

*Jane Marguerite Lindsley: A Brief Biography*

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In 1921, Jane Marguerite Lindsley notably cracked open the door to the National Park Service's (NPS) acceptance of women in the workforce when she was one of three women to be appointed as a part-time seasonal park ranger by Yellowstone Park Superintendent Horace Albright. In doing so, Albright notably "diverged from the norm of only hiring men and hired eight to 10 women rangers, including Lindsley, during his tenure." ("Explore the trail," n.d.) Four years later, Lindsley proved her mettle further by becoming the NPS's first permanent, full-time female ranger.

#### **A Foot in the Door**

Lindsley was literally raised in Yellowstone, as her father served as interim superintendent there for a time when she was a child. She worked seasonally in the park as a teenager, educating visitors about the geology and wildlife, and helped run an information center and small museum in Mammoth. Eventually she earned a degree in bacteriology at the University of Pennsylvania, ("Marguerite Lindsley," n.d.) but it was primarily those early years that made her, "to visitors, a true native of Yellowstone, someone who lived and breathed the park." (Galper, 2016)

As much as visitors liked her, Lindsley did not have such an easy time within the NPS. Officials in the Department of Interior did not believe women were fit enough to do the physically demanding tasks required of a park ranger. Indeed,

women rangers were generally only hired in roles that were seen as 'interpretive' or secretarial. In order for women to be given equal tasks to their male counterparts, it took

an Act of Congress, a ruling by the Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and much campaigning by the few women and some of the men in the Park Service. (Pocock, 2015)

Department of the Interior bigwig opinions aside, others nonetheless lauded Lindsley for her work. A 1926 article in “Sunset Magazine” spawned interest from women around the country to apply for jobs in the NPS, and today a full third of its staff are female. (“Marguerite Lindsley,” n.d.)

Lindsley was even forced to design her own uniform as there was none for women at the time. The olive-green outfit she designed, with a bright silver badge, “*denot[ed] that she [was] a member of the Department of Interior, National Park service ... and indistinguishable from the other 34 rangers.*” (Galper, 2016) Female rangers would continue to copy and adapt her design until 1978, the first year that women were allowed to wear the official NPS badge and uniform. (Pocock, 2015)

### **Scaling Back Her Role**

Lindsley wed a fellow ranger in 1928, but because women were not allowed to work full-time if they were married, she was forced to shift to seasonal employment. The couple lived in the park, however, and she regularly accompanied her husband on ski patrols and back country trips for the next 25 years. She died in 1952 at the age of 51 due to health complications from a previous accident. (“Explore the trail,” n.d.)

From the very beginning, Lindsley not only pushed back against the sexist culture of her time, but she also proved naysayers wrong and served as an example for generations of women who loved the parks. Though it took years for more women to be hired in full-time ranger positions, Lindsley broke the glass ceiling. In one eulogy, she was referred as “the breath of

Yellowstone,” but in her own words, Lindsley wrote: “I love the work of the rangers, and if I were a boy, I would make the park service my life’s work. It was born in me, I know it.” (“Marguerite Lindsley,” n.d.)

### References

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