

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Hedy Ratner

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

Interview # ISE-A-L-2014-016

Hedy Ratner, a Chicago-based feminist who has been active in the women's issues since the 1970s, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's (*name of project*) Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Jun 10, 2014 Location: Ratner's business office in Chicago, Illinois

Date: Jul 8, 2014 Location: Ratner's business office in Chicago, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio/Digital video

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

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Interview being
processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:02 + 2:13 / 2.03 + 2.22 = 4.25 hrs

Session 1: Early life, education, involvement in Civil Rights & anti-war movements

Session 2: 1970s Women's movement, ERA fight in IL and Women's Business
Development Center

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on September 25, 2014.

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

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Abstract

Hedy Ratner, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISE-A-L-2014-016

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Hedy Ratner was born on August 29, 1941 in Chicago, Illinois, the daughter of Jewish immigrants. She attended college in a variety of different institutions, eventually earning a Masters of Education Administration from DePaul University in 1974, simultaneously earning a Masters in Library Science from the University of Chicago. Throughout the 1970s she worked as an assistant superintendent at the Cook County Schools.

Ratner became active in the Civil Rights movement in the early 1960s, and by 1968 was very involved in the anti-war movement. In the early 1970s she shifted her efforts to the women's movement, identifying herself as a feminist. Through her leadership at the YWCA, she started, led or joined a variety of women's organizations, including the Illinois Women's Political Caucus, Women in Film, which she founded and led, and was also active in the Chicago chapter of the National Organization for Women. It was through these organizations that Ratner became involved in the decade long fight in Illinois to adopt the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The measure, which needed sixty percent of the vote in the Illinois legislature, went down to defeat every year from 1972 to 1982. Those opposed to ERA were led by Alton resident Phyllis Schlafly. Ratner was deeply disappointed when Illinois failed to ratify the ERA Amendment, but by 1985 had turned her considerable energies to founding the Women's Business Development Center, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to assist women and minorities to begin and develop successful businesses.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) fight in Illinois; feminist movement during the 1970s; Chicago YWCA during the 1970s; Illinois Women's Political Caucus; Mort Kaplan; National Organization for Women; Convention to Elimination all Forms of Discrimination Against Women; Phyllis Schlafly; Gov. Jim Thompson; Gov. George Ryan; Gov. James Edgar; 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago; Office of Superintendent, Cook County Public Schools

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 Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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