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



Geraldine Farrelly
September 19, 1978

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

- Dorothy Huyck: 00:13 The date is September 19th, 1978. I'm Dorothy Huyck. I will be interviewing Geraldine Farrelly, G-E-R-A-L-D-I-N-E F-A-R-E-L-L-Y, who is an employee relations specialist at the Southwest Regional Office in Santa Fe. One correction. Geraldine Farrelly's last name is spelled F-A-R-R-E-L-L-Y. Double R in there. Okay, can I ask you how you first became acquainted with the National Park Service?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 00:52 Well, I've lived in Santa Fe all my life. I've known about the National Park Service. In fact, several of my sisters worked here in the summertime going to college. Myself, I started with the USGS here in town in 1950. And then, 1952, I went out to the Grand Canyon, and I was so impressed with it I decided to put my application in with Park Service, which I did. And it wasn't until two years later that I was called.
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:30 That's when you received the call?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 01:30 Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Dorothy Huyck: 01:31 And what job did you actually come onboard with?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 01:34 Okay. I came in October of 1954. I was, well, the title of it as I remember it was accounts clerk or something like that. I did accounts and payroll for the region at that time. Which, it wasn't very large because we still had Southwest Monuments in Arizona. And many of the parks in the region were their own accounting offices, so they didn't want accounting work. And then—
- Dorothy Huyck: 02:06 What grade did you start?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 02:07 I started as a four. And in 1955 I was, I believe it was March of '55, I was promoted to payroll supervisor. And shortly after that, they started closing all the accounting offices in the region. As I remember it, Big Bend was one of the first ones they closed, and we took over all the accounting and payroll. And then, we gradually added Mesa Verde and Petrified Forest.

And we were still doing that in 1965 I believe, when we took over Lake Mead. I think Grand Canyon were about some of the last ones. So, we were doing all the payrolling and the relating accounting work. Excuse me, related to payroll. And in '65, we also went under that horrible freedom computer. I don't know whether you were familiar with it, but that was a nightmare, to say the least.

Dorothy Huyck: 03:29

Did it require a complete adaptation of all your usual procedures?

Geraldine Farrelly: 03:33

Yeah. Well, we had to learn the computer. And it wasn't a very good computer so that we were, in addition to trying to payroll everybody, we were also bringing in these accounting offices that had been closed, thereby adding more people to the payroll. So that way we're not only trying to payroll people on a computer, but manually too, and try and get them all paid on time. So, it was a terrible nightmare. Fortunately, they phased it out after several years. Let's see. In '68 I transferred into personnel. All my service has been right here in the regional office. I started as a personnel assistant. Then, I was promoted to employee relations specialist, which I am now.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:34

When was that?

Geraldine Farrelly: 04:37

'71 I believe.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:40

And, what grade are you now?

Geraldine Farrelly: 04:40

I'm a GS-11.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:46

Can I ask where and when you were born?

Geraldine Farrelly: 04:49

I was born in Springer, New Mexico, November the 12th, 1921.

Dorothy Huyck: 04:56

Were you an only child?

Geraldine Farrelly: 04:58

Oh, no. No, I come from a large family. There were nine children all together.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:02

Okay. Which one were you?

Geraldine Farrelly: 05:05

I'm about, let's see about fifth down the line.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:14 And did you grow up in Springer?

Geraldine Farrelly: 05:15 No. No. We moved from there when I was quite small. I lived in Santa Fe since I was four years old.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:21 You went to high school here?

Geraldine Farrelly: 05:23 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dorothy Huyck: 05:25 And did you have further work after high school? Education?

Geraldine Farrelly: 05:30 I took some secretarial courses, but that's all.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:35 Can I ask what your father's occupation has been?

Geraldine Farrelly: 05:40 My father was a banker, but due to reasons of health he had to move to New Mexico. And he did not continue it after coming to New Mexico. He was in the hardware business for a number of years, and also worked for the state.

Dorothy Huyck: 05:59 And, your mother was busy with the nine children?

Geraldine Farrelly: 06:03 Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:08 While you were in high school and taking your secretarial courses, who was it that might have encouraged you? Would it have been a parent, or teachers, or someone in the community, or maybe no one at all?

Geraldine Farrelly: 06:22 I can't remember the name of anybody that particularly encouraged me.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:28 No one encouraged you to go on to college, for instance?

Geraldine Farrelly: 06:31 No. I didn't want to go to college. In fact, when I graduated from high school, I went to work for the telephone company almost immediately. Worked for them for three years until I got married.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:46 Were you by any chance, a tomboy as you were growing up?

Geraldine Farrelly: 06:53 In a way, I'd say so.

Dorothy Huyck: 06:55 Did you play with boys as a child?

Geraldine Farrelly: 06:57 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:00 And as you got to be a teenager were you expected to be something more of a lady and less of a tomboy?

Geraldine Farrelly: 07:05 Mm-hmm (affirmative). I think that's probably true of everybody that grew up at the time I did.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:14 Did you rebel at that idea at all?

Geraldine Farrelly: 07:16 No.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:21 Had you been into any of the national parks during the growing up years? Prior to your coming here?

Geraldine Farrelly: 07:31 Only Bandelier because of it – Oh, I've been to Capulin also, which is over by Raton. But we didn't do a great deal of traveling when I was growing up. With the depression and everything, you pretty well stayed close to home.

Dorothy Huyck: 07:52 It was that first trip to the Grand Canyon?

Geraldine Farrelly: 07:55 Yeah. I was real impressed with it. And the people that worked for the park.

Dorothy Huyck: 08:03 You met some of the employees at that time?

Geraldine Farrelly: 08:05 Well, I knew one of the women out there, Alice Quigley. She had lived here in Santa Fe, and she was out there when we went out there. We visited with her, but she's the only one I knew.

Dorothy Huyck: 08:20 Now that you're in the field of employee relations, what all does that include as far as you're concerned?

Geraldine Farrelly: 08:27 Well, it includes a great deal. Retirements, life and all the benefits, life and health insurance, adverse actions. Labor relations, which Southwest region has no unions, so I'm not really into it. I've had a great deal of training in it, but I haven't had no real experience. Serving parks who have had contacts by unions, I've been involved with that.

But I don't know, people in the Southwest region just aren't interested in unions. And I don't think the unions are particularly interested in us because most of our areas are too small, employee-wise. Let's see, what else? I'm

involved in personnel management evaluations. This is where we go out to an area and evaluate the management of the personnel, and problems that employees may have. In fact, I just returned from leading a PME last week.

- Dorothy Huyck: 09:47 A PME?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 09:47 A personnel management evaluation.
- Dorothy Huyck: 09:50 —evaluation?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 09:54 That takes up a good deal of time.
- Dorothy Huyck: 09:57 When you lead a PME, what, in fact, are you doing?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 10:01 Well, you're the spokesman for the group. You make the assignments on what each person is to look into in the area. And then, of course, when you come back, you write a report on what you find in the area and make your recommendations on improvements or changes which may benefit the area. Let's see, what else do I do? Adverse actions are beginning to take a great deal of my time. Up to six, seven years ago, employees never complained about anything, but we're getting a number of grievances now, reprimands, suspensions. So, it's beginning to come into its own, and it takes up a great deal of my time.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:00 Without naming any names or even any parks, would you give me an example or two of the kinds of things you're referring to there?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 11:10 Oh, grievances can range anywhere from – I hate to mention them because—
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:23 Well—
- Geraldine Farrelly: 11:23 —they may—
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:24 —sure. Maybe we shouldn't—
- Geraldine Farrelly: 11:25 I'd rather if we didn't.
- Dorothy Huyck: 11:26 —talk. All right.
- Geraldine Farrelly: 11:27 Okay. But you'd be surprised at the wide variety of things that they cover that people grieve about, and that you can

reprimand for, or suspend, or recommend suspensions. And of course, all of this takes a great deal of time because you have to be very careful how you handle them procedurally so that if it goes to a hearing that you're on firm ground, and you don't get knocked down and have to rescind your grievance, I mean, your suspension or reprimand, or whatever it happens to be.

- Dorothy Huyck: 12:10 Do these include any discrimination grievances?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 12:13 No, I'm not involved in discrimination, that's EEO. I may get into it some way as a spin-off from something that happened, but not directly in the EEO discrimination complaints.
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:32 During the years that you have been with Park Service, have you found your supervisors to be encouraging or discouraging, or possibly some of both?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 12:43 I would say a little bit of both. I've had some definite discouragements because I was a woman. Back in the—
- Dorothy Huyck: 12:53 Who did that to you?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 12:53 —back in the '50s. Well, for instance, I had experience in accounting, and so forth, and yet I was passed over because they had a man that they wanted to put into a job that I felt I was just as well-qualified for as he was. But I know for a fact that the person responsible for it just didn't feel women could do the job. But I think that's changed a great deal now.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:30 That was in the '50s?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 13:30 Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:31 Have you had encouragement from some supervisors?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 13:36 Yes. One in particular who's now retired. In fact, he went to bat for me many times to get me where I am. So, I'd say it's half and half.
- Dorothy Huyck: 13:58 There are certainly some people who think the National Park Service is a rather male-oriented organization. Do you?

- Geraldine Farrelly: 14:07 I don't think it's that way anymore. It was when I first came in.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:11 What have you seen change?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 14:13 Well, the fact that women are being advanced. We have an associate deputy director upstairs now. We've got several women superintendents, which I don't think 10 years ago would have been possible.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:33 Have you seen a change within your particular area of Park Service?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 14:47 That, I can't say. I suppose it has in my case.
- Dorothy Huyck: 14:56 There certainly are a number of women in employment relations.
- Geraldine Farrelly: 15:00 Yeah.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:03 So, this must've—
- Geraldine Farrelly: 15:03 But, then there's almost as many men too. We had a conference in March, I believe it was, employee relations specialists, and let's say there was as many men there as there were women. I think, women probably can handle it better. That's my opinion, maybe not.
- Dorothy Huyck: 15:29 Do they have particular characteristics that would seem to be—
- Geraldine Farrelly: 15:34 Well, I think you have to be sensitive to people, and their needs, and their problems. And, when they come to you with a grievance, they want to feel that they can – They may come to me and talk to me first about what they should do. And you have to have a sympathetic ear and yet, you have to be able to tell them, "No, I don't think you have a chance," or whatever. And I don't know whether a man really has the patience to relate to people like that. Maybe they do, I don't know. I haven't seen any.
- But I believe I have a good rapport with the people that I deal with. And in fact, I've had people from other agencies here in town call me about what can they do about this or that, because they're afraid to go to their own supervisor. So, somehow the word's gotten around. So, I don't know. I

think that women are probably more sensitive to people than men are. And then, when you're handling a death of either an employee or somebody, you remember, well, not a member of the family but an employee, you have to deal sensitively with that also. So, all in all, I just think women are better at it.

- Dorothy Huyck: 17:12 Are there any jobs within the Park Service that you think women really ought not to tackle?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 17:18 No, I can't think of any.
- Dorothy Huyck: 17:22 Have you been given opportunities for additional coursework, or classes, or trainings?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 17:28 Oh yes, courses.
- Dorothy Huyck: 17:31 Where they conducted here, or in Albuquerque?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 17:34 Oh, I've been to Harpers Ferry. I've been to Albuquerque, Denver, Dallas, El Paso. Just about any place where a course – Phoenix.
- Dorothy Huyck: 17:49 And what kinds of courses have you taken?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 17:53 Most of them dealing with employee relations. The Troubled Employee Program, which deals with alcohol, drug abuse. I also—
- Dorothy Huyck: 18:03 How long has that program been in effect?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 18:09 It's been in effect, I don't know, four or five years. But they really haven't emphasized it until last two or three years, I guess.
- Dorothy Huyck: 18:26 And you think it was good training on that too?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 18:28 Yes. I went to a very good course in Phoenix several years ago. It was given by a civil service man, which was very good, I thought.
- Dorothy Huyck: 18:43 And is that program beginning to be effective?
- Geraldine Farrelly: 18:48 We have more supervisors aware of it and trying to help employees through it than we did before.

Dorothy Huyck: 19:08 We touched on this briefly before. Do you think that your opportunities for promotion and assuming greater responsibility have been in any way affected by the fact that you're a woman? I mean, we've spoken about that earlier.

Geraldine Farrelly: 19:26 Well, no. I don't think so. Not since I've been in personnel.

Dorothy Huyck: 19:35 Then let me ask, would you say that your specific training and your specific talents are well-used on the Park Service?

Geraldine Farrelly: 19:42 I think they are, yes.

Dorothy Huyck: 19:47 If you look down the road in say, five years, what do you see as the opportunities for women in the future?

Geraldine Farrelly: 19:56 Well, in this region, I think if you have the ability, we'll see many more women superintendents in more positions of authority than there are now.

Dorothy Huyck: 20:13 You speak of that in the case of this region?

Geraldine Farrelly: 20:16 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dorothy Huyck: 20:17 Is that due to influence of people higher up in the region?

Geraldine Farrelly: 20:22 Yeah, I believe so. Yeah.

Dorothy Huyck: 20:29 And that must make the prospects a little promising as far as women are concerned?

Geraldine Farrelly: 20:31 Right.

Dorothy Huyck: 20:33 If a young woman came to you, say somebody just out of school, and said she was considering a Park Service career, how would you counsel her?

Geraldine Farrelly: 20:44 Well, I think for women, there's a great opportunity in personnel work. I think it's one of the few fields that there are opportunities for advancement.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:00 You don't see similar opportunities in other areas?

Geraldine Farrelly: 21:11 Not if I'm just speaking of the regional office. No. Now, in an area getting into the park ranger series, I think there's opportunity for advancement there.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:26 Any other areas?

Geraldine Farrelly: 21:31 Offhand, I would say no.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:39 I presume you're married? Is that correct?

Geraldine Farrelly: 21:44 I am not now. No. I have been.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:47 Have been married? When were you married?

Geraldine Farrelly: 21:52 I was married in '43.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:52 And, were divorced?

Geraldine Farrelly: 21:55 Mm-hmm (affirmative), in '50.

Dorothy Huyck: 21:55 Have any children?

Geraldine Farrelly: 21:57 I have two children.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:00 How old are they?

Geraldine Farrelly: 22:01 32 and 31.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:01 Are they sons or daughters?

Geraldine Farrelly: 22:05 One of each. Daughter is the oldest.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:14 I've been asking you quite a lot of questions than you ask me. Is there anything that we haven't talked about with regard to being an employee at Park Service that you'd like to comment on?

Geraldine Farrelly: 22:30 No. I'm just about ready to retire, two more years.

Dorothy Huyck: 22:34 Oh, really?

Geraldine Farrelly: 22:36 I plan to if everything goes all right. If they don't change the retirement law on us. But no, I've enjoyed working for the Park Service. I don't think there's the close-knit family that there used to be when I came to the Park Service. I don't know, people just don't seem to be as close-knit as they were when I started. I don't know whether it's a different generation or what, but it's not quite the same as it was.

Of course, many of those people that I knew when I started, they've all retired. We've got a new crop of people coming up and it's just different, which is all right, I guess. Maybe it's for the better, I don't know. But that's about all I've got to say.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:37

Thank you.

Geraldine Farrelly: 23:38

Okay.

Dorothy Huyck: 23:41

This is Dorothy Huyck. Mrs. Farrelly's conversation was very cautious. And after I turned off the tape recorder, she had additional comments. I think it would not be betraying any of her confidences to note that she referred to having been offered positions elsewhere in the Park Service in this region, which she did not accept because she was not mobile. Being divorced, she had two young children to raise. And later in life, she had two parents to care for. However, she said there were also opportunities in the regional office, which she did not participate in, because she was a woman, or at least that was her perception of those opportunities, which did not come her way in this region.

[END OF TAPE]

[END OF INTERVIEW]