

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Kathleen Sullivan

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft - ERA Oral History project

Interview # ISE-A-L-2011-059

Kathleen Sullivan, who immigrated to the U.S. in 1951 and eventually became one of Phyllis Schlafly's chief lieutenants in the ERA struggles of the 1970s and '80s, was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft - ERA* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: Session 1: Dec 14, 2011; Session 2: Jan 10, 2012; Session 3: Jan 26, 2012;
Session 4: Feb 14, 2012; Session 5: Mar 2, 2012; Session 6: Mar 6, 2012;
Session 7: Mar 21, 2012; Session 8: Apr 2, 2012

Location: Telephonic interview, with Mrs. Sullivan in Naples, Florida & Mark DePue in his office at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Interview being
processed

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt Total Pages: 179 Total Time: 1:28 + 1:59 + 1:22 + 1:29 +
1:38 + 1:51 + 1:22 + 1:42 / (1)1.47 + (2)1.65 + (3)1.37 + (4)1.48 + (5)1.63 + (6)1.85 +
(7)1.37 + (8)1.7 = 12.52 hrs

Session 1: Growing up on island of Trinidad, coming to America & marriage

Session 2: Sullivan's views of American & Illinois politics in mid to late 1960s

Session 3: 1968 and the emerging battles of abortion and ERA

Session 4: Opening stages of the ERA fight in Illinois through 1972

Session 5: ERA fight in Illinois from 1973 through 1977

Session 6: ERA fight in Illinois from 1978 through its final defeat in 1982

Session 7: Post ERA and Sullivan's 1990 and 1992 Congressional campaigns

Session 8: Project Reality and social issues in the 1990s and 2000s

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on July 12, 2012.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Kathleen Sullivan, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISE-A-L-2011-059

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Kathleen (O'Connor) Sullivan was born on January 22nd, 1934 in Trinidad, West Indies, and grew up there until she came to Scarsdale, New York in 1950 to work as an au pair for her aunt and uncle. She met Jerry Sullivan in 1951, and the two were married in 1953. From that time on, she viewed herself as a career homemaker, raising six children in a very successful marriage. Kathleen was also always very involved in church and community activities, and was intrigued early on by American politics. She was an early supporter of Phyllis Schlafly, a vocal conservative who in the early 1960s spoke passionately about the nuclear arms race. Like Schlafly, Sullivan was a strong supporter of Senator Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign.

In the 1970s, Sullivan became Mrs. Schlafly's chief lieutenant in the long and contentious fight in Illinois over the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment. She discussed this fight in considerable detail, as well as the cultural and political environment in Chicago during that era. She discussed the early activism of the Students for a Democratic Society, and of conflicts within the Catholic Church in the greater Chicago region. She was a staunch opponent to the Roe v Wade Supreme Court decision in 1973, and a vocal opponent to the American feminist movement and the National Organization for Women. She was the Illinois Chairman in the Stop ERA movement until its ultimate defeat in 1982.

In 1990, and again in 1992, Mrs. Sullivan ran for Congress in Illinois's 10th Congressional District, running on the issues of tax relief, health and family. She ran a strong campaign, but was defeated both times in the Republican primary by liberal Republican incumbent John Porter. Throughout the 1980s through 2009 she was the driving force behind Project Reality, which promoted Abstinence Education in Illinois's schools and nationwide until the Governor Rod Blagojevich administration defunded the project in November, 2007.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Trinidad, West Indies; Phyllis Schlafly; Equal Rights Amendment fight in Illinois; Stop ERA; Senator Barry Goldwater & 1964 presidential campaign; Project Reality and abstinence education in Illinois; Senator Jeremiah Denton; Students for a Democratic Society; Sullivan's 1990 and 1992; Congressman John Porter; Governor Jim Thompson; Speaker of the IL House George Ryan; 2003 Miss America Erika Harold; Governor Rod Blagojevich

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The

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