And so, somebody said, "Well, why don't you go down and talk to Colonel Boles?" He was the superintendent at the time. And so, we did. And we went down and went in his office and talked to him. And he said, "Sure." He says, "Why don't you try it out first, see how you like it. If you like it, why, maybe we'll put you on." So, we did. And we liked it so well that we started working with what they called WAE at that time, just whenever actually employed. And for quite some time, I just worked on weekends.
- And then later on, I worked four days a week. I wasn't allowed to work the full week since I wasn't permanent. And I didn't want to be permanent for a while because I wasn't sure how long I wanted to continue with it. And my husband was getting his master's degree up at Colorado State, and I wanted to go with him in the summertime, do his typing and so forth. And if I had a permanent job, I couldn't do that. Especially in the summer, I couldn't take off. So, this is the way it actually started.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:50 What year was that?
- Olive Johnson: 01:53 It was in 1944. I think Thanksgiving weekend was the first weekend I worked.
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:02 Maybe we can go back in history for a moment and ask where and when you were born?

Olive Johnson: 02:08 I was born in Philadelphia in 1914. March 18th, 1914.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:15 Were you, by any chance, an only child?

Olive Johnson: 02:16 Yes, I was. My father was a doctor.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:20 A physician?

Olive Johnson: 02:20 Yes. And I was raised in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, right outside of Philadelphia. I moved out of the city when I was two years old.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:28 Your father, therefore, was certainly a college graduate.

Olive Johnson: 02:31 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:31 Was your mother?

Olive Johnson: 02:32 Yeah. She went to Wilson college.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:35 Where did you attend high school?

Olive Johnson: 02:37 Haverford. Haverford High School.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:39 And after that?

Olive Johnson: 02:42 I went to Penn State for two years. And then I went to Bryn Mawr Hospital, and took nurse's training.

Dorothy Huyck: 02:51 And you got a...

Olive Johnson: 02:53 I didn't actually get my degree. I got sick and didn't go back. I had been engaged two or three years to be married. And they did not allow nurses to marry in those days. And rather than to join a lesser class, one of the earlier classes, and let my own class go on, why I just decided to go ahead and get married. And my husband to be had gotten a job in the meantime, so we just went ahead. I had really no idea of having a career myself. In those days you didn't think so much about it as you do now.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:33 In what year were you married?

Olive Johnson: 03:35 1935.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:37 And you had children?

- Olive Johnson: 03:38 One daughter and two grandsons.
- Dorothy Huyck: 03:41 Your daughter is now how old?
- Olive Johnson: 03:43 She's 41. She lives in Santa Fe.
- Dorothy Huyck: 03:48 Going back to your own educational process while you were in high school and later at Penn State, who was it that encouraged you? Might it have been a parent or both parents, or a teacher, a professor, someone in the community, or maybe no one in particular.
- Olive Johnson: 04:07 I don't think anybody in particular. My father, he didn't really encourage me to go into training. But in those days, you either were a teacher or a nurse it seemed. And there wasn't too much else for women to do. I didn't like secretarial work.
- Dorothy Huyck: 04:23 They were the options.
- Olive Johnson: 04:25 They were more or less the options. And since I've been around doctors and everything, I decided, well, I'd try training. And I really did like it. I got this nurse of the year award. But as I say, I got a strep infection and appendicitis around the same time. And I had a terrific time getting over it. And as I say in the meantime, my class went ahead, and I had to wait. They made me stay out for several months. And in those days, they didn't have penicillin, and they didn't have all these different things for strep infection. And so, as I say, since I had to be out anyhow, I just didn't go back and join the lower class. I just went ahead and made our plans to get married and took a job up in the middle of Pennsylvania.
- Dorothy Huyck: 05:17 Thinking back to when you were in high school, did you take math and science courses in high school?
- Olive Johnson: 05:24 I took some. I never particularly cared for math. I was better at English. I was salutatorian in my class when I graduated from high school. I was really majoring in English and literature when I went to Penn State. Although you take sort of a general course the first year, I didn't really know what I want to do. I just decided I didn't want to be a teacher though.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:51 Again, about high school, you did take some math and some science?

Olive Johnson: 05:55 I took the requirements. Haverford Township High School had pretty high requirements.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:00 Were these courses that were more frequently assigned to boys?

Olive Johnson: 06:05 They were required for both boys and girls.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:07 Required for college entrance?

Olive Johnson: 06:09 Yes. Geometry and algebra. And that sort of thing. But otherwise, I probably wouldn't have taken if I hadn't had had to take them.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:19 As you were growing up, did you play with boys?

Olive Johnson: 06:26 Yes. I was kind of a tomboy when I was growing up.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:34 You were saying that you were something of a tomboy.

Olive Johnson: 06:38 I liked to play with wagons. I loved to roller skate. I liked action. And I didn't care much for playing dolls and things like that like a lot of girls did. And so, I did play probably more with boys than girls.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:50 As you were growing up into the teen years, were you expected to become something more of a lady?

Olive Johnson: 06:58 I suppose in a way I was kind of spoiled. My parents more or less depended on me doing what the right thing would be. And so, I just felt an obligation, I suppose. So, I did sort of just do what was expected of me, more or less.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:16 And did that include becoming something...

Olive Johnson: 07:19 More so than I had been. Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:21 And you did not rebel [crosstalk 00:07:22]?

Olive Johnson: 07:23 No, I didn't rebel against it.

- Dorothy Huyck: 07:24 Were there extracurricular activities that you were involved in in growing up that were helpful later in your parks service work?
- Olive Johnson: 07:31 I would say so. I went to camp for a couple of years, and I think probably they were some of my real formative years. I was 12 the first year I went, and I think 13 or 14 the next time. And first time I went for two full months down in Maryland in Chesapeake Bay, Choptank River. It was an old Southern home that had been made into a camp. And that was really the first time in my life I had ever mixed with a large group of people and learned how to get along with groups. Being an only child, I think I more or less had my way in everything up until that time. And I found out at that time that you had to give and take a whole lot.
- And I loved to ride horseback. At that particular time in my life, horses were number one. And this camp had a stable full of horses. And we were allowed to do a great deal of riding, took care of them entirely, and took care of the bridle and saddle and everything like that, which I loved at that time. And then we also took a cruise on a boat, or small ship really, on Chesapeake Bay, went to Annapolis. They took us all through there. It was up about a 10-day cruise, which was my first time on water, which I also enjoyed. So that was, I suppose, one of the outstanding things in my life at that particular time. And I think it did teach me a great deal about other people, and how to behave with them.
- The second year was set up in the Pocono Mountains. And there wasn't anything quite as innovative up there as there had been at this first camp, or maybe I was just more used to it by that time. But I really never had any trouble getting along with groups, I don't think. After I first learned that you couldn't have your own way and everything.
- Dorothy Huyck: 09:23 Getting along with groups must have been important when you came into the Park Service [crosstalk 00:09:27].
- Olive Johnson: 09:26 Yes it was.
- Dorothy Huyck: 09:28 When you first came on duty at 1944, what was your title then? Do you remember? Were you a guide?

- Olive Johnson: 09:37 No. Let's see. I guess they called us tour leaders at that time. We went from tour leader to guide the tour leader to guide. Our titles more or less went back and forth. And finally, the same job went to park technician, which is one of the things they had been trying to get all the years. First, we were under the naturalist division. And we were under the naturals division at the time I came in.
- Dorothy Huyck: 10:03 I think the record of employment, which comes off the computer in St. Louis suggested maybe you started November '43. Thanksgiving of '43.
- Olive Johnson: 10:11 Well, perhaps I did in '43. We moved here in 1943. And I was thinking I'd been here a year before, but I suppose it was that first-
- Dorothy Huyck: 10:19 Were you were required to be a nurse?
- Olive Johnson: 10:22 No, but the fact that I had had two years of training and had gotten such high marks and everything, I had had everything in the hospital except the operating room. Which wouldn't be necessary anyhow. But I did every other course. And all I lacked was the full-time, which in those days they made you spend a certain length of time on the floor and so forth.
- Although we had worked on the floors. We'd go to class and work an hour or two on the floor, and then come back again to class. And since I did have quite a lot of experience and things like that, they gave me the title first-aid attendant. That was my title incidentally. I did the same work as the tour leaders. I went through with the groups and gave information. But I usually walked on the rear and carried a great big old first-aid case.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:13 If I'm not mistaken, it was customary at Carlsbad up until that time at least to have nurse guides.
- Olive Johnson: 11:19 Yes. They did. In fact, the first women there were nurses. They usually had one on each party. I think in those days we only had two parties, one at 10:30 and one at 12, I believe it was. And they'd have a nurse in the rear of each party. And there were nurses there when I first went there. I worked with several nurses. But of course, we had more parties then. So, I'd be on one party, and they'd be on

another. They'd usually put them on the largest party, although not necessarily.

And then finally, the salary of nurses kept going up all the time. And it was very difficult to get a full-time nurse out there. And then many of them were single people that came there and got married within a year or so, kind of like airline hostesses. They met a lot of people, and they had a lot of opportunities to get married, and they did. And then they'd have to go through and train another one. And it got to the point where they'd only have them such a short time.

And of course, here I was just staying on and on because my husband was employed here in town. I didn't want to move or anything. So, I just continued. And finally, I don't know whether it was Mr. Hoskins, or who it was, the superintendent, they just decided that instead of hiring a registered nurse, why not just keep me on as first-aid attendant in that job and without the nurse? There really wasn't that much to do anyhow in the way of requiring a registered nurse.

- Dorothy Huyck: 12:54 As far as I know, Carlsbad Caverns is the only national park that had a history of employing nurse guides that went back some years. Was it ever explained to you why it was desirable to have a nurse or two nurses with each party?
- Olive Johnson: 13:10 No, except it was a fairly strenuous trip, particularly when they walked out. And there was a tendency for people to try more than they were able to do. We were always worrying about heart attacks in that walkout. That was a terrible walkout, and older people in their 60s and so forth, would try it. In those days, we only had the little elevators. And it was a long, long wait for a ride. And I can remember when that line for the elevator used to just snake around there. And some of the tours, you'd wait an hour to get out by elevator. And Colonel Boles always tried to get people to walk out. Well, sometimes you got some people that shouldn't have walked out. And I think it was sort of a safeguard because we did have a few heart attacks on those walkouts. We'd have people that had to be carried out several times.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:06 I believe in was one or two of his monthly reports. Colonel Boles referred to the fact that women were prone to fainting

and to hysteria. Did you have [inaudible 00:14:14] or have hysteria?

- Olive Johnson: 14:16 I can't remember many hysteria particularly. But when I first went there, the first stop in the cave was in what they called the auditorium. You came down through the entrance, and there's a great big... Did you go through yesterday? You probably remember that big empty place there. And it's on the level, you walk straight across. Well in those days, there was no trail across. It was just all a dirt floor there. And everybody was brought down into the auditorium and assembled there.
- And then one of the guides, or even Colonel Boles himself would get up on one of those rocks and talk to the group. And it was about a 10-minute talk. And it was semi-darkness. People had just come in. They were kind of excited. And they were standing. And this did have a tendency to cause people to faint. And I remember we used to carry this little ammonia inhalant. In fact, all the guides did.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:09 I'm sorry. Carry what?
- Olive Johnson: 15:11 Ammonia inhalants.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:12 Ammonia inhalants.
- Olive Johnson: 15:13 Yes. That you'd crush. And I can remember as many as four and five people fainting during one talk in a large group there.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:22 Women?
- Olive Johnson: 15:23 No. Men fainted just as many times as women did. In fact, I can remember one time, one great big fellow, looked like a big old football player, and he just went kerplow. But we never had any injuries. It was a soft floor, more or less. And usually, they felt kind of foolish about it. But it was just the standing too much. And the dimness, maybe the light and the excitement. Everything combined. But that was the one place that they would faint the most. And of course, I guess it gave them a feeling of confidence to have a nurse around when this would happen. Although I can't remember any real serious things that happened there. Just to faint.

- Dorothy Huyck: 16:03 Did the nurse guide wear a uniform?
- Olive Johnson: 16:04 She wore the regular Park Service uniform. The only reason you would have known she was a nurse is she carried this big thing over her shoulder with a first-aid kit.
- Dorothy Huyck: 16:20 What about hysteria? I'm not certain what Colonel Boles meant by that.
- Olive Johnson: 16:20 I really don't know what he meant either because I really have no recollection of any hysteria in the cave. I really don't. Maybe he thought some people would get scared or something because it was very dark, and you're going down, down. I just don't know what he meant. Because I don't recall any of it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 16:41 As of 1943, what kind of lighting equipment was used in the cave?
- Olive Johnson: 16:46 We had electric lights. In fact, my recollection, of course your eyes get a little dimmer as you get older, but my recollection was some of the best lighting that we had was during those early days. It seemed to be lighted up a lot more than it is now, to me. Particularly I remember in the Queen's Chamber, the whole ceiling, where all those stalactites were. Just somehow or another, they were spotlighted, and it seemed real outstanding.

Then later on, I think John Mosley came in and did some lighting. And he did a marvelous job. I thought he did real well. And for years, I thought the lighting was really better than is now. Maybe I shouldn't say that. But I really felt that it was. Of course, as I say, maybe it just doesn't look right to me because my eyes don't let as much light as they you used to, but it certainly seemed to me a lot brighter in those days than it is now.

Of course, they didn't want too much light now. Because they did find that algae grew on things if they got too much light. And of course, they wanted to keep it looking like a cave and not a big lighted up auditorium or anything. So I'm not criticizing it at all. I'm just saying that there did seem to be more light at that time on things.

- Dorothy Huyck: 18:02 In the years past, there was a period during the “Rock of Ages” ceremony, when all the lights were turned out. For any length of time were they out?
- Olive Johnson: 18:13 They were out for about one full minute. We used to take turns going back and turning the rheostat for that. They had it out in the middle of the big room, and one person was assigned to do each time. We had a record player that had the record Rock of Ages. And then we had this rheostat, this wheel that you turned. And in those days, everybody was seated up on the hill there where the Rock of Ages was. And one particular guide was seated right by the light switch. And it was that guide to turn off all the lights when Colonel Boles got to the point where he said, “Now we’ll have complete darkness and silence,” trying to make it real impressive.
- So that guide would turn off the lights. And then down in the middle of the room that was the sign for you to start rolling the rheostat wheel. And it would gradually bring on the lights way out at the end of the big room. It just looked almost like sunset. There’d be a glow start. And then as the music proceeded at certain words in the music you gave the wheel another turn, and it would bring on another section of lights. Till finally, by the time the last part of the song was on, the lights would be on all over the room.
- Dorothy Huyck: 19:26 Did the public sing along with the record?
- Olive Johnson: 19:29 They did at one time, but not while I was there. It was before the days that I was there. I understand that at one time they did used to sing Rock of Ages. But when I started in ‘43, they did not. They were just playing the record. And the records, we had to keep everything in a box to try to keep the dampness out. Because the dampness down there was, well, there’s about almost 80, 90% humidity. And that would make the records warp. And I can remember one time when Ed Alberts was in charge, he got so provoked because he thought we weren’t starting the record right. It would go rock. So, he went down to see if he could do it himself. And it was even worse when he did it. We had to keep a whole stack of those records, new records. Because one would only last us for so long because of the dampness. It would warp and it wouldn’t sound right.
- Dorothy Huyck: 20:26 Did people become frightened in that darkness?

- Olive Johnson: 20:29 No. People would become very impressed, and some people would even have tears in their eyes. It really impressed them, I think. Most of them loved it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 20:41 Did Colonel Boles always conduct this—
- Olive Johnson: 20:44 Always.
- Dorothy Huyck: 20:44 Always.
- Olive Johnson: 20:45 Well, I say always. 99% of time. Once in a great while, of course, he would be off at a superintendents' conference or something like this. And on the second trip, which we called a bus trip from El Paso, there was a bus came over from El Paso and brought people over. And on that one where there were fewer people, he would let one of the senior guides do it sometimes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:05 Did you lead this [inaudible 00:21:07]?
- Olive Johnson: 21:08 I have done it many times. Yes. As he got older, and as time went on, other people would do it occasionally in his place. But he enjoyed the feeling of it. And we used to call it his baby because he really did enjoy it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:08 He was a very colorful individual.
- Olive Johnson: 21:28 Very colorful. He loved people, and he loved the cave. He really did. He did a great deal to publicize it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:35 I noticed yesterday as I drove from El Paso that every five to 10 miles, there would be a sign. And they pointed out very specifically, Carlsbad Caverns, so many miles, and the city of Carlsbad so many miles. And I wondered if this didn't go back to Colonel Boles' period, putting those signs up so regularly on one [crosstalk 00:21:54].
- Olive Johnson: 21:53 No, I don't believe so. He did have his office in town eventually. In the very beginning, he used a soapbox out on the parking terrace to type. That was his first office.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:53 [crosstalk 00:22:06].
- Olive Johnson: 22:07 That's what they said. Out on the parking terrace out at the caverns out there. On the first parking terrace.

- Dorothy Huyck: 22:07 That's his office?
- Olive Johnson: 22:12 And he used to sit out there before he had an office. And then for a long time, when I first went there, his office was in, well, what they're using now as... Let's see. What do they call it, the manager's office up there, I guess it is. And that used to be the main office, where the superintendent and his secretary and everything was. And then he also had a little office down here on Mermod and Fox Street where the Reclamation Service is in Carlsbad. And that's where I first went to interviewing. But that was just a little cubby hole. And part of the time he was in place and part in the other. And then several years later, of course, they moved the office to Carlsbad. But for many years they had the superintendent out in the park, his office out there.
- Dorothy Huyck: 23:07 As far as your employment is concerned, I think I'm correct in saying that you started around Thanksgiving of '43, and that you retired in 1974.
- Olive Johnson: 23:15 Right.
- Dorothy Huyck: 23:16 And according to this record, you must've been paid \$5 a day, the great sum of, in 1943.
- Olive Johnson: 23:23 That's probably right. I don't remember exactly, but I remember it was very little.
- Dorothy Huyck: 23:28 When you finished your employment, you were at GS-8, supervisory park technician.
- Olive Johnson: 23:33 That's right.
- Dorothy Huyck: 23:36 I'd like to ask you a few questions about that experience. Without giving me their names, you might just as well leave the names out, if you think back to the persons who were your supervisors during that period of time, were your supervisors encouraging or discouraging, or did you experience some of both?
- Olive Johnson: 23:59 I'd say for the most part they were encouraging. I never had any criticism really of any of my supervisors. I really enjoyed working with all of them.
- Dorothy Huyck: 24:11 How did they encourage you?

- Olive Johnson: 24:18 Well, when I first started, I was rather timid. I had never worked with large groups of people. And they just encouraged me by saying, "Sure, you can do it." And after I'd give a talk, they'd say that was fine. And they encouraged me a great deal to give talks. And I gradually got to the point where I had more confidence in that. And after I got confidence, then I felt like I could go on. But it took a little while. In the beginning, I thought I'd never be able to get up and talk in front of five or six hundred people. Just out of question. I was too shy, I guess, to even think that I could ever do that. And it was entirely by their encouragement. And they treated me just like I had been there a long time. I was one of them. There was really a good feeling of camaraderie amongst the group that worked there. I always thought there was.
- Dorothy Huyck: 25:18 Did you experienced any form of discouragement from supervisors?
- Olive Johnson: 25:22 Well, I can think of one that might've been—
- Dorothy Huyck: 25:27 I'd rather not know his name.
- Olive Johnson: 25:28 No, I'm not going to tell the name, but I can think of one that was a little bit challenging.
- Dorothy Huyck: 25:32 How was that shown?
- Olive Johnson: 25:35 More or less by sarcasm. And I think mainly because this particular individual, he was trying to feed his own ego quite a bit at the time. But I really am not too critical of him because he had problems of his own while he was there. And then a few misunderstandings where he thought one thing and the facts weren't quite the same as he thought, which he found out later. And actually, I'm still very good friends with that individual. So that, as I say, I don't feel that it was anything drastic at all. But if I would say that anybody was not encouraging, it was probably that one person. But it was for a short period of time. And as I say, there were other factors that probably entered into it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 26:29 There are some people who consider that the National Park Service is a rather male oriented organization.
- Olive Johnson: 26:36 I don't think so anymore. I think probably when I first started, I definitely had that idea. And I think most visitors

did too, because they used to be very surprised to see a woman in uniform. And immediately wanted to know, "How did how'd you happen to get this job, and do like it?" And surprised. This was a long time ago. But I don't think people are surprised at finding women in any kind of work anymore because I think women are taking jobs in all sorts of work. And the Park Service is a natural for anyone that loves nature and the likes outdoors and likes people.

Dorothy Huyck: 27:16

Are there any kinds of jobs in the Parks Service that you think a woman really ought not to tackle?

Olive Johnson: 27:26

I think law enforcement in some areas is dangerous for a woman to be out by herself. Because a person, regardless of how much training you've had, there are people nowadays that come into the parks and go everywhere else in groups. Motorcycle bands and things like this. And even one man isn't able hardly to handle them, let alone one woman. And I do think some of this type of thing, I think it's asking for trouble. I really do. I myself wouldn't want it, and I wouldn't want a daughter on mine going into it either in that particular phase. I do think that patrol, as far as any kind of [inaudible 00:28:16] in the back country or horseback and all that is fine that women like to do that. And I know a lot of them love it. But I would say a metropolitan type park where you're getting lots of people in and a lot of them a rowdy type, I just don't see that women would be as good at that type of law enforcement with those type of people.

Dorothy Huyck: 28:41

Do you think that being a woman affected your opportunities for added responsibilities or promotion?

Olive Johnson: 28:50

No. I think I could probably even have gone further if I want her to take transfers [inaudible 00:28:54]. I think considering that I stayed at one park all the time, the people were most thoughtful. Because I know that there was a tendency to not keep people at one area, and there, I suppose, still is. That they need to move on and get broader horizons. And that probably you get in a rut if you're in one place too long and so forth. But they knew that in my particular case, I couldn't move, and that my job more or less dependent on staying here at Carlsbad because of my family. And I think the very fact that I was allowed to go ahead and take jobs that did give me higher grade was very thoughtful of them because they could have kept me just as

a guide or just a technician in the lowest grade since I wasn't willing to take a transfer anyplace.

- Dorothy Huyck: 29:56 Were you given any opportunities to take additional courses or classes or training-
- Olive Johnson: 30:00 Oh, yes. In fact—
- Dorothy Huyck: 30:01 For example?
- Olive Johnson: 30:03 I can't remember specific ones, but I remember there were some we had to take, particularly if we wanted to be supervisors. I can't remember what they called them at that time, but I remember they had one group come from different parks out at Carlsbad. And then there was another group in here at Stevens Motel, they had several days of supervisory type training. And you had to take that to become a supervisor. I was sent to Albuquerque one time on something on bubonic plague when they had a lot of it in New Mexico and—

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

- Olive Johnson: 00:00 And that was most interesting. I was there for about a week, and there were, I think, two from each region. I met a lot of other women and superintendents and people that had very interesting jobs, and it was a very enlightening week, really.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:19 You remember when that was?
- Olive Johnson: 00:21 I can't remember the names right now. There's one from California that I particularly like, but I can't remember her name right off.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:27 [inaudible 00:00:27]?
- Olive Johnson: 00:27 [inaudible 00:00:28].
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:31 Do you remember when you went to Washington?
- Olive Johnson: 00:36 I believe it was a year before I retired. It was probably '73. Or it might even have been ... I think it was '73.

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:45 If you look ahead, say into the future of it, how do you see the opportunities for women in the park service?
- Olive Johnson: 00:55 I should tell you they were about equal to men. I think the park service has probably done more than most organizations in giving them an equal opportunity. In fact, out here at Carlsbad, because I'm only talking from my experience in one park, although I have visited almost all the other national parks and whenever I visit them, I usually make a point to talk to some of the people, the employees. I find that almost everywhere I have been in the other parks there are women in all sorts of jobs out in the field.
- Olive Johnson: 01:29 But here at Carlsbad, I don't know of anything that a woman is not allowed to do, if she wants to, if she's capable of doing it. She can just take any job that she's qualified for. In fact, when we used to go over the applicants for summer employment, it didn't make any difference as far as whether a woman or man or anything about them, as long as they were qualified. We just took them according to their qualifications.
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:04 If a young women just out of school, [inaudible 00:02:12] possibly join the park service, would you recommend it too?
- Olive Johnson: 02:17 If I thought she really liked that sort of thing I really would because of course, I love the park service. I was there so many years and I remember trying to talk some people into it in the past when they were wondering what they should do.
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:31 Including women?
- Olive Johnson: 02:32 Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:37 I'd like to ask about your financial relationship in that, I wonder if you've had any responsibilities for any part of your family, in terms of your income in the park service being a contribution to the family financial arrangements.
- Olive Johnson: 02:53 I would say it played a very important part, particularly in our retirement. Right now, we never could do the things we were doing if I didn't have a retirement. My husband has an educational retirement for the state and my increments are

going to put mine ahead of his before very long, I think. Although he started off with quite a bit more and was getting a lot more salary than I when he retired.

- Dorothy Huyck: 03:24 [crosstalk 00:03:24] time you were working, was your income of some [crosstalk 00:03:28]?
- Olive Johnson: 03:27 Yes, it was because my mother lived with us and we came out here primarily for our daughter's health. She had had asthma and chest conditions back in Pennsylvania and they had told us to try a hot, dry climate. We had been under a lot of heavy financial drain when we first came out here.
- Olive Johnson: 03:51 In fact, that's probably one of the reasons I started looking for work too, because we really needed to pay a lot of bills. We hadn't even sold our house back in Pennsylvania. We had to buy one here. The air force was in here and there was a Bombardier base and there wasn't a place to rent anywhere in Carlsbad when we arrived.
- Olive Johnson: 04:12 I walked the streets for two weeks trying to find something. I went to every place and even the motels were renting by the month. And the Stevens was about the only place. And it's just a fraction of the size it is now. There was just one little area. We lived there for a couple of weeks and could hardly stand the expense of living day to day in [inaudible 00:04:34].
- Olive Johnson: 04:36 So we finally had to buy a house. And so, we were paying for two houses, one in Pennsylvania that hadn't been sold, and one out here. So, it was important even though that wasn't much of a salary in those days, but then things didn't cost a lot either.
- Dorothy Huyck: 04:49 Your husband was employed here [inaudible 00:04:52]?
- Olive Johnson: 04:52 He started the agriculture department here, yes. He was teaching vocational agriculture.
- Dorothy Huyck: 04:57 Agriculture department in [inaudible 00:04:58]?
- Olive Johnson: 04:58 The high school.
- Dorothy Huyck: 05:02 He's now retired?

- Olive Johnson: 05:03 Yeah. He later became director of New Mexico State University branch in Carlsbad. And he had that job 20 years before he retired.
- Dorothy Huyck: 05:10 If we can turn our thoughts back to a few people. If you were remember, I think you remember Viola Shannon?
- Olive Johnson: 05:20 Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 05:20 [inaudible 00:05:22]?
- Olive Johnson: 05:24 I worked with her from the time I first went out to caverns until she retired a couple of years before I did. She had been an elevator operator and she was a very efficient type of person. Then just about the time I went out there, she wanted to get on the guide force. As I recall, she did just about that time because I can't remember her doing much elevator operating after that.
- Olive Johnson: 05:56 Except that each guide as they came in from the tour would take their turn at operating the elevator. We had one full-time and then we all took turns operating the elevators ourselves when we'd come in from tours.
- Dorothy Huyck: 06:11 Was it Viola Shannon who was expert at greasing elevators?
- Olive Johnson: 06:15 Yes, she was. She would get into coveralls and think nothing at all of doing the same job any man would do on those elevators. And she kind of prided herself on the fact that she wasn't afraid of it, but she could do it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 06:29 Was it a matter of greasing cables? Is that correct?
- Olive Johnson: 06:33 I didn't watch her do it. I don't remember exactly what it was, but there was a matter of, I knew you had to grease cables and I believe that's what she was doing.
- Dorothy Huyck: 06:43 Did you know Vivian Rhodes?
- Olive Johnson: 06:46 Rhodes?
- Dorothy Huyck: 06:49 Yes.
- Olive Johnson: 06:49 I don't recall her.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:49 She began working at Carlsbad in '49.

Olive Johnson: 06:53 Vivian Rhodes.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:55 What about Edna Pendleton?

Olive Johnson: 06:58 Yes, I remember her.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:00 Was she a guide also?

Olive Johnson: 07:01 She was a school teacher here in town and then she worked in the summertime just part time in the summer. We used to call her Penny. In fact, she was my daughter's first grade teacher.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:14 So she was strictly a part time person?

Olive Johnson: 07:16 Strictly.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:18 What about Roberta Biddington?

Olive Johnson: 07:20 Yes, now, she was full-time.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:23 As a guide?

Olive Johnson: 07:23 Yes. She worked out there for several years. She was a very masculine type of person that didn't care too much for men. She thought women got a kind of a bad deal I think in those days. She was a very outspoken person and we all loved her, but she was different, and she was from California. Then she joined the service during the war.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:56 Joined the park service?

Olive Johnson: 07:56 No, the military service. I believe it was, I think she took pictures from airplanes, something like that. Did photography from airplanes.

Dorothy Huyck: 08:08 Did she return to Carlsbad?

Olive Johnson: 08:09 For a short period, as I remember, she did. Then she went back to California and I lost track of her after that. I don't think she stayed with the service.

Dorothy Huyck: 08:20 I think she resigned from Carlsbad in 1949.

Olive Johnson: 08:24 That sounds about right. Yeah. I remember she did come back for just a short time after the war.

Dorothy Huyck: 08:29 And worked as a guide?

Olive Johnson: 08:31 Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 08:34 Anything else you remember about her?

Olive Johnson: 08:38 I just remember her mannerisms were so different than most people. She was so outspoken and kind of blustery type of person.

Dorothy Huyck: 08:51 Did she think she had a bad deal?

Olive Johnson: 08:54 I don't know what had happened in her life, but I always feel like she had a chip on her shoulder, she didn't like men very well.

Dorothy Huyck: 09:01 Do you remember Doreen Gale?

Olive Johnson: 09:06 Yes, I do. She was a darling. She got married while she was out there. Her name had ... well, let's see, she came there as Doreen Gale and then she married a fellow by the name of Tender. So, her name was Doreen Tender. Her first husband had been in the service and he died of cancer and she came on as a nurse. She's a registered nurse. She worked there several years. I don't remember exactly how long.

Dorothy Huyck: 09:37 I think she came on duty in '48. But I don't know when she resigned.

Olive Johnson: 09:39 That sounds about right. Well, she resigned after she got married again, she lived in Eunice for some time and she became an anesthetist with the hospital there and she followed the professional nursing after she got married again.

Dorothy Huyck: 09:59 She's not in this area anymore?

Olive Johnson: 09:59 Not unless she still lives in Eunice.

Dorothy Huyck: 10:07 Did we mention Norma Husselman?

Olive Johnson: 10:08 Yes. I remember her too.

- Dorothy Huyck: 10:13 [inaudible 00:10:13] recall about her?
- Olive Johnson: 10:15 She also was full time and she was there for a couple years. Then I think she finally left and got married.
- Dorothy Huyck: 10:23 But she also was a guide?
- Olive Johnson: 10:28 Yes. At that time, I was a guide too, of course, and I was working with all these people. What we did, we simply took our turns at leading or rearing or what we call cut in line on tours.
- Dorothy Huyck: 10:39 What you called, cut in line?
- Olive Johnson: 10:41 Yes. So, in other words, one would walk all the way through the people, flashing their flashlight at their feet and talk to the individuals as we went through the line, that's what they called it. Cut in line. In the days when we had only a couple of parties, they got pretty large. Sometimes we'd have three and 400 people on a tour.
- Olive Johnson: 11:00 You might have two or three cut in lines where one would take the first cut and one would take the second cut and one take the third. So that you'd have a group of people that you were constantly, you'd go by them and then you'd post and let them go by you and then you'd start up through the line again so that you could answer their questions and talk to them, see that everything was going all right.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:18 Now, when you say you would post, you mean you would stand in one place?
- Olive Johnson: 11:21 They were different places. At one time, they had regular posts named around the big room and the main corridor and everything. You try to get through your group and get to that post by the time you came to where your marker was. For instance, a man with a cap on his head or something. When you got to him, then you'd stop. You're supposed to be at that post. Then you'd let all those people pass you again.
- Olive Johnson: 11:45 Then you'd start in and try to get through your group again. Maybe you had a hundred people to get through until you got to the next designated spot where there was a post and then you'd stop again and let them all go by you. This way you get to see the people frequently. You were encouraged

to keep moving and not just stay with maybe one person the whole time, just because they were interesting or something.

- Dorothy Huyck: 12:08 This gave people an opportunity to ask you questions?
- Olive Johnson: 12:09 Yes, it did. By the time the day was over, you knew everybody in your cut in line real well. They felt they knew you and it was a real good feeling.
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:24 Did you know Julia Dean?
- Olive Johnson: 12:27 Dean?
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:27 D-E-A-N. So, there's Norma Lee [inaudible 00:00:12:35]?
- Olive Johnson: 12:36 No.
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:39 Or Jean Bollaval?
- Olive Johnson: 12:40 Yes, I knew Jean.
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:41 Did you?
- Olive Johnson: 12:41 Yes. She married John Palmer and they met out here. John was also one of the guides. Now Jean Bollaval was a registered nurse. So, they were still taking on registered nurses. But usually just one. And as I say, they didn't have them too long at a time. Jean didn't stay too long. She was there a year or two, I think.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:02 You'd think this idea that a registered nurse went back to the very early days when Mr. Bowles came on duty?
- Olive Johnson: 13:07 Right, I believe it did.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:10 I'm wondering if it was his idea?
- Olive Johnson: 13:12 I think it was. I think it was kind of an excuse to get women on. And there was a reason for it because in those days, just taking a woman on as a guide was something that you almost had to qualify the reason for it. You know what I mean? It was sort of man oriented at that time because it was fairly strenuous. I kind of think that that was a good reason to have women on there. I think he liked to have at least one woman on a tour because if someone would get

sick and it was a woman and it was good to have a woman there.

- Olive Johnson: 13:49 Then also we did have people go through that simply were not prepared for what type of trip it was. And regardless of what you tell them, people are going to try it anyhow. We had a lot of women that were maybe six, seven months pregnant, come down there and try to make that trip and everything. And there was always the possibility that something could happen.
- Olive Johnson: 14:11 I think Colonel Bowles felt that it would be good to have a woman there just in case something would happen. We always had a well-stocked first aid room with two hospital beds. So, if anything did happen, we were prepared to take care of them. It's an isolated place.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:28 It's down below?
- Olive Johnson: 14:28 No, the first aid room's up top.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:30 You'd bring somebody up in the elevator?
- Olive Johnson: 14:32 Yes, we had stretchers and we could bring them up in the elevator if it was necessary. For some reason or other, we never really had that type of emergency, but I'll never tell you why with as many people that went through there. There was a marvelous opportunity for it to happen. But we never did have, but we were prepared. We had a good first aid room with, as I say, two hospital beds and good facilities in the elevator building.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:00 We have many pictures of Mr. Bowles taken with different groups who visited, or the queen of something or other.
- Olive Johnson: 15:06 He loved to take pictures. He never went anywhere without his camera.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:09 Somebody took pictures of him.
- Olive Johnson: 15:11 Yes. But he'd have them take pictures with his camera lots of times. Then he'd have it printed and blown up and send it to somebody. That's one of the ways that he advertised.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:21 Some of those pictures were taken with his guides. Were you among them?

- Olive Johnson: 15:25 Yes, I'm sure that I have had my picture taken with him several times. I don't think I have any pictures right now, but I can recall posing with him. He'd say, "Come stand up here." One thing about Colonel Bowles, he really thought a lot of his employees and I worked under nine different superintendents, and everyone works differently. And I liked every one of the nine.
- Olive Johnson: 15:52 But the one thing that I think everybody remembered about Colonel Bowles was that he always took great pride in his employees. And regardless of who he had coming through the cave, these important people and everything, he'd bring them in and almost the very first thing he'd do was come and go over to the lunch table where we used to eat lunch and introduce them to his employees. He'd say, "Now, these are the people that make all this possible. These are the people that are helping to preserve it and will tell you about it."
- Olive Johnson: 16:24 He knew the name of everyone, whether they were just employed or whether they'd been there a long time. He knew exactly what position they had in line. He had looked to see whether they were the lead or the rear or what they were going to be doing or who the chief of the party was. And many a time when we were having lunch, I remember him walking in with some big shot of some kind and the first thing he did was bring them right over and then he'd always seemed so proud of his employees.
- Olive Johnson: 16:50 I think it made his employees really put out and try to do a lot more than if he had been somebody that just kind of ignored them. No other superintendent that we ever had after that did this. I mean, I guess they just felt it wasn't necessary, but he did. He really made his employees feel like they were important people.
- Dorothy Huyck: 17:12 He had a political background [crosstalk 00:17:15] a lot about the virtue of doing this.
- Olive Johnson: 17:17 I wouldn't doubt it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 17:20 Do you know about his life prior to Carlsbad?
- Olive Johnson: 17:24 He was at Hawaii National Park and I think he was raised in Arkansas and he went back to Hot Springs just before he was ready to retire. He had been here just a little less than

20 years; I think just a month or two less than 20 years. He was going to retire in just a couple more years, but he went back there to retire, I mean to finish working in the park service before he retired. Then he came back to Carlsbad and lived here during his retirement years.

- Dorothy Huyck: 17:59 Any thoughts on the effect that World War II had on visitation at this park?
- Olive Johnson: 18:04 Well, of course it knocked visitation down almost nothing.
- Dorothy Huyck: 18:07 But you did stay open?
- Olive Johnson: 18:09 Well, I was going to say it knocked it down to almost nothing amongst the average person. But the thing that we did have were convoys of soldiers coming through. We had air bases all over this area out here, and there were seven or eight different military bases. On weekends, these groups would come in busloads and we'd have some huge tours during the war, but three-quarters of them would be soldiers or military people.
- Olive Johnson: 18:42 Then we still had school groups that came through in those days and they were bringing a lot of graduating classes through. The schools weren't quite as big as they are now. Now a graduating class at most schools are so large, you couldn't take them anywhere. But they were taking groups of anywhere from 30 to maybe a hundred through, as graduating groups. Then some days we'd get five or six school groups in one day.
- Dorothy Huyck: 19:08 This was during World War II?
- Olive Johnson: 19:10 Yes. Even then they would bring busloads through as I recall. But most of it was military during that time.
- Dorothy Huyck: 19:16 You recall at all that people who were moving to California to work in war industries in California, might've stopped off here?
- Olive Johnson: 19:23 Yes. I would feel quite sure that most of the individuals, as families that went through were people who were being transferred from one area or another. They were on their way some place. They weren't just traveling for the fun of it. But they thought, well, as long as we're going through

this way, we'll stop off and see the caverns. I'm quite sure that a lot of those people were in that category.

- Olive Johnson: 19:46 But I do recall that the tourists, they dropped in size. I remember one particular tour, that one tour that we used to have would run around 50 or 52 people. Of course, later on, that was unheard of having a group as small as that. Then when they got down that small, we sometimes ran it with just a lead and a rear. It seemed that we were always hard put financially out there to hire people, as long as I can remember.
- Olive Johnson: 20:21 There would be times when we were awfully short-handed of personnel and I can remember many a time taking a tour through with nobody but the superintendent on the other end or the assistant superintendent. John Deal was the assistant superintendent out there when I first went out there and he used to rear it and I used to lead it. We'd take that tour around the big room, just the two of us many times. I think he was assistant superintendent at the time, but he thought nothing of coming down and taking the job as a guide if it was necessary.
- Dorothy Huyck: 20:51 There were times when you were so short at times that you for instance were furloughed. Isn't that correct?
- Olive Johnson: 20:55 Yes. I remember there was one particular time. I really forgotten that, but I didn't object to it really, because I think I needed some time off really at the time anyhow. Since my husband was employed, it wasn't as if I were not going to have any kind of an income at all. So that I didn't really mind it. They didn't insist that I do it, but if it was agreeable with me. They were very nice about that.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:23 I think you also told me that you had done some curatorial work and some library work. Is that correct?
- Olive Johnson: 21:29 Yes. I'm not much of a librarian. I never took a librarian course in my life, but they did have a lot of books up there in what they called the old Nationalist Office, which has since been demolished. But the only library we had at that time was up in that building where the Nationalist was. We had no dressing rooms for women, of course, at that time.
- Olive Johnson: 21:53 What used to be the so-called library was our dressing room. In fact, we dressed in the broom closet because there

was no door between the library and where the naturalists and the rest of them were working. So, we used to step into the broom closet and pull the door and change our uniform and then come out and keep our uniforms in a little locker.

- Dorothy Huyck: 22:16 [inaudible 00:22:16] uniforms were you wearing? The same thing as men were wearing?
- Olive Johnson: 22:19 In those days we were wearing skirts and a coat somewhat similar to the mans. It wasn't the jacket; it was the regular coat. Of course, the button on the other side. But that and the skirt and we had kick pleats at one time and then just a plain skirt at another time.
- Dorothy Huyck: 22:43 You were given a uniform allowance?
- Olive Johnson: 22:47 Yes, let's see. I'm trying to think when that started. As I recall, we probably bought our first uniforms, but it wasn't too long before we got uniform allowance. There were some problem with me since I was called a first aid attendant. The first year I did not get a uniform allowance. I had to pay for it myself.
- Olive Johnson: 23:08 Then finally somebody worked on the idea and said, "Well, the first aid attendant of Carlsbad Caverns has to wear the same uniform that the guides do." They evidently thought wherever they had heard this, that a first aid attendant could just dress like a nurse or something and that they shouldn't have a uniform allowance.
- Olive Johnson: 23:28 So that I do recall there was some snafu about that and I did pay for it at that particular time. But by the time I got my next uniform, there was some sort of a uniform allowance. I don't remember just what it was at that time.
- Dorothy Huyck: 23:42 Things have changed a lot at Carlsbad Caverns over the years.
- Olive Johnson: 23:44 Tremendously. So much so that the only thing the same is the cave. I hadn't thought of these things for years that you're bringing up.
- Dorothy Huyck: 23:59 We talked about a variety of things. Is there something we have not covered that you'd like to comment on?

- Olive Johnson: 24:07 I don't believe so. [inaudible 00:24:07] it would be. Except that I think some of the people that are in the park service are some of the very best. I met so many hundreds and hundreds of people in the years that I worked there. 27 years, you meet a tremendous number of people. Particularly when they would go and come as fast as they did out there. They'd stay a couple of years and then go on to some other area.
- Olive Johnson: 24:29 I love getting the courier now and immediately have to see where these different people are. I noticed that Bob Barbee has just been transferred back again to the mainland from Hawaii. He's out, I guess it's Redlands or one of the parks out in California now.
- Olive Johnson: 24:48 Some of these people that worked here have really gone on to be top man. And I knew they would because they were really top people here, even though they didn't have an opportunity to do much except guiding here at that time.
- Dorothy Huyck: 25:03 You yourself were offered transfers, were you not?
- Olive Johnson: 25:06 I could take transfers if I had wanted them. Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: 25:08 Were you offered specific positions elsewhere?
- Olive Johnson: 25:11 You had to make out a form and make yourself available.
- Dorothy Huyck: 25:16 But you were not [inaudible 00:25:17]?
- Olive Johnson: 25:17 I always put on my form that I did not want ... so I really didn't get what you'd call, a specific offer because I always had on my form that I didn't want to be transferred. In fact, I was in exactly the opposite position of most people. Most of them were just really anxious to transfer so that they could attain a higher position. This was the way you got your higher grade was to transfer. You could just do so much here. So, they were always so anxious to apply for these other jobs.
- Olive Johnson: 25:48 I remember a bulletin board was always full of applications, where there was a vacancy someplace. A lot of my work in the last few years before I retired, was helping these people make out applications and make sure that they did get in on these opportunities that they wanted so bad. But I was in the exact opposite position. I was

trying to justify the fact that I didn't want one, which was kind of hard to do.

- Dorothy Huyck: 26:20 Anything else that we should recall?
- Olive Johnson: 26:30 I can't think of anything else particularly.
- Dorothy Huyck: 26:38 Thank you very much.
- Olive Johnson: 26:40 Well, thank you. I've enjoyed talking with you. It's fun remembering all these things.
- Dorothy Huyck: 26:48 We've been talking about men who were rangers and women who were guides at Carlsbad Caverns.
- Olive Johnson: 26:55 The ranger's always had a feeling that I think that they were a little bit superior to the guides and that it was more of a man's work. I never knew any women that particularly wanted to be rangers, but I think that there was a little more feeling there that it would've been more difficult if a woman had been wanting to become a ranger. Now, what it is now, I don't know. I think now that there probably are women rangers out there, at least in the Guadalupe Park.
- Dorothy Huyck: 27:25 What period are you thinking of when you refer to this distinction between rangers and guides?
- Olive Johnson: 27:29 Oh, probably about an eight or 10 year period before I retired, then on back.
- Dorothy Huyck: 27:35 How was this shown?
- Olive Johnson: 27:39 There just was a feeling between the guides and the rangers, and the rangers kind of had that superior feeling, that their job was more important. It was one of those things you can't really put on paper, but it was just a feeling more or less. But there was a little jealousy, I suppose you could say jealousy between the two.
- Dorothy Huyck: 28:09 Thank you. Let me see if I can summarize this, but please correct me. Initially, the guides worked under the naturalist division.
- Olive Johnson: 28:19 When I first went there.
- Dorothy Huyck: 28:20 Then for a time you were shifted to the rangers.

- Olive Johnson: 28:23 For a short period of time.
- Dorothy Huyck: 28:24 For a short period. That did not work out too well.
- Olive Johnson: 28:29 Well, it didn't accomplish what they tried to do. I think they had tried to raise our grade by doing that. It didn't go over with the higher up officials, apparently. They still didn't think so, so then they put us back again under the naturalist division.
- Dorothy Huyck: 28:47 Eventually the guides were all made park technicians?
- Olive Johnson: 28:50 Park technicians. This was one of the things that they were trying to do to help the feeling of importance, I think, and also their grade. Their opportunities to advance were better as a park technician.
- Dorothy Huyck: 29:02 Did it get over any of that distinction between ranger and park technician? I guess that still was retained.
- Olive Johnson: 29:10 I imagine it would depend on what park you're working in.
- Dorothy Huyck: 29:14 I was thinking here at Carlsbad.
- Olive Johnson: 29:14 Here, they were working so close together that I think there was always a little feeling of jealousy, maybe nothing real. Not so that you couldn't get along with the people, but there was always that feeling that one was a little better than the other.
- Dorothy Huyck: 29:29 Was a ranger better because of where he had come from?
- Olive Johnson: 29:32 No, I think just the position itself, the title and the feeling of importance that went with the title and the freedom that you more or less had of doing things more on your own. For instance, if you took the car and went out in the back country to fix fences or something like that, you were on your own all day long. You didn't have anybody right there saying, "Do this and do that."
- Olive Johnson: 29:55 You weren't confined to a small area. You had the whole back country at your disposal. I think there was more of a feeling of importance amongst the rangers that they had more important type of work to do.
- Dorothy Huyck: 30:08 Was this something they brought from prior assignments?

- Olive Johnson: 30:11 Not necessarily.
- Dorothy Huyck: 30:11 I just want to make sure [crosstalk 00:30:16].
- Olive Johnson: 30:16 Because a lot of them started at Carlsbad.
- Dorothy Huyck: 30:18 I know you mentioned those who had worked at Yellowstone and Yosemite.
- Olive Johnson: 30:21 Well, they would be supervisory rangers or chief rangers or somebody like that.
- Dorothy Huyck: 30:27 So in this instance, the title and the series park technician proved to be a reasonable solution?
- Olive Johnson: 30:34 I think it was a good solution at Carlsbad.
- Dorothy Huyck: 30:38 Thank you. 1932, Superintendent Bowles, wrote as follows, quote, "There's hardly a day that passes by that one or more of our visitors, usually women, are treated by our trained nurses. Some of these women get nervous or faint, and now and then one becomes hysterical and others become nauseated."
- Olive Johnson: 30:59 I don't recall any of them getting.
- [END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]
- [START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A]
- Olive Johnson: 00:00 [inaudible 00:00:00] I'm getting hysterical. If they had claustrophobia, a lot of them just wouldn't go in, they would just say, "I don't want to go down underground." But it was usually the men that would force themselves go underground and actually got sick. But I recall no hysteria.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:15 Why do you suppose men usually got sick, if a man got sick?
- Olive Johnson: 00:20 I think they were ashamed to say that they were afraid to go underground, so they forced themselves to. You can't force yourself. When you have claustrophobia, it just takes over and they'd get sick. They usually said, "Well, my wife won't go if I won't go. So, I just forced myself to go."

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:38 So, Mr. Boles statement about it, was usually women who got sick, is probably not accurate.
- Olive Johnson: 00:43 I don't believe so. I think the women just weren't afraid to say that they didn't want to go down, whereas a man would have forced himself to go down. We had more men had claustrophobia and got sick than we did women.
- Dorothy Huyck: 00:54 We were speaking also of Mr. Boles, with regard to his famous enthusiasm for the Rock of Ages ceremony.
- Olive Johnson: 01:01 Now, that's the one thing that he really used to enjoy. He'd always make it for the big party of the day and give that talk, would be last thing of the day, then they'd go back to the elevators and go out or walk out. In those days we'd have sometimes two, even 300 people. That's about the most we could [inaudible 00:01:18], but they'd be grouped all over all the rocks in the area, because there weren't that many seats for them. He wanted to make it very impressive, so he wanted complete silence when those lights went off. So, one of the [inaudible 00:01:32] lines was a sign to take any children under six years of age off of the top of the hill and way back past the [inaudible 00:01:44] in the back and keep them back there while the ceremony was going on. Of course, the parent had to go with them.
- Olive Johnson: 01:51 This was one of the horrible assignments, because she had to always argue with a mother or father that the child had to go down there and the parent would say, "Well, my child isn't going to cry." But you just didn't dare leave him up there, because if he did cry, [inaudible 00:02:06] would look at you. So, we'd have maybe eight or 10 children and their parents off the back of the Rock of Ages down the way while the ceremony was going on.
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:16 It was your duty to explain why this was necessary.
- Olive Johnson: 02:20 In the beginning, before they went in, they were given a little slip of paper telling them that if they had a child under six years of age, they would probably be asked to go down and follow the guide off the top of the hill at the Rock of Ages ceremony, so quiet could be assured. But most of them would say, "Well, my child is seven." Even though it was a four-year-old, [inaudible 00:02:40] anything. Then, when we did get them down on the other side, they're on what they called baby row. Why, we still had to keep them

quiet, because if they started to cry, you could hear a faint sound back up there. That was the one assignment, that usually the nurse or one of the women had, was to try to keep the babies quiet. I guess they thought maybe the women could do it better than the men.

- Dorothy Huyck: 03:02 So you yourself must've—
- Olive Johnson: 03:04 I had it many a time.
- Dorothy Huyck: 03:05 [inaudible 00:03:05] these people back to baby row.
- Olive Johnson: 03:07 Right.
- Dorothy Huyck: 03:09 Once the ceremony was completed then you returned these people-
- Olive Johnson: 03:12 Well, they just stayed there and then the party came by them and they just dropped into line.
- Dorothy Huyck: 03:15 Do you know when that ceremony was ended?
- Olive Johnson: 03:21 I should, but I don't remember right now. I can't tell you exactly.
- Dorothy Huyck: 03:27 It seems to be something that many people found very impressive.
- Olive Johnson: 03:32 It was. For years afterwards, people would ask, "Well, why did they stop it?" But just the numbers themselves would eventually stopped it, because too many people were going through to stop them in one particular spot like that.
- Dorothy Huyck: 03:46 You surely could not have kept all those people on, what is now, the trail, they must have draped themselves all over the formations.
- Olive Johnson: 03:51 The trails weren't built up like they are now. They were more just dirt trails in those days. It was very easy to walk down off the side of them. They did have them off the trail all right, but they were mostly on rocks, there weren't too many formations right in that area that they could hurt. But some of the seats were a little precarious, and occasionally a woman got a snag in her hosiery or something, because of the rough rocks or something of this sort. But people were

so anxious for it, they didn't mind getting off the trail. If there was no place to sit, they found a place.

- Dorothy Huyck: 04:22 Were you still working here when this particular ceremony was disbanded?
- Olive Johnson: 04:26 Yes, I was. I should remember the year, but I know that it was in December, but I can't remember exactly the year. It was before Colonel Boles left there, so it was within the early '40s. Yes. The last year he was there, they didn't have it. I remember he was pretty unhappy sometimes, because they didn't have it. It must've been around '44, '43, '44, '45. I can't remember exactly when he left. I think he was there about two years after I had started working there. Before he left, I think it was about two years. Then Mr. [Libby 00:05:09] came.
- Dorothy Huyck: 05:10 There was some explanation, I presume, as to why the ceremony was ended.
- Olive Johnson: 05:16 Mostly because it was not something that really was natural to the cave. It was something that was a ceremony that could have been held any other place and could be made just as dramatic by turning off lights and having music and all this. They were trying to keep a more scientific aspect to the cave and keep things more in its natural way than trying to dream up a ceremony or something to make it impressive. They figured that the cave was impressive enough without having to have a ceremony.
- Dorothy Huyck: 05:48 There are, on record, a variety of letters from persons who wrote to Mr. Drury, as director of the park service, concerning the frequency of inaccurate details that were handed out, mostly by the superintendent of that time. Persons of a scientific bent found this questionable and then took it upon themselves to write Mr. Drury complaining of this.
- Olive Johnson: 06:11 This is certainly true. I don't think the Colonel was too scientific at some of the things he said. The general gist of things was true, but the time elements, I'm sure some of his time elements were a little off from what they had figured, in what later was a more scientific approach. The talks were a little more scientific later on. Some of the things were contradicted that he said.

- Dorothy Huyck: 06:39 His sense of geologic time was—
- Olive Johnson: 06:40 Yes. His geologic time was off. But the impressiveness of the cave is something that he did stress and I think he made people really enjoy the beauty of it. Another thing he did, he tried to make the people realize that the visitors were from all over, and for a while, he used to catalog the number coming from each state each day. In those days, instead of having a strip-type ticket, they had to sign up individually as a family or as an individual, then they had to say from which state they came, then we had a little mailbox like thing, and we'd stick in these little tickets from each state, then we had to count them up. Before the Rock of Ages ceremony, we had to tell him how many came from each state and he would go over that whole list. He always kept Texas for last, because they always had the most, being a neighboring state. Then he'd say, he'd make a big dramatic pause and say, "And from Texas, we have." and then give the number. Everybody would go. "Yay."
- Dorothy Huyck: 07:47 He was something of a showman.
- Olive Johnson: 07:53 He was definitely a showman. But the people really ate it up. But, it could have been held at any place, but in the cave, it certainly didn't make the cave any more impressive with all this.
- Dorothy Huyck: 08:05 Was this another of your duties to count up the number of persons from each state?
- Olive Johnson: 08:09 Different people were assigned to that, yes. Of course, all the guides were taking and doing heavy visitation periods. It was a terrific job to get all these people signed up individually. I remember the day that we got strip tickets, everybody rejoiced, because before that, on a big day, like a Memorial Day weekend or 4th of July, we actually had to put a table outside and have somebody out there. Then, each window on the ticket office, there was somebody also signing up, we'd have five or six books that we were all using, trying to get all these people signed up so they could go in in time to make the next tour. It was really quite a task. They were the same type of thing that later became a pass. It was quite a process. But the strip ticket made it much easier when we got heavier visitation.

- Dorothy Huyck: 09:04 Mr. Boles was also very distinct writing his monthly reports back to Washington about the fact that visitation had reached a new peak or that this was a park in the whole of the National Park Service, that was returning funds to the Treasury.
- Olive Johnson: 09:18 I'm sure this is true. I think they always were, were making money out this park, where a lot of them were losing it. Of course, they didn't have quite the maintenance, perhaps than some. They didn't have the terrific winter weather to tear up all our roads, and they didn't have as many miles of paved road and the trails in a lot of your big parks. I don't think the expenses were probably quite as great, but it probably was one of the few parks that really made money for the government. The visitors were always asking that, strangely enough, they wanted to know whether they lost or whether they made money here. They were tickled to death when they found out that we were actually making some money. In fact, most of the visitors would say, "Well, I get awful fed up with government, but the Park Service is the best agency in the government." This always made us feel very good. But most of the visitors did really enjoy the park. They had been to other parks and they were always impressed the way they were run. They seemed to think that that part of the government was just fine.
- Dorothy Huyck: 10:14 I think that idea still [inaudible 00:10:15].
- Olive Johnson: 10:16 Yeah, I think it does. In fact, I heard it all during the years that I worked there.
- Dorothy Huyck: 10:25 Mr. Boles also regularly [caught 00:10:29] his budget to some extent by returning more funds to Washington, isn't that correct?
- Olive Johnson: 10:33 Yes. I understand he did take pride in turning back money, which made it more difficult for future superintendents to run the park, because expenses kept going up. I guess they thought if it could be turned back once, it could be returned back again, or it might've had an effect on what budget they gave it for the next year too, proving it.
- Dorothy Huyck: 10:55 We have, in the National Archives, quite a collection of photographs of Mr. Boles through the years.

- Olive Johnson: 11:00 He was quite a photographer. He never went any place without his camera. Sometimes, he didn't even have film in it, but he'd get a group together and make them feel good by taking their picture.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:09 That I didn't know.
- Olive Johnson: 11:10 Frequently. He's run out of film and just pretend to take a picture. But he did take a great many pictures, and when he took them and it turned out well, he would get it publicized. He's send it around to newspapers. He was a great showman; he made the most of that. He certainly put the cave on the map in those early days when it was off on the corner of nowhere down here.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:34 Is this on the National Parks Highways [inaudible 00:00:11:37]?
- Olive Johnson: 11:37 No, it was named National Parks Highway only a few years ago. It's been the El Paso highway more or less [inaudible 00:11:44] the road goes to El Paso. But it wasn't called National Parks Highway until just a few years ago.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:48 I thought he was promoting that idea.
- Olive Johnson: 11:51 It wasn't called that.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:55 Well, he certainly went around to a variety of Rotary clubs and similar organizations to promote the cave.
- Olive Johnson: 12:03 The whole time he was at other parks, even as superintendent, he was talking about this one. When he was at Hot Springs in Arkansas, his talks would usually be on this one here instead of on that one. He really did love it here.
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:20 Once Mr. Boles left this area, did the programs at the park, other than the Rock of Ages ceremonies, did they change? Or did the attitudes of visitors with less of this showmanship going on change?
- Olive Johnson: 12:34 I think people always enjoyed those guided tours, but there was a lot of talk about why did we stop it and how it had been such a great thing. People did resent it for several years, in fact, the guides used to just dread having people ask them that, and there was never a—

- Dorothy Huyck: 12:50 About the Rock of Ages?
- Olive Johnson: 12:51 Right. There never was a tour that went through, I guess in the next five years, that didn't have at least one person on it that asked about it. But, usually we were able to explain to them that visitation had increased and you just couldn't get a number of people up there anymore that were going through. You couldn't do it for one, not do it for all. Most people accepted it. But, they did then put a little more of scientific aspect into the talks. We had talks that gave them a little truer picture.
- Olive Johnson: 13:24 I think there were enough talks, of course in those days they didn't have as many talks either, we had the Rock of Ages, was more or less built around that one talk. Then later on, the superintendents that came in tried to have more talks at different places. They later built seats so that people could sit down and listen to these talks. This helped a great deal. Because standing up, you do have a tendency to get a little bit lightheaded and this is when people fainted when they had to stand all the time. We had practically no people faint after you had seats in the cave where they could sit down and listen to a talk.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:57 Did you also provide some of the evening talks at the entrance of the cave?
- Olive Johnson: 14:02 Usually, one or two people were assigned to that that lived out there. However, in later years, any of the ones that wanted to do it were allowed to do it. But, since the bus left in the afternoon to go back to Carlsbad around 4:30 and this talk didn't take place until between six, seven, 7:30 at night, it was usually the people living out there on the hill that gave the talk. They would simply come on later in the day for their eight-hour day. Otherwise, you had to drive a car individually back and forth to Carlsbad. So, I never gave the bat flight talk, although we gave all the other talks in the cave, because I didn't live out in the [inaudible 00:14:48]. However, two seasons, I gave talks down at the library in Carlsbad, telling people that were staying here in town that night and had planned to go to the caverns the next morning, just exactly what they could expect and telling them something about the cave and answering their questions and also giving them the slideshow. I did that for two summers, regularly, down at the Carlsbad Municipal Library. That was quite a few years ago.

- Dorothy Huyck: 15:20 Speaking of quite a few years ago, several persons have told me that World War II posed a real opportunity for women in the National Park Service. Now, here at Carlsbad during World War II, if we look at that period alone, there were women hired in the Summer in particular?
- Olive Johnson: 15:41 Summer was when we had our heavy visitation, so we always took on an additional number in the summer. It is true that most of them were women, because they were available, but it was almost always women schoolteachers. We had a lot of schoolteachers from Carlsbad, and I believe one from Roswell, but they were mostly local schoolteachers who already had homes here in Carlsbad established and needed summer work and would come out and work the summer. They did that for several years there. A few were taken on permanent. I can think of maybe two that were taken on permanent, plus what nurses would come and go. But most of them were just seasonal employees.
- Dorothy Huyck: 16:24 And what you said, nurses in the long run really did not make a career out of the park service, and that they found [inaudible 00:16:29] elsewhere.
- Olive Johnson: 16:29 Most of them were here just for a short period of time. They later were able to make more money at hospital nursing or private duty nursing when nurses rates went up. Then a lot of them just simply were here for a short period of time and went on to hospital nursing or private duty nursing, or got married and went off with their husband someplace.
- Dorothy Huyck: 16:58 Would it be correct to say that, as far as World War II is concerned, the opportunities for long-term employment were limited to one or two persons who may have been taken on permanently?
- Olive Johnson: 17:09 I would say so. I don't know of anyone that was taken on here, any women, that went on to make a career of the Park Service.
- Dorothy Huyck: 17:22 Thank you, again. We're just beginning to talk about a period that you spent in Washington on the Uniform Task Force.

- Olive Johnson: 17:32 Right. It was when they wanted to change the uniform from the light tan dress to something else. We had many discussions, sometimes it ran into the night, till 10:30, 11:30 at night in the individual hotel rooms trying to get this problem thrashed out, as to what all the accessories would be and the different types of uniform. It was really amazing to me, all the different types needed for the different kinds of work. One would say, "Well now, positively, I've got to have trousers to get out and ride a horse in the back country. If I'm going to have that, I've got to have a shirt that goes with it and I've got to have a tie and I'm going to have to have a man's belt if I'm going to wear this kind of trousers." And another one will say, "Now, working as a superintendent in an office, I want something that looks dressy enough that where I wouldn't want a pair of pants if I was going to have a meeting with some people in my office and so forth, so I want something along a different line."
- Olive Johnson: 18:40 Then other people were taking nature walks and they say, "Well, I want something else." We discussed all these different things, and I couldn't imagine, when I first went to Washington, that it would take so long to make up our minds. But I could see after I got there, that women who were holding so many different types of positions, that it wasn't necessary to have a very broad range of what they could wear. But most of them definitely wanted to look like the men so that they could be recognized as belonging to Park Service. They said that tan dress, they could have been anybody and nobody recognized them as really being part of the Park Service.
- Dorothy Huyck: 19:20 You must have met a variety of women—
- Olive Johnson: 19:24 I really did.
- Dorothy Huyck: 19:25 Do you remember any of the persons who were there with you?
- Olive Johnson: 19:27 Well, I remember Doris Omundson. I can't recall their names right now, but I remember—
- Dorothy Huyck: 19:35 [inaudible 00:19:36].
- Olive Johnson: 19:35 I think it was '73, it was just the year before I retired, so it must have been just about that time.

- Dorothy Huyck: 19:45 But you're certainly encountered women in a variety of positions.
- Olive Johnson: 19:48 Right. They were Rangers and some of them in administrative and some of them supervisor, they're all in different types of work. It was really interesting to see all the different things they did at the different parks. It gave me a good insight into... So, they did do away with the dresses, and pretty soon. One of the things that was kind of interesting was that the uniform companies said it would be too expensive to make something just for women, because there weren't enough women in the Park Service to make it worth their while. They had to buy things in such large quantities. But they said, if you could use the same material as we have for the men's uniform, they could make it a cut that would fit women. But, if we were thinking of some completely different materials and everything, they'd have to be such a great number, otherwise it just wouldn't be feasible for them to do it. I hadn't realized that you had to have such great numbers. I thought there were enough women, probably, in the Park Service to make it feasible, but I guess it wasn't.
- Dorothy Huyck: 20:58 There was a time, and I can't identify that time on hand, when an allowance for uniforms for women was much smaller than that for men. Do you remember anything [inaudible 00:21:08]?
- Olive Johnson: 21:11 I don't really recall it. Of course, the uniform we wore at Carlsbad, except for the fact that theirs was trousers and ours was skirts [inaudible 00:21:19] the material was the same. As I recall, it was adequate to pay for what the uniform cost us, which was the important thing.
- Dorothy Huyck: 21:28 Yes, indeed.

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A]

[END OF INTERVIEW]