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



Janet Chess Wolf
April 13, 1978

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[START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

Dorothy Huyck: Janet, how did you first become acquainted with the National Park Service?

Janet Wolf: That's a loaded question. Because my parents wouldn't let me work in a summer resort. I wanted to go away for the summer. The parks afford good clean living, so if I found a park, I could work at I could work away from home.

Dorothy Huyck: What park did you start working at?

Janet Wolf: Acadia National Park

Dorothy Huyck: In what role?

Janet Wolf: I worked with the concessioner. I helped run the gift shop on top of Cadillac Mountain. I think I was the first woman to do that.

Dorothy Huyck: When was that?

Janet Wolf: (Pause)The summer of '64 or '65 – I don't remember now.

Dorothy Huyck: Did you to back to Acadia in succeeding summers?

Janet Wolf: No, I went to Oregon Caves National Monument the next summer, and then I began working for the Forest Service as a seasonal.

Dorothy Huyck: Now, at Oregon Caves, were you working for the concessioner?

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: And thereafter?

Janet Wolf: It was two summers I worked for concessioners, and then I worked summers for three years for the Park Service as a Ranger Historian at Saratoga.

Dorothy Huyck: All at Saratoga.

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: Had you traveled in national parks, or how were you aware of them prior to your summer at Mt. Cadillac?

Janet Wolf: My parents had always taken us on a lot of trips, and I think that's where they had gotten the idea, initially, that that was a good place for me to work. They'd been very impressed at Glacier, and they had noticed the people working there, back in the early 50's – mid-fifties. We continually traveled. It was just through that kind of an acquaintance that it kind of developed.

Dorothy Huyck: You mentioned your parents. Where and when were you born?

Janet Wolf: Groton, Connecticut in 1947.

Dorothy Huyck: Did you grow up in Groton?

Janet Wolf: No. I grew up on Long Island.

Dorothy Huyck: Where?

Janet Wolf: Levittown and then Huntington.

Dorothy Huyck: Where did you graduate from high school?

Janet Wolf: In Huntington.

Dorothy Huyck: Were you an only child?

Janet Wolf: No, I had a younger brother.

Dorothy Huyck: You were, therefore, the eldest.

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: Where did you go to college?

Janet Wolf: State University of New York at Stony Brook, and I got my master's at Northern Illinois University, and I've gone to a number of colleges since then.

Dorothy Huyck: What field did you get your bachelor's in?

Janet Wolf: American History.

Dorothy Huyck: And your master's?

Janet Wolf: American History with a minor in Medieval.

Dorothy Huyck: And what other kinds of educational experiences have you had that you referred to, in general?

Janet Wolf: I've taken a variety of courses in things like fire technology, public administration, personnel management, and then I've taught in one community college in the field of recreation on interpretative techniques that were usable for recreation people in outdoor education.

Dorothy Huyck: Where was that?

Janet Wolf: Catonsville Community College.

Dorothy Huyck: When you were in high school, going back to high school for just a minute, and during the educational process, who were the persons who

encouraged you? Your family, or teachers, or maybe church or community leaders? Maybe none.

Janet Wolf: Encouraged me in what sense?

Dorothy Huyck: The academic process.

Janet Wolf: (Pause) It was always assumed – I mean, it was never a conscious thought on my part that I wouldn't go to college. It became more the conscious decision when it came time for my graduate work, but the family background I come from, it was almost assumed that you went, and you got your bachelor's and you went on. I had teachers that were very encouraging, very supportive.

Dorothy Huyck: Is your father a college graduate?

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: And your mother?

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: What is your father's occupation?

Janet Wolf: My father is a dentist.

Dorothy Huyck: And your mother?

Janet Wolf: She was a physiotherapist before she got married.

Dorothy Huyck: But has not practiced that.

Janet Wolf: No, not since – She went back and became a childhood education major.

Dorothy Huyck: After marriage?

Janet Wolf: When she was in her late 50's or early 60's.

Dorothy Huyck: While you were in high school, were you encouraged to study courses such as math and science that many people allocated more frequently to boys?

Janet Wolf: I always took them. (laughter) I took advanced courses in them.

Dorothy Huyck: In math and science.

Janet Wolf: Yes, except for physics which I never did quite understand. (laughter)

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

Janet Wolf: (Pause) I can't remember who I played with.

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

- Janet Wolf: No. I have no concept of that at all.
- Dorothy Huyck: You mentioned your family's travels to national parks as you were growing up. Were these travels beneficial in terms of your current experience in the Park Service at all? Did you get a feeling of how the parks functioned, or was there anything that you learned from that family expedition sort of thing that you've found helpful since?
- Janet Wolf: I'm sure it's part of the way I think, but nothing that I can consciously pinpoint. We spent a lot of our time just together outdoors. We had a home in the mountains that we spent a lot of time at.
- Dorothy Huyck: Where was that?
- Janet Wolf: In the Adirondacks. That gave me some of the appreciation for some of the natural things in conjunction with my own interest in history, and my parents', but I can't think of any particular visit that stands out in my mind, except for... Well, no, there is one. I remember at Yellowstone National Park my parents put me on a harness because they were afraid of the pools, and they felt they had to be very careful of my brother and I, that we wouldn't get hurt. To me, that's typified, what I think is responsible visitor attitude toward safety. I don't think that's the Park Service's responsibility. I think my parents did – Oh, you know, if you care – I think they took the right approach, and I don't think that we should be responsible.
- Dorothy Huyck: You must have been very young.
- Janet Wolf: Yes, my brother was extremely young. I can't remember the age anymore.
- Dorothy Huyck: But you remember that and something that's since been interpreted as being responsible visitor behavior.
- Janet Wolf: Yes. I guess that's just because of all the controversy about Yellowstone and the hot pools. But they were very, very careful about us when we were in those kinds of dangerous situations. You had to hang on tight. You couldn't walk away and, as I said, sometimes actually putting the harness on us.
- Dorothy Huyck: Very interesting. When did you become a full-time employee of the Park Service?
- Janet Wolf: In the fall of '69.
- Dorothy Huyck: And where?
- Janet Wolf: Well, I came into the training center at Grand Canyon, and I went through G.C. as one of the first group of urban intakes.

- Dorothy Huyck: Were you one of the earliest classes at the training center that included women. Were you in one of those early classes?
- Janet Wolf: I don't think so. There were quite a few women in before I came through.
- Dorothy Huyck: And what were your initial responsibilities as a full-time employee?
- Janet Wolf: We came in – we went through three months at the Grand Canyon, and we went to D.C. for up to a year. There we were just sort of given roving assignments. Every three months we moved to a different section of Washington Operations – National Capitol Operations, so we did a variety of different things, working with community programs, some pre-site information information things for school groups, a lot of community relations work. The last three months that I was in D.C., I was sent up to the Catoctin Mountains Park where I worked with Frank Menser to set up the Mountain Folk Craft Center up there. It was the first time they did it. I had to work with the community organizations to try to discover the kinds of crafts, and a lot of research and design work and stuff.
- Dorothy Huyck: And after that initial period?
- Janet Wolf: I went to Roosevelt - Vanderbilt as historian – assistant to the chief – I think it was resource management then, (laughter) I don't remember. I was there for several years, and I got moved up while I was there.
- Dorothy Huyck: What grade did you go there as?
- Janet Wolf: A 7.
- Dorothy Huyck: You were there for several years?
- Janet Wolf: Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: And what grade were you when you left?
- Janet Wolf: A 9.
- Dorothy Huyck: You were involved in interpretation there?
- Janet Wolf: Yes. My background is primarily as an interpreter. At Saratoga I got into living history when it was first getting off the ground, making period outfits, learning period crafts and stuff like that. That's a kind of an involvement with interpretation dealing with people has stayed with me throughout, probably because of my own inclination that parks are a good place to teach history and make them not dull and stodgy. (laughter) You know, too many of my friends say, "Oh, I couldn't stand American history." I think that we can teach it in the parks in a real exciting environment, so I've always had a bent toward the interpretative.

- Dorothy Huyck: I presume there's no living history per at either Roosevelt or Vanderbilt. Is that correct, or am I mistaken about that?
- Janet Wolf: I don't know what there is today. There certainly was when I was there.
- Dorothy Huyck: There was? Of what nature?
- Janet Wolf: In the Vanderbilt mansion we had volunteers come in, clothe them in period dresses that were Mrs. Vanderbilt's style, which was a very interesting project, to find somebody who could work out patterns from existing dresses and duplicate them, and try to find fabrics that would be appropriate to someone of Mrs. Vanderbilt's stature of wealth. They would come in and they would play on the piano in the afternoon sometimes. Then we moved some of the women into period clothing and we did two or three of the main periods that the mansion was being used through, and they would act as guides and stuff. It was an attempt to get a feeling so that the people would know what the place looked like back then. They also used to try to smoke cigars in Mr. V's bedroom (laughter) because supposedly it had a slight odor from the Cuban cigars. We'd get our cigars confiscated by Customs, and they'd send them to us once in a while. The guys would sit up there and puff away, (laughter) trying to figure out machines that would puff so the room would get full of smoke and smell again. (laughter)
- Dorothy Huyck: You were using cigars that had been confiscated by Customs. Is that right?
- Janet Wolf: Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: And then they were shipped off to you people to smoke, in effect.
- Janet Wolf: Well, (laughter) they didn't give them to us to smoke. We weren't supposed to do that. They were given to – yes, so we could get the odor.
- Dorothy Huyck: That's living history, isn't it?
- Janet Wolf: It sure is. (laughter)
- Dorothy Huyck: Smoking cigars for the sake of the odor. Was anything similar done at Hyde Park?
- Janet Wolf: No. Hyde Park – I think it would be very difficult my own personal feeling on that. What they did a lot there was use Mrs. Roosevelt – Eleanor's voice from recordings, and later on when I was there, we did some work with Anna Roosevelt, remembering things. I think that's a form of living history, not one that you would normally classify as such, but I think that was probably as appropriate as you could get. There was some talk for a while of rigging his television up because he used to come back and watch the campaign returns. A couple of us always thought it would

be kind of neat if you could get a copy, a videotape, of the return for one year and have it on a closed circuit television – run it through his old TV. That would be a kind of interesting living history, but that was about all that was ever considered.

Dorothy Huyck: I'm not aware that that was accomplished. Was it?

Janet Wolf: Not that I know of.

Dorothy Huyck: When did you leave Roosevelt - Vanderbilt?

Janet Wolf: (Pause) I think it was January of '72.

Dorothy Huyck: Where did you go then?

Janet Wolf: Fort McHenry.

Dorothy Huyck: What were your responsibilities there?

Janet Wolf: I was a management assistant – tourists. We were primarily responsible for the relationships between the Park Service at McHenry and the Maryland Society for the Preservation of Antiquities at Hampden House, or Hampden National Historic Society. I worked on it with that group starting some restoration work.

Dorothy Huyck: Restoration at Hampden House?

Janet Wolf: Well, yes. Preservation, I guess, is a better description. We treated a lot of the books that were beginning to decay from their condition of storage – not having been oiled and treated in a long time and started to look at other things that could be done to help preserve the house better. I had several employees that worked out. They were doing things that had not been done prior to that point. Later it evolved into the concept of putting the storage area over at the park itself. We converted the Civil War magazine into a humidity-controlled storage area.

Dorothy Huyck: In this case you're talking about Fort McHenry rather—

Janet Wolf: Right.

Dorothy Huyck: —than Hampden House.

Janet Wolf: Yes. We set it up primarily to store the artifacts from Hampden. They'd been stored in the attic and the basement with no control over the heat and humidity at all. It was doing some serious damage to the artifacts, so we remodeled the inside of the powder magazine to put in humidity-absorbing materials and to set it up so it could be used as a functional storage area.

Dorothy Huyck: Were these items then returned at a later date to Hampden House, or are they stored at Ft. McHenry?

- Janet Wolf: As far as I know, they're still stored at Ft. McHenry. There's no place at Hampden that would be easy to modify to store these artifacts.
- Dorothy Huyck: Were there other categories of responsibility that you had while you were at Ft. McHenry?
- Janet Wolf: Oh yes. At the same time that I was doing this stuff out at Hampden, I was also in charge of all the special events that at were Ft. McHenry. After about nine months I was brought back to Ft. McHenry as Chief of Interpretation of Visitor Services, and I was the chief assistant to the superintendent. I ran all the special events plus all the interpretative and protection programs at the park, so I worked with the U.S. marshals on this. It's the exclusive jurisdiction (unintelligible) special events, the idea that the U.S. Marshals are there to help provide law enforcement protection along with Baltimore City Police Department, and I coordinated the special events, and worked with the interpretative program, and was responsible basically for the day-to-day operation.
- Dorothy Huyck: As you look back on those sundry events that you were managing, so to speak, does anyone in particular come to mind as an unusual circumstance?
- Janet Wolf: You mean the special events? (Pause) No, I think there was always the thrill at McHenry when you were working with the flag because we used the grand banner, the very large replica, and we would fly that on a number of special occasions. There was always something thrilling about raising that and unfurling it in front of a crowd of people and everybody being so impressed by the size and the beauty of the flag flying in the wind. We did that for the tattoo ceremonies which, I think, were very impressive. I think that was very well done, and we did it for most of our other special programs. I think that is always something special. We also, while I was there, started the induction of people into American citizenship on July Fourth. I liked the concept – I think it meant something to people, but the conditions under which it happened were trying to people who were not all that at ease with it and having to wait in the heat and go out and announce for it at an outdoor platform and all. I think it was a little uncomfortable for some of them and I felt bad about that.
- Dorothy Huyck: Is it still being done?
- Janet Wolf: It was done during the Bicentennial as one of events. I don't know if they're doing it now or not. They did for two or three years after I started it.
- Dorothy Huyck: Then when did you leave Ft. McHenry?

Janet Wolf: (Pause) I think it was September of '74. I can't remember any dates at all. (laughter) Smitty can tell me (laughter) because he has it down pat. It was September. I think it was '74.

Dorothy Huyck: Did you come here to Ft. Frederica at that time?

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: Your title is now—?

Janet Wolf: Superintendent.

Dorothy Huyck: And your grade is now—?

Janet Wolf: Eleven.

Dorothy Huyck: How many people do you supervise?

Janet Wolf: Ten permanents and – oh, we go up to 17 to 20 during the summer between seasonals, and Department of Labor people, and the CETA program, and work-study students and things of that sort.

Dorothy Huyck: You're one of about a dozen superintendents currently throughout the whole system, I believe.

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: There are some people who feel that the National Park Service is rather male oriented. Has that been your experience?

Janet Wolf: Rather. (With emphasis) (Laughter) I think that's an understatement.

Dorothy Huyck: An understatement. How would you care to phrase it more accurately?

Janet Wolf: Oh, I don't know if I could phrase it more accurately. I think it is basically a male organization. (pause) They're making efforts, but it's still primarily male oriented.

Dorothy Huyck: How does one experience that?

Janet Wolf: What is it that you're looking—?

Dorothy Huyck: What is it that brings that to your attention as a woman? What is it that verifies that statement, or that makes it an understatement?

Janet Wolf: When I was first coming – I can give you examples of things that have been said to me. As a seasonal when I was thinking of coming in, someone said to me, “What do we want to waste all our money training you for? Within three years you'll be married or pregnant or both.” In one park, I had applied for the job and the superintendent didn't want to give it to me. I was woman going into the job, and he said, well, I could have the job if I

came down there and worked for two weeks and proved that I could work with the men.

Dorothy Huyck: So, you literally had to prove yourself in that case.

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: Did you take that job?

Janet Wolf: I sure did, and there were a number of instances (laughter) where we had some very strong run-ins because, I think, of his attitude. We had different personalities, too, but a lot, I think, was his attitude towards women. That caused some problems for both of us, I think, but there are just a lot of situations like that. I think some of them are just general societal type of influences. One of the things that I think annoys me is, the surface thing that annoys me more than anything else at superintendents' conferences and at important meetings when there is a woman on the platform, and they make some comment about how much her beauty, or her graciousness lends to the meeting. I think that is the most insulting thing, though it typifies the way they look at us. My husband and I very cold bloodedly sat down last year and said that I was going to be in Washington for a month, and we decided that I would go ahead and go to Elizabeth Arden and have them give me all the make-up lessons and all the rest of the crap because we could – You know, you've got to face up to the fact that you're working in a male society and the first thing that they notice, the first thing they comment on to the person next to them when you've walked out of the room is how you look. So, we considered the amount of money I spent there to be an investment in my career.

Dorothy Huyck: So, in fact you did go to Elizabeth Arden—

Janet Wolf: I did. Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: —in Washington.

Janet Wolf: I sure did.

Dorothy Huyck: And you consider that a financial investment in your Park Service career?

Janet Wolf: That's right, because that's how the men I deal with look at you first. I don't think that they'd want to admit it, particularly, but I sincerely believe that the first impression is very much based on that, and not just within the Park Service, but it's true in the local communities you work in, too. I think with your own staff, once everybody gets to know you, that's no longer a criteria, but even there, I think it may have some factor. It's just something that maybe because I've been around mostly men in the Park Service and I've gone with them to a number of places and stuff, that generally, I think that is how they react to things.

Dorothy Huyck: We were talking about what it's like to be a woman in the National Park Service, and maybe even a woman superintendent is more of a question.

Janet Wolf: It was certainly strange at first, (laughter) not just because I was a woman coming into a superintendency. Nobody really tells you what you're really supposed to do. You supposedly have watched other people, but nobody has ever said, well, you've got this kind of responsibility. Who do you go to now to approve your leave? Do you approve your own? Who approves this and that for you? Just how much responsibility and independence do you have? I think your kind of adrift for a while until you get your feet on the ground. It depends on how well you do, how supportive is, how much help the other superintendents are willing to give you. Then within the organization, to get your own credibility. I sense – and this may be wrong of me – I sense that I must do a much better job than the men do, and at the same time, I'm afraid of doing too good a job and of having them react to me – showing them up. I don't know how to put it. You don't want to be so good that you make other people feel uncomfortable.

Dorothy Huyck: How do you arrive at that balance?

Janet Wolf: I don't know that you do. After a while I kind of do what I think is right, and I don't worry about it, although every once in a while it does give me a pause to think, are people reacting negatively, do I do too many things some days? But then I decide I've got to run the park and do my job the best I can, and so I keep on going, and I don't worry about it. I think you have to be very careful in how you deal with people, and more so with your relationships between the field and the regional office, because they have – It depends on how they react to you personally, and it's not just a man or a woman, but – I mean a woman. It's both how you relate personality-wise. It's going to depend a lot on how much you're going to get out of them, so at first, you've got to be very cautious, I think, until you establish very good working relations. Once you've established and have a name for yourself, if there are some places where you problems, I think you can become stronger in the positions you take, but my feeling is that you really have to work for a couple of years before you reach that level of – I don't know how to put it independence of being able to just say, “Tough. This is the way it's going to be. I don't think -You're not answering the questions I'm asking. We're not understanding each other.” Just putting it right on the line.

Dorothy Huyck: Have there been cases where apparently you have made a man uncomfortable by doing “too good a job”?

Janet Wolf: No. Not that I'm aware of. I think I've surprised a few people. I don't think I've made any of them uncomfortable. I hope I haven't because I try

not to. The way you deal with people can make a difference as to whether they're comfortable or uncomfortable with what you're doing. I try to be very careful in that.

Dorothy Huyck: Has anyone in the Park Service acted as a mentor as far as your growing and increasing in stature in the Park Service is concerned?

Janet Wolf: Do I have a sponsor, is that what you're saying, in effect?

Dorothy Huyck: Or someone who has been an encourager or with whom you've had good conversations to work out certain areas of difficulty.

Janet Wolf: Oh, I've had a number of people that I could talk with in terms of if I had a problem, I could go to them and talk to them and ask advice. But in terms of having a sponsor, which is something that a lot of Park Service people think you have to have, that it's real critical, I don't think I've got one, or didn't have one. Most of the superintendents and a lot of the staff I work with have been encouraging and very helpful. I think a lot of where I am now can be traced back to the first people I had as supervisors when I got out of my training situation – very willing to share their reasoning and their logic with me, share their decision making, let me have input, and—

Dorothy Huyck: Were these people in Washington?

Janet Wolf: No, after I left Washington, up at Roosevelt and Vanderbilt.

Dorothy Huyck: Your supervisors there—

Janet Wolf: The superintendent and the chief—

Dorothy Huyck: —were encouraging.

Janet Wolf: Definitely. And they shared things. A lot of times people will say, “Well, this is what I'm going to do.” But when they were trying to decide what to do they would involve me in the discussions and have me participate and share in that kind of thing on an open discussion level, which was, to me, a great asset in seeing how they were reasoning out, how they were approaching things. Their willingness to let me do that made a very big difference in how quickly I could grow and assume responsibility. I think the world of them before that. I think that anybody who had the chance to work under either of those two people in a similar situation would be well advised to do it, because I think a lot of people are not that open, cannot give you that.

Dorothy Huyck: You're pointing up the importance of the supervisor in bringing along younger personnel.

Janet Wolf: Yes. Or older personnel, depending on—

- Dorothy Huyck: Well, newer personnel, maybe.
- Janet Wolf: Yes. Definitely.
- Dorothy Huyck: Have your supervisors been consistently encouraging?
- Janet Wolf: No, I wouldn't say that.
- Dorothy Huyck: In some instances, they have been less than encouraging.
- Janet Wolf: Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: How was that exhibited?
- Janet Wolf: Well, it was primarily the person that there was a personality conflict where I had to go in and prove that I could do the job before I would get it. I had a back problem, and for a while I had had a recurrence of it. I'd already had an operation, and the doctor told me I had to go on my back for two weeks and not move. This guy gave me this huge lecture on how this was going to ruin my Park Service career, how I couldn't do anything because I wouldn't be able to stand up to the pressure and all that silly stuff. Well, I thought, "Jeez, here I am, feeling miserable and in pain, and I'm under pain pills, and you have to tell me how this is going to ruin my whole Park Service career." (laughter) I had been at another park when I'd had the back operation, and the whole staff had been just super, super supportive of helping me out and bending over backwards to make sure that everything worked out O.K. I just really couldn't believe it – that he'd do that.
- Dorothy Huyck: When you returned from those two weeks of leave, which I assume you took for your back problem—
- Janet Wolf: Yes.
- Dorothy Huyck: You were able to assume your normal duties?
- Janet Wolf: I think I was taking an extra hour off at lunch a day to lay down and rest my back. I wore a brace for six or nine months, I guess, to help relieve the pain, but I pretty well functioned (unintelligible) I didn't take my work home and do it at night. They were getting the same amount of work out of me, whether I was at home or at work.
- Dorothy Huyck: For the second time, therefore, you were proving yourself to this supervisor. You were able to carry on the job, once you went back to it.
- Janet Wolf: Yes. I don't think he ever – He didn't like my questioning his decisions, and we had some very different opinions about some things, but as far as I've been able to tell, he was very supportive of me in the sense of saying to other people that I had good management potential. He told me point

blank that I would never get a promotion under him, although even the personnel people kind of said that they thought I was doing a higher-graded work, and I wasn't classified at the right grade. As a matter of fact, I understand that when they found out that I got an 11, that they all thought I'd gotten promoted down there, when it was the fact that I'd gotten promoted to my superintendency. He told me point blank that as far as he was concerned, I was doing an eleven work, but I'd never get a promotion under him.

Dorothy Huyck: Did he say why you would never get that promotion?

Janet Wolf: It was basically involved with this conflict that we had. He just wouldn't give it to me. He was going to get rid of me before (laughter) he'd give it to me, even though he admitted that I was fully competent to do that level of work, and that I was, in fact, doing it. I wasn't going to get it from him.

Dorothy Huyck: Let me ask you a slightly different question. Have you taken various training courses in the Park Service?

Janet Wolf: Quite a few.

Dorothy Huyck: Such as?

Janet Wolf: Well, I've had a number of the interpretative training courses, a number of the supervisory ones. I went to sensitivity training in Washington, D.C., and to grid, and one of those type of management courses having to do with labor relations, interviewing techniques – a wide variety. The first couple of years I ended up doing a lot of my own. I got – The Park Service wouldn't sponsor me, and I managed to get a fellowship anyhow to go for a six weeks training course. If I got the money to go and all, they'd give me admin. leave to go, but I couldn't get them to be my sponsor. It was kind of strange that I got accepted on a fellowship to go anyway, so I ended up being able to attend. That was, I think, a real good program. It was the Seminar for Historical Administrators put on by the Burk Association for State and Local History and the American Association—

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[START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

Dorothy Huyck: Therefore, you've actually attended some special society meetings.

Janet Wolf: Yes, particularly earlier in my career, I was active in the American Association of State and Local History, and went to a number of seminars sponsored by them and by the National Trust for this seminar in Williamsburg, which was a good, compositive group. I think that really expanded my perspective a great deal and I feel I benefited quite a bit from that.

- Dorothy Huyck: You wouldn't have gone there but for a fellowship of some sort.
- Janet Wolf: That's right.
- Dorothy Huyck: Who provided that?
- Janet Wolf: The organization that was sponsoring it.
- Dorothy Huyck: Would you say that your talents and your particular training are being well used by the Park Service now?
- Janet Wolf: (laughter) That's a loaded question. I'm basically an historian by training, but I think by inclination I'm a manager, so I think the combination of managing a historic area is a good one. The only hesitation I would have now is whether I should not be at an area with more problems that's more complex. You get to a point where you wonder if you need a place that's going to demand more stretching. I think when I first got here this park certainly did, but I know so much about it now, and I've got so many other programs going in different directions, that while I think I can still contribute a lot here, that I think that it probably is getting near the time when I should move on.
- Dorothy Huyck: What kinds of programs have you initiated since coming here?
- Janet Wolf: We've been doing more public involvement work, a much more active press campaign to keep the local community informed of what's happening, trying to come up with some programs that primarily will benefit the local community – improving our interpretative program that is working out some archeological research. They were ready to start building construction shortly after I got here. We managed to get some modifications in it, and we've been working on museum design since then, and I've managed to work with the co-operating association to get a lot of other projects in line with this done which the normal programming system would not have been done for quite a few years. We've gotten a number of things accomplished. We solved the question of the Martha Davis Cake Collection...
- Dorothy Huyck: Which is now where?
- Janet Wolf: That's at the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah. A lot of these types of issues we're getting resolved and worked out. We're experimenting with new types of interpretative devices, developmental projects. This summer we're going to be doing some children's theater work, which we've never done before. We've got a very active living history program. We're working on an above-ground archeology program, and just a lot of different kinds of programs for the people that are coming here.
- Dorothy Huyck: What are you doing in living history?

- Janet Wolf: Most of our programs in the summer are done in period clothing, some in first person, some in third, depending on the individual interpreter and what they're comfortable with. One is called The Defense of Frederica where you talk mostly about the military role. Last year George came up with the idea of involving the visitors by trying to teach them how to go through a drill – all the different calls. You go through a manual of arms exercise as opposed to firing the weapons, which we found the people really get a kick out of. They just laugh at each other and they don't know what to do. It's really kind of fun to watch them. They enjoy it. And then there's a guided tour of the town, and they do crafts, and they play card games, and they've built palmetto bowers that the people lived in when they first came here. We experiment with lime burnings. We initiated a Thanksgiving Day program. Our Thanksgiving is in the middle of July, and it's now an annual event when we have sunset services down by the fort where the colonial settlers all participate. The local minister does a service for us out of the Anglican Prayer Books. We've tried to keep the things that are unique to Frederica as the theme. When we dedicated our building, instead of singing The Star Spangled Banner we sang God Save The King, (laughter) and do little things like that to keep it aware – to build up an awareness in people's minds that this is British and to build on those things that are unique to the area.
- Dorothy Huyck: You obviously got good response from local people as well as visitors from elsewhere.
- Janet Wolf: I think so, yes. We get a fairly good turnout, considering that we're a small park and kind of out of the way. Our visitation last year was almost 320,000, which is, I think, very good for a park this size and this far from the Interstate and not very well known.
- Dorothy Huyck: Let's go back for a moment to being a woman in the Park Service. Do you think that being a woman has affected your opportunities for added responsibility for promotion?
- Janet Wolf: (pause) Probably. I don't know. It depends on the mood you get me in (laughter) and what's been happening lately as to what kind of an answer you will get. There are sometimes when I feel I have to reprove myself all over again any time I come up for another job. That sometimes even though I may have a good reputation where I've built up credentials, people still say, "Well, she's a woman." They're not saying it, they're just thinking it. It's a subconscious. At this same time, I have gotten opportunities to do things because I am a woman. I think I was in the right place at the right time, and I think I've benefited from the willingness or the need of the organization to get more women into management positions. At the same time, I think I've done it on my merits. If that's a

conflict, (laughter) I don't know, but I think where they might have passed over me earlier in spite of the fact that I was competitive with the men that I was competing against, that because of the pressures today, that they're not as apt to pass over me.

Dorothy Huyck: And if you look ahead five years down the road, what do you see as the opportunities for women at that stage?

Janet Wolf: Well, I still think that we've got a long road to hoe.

Dorothy Huyck: Why?

Janet Wolf: Well, first off, we're not getting the women in to the lower ranks, and if we don't have the women coming in from lower grade levels, there's no way – it's going to be very difficult for us to move up to the upper grade levels. Until we find a way or get a commitment to move people in – and this is any minority group that we might happen to have – we're not going to get them up. We're not going to get them into positions of responsibility, and I think that we have to be very careful that when we put people into those positions, they are well-qualified people. I think that the biggest thing that could hurt the women is to put somebody in a woman in – to a high position that just does not have it on the ball, and there are some of them around. I think that this is something that hurts us, that we'll have to be very careful of. But to build up a corps to draw from, a good solid group of people, we're getting a few more in, but we just don't have it now.

Dorothy Huyck: Are there some jobs that women should not tackle in the Park Service?

Janet Wolf: (Pause) I can't think of any, not off hand. One of the biggest things that I guess they always say, "Well, you don't know anything about maintenance, or how can you know about this and that." That's the biggest hang-up, I think, that you have is that women are not aware of the maintenance problems. But most of the things we deal with is common sense, and I think that this is an area that we can be as strong as the men in, but it's also the area that we get the most questioned. But I don't see any reason why we couldn't even have a woman as the chief of maintenance. I think we just don't have anybody in the Service right now that's qualified, mostly because a lot of our people come up through the labor ranks. If you're a real sharp woman with an engineering degree or something, you're probably not going to want to apply. There are a lot of other people competing to get you, why come into an organization that's going to be treating you with such skepticism.

Dorothy Huyck: You are married?

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: When? How long have you been married, or when were you married?

Janet Wolf: It's been three or four years. (laughter) I think it's been four years. I got married when I was at Ft. McHenry.

Dorothy Huyck: Does your husband reside here near the park?

Janet Wolf: Yes. We live in government quarters.

Dorothy Huyck: Is he employed by the Park Service?

Janet Wolf: No.

Dorothy Huyck: Is he employed locally?

Janet Wolf: He is employed by the Federal government. Since we've moved here, he's managed to get a permanent federal appointment to the Social Security Administration. So, he's a career professional civil servant.

Dorothy Huyck: Would you consider to continue your employment with the Park Service if you were to have children?

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: This is a question, of course, that is a standard question that you ran into earlier – you're just going to get married and have children (laughter) and resign.

Janet Wolf: Yes. (laughter)

Dorothy Huyck: Do you have responsibilities of a financial nature for anyone else outside of your own household – a parent, a sibling or your husband's family?

Janet Wolf: No.

Dorothy Huyck: If you had a daughter, let us say, would you encourage her to consider working for the National Park Service? Obviously, she wouldn't be old enough to work for the Park Service for another couple of decades, but let's assume the possibility. Would you think it an area that a young person should enter?

Janet Wolf: It's a hard question to answer because it depends on the personality of the individual, what they're willing to put up with. I have gone out of my way, or I've tried to go out of my way, to encourage some young women that I've met to look for ways to improve their career opportunities and stuff. I would encourage women, at the same time, making sure they realize the difficulties they may come up against.

Dorothy Huyck: What kind of encouragement have these young women – I take it they're currently in the Park Service, is that right?

Janet Wolf: Some are. Some quit.

Dorothy Huyck: Why have they quit?

Janet Wolf: Because of the pressures that – Well, there was one girl that was in as a ranger intake, and supposedly she was told, “Well, we won't assign you to any of these law enforcement duties because I don't believe that a woman should be doing them.” You get so much of that after a while, that after a while she just said, “To heck with it. I've had it,” and quit. I think that for her she did the right thing. I think it's a shame we don't have some of us stand up and say, “Just forget it, fellows, you're not going to get away with pushing us anymore.” But you come into the old question of how much are you sacrificing? Is it really going to do you any good? Or do you have to play along with the game and beat them at it.

Dorothy Huyck: How do you adjust to this choice that (laughter) – of playing the game and beating them at it? How does one work this out?

Janet Wolf: I think that it's a personal decision, and I think that you've got to look – when you get really mad and you're considering going a grievance or an EEO route, you have to consider what you're going to get out of it if you win, and how that's going to really affect your career, and if the issue you're fighting over is worth fighting on.

Dorothy Huyck: Have you had to make that choice in some occasion?

Janet Wolf: I was talked out of it, and I'm very sorry now I was talked out of it. I don't think in the similar situation that somebody would talk me out of it now.

Dorothy Huyck: You would instead go a grievance route?

Janet Wolf: On that particular case, I would have, yes.

Dorothy Huyck: In the interim have you simply gained more confidence, or has the system changed? Why do you think now that you should have acted differently?

Janet Wolf: Because that individual is still in the service, and he could do the same thing to somebody else. I think that when it comes to a very blatant – When somebody says point blank says, “I know you're doing another grade work, but you'll never get it under me,” that kind of thing works very specifically against you, and against you as a woman, which was part of it, because that was the same individual that said I'd have to come and prove that I could work with the men before I could have the job, that I'd really think that a person like that has to be made aware – and sometimes you can talk and you're never going to get through, and the only way to make them aware is to go the other route, and I would hate to see somebody else get stuck. and be in the position I was in. That's the only reason that I would have – would do it now. Most of the issues where I've

gotten mad enough to do it, I've sat down and thought about it and said, "No, it's not worth it," for, you know, the reputation you're going to gain from it, and for everything else which you're going to get out of going that route, may make you feel better for a little bit, but you're going to stick yourself in a corner some place and you're going to box yourself in. It's not worth it. Playing it at their game, one of the women said, "You know, they always try to make you a secretary. It's almost a joke now because the guys know that I just do not normally do it. But, "she said," if you think about it long enough, just remember that whoever is a secretary can, when they write up the minutes, then the minutes say what they wanted said. So really, it's a very influential position, and sometimes you can use people prejudiced against you or they're not against you, but their concept of you, against them and play the game right back at them, and they don't even realize what you've done, yet you've out-maneuvered them. I think that's something that only as I've gotten older and got more experience, I realize the potential for doing that. I can't say that I always like to do it, but I figure that if that's how they're going to if they're going to try to use it against me, then I might as well turn it around and reverse it if I can.

Dorothy Huyck: Is this an example of your own phrase, beating them at their own game?

Janet Wolf: Yes, I think so.

Dorothy Huyck: What other methods can one use to improve the overall atmosphere?

Janet Wolf: Of the Park Service? (Pause) I think one thing is that the women in the Park Service need to be more encouraging to the women coming up. This is something that those of us that have in some degree or other made it, need to be more supportive. I found it very interesting when a group of us got together, that some of the women felt, well, they made it on their own. They didn't see the need for that. I feel very differently. We need to be encouraging, we need to be a sounding board, need to let people vent their frustrations by talking to us, share their experiences, share ways we've dealt with things.

Dorothy Huyck: Is there anything like a network evolving among Park Service women?

Janet Wolf: I don't know. I think there may be, but it's very tenuous at the moment. I think there are a few of us now – and I think there are several groups of a few people – that are very close that can, well, if there are some things that are really bad, we'll get together, whether it's by phone or in person, and talk things and help each other. But I don't think it's spread too much. I think there are several clusters of these around, and it's more of a personal relationship thing. It may evolve into something more. It's hard to tell now because there's still – As I said, a number of these people feel like they've made it on their own and they don't see why they should have to.

Dorothy Huyck: I gather that your husband is a supportive kind of person. Is that—

Janet Wolf: Fortunately. Very definitely.

Dorothy Huyck: —of help in your particular location. Do you feel free to talk things over with him?

Janet Wolf: Oh yes. Most definitely. I think he's very tolerant. Sometimes I will get so mad – the way – not the Park Service particularly, but the way society treats career women that I get almost obnoxious about the fact that they're scrubbing my name that goes on that thing because everybody says it's going to have to be in his name. Darn it all! It's as much mine as it is his, and it's going to be in my name. I think sometimes some guys might take offense at that, but he understands it's my way of getting out my frustrations, because they will not, sometimes, take you for the fact that you're the woman, that you're as responsible, if not more responsible. When we were in Baltimore and we got married, I called up the electric company, and I said I'd like to change the name on the bill, I'd just gotten married. And they said, "Oh, well, we'll have to put that in your husband's name." And I said, "No, you're not putting it in my husband's name. It's government quarters, its required occupancy is part of my job, and it goes in my name." And they said, "Well, we're sorry, but we can't do that." And I said, "Well, in that case, you never heard from me. Goodbye," and I hung up. And they never changed it from my maiden name the whole time. Those kinds of things really get to you. But he understands when I do something like that, the frustration behind it, and is very good about it, where I think some people might feel threatened by that. He's really good about understanding what's bothering me and letting me talk it out, or letting me do something like that if it really bugs me.

Dorothy Huyck: He must also long ago learned because you're in the Park Service you have to be mobile.

Janet Wolf: You see, he worked as a co-op ed. student for the Park Service off and on for about two and a half years before we got married.

Dorothy Huyck: If you were to move from here, he would expect to go along and find another position. Is that correct?

Janet Wolf: Yes. We moved down here after we were married. We'd been married about eight months when we moved. We basically look at any move in terms of what is this going to do to my career; what's it going to do to his career. Is it something that's really worth it, and is it something that we both want? If it fills the needs, and we both feel that we we can be happy, we'll make the move. When we came down here, he wasn't sure. He gave up a permanent job in the city of Baltimore and moved with me. He came

down and looked the area over and said he thought – he'd be willing to take the chance. I in turn made a commitment to him that if it did not work out, I would at the end of a year, I would start looking for a move, and if I couldn't move within the Park Service, I would look for employment elsewhere, if he felt he was not comfortable. I thought if he made the commitment to give up a permanent job for me, the least I could do was make a reverse commitment to him. Fortunately, it worked out (laughter) and he went up and on since he's been here. He's been out of work for a year, but he's now got a permanent job in Social Security. It's a very good agency in terms of moving. We've had offers and it looks to us as if they are willing to work with us to try to relocate him along with me.

Dorothy Huyck: You have had offers of other positions in Social – Is that correct?

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: And Social Security, when asked about that, was interested in attempting to move him—

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: —in the light of your offers.

Janet Wolf: Yes. We actually went to them on one that we seriously considered. One was... It was a promotion – it was into a planning position, and we didn't feel that it met the criteria of keeping me in management, which is what I would like to stay in. We didn't think it would help my management career, and that it would expand it that much, that there are other central offices, regional type jobs, that you can get that keep you in touch with what's happening in management and increase your management talents. We didn't feel that particular job would do that much for me. We turned it down without ever asking his agency. I was offered a larger park, and I called him, and before the end of that day we knew that one area – one office was out, but they worked with us, and it didn't look like they were going to be able to work anything out. After we had decided, based on the merits of the job, we would not take it, they came through and offered him a temporary detail until they could get him a permanent job. We're pretty optimistic. It's kind of a challenge to run two Federal careers side by side. (laughter)

Dorothy Huyck: I've been asking you all the questions. Is there some comment that you would like to make in regard to your experiences as a woman in the National Park Service? I may not have asked anything about—

Janet Wolf: I can't think of anything off hand. It's been a challenge, and I don't know how much of it is just the fact that you are going into new fields. That's kind of exciting in a way. I'm not in it for that reason, but it's because I

believe in the Park Service and what it stands for. I hope, personally, that the Service becomes more aware of its responsibilities toward women and minority groups, because I think that some people – some of us are going to get fed up. It's just not worth putting up with the hassle. It's not big things, it's small things that add up. It's not worth it. We're going to lose – I think we already have lost some very good people because they just said, “You're playing a Mickey Mouse game. It's not worth it.”

Dorothy Huyck: Some of those were women?

Janet Wolf: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: You cited the once instance. What kinds of things caused other people to leave the Park Service – they choose specifically not—

Janet Wolf: Well, I don't know enough about the individuals to know whether it was a case where somebody was being black balled for some reason, had a bad reputation, or what. Some people have been stuck in areas where no attempt was made to take into account some of the problems that they would have. You get twenty, thirty turn-down letters, “Dear John” letters, or “Dear Jane” letters that say we considered your form, but you have not been selected. After a while you begin to wonder, and when you can't get any answers, I think then you start looking elsewhere to see if there's not a way out – something better. There are several women who have gone that route.

Dorothy Huyck: Have actually experienced turndowns in a number of parks and then finally given up – is that—

Janet Wolf: Yes. They've gone to other agencies because they could get better deals with the other agencies that were willing to let them move ahead. You don't know whether it was a valid thing, whether the people weren't good, whether for some reason they turned somebody off and was being blackballed unofficially. There's a great network (laughter) in the Park Service of reputations and rumors and one has to be very careful. I think some people get caught in that. That's not only women. Everybody can get caught in that on that one. I think there have been a couple of women that have left because of that. There are always comments, and you can get pretty fed up with it after a while about somebody sleeping their way to this or that. Those comments go around. I don't think that we appreciate them at all. People just get fed up after a while. You put up with it for a long time, and if you see you're getting enough back to be worth it, you'll put up with it, but people are becoming more militant. I'm not sure how much they're willing to put up with it, that there's not going to be a day when the Park Service is going to be faced with some people taking some pretty strong stands. I think they may have already (background noise) in

one or two instances. It's hard to predict what's coming up. I know the more self-confidence, I guess it is, that I get, the more I do, the more experience I have, the better my own estimation of my value is, and the less I'll put up with. There are some things that I would have done, and I couldn't give you a specific example now, but there are things I would have put up with a couple of years ago that there's no way I would put up with now.

Dorothy Huyck: When you do not put up with those things, are you looked upon as being aggressive?

Janet Wolf: I think by some people, yes. It depends on how you handle it. Some it comes out as just pure aggressiveness, and sometimes I think you can be more subtle with it and get around people again and still not put up with it. You begin using the system against them, using their own preconceptions.

Dorothy Huyck: So, in your experience you have found that you have put up gradually with less and less of the "Mickey Mouse."

Janet Wolf: I think – In some cases, I've put it into better perspective, so it doesn't bother me so much. I think that's a part of growing and maturing in what you're doing.

Dorothy Huyck: Can you give me an example of that?

Janet Wolf: (Pause) No. It's hard – When the situation happens, I recognize it, but to put up with it – Though somebody made the comment in a recent training session that one of the instructors was very embarrassed since there were a couple of women in the room, and he kept wanting to say "damn," and he would just hesitate. You could just see him just change his word at the last minute. One of the guys thought he saw a very annoyed expression cross my face, and that used to really, really bug me. It doesn't bother me very much anymore. I just kind of laugh at it, and I say to myself, you're being silly, and there's no point in my getting upset. I guess that may be an example of something that I've adapted to. It's really, I think, the small things that get to you. It's not the big ones, except when you get to feeling, "Jeez, do I have to prove it all over again?" Sometimes, whether it's a combination of the weather or your biorhythm or whatever (laughter) and events that happen in work, you get that feeling. I think everybody does.

Dorothy Huyck: That isn't necessarily peculiar to women.

Janet Wolf: No, I don't think so. Maybe the circumstances around us make us feel it a little bit more, but I think it happens to everybody at some point. In my case, I know, once or twice I've said, "Is it really worth it? What am I putting up with? Is it worth working this hard and not getting any recognition or reward for it?" There are sometimes when you work real

hard, and you know what you've done, you know the kind of recommendations you're getting. And then you see when something important comes up, then a guy who hasn't been doing those kind of things gets it, and you don't know why. That can be pretty upsetting. You wonder, what game aren't you playing? What is it that you're doing, or is it just because you're a woman? There've been some guys that have said they think that – why should a woman get an important job, one of the higher paying jobs, because after all, they've got to support a family and kids, and the government ought – They ought to be getting those jobs because they'll be making more money. That absolutely flabbergasts me. (laughter) What are you saying about somebody like that? There are those people who—

Dorothy Huyck: Do you say something?

Janet Wolf: I think I've just looked at them in shock. (laughter) We've talked about it but not with the individuals themselves. You hear that kind of comment, there's no question about it. It amazes me that in today's world that it still happens, but it does. (laughter) You get these shocking reminders every once in a while. I think the Park Service has a higher concentration just because of the macho male (unintelligible) ranger. There's something about that that makes it a little more difficult or tends to produce – or we tend to attract the kind of people that are going to have those feelings – not as strong as that. I think that's an exception. But you run into strange perceptions of where people should be going, based on their sex. I can't think of anything else in general about the Park Service.

Dorothy Huyck: Thank you.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[END OF INTERVIEW]