



Not Your Ordinary Job – Episode Five Transcript

- Jasmine:** Hello, everyone, welcome to the Bureau of Land Management Eastern States podcast, Not Your Ordinary Job. I'm your co-host, Jasmine.
- Ashley:** Hello. I'm Ashley.
- Jasmine:** Each week, we will highlight a Jackson Hotshot team member by allowing them to speak about their experience working in the career of fire. We are very excited for you to listen to their stories. We also encourage you to head over to NIFC.gov for the latest fire news every weekday.
- Ashley:** We would like to welcome Hilary on the show. How are you?
- Hilary:** I'm well, how are you doing today?
- Jasmine:** We're doing awesome. We are happy to be able to interview you. So, our first question would be what made you want to get into the career of fire?
- Hilary:** The opportunity, I think of participating in the ongoing history of fire and having a means of contributing to the health and longevity of the public lands as someone who hunts and I do a lot of hiking and backcountry camping. It just seems like a really neat way to give back. And then also the mental and physical challenge of it. I've kind of always been fascinated with the history of the public lands and the people that dedicated their lives to it, essentially and it just seems like a pretty neat cause to be a part of.
- Jasmine:** That's great. So, what do you feel are the biggest challenges that are faced when working in the career fire?
- Hilary:** There's always like the physical challenge and the inherent risk, but honestly, I think just being away from my family and my home would probably be that the foundation of the challenges. I live in Montana, so coming to Jackson and I'm going to be gone for six months, which is fine. But my significant other is in fire so we kind of both understand and that makes it a little easier just kind of knowing that we're kind of going through the same thing. So, but definitely being away from everyone.
- Ashley:** While being away from family is one of the top reasons that it can be challenging, what would you say is your favorite part? Why do you go six months away from your family? What makes it worth it?
- Hilary:** Being part of something that's much bigger than myself, I think is a huge motive. Your world gets a lot bigger when you experience the forces of this field and I think it just broadens your perspective on life. I think manual labor is incredibly important to experience and doing it for six months, you walk away kind of as a different person. And that transformation that progresses least over the last two years has been really valuable to me personally.

Jasmine: That's great. So, throughout these two years are there any goals that you have accomplished?

Hilary: It is really important to me to show that there doesn't have to be a gap between what men and women can do in fire. So, I put some pretty extensive work into my physical abilities. And that I think increases... things like that increases the opportunities that women have within fire, if we can start off on the right foot and be able to contribute as much as male counterparts. I think that's, that's really, a really positive thing. So just meeting those physical standards and not being an exception, I think has been a really great accomplishment and I continue to set more physical goals as I progress within my career.

Ashley: Could you mention any success stories while being not only a woman, but a team member of this great crew? Any success stories that you've recalled in this year.

Hilary: One of my biggest successes was started last year, I was on an engine, and I kind of knew I wanted to be on a Hotshot crew. So I wanted to detail with anyone and finally the opportunity to detail with Jackson was kind of in the middle of the summer and that was my opportunity to show that I was capable and I got an invitation to apply this past fall. And I think that was a big accomplishment for myself personally. Just having a goal of being on a 'Shot crew and working throughout the entire summer, last year, just developing physical abilities and just learning all that I could from being on the engines and detailing. So, I think, I think that was a really big accomplishment for me was being successful on the detail and then being able to be asked to join the crew this year.

Jasmine: What do you feel are the biggest misconceptions?

Hilary: I think the dimension of work that encompasses fire is kind of a big misconception. It's not necessarily just knocking down flames on either side of that. And then the days in between, you know, staging spiking out, there's a lot more than just putting out fire. And I think, you know, it is really important for people coming into the position to know that they're going to be some long days where you don't necessarily see any firefighting but that's still, that's still part of the job. And it's not better or worse, it's just you know, another thing that, that's part of it.

Jasmine: That's a lot of work!

Hilary: It is! It is a lot of work.

Ashley: What does it take to become a great team member?

Hilary: I think putting in effort to meet expectation is one of the biggest things. And understanding that, you know preparation doesn't start when the season starts. Preparation starts when the season ends physically, and mentally there's like a balance between, you know, the work that you do in the offseason. And then you know also, spending time with your family at home. It's... I kind of feel like you're still on the clock when you end because you're building your body again. And yeah, I think that, that shouldn't be overlooked, the amount of effort that you know, you put in to prepare. Staying humble, I think is a really big part of it. There's really no room for ego in this job. And I think that's, that's one of the cool things about Jackson is everyone is you know, maybe in it for different reasons or think the same reasons, but everyone just has a really great perspective and knows that we all have the same objectives.

Jasmine: We would like to thank you, Hilary for allowing us to interview you and we definitely appreciate all your hard work that you're doing to protect our communities.

Ashley: Listen to our podcast every Friday to learn more about our Jackson Hotshots.