

INTERVIEW WITH DELORES BELLO
BY JERRY FRENCH DECEMBER 6, 2001

MR. FRENCH: Good morning, my name is Jerry French. I am the interviewer of a long-time Service employee Delores Bello who will be retiring in eleven days is it?

MRS. BELLO: January 3rd.

MR. FRENCH: So we are doing this a little bit prior to retirement. Delores has worked in Contracting and General Services in the Regional office for many years. Delores if you will just tell us about where you grew up and a little bit about your education, what your work experience was before you came to the Service. Then tell us what it was like working for the Service.

MRS. BELLO: I started my career with the National Park Service in Santa Fe in 1964. I worked as a Secretary for the Lands and Water Rights Department. Then I was moved upstairs to one of the Deputy's offices. I worked for them for about three years. Then I got married and I came and moved to Albuquerque. I worked for the Air Force Base for about five months. I didn't like military type work, so I looked for another natural resources agency and I found the Forest Service. I went to work for them, and worked there for seventeen years in various areas. I worked in the Division of Public Affairs for a while, that was very interesting. I got to work a lot of the Regional Forester and the Deputy Regional Forester and a lot of the issues that were current or were brought to the forefront at that time. Some of these were pesticide spraying in Arizona. That was really opposed. We had demonstrations in front of the building sometimes. We were told not to go out until things were O.K. It was interesting. From Public Affairs I went to...where did I go? Oh yes, I worked with Fire for a few years, and that was really interesting. I was their Chief Secretary, but I did get to pinch in as Dispatcher during the height of the fire seasons. We had two huge fire seasons; one in 1973 and one in 1974. We had to big fires on the Santa Fe National Forest that attracted a lot of national attention. That was very exciting. I didn't have a child at that time it was just my husband and I. He was a teacher and during the summers he got to work for the Forest Service. He was a fire patrolman on the Sebola [sic] National Forest. So during the summers we hardly got to see each other because we were both putting in twelve-hour days, whatever it required. It was a very exciting time. Then I did have a child and I quit for seven years. I came back part-time for the Division of Contracting with the Forest Service. I worked four hours a day. They did give me a permanent part-time status. This was really exciting because it contributed to my retirement. I worked maybe four years for four hours a day with the Division of Contracting. Then I transferred to the Sebola National Forest for two reasons. Mainly it was because my son was getting older, he was going to start preschool. There was a school right across from Sebola, so I thought it would be real convenient. So I moved there. I worked there full time for about five years, still in the Division of Contracting. After that, I came back to the Regional office

with the Forest Service. I worked in Contracting and I got a lucky break. I was made the Chief Procurement Clerk and from there I was given the opportunity to move into the Contracting Officer field. I had a trainee job, and I worked that for about two years. When the job with Fish and Wildlife was advertised I put in for. It was an entry job, I think it was a 7-9, I happened to be lucky enough to get it. I have been with Fish and Wildlife since 1991. I have moved from a 7 to a 12, and I am very proud of that since I don't have a college education. I have worked my way up just by doing hard work and being very diligent. I like people. I like to give it my all. I like to serve people so working in Contracting has given me that opportunity. Plus, I also get to visit Refuges and see what life is like on the Refuge. It's totally different from being in the Regional office. So I do sympathize with people on the Refuge and I like to help them as much as I can when it comes to getting their projects completed. I have really enjoyed my work with the Federal government, with all of the agencies except the military. It wasn't my cup of tea. But I do like the Natural Resources agencies. It's just what I like. I like nature. I like getting out in the field and seeing what the people are doing and how they are preserving it for future generations. I kind of instilled that in my son a lot. He was going to go into Fish and Wildlife but then he saw that the money wasn't there. And being a young guy in the 1990's or 2000's or whatever, he was after the money, so he changes careers. But he is still interested in it. He is a conservationist I guess you'd call him. He really likes to go in for recycling and things like that. And I believe I had that influence on him. My husband was always in Education. He too likes nature. We do camp. He and our son go fishing. I like camping. I like going with them to the mountains. I don't fish, but I sure enjoy the outdoors and hiking in the mountains, and biking and stuff like that. That's about it.

MR. FRENCH: Delores, would you be willing to say what you thought was probably your most difficult assignment with the Fish and Wildlife Service?

MRS. BELLO: I think my most difficult assignment was when I came over from the Forest Service. They were highly organized. When I came to Fish and Wildlife, I found it less than organized. It was hard for me to switch my thinking in the way Fish and Wildlife approached things. When I did come to Contracting, things were in turmoil. The Region had been threatened by the Washington office for all of the warrants to be taken away. So we got a new Chief in Contracting. We formed a team and we said that we were going to get it on track here, and that we were going to get things done correctly as far as regulations went. But we still wanted to serve our customers. It was a task that was difficult, but I think we accomplished it. And I believe I had a lot to do with that because I was kind of the middle person, between the Chief: who poor thing, she had a hard task. She had to be a taskmaster. I was kind of in between because I could work with Engineering, and I didn't have to carry the tasks out the way that she did. But I still could help her in getting some of those things across to the end users. That was the most difficult. We did turn it around, and we were allowed to keep out warrants. I think our

reputation now is different in that, I think we have a reputation now that we like to serve and work with our customers but still do it legally correct.

MR. FRENCH: On that same line, what would you think was your most enjoyable assignment?

MRS. BELLO: Working with the Refuge people. I didn't get to work much with the Regional office people, but I sure got to work with the Refuge people; the field people. I liked seeing what they were into and how I could help them. That was the most enjoyable.

MR. FRENCH: Just to throw some reference in here; and I can't remember the gentleman's name, was it Jim? Who was the Contracting Officer when you started?

MRS. BELLO: Actually, when I started, there was no one.

MR. FRENCH: Was it before Emma Bickley started?

MRS. BELLO: I started a month before Emma.

MR. FRENCH: O. K. So there was another gentleman in, and I know that in the field we went through quite a bit of turmoil because Emma was a very organized individual and she scared us. Maybe you were part of the scare tactic, I don't know. We did go through quite a transition as that time. And as soon as she trained all of us to tow the line, it was much better and faster and I appreciate that. On that same note, sitting in on this interview is B. J. Golec. Beverly is the proper name. Before the interview started, we were talking. We had both worked for the Forest Service. And we talked about how organized they are and the difference between moving from the Forest Service to the Fish and Wildlife Service. And how everything was in manuals and if you drove a nail in Florida, it's the same way you drove in Montana. When you come to the Fish and Wildlife Service, we're not quite that tight with our regulations.

MRS. BELLO: Right. That's true.

MR. FRENCH: Well, Beverly; I'm sorry, Delores, before we end this interview; what are your post-retirement plans?

MRS. BELLO: I don't have any at this time. I'm just going to de-stress. Because contracting is stressful, even though I enjoy it. I am going to de-stress for about a year. I'm going to get my life organized at home; get things cleaned out, get rid of stuff that we don't need. After that I would like to; we do have two elderly mothers that we are taking care of. So they take some time. I'd like to be able to do more things with them. Also, in about a year or so, I'd like to start doing volunteer work for the Ronald MacDonald

House. I have a friend who is the head there and I've talked to her about it. She says that as soon as I am ready, I should look her up and she will put me to work. That's what I'd like to get into. Also, I love to sew. I have a lot of small pieces of fabric. And one of the things I would love to do is to make little kids clothes, and just give them away. So that little kids that are needy can have something new to wear.

MR. FRENCH: By listening to your interview, obviously you've been doing contracting work, and this type of work for a long time. Do you want to do any of that post retirement?

MRS. BELLO: No I don't.

MR. FRENCH: So if you work with the Ronald MacDonald House, you don't want to do budgets or contracting or things like that?

MRS. BELLO: No, I just want to work with something else.

MR. FRENCH: Delores, before we close this, I just want to ask if there is anything else you'd care to add?

MRS. BELLO: No, other than when I first came, I was unhappy because it was so different. But as I got used to the people and got to know them I figured that they were just people that I could help. And I think I helped them. I think I have gotten things in order. I did bring a lot of the stuff from the Forest Service to organize contract files, to get things in line, to get systems in place, and I really think that that has helped the Service. And I know that Ray, my present boss is grateful about that. I just think it was a great opportunity for me to give what I can, and I think I have.

MR. FRENCH: As one of those who was on the receiving end, we certainly appreciate your efforts. Because there was a lot of chaos, and if you started at that time, I know how tough it was.

MRS. BELLO: It was.

MR. FRENCH: The field was fighting the Regional office, and back and forth. But I appreciate the fact that you suffered through it and made us tow the line. Because it is now better than it has been, ever.

MRS. BELLO: I think it is, I have that feeling. And I know that Engineering and Contracting didn't really get along, but now, we're a team. And people just can't put a wedge in between us anymore. We worked together as a team, and it's wonderful. I think it really is. I think it's for the betterment of things out there in the Service. When things are built now, they are built to code and I think that's great. It's the safety factor, and

also just to be within code. I mean, we're a Resource Division that wants to preserve. And doing things right, environmentally also, as far as building goes, we should be setting the example, and I think we are.

MR. FRENCH: O.K. Delores, I thank you very much.

MRS. BELLO: Your welcome.