

Interview with Phyllis Schlafly

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Interview # 1: January 5, 2011

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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Introduction Interviewer: Mark DePue, Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Interview location: Eagle Forum office in Clayton, Missouri.

DePue: Today is Wednesday, January 5, 2011. This is my first interview for 2011, and I am thrilled that I get to start with interviewing Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly. Good afternoon.

Schlafly: Good afternoon Dr. DePue.

DePue: I’ve been looking forward to this one for a long time. I think you and I are going to have several sessions before we’re done with this. I am fine with that because you have an important story to tell, one that’s pivotal in the political history of the last half of the twentieth century for the United States.

Schlafly: I have had a very interesting life.

DePue: But we always start, and especially in a case like yours, I’d like to spend some time on your background—quite a bit of time—because I have the opinion that where we came from and our families and our early lives, have a lot to do with shaping the rest of it. So let’s start with when and where you were born.

Schlafly: I was born in Barnes Hospital, in St. Louis, Missouri. I don't remember that event, but my mother would say she was the first generation of women who were having their babies in hospitals.

DePue: And what was the birth day?

Schlafly: August 15, 1924.

DePue: Okay, so a few years ago. Tell me a little bit about your parents and where they came from.

Schlafly: Well, they both were in St. Louis. I tell the college women when I talk to them, women going to college just didn't start recently. My mother got her college degree, and a graduate degree in 1920, from a great university, Washington University in St. Louis. Then she was a full-time homemaker. When the depression hit, she needed to take a job to support the family, and she ended up spending twenty-five years as the librarian of the St. Louis Art Museum.

DePue: What was her maiden name?

Schlafly: Odile Dodge.

DePue: Did she go by Odile?

Schlafly: She did. She was called Odile and she had a nickname, "Dadie."

DePue: D-a-d-i-e?

Schlafly: Right.

DePue: Where did the nickname come from, do you know?

Schlafly: I have no idea.

DePue: What did you call your mother?

Schlafly: I called her mother.

DePue: Not mom?

Schlafly: That's right.

DePue: And your father?

Schlafly: My father was a sales engineer. He lost his job during the depression and had a hard time finding jobs here and there. He was a wonderful father and I had a wonderful mother.

DePue: Where did your father work before he lost his job?

Schlafly: Westinghouse.

DePue: What was he doing for Westinghouse?

Schlafly: He was a sales engineer. He sold all of its big equipment.

DePue: How old was he when he lost that job?

Schlafly: I don't know.

DePue: I understand though, he was quite a bit older than your mother, that he was a little bit older at the time?

Schlafly: Yes, he was at least fifteen years older than mother.

DePue: I've been reading a couple of the biographies on you. From what I read, he was 51 years old at the time he lost the job.

Schlafly: That would be about right, yes.

DePue: Was that tough on the family?

Schlafly: Oh, of course it was. The depression was tough on everybody. We didn't get any federal handouts, welfare, food stamps, any of those things. In fact, we would have considered it an embarrassment to be on the take from the government. We didn't really think of ourselves as poor. We just made it, and somehow we survived.

DePue: When you say we, both of your parents would have been upset by taking things from the government?

Schlafly: Yes, I think they would have been. It just wasn't in the scheme of things that anybody talked about.

DePue: What are some of your earliest memories then, growing up?

Schlafly: We initially lived in a St. Louis suburb, just outside of the city, at 6333 North Rosebury. I started school at the local public school, the DeMun public school, where I went to kindergarten, first and second grade. We lived on the third floor of an apartment. Then, when the depression hit, we could no longer afford the apartment, and we took the train and went out to bunk with an uncle of my mother, who had a house in Los Angeles. We were out there maybe six or eight months, and then came back and thereafter lived with my mother's parents, first of all at 6105 Pershing Avenue in St. Louis, when she was starting to get one job after another. She started out selling yard goods at the

Famous-Barr department store, which was a big branch of the May Company.¹

Then we moved to Normandy, a suburb, and had a house at 7729 Augusta Avenue, where we lived with my grandparents. My mother's sister and her husband lived with us for a time too. Meanwhile, I had a younger sister, about five years younger than I was.

DePue: And her name?

Schlafly: Her name is Odile, like my mother.

DePue: Was your father able to find work after moving around a couple places?

Schlafly: Little odd jobs here and there. I remember when he installed the air conditioning in the Normandy movie theater; that was very exciting. I think we could go to the movies on Tuesday night for ten cents, and get free dishes, too. (laughs)

Before we moved to Normandy, I went, in the fourth grade, to the Hamilton School, public school, and that was where I was introduced to writing. We had a teacher who would have us bring in a little paragraph of an essay every morning. I think that was good training for the fourth grade.

DePue: Do you remember her name?

Schlafly: No.

DePue: That's not unusual. Trying to keep track of your grade school teachers is awfully tough. I want you to tell me a little bit more or paint us a picture of your parents; who they were, what their personalities and character traits were.

Schlafly: My parents were wonderful. They were loving and faithful. They were very hard workers. I remember years ago, one of my sons came home from college and I said, "Why don't you go out and have some social life with some of your old high school classmates?" "Oh, he said, I don't want to. They just want to go out and drink." I said, "How come you don't want to go out and drink?" "Well," he said, "Mother, I've thought about that, and I noticed that at the end of the day, my parents just kept right on working through the evening. They didn't stop for drink or refreshment, they just kept right on working, and I thought that's what I was supposed to do."

So I guess I learned that from my mother and father. They both were hard workers and the jobs they had were long hours, but in their spare time in the evening, my father would sit at the desk in the living room. He invented a

¹ A few years prior to this interview Famous-Barr was bought by Macy's and the name was changed.

rotary gasoline engine, which he worked on for about twenty years and finally got a patent on, but unfortunately never sold it. But it was quite a thing. You can still read it if you go onto the U.S. Patent Office website.

My mother spent her spare time writing a book on the social history of St. Louis; it's a great manuscript. She never completed it or got it published. That's one of the things I still want to do: get that book published, because it's not only a part of St. Louis life that has not been well written about, but she has collected a remarkable group of pictures to go with it.

DePue: Do you know enough of the family history to know when the Stewarts came, where they came from originally?

Schlafly: Well, the Stewarts came from Scotland. My father's father came from Scotland as a boy, but the other four grandparents had quite a lineage. I have seven ancestors who fought in the Revolutionary War: two in New York, one in Maryland, one in Pennsylvania, and three of them in St. Louis.

DePue: This is an impolite question, but did they all serve on the revolutionary side or were some of them Tories?

Schlafly: Oh no, they were certainly not Tories. They were all on the right side.

DePue: How about religion growing up? Was that an important aspect for the family?

Schlafly: Yes. All four grandparents were Catholics.

DePue: Both of them came from Catholic background?

Schlafly: Yes they did.

DePue: I didn't ask you the Dodge lineage. Do you know where that originated in Europe?

Schlafly: Well, my grandmother, my mother's mother, was the French line; they came originally from Sainte Genevieve. They were the French immigrants who came down through Canada. They never went through Ellis Island. They came down through Canada and three of them served in the Battle of St. Louis during the American Revolution.

The Dodge side were... well, one of them, a great-great-grandfather, was the president of Shurtleff College in Alton, Illinois. Shurtleff no longer exists, because it was taken over by the Illinois state universities, but at one time he was president of Shurtleff College. So they were the English branch and must have been Protestant. Then my father's father was from Scotland and his mother was Scotch-Irish. He used to tell me that, for pleasure, she would ride horseback sidesaddle.

DePue: A pleasant memory obviously.

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: Sidesaddle. I had always wondered how that was possible. Let's go back a little bit more about the religious life that you grew up in. Were the family regular churchgoers?

Schlafly: Regular churchgoers, oh absolutely, strong Catholics. Then when I got to the seventh grade, my mother made a deal with the Academy of the Sacred Heart, known locally as City House, and allowed them to cover my tuition by my mother cataloging their library. I stayed there through the seventh and eighth grades and through high school, and graduated there at the top of my class.

DePue: Well, I am upset with myself, because I'd been reading one of the biographies; I don't have it in front of me and I don't recall the specific name of the author or the book.

Schlafly: Carol Felsenthal.

DePue: Yes, that's the one. And the name of the book?

Schlafly: *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*.

DePue: I'm going to be referring to that here occasionally. She spends quite a bit of time talking about that experience that you had in City House. I just want to take a step back real quickly. Your mother was working where at the time?

Schlafly: The St. Louis Art Museum.

DePue: As the?

Schlafly: As the librarian. She was the librarian at the St. Louis Art Museum for twenty-five years.

DePue: You talked about your father being such a hard worker and yet he didn't have work during much of this time. Is that correct?

Schlafly: There were long periods when he didn't have work, but he would get odd jobs here and there. Ultimately, he did get a job with the War Production Board, and [Harry S.] Truman closed the St. Louis office and sent all the jobs to Kansas City, just two months before my father would have been eligible for his government pension.

DePue: Would he consider himself an unlucky man?

Schlafly: No. No, we did not feel sorry for ourselves.

DePue: Even though at 51, he'd been working for Westinghouse—I assume he was a valuable employee—yet at the beginning of the depression, for whatever reason he was let go at the time.

Schlafly: Well that's right. A lot of people lost their jobs. There was very high unemployment. But no, we never had a feeling of being oppressed or mistreated or discriminated against or unjustly treated. That's the way it was.

DePue: Did you feel any stress at all because of the financial circumstances of your parents growing up?

Schlafly: No, but we learned to be very careful with money.

DePue: Who was the frugal one between the two parents?

Schlafly: Oh, they were both very frugal.

DePue: Well that's a Scotch trait isn't it?

Schlafly: Well yes it is. In handling the money for my organization, I remind people, I grew up during the depression and I'm Scotch. (laughter) Your money is safe with me.

DePue: Who was the disciplinarian of the two?

Schlafly: I don't know that we had any discipline problems. Both of them were good role models and they taught us to be hard-working. We were expected to do well in school and did, and so what's the problem?

Just recently there was a front page, middle of the page story in the *New York Times*, about the terrible plight of a young couple who had had to move into a smaller house, with only three small bedrooms. They had three generations there and they just couldn't get along. I guess they expected the government to do something for them. Well, I lived most of my growing-up life in a small apartment with only three **small** bedrooms, just one bathroom. We never felt we were oppressed or mistreated. We didn't even feel like we were poor.

DePue: Do you remember your father when—again, I keep going back to this—but he was unemployed quite a bit of this time. Was he at home during those times or would he go out looking for work out of the house most of those days?

Schlafly: Sure, sure he was looking for work.

DePue: How about holidays for the family? Anything that you remember fondly about the holidays that you shared?

Schlafly: Well, Christmas was a big day. If you're asking about vacations, we never took one.

DePue: I was asking about the traditional holidays of Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving.

Schlafly: Well, they were big events. We did have turkey on Thanksgiving. My mother and grandmother were both very good cooks.

DePue: Growing up then, would you describe the family as kind of an extended family arrangement, just because of where you were living at the time?

Schlafly: Well, our grandparents lived with me, if that's what you call extended family.

DePue: Yee.

Schlafly: Of course you have to realize, that was a streetcar era; all of the transportation was by streetcars. It was very unfortunate when St. Louis gave up its streetcars; it's a wonderful method of transportation. That's the way we got around. My mother never learned how to drive.

DePue: Did the family have a car?

Schlafly: We did have a car that my father drove.

DePue: When do you recall that he got that?

Schlafly: Well, we always had some type of a secondhand vehicle.

DePue: Let's go back to going to City House. Is that where you attended high school years?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: How about before that time?

Schlafly: Seventh grade through high school.

DePue: How was it that the family was able to send you to a private Catholic school?

Schlafly: Well, I told you. My mother got the tuition covered because she catalogued the library.

DePue: She did that on an ongoing basis, as a second job for herself then?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: What was City House like?

Schlafly: Well it had a lot of traditions. It was, I think, a very good school. Of course we took Latin. They don't teach Latin anymore. I think it was a very excellent education, with a lot of Catholic traditions, that went along with it. The nuns were pretty good disciplinarians.

DePue: How did you do?

Schlafly: I did fine. I liked it.

DePue: Did some of the other girls grumble about the structure and the discipline of the school?

Schlafly: No, no. We didn't have any complaints. I think the worst thing my class ever did was the day we hid the chalk from the nun. (DePue chuckles)

DePue: Were you involved in that stunt?

Schlafly: I don't remember. (DePue laughs)

DePue: Were these all nuns then, your instructors?

Schlafly: Yes, all nuns.

DePue: What else was on the curriculum?

Schlafly: A straight high school curriculum: English, math, French, Latin, history. Sure, just a regular, standard curriculum.

DePue: Did you have much choice in the things that you were going to be able to take as classes?

Schlafly: Choice, what's that? No, we didn't have any choice.

DePue: One of the things I wanted to ask you about—

Schlafly: And we didn't have women's studies or any other subjects like that.

DePue: And I'm sure we've mentioned this, but this is an all girls school correct?

Schlafly: Yes, an all girls school.

DePue: Did it bother you that you were not going to a school with boys?

Schlafly: No, it didn't bother me a bit.

DePue: Was there a parallel school for the boys?

Schlafly: Well, there were opportunities. There was St. Louis University High School, which is a Jesuit school, and there was CBC [Christian Brothers College High School]. So I knew boys from both those schools.

DePue: One of the things that struck me in the book, reading about this, is the weekly primes. I mention that because I think that paints a picture, an understanding of what the school was like.

Schlafly: That's right, and we called it "preem." Yes, on Monday morning, we would all assemble in the assembly room, and the Reverend Mother would hand out cards based on the conduct of last week. Your card would be either *tres bien* or *bien* or *assez bien*, or the worst would be, no card at all. Of course that means very good, good and just good enough. I guess I got *tres bien* most of the time. I really can't remember getting the really bad ones.

DePue: What kind of a student were you, let me ask you that.

Schlafly: Oh, I was a good student. That was my life, yes. I liked studies and I did well. I did fine.

DePue: What other interests or hobbies did you have at the time?

Schlafly: Well, I did join the Girl Scouts, which met at St. Michael and St. George which is an Episcopal church in another part of town. I had five gold stars for five years of perfect attendance, and I enjoyed that. That was once a week. Other hobbies, I don't know, I don't remember. School was the main focal point of everything I did.

DePue: Did the church you went to have any kind of a youth group?

Schlafly: If they did, I didn't belong to it.

DePue: What was the church?

Schlafly: St. Ann's in Normandy. We lived in Normandy for a number of years. When we lived in Normandy, I went to the public school there, which was called the Roosevelt School. I went to the fifth and sixth grades there. That's where, again, I pursued my writing. I was the editor of the school newspaper, which was called the *Roosevelt Rocket*. I typed it out on an old typewriter—people today haven't even seen those old typewriters—and then mimeographed² it and passed it around. So that was one of my projects when I was in the fifth and sixth grade.

DePue: Even that early?

Schlafly: Yes.

² A predecessor of xerographic reproduction.

- DePue: What was your favorite subject, getting into the high school years?
- Schlafly: Oh, I liked them all. I was a good student.
- DePue: Did you have a sense in high school, especially as you get towards the end of high school, what you wanted to do with your life?
- Schlafly: I had the principal sense that I needed to get educated and go to college, and be prepared for whatever problems life might present, which my mother had done. She was a great role model. So when the depression hit, she was ready to support the family. I grew up believing that I should be educated, so I would be ready for whatever life brought my way.
- DePue: This school, City House.
- Schlafly: City House. It's no longer there, but it was a fine school for generations.
- DePue: What's your thought now, looking back and realizing it's not there any more?
- Schlafly: Well I think it's very sad, because to a certain extent, feminism corrupted the nuns, like it has corrupted many women. So as a result, there are not so many nuns any more, and they had to close it.
- DePue: Well, plus the schools have changed so dramatically from when you were going, in terms of the structure and the discipline that you had. I can't imagine how most people would respond to that kind of an environment today. Do you regret that that part of it is gone as well?
- Schlafly: I regret that the whole thing is gone, yes. Because I thought it was very good for girls' formative years.
- DePue: When you were there, was there an assumption of the young girls who were going to City House, that they were to do something in the larger world? Or were they also taught to be a wife, a mother, to be in that role was sufficient as well?
- Schlafly: I don't remember that the nuns were doing anything to plan the rest of our life. They were doing their job and trying to educate us, and they did a good job of that.
- DePue: Did you ever toy with the notion of being a nun yourself?
- Schlafly: No, I didn't.
- DePue: Any particular reason?
- Schlafly: Well, I just didn't feel I had a calling for that.

- DePue: How about political discussions? You've become very well-known because of your political stances. How much was politics a part of growing up for you?
- Schlafly: I would say zero. We didn't talk politics in my family. However, my family was all Republican. My father used to say that our family left the Democratic Party in the depression of Grover Cleveland. Nobody in my family was ever a supporter of Franklin Roosevelt. They were all Republicans, throughout my lifetime and throughout the depression.
- DePue: When you're going to school, when you're encountering other people, especially the kids of your age, were most of these also, do you think, coming from Republican? Did the subject even come up?
- Schlafly: You mean in high school years?
- DePue: Yeah.
- Schlafly: My guess is that Republicans were in a minority, although politics was not something that we had much discussion about, and we really didn't discuss it at home. When elections came around, my father would get hold of the ballot and we'd look over the ballot and just simply vote straight Republican.
- DePue: Was the assumption on your part that that's how you should be voting as well when you come of age?
- Schlafly: Yes.
- DePue: Nothing in your background wanted you to challenge any of those things?
- Schlafly: That's right.
- DePue: Okay. How about some extracurricular activities like jobs? Were you working at the time, especially in junior high and the high school years.
- Schlafly: Not in the high school years, no.
- DePue: Was there not time for that then, or were you not interested?
- Schlafly: There really wasn't. The school—a lot of the time wasn't over until 5:20 in the afternoon. No, there wasn't any time for a job. Nobody thought about high schoolers having a job.
- DePue: How far was the school from where you lived?
- Schlafly: Well, I started there when we were in Normandy, and my father would drive me down and drive me home. But then, when my mother got the job with the Art Museum, she had to move inside the city limits to be a city employee.

That's when we moved to 4961 McPherson Avenue, and that's where we lived and where I lived until I was married. It was an apartment, and again, it just had three small bedrooms and one bathroom. My grandmother was living with us and that's the way it was.

DePue: Did she have some income of her own, or was the family supporting her as well then?

Schlafly: We were supporting her too. She was also industrious. She was a very fine needlewoman, and she made a number of things that could be sold at what locally we call the Women's Exchange, like crocheted purses and things of that sort. So she made a little pin money that way.

DePue: Your senior year in high school. What do you think you want to do with your life after you graduate?

Schlafly: From high school?

DePue: Right.

Schlafly: I got a scholarship to Maryville College, which was also run by the Sacred Heart nuns, which was then in south St. Louis. And so, that being paid tuition, that is where I started.

DePue: Is that to say then, that you had it in your mind all along that you wanted to go to college?

Schlafly: No question about that.

DePue: How about your parents?

Schlafly: Women have been college educated for generations in my family.

DePue: So from your perspective—I don't want to put words in your mouth—but from your perspective, that was just the thing you wanted to do but also the expectation?

Schlafly: Oh, it was a **given**. It was a given that everybody in our family would go to college. There wasn't any dispute about it.

DePue: The only challenge then, is trying to figure out how to pay for it.

Schlafly: How to pay for it.

DePue: Did you apply to lots of places then, for scholarships?

Schlafly: No. I didn't apply anywhere. They just gave me one at Maryville.

DePue: Is that because of its affiliation with City House?

- Schlafly: Probably, and I graduated top in my class.
- DePue: This is the same time period when things are really starting to heat up in the world. In Europe, you see what's going on.
- Schlafly: This is 1941.
- DePue: During that whole time you are in City House, things are developing overseas, in Europe especially, but also in the Pacific. Were you paying attention to any of that?
- Schlafly: Not really.
- DePue: Was that ever something that was discussed in school?
- Schlafly: I can't remember that it was.
- DePue: You don't recall your parents talking about it either?
- Schlafly: Not really.
- DePue: Okay.
- Schlafly: They did put, of course, the military draft in at that time, but we didn't have any boys in our family, so it just really didn't affect us.
- DePue: Do you remember when the war started in Europe, with the Germans invading Poland?
- Schlafly: Well, that was '39.
- DePue: That was September of '39.
- Schlafly: I don't remember that being an event in my life, no.
- DePue: How about the next year, when they invaded France and the Low Countries, and threatened England itself?
- Schlafly: I don't remember that as being an event in my life. Of course, I do remember Pearl Harbor, when that hit.
- DePue: During the time you're in high school though, you were still writing quite a bit it sounds like.
- Schlafly: Well, I won a couple of essay contests.
- DePue: I want to read a passage from one of those essays if I could.
- Schlafly: Okay. (chuckles)

- DePue: Here's the passage. "There is war in Europe and blood and hatred, and only one nation which still reveres the things I love, England, the citadel of civilization. I can't believe and I don't believe that the world as I know it is going down. Only this do I know, but I know it as surely as I live. As long as men and women do not lose the simple refinement of soul, which is the key to happiness, the flame of culture and right thinking will never go out. I'm not a victim of optimism, but I have faith in the integrity of mankind. My only preconceived ideas are faith in human nature and a fierce determination to always look forward to adventure. Understand the world today? No. But as it is my heritage, I promise to see in it, only beauty and truth, and to accept it as a thing of elegance and grace."
- Schlafly: Where did you dig that up?
- DePue: Well again, that's from the book.
- Schlafly: Oh it is? I don't know where she got that, maybe out of one of my scrapbooks. I don't remember it but it sounds pretty good. (both chuckle)
- DePue: You're certainly not in a position of disavowing it.
- Schlafly: No, I'm not going to disavow it. In fact, that's one of the things about me, is I don't have to apologize for anything I ever wrote.
- DePue: Was writing then, one of the things that you truly loved to do at that time?
- Schlafly: Well, most people do not enjoy writing. It's not a **fun** thing to do, but it is a feeling of accomplishment when you finally get it finished.
- DePue: So even you would say that writing is hard work?
- Schlafly: Writing is very definitely hard work.
- DePue: You've done an awful lot of writing in your career, so you can make the connections here; you don't mind hard work.
- Schlafly: That's right.
- DePue: Let's talk about starting at Maryville College. That was in what year, 1941?
- Schlafly: Forty-one. Some time during the year, I made the decision that I wanted to transfer to Washington University,³ where most of my family had gone to college—my mother and her sister and her father. But I realized that while my family had given me a desire for a college education, they had no money to pay for it. So I looked for a job to work my way through college. I applied for and got a job at the St. Louis Ordnance Plant, known locally as the Small

³ In St. Louis

Arms Plant. Now it didn't make small arms; it made small arms ammunition. It was the largest ammunition plant in the world, at Natural Bridge and Goodfellow. I applied for a job there and went to work right after my eighteenth birthday. That is the way I worked my way through college. About half the time I worked four to midnight—they did three shifts a day—and the other half of the time, I worked midnight to eight in the morning.

I was determined to go to college in regular daytime hours and not as a night school student, so I worked nights so I could go to college in the morning. I was trained to be a gunner, testing ammunition; I tested .30 and .50 caliber ammunition, and I did all the tests that are necessary for the government to run on ammunition in order to accept it for use in the war. I did the velocity tests and the accuracy tests and the aircraft hang-fire tests and the penetration tests for armor-piercing bullets. I photographed the tracer bullets in flight and developed the film in the darkroom. When a cartridge didn't go off—that's called a misfire—I had a little lab where I would investigate why the bullet didn't go off. So I did all the tests, including the machine gun tests. There were times when I fired as many as five thousand rounds in an eight-hour shift. I worked that job for two years and that's the way I financed my college education.

DePue: How many hours a week did you work?

Schlafly: Forty-eight hours a week.

DePue: In other words, six days a week.

Schlafly: Right.

DePue: Monday through Saturday.

Schlafly: I wore slacks and I wore the blue blouses that had been part of my uniform at the City House. I got one of my friends to give me her old castoff blue blouses, so I had a clean blouse every day.

DePue: I have this image of you working at this ammunition plant. You said you were testing this ammunition, so I have this image of you laying down or standing up, holding a rifle, or sitting down behind a machine gun and actually pulling the trigger. Is that how you did this?

Schlafly: Well, there wasn't any real danger in it. They were rifles and machine guns from fixed mounts. For example, the velocity test is very interesting. One person would be the gunner who would fire the weapon. Then another person was called the chronographer, and she sat in a little booth. When the bullet came out of the barrel of the gun, it released a long shaft, and when it hit the target, some little thing would jump up and make a mark on the shaft. The chronographer would measure that and do a little math, and that's how you

figured out how fast the bullet was traveling. That was more interesting than some of the other tests.

The aircraft hang-fire test was pretty interesting, because in those days, the airplanes would fire their guns through the propellers; if it wasn't a perfect sequence, a bullet would hit the propeller and down the plane. So you had to have that perfect cadence. There was a drum that would record the time interval between each bullet going off. There were all kinds of interesting tests like that. As I say, I worked that job forty-eight hours a week for two years, and that's the way I paid for my college education.

DePue: It sounds like then, you're testing not only the ammunition but the weapons that are firing the ammunition. Is that right?

Schlafly: No, we really weren't. We assumed they were okay. The plant did not make guns, it made ammunition.

DePue: It sounds like it made ammunition for a huge chunk of what the United States was burning up at the time.

Schlafly: That's right. It was the largest ammunition plant in the world. I think it maybe employed forty thousand people.

DePue: Well tell me about that workforce. How much of that workforce were people like yourself; young ladies who had—in many cases, I'm sure—had husbands or brothers, fathers, overseas even.

Schlafly: There were all kinds. We had a number of women. We had some old guys who were too old for the draft, and some who had been rejected by the draft for medical reasons. You had all kinds of people.

DePue: So you've got two different worlds going on here. In the daytime you're working hard, I'm sure, going to school, and you've got a group of people there. Then you're encountering these people in the ordnance plant at night. Was there much difference between those two worlds?

Schlafly: Well sure. The people at Washington University were just ordinary college students. I had to take classes that fit into my schedule. I had a very tightly structured schedule. In order to fit into my schedule, I couldn't take any eight o'clock classes in the morning. In fact, I'm not sure I could take a nine o'clock. But at any rate, this is what led me into political science, because they seemed to be more ten and eleven o'clock classes. I liked it, and ultimately majored in it.

DePue: Was there a shortage of young men at Washington University at the time?

Schlafly: Well yes, there were not so many men. However in my commencement, it was a small number of people who got bachelor's degrees, but there were two

hundred Navy doctors who got medical degrees. So that was an interesting commencement.

DePue: I want to go back here a little bit and ask a couple questions about the move from Maryville College to Washington University. Was it strictly a matter of tradition, the family had always gone to Washington University, or the scholastic challenge that that would represent, or is there something about Maryville that you didn't like?

Schlafly: No, there wasn't anything that I didn't like about Maryville. It was a combination of several factors. Actually, it was easier to get to Washington University. I rode the streetcar, which came right in front of our apartment; I could almost hear it clanging at the street just east of us. I'd run out and get on it and it was a fifteen minute ride to Washington University. Then I'd get off and walk into the class. It was more of a challenge and I enjoyed it more.

DePue: Where do you find time to do anything except—I don't even know where you find time to sleep in this schedule that you had during those couple of years.

Schlafly: Well, I had a very tight schedule, but I didn't have any social life. I didn't associate with any of the students. I didn't join a sorority. I didn't do anything at the college except go to class. This is why I don't understand what college students are doing with all that extra time. I was working forty-eight hours a week; it took me an hour to go and an hour to come every day. I don't know what college students do with all that extra time.

DePue: Did you miss or regret that you didn't have any time for a social life?

Schlafly: No. No no. I wanted to hurry up and get through college.

DePue: Hurry up and get through college. **Now** did you have an idea what you wanted to do with your life?

Schlafly: Well, I wanted to go to graduate school. I had saved up enough money to pay for one year. I applied at both Radcliffe and Columbia and was accepted both places. I chose Radcliffe, which annoyed the head of the department, because he wanted me to go to Columbia. But anyway, I went to Radcliffe and had a year there and got a masters, and it was a wonderful year. That's when I started to have some social life with the students.

DePue: You made the choice, Radcliffe versus Columbia, for what reason? What was it that differentiated the two?

Schlafly: I thought it would be nicer to be in Cambridge than in New York City.

DePue: Why that?

Schlafly: Well, Harvard has its own prestige. At the time I went, the graduate school was completely coed.⁴ The Harvard President signed my diploma. I thought it was a better place to go.

DePue: A better school?

Schlafly: Well, certainly just as good a school. I just thought it would be a more attractive surrounding in Cambridge, and I think I was right on that. I enjoyed it very much.

DePue: I apologize. I'm going to occasionally bounce around here a little bit, but I did want to ask you if you remember when Pearl Harbor happened. Any memories of that?

Schlafly: Well, I remember it was a big shock, yes. That's about all I remember. As I say, we didn't have any boys in our family, so the draft was not impacting directly on our family. But it was a stunning shock when it happened.

DePue: —Where you're in school, where you work in an ordnance plant, what was the mood of the people you encountered there, as far as the war is concerned?

Schlafly: Well let's see, that was in December of '41. In December of '41, I would have been in Maryville at that point. Well, I know we talked about it. I can't give you any particular insight about it.

DePue: Okay. Let's go back then, to being at Radcliffe. You mentioned now, that you had a little bit of a social life. Can you describe that for us?

Schlafly: Yes. When I went to college we had a social custom that was called a date, and that meant a boy asked a girl out, and then he paid for the movie ticket or the supper or whatever it was. I understand they don't have dates any more, they have other liaisons, but dates were a lot of fun, and I enjoyed them very much. I lived in a house in Cambridge that was owned by Radcliffe, that was at that time, 250 years old.

DePue: And I assume—

Schlafly: We had a housemother. I think it was nine girls who lived in the house and a housemother. We were limited to 250 watts in our bedroom and bath, so that's 100 watts on each desk and 50 watts in the bathroom.

DePue: That's interesting.

Schlafly: [President Barack] Obama's trying to do the same thing now. He's trying to take us back.

- DePue: Because electricity was scarce at the time, I guess.
- Schlafly: Well, it was probably the wiring of the house.
- DePue: What would you have considered and how would you describe a good date at the time?
- Schlafly: Oh, I had so many. It was a lot of fun. A good date? We could go to a concert or a movie or some kind of supper with a bunch of students, all kinds of things.
- DePue: What were the academics like at Radcliffe?
- Schlafly: Well, at Harvard they called the political science department “government,” All my courses were in government. I took public administration and constitutional government and political theory. All my courses were in political science subjects.
- DePue: At this point in your life then, what was it about political science that really caught your attention, that really got you excited?
- Schlafly: Well, I realized the government was getting to be very important in our lives. I thought a good career path for me would be to go to Washington and get a job with the government and maybe find some of the Radcliffe graduates who were down there, who might give me a hand.
- DePue: Were you working while you were at graduate school?
- Schlafly: No, no. I had saved up enough money to pay for it.
- DePue: Okay. That and the scholarship I assume that you got.
- Schlafly: I don't think I had a scholarship at Radcliffe, I paid for it. I didn't have a scholarship to Washington U. I paid for it.
- DePue: Well again, the book mentioned that you had a Whitney Fellowship of five hundred dollars, at Radcliffe.
- Schlafly: Well, maybe I did, that is possible. I just don't remember. If I had one, it certainly would have been a merit scholarship and a very small amount. I don't think they gave scholarships based on need like they do now. It would have been a merit scholarship.
- DePue: Did you have kind of an emerging political philosophy or a political sense at that time, would you say?
- Schlafly: The professors were certainly New Deal advocates, Roosevelt lovers. I remember the constitutional law professor, who one day announced that

Henry Wallace was the greatest political thinker of the century. Do you remember Henry Wallace?

DePue: Yes.

Schlafly: He was a Communist.

DePue: And for awhile he was Vice President.

Schlafly: That's why Roosevelt dumped him for the next term, because he was kind of a kooky Communist. Then the Professor of public administration used to say, "We should stop talking about balancing the budget and instead should talk about budgeting the balance." I remember that Friederich Hayek⁵ came to speak while I was there. He's the author of the *Road to Serfdom*, which was quite a bestseller at that time, and how the Harvard professors were preparing all the students not to believe what he said before he arrived. (laughs)

DePue: It sounds like you're having a little bit of a political awakening then, while you're here at Radcliffe. Would that be a fair assessment?

Schlafly: Well, I'm sure it had an influence on me. Hayek was the author of the *Road to Serfdom*. I should have mentioned that. Well, I would say it had some kind of effect on me. That was the year that the United Nations opened in San Francisco. If I had had the money, I would have gone out there to that, but I didn't have the money. I'm really glad now I didn't go, but that's one of the things I would have liked to have done.

DePue: So that is to say that at that time, you were attracted to the concept of the United Nations?

Schlafly: Probably, yes, because everybody thought that was going to solve all the world's problems.

DePue: Some of the stories you've told about at Radcliffe, and with some of the professors, I can hear these echoes of your father and your mother and their political views. Is that part of that reason it stuck with you, you think, because it's such a contrast to what you were growing up with?

Schlafly: Oh I don't know. It wasn't the really big part of my life. I was just interested in learning all I could and getting finished and getting my degree and moving on. They tried **very hard** to get me to continue in graduate school there and go for a PhD; that did not interest me in the slightest.

⁵A defender of the free market and *classical liberal* (i.e. libertarian) principles.

DePue: Give me a percentage of the people at Harvard then, at your time, that were women.

Schlafly: Oh, there were plenty of women. The graduate school was completely coed. There were plenty of women.

DePue: I'm trying to get back to my timeline here. We're talking now at the close of the war. What year did you graduate, '45, that you got your masters degree?

Schlafly: Right. June of '45.

DePue: So this is right at the end of the war.

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: Was there a lot of anticipation about all of those GIs returning to the colleges?

Schlafly: Well, I first came home after I got my degree. Then I decided to get on the train and go to Washington, D.C., thinking I was going to get a job with the government. An immediate hiring freeze was slapped on right after the war, so I went to a private employment agency and signed up for them to find me a job. This was the fortunate thing that happened. They found me a job with a little group then called the American Enterprise Association, which is now called the American Enterprise Institute and is a very big deal now. But at that time, it was a little office with about four or five rooms, on 9th Street as I remember. It consisted of one smart man who wrote speeches for conservative Congressmen, and a research assistant who did some of the legwork of digging up material, and a couple of typists. They needed somebody to look after the files. I got a job to work in that office, where I handled the files and the books and did something which later served me very well: excerpting. One of the services that this organization provided to Congressmen, was to give them excerpts of articles and newspaper accounts that were on one page and got rid of all the unnecessary words. That is now one of my skills, to say more in fewer words and get rid of all the excess verbiage. So I did a lot of that and did some bill analyses, and it was kind of an interesting job.

DePue: Do you remember the gentleman's name?

Schlafly: The boss?

DePue: Yeah.

Schlafly: His last name was Richardson. I've forgotten the first name and of course I never used the first name. He was **Mr.** Richardson. (both chuckle)

DePue: Very good. Would you have considered a similar job in an institution that had liberal leanings instead of conservative leanings?

- Schlafly: Well I needed a job. I arrived without any money. I needed to start to work now.
- DePue: So the answer is yes, I would have considered that job.
- Schlafly: Well the thing is, when I took the job they said, Now there's a condition to this job—you've got to go to typing school and learn how to type. Typing was not part of the high school curriculum in those days and I thought that was really being oppressive. However, I had to do it. You know, I have thanked them every day for making me do that, because I could not turn out the work I do if I couldn't type. But the typing school was **so right wing** and **so pro-business**, that the lessons we typed (chuckling) were an education in itself.
- DePue: You had mentioned before that you had done some typing. Was it just hunt and peck earlier in your life then?
- Schlafly: Before that it was just hunt and peck, yes.
- DePue: I'm wondering then, is this experience of working at the American Enterprise Association part of your political evolution as well.
- Schlafly: Absolutely. Absolutely, because they did only work for conservatives. A good example would be Senator Wherry of Nebraska, who is long since gone, but he was a good conservative leader at that time.
- DePue: Would it be fair to say that you got this exposure at Harvard, Radcliffe, where you're getting some of these professors who were saying things that didn't strike you as true in terms of your own upbringing, and now you're hearing something that made a lot more sense to you personally and politically.
- Schlafly: It did make more sense, yes. However, the Harvard thing—it wasn't blatant like it is today. I'm really shocked at how **atrociously** left-wing a lot of the professors are, and how they **force** their views on the students. That isn't what I experienced.
- DePue: Did you have conservative professors there as well?
- Schlafly: Yes.
- DePue: Did you feel at any time that your grade was dependent on how you came down on a particular issue?
- Schlafly: Never, never.
- DePue: Again, bouncing around a little bit, but this is roughly the timeframe again, when the war in Japan ends as well. Do you recall Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb, and what you thought about that at the time?

- Schlafly: No, I don't recall anything special about that. I don't know that I had any particular feelings about it at that time, one way or the other.
- DePue: I guess one of the reasons I'm asking that is because, by the fifties, you became well-known for your voracious study of nuclear disarmament treaties and that whole issue of nuclear defense. Can you pinpoint when you developed that interest?
- Schlafly: Yes, but that's a little later in the story.
- DePue: Okay, so we don't want to get there quite yet.
- Schlafly: No. Things happened before that.
- DePue: How long did you spent in Washington, D.C.?
- Schlafly: One year.
- DePue: You say that rather emphatically.
- Schlafly: Well, that was enough.
- DePue: Why was it enough?
- Schlafly: That was enough. At the end of a year I was ready to go back to St. Louis, and so I went back to St. Louis.
- DePue: But why were you ready? Can you put a finger on that?
- Schlafly: Well, essentially (pause) it wasn't—I didn't see it really as going anywhere. I didn't know enough people to make Washington a fun place to be. I only knew a very limited number of people. I did join some club where they had social events. (pause) I guess I had learned all I could at the job I was in. In St. Louis, everybody was all of a sudden coming home after the war, and I kind of walked right into a very nice social circle.
- DePue: Was one of the issues you had in Washington, D.C. then, the lack of any kind of a social life? You're a young lady at this time.
- Schlafly: I would say that was a problem, although I did have a number of guys taking me out. We used to go dancing quite a bit. But still, I felt I should go back to St. Louis.
- DePue: Any impressions that you developed while you were out in Washington, D.C., about the city or the nature of the Federal Government at the time?
- Schlafly: (pause) No. I don't know anything in particular that's worth remembering at this point. Washington is Washington, it's an interesting city, has a lot of

interesting places to see. I enjoyed my year very, very much. It was a wonderful year, but I was ready to go home.

DePue: During the Second World War, Washington, D.C. was packed. There was no place to live. Where did you end up finding a place to live when you went there?

Schlafly: I had a friend who had a friend, and she gave me a room on her second floor.

DePue: You returned, from what I understand, in September of 1946 then, to St. Louis. What did you do when you came back?

Schlafly: Looked for a job.

DePue: Anything in particular? You've got this political science degree, you've got a master's and you certainly have aspirations; what kind of a job were you looking for?

Schlafly: Something to build on what I had. The first job I applied for and got was the job to run the campaign of a candidate for Congress. If you remember, 1946 was one of the biggest Republican years in history. His name was Claude Bakewell, and he ran for Congress in the city of St. Louis. Congressional campaigns were rather simple in those days. I was the campaign manager, the scheduler and the ghost writer, the speechwriter. It was a whirlwind campaign—September and October, election in November—and he **won**. He unseated a Democrat Congressman and it was a wonderful experience.

DePue: How does a twenty-two year-old young lady convince a politician to be the campaign manager in a tough political campaign?

Schlafly: He probably (laughing) didn't know anybody to ask. I don't know. But as I say, campaigns were simpler in those days. I don't know, maybe I sounded eager, and I did enjoy it. That was my first plunge into politics and the taste of victory was very sweet.

DePue: Was it an upset victory?

Schlafly: It was an upset, yes. He defeated a Democrat.

DePue: In a city—

Schlafly: In the city of St. Louis.

DePue: What were your parents' reactions to you doing this?

Schlafly: I lived at home. Well, my parents were always very supportive of everything I did. Meanwhile, I was looking for a permanent job. That's when—I'm not quite sure—I think I went to a private employment agency. I am not positive

of that. But at any rate, the job was virtually created for me. It was a job that was 50 percent with the St. Louis Union Trust Company and 50 percent with the First National Bank, which were affiliated institutions in the same building; my one desk supported both of those half jobs.

For the St. Louis Union Trust Company, I did research for a vice president who had developed the idea that—they took care of people's estates—if we didn't maintain the private enterprise system, their clients were going to lose all their money. So he wrote a monthly newsletter that is very much like the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*. It was largely on Socialism and Communism, and I did the research for that.

The other half of my job was to be the librarian of the simple library of the First National Bank; nobody had moved the books around in years. Also, I wrote some speeches for some of the vice presidents. I loved the job; it was very interesting. I took the streetcar downtown. It was all the way downtown, on Broadway and Olive, every day. I was there three years and loved every minute of it.

DePue: A couple questions going back to your time as a campaign manager. Did that expose you to a different circle of contacts? Obviously, you're going to be encountering other politicians, other people who are influential in the community at the same time? Were you beginning to develop a list of associates or those contacts that would become important to you later?

Schlafly: I really can't verify that. I don't remember. I was too busy scheduling and writing speeches.

DePue: All of your time then, was writing the speeches?

Schlafly: And scheduling.

DePue: Being a campaign manager, at least my understanding of it, that's an all-consuming job.

Schlafly: It was an all-consuming job.

DePue: That doesn't leave any time for a social life.

Schlafly: Well, we're only talking about two and a half months.

DePue: Was that important also, in terms of an emerging political sense and a political philosophy?

Schlafly: Well, it would have been straight Republican ideology, but I certainly did like politics.

DePue: This job then that was created for you, for the St. Louis Union Trust Company and the First National Bank, they saw a need or did you see a need to fill that?

Schlafly: They saw the need. They wanted somebody and it was worked out to be a cooperative venture between the two institutions.

DePue: Was it helpful then, that you had just come off this campaign, that you were able to land that position?

Schlafly: No, but it was helpful that I had a recommendation from the American Enterprise Association, who gave me very fine recommendations.

DePue: How important then is this job, these three years you had in this position, in an emerging political philosophy?

Schlafly: Yes, very important.

DePue: When you first started, would you say that you had a well-defined sense of what you believed in and who you were at the time?

Schlafly: Well, pretty much so, but I suppose it was evolving.

DePue: What I'd like to do if you don't mind, if you can think back to that time period, is to get your opinions on some fairly broad issues and just get your reflections on it at that time. Of course these were things—I would think in some of these cases—that you're writing about in this letter that was published. How often was the letter released?

Schlafly: The newsletter was a monthly.

DePue: You've already expressed this, but did issues like FDR and the New Deal come up in the newsletters?

Schlafly: There weren't any personal attacks and I'm not sure there were many personal references. It was more theoretical, but it certainly was against Socialism and Communism and big government and that sort of thing.

DePue: You had mentioned before that much of it was a fear about the state of the free enterprise system. Would that be a fair thing to say?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: So what kinds of things then, were you writing about and emphasizing, in terms of what was a possible threat to the free enterprise system?

Schlafly: The reason 1946 was such a big victory year for Republicans, was the public reaction to Truman's price and wage control. Americans simply do not like price and wage control. It was a big, all encompassing issue.

- DePue: Well that sounds like it's one of those things that's an extension of what the government felt it had to do during the Second World War, when there was rationing and you had to make sure that the troops were going to be properly supplied.
- Schlafly: Yes, but by November of '46, we were sick of it. The slogan in that campaign was, "Had Enough." A very effective slogan.
- DePue: How about then, the proper role of government in a free society? That's an overarching subject, but by that time were you developing your own concept about that, and the concept that was finding its way into the newsletter?
- Schlafly: Well yes, I agreed with everything that went in the newsletter. I was supportive. I was happy to work on that subject. I did another thing for the St. Louis Union Trust Company. They had me go and give speeches to women's groups on wills and trusts, and wills and wives, and subjects like that. So I kind of started speaking around town on money management.
- DePue: Is that something you liked to do?
- Schlafly: Not particularly. No, I liked the newsletter better.
- DePue: Were you comfortable with the public speaking aspects of it?
- Schlafly: I was learning. I had taken several courses in public speaking and joined a group in public speaking when I was in Washington; I was trying to develop myself in public speaking.
- DePue: Up to this point, would you have described yourself as an extrovert or more of a private and introverted person?
- Schlafly: I was always quite shy. I am not a people person.
- DePue: Then the speaking would have been a little bit of a stretch for you, it sounds like.
- Schlafly: It was hard. It took years of labor to develop into a speaker.
- DePue: What did you have to do then, to prepare yourself before you gave these speeches at this time?
- Schlafly: Well I think, as I remember, the St. Louis Union Trust Company demanded that I write out my speech so they could look it over and make sure I didn't make a mistake about wills and trusts. So probably I was reading those speeches. But anyway, I was starting to learn how to be before an audience.

- DePue: Going back to some of these other issues then. Did issues about the *U.S. Constitution* and the proper application of the *U.S. Constitution*, come up in the letters?
- Schlafly: Probably, but I don't really remember a lot of the topics. We did that for three years. They were a lot about the threat of Communism and the threat of Socialism.
- DePue: Again, what specifically was the emphasis then, in terms of the fear about the threats of Communism and Socialism?
- Schlafly: Socialism was what was coming out of the New Deal, and the government takeover of industry and our lives. Communism was the growing Communist threat around the world.
- DePue: So the Communism aspect of it would have been more of the international side?
- Schlafly: Yes.
- DePue: Okay. Some of this sounds like stupid questions. So this is the beginning of the Cold War, and even at that time in '46, that phrase hadn't even been invented yet. That came a couple years later. But what in particular concerned you and concerned your bosses, that you were saying on the international stage, about Communism?
- Schlafly: Well, Communism was all bad. People need to know how bad it is.
- DePue: Were you critical in these letters about issues like Yalta and Potsdam, and the agreements that were made with [Joseph] Stalin, about eastern Europe especially?
- Schlafly: Well, I certainly wrote a good bit about Yalta and Potsdam. Now whether they were in the St. Louis Union Trust Company letters, I can't verify at this point. I can't remember.
- DePue: How about some of the social issues that you've become so well-known for now? Were those things that were addressed in the newsletters?
- Schlafly: No. (pause) They were largely economic and international.
- DePue: Was there any issues that you felt uncomfortable with, that they wanted you to write about?
- Schlafly: No.
- DePue: You were in complete agreement with the positions that they had then?

Schlafly: Mm-hmm.

DePue: Let's talk a little bit about the social life. Did that start to change for you, improve?

Schlafly: Oh yes. Nineteen forty-six was a very social year in St. Louis. This is when everybody was coming back and there were parties all the time. I had lots of dates and just had a good time all the time.

DePue: I read someplace that you even had an official debut into St. Louis society.

Schlafly: I don't think that's true, but coming back I went to all the parties. I had a lot of friends and I went to many fine, lovely parties.

DePue: Were you living with your parents again at the time?

Schlafly: Always, yes.

DePue: Were there any strains because you're living with your parents?

Schlafly: No.

DePue: Well then let's get to an aspect of the social life I'm sure you remember very well, and that's—well no, let's talk about one other thing here. Do you remember much about the election of 1948? You're paying pretty close attention to things by then.

Schlafly: Well yes. I remember how shocked we all were that Truman won. It was a shock. The *Chicago Tribune* and I both believed that [Thomas E.] Dewey was going to win. (both laugh)⁶

DePue: In fact they believed so strongly that they didn't bother to do polling once it got closer to the election. A disappointment then, as well, for your bosses?

Schlafly: Oh I'm sure it was. I don't remember anything specific but I'm sure it was.

DePue: Let's move on then and start a discussion about meeting Fred, Fred Schlafly. How did the two of you end up meeting?

Schlafly: Well the way he always told it was that he came down to the St. Louis Union Trust Company one day to find the documentation on something that was said in one of the newsletters about Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois being a Socialist, and he found me.

DePue: That you were the person who wrote that up.

⁶ The *Tribune* famously produced an election issue before final results were tallied, with the headline, "Dewey Wins," picturing a smiling Dewey. This created a subject for jokes and ridicule for some time.

- Schlafly: Yeah. (laughing)
- DePue: Do you remember that yourself?
- Schlafly: Yes, uh-huh, yes, that's right.
- DePue: What was your initial reaction to Fred?
- Schlafly: Actually, it was, I guess a few weeks after that, that he called up. He called me up—it was a Sunday afternoon—and said, “Well, how about getting together some time?” “Well, okay.” “Well how about in a half an hour?” (DePue laughs) That was our first date. That was in March of '49, and we were married on October the twentieth.
- DePue: Tell me about Fred then, at the time. What was it that attracted you to Fred?
- Schlafly: Everything. He was tall, dark and handsome. He was good fun and we were very compatible on everything from religion to politics, and it was love at first sight.
- DePue: For both of you?
- Schlafly: For both of us, yes.
- DePue: When you say compatible in religion, was he also from a Catholic background?
- Schlafly: Oh, absolutely.
- DePue: What differences were there between the two of you, that you knew of at the time?
- Schlafly: I didn't detect any differences. We were completely compatible.
- DePue: Now one of the things I know was the case, he was quite a bit older than you were.
- Schlafly: Fifteen years.
- DePue: Did that trouble you at all?
- Schlafly: No.
- DePue: Did it trouble your relatives, your mom?
- Schlafly: I don't think anybody ever said anything to me about it.
- DePue: But your mom ended up marrying somebody quite a bit older than herself as well didn't she?

- Schlafly: She did, and it was a very happy marriage.
- DePue: Do you recall, from things that he told you, what attracted him to you initially?
- Schlafly: No, I don't recall. No, I don't recall in particular. We were just extremely compatible.
- DePue: From what I understand, when he initially came down looking for the person who wrote the letter, he was assuming that that person had to be a man.
- Schlafly: He may have been, I don't know.
- DePue: Again, this is from the book. Here's what was written at the time, that he had written. "I didn't believe in love at first sight, so I took a second look. (she laughs) I gave her a look that you could have poured on a waffle. I fell for her so hard and fast, that I didn't have time to pull the ripcord on the emergency chute before she landed me."
- Schlafly: (laughing) Well we did, during our courtship, write a lot of poems back and forth. (still chuckling) I only saw him once a week.
- DePue: What was he doing for a living at the time?
- Schlafly: He was a lawyer in Alton.
- DePue: Was he something of a workhorse himself then?
- Schlafly: Yes. Oh sure. He worked all the time. After we were married, he'd have supper and then go back to the office.
- DePue: And from what I've read, he was something of a confirmed, and happy-to-be-confirmed bachelor when he met you.
- Schlafly: Yes, I guess that's right. He said so anyway.
- DePue: Do you recall anything that you had to do in particular to convince him otherwise, or did you just let nature take its course?
- Schlafly: No, I didn't have to do any convincing.
- DePue: Do you recall when he proposed to you?
- Schlafly: Yes. It was on my birthday, August the fifteenth. No, no, that's not true. That's when he gave me the ring. Is that when he gave me the ring? I'm a little confused now. August fifteenth was an important date. (pause) I guess that was when he proposed.
- DePue: When did you get married then?

Schlafly: October the twentieth.

DePue: And where did you get married?

Schlafly: In the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of the St. Louis Cathedral.

DePue: Was that your congregation?

Schlafly: Yes, that was my parish church. That's the same place my mother had gotten married.

DePue: So again, tradition is a theme here, in your early life especially.

Schlafly: I would say so.

DePue: Where did you honeymoon?

Schlafly: Acapulco.

DePue: So Mexico. Did you fly down?

Schlafly: Yes, we flew down.

DePue: And then it was back to work for both of you?

Schlafly: Yes. Of course I got sick, and he didn't know what to do with his sick wife at this point. I got the usual Mexican tourista. So he took me, on the way back, to the family shrine, which is the Mountain Valley Spring in Hot Springs, Arkansas. He thought the Mountain Valley Spring would bring me back to health, so we hit that on the way home.

DePue: That's quite a detour. You said that was the family...?

Schlafly: Well that was his father's business.

DePue: Tell me a little bit more about Fred's personality.

Schlafly: He was very Irish. His mother is 200 percent Irish and his father is Swiss, so he's a typical Irish personality. He's a people person. He likes to talk to people. He's combative; that's why he's a good lawyer.

DePue: But an aspect of the Irish, they also do like their parties, they do like their alcohol.

Schlafly: Well he didn't drink.

DePue: And it sounds like he wasn't too much for the partying either, from what I've read.

- Schlafly: That's right; he wasn't too much for the partying.
- DePue: Here's another quote. This is just a quote from the book about the relationship that the two of you had. "Fred was more interested in politicking than partying."
- Schlafly: I think that's a fair statement.
- DePue: Would you say that's a fair statement for yourself as well?
- Schlafly: Yes I would.
- DePue: "In debating than dancing."
- Schlafly: Yes, I think that's a fair statement for both of us.
- DePue: "He simply loved to debate, driving even the polemical Phyllis to desperation."
- Schlafly: (laughs)
- DePue: That's the lawyer in him perhaps.
- Schlafly: Yes. Whose opinion is that? Is that Carol's opinion?
- DePue: Yes, that's what she had written. What were the discussions at the time you got married about issues like the family? This is at the beginning of the baby boom generation and you're two Catholics that are getting married. Do you recall any discussions about that as a subject?
- Schlafly: What is there to discuss? You get married first and then you have babies.
- DePue: What was his opinion about you as a working woman, who'd had quite a career already up to this point?
- Schlafly: Well, I quit that and we moved to Alton, where he practiced law. One time, I had one of my friends over to supper and I don't know how the topic came up, but she thought he made one of the funniest remarks she had ever heard, when he told her, "Well it's hardly worth getting married for only two children." (both laugh) That gives you an idea of his attitude about children.
- DePue: What did your parents think about the marriage?
- Schlafly: Oh, they were pleased. My father always thought everything I did was wonderful.
- DePue: And your mother?
- Schlafly: She was a little more critical but not critical of Fred.

DePue: Well, what I would recommend here for today is that we stop here. I can do a little bit more research and then we can pick it up tomorrow if you don't mind?

Schlafly: Okay. (end of interview #1 #2 continues)

Interview with Phyllis Schlafly

ISE-A-L-2011-001.02

Interview # 2: January 6, 2011

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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A Note to the Reader

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DePue: Today is Thursday, January 6, 2011. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I have an opportunity to have a second session with Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly. Good morning.

Schlafly: Good morning Dr. DePue.

DePue: It's a lovely morning here in St. Louis. We're doing this in your office at the Eagle Forum, is that correct?

Schlafly: That's correct. This is our national headquarters. We have had this beautiful location since 1993.

DePue: Tell us a little bit about the organization and then we'll get into the meat of the interview this morning.

Schlafly: You want me to tell you about the Eagle Forum?

DePue: The Eagle Forum yeah, just a little bit.

Schlafly: Eagle Forum really started as Stop ERA. I gathered people together to fight the Equal Rights Amendment. After a few years, I realized our volunteer activists were interested in many subjects, so we incorporated as Eagle Forum and we've grown and prospered ever since.

DePue: We will spend a lot more time talking about the Equal Rights Amendment and the Eagle Forum here in future sessions, but just to give us a little background of where we're meeting today.

What I want to start with, we left off yesterday with you getting married. So I thought I'd start out with setting up a home and moving to Alton and that aspect of your life. Could you tell us a little bit about that experience?

Schlafly: Fred Schlafly and I were married on October 20, 1949, at the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, which is one of the side chapels at the great St. Louis Cathedral. I quit my job at the St. Louis Union Trust Company and the First National Bank, recommended one of my good friends to replace me, who did, and I moved to Alton, which is about a forty minute drive from St. Louis, on the Illinois side of the river. It was not a suburb. Alton is a little town and it was, at that time, a town of a great deal of locally owned industry. In other words, the big CEOs lived in Alton. I'm talking about the plant that made the ammunition, and the glassworks, I think it was the largest glassworks in the western hemisphere, and Shell had its biggest refinery in the western hemisphere there. So it was a very nice town.

Fred Schlafly had been a bachelor for quite a few years, practicing law in a firm in Alton, and so he knew everybody in town. We had a little house which we moved into, rented the first year. I suddenly became a full-time wife. Fred was active in every type of civic endeavor you can think of. He had been the president of every organization in Alton, and I kind of fell into that pattern. My principal charity for about ten years was the YWCA. I was on the board of the YWCA for years and signed most of the checks, but I did many other things too. I did some work for the Red Cross. I ran a number of house tours in St. Louis for Radcliffe College as fundraising for the college, and they were very successful.

DePue: Tours of large mansions?

Schlafly: Yes. Tours that ladies wanted to go and see the inside of. They were very popular in those days, these house tours. I joined the Junior League. I did volunteer work with the Junior League. So I was just a housewife, as they say, and very happy about it.

DePue: Just a housewife. Does that phrase bother you a little bit?

Schlafly: Oh, I laugh when people say that. (laughs)

DePue: So the answer is no.

Schlafly: No, no. I'm not going to let that bother me.

DePue: Tell us more about the Junior League.

Schlafly: Well the Junior League of St. Louis was part of a national organization. Basically, it was an organization of rather well-to-do women who had time on their hands and wanted to do something good for humanity and some type of volunteer work, so they did all kinds of volunteer work.

DePue: As soon as you got married, you stepped away from the working world. Had you and Fred talked about that decision?

Schlafly: Not very much. It would have been kind of impractical to drive to downtown St. Louis from Alton, Illinois, about a forty minute drive in traffic every day. That didn't look like a very good thing to do, though I will say, what Fred gave me for a wedding present was a car. I had never had a car before. My life was the life of riding streetcars, so cars were a new experience.

DePue: Do you remember the model of the car?

Schlafly: It was a Ford.

DePue: A good, practical Ford?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: Did you consider looking for work in the Alton area?

Schlafly: No.

DePue: Why not?

Schlafly: Well, I didn't need to have a job and didn't plan to have a job after I was married.

DePue: What did you plan to do, other than these volunteer activities?

Schlafly: I planned to be a wife and mother.

- DePue: Tell us a little bit more about Alton. I guess what I'm thinking about—you did talk about it quite a bit—is this a blue collar town?
- Schlafly: No, it really isn't. As I say, it had a beautiful subdivision that really is prettier than anything in St. Louis, where a lot of these big CEOs lived: the Olins and the Levises and the people who were the heads of great, enormous companies. It was just a very, very nice town. When all the bosses live in the town too, it just does a lot to make the town a very interesting place.
- DePue: What were the politics like in Alton?
- Schlafly: Well, I wasn't thinking about politics at that moment. We were married in '49. My first child was born in 1950 and then I was pretty busy with the baby. Then my life changed in 1952.
- DePue: That's where we're leading up to and that's why I was asking for what Alton was like at the time. So I guess we'll get into that subject when we talk about your run for Congress in '52. I want to talk a little bit more about your activities in some of these volunteer efforts and also what Fred was doing at the time. So let's go to the volunteer activities. It looks like you kept very busy in that respect.
- Schlafly: Yes. I was doing something in the YWCA probably every week. That was my principal charity at that time. There were a number of others too.
- DePue: I had been reading obviously, about some of the other volunteer work that you've done over the years. Is this when you started with the League of Women Voters?
- Schlafly: I don't think I was ever active in the League of Women Voters. What I did join were Republican women's clubs. I started that, and a good part of my life was working with Republican women's clubs.
- DePue: What drew you to the Republican women's clubs? Was that Fred's suggestion; was that your idea?
- Schlafly: Oh I don't know, they probably came after me.
- DePue: Did Fred have a reputation by that time of being active in Republican politics?
- Schlafly: No, not in politics. But as I said, he had been the president of several bar associations and the Red Cross and the Community Chest, all of those civic organizations.
- DePue: I know that he had a reputation—maybe this is later—for being a strong anti-Communist and being vocal, being a person who was willing to go out and speak and write on the issue. Was that the case even at this time in your lives?

Schlafly: Well, I would say the anti-Communist work started around 1960, which is a little bit later.

DePue: How about the Daughters of the American Revolution?

Schlafly: I joined a couple years after I was married. That was another big part of my life, because I became very active in that, held a number of offices, both locally and statewide.

DePue: What attracted you to that organization?

Schlafly: Well, it's a great organization of women who believe in the United States of America, who are glad we won the American Revolution and are proud to have had ancestors who fought in it. I ultimately traced seven of my ancestors, who qualified me for the Daughters of the American Revolution, coming from a number of different states. I think one was New York, one was Pennsylvania, one was Maryland, and a couple of them were Frenchmen from what's now Missouri.

DePue: Did you know about a couple of these connections though, even before you started to think about joining the group? Is that something that you grew up with knowing about?

Schlafly: No. I knew it was there but I didn't have any contact with it. I didn't have any other members of my family who had ever joined.

DePue: I've also read that you continued to do speeches at the time.

Schlafly: When I married, I still had a few speech assignments scheduled from my days at the St. Louis Union Trust Company; some on women's financial problems, wills and trusts. Then, when I joined up with Republican clubs they wanted a more Republican speech. I have to say that in those years—we're talking about the 1950s and 60s—nobody ever mentioned the word conservative. That wasn't in the lingo. But the Republicans, the ordinary, run-of-the-mill, middle west Republicans, were what we would look upon today as **extremely** conservative. That's just the way the whole Republican apparatus was.

DePue: What words did they use to describe themselves at the time? Especially if you're considering there is a difference between what you've just discussed in terms of Midwest Republicans and those that you're going to spend a lot of time writing about later in your life, and the eastern elites?

Schlafly: Well, we didn't use the word conservative. Conservative did not come into political lingo as a label that we accepted until Barry Goldwater's book, *The Conscience of a Conservative*. That title was the invention of Dean Clarence Manion. That's when we began to think of ourselves as conservatives. But we were just plain, ordinary Republicans, and ordinary Republicans were critical of big spending, deficit spending, critical of more government control, critical

of wage and price control, critical of the New Deal and Franklin Roosevelt, critical of the United Nations, critical of foreign entanglements. Just the ordinary, run-of-the-mill Republicans in the Midwest.

DePue: You went through quite an interesting litany of things that your run-of-the-mill, Midwestern Republicans were critical of at the time. How would you express that in terms of what Midwestern Republicans were **for** at that time?

Schlafly: Senator Bob Taft. Ordinary middle west Republicans were big supporters of Bob Taft.

DePue: Robert Taft of Ohio.

Schlafly: Of Ohio.

DePue: Were you for preservation of the Constitution?

Schlafly: Well of course. That didn't even seem to be an argument. (both chuckle) Nobody was challenging the Constitution itself, at least not overtly.

DePue: I understand you also did a little bit of radio commentary?

Schlafly: That was later.

DePue: Here's something that has come up: affiliation or some association with the John Birch Society in the early fifties.

Schlafly: Well, it was there.

DePue: Were you ever a member?

Schlafly: No. I went to one day of a two-day seminar that Robert Welch spoke at in Chicago—I can't remember exactly when that was—but he was very angry at me that I didn't stay the two days, but one day was enough. There were a lot of good people who were concerned. I think that's a little bit later. I don't think we're talking about the early fifties now. I think that was a little bit later.

DePue: Okay.

Schlafly: But the day that changed my life and got me into politics was in 1952. I think it was early in the year, because Illinois had an early primary. Illinois primaries used to be in April, and so it was probably in January, around then. The local party officials—I'm talking about the County Chairman and State Committeeman, people like that—came and called on us one evening, to try to talk Fred into running for Congress. People thought that 1952 was going to be a big Republican year. The district at that time was Madison and St. Clair counties, which were definitely Democratic Party counties, but there was hope and they wanted to talk Fred into running. This conversation went on for some

time. Fred had no interest in running. He liked to read the paper and talk about politics, but he was busy supporting his new family. Finally, in the course of the conversation, somebody said, "Well Phyllis, why don't **you** be the candidate?" We kicked that around for a while and the bottom line was that I agreed to do that. So that was quite an experience.

I ran for Congress in 1952, with the full support of the Party. You know, all this stuff about women being discriminated against is so ridiculous. I had the full support of the Party; they wanted me to run. The district at that time was pretty much run by the Republican machine in East St. Louis, which was part of the district.

DePue: St. Clair County?

Schlafly: Yes, St. Clair County and the McGlynn machine. They liked to make all the decisions, so they had their candidate for this office, and his name was John Godlewski. So I announced I was running. This was kind of a curiosity for a lot of people. Here's a young woman who just moved into Illinois and has a baby who's—let's see—I think he was under two.

DePue: He would have been one, you're probably right, because he was born in 1950.

Schlafly: Yeah, he was born in November of 1950, and now we're talking about January of '52. A lot of events were set up. The Party set up a lot of events for me to talk to people; other people set up debates. The primary had a lot of press.

DePue: When you say the Party, you had also mentioned that the machine's candidate was John Godlewski, is that how you pronounce his name?

Schlafly: Godlewski. Are you going to ask me to spell it?

DePue: I found the spelling in one of these books.

Schlafly: Oh, good. Well, the machine—it's a matter of control. That's what political machines are. It's not so much a matter of ideology, it's control. They had their guy, which was all right, and we had a spirited primary campaign with quite a number of debates. I ran a rather intellectual campaign. I mean, I talked seriously about the issues and I won. To the surprise of a lot of people, I won the primary. That was quite a big news event.

DePue: What do you credit your victory in the primary to?

Schlafly: Hard work and going to all the meetings, and trying to round up the Republican votes. It's only Republicans who vote in the Republican primary. I was talking a line that they liked and there were a lot of big issues in 1952. We were ready to get rid of the whole Roosevelt-Truman administrations.

Running for Congress was kind of simple. When I put out my press releases, I would type them myself, write them of course, and type them on my old Royal standard typewriter, with about six or seven onionskin carbon copies. Now, a lot of people today don't even know what carbon paper is, or the onionskin that we put behind it. So if you hit the wrong key, you had to fold your papers and erase it on all the copies. Then I would send them out to the press. So I was putting out a pretty good line of press releases about substantive issues.

DePue: Mrs. Schlafly, you were doing this for a candidate not too many years before this yourself, when you came back from Washington, D.C., and you were running somebody else's campaign. Who was your press secretary? Who did all of these things for you?

Schlafly: Oh, in that primary? I think I did everything myself.

DePue: So you had no campaign manager?

Schlafly: No, I had no campaign manager. I had no staff. The district was small enough that I never had to be gone overnight. I could drive. In those days, I could drive myself to East St. Louis, speak at a meeting and drive home, and I wasn't worried about crime or anything else. It was a different world.

DePue: I want to clarify one thing because I've read two different accounts of this in two different books—one by Carol Felsenthal, which we mentioned yesterday, and of course Donald Critchlow. Critchlow mentions it's the twenty-first district and Felsenthal mentions it's the twenty-fourth district. Do you recall which congressional district it was at the time?

Schlafly: I can't remember but of course, redistricting has changed the numbers of the districts and I just can't tell you which is right.

DePue: I think it's likely this time around that we had nineteen congressional districts in Illinois, and it looks like we're heading down to eighteen.

Schlafly: Right. Once we got past the primary, the next big thing that happened in my life was the Illinois Republican State Convention. Now this was a big event at the armory, I think, in Springfield, Illinois. Now you're talking about pre-air conditioning times, and it attracted five thousand people. Because I was this person who was getting a lot of press as a Republican nominee, I was invited to be the keynote speaker at that convention; that turned out to be a tremendous success. I hit all the hard issues and I got repeated applause during my speech; that's what made me known all over Illinois as a Republican speaker. Following that, I just had an endless stream of Republican organizations and Lincoln Day Dinners and Republican women's clubs, et cetera, who wanted me to come and speak.

- DePue: You'd mentioned, earlier in your career you didn't like the idea of public speaking; you were more comfortable with writing. By this time in your career are you comfortable with it?
- Schlafly: Getting better.
- DePue: You had obviously mastered it, I mean the success that you did at that Republican Convention.
- Schlafly: Well, (chuckles) once I had the speech written, it was an easy audience. They were ready to cheer for anything, I think.
- DePue: I want to read a quote that came out in the *Globe Democrat* at the time, right after you had your primary victory. It accompanied a famous photo of you as well. "Mrs. Schlafly cooks her husband's breakfast Wednesday morning after winning the nomination. She doesn't let political success interfere with her wifely duties."
- Schlafly: Well that's, I think, the picture of me in my kitchen in an apron.
- DePue: Right.
- Schlafly: That picture went **all over** the country. We had a friend in New York who opened up one of the big New York papers (chuckling) and saw me standing there in that apron.
- DePue: Now later on, your opponents twenty years later, in the ERA fight, would have said that's an incredibly sexist quote in the newspaper. Did it bother you at the time? Did you even think about it in that context?
- Schlafly: No, just laughed about it.
- DePue: What was Fred's view about your running for Congress?
- Schlafly: He was very, **very** supportive, in every way. He enjoyed politics vicariously through me, loved every bit of it, didn't want to do it himself, but he was just very happy to support me doing it.
- DePue: Winning that election would have had serious implications though, to the marriage I would think, just by virtue of your being in Washington, D.C. or possibly moving to Washington, D.C. Did that subject come up between the two of you?
- Schlafly: We knew the odds of winning in November were not good. It was a 2-to-1 Democratic district. Running was the way to get all these issues out on the table, which we liked doing. I think we never really worried about the problems that would happen if I had won. You're right, it would have caused a lot of problems, but we just didn't put that on our worry list.

- DePue: Then what you're saying is your motivation for running isn't an expectation to win, but to get the issues out.
- Schlafly: That's a fair statement.
- DePue: Why did you feel so strongly about those issues?
- Schlafly: Oh, well they were very important issues. I belonged to the groups that thought practically everything Roosevelt and Truman did was wrong. It was moving us into Socialism, it was spending our money, it was going into debt, it was taking control of our lives, and we didn't like it. We wanted to overthrow it and have a conservative government.
- DePue: Was part of the concern then, that you didn't feel and Fred didn't feel that that was finding a voice in American politics at the time?
- Schlafly: No, it did have a voice in American politics. They just hadn't been winning. There wasn't any particular voice in my district, so I was glad to **be** that voice in my district.
- DePue: Who was your opponent in the general election?
- Schlafly: Well, then we got into the general election. The Democrat was Mel Price, who went on to be, I think, the longest serving member of the House in history. He had a lifetime job there and he was very unhappy about running against a woman. We had a big debate at the Alton City Hall and he didn't want to shake hands with me. He was just very unhappy. In fact, he was so worried about this election, because I was having so much favorable press, that he felt he had to get married. So he got married during the campaign and took his bride to the Democratic National Convention for their honeymoon. (quiet laugh)
- DePue: You mentioned that he was so upset about running against a woman. Do you think it was your being a woman or the issues you were presenting or how vocal and persistent you were in presenting those issues?
- Schlafly: Well both. If I say so myself, I was pretty articulate about the issues. I would stand behind those speeches. They were kind of intellectual, hard-hitting speeches.
- DePue: Were you getting any comments or pressure behind the scenes from the Republican establishment in the district saying, Phyllis, you need to tone this down, you need to moderate your views?
- Schlafly: No, never. Oh, no, no. The Republican organization was fully supportive of me in every way.

DePue: I'd like to go through the issues if we could, a little bit. One of them: this is 1952, the presidential candidate is [Dwight D.] Eisenhower. Were you an Eisenhower supporter?

Schlafly: No, I was a Robert Taft supporter. One of the exciting events was when Bob Taft came campaigning in Alton, I had the honor of introducing him at what was then West Junior High School. That was an exciting event. He's a wonderful man; I was proud to have supported him. And the whole Republican Party in Illinois was for Bob Taft. When we went to the Republican Convention in 1952 in Chicago, the Illinois delegation was fifty-nine votes for Taft and one for Eisenhower. So that tells you where the party was. So I was not out of step. I was right where everybody wanted me to be.

DePue: This is going to be important because of the book that you published in 1964, but I want to spend a little bit of time on each one of these Republican conventions, and your education and evolution as a political force because of your participation in those conventions. So what was it that happened in that 1952 convention that led to Eisenhower's victory?

Schlafly: You mean why did Eisenhower beat Taft at the 1952 convention?

DePue: Yes.

Schlafly: Because it was stolen. Bob Taft should have been the candidate. The Eisenhower crowd made nasty, dishonest claims about Bob Taft, claiming he was stealing votes, which was ridiculous. He was one of the most honorable men who was ever in politics. Then they went to Governor Earl Warren of California and made a deal with him, that if he would throw his vote to the Eisenhower side on the crucial votes—on credentials and rules—which come up before the nomination, that he would be guaranteed the first vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court. They made that deal. Eisenhower knew nothing about it, but Eisenhower's agents, like Herbert Brownell, made that deal with Warren. The crucial votes were on credentials, whether you're going to seat the honest delegates or the ones that the Eisenhower people tried to steal, and then on the rules. The whole California delegation voted with the Eisenhower people and that's basically why Eisenhower was nominated.

DePue: Was part of their argument that they didn't feel that Taft was electable, that Eisenhower would be a much more popular candidate?

Schlafly: You mean what did the people we now call RINOs [Republicans In Name Only], whom we then called Rockefeller Republicans, what did they think? No, they just wanted to control, and they didn't think they could control middle-western Republicans. They wanted somebody from the east. They had trained and groomed Eisenhower for this, putting him in as a president of one of the universities, for which he was grossly unqualified. But anyway, that

was a good perch for him to wait around to be nominated for president. Eisenhower, they thought, was somebody who could be controlled.

DePue: Eisenhower had famously been quoted, by both Republicans and Democrats, because he was very careful not to reveal his political leanings before this time.

Schlafly: Yes, that's right.

DePue: You've mentioned "they" and you've mentioned a couple names here: Herbert Brownell, Rockefeller—I assume you're talking about Nelson Rockefeller.

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: Who else would you associate with, when you're saying "they", the people who are behind the scenes trying to control this?

Schlafly: Well, you have to read my book, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, to get all the names.

DePue: And they are in there.

Schlafly: Yes, they are in there. Basically, that control at that time, emanated out of Chase Manhattan Bank and the New York financial crowd, who thought they should be running everything. They were the ones who gave us Tom Dewey, but we didn't want him.

DePue: Both in '44 and '48.

Schlafly: Right.

DePue: And Wendell Willkie before him?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: I'm trying to remember who was '36. I've written it down someplace.

Schlafly: Well, it was Alf Landon of Kansas; they allowed him because they knew that no Republican was going to win that year. So they tossed a bone to the middle-west Republican, let him go down in defeat, and then they would control the presidents from there on out.

DePue: Beyond being able to control—and you called them the kingmakers in the book, *A Choice, Not an Echo*.

Schlafly: I'm not the only one to call them kingmakers. *TIME Magazine* called them kingmakers, too.

DePue: Beyond just controlling who was going to be the candidates, what was their agenda?

Schlafly: They were the internationalists. They were the ones who were big into foreign aid handouts, involvements in the international scene.

DePue: So you're suggesting that it was because of their own personal and business/financial interests that they were supporting those positions?

Schlafly: Basically, yes.

DePue: How much of this did you become aware of, did you start to understand because you were there at the 1952 convention?

Schlafly: Republican National Conventions have been a lifetime hobby of mine. I have been to every one, and a delegate at most of them, beginning in 1952. For example, I sat through all the hearings of the 1952 Credentials Committee and saw how they manipulated people, how they forced guys to change their vote, and how it was manipulated to get what they want. I watched it happen. Most people who are delegates to a Republican National Convention are first-timers. You have a little core of people who have been over the ropes many times, but most of them are first-timers, and they don't know what happened before. That's why I wrote *A Choice, Not an Echo* to explain to them how the kingmaker crowd—that is, the New York financial crowd—had manipulated the choice of the presidential nominee in 1936, 1940, 1944, 1948 and 1952. By the time we got to 1964, I thought the people ought to know about it.

DePue: We're going to talk about that a little bit more later. I'm trying to keep on the chronology. Again, this is the heart of what I wanted to get to; it's fascinating stuff. Did you then walk away from that '52 convention very disillusioned with what you saw?

Schlafly: Oh yes, it was a terrible defeat. It was very close. It was just a matter of a couple of votes. It was a bitter defeat for Bob Taft and for everybody who was supporting him.

DePue: Did you have an opportunity at the convention itself to talk to delegates who had been at these previous conventions, where they told you that this was part of a pattern, that the term "the kingmakers" had behind the scenes set up other candidates in the past?

Schlafly: I don't remember that, because I was too busy watching what was going on. But when I wrote *A Choice, Not an Echo*, I had many old-timers who confirmed everything I said.

DePue: Okay. Do you think today, that Robert Taft could have won that election in 1952?

Schlafly: Oh yes, absolutely. Taft was the author of the Taft-Hartley Bill, which put some restrictions on the unions. They used the argument that that was death at the ballot box. That simply was not true, because even after the Taft-Hartley

Bill was passed, over Truman's veto, he won big in Ohio, which is certainly a key state in any presidential roundup.

DePue: And also, as I would think at that time, a strongly unionized state.

Schlafly: Mm-hmm.

DePue: So based on that, you had the belief that if he could win in a state like Ohio, he could certainly carry the entire country.

Schlafly: Right.

DePue: Let's get to the general campaign and you're running against, would you say, a pretty popular opponent in Melvin Price?

Schlafly: I don't think he was particularly popular. He got elected the first time by showing a picture of himself, I think, peeling potatoes in the Army. So he ran with a veteran's aura around him, but it was just a 2-to-1 Democratic district. I did as well as Eisenhower did in that district. It just wasn't in the cards for Republicans to win.

DePue: I'm struck—at that time, how old are you?

Schlafly: I think I was just old enough to be in Congress; twenty-six.

DePue: And a very attractive young lady. Were you blonde?

Schlafly: Sort of.

DePue: Did you consciously use your appearance and that fact in the campaign itself? Did that even cross your mind in terms of the strategy that you had?

Schlafly: No.

DePue: What was the tactics or the strategy that you developed, that you decided on, in running this campaign then?

Schlafly: A straightforward description of the issues and the choice. As I say, the people I talked to and the Republicans were simply opposed to everything Roosevelt and Truman did, and it was time to overturn that, and give us a new leaf and move on.

DePue: The big issue, or at least one of the big issues in that campaign at the national level, and certainly it was part of the debates that you had, was the Korean War. What was your position on the Korean War? By this time, it had been going on for two years and it was down to the point of a stalemate, where not much was happening on that front and not much was happening at the peace talks.

- Schlafly: Well, my position was we should win it. I think with hindsight now, it's too bad we didn't win it.
- DePue: When it first broke out in June of 1950, did you think we got into the war in the right way?
- Schlafly: No. Truman got us into the war without a Declaration of War by Congress, which the Constitution calls for.
- DePue: Would you have been in favor of supporting the war if he had taken it to Congress and gotten that Declaration of War?
- Schlafly: Probably not.
- DePue: Because?
- Schlafly: Well, because war is awful and I didn't think that was our job. It certainly was a big issue, and probably what won it for Eisenhower was when he said, "I will go to Korea."
- DePue: What does that mean?
- Schlafly: We didn't know, but it sounded good. (chuckle)
- DePue: I want to go back to 1950 and your initial feelings about whether or not this was the right war to be in at the right time. That's kind of a paraphrase of a famous quote about the Korean War. At least from what I've read, you and Fred already had strong positions about Communism, hated the idea of Communism, hated the idea of Communists within the American society and even government, but also the spread of Communism overseas. So here's a case and point, where the United States is standing up against the spread of Communism overseas, but you've just said that you weren't necessarily in favor of fighting that particular war in 1950.
- Schlafly: No. I think [Ronald] Reagan was better, that he won the Cold War without firing a shot, as Margaret Thatcher said. Just because there are bad guys in other countries, doesn't mean we have to go to war against them.
- DePue: So at the time, you would have reconciled to yourself that the entire Korean Peninsula would have gone Communist?
- Schlafly: Unless we had a Constitutional Declaration of War, which it probably could not have gotten. I mean the UN decided that we should go in. I just didn't believe in the UN making any such decisions.
- DePue: If there had been a Declaration of War by Congress, then you would have supported the war?

- Schlafly: Well sure, if that's our policy, yes.
- DePue: But 1952 of course, all of that is fait accompli, it's already behind you. Your position in 1952 then was to win the war?
- Schlafly: To win the war, yes. We were already in it.
- DePue: What exactly did that mean then? What would we have to do to win that war?
- Schlafly: Just leave it up to [General Douglas] MacArthur.
- DePue: Of course, MacArthur was out of the picture in 1951 when Truman fired him. Do you remember your reaction when you heard that news, that he was fired?
- Schlafly: No, I don't.
- DePue: Were you a strong MacArthur supporter though?
- Schlafly: Yes. We know that Taft had made, I think, an agreement with MacArthur, that if Taft had gotten the nomination in '52, MacArthur would have been his vice presidential choice.
- DePue: Some of the things that I've read in terms of what you were advocating in 1952, during the campaign, were a blockade against China, and bombing the bridges over the Yalu River, which is of course, the way that the Chinese were getting their reinforcements and their supplies in, and basically an escalation of the war. If you settle for nothing but victory, then you're talking about pushing that line all the way up, so basically, invasion of North Korea again. Does that sound right?
- Schlafly: Well, it's just as MacArthur said, "There's no substitute for victory." We're in the war; let's win it or get out.
- DePue: The fear at that time was if we did push that hard, that that might trigger a much larger war at the worldwide level.
- Schlafly: Well, I would go with MacArthur's wisdom rather than Truman's.
- DePue: Would you have agreed with a lot of the State Department assessment, a lot of the official assessment, that Europe was more important at that time than Asia, that that should be our main focus and that if we get bogged down in Korea, then we're losing track of that focus?
- Schlafly: Well we were bogged down in Korea. Don't ask me to agree with the State Department on anything. (both laugh)
- DePue: One of the phrases that I picked up on is "C2-K1." C2: corruption, Communism; K1, Korea. So let's talk about the corruption issue in the

Truman Administration. Is that something that you discussed quite a bit on the campaign trail?

Schlafly: Yes, and it was a big political issue. Let's see, there was some type of a special fur coat that one of his people got paid off with. The corruption was a big issue then. However, if you compare it with the corruption today, I guess you can look back and say it was petty stuff.

DePue: Would you be willing to say that that second C, Communism, was a more important issue for you in the campaign?

Schlafly: Well yes. We began to talk about the Communist infiltration of the government. I started to study that and talk about it, and it was a big issue.

DePue: This is of course, during the timeframe that Joseph McCarthy, "McCarthyism" as it's become known today, is very much a political issue. Where did you stand on his involvement with exposing people within the administration who were Communists or Communist affiliated?

Schlafly: Oh, well, McCarthy is a great hero. He was absolutely right. Finally, the release of the Venona Papers⁷ has shown that, if anything, he never told it as bad as the infiltration really was.

DePue: Certainly you're aware that the traditional, the conventional view of McCarthyism though, is that it was this terrible scourge on American society at the time.

Schlafly: That's what you will find if you look in all the textbooks, yes, and it's all a big lie. He was a fine, honorable man. He's probably the most investigated man in American history. They did everything to try to get some type of scandal on him. They even put a mail cover so they were able to read all the mail he was getting, which is extraordinary in this country, and they were never able to find any scandal on McCarthy.

DePue: Then what eventually led—I think it was 1954—to his official censure in the Senate?

Schlafly: When you read the text of the censure, it's pretty silly. Nobody can really understand what it means. They didn't censure him for any of the things that they really talk about. He never called somebody a Communist who wasn't a Communist. Everybody he fingered **was** a Communist.

DePue: I think part of that—I'm a little bit vague on my recollection here—but when he went after the Army, and George Marshall in particular.

⁷ Release of the National Security Agency's long-secret Venona archive of decoded Soviet intelligence messages transmitted to and from Moscow during World War II led to "a flood of scholarship," engendering growing controversy among Cold War historians of both the left and right.

Schlafly: Well, Marshall was a disaster.

DePue: In what way?

Schlafly: Marshall was the commencement speaker at my college graduation. He was hopeless. Marshall was the one who devised the extraordinarily stupid plan to win World War II by an island-by-island invasion of Japan, with an estimated cost of a million American casualties. He was a terrible man. His views and positions are simply unacceptable. That was one of the **worst** plans that was ever devised; the only reason they didn't go through with it was that Truman dropped the atom bomb and they didn't have to. But just think of all the American guys who never could have come home and gotten married and had families, who would have died on the beaches of Japan. That was Marshall's plan.

DePue: What did you think about the Marshall Plan in Europe after the war, to rebuild Europe?

Schlafly: Well, I don't know why we should have done that. I was really opposed to most of the foreign aid. Some of it certainly did a lot of good for those countries, but it grew into an enormous transfer of American wealth. Now we see that one of [Barack] Obama's plans, when he told Joe the plumber he wanted to redistribute the wealth. He didn't just mean from taxpayers to non-taxpayers in this country; he means from the United States to foreign countries.

DePue: Going back though, into this 1952 campaign and Joseph McCarthy, did you have any direct association with McCarthy?

Schlafly: Well I did meet him, but I didn't have any connection with any of his plans or speeches or strategies in any way.

DePue: Very much part of the dialogue at that time, when you're talking about Communism and Communist infiltration in the United States, was of course Alger Hiss, Whitaker Chambers, [Julius and Ethel] Rosenbergs.⁸ Was that part of what the standard debate would have been during that '52 campaign, for you?

Schlafly: Yes. In 1949, the year I was married, Fred and I went to a lot of social events. There were pre-wedding parties and there were post-wedding parties, and we had an active social life. The conventional wisdom was, Alger Hiss was innocent. But Fred was a reader of the *Chicago Tribune*, which had the truth, reporting about Hiss and the trial, and he knew Alger Hiss was guilty. That was a real revelation of how the press was misleading people on the Communist issue, because now, you can't dispute the fact that Alger Hiss was

⁸ Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were convicted and executed for conspiracy to commit espionage. It was for many years a liberal cause celebre, with progressives then feeling that the Rosenbergs were unjustly convicted.

guilty and he was properly convicted. There are a few diehards still trying to defend him, but there's no way he can be defended any more. But at that time, I will say, most of the people around here thought he was innocent, but if you read the *Chicago Tribune*, you were getting the true facts that you weren't getting in the St. Louis papers.

DePue: You say that was a revelation, an understanding about the media, at the time?

Schlafly: The media, yes.

DePue: That it was—again, I don't want to put words in your mouth. The revelation from your perspective was what, in terms of how they portrayed the news?

Schlafly: That they were concealing the Communist infiltration.

DePue: Are you willing to put a motivation behind why they were doing that?

Schlafly: No. It's just the way it is. The liberals developed the idea that if you attack the Communists, you're just getting too close to them, and so they felt compelled to defend the Communists.

DePue: They being the liberals, or they being the press, or both?

Schlafly: The liberals, wherever they were.

DePue: Do you think there was a bias in the media at that time?

Schlafly: Oh sure. I saw the bias in Alger Hiss, yes. The press was very unkind to Whitaker Chambers, and very dismissive of him.

DePue: Another one of the issues that would have been—

Schlafly: And I want to point out that McCarthy was very popular at that time. He made a speech for Eisenhower's election in '52 that was very helpful to Eisenhower. McCarthy was a hero to conservatives, Republicans, and I think most of the American people.

DePue: You had already made the distinction between the Republicans in the Midwest, compared to the Republicans in the eastern part of the country. Do you think that McCarthy appealed more to that Midwest strain of Republicanism?

Schlafly: Probably. He was from Wisconsin.

DePue: What was your position on the draft? Obviously, there had been a draft that wasn't pursued aggressively, because the United States didn't need a large military until 1950, and then of course you needed the draft. What was your position on the draft?

Schlafly: I don't think I ever said anything one way or the other on that. If you're fighting a war, you've probably got to have a draft.

DePue: Okay.

Schlafly: But we're doing quite well without a draft today. I tell the college students, you are very fortunate to live in the post-Reagan era, when you don't face the draft.

DePue: Did you have any debates with Price?

Schlafly: Quite a few, yes. He was kicking and screaming all the way. He didn't want debates.

DePue: If he didn't want debates, how did you manage to have debates with him? Would you just show up at the same venue?

Schlafly: Well, the organization set it up. I don't know if we had more than one—I can't remember—but the one at the Alton City Hall was quite memorable. Of course, I didn't set it up. I don't remember whether it was the League of Women Voters or somebody else set it up and talked him into coming. I didn't have anything to do with that.

DePue: You say it was quite memorable. What do you remember about that debate?

Schlafly: I (chuckle) thought I won it (DePue laughs) and I mentioned earlier, he didn't want to shake hands with me. (laughs)

DePue: Do you remember any particular telling moments or specific issues that were discussed?

Schlafly: No, but I do know Korea was discussed. I don't remember much else.

DePue: How would you characterize him as a campaigner?

Schlafly: Well, I told you, I think he's the longest serving member of the House, so he convinced the majority of voters in that district that he should be their Congressman.

DePue: But it's not hard to do if you've got an overwhelming majority of Democrats in the district, is it?

Schlafly: That's right.

DePue: From the accounts that I've read, you clearly out-campaigned him and you certainly outworked him, which anybody who knows your history up to this point, would not have been surprised by that. Do you think the Republican

establishment were surprised at how vigorously, how well you actually ran that campaign, looking back at it?

Schlafly: Yes, probably.

DePue: As you already mentioned, the election day comes. You lose by over 60 percent vote for Price versus yours, but it was roughly the same percentage in terms of Eisenhower versus [Adlai] Stevenson, for the district?

Schlafly: Roughly, yes.

DePue: Did that disappoint you when you heard the results?

Schlafly: Well, I figured it was expected. I didn't go into any depression about it.

DePue: Did you and Fred go into debt over the...?

Schlafly: Oh no. I've never been in debt.

DePue: How did you finance the campaign?

Schlafly: I suppose I had some contributions. I'm sure I had some. It wasn't very much. It was not an expensive campaign. I told you how I put out my press releases, and that only took a few postage stamps every week. I drove to all the meetings, never had to be gone overnight. I'm sure I had some donations, enough to do it. Of course we laughed about this and told it so often I don't know if it really happened, but in Illinois, there's a custom that candidates run a little ad in the paper after the election, thanking their voters who voted for them. Fred used to say he ran an ad that said, "Phyllis Schlafly thanks all those who voted for her in yesterday's election, and her husband thanks the many more who did not." (both laugh)

DePue: Was Fred supportive through this entire campaign?

Schlafly: Oh, completely supportive.

DePue: Again, this goes back to the whole issue that we flirted with before, in terms of you, a very attractive young lady, a young mother, running for office, and you're married to a successful lawyer at the time. But the inevitable happens, with people wondering, okay, who's really in charge, who's the dominant personality in that relationship? Did you hear any of that during the campaign itself?

Schlafly: No. I just don't think gender was ever an issue in Illinois politics. We had a couple of very distinguished Congresswomen who were in the U.S. House; everybody admired them. Marguerite Stitt Church had a big reputation. There was another one whose name I've forgotten. Faye Searcy was elected statewide, as one of the state officers. I just don't even think gender was an

issue. I never met anybody who admitted that he voted for or against me because I was a woman.

DePue: One of the questions you occasionally did get though apparently, was this one: Did you wear the pants in the family?

Schlafly: Well, I don't remember that and I certainly didn't wear pants.

DePue: You did when you were working (chuckle) in the ammunition plant.

Schlafly: Yes, that's right.

DePue: Well here is one of the responses you gave at that time, just to kind of de-fuse that perhaps. "I want to thank my husband Fred for letting me come here."

Schlafly: Oh yes, well I did use that when I got into the feminism fight, because that used to just annoy the feminists **so** much. (laughs)

DePue: Is that to say that that's one of the things you liked to do was annoy them?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: Again, this is right after the campaign, and a question to you I guess. Did you lose because your name was Phyllis, not Phillip?

Schlafly: No, I lost because they had twice as many Democratic votes as Republican votes in the district I was running in.

DePue: Here's the direct quote and you paraphrased it awfully close. "No, I lost because I ran in the 24th District and I'm a Republican, not a Democrat. Sex had nothing to do with it."

Schlafly: Well, that's right, although many newspapers used to refer to me as the Alton housewife. That was kind of a label they hung on me, which was okay.

DePue: You don't think that either hurt you or helped you in the campaign?

Schlafly: No.

DePue: I want to go back now and spend a little bit of time, now that we're past this campaign, and you've got a young child at home now. I want to take some time here and talk about being both a wife and a mother. This is going to obviously focus especially on the fifties, but it's going to extend beyond there as well, and just in terms of the kind of life that you and Fred and the family lived during those years when you had young children. Let's go through the birth order to start with, I guess. Who was born first, was it John?

Schlafly: Yes. John was born in November of 1950. The next one was Bruce, who was born in March of '55.

- DePue: Can I ask why there is such a distance between those two births?
- Schlafly: Because I didn't get pregnant.
- DePue: Was that something that was bothering you after a while?
- Schlafly: Yes, oh it did bother me.
- DePue: What were the doctors telling you?
- Schlafly: They told me, Just relax, you're perfectly capable of getting pregnant again.
- DePue: That's an easy thing to say isn't it?
- Schlafly: So I was. (pause) I did not plan the spacing of my children. They just came when they were going to come. Bruce was born in March of '55 and Roger in the fall of '56. Liza—I'm not sure if it was '58 or '59.
- DePue: I have '58 here, but I was trying to do some math myself and just reading between the lines. Was her birth name Liza?
- Schlafly: No. She decided she wanted to change her name. I gave her the name Phyllis and she didn't like it, so at some point she changed it. I can't remember exactly when.
- DePue: Was she still pretty young at that time, when she changed it?
- Schlafly: I don't remember. Andy was born in '61 and Ann in '64.
- DePue: Describe yourself as a mother.
- Schlafly: Well, I'm a great believer that babies should be nursed by their mother. I nursed all my children for at least six months after they were born. Basically, after a birth, I kind of stayed on the second floor for about six weeks and devoted my attention to the baby.
- DePue: The second floor of the house?
- Schlafly: The second floor of the house, yeah.
- DePue: Now you mentioned breastfeeding the babies. Was that not typical at that time in American society?
- Schlafly: It wasn't particularly typical, no.
- DePue: Someone had convinced American mothers that that wasn't necessarily a good thing?

- Schlafly: Yes. The people who think they're smart go through certain fads. I think they were just coming through a fad that a baby was supposed to be put on a very rigid schedule of feeding, and you weren't supposed to interfere with that schedule no matter how much the baby cried. They went through this phase and I never agreed with that. I thought if the baby opens his mouth, give him some milk; so I believe that a little baby should be taken care of and fed as often as he wants to be fed.
- DePue: Was this at a time when Benjamin Spock's book on child rearing was popular?
- Schlafly: It may be, but I never read it. I don't know what he was saying because I never read it.
- DePue: Once the kids got a little bit older and started getting ready for school.
- Schlafly: Well, that's a big thing in my life. When my oldest child—naturally, I thought he was brilliant and destined for great things. I looked around and decided to find some expert teacher in the Alton School System, to give him a head start by some special reading lessons in the summer before the first grade. At that time, we had a newspaper called the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* and they serialized a book every now and then, and they serialized Rudolf Flesch's great book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*. Well, I read the book and believed it. Of course he explained how the education system had given up the teaching of phonics and was just teaching what they called the whole word or look-say method, which basically teaches the kid to memorize a few dozen words, add a few more words for each grade, and never learn how to sound out the syllables of a word. When I took John to have these lessons from this expert teacher, she would be in the front room of her house and I sat on a swinging chair on the porch. I could tell, she wasn't teaching him to read. She was just teaching him to memorize a few words. What Rudolf Flesch said was true. So I bought the materials that he recommended and did not enter John in the first grade, taught him how to read at home, followed Rudolf Flesch's instructions, and then entered him in the second grade, already a good reader.
- DePue: Was there an existing kindergarten program at that time?
- Schlafly: There was and he didn't adapt to kindergarten. I since then have been turned off to kindergarten and think it's a mistake. I didn't use it for any of my other children.
- DePue: So John started at kindergarten but didn't last there very long?
- Schlafly: Yes, that's right, I think. I think that was the way it was.
- DePue: You don't remember any particulars about that though, just that he didn't take to it?

Schlafly: He didn't take to it and then I didn't try kindergarten on any of the others. All my children, really, started school in the second grade.

DePue: Wasn't there a requirement at the time, that they had to be enrolled in kindergarten or first grade at least?

Schlafly: No. The Illinois law was they had to be in school at age seven, and all this happened before age seven.

DePue: Was there an assumption then, from Illinois' perspective, that you're going to start in first grade? What was it that got them into the second grade to begin with? Did they test out of first grade?

Schlafly: I entered him in St. Peter and Paul parochial school; they had a very intelligent nun who was the principal, who had apparently taught all over the country or world or something, and she said no problem, we'll just give him a test. So they gave him a test and she said, No problem. He went right to the second grade. So when the others came along, they knew my children could already read, so they went right to second grade.

DePue: Were they then on the young side for second graders?

Schlafly: Yes, they were probably all a year young, because I went through school a year young and I was convinced that was the way to go. I'm not completely convinced of that now. When I polled my children after they were grown, I think they split three and three as to whether they thought that was a good idea.

DePue: Whether or not they should have started either in the first or the second grade?

Schlafly: No. Whether they should have gone through school a year young.

DePue: Okay.

Schlafly: No, no, they all knew that I gave them a tremendous gift when I taught them how to read at home and start in the second grade. There's no dispute about that. That was the best thing that ever happened to them. The only issue was, should they be a year young, and I'll say they split three to three on that.

DePue: Can you recall specifically how that broke out?

Schlafly: No I can't.

DePue: Did you enjoy being a stay-at-home mom, with all that that means?

Schlafly: Oh yes, oh sure.

DePue: Did you enjoy house cleaning or cooking or rearing the children more?

Schlafly: Rearing the children. I never had anybody to look after the children. I did that myself.

DePue: Again, I don't want to get too far ahead of this myself, but of course this is all going to be part of the challenge that you get into in the 1970s, that you're getting from the NOW [National Organization for Women] people—all kinds of questions about what kind of mother you actually were at the time. So that's why I think it's important that we kind of flesh this out, when you're actually in those critical years in the fifties and sixties. How about a cook? Did you enjoy cooking?

Schlafly: Yeah, I enjoyed cooking. Oh, I always had good food.

DePue: What was the typical routine then, when the kids were at home? Everybody sit around the breakfast table together?

Schlafly: Not really. (pause – chuckles) I don't know how to answer that question. I don't know what a typical routine is.

DePue: Part of the lore, the mystery about the fifties, fortunately or unfortunately, however you want to define it, is some of those sitcoms of the 1950s. "Father Knows Best," "Leave it to Beaver," with the mothers cooking the breakfast and everybody sitting at the table. You're not having a bowl of cereal probably; you're having eggs and bacon or toast or other things like that.

Schlafly: Not in my house, (DePue chuckles) no. They all grew up on a bowl of hot cooked Roman Meal with wheat germ and real cream on it; I told them that was what the Roman Army marched on to conquer the world and that is breakfast, and there's no variation. It's Roman Meal with wheat germ and real cream—hot, cooked that morning.

DePue: Now some of the kids I guess, in being interviewed for the books, talked about that this was—I'm probably going to paraphrase this entirely wrong—this was your health-food-craze era.

Schlafly: Yeah. I was into health food before it was cool to be into health food. For many years, every Saturday I would drive to a farm in Edwardsville and buy twelve gallons of unpasteurized milk and twelve dozen fertile eggs, and that would last us for the week. You asked me what's the difference between unpasteurized milk and milk you buy at the grocery store. I will tell you it's about the same difference as between fresh strawberries and canned strawberries.

DePue: Or how about the analogy, fresh grown tomatoes versus store-bought tomatoes?

Schlafly: Yeah, yeah.

- DePue: Why? Why did you insist on having that kind of diet for the kids?
- Schlafly: Well, I wanted them to have a good diet, grow up big and strong.
- DePue: We talked about a couple things already. You were certainly no fan of the conventional wisdom at that time, that breastfeeding wasn't necessary and maybe not even good. You were no fan of the new fads in education as far as reading is concerned. What was going on in manufacturing or production of food that you weren't convinced of?
- Schlafly: It wasn't that I was **against** anything; it's that I was **for** healthy food. I bought little jars of salmon straight from Alaska, that weren't gooped up with any kind of preservatives, from people who caught their own salmon. Of course, we never had any soft drinks in the house. You look in my refrigerator all my life and you won't find any soft drinks. (pause – reflecting) What else did we have? Well, I served a good diet.
- DePue: Obviously the kids thrived on the diet they got.
- Schlafly: Yeah.
- DePue: Did you run a pretty tight household in terms of the discipline and the structure and the organization of things?
- Schlafly: (pause) uhh I don't know that I'm—I'm probably not a tough disciplinarian.
- DePue: Which one of the two of you, between you and Fred, was the disciplinarian typically?
- Schlafly: I don't know, we really didn't have any problems. I guess I come from the view that the model you present to them is more important than what you might tell them or demand or whatever.
- DePue: This is the dawn of the TV age. Did you have a TV in the household?
- Schlafly: We did have a TV. Let's see, we watched programs like *Lawrence Welk*. There was some comedy show the kids liked, but TV wasn't big; there were only one or two programs they cared about.
- DePue: Did you tell the kids they could only watch a certain amount of TV a day, or put prohibitions on that?
- Schlafly: No. I didn't need to. There probably was only one program they were interested in. There was some kind of cartoon program they liked, I think. It's the only one I can remember them watching.
- DePue: How about the dinner meal? Was it an expectation that everybody would be at dinner, that you'd sit down around the table together?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: What was the topic of conversations at the dinner table typically?

Schlafly: I can't remember—just ordinary events, family, and maybe political later.

DePue: You don't recall though, that either you or Fred were encouraging the kids to talk about some more sophisticated or political issues, or centered more on what they were doing for that day?

Schlafly: I think so yes.

DePue: Well, they have two parents who, by that time, had a long tradition of keeping very busy themselves. I know that your husband was very active, I'm sure in his work and some other activities, but you were also a multi-tasker if you will. Weren't you still writing and giving speeches during this time?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: Certainly by the time you got up into the early sixties you were.

Schlafly: Yes. I was giving speeches to Republican women's clubs and other events. I became active in DAR.⁹ I became active in the Illinois Federation of Republican Women. I have a note here that I guess one of the first trips I made for politics was in 1954. I made a trip to Washington with the Vigilant Women for the Bricker Amendment. The Bricker Amendment was a lively issue at that time, which was to prevent us from being stuck with treaty law. That was one of the earliest active conservative organizations. We went down to lobby the Senate and Congress, to pass the Bricker Amendment, named after John Bricker of Ohio, which would have protected us against treaty law.

DePue: In what way? From what I read it was that it had to pass some kind of a constitutional test?

Schlafly: That treaties could not override our Constitution or our laws.

DePue: Was that essentially an issue about where sovereignty rested?

Schlafly: It was about sovereignty. It was also about the UN, which is always dreaming up treaties. It's still an issue. I mean, these laws that were passed by Oklahoma and Tennessee last year, to say that their courts cannot consider foreign law or foreign treaties. We're still fighting this issue. The internationalists want to put us under world government. I think the American Constitution is the right way to go, and judges shouldn't be looking at foreign law or treaties. It's the same issue.

⁹ Daughters of the American Revolution

DePue: How did you manage to balance all of these activities—your volunteer work, things like working on the Bricker Amendment, still making speeches—because your emergence in 1952, on the Illinois scene at least, of being a very popular public speaker for these various organizations. How did you manage to balance that and all of the demands of running a pretty active home life as well?

Schlafly: Well, it just all worked in together. I made efficient use of my time. Incidentally, one other—what years are we in now?

DePue: The late fifties.

Schlafly: All right. It was 1957 that Fred was appointed, in the American Bar Association, a member of the ABA Committee on Communist Tactics, Strategy and Objectives. It was a committee of about, oh, maybe a dozen distinguished lawyers from all over the country. All committees have to make reports. Fred was the draftsman of that report, which told what's wrong with Communism and what we ought to do about it, but the very controversial part was a listing of about—don't hold me to the exact number—a dozen, maybe twenty, bad, pro-Communist decisions of the [Chief Justice] Earl Warren Supreme Court. The committee approved this, then it had to be presented at the ABA Convention. For the first time in history, the American Bar Association held its convention in another country; they held it in London. So we had so much invested in this committee report that Fred had written and I had typed it on my Royal typewriter. Let's see, we're talking about '57—well you see Roger was born in the fall of '56, so I was upstairs most of the time. I can remember my typewriter being in the bedroom.

DePue: Well you had said before, he was born in '57. Fifty-six?

Schlafly: Fifty-seven. No, Bruce was born in '55 and Roger in '56.

DePue: Okay.

Schlafly: So now we're in '57, I have my typewriter in the bedroom and I'm typing out these draft revisions. The Internet makes this so easy now, but you know, you had to type it, then you mark it up and then redo it. So Fred and I went to London for that convention, as part of presenting the American Bar Association Report on Communist Tactics, Strategy and Objectives. We got there and presented the report, and all hell broke loose. *U.S. News & World Report* printed large sections of it. It had big press. It was an attack on the Warren Court.

Now Earl Warren—I told you how he got the job—the first Supreme Court vacancy turned out to be the Chief Justice. The Eisenhower people said, But we didn't promise you the Chief Justice. I wasn't there, but I'm told Warren said, You promised the first vacancy, I'm demanding it. So

Eisenhower thought he had to fulfill this pledge that he was no party to. So the American Bar Association wanted to put on the dog for all the British.

DePue: That's why they were in London instead of someplace in the United States?

Schlafly: Yeah. They had talked Earl Warren into coming. Well, if there's anybody Earl Warren hated, it was Richard Nixon. Let's see, what was Richard Nixon in 1957?

DePue: He was still Vice President.

Schlafly: He was Vice President. So if Richard Nixon came to this awesome event of the ABA Convention in London, he would outrank Warren. So I think they had to talk Nixon into not coming, or at least not being there the day Warren was there. So anyway, Warren was there, but then our report hit and Warren was so mad that—he did show up at this important meeting—but the other thing was, he showed up in a brown suit. You know how dressy all the British are, with their cutaways and morning coat jackets and so forth, and everybody talked about him showing up in a brown suit. I mean, he just didn't have enough sense to come in out of the rain. But anyway, they got hit with the Communism report. He got mad; he resigned from the American Bar Association and went home. He was a petty man. Ultimately, the President of the American Bar Association had to go on bended knee to **plead** with him to come back into the American Bar Association.

Well anyway, so we presented this report and it had enormous publicity. Those were the days we had really strong leaders of conservative republicanism in the Senate. Senator Styles Bridges put it in the Congressional Record. Yes, in the Congressional Record, and then we were able to get reprints. We put out millions of copies, **millions of copies**. This became the standard piece that all anti-Communists had to read and study.

DePue: The Communists or anti-Communists?

Schlafly: Anti-Communists, yeah anti-Communists, oh yeah. It was a wonderful report. It really hung the Warren Court out to dry. So at any rate, it was a very successful trip. That was the first time I ever went abroad. Then we did a little traveling around and went down and had a private audience with the Pope.

DePue: Was it John?

Schlafly: No, it's not John; it's Pope Pius XII. We then came home. But that was very successful and this was a **big** part of our life right then.

DePue: Were the children with you on that trip?

Schlafly: No.

DePue: Who was looking after the children?

Schlafly: I can't remember but I certainly had somebody responsible.

DePue: A family member perhaps?

Schlafly: I can't remember. We were gone about a week.

DePue: I'm going to put you on the spot here. Do you recall in essence then, what were the tactics or strategy that the Communists had, that was presented in this important document? What essentially, if you could boil it down in just a couple of sentences, were the strategy and the objectives of the Communists?

Schlafly: Well the first part of it was the court decisions. There were a dozen or so pro-Communist decisions, in other words let them off from what they were being charged with. It talked about the infiltration in government, their manipulation of the media. I've forgotten exactly, but it was our view of Communism in 1957.

DePue: That's good. During this timeframe, did you miss not having any work? Did it even occur to you that you wanted to go look for some work outside the home?

Schlafly: I never considered a job outside the home. I had no paid job. I have not had a paid job since I got married. It wasn't on the table for discussion.

DePue: Let's move into more of your involvement—you've already talked about quite a bit of this—but more involvement in Republican politics during this timeframe as well. We've talked quite a bit about the '52 convention, so let's move on to the '56 convention. Did you attend that convention?

Schlafly: Yes, I was a delegate. I was an Eisenhower delegate.

DePue: By that time, were you proud to be calling yourself an Eisenhower delegate?

Schlafly: Yes. He was up for reelection and I was certainly supportive of him.

DePue: Now when we first started the discussion today, you were mentioning that there wasn't really this notion, or the label at least, that there is such a thing as a conservative, or certainly a conservative Republican. Were you content with where Eisenhower was on some of the issues that you and Fred expressly cared about by 1956?

Schlafly: Well, I'm critical of some of the things Eisenhower did. I don't think Eisenhower was an authentic conservative. He did a number of things that I didn't approve of, which I talked about in *A Choice, Not an Echo*. The strength of the Republican Party diminished significantly while he was in office.

- DePue: The strength of the party in terms of.....?
- Schlafly: Numbers of Republicans in Congress. It was fewer each election, I think.
- DePue: So it went down from '52 to '54, but also a drop in '56, even though he won reelection?
- Schlafly: Well, I can't give you the exact numbers but there was a definite drop in Republican support during the Eisenhower Administration. Meanwhile, I did a lot of civic type of work in those years. I mentioned the YWCA and the Junior League and the Radcliffe house tours. I also did some volunteer work promoting the St. Louis Symphony. Now, we're in 1956 and Communism is getting to be, or was at that time, a big issue. We were all worried about Communist infiltration of our government. I did quite a bit of writing about that and talking about that.

In 1956, I went to some liberal seminar at Pere Marquette Lodge in Grafton, Illinois, which is about a half an hour's drive north of Alton. I saw how they ran a weekend seminar and what a neat place that was to have one. I invented the idea of having an anti-Communist school at Pere Marquette Lodge, which I did in 1956. I got Louis Budenz¹⁰ to come and be the teacher. You know who Louis Budenz was? Well he's an ex-Communist who had some high positions—I've forgotten exactly. He wrote a number of very good books, which are here in the library, and was very good at explaining what Communism is, the theory and the practice, strategy and so forth. And I talked him into coming and giving this three-day, Friday to Sunday, seminar, at Pere Marquette Lodge. I got about fifty important people from around the country to this secluded lodge, which is really the nicest state park in the state of Illinois. He gave one speech after another and it was very successful.

The next year, 1957, I thought, well, that was such a great idea, we'll repeat it. By that time, he had gotten ill and wasn't traveling any more. I looked around for somebody who would be a scholar, to explain Communism. I read some articles by somebody I never heard of, named Dr. Fred Schwarz. They made good sense to me and I tracked him down. I can't remember how we got away from the idea of a weekend at Pere Marquette Lodge, but what I did sign him up for in 1957, was a series of one night stands on successive Tuesdays, I think they were, at the St. Louis Medical Society on Lindell Boulevard. He was a doctor, so that kind of fit. So I engaged him to come and he gave those four speeches. I sold that like a series; you were supposed to go to all of them.

The following year, in 1958, was when he wanted to make it even more important, and that's when we put on the five-day school at the Tower Grove Baptist Church. It was five days, all day, nine to five, five days. I got a

¹⁰ Budenz was active in the trade union movement before joining the American Communist Party. He defected to the FBI in 1945.

number of important men, and I got General Leif Sverdrup to be the honorary chairman of this event, who was a prominent St. Louisian at that time. I've forgotten why he was so prominent but he was.¹¹ We had this school with just one speech after another, all day for five days. He brought in some other speakers. I gave my little speech called, *Are you a Sucker for Slogans?* I talked about the Communist slogans and how people were suckers for it. Then we had various other important people. I would say Schwarz did 60 percent of the speaking, and he was a very compelling speaker. Most of his speeches were an hour and fifteen minutes; he'd take up a subject and he was excellent in explaining the theory and what the Communists were all about, which he had experienced in Australia. He had come here from Australia and his organization was called the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, and that was his first big school. Subsequent to that, he put on these five-day schools all over the country, and that was a major factor in building the conservative movement, a movement that understood how evil Communism is.

DePue: Do you recall much about the kind of people who came to these series of events, where you got the names, how you made the contacts initially?

Schlafly: It was about that time that I was one of the co-founders of a dinner club called the Discussion Club—people who were interested in political and ideological issues. So I would have gotten some of them there. I would have gotten some of them from my political or Republican contacts. I don't know where I got them, but I found them.

DePue: I'm going to back up just a little bit here. I'm intrigued by your going to a liberal event in 1956 at Pere Marquette. Do you recall what motivated you to go to that one?

Schlafly: I wanted to see what was going on.

DePue: To kind of check out the enemy if you will?

Schlafly: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: What was your impression, what you came away from that, in terms of the kinds of things they were discussing?

Schlafly: Well, they were all internationalists. They were State Department, Council on Foreign Relations types, the local branch of the Council on Foreign Relations. I just went to find out what was going on. I wasn't taken in by any of their propaganda.

DePue: Did you walk away disillusioned or surprised?

¹¹ Leif Sverdrup, a Norwegian-American engineer known for his work with the U.S. Air Force as well design of major tunnel and bridges. As a major general, in 1945 he commanded of all engineering forces in the southwest Pacific. He was chief engineer to MacArthur and a national hero of the engineering fraternity.

- Schlafly: No. I walked away with a good idea, (DePue chuckles) what I was going to do.
- DePue: That's the same year that you have the Hungarian Uprising. What did you think of America's response to the Hungarian Uprising?
- Schlafly: Well, we were very critical of Eisenhower on that. Eisenhower sent a bad telegram that basically told the Russians we weren't going to do anything.
- DePue: What do you think he should have—how should he have responded?
- Schlafly: Recognized the anti-Communist government. Extended them immediate diplomatic recognition.
- DePue: Would you have been in favor, at that time, of military intervention of some type?
- Schlafly: No.
- DePue: Let's talk a little bit more about the '56 convention then, if you'll permit me. Anything that strikes you about that convention? Certainly '52 was an important event in your life. Anything that strikes you about '56?
- Schlafly: Well '56 was just an enjoyable convention; it wasn't very controversial. I do believe that is the convention that introduced the teleprompter. The teleprompter was invented by Schlafly, a cousin of my husband; his name is Hubert Schlafly. He invented the teleprompter and he was out there to show it off and to try to get the politicians to use it. I've forgotten most of what he said, but I do remember Adlai Stevenson—was he the Democratic nominee in...?
- DePue: Yes.
- Schlafly: He wouldn't use it, so Hubert called him a head bobber. Stevenson insisted on having his script in front of him. He wouldn't use the teleprompter. People learned how to use it, but that was the first convention and Hubert was out there demonstrating it.
- DePue: Did TV play any role at all at that time, in national politics, especially in the conventions? Do you recall if it was televised even?
- Schlafly: It must have been, but I would have been in the hall, so I don't know.
- DePue: When you say you would have been in the hall, is a lot of the action going on in these conventions not on the floor?
- Schlafly: On the floor yes, yeah on the floor. Yeah.

- DePue: Were you also working on the Credentials Committee at that time?
- Schlafly: No, there wasn't any contest. I don't remember any fights at that convention. Well, there were some people. Eisenhower had had some health problem, a heart attack or something, and there were some people who talked about dumping him, but that didn't go anywhere.
- DePue: I wonder if you can just reflect a little bit on the 1950s in particular—we'll use this venue to bring it up—how the national media treated Eisenhower and treated the Republican Party and the themes of the Republican Party at that time.
- Schlafly: I think the media were probably okay with Eisenhower. I can't remember their doing anything really vicious about him.
- DePue: Did you have a sense at that time, about academia, how they were treating Republicans? Or maybe, what I'm really getting after here is conservative ideas, which are just beginning to percolate, but you said yourself, it's really not a label that's being used at the time.
- Schlafly: (pause) I don't really understand what your question is, but I think the Eisenhower years were sort of a holding time. I don't remember what big fights were during the Eisenhower years.
- DePue: I guess what I'm getting to here, and I apologize for not being able to express this very well. You talked about that you had been exposed to academia in your own career back in the forties, and you remember some occasions where the professors were expressing some ideas that were obviously liberal, but you also found that there was professors who were on the opposite side, and that you felt that that was invigorating, that you were exposed to lots of things and it wasn't structured.
- Schlafly: Well more important than that, was that they weren't forcing any liberal ideas on anybody, as they do today.
- DePue: My question is, did you find that the climate, either in the media or in academia, in the 1950s, was what it was going to become in the seventies, eighties and up through today? Was there a bias that was presented at that time, that you saw?
- Schlafly: Well yes, but it was more subtle. I had a speech that I gave a great many times, called "The Paper Curtain." It was a speech about how conservative books were kept out of the stream, or given bad book reviews. When a new book came out, they would pick a liberal to give a bad review to a conservative book, and that sort of thing. It was a very popular speech. It kind of showed how the media were trying to manipulate the thinking of Americans.

DePue: From what you've said, much less defined, much more subtle than we would experience today, or even twenty or thirty years later.

Schlafly: Well yes, everybody understands it today. In those days, I was the only one talking about it. I was telling them something new.

DePue: But apparently if it's popular, it's resonating among certain circles.

Schlafly: What is "it"?

DePue: Your speech. The idea that, however it was manifested, there was this bias against conservative writers.

Schlafly: Well, people were starting to realize that and they certainly realize it now.

DePue: Maybe that's a good point then, to start discussing 1960. Now you've got a decision to make, because Eisenhower is getting up but he's clearly not going to run for reelection and he can't. Tell us about the 1960 campaign.

Schlafly: Well, can I take a break here?

DePue: Yes, you certainly can.

DePue: We took just a very brief break here and we're back at it again. We're getting close to the 1960 convention. Mrs. Schlafly, do you want to go ahead?

Schlafly: Well in the late 1950s, I was giving quite a lot of speeches. I see by my notes, in 1958, I gave thirty-one speeches. In 1959, I gave ninety-eight speeches. I did some community work for the Red Cross, for the St. Louis Symphony, but I also did quite a bit of involved work for the Illinois Federation of Republican Women, which became a big part of my life. I held a number of chairmanships and offices and so forth, in that organization, and for DAR, and I was Chapter Regent and then held some state offices, all of which required going to meetings and writing reports and that sort of thing.

I also was very active in the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation. The way that got started: at the end of the Fred Schwartz school at the Tower Grove Baptist Church in 1958, we decided that we wanted to have an organization to work specifically against Communism. Schwarz said that he already had one, the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade. Fine, we'll join up and he said no, the Catholics and the Protestants have to be separate. They're not going to work together and so you need to have a Catholic anti-Communist organization. That's when it was started, by Eleanor Schlafly, my husband's sister, by my husband Fred and me. We chose the name Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, because Cardinal Mindszenty of Hungary was the great symbol of anti-Communism and anyway, we didn't want to use the word Catholic, because we didn't want the bishops to have any control of what we were doing.

The organization is still functioning and it's a wonderful organization. I did most of the writing for it, for, I don't know, the first ten years. We put out a monthly report. We had a secondary publication called the *Red Line*, which was reporting directly from the Communist publications, like the *Daily Worker* and the Communist magazine called *Political Affairs*. We had been trained by Schwarz to deal with authentic information about Communism. This was the organization where I initiated the study groups. I developed a study group program of ten lessons, based on Congressional documents; they could get the congressional documents free from their Congressman. They would read one each month and then come together and discuss it. I packaged it in a little flyer that goes in a number-ten envelope. My children have frequently said, "Mother thinks the solution to all problems is a new flyer." I put this out and I repackaged it for the DAR, with their name on it. I repackaged it for the Illinois Federation of Republican Women. I think at one time, we had five thousand of these study groups all over the country.

DePue: Several questions here. What was—is it Mr. Schwarz, Dr. Schwarz?

Schlafly: Dr. Schwarz. He's a physician.

DePue: What was his objection to having Catholics and Protestants involved in the same organization?

Schlafly: They wouldn't get along. It's just a fact of life. They wouldn't get along.

DePue: But from what you talked about, and you started with the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation but you personally, it sounds like you were looking for ways of getting that message out beyond just this Catholic circle as well, and that would be the role of sending out to the Illinois Federation of Republican Women and other organizations also. Is that a fair assessment?

Schlafly: Well, I don't really know what you're saying. Schwarz's organization was identified as evangelical. You're not going to get Catholics to join that and they don't want the Catholics to join them. I mean we have passed this time in history, which we'll talk about later, when we talk about ERA. I think Schwarz's assessment was absolutely correct. So we started the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation and it's still functioning and has done a good job in educating people in general, but Catholics in particular, on the evils of Communism.

DePue: You also talked about the number of speeches that you were giving in '58 and then '59. There was quite an escalation between those two years. Was that because we're getting closer to a presidential election year, or it's just that you became more—

Schlafly: Or it could be because the baby was getting bigger. (both laugh)

DePue: I would assume that this means an awful lot of travel for you.

- Schlafly: Not necessarily, but some. It would be a combination of Republican, DAR, anti-Communist, civic groups.
- DePue: Were most of these in Illinois then?
- Schlafly: Most of them would be in Illinois.
- DePue: So most of them did not involve an overnight stay?
- Schlafly: That's right, except I think several times, the Illinois Federation of Republican Women and the DAR, would have a series of a half a dozen meetings around the state. I can remember, I took my baby and baby buggy with me when I was a nursing mother. I could always find some woman who would be happy to avoid the speeches and sit out in the hall with my baby while I was talking. So I took a nursing baby on some of these trips around the state.
- DePue: What was Fred's position of all the travels now that you're doing, and all the speeches and the activities that are away from home?
- Schlafly: Fred was always supportive of everything I did. He enjoyed it.
- DePue: Was there ever an occasion when he said, Phyllis, that's just too much, you need to stick around more.
- Schlafly: Yeah, there were a couple of those, so I canceled those.
- DePue: That was on the rare side though?
- Schlafly: It was on the rare side.
- DePue: Let's go ahead and pick up the narrative then. We're getting close to the 1960s timeframe. Can we go ahead and start talking about the '60 year and the convention and the activities leading up to the selection of Richard Nixon as the candidate?
- Schlafly: Mm-hmm.
- DePue: I'll turn it over to you then.
- Schlafly: (pause) I can't put exactly the date on it, but when Barry Goldwater's book, *The Conscience of a Conservative* came out, and when a little group of conservatives decided that he should be our next presidential candidate. You need to realize what an awesome decision this was. In the first place, Dean Manion gave Barry Goldwater the title for the book, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, which made conservative a word that we wanted to relate to. Everybody now knows that Brent Bozell wrote the book, but in any event it was Manion who gave the title to it. Now, a little group of people, of whom Manion was one, decided, well, Barry Goldwater is the one we want to

support for the next president. We're now in the last years of the Eisenhower Administration, we're not too happy with it, we know he isn't going to run again, we need a candidate.

Now, Barry Goldwater came from some faraway distant place called Arizona. Nobody had ever run for president from way out there. That's some little state nobody ever went to. In those years, there wasn't any baseball team that was any farther west or south than St. Louis.

DePue: This is at the very beginning of the days of air conditioning, so why would somebody move to Arizona?

Schlafly: Yeah, why? I mean to run for president, you've got to come from Ohio or Pennsylvania or New York. So it was very unlikely. He had made a name for himself as standing on principle. I think there was one famous vote where he was the only "no" vote. I can't remember the details at the moment, but we knew he was authentic, a conservative. So anyway, we decided we were going to support Barry Goldwater.

Meanwhile, Richard Nixon thought that he was the one in line. You realize, there are a lot of Republicans who believe in primogeniture. I thought we got rid of that when we separated from the English, but he was the next one in line so he was entitled to it. He had nailed down all the open hatches; he was ready for it.

So we went to the Republican Convention in Chicago in 1960. There were a lot of preparations for that. At that time, I was the President of the Illinois Federation of Republican Women. I had built this organization up to about twenty-seven thousand members. It played a role in Republican politics in Illinois. Because the convention was in Chicago, the National Federation of Republican Women was going to have an event, and because it was in Chicago, I had the opportunity to select where it was going to be and who the speaker would be.

I picked the Palmer House¹² in Chicago and Barry Goldwater for the speaker. We spent a lot of time preparing this event which we called the Hawaiian Hukilau¹³. It was a luncheon that you had to buy a ticket for. We hoped to sell tickets to the delegates to the Republican Convention—it was during convention week—and Barry Goldwater agreed to be the speaker. For entertainment, I signed up Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy¹⁴—a big radio star at that time, to come and do an act. Hawaii had just become a state. How things change. When Hawaii was admitted as a state, it was a double deal with Alaska, on the assumption of everybody—conventional wisdom—that

¹² An historic, elegant hotel in downtown Chicago.

¹³ A way of fishing used by the ancient Hawaiians—huki meaning pull, and lau, leaves—became a festive event for tourists.

¹⁴ A famous duo, with Bergen the ventriloquist and Charlie his "dummy" as a humorous foil.

Hawaii would always be a Republican state and Alaska would always be a Democratic state.

The first Governor of Hawaii was a Republican from St. Louis named Bill Quinn, who had moved out to Hawaii. Now, when I was in high school at the City House, one of my extracurricular activities was to participate in the school musicals that were put on at St. Louis University, the Jesuit college here, by a very affable, gregarious priest named Father Lord. He put on these musical comedies and I can remember Bill Quinn was the star—he had a beautiful tenor voice—and I was in the chorus line. And so when we were planning our Hawaiian Hukilau with Hawaiian food and a little Hawaiian band, I got Bill Quinn to come and sing for the occasion. It was a wonderful, memorable event. So far as I know, it was the first national Republican audience that Goldwater had addressed, because it was clearly Republican and clearly national, it was all delegates.

We filled up the ballroom of the Palmer House; the money kept rolling in for tickets, and a great consternation about what we had to do about this. Then I engaged also, the Red Lacquer Room for the overflow. This is in the days before instant replay, so I had to persuade Quinn and Goldwater and Bergen, after they did their act, to go from the ballroom into the Red Lacquer Room and do it all over again for the overflow crowd, which I did. It was a memorable event and a lot of fun. This is how we presented Goldwater and revved people up for Goldwater.

So then we got to the convention and Goldwater's name was placed in nomination, I think by Senator [Everett] Dirksen; I'm not positive but I think so, because certainly Illinois was for Goldwater. You know, one of the fun parts of these conventions is you have a demonstration for your guy, so you start to march around all the aisles. Of course they've gotten so paranoid about security now, you don't have anywhere near as much fun as we used to have at the conventions. I nudged the big, strong guy sitting next to me in the Illinois delegation, to grab the Illinois standard and get in the march. This irritated our governor¹⁵ very much. But at any rate, we were all marching around for Goldwater, which we could do in those days. I hope they're going to let us do that again but I don't know; this paranoia about security is awful. So that's when Goldwater came out on the platform, to thank us and basically said, Conservatives, this isn't our year, Nixon's got it, go home and I'll see you in four years. And that's the way it was. Nixon was nominated and then we all know that it was the Daley Chicago Democratic machine that stole the election for John Kennedy and Kennedy became our President.

DePue: From the way—I think it was Don Critchlow—was talking about this event, that Goldwater was rather reluctant to be a national level candidate, at least in 1960.

¹⁵ William Stratton, a Republican

Schlafly: Oh he was, he was very reluctant. It was a real draft. He really had to be drafted to run. He didn't want to run. He just wanted to be a Senator. He's a guy who would say anything that came to his mind and he didn't want to be molded into a national candidate.

DePue: How about the role of Rockefeller at the '60 Convention? Was he actively pursuing the presidency, the nomination?

Schlafly: Oh yes. His goal in life was to be president and when he realized he wasn't going to make it... Nixon had lined up all the delegates; Nixon was a skillful politician that way. Then Rockefeller decided to make a deal with Nixon. Nixon flew to meet with Rockefeller in his New York apartment and, I don't know, spent a day or two there and basically, Rockefeller brow beat him into accepting Rockefeller's platform.

Now meanwhile, in those days the Platform Committee would hold hearings and they would hear witnesses and they would work hard for some days and they'd come up with a platform. So Nixon came back from New York and basically said to the Platform Committee, We'll throw out all your work; I've agreed on the platform with Rockefeller. I've got a lot of good quotes from people who recognize that that was Nixon's sellout to Rockefeller. It made all the people who had worked on our platform mad. I don't know that there was anything terribly wrong with the Rockefeller platform—it was undoubtedly more internationalist—but it was the mere fact that he did it.

DePue: Earlier in Nixon's life, he got quite a reputation for being a champion of the anti-Communists. I think that's what his initial reputation was.

Schlafly: Nixon took credit for the Alger Hiss case, and he deserves some credit for getting the committee to call Hiss. I guess that's what he really did, and he deserves some credit for that. Basically, that's why the kingmakers picked him for the Vice President with Eisenhower in 1952, because they thought that he would be the leader of that wing of the party.

DePue: Did you have a hard time after the 1960 convention then, of reconciling your support, being an enthusiastic supporter for Nixon in that campaign?

Schlafly: Well, it was completely obvious that Goldwater didn't have the votes at that convention, and I worked for Nixon. I met with Nixon and that's when he personally promised me, as well as other people whose opinion I valued, that he would restore our military superiority. I was a good friend of General Tom Power, who had been head of the Strategic Air Command. Nixon convinced him that he would restore our military superiority, our nuclear superiority. So I certainly enthusiastically supported Nixon in 1960.

DePue: What were your concerns from the Democrats, from the Kennedy campaign, in terms of the rhetoric, the platform that the Democrats had in the 1960 campaign?

Schlafly: I don't remember, but I wouldn't have been for any Democrat anyway.

DePue: I could get this wrong, but as I recall, both of them were talking about strengthening the military at that time.

Schlafly: Yes. Oh yeah, they talked about it, that's right.

DePue: What were you hearing now, being pretty involved in Republican politics, about the way the election in 1960 went down for Nixon versus Kennedy in the State of Illinois? You've already talked about it a little bit.

Schlafly: Well you know, I was President of the Illinois Federation of Republican Women, so the convention was probably in July, in the summer some time, in Chicago. Then we had our annual convention in November, right after the election, in Chicago. And I remember that day, I'm presiding before our Illinois Federation of Republican Women convention, and some people rushed in and said, We've got to have some experienced poll watchers right now, we're finding election fraud. They came right into my meeting and actually in my meeting, I had plenty of experienced poll watchers. So we detached a delegation of our members to go over and watch the opening of these ballots where they found the fraud, where they would find—don't hold me to the numbers, but something like fifteen votes in an abandoned precinct. I mean they'd have a hundred votes in an abandoned precinct that only had fifteen people living in it. So we know. Our girls went over and they saw the fraud right there.

DePue: Would you be willing to say then, that Nixon rightfully should have won Illinois' electoral votes?

Schlafly: Yes, that's right, that's right.

DePue: What did you think about Nixon's decision then, not to contest the election?

Schlafly: Well that's a tough one, that's a tough one. (pause) Well, I think he was concerned about the upheaval that would be in our country.

DePue: Let's talk a little bit about what you saw then, of the Kennedy presidency for the next three years—your general impressions of the Kennedy presidency. Let's maybe start it off this way. Fairly early in his presidency, the Bay of Pigs¹⁶ incident occurs.

Schlafly: Yeah, that was a disaster, and yeah, he chickened out.

¹⁶ A military plan to enter Cuba, only 90 miles from Florida, to quell the growth of Communism under Castro.

- DePue: Do you think that he should have ever gone forward with that in the first place?
- Schlafly: Yes. It was all set up and it was actually a good plan, but Kennedy—what did he do?—he pulled off the air cover.
- DePue: At the last minute, he got some cold feet.
- Schlafly: At the last minute, and left those guys out there to die on the beaches. It was a terrible thing.
- DePue: Was that the particular incident that really colored your entire impression of the Kennedy Administration after that, or had you already had some strong feelings?
- Schlafly: I was not for Kennedy in any shape or form. When was it, he met [Nikita] Khrushchev¹⁷ somewhere and Khrushchev sized him up as somebody he could push around.
- DePue: Well that was probably during the Cuban Missile Crisis¹⁸ in the fall of 1962.
- Schlafly: Yeah.
- DePue: Your impressions of how managed or handled or led, during the Cuban Missile Crisis?
- Schlafly: I have become convinced that the reason we didn't have a disaster in the Cuban Missile Crisis was General Power, who was then head of the Strategic Air Command based in Omaha.
- DePue: This is the same Power that you had mentioned before.
- Schlafly: Yes. When it became known that they had missiles in Cuba, General Power personally ordered the airborne alert, and the Soviets could pick up information about this. So we had all these B-52 bombers flying around, carrying nuclear bombs, and they're all flying around, and the Russians are picking this up, they see this happening. Now in my opinion, Kennedy never would have ordered it, but once Power ordered it, Kennedy didn't have the nerve to cancel it. I think that is what saved us. The Russians didn't dare go ahead because they knew we had enough flying around up there to wipe them off the face of the earth.
- DePue: At that time, they were well behind in terms of their ability to deliver nuclear weapons to the United States.

¹⁷ First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 1953-1964.

¹⁸ U.S. intelligence learned the Soviet Union had ships en route to Cuba loaded with nuclear missiles.

Schlafly: Yeah, sure.

DePue: Any thoughts about what the Kennedy Administration was doing in Vietnam?

Schlafly: Well, he pulled the rug out from under [Ngo Dinh] Diem, and that was the source of our disastrous involvement in Vietnam.

DePue: Were you generally okay with this kind of behind-the-scenes but gradual buildup in Vietnam that was going on in the Kennedy years? Do you think that was the right place to confront Communism?

Schlafly: Well, I don't know. My friends in Australia think that if we hadn't done that, Australia would have gone to the Communists, but I don't know. I certainly think we should have backed Diem. Kennedy gave the order. The order: Unleash the generals? Vietnam was so badly handled, from beginning to end.

DePue: Of course '62 was the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the background of all this, there is this buildup going on in Vietnam. But let's jump forward to Kennedy's assassination in 1963. What was your reaction to that?

Schlafly: Everybody was horrified. It's so fortunate they caught that one man in Texas. I've forgotten who that was.

DePue: Are you talking about [Lee Harvey] Oswald?

Schlafly: No. I'm a little foggy about the details, but there's somebody else they picked up, that made it clear... I mean I think that the liberals in the Kennedy Administration were all ready for a massive attack on the whole conservative movement, and to blame the assassination on the conservatives who were so critical of Kennedy. Of course now we know it was a Communist who killed Kennedy. Finding that out was a tremendous thing, because in those first few hours, it looked like the administration and the media were all going to blame it on the right wingers.

DePue: Of course, this has been a topic of fascination for Americans ever since.

Schlafly: Yeah.

DePue: Who actually killed Kennedy. What's your view? Was it one lone gunman?

Schlafly: Well, I don't have any better evidence than that, but it is certainly clear that everybody they put on the Warren Commission was somebody they could control. They just made a mistake in keeping so much secret and not letting so much out. We should have more transparency. But I don't have any better information. I think Oswald killed him.

DePue: The question then is how much support was behind Oswald then, in your mind?

- Schlafly: There's so much dispute about all that. I can't relive all the conspiracy theories about who killed Kennedy. I just think it was a mistake that they kept so much of it secret.
- DePue: Okay. Well let's go on. Coming back to your own personal life between 1960 and 1964, what kind of things were going on in your personal life? Were your speaking engagements continuing on or increasing at the time?
- Schlafly: In '59, I gave ninety-eight speeches. I was running the Illinois Federation of Republican Women from '60 to '65. Andy was born in '61. I did that radio series called "America Wake Up." That was when radio had fifteen minute segments, and they were fifteen minute speeches. I had a friend who would make copies—those were the days when we used reel-to-reel¹⁹—and mail them out to stations. A lot of stations ran them. I talked on all kinds of subjects. I was talking more and more about the Soviet missile threat, which I felt was emerging as the big issue.
- DePue: What was it especially about that issue that concerned you?
- Schlafly: I didn't want the U.S. to be attacked by Soviet missiles. Kennedy had appointed the guy who was famously known for the Edsel, from Ford Motor Company, Robert McNamara, to be Secretary of Defense, who had no qualifications for that job and didn't believe in American superiority. Our Republican platform repeatedly has called for American military superiority, but McNamara didn't believe in that and he was constantly cutting whatever we had. I began to see him as the bad guy who needed to be exposed and attacked.
- DePue: Was this the origin of your campaign against the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty as well?
- Schlafly: It was, and it was my testimony against the Test Ban Treaty in 1963 that got me the Woman of Achievement Award from the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.
- DePue: Can you tell us more about what the Test Ban Treaty represented and your opposition to it then?
- Schlafly: Sign a treaty with the Russians, who weren't going to obey it, and cutting back on our weapons. I'm of the opinion that the best peace is attained by the U.S. having military superiority.
- DePue: I'm sorry to put it this way, but how is it then that a housewife from Alton, Illinois ends up being an expert that testifies against the Test Ban Treaty in Washington, D.C.?

¹⁹ Magnetic audio tapes.

Schlafly: Well, just study and politics and belief in the survival of the United States of America.

DePue: Where were you getting the public exposure? Was it the radio show, or the series of speeches, or the extensive writing that you were doing at the time, or a combination of all of the above?

Schlafly: Yes, I would say all of the above.

DePue: How many outlets did the *America Wake Up* radio show get? Was that something that went national?

Schlafly: I'm really not sure, but my guess is, it was mostly Illinois, because it was a project of the DAR, of which I was one of the state officers. It was the DAR that backed me in it and it was a DAR member who laboriously made all of the copies and mailed them out. I think it was probably something like thirty or forty stations in Illinois. There may have been other stations, I just don't remember.

DePue: With the exception of testifying against the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty during this timeframe, '60 to '63, was your reputation primarily within Illinois or did you have a growing reputation at the national level?

Schlafly: My friends around the rest of the country were through my chairmanships with the National Federation of Republican Women, because I went to some of their conventions and meetings. I don't know, I had several chairmanships. Likewise, the DAR conventions, so I did have some national spread through both of those organizations.

DePue: Do you think the national media was aware of you?

Schlafly: No. No, not at all.

DePue: Anything else that you want to mention during this timeframe, before we get to the critical '64 election?

Schlafly: (pause) I don't think so.

DePue: Well then let's get to '64. You can tell me what makes sense, but maybe the start point should be how it is that you came to write, *A Choice Not A n Echo*.

Schlafly: Kennedy was assassinated in November of '63, is that right?

DePue: Right.

Schlafly: Okay. I had a pre-scheduled Republican speech in early December. I don't remember where it was, but it just seemed in poor taste to give my typical Republican speech attacking Kennedy. I've got to think up a new speech for

this occasion which I was locked into. That's when I put together the first draft of how Republican presidential nominees are chosen, and that was the first draft of it. Meanwhile, I guess after January, my anti-Communist friend, John Stormer, came out with his book, *None Dare Call it Treason*, and it was a wrap-up of all the issues, all the bad things the Democrats have done to us and the Communists have done to us. He published it himself and he had a tremendous marketing idea.

On the last page of the book, he had the scale of prices; and the more you bought, the less the book cost. It was just sheer genius that he thought that up and all of a sudden, this book began to be everywhere. All the study groups and all the Republican clubs, everybody was buying this book. I thought huh, I can do that with how Republican presidential candidates are chosen. So I developed it into a book and I put it all together in January and February. My notes say that I mailed the script to the printer in Ohio that did cheap mass production paperbacks, and I mailed it to them on March 26, 1964. On April the twentieth, I read the final proof. The question was the title. Barry Goldwater had used the expression, "A choice, not an echo," and the minute I heard that, I said that's it. So that was the title and I developed this innovation—which practically everybody does now—of putting my picture on the front, because I couldn't think what else to put on the front. I told a story, with each chapter, on a convention; 1936, '40, '44, '48, and then '52 was the one, the big steal, and '56 and '60, and you come up with, now we have a candidate for '64 and don't let the kingmakers or the Rockefeller crowd take it away, because we all knew Rockefeller was the opposition. I plunged with buying twenty-five thousand copies, which arrived at my garage on April thirtieth.

DePue: You had to pay in advance to have them printed?

Schlafly: Well I don't remember if we paid in advance or not, but I certainly paid for them. I don't believe in debt. I've never bought anything on credit. I don't believe in credit. I paid for them. There were twenty-five thousand, and I suppose it's not very much money as you think about it today but anyway, it seemed big then. As soon as they arrived, I typed up a letter to send to my friends all over the country. The friends I had were through the Illinois Federation of Republican Women, the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, and the DAR. So I had friends around the country and the letter basically said, Read this book today and then buy enough copies to send to your delegates to the Republican National Convention. I had an old fashioned mimeograph machine. I had typed a stencil and then I put the ink in and I went down to the basement. I ground out two hundred copies in the basement, on my mimeograph machine, and mailed out the two hundred copies.

DePue: Now this is what month? Are we talking March or April?

Schlafly: We're talking about May. We're talking about the first of May.

DePue: Of 1960.

Schlafly: No, '64.

DePue: I'm sorry, '64 yeah.

Schlafly: The books arrived on April thirtieth and I went down the basement that night and probably mailed them out the first of May.

DePue: The target audience is the people who are going to the convention that August.

Schlafly: Oh yes, yeah.

DePue: So this is a very short timeframe, that's all I'm trying to emphasize.

Schlafly: Not only that, but the primary schedule was different. In 1964, the California primary was in June, and that was kind of the clincher, the final one, but it was in June. So now we're at the first of May and my two hundred friends are getting this with a copy of the book.

DePue: Can I interject one more thing. The primaries worked quite differently at that time than they do today. Did all of the states have a primary, or did a lot of the delegates show up at the convention uncommitted at the time?

Schlafly: It varies. Every state's different, but California was a winner-take-all-state; they had a primary election and it's a winner-take-all, and it was the last one and it was in June. One of the guys was my good friend from the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation in Glendale actually. He was in the door business, so we had a shipping place with a pier. He read it. He did what I said, he read it the day it came and he thought this is great, send me a couple of boxes. So then I had the last page you see, if you bought one copy it was seventy-five cents. If you bought a hundred copies, I think it was thirty cents a copy. There was a price scale all the way down. If you bought a thousand copies it was twenty cents a copy.

DePue: Is this why you went with paperback instead of hardbound, to make it cheaper?

Schlafly: Oh yes, paperback's the way to go. You couldn't have gotten it out as hardback; you couldn't go through any regular publisher. I found this low-budget paperback printer in Ohio. I don't know how I found them.

Well he said, send me a couple hundred, I'm leaving for the UROC Convention in two days. UROC was the conservative adjunct to the Republican Party in California—that stands for United Republicans of California—and they were the really hardcore Republicans, in California. So he took a couple hundred to that convention and passed it around. So within a couple of days, it had statewide California distribution. Then the orders rolled

in, they just rolled in, and I'm ordering more. Then I had to go to some fast, bigger printer in Chicago, and Gil Durand ultimately put out a million copies in California. Nationally I sold three million. That's between May first and the convention, which I think was in August that year, I'm not exactly sure.

DePue: Where was the convention that year?

Schlafly: San Francisco, but the California primary was in June. Many of the top Republican officials in California, including the national committeemen, said that my book was decisive in carrying California for Goldwater. See, that was the big upset. The thing about most political writing, it's designed to rev up your prejudices. That wasn't what *A Choice, Not an Echo* was. *A Choice, Not an Echo*, was persuasive. It took people who were for Rockefeller and made them to be for Goldwater, and people who were for Lyndon Johnson and turned them into Goldwater supporters. It persuaded people. All these dedicated Goldwater conservatives all over California were working their precincts and they knew where their votes were. It took thirty books to work a precinct. They found that they could buy thirty books and put it out in their precinct, and they'd re-canvass a couple of days later and they had picked up votes, and that's what made it sell. Gil Durand said these were not rich people. These people were coming to his dock and they were counting out their several hundred dollars in quarters and dollar bills. That's what they had to buy it with, because they saw it did what they wanted to do, which was to **persuade** people to be for Goldwater. That's the way, and it was a big upset when Goldwater carried California.

Meanwhile, people are redundantly sending the book to... One delegate was so mad at me; he wasn't for Goldwater and he said, (snarling) "I've gotten seventy-five copies of your book." (both chuckle) But the Goldwater fans were dedicated and they were determined, and now they had the tool.

DePue: What was your expectation when you first sent them out?

Schlafly: Twenty-five thousand. I thought that was enough to take care of all the delegates.

DePue: Did you think or hope that that might sway the decision Goldwater's way?

Schlafly: Oh sure, that was the idea.

DePue: Were you confident that that would be the result?

Schlafly: I was pretty optimistic about that, yes. I knew it was a compelling story.

DePue: Then what's your reaction when you hear some of the reviews—I'm sure some of these are from liberals, but also from that certain wing of the Republican Party—where wow, this is all just conspiratorial stuff.

- Schlafly: Well, nobody's shown anything the matter with it. Nobody's shown anything wrong with it. I told how the kingmakers had forced Dewey on us twice, forced Wendell Willkie on us and cheated Bob Taft and smeared him and everything. It told a story.
- DePue: Did you write this from an academic standpoint, where it's carefully footnoted and citations listed?
- Schlafly: Well you can look at the book. I have a number of footnotes. Nobody's ever said there was an error in it. See, there were plenty of people who knew this story, but they weren't writers. I mean people like John Bricker and conservatives, plenty of people knew the story and when they read it, it all rang true to them, but they weren't writers.
- DePue: I apologize, I just don't know this. Was Robert Taft then no longer on the scene?
- Schlafly: That's right.
- DePue: He had passed away?
- Schlafly: Yeah, yeah. He passed away rather early in the Eisenhower Administration. A lot of conspiracy-minded people think there was something strange. He died of cancer of the hip and I never heard of anybody dying of cancer of the hip.
- DePue: Well then tell us about what happened once you got to the convention.
- Schlafly: It was the most exciting week of my life. It was just fun all the way.
- DePue: Can you kind of lay out the story for us?
- Schlafly: Well, everybody in the convention had read *A Choice, Not an Echo*. Of course the ones that came up to me were all people who liked me and liked it and thanked me and everything.
- DePue: How about Barry Goldwater? Did you have a chance to talk to him at that time? Obviously, you had already met him because of this other speaking engagement.
- Schlafly: No, not at the convention, no. He would have been all around with Secret Service or whatever.
- DePue: At the time, did you believe that—you certainly expressed it this way in the book—that Barry Goldwater was a winner, that he could win the election and that Rockefeller wasn't going to be able to win the election. Were you confident of that in the convention, coming out of the convention?

- Schlafly: Well I was very optimistic. I thought he could win, yes. But of course we didn't anticipate the incredible smear campaign.
- DePue: Tell us about the nature of that campaign.
- Schlafly: Well, they tried to make Barry Goldwater into a warmonger.
- DePue: They, who is they?
- Schlafly: The media and the liberals and the Democrats, whereas it was Lyndon Johnson who was deliberately taking us into war to prove what a tough guy he was. We all know the Gulf of Tonkin event was just a hoax.
- DePue: One of the main charges was that Goldwater was going to nuke the Communists, nuke North Vietnam, end the war that way.
- Schlafly: That was really taken out of context. He discussed that as one option. (pause) Meanwhile, Lyndon Johnson is taking us into war, based on something that didn't happen.
- DePue: What were the lessons then, that you personally learned, coming out of that particular campaign? First of all at the convention, the fantastic success that your book had, and then seeing what happened in the election afterwards.
- Schlafly: (pause) Well, there were a lot of things that went wrong with that campaign. I don't know where you want me to go with that. There were plenty of things wrong with the campaign. He didn't know how to run a national campaign and he didn't have the right people to run it for him. The media were just absolutely disgusting in the false things that they said.
- Now you know, I had another book before the election. So one day, I guess maybe right after the convention, I got this call from Admiral Chester Ward in Hawaii, and he said, "Well, this book of yours is everywhere I go. How about doing a book with me on the nuclear question?" We put that together in about a month and called it *The Gravediggers*, and he came out for the final proofreading. I remember going up to the typesetter in St. Louis, when we're still dealing with linotype, and making our corrections. Oh that was a pain. But we called it *The Gravediggers*. I did meet with Goldwater then. I gave him the manuscript of that book and I said, "Here's your issue. I It's all here, just use it." And he did not use it effectively.
- DePue: What timeframe did that come out?
- Schlafly: Well, it would have been some time between—it had to have been in September or October.
- DePue: Now it just struck me, you're pregnant at this time aren't you?

Schlafly: Yeah, I'm pregnant. It was the most productive year of my life. I had a hot spirited campaign to be elected delegate; that's another thing. In 1964 I was running the Illinois Federation of Republican Women. I had a hot campaign for delegate which I won, probably in April. I wrote the two books and published them and sold them. I made a lot of speeches for Goldwater. Frequently, a number of times, I'd go up to Chicago, make my speech, then they'd take me to Union Station and I'd get on a train with a berth you know?—I don't know if they do it any more, the berth—go to sleep and wake up in Alton about six o'clock in the morning.

Then, some people in California got so excited about *The Gravediggers*, that they wanted me to do a TV show. I taped a TV show—which they then bought time and aired as an ad for Goldwater in California quite a lot—on the missile threat and why we should elect Goldwater and not Johnson. I did that and then ended up the year having a baby in November.

DePue: A very productive year.

Schlafly: It was a very productive year. I sold two million *Gravediggers*.

DePue: And again, that became part of the national dialogue for the election itself?

Schlafly: Well I tried to make it that. Goldwater didn't use it effectively, but it's what I talked about. Then for a number of years—I can't tell them all, but they certainly were in the sixties—I gave a speech called "What Are the Gravediggers Doing Now?" It was a speech about the Soviet missile threat.

DePue: You mentioned that you were somewhat critical, maybe very critical—I don't want to put words in your mouth. The nature of your criticism about the way the Goldwater campaign was run?

Schlafly: (pause) Well, yeah. (pause) I guess he just really didn't adapt well to presidential politics. He really wanted to just kind of do his thing and be a Senator.

DePue: He wasn't an aggressive campaigner then?

Schlafly: He was willing to be a staunch person who would vote no on anything that he thought was wrong, but I don't think he liked engaging in the fight. I visited Goldwater at one time in Phoenix, in his house. He had a house with no right angles in it. If you can imagine a house with no right angles? You know, just look at this room with these square corners. (laughs)

DePue: Was it all different angles or was it all curves, or ... ?

Schlafly: Well I don't know, but there were no right angles.

DePue: Apparently, you thought that kind of helped define who he was as a person?

Schlafly: Well, he was different, yes.

DePue: Was he not the campaigner that Richard Nixon was?

Schlafly: No, he wasn't the campaigner Richard Nixon was, but he didn't know how to go after the delegates and the voters. Nixon was kind of skillful at that.

DePue: Do you think his heart just wasn't in running the campaign then?

Schlafly: I'm sure he would have rather won than lost, but you've got to learn what to say and what not to say.

DePue: Well at this point in history, we look back at that particular campaign and the historians certainly do, and say that it's undeniable that Goldwater was trounced in the general election by Johnson. But it's also clear that the true birth of a conservative Republican movement was born out of that campaign, or out of those crucial years. Would you agree with that assessment?

Schlafly: Oh absolutely, absolutely. This is the start of the conservative movement. The people who voted for Goldwater never regretted it. They knew he was right and they never regretted it; they were staunch. The trouble is, after the election, Goldwater let the liberals, the Rockefeller people, take the party away from him. The Rockefeller people just set out to purge all the Goldwaterites, and Goldwater didn't care to fight that battle. That's why they purged me out of the National Federation of Republican Women, but I'm not the only one. They purged all the Goldwater people they could find.

DePue: We're definitely going to pick up on that the next time we meet. I want to give you an opportunity though, to make any kind of concluding statements you want about this particular election, but also about your path and your own personal journey and Fred's journey up to this point in your lives. So how would you like to conclude for today?

Schlafly: The Goldwater campaign in 1964 was the real start of the conservative movement, when we began to be proud to call ourselves conservatives, when we organized together on behalf of a candidate, when we realized how vindictive and mean the Rockefeller Republicans were, the people we now call the RINOs, it's the same crowd.

DePue: RINOs, Republican In Name Only.

Schlafly: Right. We had a few bad years but we eventually... The problem with the conservatives after 1964 was, they began to believe the liberal line that we could never elect a real conservative president. Conservatives became defeatist and they thought well, I'm staunch, I'm going to stand by my principles, I'm going to pass out my literature, but of course we're not going to win. That was their attitude and that's why we got Richard Nixon. He was sold as the best we could get.

DePue: Well, that's a nice teaser for the next couple of sessions we have. It's going to be fun. Thank you very much Mrs. Schlafly.

(end of interview #2 #3 continues)

Interview with Phyllis Schlafly

ISE-A-L-2011-001.03

Interview # 3: January 14, 2011

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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A Note to the Reader

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DePue: Today is Friday, January 14, 2011. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today is my third session with Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly. Good afternoon.

Schlafly: Good afternoon. Happy to see you again.

DePue: Yes. It's uncharacteristically cold down here in January.

Schlafly: Oh no, I would think this is normal for February. Snow on the ground and the temperature about ten or twenty.

DePue: Good, crisp winter weather. Well, last time we talked to you, we finished up with your role at the Republican National Convention in 1964, and that crucial role you had because of *A Choice Not an Echo*, in determining who the Republican candidate for the election was that year. Of course, that was Barry Goldwater. As we mentioned right at the end of our session last time, Goldwater went down to a resounding defeat, a landslide victory for [Lyndon B.] Johnson. I wonder if you can start then, by talking about the impact that had on the Republican Party coming out of that election.

Schlafly: It was a smashing defeat. Of course, Goldwater was very unfairly treated with the television ads and by the media. The mushroom cloud, with the girl picking daisies, was a very famous, scurrilous ad that's been played many times since as an example of an unfair ad. They tried to portray Goldwater as some kind of a warmonger, but actually at the same time Lyndon Johnson was getting us into the Vietnam War, trying to show that he was strong for national defense. We now know that the Gulf of Tonkin event, which he used as an excuse to get us into the Vietnam War, really didn't happen.

But at any rate, the San Francisco convention was the time when the conservatives took over the Republican Party, took it away from the kingmakers who had been foisting their candidate on the presidential nomination in convention after convention. Unfortunately, Barry Goldwater didn't care for the fight to maintain control of the party. When the liberals saw their chance, they set about immediately to try to purge from the Republican Party everybody who was pro-Goldwater. They were very upfront about what they wanted to do. [Nelson] Rockefeller was in New York. His brother was Governor of Arkansas. They helped to put Ray Bliss in as Republican National Committee Chairman, and they set about on a process of purging everybody who was for Goldwater, starting with Dean Burch, whom Goldwater had appointed RNC Chairman during his campaign. That was their project, starting right away after the election.

DePue: I don't want to get too far ahead in the story, because I know 1967 was a pivotal year as far as you were concerned, but just that first few months and year or so out from the election in '64, how much were you hearing? How much feedback were you getting about your role in helping to select Barry Goldwater?

Schlafly: Well, the conservatives liked me very much. I sold three million copies of *A Choice Not an Echo*. The people who voted for Barry Goldwater never regretted it. They knew that he was the better man. They believed what I wrote in *A Choice Not an Echo* and they continued to be conservatives. They didn't regret their part in it in any possible way.

DePue: What did you think about what some would characterize as the faint praise, or a lack of recognition that you received from Barry Goldwater about his nomination for the Republican Party?

Schlafly: Oh, he was all right. He was very nice to me. I did visit him once in his home. "A choice, not an echo" was his own expression, which I had picked up for the title of the book. I did meet with him when my book, *The Gravediggers*, came out, the second book of that year, 1964, and tried to get him to take a stronger stand on the strategic balance, because I felt the missile threat was the big issue of the campaign. He didn't do that; he sort of rejected making that a major issue. I think Barry Goldwater just liked being a Senator and saying what he wanted to say.

DePue: Speaking of saying what you wanted to say or what he wanted to say, you apparently didn't waste too much time to get back to writing, and the next book, as I understand, came out one year later and that's, *Strike from Space: A Megadeath Mystery*.

Schlafly: I guess it was in August of 1964, Admiral Chester Ward called me up—who lived in Hawaii—and said he saw *A Choice Not an Echo* everywhere he went in Hawaii, and how about writing a book with him. Then we put together the book, *The Gravediggers*, and it was a real collaboration. We wrote it in about a month. He finally came out to St. Louis for the final editing of it and we sold two million copies of that book. That was when I really went gung-ho to take on the issue of the strategic balance and the Soviet missile threat.

Following the 1964 election, we figured the country needed another book—again a collaboration with Admiral Chester Ward—on a book called *Strike from Space*, which set out in more detail, the growing Soviet missile threat and the way that the United States was not keeping up with them, and how Lyndon Johnson was diverting money into other political projects that he liked better. *Strike from Space* was a big seller again. Our book sold by the hundreds of thousands. This was the start of really, a lot of the speaking that I did.

Now, in the next few years after '64, I made a great many speeches, I guess mostly around Illinois but also around the rest of the country. My main speech was on the Soviet missile threat. I was active in several organizations and I made the speech agreeable to several audiences. I had been active and was active in the Illinois Federation of Republican Women, which I was the President of and built up to a really formidable group; the National Federation of Republican Women; the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, which was a Catholic anti-communist group with chapters all over the country; the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution], for which I became National Defense Chairman, was writing articles and giving speeches for the DAR. And then just plain, ordinary, run-of-the-mill Republican speeches such as Lincoln Day Dinners. In Illinois we have an institution called Lincoln Day Dinners, and every Republican club and county has to have a Lincoln Day Dinner, so I did many of those. In fact at one point, the Illinois Federation of Republican Women gave me an award for having traveled a hundred thousand

miles within Illinois for the Republican Party. You realize, this was pre-air-conditioned cars and pre-air-conditioned rooms.

DePue: Well, I think it's also pre-interstate highway system in many cases.

Schlafly: Yes. (chuckles) Right. But at any rate, through these years, through 1965, '66, '67, '68, I was giving many speeches for different groups. I will say the principle theme was the strategic balance, the need for an anti-missile defense, the need to maintain our superiority, which is what the Republican platform called for time and time again. Not just strong, but superiority.

DePue: If we go back ten, twelve years before that time, the theme of your life at that time was anti-communism and infiltration into American government and society, but also foreign expansion of communism. In fact, that's how you met your husband, how you met Fred to a certain extent, I believe. What's the evolution that occurs to get you to the point of talking about strategic defense and nuclear weapons by the mid-'60s?

Schlafly: Well I would say it was my collaboration with Chester Ward. He was probably the country's best nuclear strategist. When he retired as Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Navy, he moved to Hawaii so he could think and plan in peace and quiet, without too much interruption. What he worked on was strategy, but he realized he wasn't reaching a public audience. He wanted me to collaborate with him so that he could reach a wider audience, and of course we did.

DePue: How did he come to approach you versus lots of other people who he might be talking to?

Schlafly: Well, he saw the success of *A Choice Not an Echo*, and he just called me up out of the blue. I think I had met him once, on one of my trips, before that.

DePue: Tell us a little bit more about Chester Ward.

Schlafly: He was very nice to work with. All of our collaboration was really by mail. A few telephone calls but they were expensive. This is pre-Internet, no email; he would send his manuscript to me and I would make it intelligible so the public could understand.

DePue: In other words, you took some dense terminology and language and made it readable?

Schlafly: Right, I did that. The books were really—I would say they were kind of a fifty-fifty collaboration. I did a great deal of the writing of it, but the basic outline was his strategy, that we have to maintain our superiority. That is the key to peace, the United States being the biggest and the best.

- DePue: Did the two of you ever have—especially in these early collaborations, have any cause for disagreement on policy issues?
- Schlafly: No, not really. The people who disagreed with me were the people who did not want to talk about the Soviet missile threat. They wanted only to talk about communist infiltration in the United States. That, for example, was the position of the John Birch Society. They didn't like my books because they didn't want people to be diverted from working against the infiltration of our government, which of course I believe was there and we had to guard against, but the Soviet missile threat was very real, too.
- DePue: Did you think that the infiltration of American society—as you put it—into the government was a lesser threat than it was in the early fifties?
- Schlafly: (pause) No, I don't think it was a lesser threat. I still think it was a big threat. The infiltrators in our government were guiding policy that they shouldn't have done. I was worried about both of them, but I was the one to make the need for an anti-missile defense and the need for strong offensive weapons, an issue with the body politic, with the average run-of-the-mill Republican.
- DePue: I want to go back just a year or so here. Obviously, you and Admiral Ward are picking these titles carefully. Why the title, *The Gravediggers*?
- Schlafly: That was the title I chose, *The Gravediggers*, because we're not calling these people who were dismantling American military strength "communists." I don't believe they were communists and I didn't want to be accused of calling them communists, because that isn't what I believed anyway. We're talking about people in the U.S. government, but they were digging our grave because they were dismantling our military strength. That's why I invented the term *gravediggers*.
- DePue: Do you have any specific names?
- Schlafly: Well, the main one was Robert McNamara, who was appointed Secretary of Defense by [John F.] Kennedy, and then remained through Lyndon Johnson's administration. He would be the number one *gravedigger*, because he simply set out to dismantle our military superiority. He was canceling missiles and canceling planes and reducing our strength, and not building any anti-missile defense. He was the real origin of the policies that I spent years attacking.
- DePue: Do you think it was his deliberate motive, to reduce America's defense posture, or it was just that he was counting pennies; he came from American industry and was known for his efficiencies?
- Schlafly: I'm not a psychologist. I don't know about his motive, but he had no background in national defense when he became Secretary of Defense. He was best known for steering the Ford Motor Company into the Edsel, which was a colossal failure. He thought he knew everything and he thought he

could run the Defense Department like a business. He was simply determined to reduce it. Now that played right into what Lyndon Johnson wanted, because the money that was saved or diverted from national defense, Lyndon Johnson could then put into political boondoggles, which would buy votes for the Democrats.

DePue: Do you have any specific programs in mind when you're saying political boondoggles?

Schlafly: The Great Society, which has now proved to be a real disaster. It started his welfare system, which really broke up the families of the African Americans, as well as millions of poor people in this country.

DePue: So in essence, the whole "War on Poverty" initiatives?

Schlafly: The War on Poverty was a colossal fraud. This giant welfare system, I think, is the single worst thing that the liberals ever did to us, because what they did was to channel enormous amounts of money only to the woman, and they made the husband and father irrelevant. I mean, during the depression, all the black families were intact. There weren't any of these single moms raising kids. It's only after the financial incentives provided by Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, that made it profitable for a woman to be a single mom and have more illegitimate kids, that the families broke up. By giving all the money to the woman, the father lost his function in the family.

DePue: How about what we would now consider the other expensive new program that was adopted at the time: Medicare and Medicaid?

Schlafly: Medicare was adopted. Well, we're seeing that it's running out of money now. Anything the government does costs more. The idea that you're going to save money by having the government do it is a nutty idea.

DePue: Because?

Schlafly: Well, you give money to the government, you have pots of money sitting in buckets on the table and people want it and get at it in various ways. They don't have any incentive to economize or to get the most for their dollar.

DePue: Let's move on here just a year or so. I guess it's 1965. You mentioned Ray Bliss earlier, and he's the new GOP Chairman, I believe. One of the decisions that's made about that timeframe is to move the National Federation of Republican Women's election that occurred periodically, from 1966 to 1967. Do you remember the rationale for doing that?

Schlafly: Well, sure. As I mentioned earlier, the people we would now call the RINOs [Republicans In Name Only], but in those days we called them the Rockefeller Republicans, were determined to purge all the Goldwater supporters from any position in the party. They started with the National

Chairman, Dean Burch. They methodically went through national positions and state positions; they had gotten rid of about every one, until finally they looked around and saw that they didn't have the National Federation of Republican Women. Now I had been active in that organization for a number of years. In the national convention, which was in Louisville in 1964, I was unanimously elected first vice president; the first vice president normally moved on to be president, so the Rockefeller Republicans decided that they had to purge me. They had a very enormous strategy to get rid of me, because I had the support of the organization.

Now the story is very well told in my book, *Safe Not Sorry*. The Rockefeller people were in on it: the liberal Republicans, Rockefeller of New York, Winthrop [Rockefeller] of Arkansas, [George] Romney of Michigan, Ray Bliss in the national committee office. They devised a comprehensive strategy to keep me from being president of the National Federation of Republican Women. The next convention and election was scheduled for 1966—they were biennial conventions with elections. The 1966 convention was scheduled to be in California. So their first plan was to change the date and location of the convention, so they violated the bylaws by changing the date and moving the convention from California to Washington. The reason for that was, first, California was solidly for me. I had made many speeches and had been many times to California. Secondly, by having it in Washington, they were able to bus in more liberal Republicans from the northeastern states.

You can read the whole story in the chapter called "The Purge" in *Safe Not Sorry*, but basically, they did every crooked thing that you can imagine. I mean things like fixing the voting machines, making my delegates stand ten, twelve hours in line in order to vote, busing in women who were not legitimate voters from their clubs, handling and manipulating the credentials system so that they gave phony credentials to people. They got buses of women whom they gave the bus ride and free lunch, to come in and walk straight to the voting machine, vote and then leave, who had no relation to the clubs that they were supposedly representing. They violated every type of rule. My biggest delegation was from Ohio and they treated the Ohio delegates terribly. My second biggest delegation was from California and they did everything to prevent them from voting. They cut off the microphones, didn't follow procedure. The bottom line is they succeeded, and they elected a woman who had never held office in the National Federation of Republican Women; but they succeeded.

DePue: That was Dorothy Elston?

Schlafly: No, it was Gladys O'Donnell.

DePue: Okay, I'm sorry. Dorothy was the previous president.

Schlafly: She was the existing president when this took place; she was working hand in glove with them, and they elected Gladys O'Donnell. The National Federation of Republican Women boasted a membership of a half a million women. After they defeated me, they never reported more than two hundred and fifty thousand.

DePue: I want to ask you. Before this fight occurred, it sounds like the Republican leadership, from the story you were telling, saw you and saw the role of the NFRW as a powerful force within the Republican Party. Was that the case, that it was really an influential engine of getting out the vote and working for Republican causes?

Schlafly: Well, somewhat, but they also were worried that it might be more powerful if I were running it.

DePue: So something of a preemptive strike if you will.

Schlafly: Yes. It's a matter of control. Those kind of people just like to be able to control their stooges. So they moved the convention to May 1967, and it was a big news event at the time. And they succeeded.

DePue: One other thing. I've read the account of all this fight in both Don Critchlow's book, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Grassroots Conservatism*, and in [Carol] Felsenthal's book, which we've referred to quite a bit the last time we met. One of the fascinating incidents in my perspective as a historian reading it, is the incident where you went out to Washington, D.C., I guess went to the Republican National Headquarters. Was that to see the list of delegates? Do you recall that?

Schlafly: Well, you know if you're running for any office, you're entitled to know who the voters are, and they wouldn't let me see the list of voters. (laughs)

DePue: Well apparently, the controversy was between yourself and Liz Fielding, who was the public relations director at the time, for the Party. This is the quote that really struck me in the process. It sounds like one of these things where the discussion went on for a long time, but it was as much in the hallways and maybe with elevated voices as much as anything else. But the comment that apparently Liz Fielding made in the presence of Ray Bliss, was towards the end of the conversation I believe, if you want to call it a conversation. "Men in the party think we women are stupid enough as it is without this." Does that sound familiar to you?

Schlafly: That's what Liz Fielding said?

DePue: Yeah.

Schlafly: Well, she was working with the men to purge me, and they were trying to act like if you were smart, they wanted to get rid of me. So she was just one of their agents to carry out the purge.

DePue: Well what's interesting about that comment is it's—maybe she didn't mean to—but it was a pretty demeaning comment about women in general, in the process of trying to put you down in the first place.

Schlafly: Yes it was, and there were other comments that Dorothy Elston made about me: I couldn't be the president because I had six children. (chuckles) But anyway, they succeeded. As it turns out, it was a good thing. If I had been elected, I might have spent my life sitting at head tables, and that's not a particularly productive life. So I was able to move on to do more constructive things.

DePue: How bitter were you at that time?

Schlafly: I wasn't bitter at all. I don't get bitter.

DePue: Well, you wrote *Safe Not Sorry* though, and you included that as an important chapter in the book.

Schlafly: Yes. I just laid out the facts, that's all.

DePue: Is that a matter of, okay, now that you've gotten it off your chest you can move on and do other things?

Schlafly: Well, I thought the story ought to be told. It's an extremely interesting story. One thing that isn't in the book was, several years later, at some Washington reception, a subsequent president of the National Federation of Republican Women was there. Her name was Connie Armitage. A man came out of the crowd, whom she didn't know, and came up to her, knew who she was and said, "I just have to confess that I am the one who fixed the Ohio voting machines at that convention, and I just had to confess this to somebody." One of the peculiar things they did to steal the election was to make the Ohio delegates all vote on a particular voting machine, and Ohio was my biggest delegation.

DePue: Tell us about the relationship you had with your own neighbor in Alton, Gladys Levis.

Schlafly: Yes, Levis. She was some kind of a liberal and didn't like my ideas.

DePue: Was she a Republican or was she a Democrat or nonpolitical in that respect?

Schlafly: I don't know whether she had any party, but she was certainly not a conservative.

- DePue: I read it in one of these books, that she was the head of the Alton District Women's Republican Club. Here's a comment that she had about this whole thing. "Mrs. O'Donnell has a constructive philosophy, while her opponent..." I guess she doesn't mention you by name. "...her opponent is an exponent of extreme right wing philosophy, a propagandist who deals in emotion and personalities where it is not necessary to establish facts or to prove charges. The membership of the NFRW wants a choice not an echo of a disaster they would not likely forget."
- Schlafly: Well that's just because I was for Goldwater and that's the sort of thing they said about Goldwater. If you didn't like Goldwater, you're probably not going to like me.
- DePue: Well there's no shortage of interesting quotes for this. I want to read one from the *Chicago Tribune* Washington Bureau Chief, Walter Trohan. This is the kind of way that these incidents are discussed at that time. This is from May 1967. "The contest involved Mrs. Schlafly, Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly; youthful, lissome, beautiful, articulate mother of six and the first vice president, who is expected to succeed the presidency, and Mrs. Gladys O'Donnell, 63 year-old widow, businesswoman and pilot." What strikes me about that language today is I don't think it could be written quite that way today, without having somebody challenge all kinds of sexism involved with the quote. Do you see any problems with that kind of a comment yourself?
- Schlafly: No, that doesn't bother me. Dorothy Elston did make comments about my children that I thought were of poor taste. I was worried about the strategic balance, not about some little catty remark by some other woman.
- DePue: I want to finish off with this quote then. This is from Ruth Bateman of Warrenville, Illinois; she's obviously a supporter. "We have heard from so many women that they would never work again for the Republican Party if Phyllis were defeated. In the minds of the convention delegates, the issue apparently has become what they consider the preservation of their conservative principles." You mentioned it yourself, that the NFRW wasn't nearly as vibrant after this incident as it was beforehand.
- Schlafly: The National Federation of Republican Women really lost half its membership. So I spent the rest of my life trying to get people active in politics. (laughs)
- DePue: Outside the NFRW.
- Schlafly: Yes, outside the NFRW.
- DePue: Do you think that's in part what Ray Bliss and Dorothy Elston and some of the others who apparently were, as you say, trying to manipulate the election? Is that what they wanted?

- Schlafly: They wanted control. If they could control half as many people, that's better than not being able to control a larger number of people.
- DePue: But as you said yourself in retrospect, you think this is all a good thing.
- Schlafly: Yes, I think it's a good thing. Running an organization of hundreds of thousands of members is a significant undertaking, and I think I did more constructive things.
- DePue: What was your relationship then, for the next few years, with the Republican Party?
- Schlafly: Well, I've always been a Republican. My thought would be, the conservatives have to take back control of the Republican Party.
- DePue: What would you have done if at that time—this is a volatile moment in American politics anyway—if at that time there would have been a viable alternative third party that would be the banner carrier of conservative causes.
- Schlafly: I have never been for a third party. I think it's a dead-end road. I have talked against it and worked against it. I feel the solution to achieve the good things we want for America is through the Republican Party.
- DePue: August of 1967, so not too long after this incident, as I understand, you started to publish the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, is that correct?
- Schlafly: That's right. You see, about three thousand people went down to Washington to support me for that convention, and I wanted to keep in touch with them. They were all asking me for comments and advice, and I thought well, I'll start a newsletter and give them my advice and then I can write about politics and what's going on and what they need to do. So I started the *Phyllis Schlafly Report* in August of 1967 and it's now in its forty-fourth year. It looks exactly the same today as it did in August 1967. I would write about politics, a little bit about women's politics, about the issues I cared about, about what some of our friends were doing. I offered it for subscription at five dollars a year. My initial subscribers were the women who had backed me in the 1967 convention.
- DePue: Do you recall what the initial circulation was?
- Schlafly: Oh, probably about three thousand.
- DePue: How frequently did the newsletter come out?
- Schlafly: It's a monthly.
- DePue: What's your circulation now?

Schlafly: It's about thirty thousand.

DePue: Did it increase quite a bit—this is way ahead of the story here—but increase quite a bit during the ERA [Equal Rights Amendment] fight?

Schlafly: It did, yes. Now it has slacked off during the Internet era, because people can read it free on the website.

DePue: I believe this is your quote, that your supporters, because of this incident and because now that you're having an opportunity to get your message out through the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, that your supporters are receiving a "post graduate course in politics at the NFRW Convention in '67."

Schlafly: Well, it was a big lesson. Any woman who attended that convention will never forget it. It simply was a memorable event. Every trick was used, and they saw it before their very eyes. I guess that's why they understand that the idea some people are floating, to have a new constitutional convention, is a foolish idea. If you're running the convention, you can run it any way you want.

DePue: Then to put a constructive spin on the lessons, what core lessons did you and your followers learn from that whole experience?

Schlafly: That the Rockefeller Republicans have to be beaten and the conservatives have to take over.

DePue: There are going to be some rugged times ahead in the next few years, as we get further into the story. Is this one of the motivations, this whole experience then, for your next book, *Safe Not Sorry*?

Schlafly: Well the next book really was just because it was time to have another book, another book that my followers would find useful and relevant to what politics was going on at the present time. So it has a lot of material in that book that is not particularly relevant any more, about the student riots and some of the unrest of the late 1960s. But at any rate, it had a good sale. Everything I wrote had a good sale.

DePue: Well that brings me to another question I guess. By this time, you've sold maybe upwards close to ten million books.

Schlafly: Mm-hmm.

DePue: You and Admiral Ward collaborated on several of these, but I'm sure a lot of people thought you had to be a very wealthy woman by this time in your life, having sold that many books.

Schlafly: Well, if you look at the price we sold them at, let's see. Of course, *A Choice Not an Echo*, was seventy-five cents, but if you bought a thousand of them, it

was only twenty cents. What's this one? This was a single copy, one dollar. I made a little money by them but not a whole lot.

DePue: So we've got *A Choice Not an Echo*; on the front cover was your picture. The *Gravediggers*, the front cover was your picture. I just saw, on *Safe Not Sorry*, the back cover is your picture. What was the idea behind having your picture so prominently on these books?

Schlafly: Well everybody does it now, so maybe I set the trend. (laughs) Well, you have to have something attractive on the cover.

DePue: I want to spend a little bit of time, if you allow me here, to get into some of these other issues, because the late sixties was such a tumultuous time in American history. I'm going to save some of this because it plays into what happened in the 1968 presidential race as well. But you had already mentioned part of what *Safe Not Sorry* was written about was the student protest. What was your position on the student protest? What was it that troubled you?

Schlafly: Well, they were very disruptive. I guess the straight, run-of-the-mill Republican view would be, we need to have some law and order.

DePue: Did you understand what their anger and their protests were about?

Schlafly: Well I think their protests were mostly about the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War was just a disaster for our country. It certainly wasn't the Republicans who gave us the Vietnam War. It was Lyndon Johnson.

DePue: So you think that war was a mistake for us to get into in the first place?

Schlafly: I do, yes.

DePue: I think we talked about this a little bit last time, Kennedy's handling of President Diem, and then Johnson's—you've already talked about the Gulf of Tonkin incident. What would you have done differently?

Schlafly: Oh, I think we can't re-fight the Vietnam War now. We did talk about it then. Basically, I think my biggest argument was that it was diverting money from our missile strength into a sideshow that was not going to protect the United States.

DePue: This is the same time period that civil rights is very much an issue. Of course, the Civil Rights Act finally passed and the Voting Rights Act finally passed, after Kennedy was assassinated. This is the time when Martin Luther King is very prominent and oftentimes in the news in the United States as well. Your thoughts about the civil rights movement.

Schlafly: Well I didn't play any role in that. I didn't write about it. I didn't speak about it. It just wasn't the issue that I thought was priority for me to talk about. It was just kind of another fight that was going on that I wasn't involved in.

DePue: Was that because you weren't sympathetic to their cause or just were focused on other things?

Schlafly: Because I was focused on the military and the national defense issue.

DePue: Would it be fair to say then, that you saw strategic defense and national defense issues as the preeminent issue of the age?

Schlafly: Oh, absolutely.

DePue: Why more important than domestic issues: economic or civil rights or poverty or things like that?

Schlafly: Because we need to survive. I had studied communism now for twenty years and I knew they were out to control the world and control us; they were a real threat and they were getting the weapons to do it. I felt that was number one, at least that was my mission.

DePue: I believe it was fairly early in 1968, you published your next book in collaboration with Chester Ward: *The Betrayers*. What was that book about and how did it come about?

Schlafly: Well, the argument and the politics about the strategic balance and our relationship with the Soviet Union was a constantly evolving story. Let's see, *Gravediggers* was 1964, *Strike From Space* was 1965, and then *The Betrayers*, I guess, was 1968. Well, there was a lot more to say; that's the reason why it came about. This was an evolving political and strategic issue and there was more to say.

DePue: In *A Choice Not an Echo* in '64, that was very much written with—I don't want to put motivations—but from what I understand, your motivation to help Barry Goldwater get the nomination. Was there an element of that in *The Betrayers*, in relation to Richard Nixon?

Schlafly: Well, we had the 1968 election coming up and I did take a position on that. I'd say that wasn't the motivation of the book, but in putting out a political document in 1968, it was almost obligatory to have an opinion about who was going to be president. Now, let me explain.

In those years, after Barry Goldwater lost in 1964, the attitude of the conservative movement was, we would never be able to elect a real conservative president. Conservatives were very defeatist about that. We tried and we lost badly. Conservatives believed that it just was not possible to elect a real conservative. This is why we got Richard Nixon. We convinced

ourselves that he was the best we could get. I knew Nixon and he had **assured me personally** that he would rebuild our military superiority. He did that in speeches, and he did that to my good friend, General Tom Power, who was head of the Strategic Air Command in Omaha and whom I thought was just a great, wonderful man. Nixon had assured him that if he were elected in 1968, he would rebuild our nuclear superiority. So I think *The Betrayers* ends up supporting Nixon. I certainly did support Nixon in '68. I was a Nixon delegate at the Republican convention.

DePue: I don't want to get too far into the '68 convention quite yet, but was that a lukewarm support for him?

Schlafly: No, it wasn't lukewarm. I thought he would do the most important thing that needed to be done. I knew he wasn't a conservative like Barry Goldwater, but we had convinced ourselves that that wasn't possible.

DePue: Wasn't possible in the short-term, or even ever?

Schlafly: I don't know, it wasn't possible in the sixties. And you realize, this is the time when the prevailing conventional wisdom is that we ought to be like Sweden, the middle way, with more socialism and more government control over industry. A lot of people believed that; a lot of businessmen believed that.

DePue: Would you agree with this statement, that during the sixties, especially the late sixties, that liberalism was on the ascendancy in the United States?

Schlafly: (pause) I don't think I would put it that way, no. No, I wouldn't say it was on the ascendancy, but it was there.

DePue: Would you say that one of the problems that conservatives had at that time was to be able to articulate and express conservative views to the rest of the American public, to the mainstream of American public?

Schlafly: No, I think we could express them, but conservatives were just defeatist. They had convinced themselves we couldn't win.

DePue: Why did they think they couldn't win?

Schlafly: Because of the Goldwater defeat.

DePue: Were there any underlying philosophical reasons that they saw, or explanations or rationale?

Schlafly: No. No, no, it's just the socialist types are too powerful.

DePue: I wanted to read a quote here from a review that I have to confess, I found on Amazon.com, a review of your book, *The Betrayers*. But I thought it was fairly decent and encapsulating what this author or this writer thought. I'll see

if you would agree with the basic assessment. “The thesis of the book is that key members of the Johnson Administration, in particular Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, had actively sought to weaken and impair the defenses of the United States, motivated by the belief that the cause of freedom was doomed, that the Soviet Union would surely win the Cold War, and that preparing for the eventual inevitable surrender was the best means of survival. Schlafly and Ward walk the reader through a panorama of Johnson Administration defense and foreign policy positions. Compellingly written and a defensive disaster. The astute reader will recall without reminder, that in 1960, the United States possessed overwhelming military superiority over its communist opponents, and that by 1968, just eight years, or two presidential terms later, that it turned into mere parody and in some cases inferiority.”

Schlafly: That’s what the reviewer wrote?

DePue: That’s what the reviewer wrote.

Schlafly: Well that’s an accurate statement.

DePue: One of the things that drew me to this, again, was trying to ascertain the motivations of why McNamara and why Johnson or others in his administration were actually making these decisions that had an impact on national defense. Again, “Motivated by the belief that the cause of freedom was doomed, that the Soviet Union would surely win the Cold War, and that preparing for the eventual inevitable surrender was the best means of survival.”

Schlafly: I’m not a psychologist and I can’t tell you the motive of McNamara, except that he had a colossal ego and thought he was the most brilliant CEO in the country. I don’t know what more than that. Now, I think as time went on, we can see the motivation of the people who followed him. Whether McNamara actually shared that or not, I don’t know. But once Nixon got elected, after all these promises, publicly, to me and to General Power, he absolutely betrayed us. The first thing he did was to hire Henry Kissinger. Henry Kissinger carried out the same McNamara policies all during the Nixon Administration. Henry Kissinger told us what his motive was, and he told it to Admiral Rickover, so we know it on the record. His motive was that he knows the Soviets will win the Cold War, that they will be the superpower, we will be inferior, and his job as National Security Advisor was to negotiate the best second best position he possibly could. In other words, Henry Kissinger was a real defeatist. He did not believe we could win. So we know his motive. That’s what he told General Rickover, that we’ve all quoted. But the policies he carried out were identical to McNamara’s. In other words, it was a steady reduction of our missiles and warheads and planes and ships and everything, in relation to the Soviet Union, so the Soviet Union wouldn’t feel threatened by us. And he refused to build an anti-missile defense.

DePue: You mentioned before, when we talked about McNamara, you don't believe him or the other people who you said were the gravediggers and later were the betrayers, that these people weren't communists. But what you're describing now, they at least had a profound defeatist mentality and perhaps an inferiority complex about the American democratic capitalist system against the Soviet communist system. Do you think that would be fair to say?

Schlafly: Yeah, they were defeatists. They thought the Soviets would win. But you have to realize that this time period, our intelligence apparatus believed that the Soviets were going to win. The reason they were going to win was because they were a totalitarian country, and they were able to direct all of their resources and supplies into weapons, whereas the United States, with our free enterprise system, you can't run the economy like that. And they really believed that the totalitarian system was able to produce a stronger country than we were.

DePue: Do you think part of that was because they were—just by virtue of their profession—focused on military versus the economic comparison between the two countries and systems?

Schlafly: They just don't understand America. I don't know what their motivation was, but that was the conventional wisdom of the intelligence community, so that sort of backed up the McNamara-Kissinger policy. There isn't any significant difference between the McNamara policy through the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, and the Kissinger policy through the Nixon regime.

DePue: Well, I'm awfully tempted, and I'm going to avoid doing this, but I'll just kind of maybe tweak it, because we'll get here. Leap forward and talk about what happened during the [Ronald] Reagan years. I don't want to go there yet but if you want to just make a very quick reflection on that, it would certainly be appropriate.

Schlafly: Well, the other point of view, Reagan's view about the Cold War, was: "We win, they lose." That sums it up. (both laugh)

DePue: And a man who is known not for pessimism and defeatism, but for his optimism.

Schlafly: Yeah.

DePue: That's a little teaser for future sessions, once we do get to that point.

Let's talk then, about the '68 election year. In '64, if you'll permit me to make some reflections here, you go into the '64 convention just having published *A Choice Not an Echo*. But before that time, would it be fair to say you're largely an unknown quantity-quality to these people?

Schlafly: Oh yeah, it was *A Choice Not an Echo* that gave me a national following.

- DePue: You can't say that in 1968. You're a known player by the time you get to the '68 timeframe. But let's start with the primary season. Candidates: Richard Nixon, Nelson Rockefeller, George Romney, Ronald Reagan. There was some buzz about Ronald Reagan, especially in the California delegation, I'm sure. Your thoughts in the way the primary was shaping up, before you get to the convention.
- Schlafly: I was for Nixon. Nixon had paid his dues. He had been around, he had spoken to everybody, he'd said all the right things. He was a pretty good politician. He certainly had the support of Illinois. The Reagan campaign in '68 was so badly handled, people in Illinois didn't even know he was born in Illinois. It was not possible to be for a non-candidate. I ran for delegate. In Illinois, we would run for delegate to the Republican National Committee, just like you run for Congress. You get some signatures, then get them filed, and you'd be on the ballot; then you'd go out and ask people to vote for you. It was a selection of the voters. Nixon was extremely popular in Illinois and nobody took the Reagan candidacy seriously in Illinois.
- DePue: What's different between '64 is that Johnson, because of the Vietnam War and everything that's going on in the country at that time, looks eminently defeatable as well. Do you think, especially at this time, Nixon appeared to be the guy who had his guts into the campaign as well, and his heart, which is one of the criticisms that I think you had for Barry Goldwater.
- Schlafly: Yes, I think all that's true of Nixon. He was a good politician. He knew how to say the right things and talk to the right people and back the right candidates.
- DePue: Some of the Republican leaders in Illinois I'm not sure were necessarily huge backers of you or wanted you necessarily to be a delegate. I'm thinking in particular, Charles Percy and Governor Richard Ogilvie at the time. Was that true?
- Schlafly: Nobody interfered with my campaign to be a delegate, but I think that was the year when I tried to be on the Platform Committee.
- DePue: Right.
- Schlafly: The way the Platform Committee at the Republican National Convention operates, there is a man and a woman from each state, and they are elected by the delegates who are already elected to serve in the convention. So the Illinois delegates would have a caucus and vote for the members of the committee. I ran for the Platform Committee. I remember that day, when Chuck Percy stood up before the sixty-some Illinois delegates and said, "Phyllis Schlafly is too conservative to represent the state of Illinois on the Platform Committee." So I lost that race, but I was a delegate and went to Miami Beach for the convention.

- DePue: Do you recall Everett Dirksen and his position on that issue?
- Schlafly: No, I don't remember that he took a position.
- DePue: What was your relationship between Senator Dirksen and Senator Percy?
- Schlafly: I had a very warm and cozy relationship with Senator Dirksen and his wife Louella. In fact, when I went around the state speaking at Republican clubs, I frequently roomed with Louella Dirksen at these motels we stayed in. Dirksen always spoke well of me and I spoke well of him. I thought he was just tremendous. Percy?—it was a formal relationship. We never had any words of disagreement, except I remember that little impromptu speech that he made.
- DePue: So you're defeated in large part because of what Senator Percy said. You don't get on the Platform Committee but from what I have read, you did get on the Credentials Committee, is that right?
- Schlafly: That's probably right.
- DePue: What's the role of the Credentials Committee then?
- Schlafly: To handle the disputed delegations. If you had a dispute about which are the proper delegates, then the dispute goes to the Credentials Committee.
- DePue: Is that a problem oftentimes, at these conventions?
- Schlafly: Well, it was enormously big at the 1952 convention. At other conventions, it's been kind of minor. They couldn't have had more than a few disputes.
- DePue: Was that kind of a mirror though? Was it partly a credentials fight at the NFRW conference a couple years before that time?
- Schlafly: The credentials fight was very big in that, yes.
- DePue: This is inside politics stuff. It's not the kind of thing that most Americans know about or pay any attention to at all, but it sometimes does sway elections, doesn't it?
- Schlafly: Well, at the 1952 convention, the votes of the Credentials Committee and the Rules Committee were decisive.
- DePue: Do you remember anything significant about the credentials fight for the '68 Republican convention?
- Schlafly: I don't remember if there was a fight or not. I took all my children to the '68 convention in Miami Beach.
- DePue: What was the age range of your children at that time?

- Schlafly: Well my youngest one, who was four, was sleeping in a box in the closet in the motel where we stayed. (both laugh)
- DePue: But hey, for the older kids, being in Miami Beach in August wasn't necessarily a bad thing was it?
- Schlafly: No it wasn't; it was fun. It was a lot of fun.
- DePue: Did candidate Nixon have a chance to talk to you personally during that convention?
- Schlafly: No. As a prospective nominee, he was well guarded.
- DePue: Well I thought beforehand, you talked about he made a pledge or a promise.
- Schlafly: Well he did, but that would have been at some political gathering. I can't remember where.
- DePue: Would it have been before or after this convention, do you think?
- Schlafly: Before the convention, yes.
- DePue: So in your mind he had already made this personal pledge about putting a lot more money, putting a lot more emphasis in national defense and nuclear strategy.
- Schlafly: Right.
- DePue: Do you recall anything about the vice presidential selection?
- Schlafly: That was [Spiro] Agnew wasn't it?
- DePue: That was Agnew. If you don't mind, from what I've read, especially in Don Critchlow's book I believe, the issue was whether or not they were going to have a liberal like Romney or Percy—
- Schlafly: Like Percy, that is correct.
- DePue: [John V.] Lindsay I think.
- Schlafly: Yeah. A lot of liberals were running for second spot. I was working closely with Strom Thurmond, who had backed Nixon. The usual plan of picking the vice president traditionally was, the roll call vote is taken on Wednesday night when the presidential candidate is chosen. Then at midnight, they go into the proverbial smoke-filled room and spend the rest of the night selecting the running mate. That tradition was still in operation in 1968, so our effort was to make sure that none of the liberals, or the Rockefeller Republicans, was selected. Strom Thurmond had promised to call me with what happened at that meeting. He called me about 5:00 a.m. and told me they had picked

Agnew. That seemed to be okay, because he wasn't one of the ones we really didn't want.

DePue: You thought that that made for a stronger ticket, or you just were afraid that that would be more inroads for the liberal wing of the Republican Party if you had a liberal vice president?

Schlafly: We just didn't want the liberals running the party and we didn't think they were popular with the voters.

DePue: Nineteen sixty-eight lives large in American history, all the way up to today. I mean, most historians would look back and say that was the most tumultuous year we'd had in probably the last fifty years or so, with everything that's going on. The year started with the Tet Offensive. I'm just going to hit some of the highlights in here and get your reflections on these. Tet Offensive?

Schlafly: Didn't seem that big at the time.

DePue: It didn't seem like this was the turning point in the war that it is now looked upon as?

Schlafly: No, I don't think it did.

DePue: Fast forwarding a few months, you've got Martin Luther King's assassination.

Schlafly: Well, that was a shock.

DePue: A tragedy in your mind?

Schlafly: Yes, certainly a tragedy.

DePue: How about the response to his assassination, the large number of riots throughout many of the cities in the United States?

Schlafly: I think that's when they burned down the street in Washington, including the office where I had worked when I spent my year in Washington, on Ninth Street. Well, it was shocking and it was very unfortunate, because I think Martin Luther King would have been a force for good.

DePue: Did you understand at the time, the black community's reaction and all of the riots? Could you comprehend that?

Schlafly: No. I don't see why burning down buildings helped anything.

DePue: Okay. The next incident would have been Bobby Kennedy's assassination following the California primary.

Schlafly: Well, that was another shock.

DePue: So you've got John F. Kennedy's assassination and you've got Martin Luther King's assassination, now Bobby Kennedy's assassination. There were lots of people in the United States asking, What's wrong with our country, what's wrong with America. Is that something that you were reflecting on in concrete ways as well, or were you focused on the election of '68?

Schlafly: I didn't feel capable of doing anything about murderers who go out and kill people. I don't understand that and I didn't have anything constructive to say about that except it's a tragedy.

DePue: I'm trying to remember exactly when the Soviets occupied Czechoslovakia. I think that was also in August of '68.

Schlafly: I think it was.

DePue: Maybe right after your convention. Your reaction to that?

Schlafly: It just proved that the Soviets were aggressive, on the march, determined to take over the world, be the number one superpower, crush any people who they could.

DePue: Did you think the Johnson Administration acted appropriately in that incident?

Schlafly: (pause) I can't really remember. I just don't remember.

DePue: Were you surprised when President Johnson himself announced that he would not be running for reelection?

Schlafly: I guess I was surprised like everybody else. He certainly was a man for whom politics was his whole life.

DePue: August of '68 ends up being a pretty big year, because it starts with the Republican convention and you've got the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, and then towards the end of the month, of course you've got the Democratic convention in Chicago.

Schlafly: Mm-hmm.

DePue: Now here is somebody, yourself, who loved going to conventions. That's been something of an avocation of yours, would that be fair to say?

Schlafly: Yes, one of my hobbies, yes.

DePue: And now you see what's going on in Chicago with the Democrats.

Schlafly: Well that's the Democrats. Republicans don't behave like that.

DePue: Well, the Democrats would say it wasn't us, it was those kids outside the convention floor.

- Schlafly: Mayor Daley took care of them. (laughs)
- DePue: Anything more you'd care to say about that, because it was such a traumatic whole year, but that especially crystallized what was going on in the country.
- Schlafly: I guess so. That's when they nominated Humphrey?
- DePue: Hubert Humphrey.
- Schlafly: Yes.
- DePue: Of course you've got the "Chicago Seven," who seemed to get more press than the folks who were inside the convention.
- Schlafly: Mm-hmm.
- DePue: One of the big issues for the Nixon campaign then was law and order. Was that an issue even before you've got Chicago? Was that an issue coming out of the Republican convention?
- Schlafly: It was before the Democratic convention, but it didn't have anything to do with the Republican convention. I think the campus riots preceded that, and that's when law and order moved to the fore as an issue.
- DePue: Do you think then, what happened at the Democratic convention and all of those student riots beforehand made the difference for Nixon in winning the election, or that was one of the contributing factors?
- Schlafly: I'd say it was a contributing factor, yes, but it wasn't decisive.
- DePue: What did you think about Hubert Humphrey as an opponent on the democratic side?
- Schlafly: (pause) He was a formidable opponent.
- DePue: What did you think about the third party candidate? I believe that was George Wallace. I'm a little bit fuzzy on that myself. I think he ran again in '72.
- Schlafly: I never had any contact with those people. I never really understood them or had any contact or tried to make contact with them, so I don't know.
- DePue: How strongly then did—
- Schlafly: As I said earlier, I am not for third parties.
- DePue: (laughs) I do recall your saying that. How strongly then, did you campaign on behalf of Richard Nixon?
- Schlafly: I did campaign for Nixon, and I was a strong supporter of Nixon in '68.

- DePue: Did you have some of your supporters question you about your strong support for Nixon?
- Schlafly: No. Everybody I knew was for Nixon. No, not everybody. There were some who were for Reagan and were annoyed at me for not being for Reagan, but I explained why that was impossible. Illinois was for Nixon.
- DePue: Was that the essence of what the issue was, or that he didn't seem to be a serious candidate at that time?
- Schlafly: It was a lousy campaign.
- DePue: Let's get into the Nixon presidency then, once he does get in the position. Primarily, this will be the first couple of years, but I think it will be hard to differentiate that first term. His positions then, what you saw him doing as far as foreign affairs was concerned, the agreement that you thought he had made with you, and then saying what had happened once he got to office.
- Schlafly: Well, he appointed Kissinger almost immediately and that tells it all.
- DePue: That would have been his National Security Advisor at first, but he certainly seemed to be the powerful voice in foreign affairs.
- Schlafly: He was running foreign policy and defense policy. This was done at the demand of Rockefeller. Kissinger was Rockefeller's man and that tells it all.
- DePue: Was Kissinger a known quantity to you when Nixon appointed him?
- Schlafly: Yes. Well, yes. When did we write our book with Chester Ward, a book on Kissinger? It's about five hundred pages and it's a major opus.
- DePue: I believe that came out in 1975. *Kissinger on the Couch*. But I know you had been working on it for years and years.
- Schlafly: That told it all.
- DePue: Nixon's position on nuclear strategy and the Soviet Union.
- Schlafly: Well, he did not rebuild our military superiority. He continued to diminish it.
- DePue: Do you recall, any specific incident or point in time when you decided that Nixon had broken this pledge that he had made to you, that he had betrayed that pledge?
- Schlafly: Well I can't put a date on it, but it was early in his administration, surely within the first two years.
- DePue: What do you think about Nixon's and Kissinger's policy in relation to the Vietnam War?

- Schlafly: Kissinger got the Nobel Peace Prize for the Vietnam War I think, didn't he? Which is ridiculous.
- DePue: I think the slogan was "Peace with Honor." At the point when the election is going on, the campaign, "Peace with Honor," I think was part of the election campaign. Would you have agreed with that basic sentiment?
- Schlafly: Well that was the goal.
- DePue: What did that mean in your eyes?
- Schlafly: It would mean that we won and accomplished something, but I don't think we won and I don't think we accomplished anything.
- DePue: Would winning be defined as South Vietnam remains a free democracy, however immature that democracy was, and North Vietnam remains a communist state? Would that be part of the definition of victory?
- Schlafly: I can't be definitive about that.
- DePue: What did you think then, about the nature of the negotiations that the Nixon administration had with the North Vietnamese and by extension, the Chinese and the Soviets?
- Schlafly: I don't know how to answer that question. I don't remember, but I don't think Nixon and Kissinger handled anything very well.
- DePue: Well the other thing, if there's something that people would point to today as a success for the Nixon administration, it would be détente with the Soviet Union and opening relationship with communist China.
- Schlafly: I think all that's debatable.
- DePue: Debatable in that maybe it wasn't such a success?
- Schlafly: That's right.
- DePue: Do you have any thoughts about what Nixon was doing on the domestic front?
- Schlafly: Well ultimately, he gave us wage and price control, and that was unacceptable. I've forgotten the year, but it certainly was unacceptable in any year.
- DePue: He's also credited with establishing the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA.
- Schlafly: Well that's another mistake.
- DePue: How so?

- Schlafly: Well, look what [Barack] Obama is doing with it now. He's trying to have the EPA run our lives: tell us how to set the thermostat in our house, tell us what light bulbs we can use; all sorts of things that we don't want to be told.
- DePue: Moving away from policy issues to political strategies, if you will. There's been a lot written in the last few years about Nixon's, "Southern Strategy." An attempt to get southerners to start voting predominantly Republican, versus lockstep for the Democratic Party. Any reflections on that?
- Schlafly: The southerners started coming to their senses and seeing that their future was in the Republican Party. I don't really know why that should be credited to Nixon. I think this was kind of obvious. The Democratic members of Congress for years had just gone along with the New Deal and Lyndon Johnson and all the bad ideas of the Democrats, so we thank the south for finally waking up. I really don't see why Nixon should be credited with that. It happened then. It happened during the Nixon Administration.
- DePue: What is it about what's going on in the country then, that caused southerners, as you might say, to wake up and start voting Republican instead of Democrat?
- Schlafly: The fact that the Republicans are the conservative party and the Democrats are a party of more socialist control over our economy.
- DePue: There are many historians today who would put it all on the issue of race, that the reasons that southerners started voting for Republican is because Democrats were—I'm going to say this poorly—but too cozy with African Americans and with issues that appealed to blacks.
- Schlafly: It's the Democrats who voted against the Civil Rights Bill. The Civil Rights Bill basically was put through Congress by [Senator from Illinois] Everett Dirksen. I think the liberals vastly overplay the issue of race. They seem to think it's the motivation of everything. Yes, it's a factor, but I don't think it's the motive of everything.
- DePue: That gets us to 1970 and another important year for you personally, because, maybe even in 1969, there are people who start approaching you and encouraging you to run for Congress again. Tell us about what led to your decision to run for Congress in 1970.
- Schlafly: The party came to me and asked me to run. It appeared to be a good year, and it was a very weak, unattractive incumbent. Meanwhile, I had been redistricted into another district. When I ran for Congress in 1952, it was in two highly populated, very Democratic, 2-to-1 Democratic counties. I was still living in the same house, but the redistricting had put me into a district that went all the way across the state, from the Mississippi River to the Indiana line. It was fifteen counties, considered to be a possible swing district, and a Democratic incumbent who looked like he could be beaten. The party

was very much impressed with the good campaigns I had waged, not only for the Congress, if anybody could remember that, but the campaigns I had waged for delegate, when we ran just like a Congressman. So the party came to me and asked me to run. I had full party support. All this talk about women not being fairly treated doesn't apply to Illinois in any shape or form.

DePue: When you say the party came to you, is there an individual or a group?

Schlafly: Yeah, they were all for me. The state officials and the local county officials were fully supportive.

DePue: Who would have been the leader of the Republican Party at that time, in Illinois?

Schlafly: The Governor was Ogilvie, a Republican governor. There were a number of state officers whom I knew and were friends with.

DePue: Do you remember if Ogilvie himself approached you, or was there somebody who was the chair of the committee?

Schlafly: I don't remember who it was, but certainly they were all supportive of me.

DePue: This is the same territory you would have been driving all over to be a delegate at the '68 convention right?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: We talked about this a little before, when you ran in '52, but now you've got six kids instead of just one, at that timeframe. Were you taking the kids along with you in a lot of those trips?

Schlafly: No, not really. Let's see in '68, the youngest one would be four. No, I didn't take the kids with me on these.

DePue: But it sounds like there were at least two or three times a week that you were on the road making these trips, is that about right, if not more?

Schlafly: Illinois has an early primary, so the campaign is really eleven or twelve months. I was seldom gone overnight, but I made lots of driving trips to the various counties. I ran a coffee party campaign. Very typically, I would set up to have two coffees in the morning and two in the afternoon and one in the evening, in either the same place or nearby places. The coffee party was very structured. They'd be one hour. The first fifteen minutes would be get your cup of coffee and your cookie or your bagel or whatever, and then I would talk for fifteen minutes and then I'd take Q&A for a half an hour, then that was the end. It was a very successful campaign. I met thousands of people in the district and was supported by all those state Republican organizations. It was a perfectly run campaign.

- DePue: Did you have a primary opponent?
- Schlafly: I don't think I did. If I did it was no problem, because as I said, the party was all for me.
- DePue: So it wasn't anything you had to expend any of your money or time or energy on, to win the primary.
- Schlafly: That's right. I don't remember a primary fight. However, I did start the campaign before the primary.
- DePue: George E. Shipley was your opponent. Tell us more about him.
- Schlafly: He was not an impressive member of Congress. He was not known for any particular policies or legislation or achievement, but he was in, he was the incumbent.
- DePue: One of the quotes that I saw attributed to him was, "You know me, I'm one of you."
- Schlafly: Well, (laughs) that sounds like his campaign.
- DePue: Just that short phrase. It sounds like he ran essentially a populist campaign, trying to be folksy and connect himself to the people.
- Schlafly: I think he was folksy. I can't remember that he talked about any issues.
- DePue: Tell us a little bit more about the district economically. What kind of a district was it? And demographically.
- Schlafly: There are some nice towns in there. Effingham is a nice town, Lawrenceville is a nice town. I don't think there are any colleges in this district. There are a certain number of rural areas and just a lot of just ordinary, downstate people in Illinois.
- DePue: There aren't any major urban areas in that district then? I've read that Alton was the biggest city.
- Schlafly: Yes that's right, Alton would be the biggest city.
- DePue: What was Alton's population at the time?
- Schlafly: Maybe forty thousand.
- DePue: So as districts go, it sounds like it's pretty rural.
- Schlafly: Yes.
- DePue: Agricultural?

- Schlafly: Yeah, agricultural. Some of the summer events, there would be a demolition derby, when people would get old, worn out cars they couldn't drive any more, and then they'd drive around a ring and run into each other. That was great fun. There were several fun, rural events like that but I can't remember at the moment.
- DePue: From what I understand, Shipley liked to label you as the intellectual, as the elitist, as out of touch.
- Schlafly: All of my speeches would have had some meat in them, yes that's correct. I certainly was intellectual compared to him.
- DePue: (laughs) Where did you get your graduate degree?
- Schlafly: Harvard. He probably made fun of that.
- DePue: What did you think about that attack on you?
- Schlafly: Well, I pretty much ignored him and went ahead with my campaign.
- DePue: What I understand also, that he was pretty cagey when it came to the issue of a debate.
- Schlafly: Yes. Honestly, I don't remember a debate with him. Did you find any?
- DePue: No.
- Schlafly: No, I guess he wouldn't debate.
- DePue: Again, rural communities, and you've been traveling this area for, I don't know, a decade or more it sounds like. Was that essentially the core of your support, especially financial support, or since you had a national reputation, was there support at the national level as well?
- Schlafly: I raised money nationally, but these local people, these local clubs and local county central committees, were all completely supportive. Now the big mistake I made was the party wanted to support me. They liked my campaign, and they asked me to combine my efforts with the Senate candidate, who was Ralph Smith. That was a terrible mistake, because Ralph Smith lost badly.
- DePue: Was he a poor campaigner, a poor candidate?
- Schlafly: Not only that, but these strategists who think they know everything, tried to tell us that the issue in 1970 was law and order. I'd been out among the people and I knew that was not what they were worried about. We didn't have any law and order problem in this district. The issue was jobs, and I couldn't do anything about it, because I was trapped into the statewide strategy of Ralph

Smith. You know, these consultants you're paying some high price to, to tell you what to do, were just fixated on that.

DePue: Does that mean that they controlled the message that went out in advertising?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: And the message was law and order?

Schlafly: Yeah.

DePue: When you were out on the stump, what were you saying in reference to jobs and the economy? How were we going to fix that problem?

Schlafly: I talked against foreign aid, a lot of giveaway of what we're doing, and I talked about national defense and I talked about the issues I knew something about.

But then the other thing that was a disaster was Governor Ogilvie, who is a Republican governor, put through a state income tax. This was the first time Illinois had had a state income tax and the voters were mad, mad, mad. In 1970, they went out to defeat every Republican on the ballot. They defeated Congressional candidates. They defeated Ralph Smith, who was running for the Senate. They even defeated the Republicans running for the Court. It was a worst Republican defeat, even than in the 1930s.

DePue: Was that strictly a defeat in Illinois or is that national?

Schlafly: No, that was in Illinois, because a Republican governor had given us a state income tax. Something over which I had no control.

DePue: Of course, Richard Ogilvie is going to go down to defeat two years later, in the '72 election, to Dan Walker.

Schlafly: Yeah...well...people were mad at him for that.

DePue: How much was the war an issue in '70, for you in this district?

Schlafly: Not much.

DePue: I've seen it written someplace, that there was a disproportionate number of young men who were in Vietnam from this particular district. Do you think that was the case?

Schlafly: I don't have any figures on that. I don't know.

DePue: You don't recall though, that the public that you were talking to, that was a big issue for them?

Schlafly: That's right, I don't recall that.

DePue: I do have a quote in terms of law and order—I believe this is your quote—that you said someplace on the stump. “Do you like the way the campus rioters and police killers, bomb throwers, arsonists and other terrorists, seem to get away with their revolutionary acts? Are you fed up with the politicians who do nothing about criminals who stalk our streets but harass the law-abiding with gun control? Something is happening in our great country and I'm not willing to sit by and let it happen.”

Schlafly: Sounds like me.

DePue: But again, everything you've said up to this point was, you really didn't necessarily want to focus on law and order as the issue.

Schlafly: Well that's right, but you know, I'm making hundreds of talks. I covered a lot of subjects.

DePue: How about some social issues? Is that part of the dialogue?

Schlafly: I think one time somebody brought up the issue of abortion and I had no idea what an abortion was. I couldn't talk about it. I'd never heard of it. I didn't know anything about it.

DePue: Seriously, had never heard about abortions before this time in your life?

Schlafly: That's right. I didn't know anything about it.

DePue: Okay. Women's Liberation Movement. Just like a lot of other things that were percolating in American society in the late sixties, it was out there. There was a lot of talk about women's liberation.

Schlafly: I wasn't talking about that. I've probably never made a speech about that.

DePue: So as far as you're concerned, that just was flat-out not on the radar screen.

Schlafly: It didn't exist. It had not percolated through to Effingham and all those towns.

DePue: What you've described as your district is the classic small-town Americana.

Schlafly: Yeah, it was.

DePue: Rural, generally socially conservative, concerned about jobs—a lot of that stuff would seem to play to the advantage of Republican candidates.

Schlafly: Well it would have, except for the problems that I mentioned, but no Republican won in Illinois that year.

DePue: One of the things that surprised me to see, was that for awhile, one of your campaign advisors was James Brady.

Schlafly: Yeah, that's right. When the party was trying to run my campaign, they decided who my campaign manager should be. They sent me Jim Brady, a very nice guy. I had a guest house with a couple of bedrooms, and the guys who worked for me slept in that house. But the trouble was, they had him doing three or four campaigns; it was more than anybody could do, so I was getting the short end of the stick. I didn't like what the party was doing. Ultimately, my husband did fire him. It really wasn't Jim Brady's fault, it was the fault of the party, who thought they knew something.

DePue: So you mentioned your husband fired him. Did Fred then, play a central role in your campaign?

Schlafly: Well he did that. I'm not capable of firing anybody. (both laugh)

DePue: So he was the tough guy?

Schlafly: He was the tough guy.

DePue: Your '52 campaign. When you described that to me, you were your own campaign manager and press agent and everything.

Schlafly: Right, right. But 1970 was going to be a very well-run, sophisticated campaign. Jim Brady was supposed to be the campaign manager, but he was giving me like one day every two weeks. They had him doing three or four campaigns and nobody could do that. So I was getting the short end of that, so I fired him. Then I got another one. At that point, the beds in my guest house were used by somebody else, so we put him up in a room in my house. He turned out to be a smoker. After he left, I mean, I had to send out everything in the house to be cleaned; all the draperies, all the rugs, everything.

But anyway, then I had a full-time driver, because you can see, the driving was tremendous. He drove me fifty thousand miles, a very nice guy. And several other young people... Oh, as a matter of fact another guy who worked for me went west for his fortune, ended up as the weatherman in Phoenix for years; now he's in a business of coaching people on the media and speaking. I used him at my last conference.

DePue: What's his name?

Schlafly: Ed Phillips. So I had a whole bunch of these guys in their twenties who were working for me.

DePue: By this time in your life and career, you already had developed a very strong core of strong women supporters as well. Were you able to tap into that support?

- Schlafly: Somewhat, but that strong core is nationwide. It's not necessarily in these little towns here. I had about four or five of these young men who were just wonderful.
- DePue: You mentioned Fred. How about the rest of the family; were they supportive of your campaign?
- Schlafly: Yeah. When the party asked me to run, I had several days of agonizing decision making, to decide whether I would do it. I remember my son John saying, "Well Mother, what else do you have to do this year that's more important?" The answer was nothing, so I did it.
- DePue: Was he on the campaign trail with you at all, or any of the other kids?
- Schlafly: John was supportive. I don't know that he did anything in particular. The other children no, they were all in school.
- DePue: When you ran in 1952, you told me the last time we met that you got into that race and you didn't really think you had that much of a chance. You mentioned that when I asked you about the possibility of moving on to Washington, D.C., and the disruption that would have in your personal life. I'm assuming that you got into the race in 1970, determined to win that race.
- Schlafly: Yeah, everybody thought I was going to win.
- DePue: What were your thoughts then, about moving out to Washington, D.C. or commuting back and forth?
- Schlafly: You know, I just really can't remember discussing that. (laughs)
- DePue: Is that in part to say that the kids didn't seem to think it was a big issue if mom was going back and forth between Alton and Washington, D.C.?
- Schlafly: I just don't remember discussing it.
- DePue: Well Mrs. Schlafly, let me put it this way. Would it be that much of a change in your lifestyle than those years you were traveling around the state or traveling across the country to various events? Hadn't you been doing this for close to twenty years already?
- Schlafly: Yes, but in all of those travels, there really was very little that required an overnight stay. For example, in running in that district, I was never gone overnight. I don't remember being overnight in any of those trips across the state. It was three hours to the farthest one. These coffee parties would end up about eight-thirty maybe, nine o'clock, and then I'd drive home.
- DePue: What did Fred think about your running for election?

- Schlafly: Oh, well he was supportive. I never would have done it if he hadn't been supportive.
- DePue: We kind of touched on this last time too, but by this time especially, you've been a prominent national figure for a long time, since '64 at least. Any resentment that he had because you had such a prominent—
- Schlafly: No. No, he loved it. He loved it. He didn't want to do these things himself but he enjoyed them vicariously. He liked politics, but he didn't want to do it. He had to support his family.
- DePue: Did Congressman Shipley make your family an issue in the campaign?
- Schlafly: I don't believe he did. I don't know, he may have made some remarks about my intellectual campaign. I don't think he attacked my family in any way.
- DePue: Well here's one comment that I was able to find here, and this is Shipley's comment when asked about the subject of your family. "She's got six kids hasn't she? You'd think that would give her enough to do."
- Schlafly: (laughs) Well, he didn't like having me run against him.
- DePue: Does that mean that he had to run a little bit harder than some previous campaigns up to that point?
- Schlafly: Well, he probably was nervous about running against a woman, just like the other guy I ran against. They didn't know how to deal with it.
- DePue: Here's a comment that you said at the time, and maybe a response to these kinds of quotes that you were hearing from Shipley's campaign: "My opponent says a woman's place is in the home, but my husband replies that a woman's place is in the House, the U.S. House of Representatives."
- Schlafly: (laughing) Yes, I said that first, before some of these other feminists said that.
- DePue: Beat them to the punch.
- Schlafly: Right.
- DePue: Would you say this was a tough or a nasty campaign?
- Schlafly: No, I wouldn't say that.
- DePue: Looking back, do you think you ran an effective campaign, as effective as you could have been?
- Schlafly: Oh yes. I think there was absolutely nothing more I could have done. I had the money I needed. I had all the staff I needed. I had everything I needed.

- DePue: In fact what I've read, you outspent the Shipley campaign by a sizeable amount.
- Schlafly: I'm sure I did.
- DePue: Another thing that struck me is some of the endorsements you had in the commercials. These are people that are not just well-known in the state of Illinois, but across the country.
- Schlafly: Oh, well the biggest thing in my campaign was the radio ad that John Wayne gave me. That was the **most** important thing that happened in the whole campaign.
- DePue: (laughs) You say that with quite a smile. Can you tell us what that message was, or how that came about?
- Schlafly: Well I don't know what it was, but it was an endorsement from John Wayne, and everybody in the district knew who John Wayne was. (DePue laughs)
- DePue: How did that come about, that you got endorsement from John Wayne?
- Schlafly: Well, I met him. As a matter of fact, I went to some kind of event in his cottage. The stars have what they call cottages, on the set. I was out there one time and met him, and I asked him for it and he gave it to me.
- DePue: You wouldn't recall what movie he was working on at the time would you?
- Schlafly: No, I wouldn't.
- DePue: Darn. A couple of the other names. Certainly Barry Goldwater would have been somebody. Was he supportive in the campaign?
- Schlafly: No, and I probably didn't ask him for support. I don't know that that would have been particularly helpful.
- DePue: At least one of the authors here said that he had written a letter, trying to encourage people to donate.
- Schlafly: He may have signed one of my fundraising letters, yes. Well, that would be helpful.
- DePue: Gerald Ford. Now, Gerald Ford. This is obviously while he's a Congressman at the time.
- Schlafly: Did he write a fundraising letter for me?

DePue: Again, I think that was the case. Edgar Bergen²⁰ was another name that came up.

Schlafly: Well, I don't remember if he did something. Of course, I had a little friendship with him at my Hawaiian Hukilau in 1960 in Chicago, but I also brought him in to Alton for another event at Monticello College. I do not remember the year. I had been with him a couple of times, so I'm not surprised if he did something to endorse me.

DePue: I have to apologize for putting you on the spot. We're only talking about things that happened forty years ago.

Schlafly: Yeah.

DePue: Do you recall—now this would have been months before the election but certainly played into this law and order theme—Kent State [University]. Of course Nixon's incursion into Cambodia and the students being outraged by that and just a few days later, then you have the incident at Kent State University where four students are killed. Did that play into the campaign at all?

Schlafly: Not really. Kent State has taken on its own importance in subsequent years, but I don't remember at the time that it was seen as really bigger than other campus disturbances.

DePue: Do you remember much about election night itself, other than the results perhaps?

Schlafly: Shipley was bent out of shape that I didn't call and concede early in the evening. Obviously, I finally did concede, and congratulated him.

DePue: The percentages I got in terms of the overall outcome is that Shipley won the election obviously—53 percent I think Felsenthal said, and Critchlow said it was 54 percent. But regardless, let's say 53 to 47, about a six point spread.

Schlafly: That sounds right.

DePue: How disappointed were you in those results?

Schlafly: Well I was terribly disappointed. We all thought I was going to win.

DePue: Even on the eve of the election itself?

Schlafly: I beg your pardon?

DePue: Even on the eve of the election, you still thought you were going to win?

²⁰ A famous ventriloquist who spoke through his dummy, Charlie McCarthy, on radio, then later on TV.

- Schlafly: Yeah, right. Fred refused to cry with me. I guess he was glad I lost. As I have said a number of times, after a couple of years, I was glad I lost, but after a couple of more years, I was glad I ran and lost, because that campaign was a tremendous learning experience, and I'm glad I ran and lost.
- DePue: We talked about what you learned, walking away from that serious rift in the Republican Party in '67. What did you learn from this experience?
- Schlafly: Well the main thing I learned was how to speak to and communicate with small groups and be comfortable speaking in public. I was always a very shy person and it took years to overcome that; it was that campaign that finally pulled me out of all my shyness.
- DePue: I'm amazed to hear you say that, because by this time, you were very well-known for being a powerful public speaker.
- Schlafly: Yes. But I had the protection of the podium in front of me, to save me from anybody coming at me. That was much easier than talking in a living room to twenty people.
- DePue: Did you enjoy the give and take of when you open things up for questions?
- Schlafly: Oh yes, I do. People now think I'm much better with hostile questions than I am with friendly questions. There's nothing they can say to rattle me.
- DePue: Why do you think you lost the election? We've kind of already addressed this.
- Schlafly: Oh, I lost it because Ogilvie gave us the state income tax. That's why I lost the election.
- DePue: What was the trend on the national level in that election?
- Schlafly: I don't know, but that situation was unique to Illinois and it was decisive. I told you, it even took down our candidates for the State Supreme Court.
- DePue: As I recall, that was not a good year for the Republicans nationwide either. That's certainly not unusual for an off-year election to be bad for the sitting president. We also mentioned that he had Kent State, and there was some anger bubbling around about that. But from what you've said, those really were not issues in your district.
- Schlafly: That's right.
- DePue: Have you ever considered running for public office after that?
- Schlafly: Well, I must have run for delegate a number of times since then, but that's all.

- DePue: Did you decide at that time, I'm not doing this, running for public office again?
- Schlafly: No. No, but I have no desire to run for public office again.
- DePue: Any final comments or reflections on that campaign, or where you were in your life at that time?
- Schlafly: After I didn't have the campaign hanging around my neck anymore, I set about trying to dump Nixon and have a different candidate in '72. I worked with groups of people who were disgusted with Nixon, and tried to find another candidate, because we just could not support Nixon again. We felt he had betrayed us. I supported John Ashbrook; for years, he was the only real conservative in the Congress, a wonderful guy.
- DePue: Where was he from?
- Schlafly: Ohio. And just right on all the issues and a strong conservative. He had backed me up in 1967 by putting an account of the crooked National Federation of Republican Women convention in the Congressional Record with his comments, because he was there; he saw it. Anyway, he would have been a wonderful president. Obviously, he couldn't do it. No way you can beat an incumbent president straight out.
- DePue: Were the conservatives in the Republican Party then, as dispirited and defeatist as they had been just a few years before, even with a Republican sitting in the presidency?
- Schlafly: Yes, but we just thought Nixon was so bad, we had to do something, and so we tried. I met with lots of groups, trying to get a candidate and trying to dump Nixon in '72. Of course we were not successful.
- DePue: Any other names that come to mind as good, strong conservative candidates at that time?
- Schlafly: I can't remember and I personally never considered anybody else. Nobody had told me that you can't be president if you're just a member of the House. (laughs) There are some of us who believe John Ashbrook was murdered. It was a very strange death. He ran against the big liberal Senator from Ohio, whose name escapes me at the moment but you'd know it; he was the incumbent for several terms. Ashbrook announced he was running against him. John Ashbrook was—I don't know how old—but maybe in his fifties or something, appeared to be healthy. He was dining in a restaurant and all of a sudden he practically just died at the table. I know this is not what can be proved or what conventional wisdom believes, but there are a few of us diehards who think he was murdered.
- DePue: What was the official cause of death?

Schlafly: I don't know, it was a heart attack. I think it was—I don't know, probably a heart attack.

DePue: Was there an autopsy, do you know?

Schlafly: I don't remember now. But he was a real threat. He was going to beat this leading liberal Democrat Senator in Ohio.

DePue: How well-known was he outside of conservative circles?

Schlafly: Not so well-known, but he was well-known among conservative circles.

DePue: I think it's also significant: in asking you this question, you didn't mention Ronald Reagan. He was a minor factor in the '68 election, just wasn't out there at this timeframe, actively seeking it?

Schlafly: Well, he made this try in '68 and of course in '76. I can't remember Reagan trying in '72. I just don't remember. The convention was again in Miami Beach.

DePue: You're talking '72?

Schlafly: In '72, and it was just a re-nomination of Nixon. I don't remember Reagan running that year.

DePue: Did you have any difficulty earning a seat as a delegate in '72?

Schlafly: Well, I had a race every time. I'm sure I had an opponent every time, but I never lost a race for delegate.

DePue: Anything in particular otherwise, that you remember about the '72 convention, or was it just kind of a given that Nixon was going to get the nomination again?

Schlafly: Yeah. (pause) I think that may have been when I made a big splash testifying before the Platform Committee, and showing charts on the strategic balance. I think that was at the '72 convention. It used to be that the Platform Committee had its hearings after you got there for the convention. There was one convention in Florida when I took a lot of charts and I made a big presentation on the strategic balance.

DePue: I'm fuzzy on the dates myself, but I believe at the time of the convention there would have been nothing about Watergate at the time, but by the time of the election, at least the Watergate incident had occurred. Do you remember your initial response to hearing about the break-in at the Democratic offices at the Watergate Building?

Schlafly: Was that before the election?

- DePue: It was just before the election, I believe.
- Schlafly: It didn't seem important. No, it didn't seem important at the time.
- DePue: How vigorous was your support for Nixon's reelection in '72?
- Schlafly: Oh, I didn't even back him.
- DePue: So you weren't on the campaign trail?
- Schlafly: Oh, I would have voted Republican, but I didn't do anything for him.
- DePue: Which is quite a contrast from what you did in '68 wasn't it?
- Schlafly: That's correct. But I certainly didn't want [George] McGovern in '72.
- DePue: Any final comments then, before we close for today?
- Schlafly: (pause) In 1971, I took my children on their first trip to Europe. I scheduled a tremendous trip all over Europe, for Bruce, Roger and Liza. That was a lot of fun.
- DePue: John was out on his own by that time I assume.
- Schlafly: Well, yeah. So they were the three I took. They were like oh, probably fourteen, twelve and ten, something like that. Those were the years when I was checking up on the Bilderbergers. I planned the trip so that we went to a lot of the places where the Bilderbergers had met. That was kind of fun, because they always went to some fancy resort that could be secluded. So we went all over Spain, Italy, France, England. I don't know where else. It was a great trip.
- DePue: I don't think the Bilderbergers have factored into our conversation yet. Can you tell us more about that?
- Schlafly: I guess I'm the one who discovered the Bilderbergers. I have a chapter in *A Choice Not an Echo*, about it. That's when I discovered them at Sea Island in Georgia. It's the secrecy of it that's so fascinating, and the way they won't let anybody near the place.
- DePue: So the elite group that would get together and then?
- Schlafly: It's an elite group and **enormous** security, so nobody's allowed to know what's going on. You know, if prominent people get together, the press likes usually to nose around and find out what's going on. They won't let them in. But I found about the meeting at Sea Island in Georgia and wrote about it in *A Choice Not An Echo*. The most interesting thing is that they have a bunch of people who were virtually unknown at the time, who then turned out years

later to be running our country, like National Security Advisor, Secretary of State or whatever.

DePue: My impression though, reading that chapter, was that this is pretty much a group of Americans. Were there internationals as well, prominent people from Europe who were part of the group?

Schlafly: From Europe yes, because the head was Prince Bernhard [of the Netherlands]. So Europe, but there were no Asians. Yes, Prince Bernhard was the head of it; he was the head of it for years, a charming man, spoke English like an American, not like a Brit. He was the chairman of the first meeting in Belgium, and he remained the head of it until he was caught up in a scandal, where one of our airlines paid off a Belgian company to get the contract. That was all right, but they paid Bernhard off, too. Not only that, but they paid off his mistress who was living in Paris; that was just **too** much, so he had to resign at that point.

DePue: Well that's just the kind of thing that newspapers like to publish. It sells papers.

Schlafly: Yeah, but you don't find about them anywhere. It was so funny. What I would do at these places I went, would be go to make friends with the guy on the desk and ask him about it, and see if he could give me a list. That's where I got a lot of lists.

DePue: So it sounds like you're going to some of the elite hotels of Europe in the process of doing this search. It can't be a bad thing for the kids to hang out in some of these places.

Schlafly: No, and they'd be so surprised when they'd find out what I learned.

DePue: Well I think that covers quite a bit today. It gets us up to the point of talking about '72 and '73 when the Equal Rights Amendment becomes a huge issue, in your life especially.

Schlafly: Okay.

DePue: That's a teaser for the next session, but thank you very much Mrs. Schlafly, this has been a fascinating discussion.

Schlafly: Okay Dr. DePue, it's been fun.

(end of interview #3 #4 continues)

Interview with Phyllis Schlafly

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Interview # 4: February 21, 2011

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Monday, February twenty-first. It's President's Day and I'm here with Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly in her office at the Eagle Forum in Clayton, Missouri. We've met three times before, I believe, Mrs. Schlafly. Today, we're in the portion of your life story that you've become very well-known for, famous or infamous, depending on which side of the argument people were on. Obviously, we're talking about the Equal Rights Amendment fight. Since this is for the Illinois State Library and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, our focus is going to be on Illinois, but this is a national story, so I'm not necessarily going to restrict it to that.

To set this up, I thought it might be good to quote from Donald Critchlow, in his book, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade*. I thought this was a very enlightening quote that I found. He says, "Phyllis Schlafly prepared to lead a counterattack against the feminist movement. In doing so, she paved the way for the Republican right to triumph in retaking control of the party." Now I start with that because ERA in itself, in the ten-year battle over ERA, is a huge issue just on its own merits, but then you layer on the aspect of where the Republican Party was in 1972 and '73, with the resignation of Richard Nixon and of course ten years before

that with the huge defeat of [Barry] Goldwater. I'm sure conservatives at that time were thinking, My gosh, we've lost this battle. Somehow, by 1980, you have a conservative Republican winning the presidency and in between this time is this huge battle over ERA, which really crystallized a lot of the debates. Now, am I making too much of all of that?

Schlafly: No, you're absolutely right. It was a real transformation of the conservative movement, of the Republican Party, and of American politics. In the early 1970s, the Women's Liberation Movement was having the full support of the media. The Republican Party was pretty well crushed, ultimately by the resignation of Richard Nixon.

After the smashing defeat of Goldwater in 1964, the conservatives in this country didn't believe it was possible to elect a real conservative president, and that's why they accepted Richard Nixon. Of course that turned out to be a mistake, to even accept him, but that was the political situation. However, in those years, the issue of the strategic balance, that is the issue of the Soviet missile threat and our reaction to it, was really the number one issue for our country. That was the issue that I was concerned about, devoted most of my time to, made all my speeches on.

I had written, by that time, I think three books, co-authored with Admiral Chester Ward, starting with *The Gravediggers* and followed up by *Strike From Space*, and then a revision of *Strike From Space*. I was giving speeches around the country. The big sale of my first book, *A Choice Not an Echo*—I sold three million of them out of my garage—gave me a national following. I was invited to speak, and my standard speech was on the Soviet missile threat. I just gave dozens upon dozens of speeches on that subject, talking about the decline in our number of missiles, the way that [Robert] McNamara was letting the Soviet Union go ahead, and then ultimately was followed by Henry Kissinger, who followed the same pattern. I spoke to Republican clubs, I spoke to businessmen's clubs like Kiwanis and Chamber of Commerce. I talked to meetings of the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] and their state and national conventions. I talked to gatherings of the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, Fred Schwarz's schools on Communism; every type of organization. A typical topic of my speech would be, "What are the gravediggers doing now?" So that's what I was known for.

Meanwhile, I had started my *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, a monthly newsletter, started in 1967, with my original subscribers—the women who had traveled to Washington to vote for me as president of the Republican women, a campaign which I lost, fortunately—and started out selling it at five dollars a year subscription. It's up to a big twenty dollars a year now. It looks exactly the same. I'm now up to the forty-fourth year of it. But at any rate, most of my speeches and writings and books were on national defense, on the strategic balance, on the Soviet missile threat.

DePue: Conservatives at that time—we're talking the late sixties, early seventies then—was it primarily the issue of the strategic defense that conservatives were concerned about and rallied around, or were there also fiscal issues that were expressed and/or social issues?

Schlafly: No, they were mostly the national defense issues and the anti-Communist issues: the threat from world Communism, the infiltration of our government by Communist agents, and the rising Soviet missile threat. You see, [John F.] Kennedy had brought in Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defense and Lyndon Johnson kept him on. Then when Nixon took over after the 1968 election, he appointed Henry Kissinger, who really ran our national defense and foreign policy; and he simply continued the policies of McNamara, which allowed us to steadily decline in our nuclear missile strength and let the Soviets go ahead. The best way to describe what Kissinger was doing, is in his own words as expressed to Admiral Rickover, when he said: He considered his job to recognize the fact that the Soviet Union was going to be the number one superpower and it was Kissinger's job to negotiate the best second best position that he could, which is a defeatist mentality. He was retained through the administration of Richard Nixon and ultimately Gerald Ford's too, and this was the same policy.

That attitude was reinforced by the intelligence community of this country, which believed that because the Soviet Union was a totalitarian country, it was more able to build the expensive weapons to control the world, because they could divert all their money and resources out of standard-of-living, into building missiles. And of course now we know that a totalitarian system is inefficient and the private enterprise system is more efficient; it produces better. But the U.S. Intelligence Department of our country really reinforced the defeatist mentality of Henry Kissinger. So that was my main speech. I talked to the Commonwealth Club in California, all kinds of prominent audiences, and became quite an advocate. My books on this subject had a very big sale also.

Then, I think it was in December 1971, I got a call from a friend in Connecticut, who said she wanted me to come and speak at a series of speeches that were put on at a local bookstore. Well, I said okay, I can do that. She said, I want you to talk on the Equal Rights Amendment.

DePue: Which at that time was in Congress but had not been passed.

Schlafly: It was in Congress. It had passed the House but had not yet passed the Senate. Oh, I said, I haven't studied that at all, I don't know anything about it, I don't know whether I'm for it or against it.

DePue: I can't think of too many issues that would be that different from what you had spent the last ten, fifteen years of your life studying and writing about.

Schlafly: That's right, it was completely different. I had ignored the rising Women's Liberation Movement. They were prancing around in the streets and burning their bras and things like that, which I ignored. I didn't think it was important.

DePue: That's why you ignored it, just didn't...?

Schlafly: Well, it wasn't my subject, whereas I had spent years researching and writing about the strategic balance. Well this woman, who was a friend and donor to my little organization said, "I will send you a packet of materials and I know which side you will be on." So she sent me the packet and she was right.

DePue: Do you remember this woman's name?

Schlafly: I do not remember her name.

DePue: Was it Shirley Spellerberg?

Schlafly: No, no, no, she lived in Florida. No, I do not remember her name, but she lived in Connecticut. So I went and gave that speech. You know, it's interesting, that when Ann Coulter wrote the forward to my book, *Feminist Fantasies*, she said her little high school brother was part of that club at the bookstore that put on this event that I came and addressed. (laughs) So that's a small world.

DePue: What was it about that initial exposure to what ERA was about that caught your attention?

Schlafly: The main thing and the main argument that I started to make against the Equal Rights Amendment is, it really was a fraud. It pretended to benefit women. It told women, we're going to put you in the Constitution. Well, of course I don't think these people had ever read the Constitution, but if you read it, men are not in the Constitution. There are no gender-specific words in the Constitution. All the words in the Constitution are sex neutral, like citizen, resident, person, Senator, president, we the people. They're all sex neutral words. What ERA would do, would be to make all laws in the Constitution sex neutral. Well the Constitution already was, so it really was a fraud. As I will point out later on, the feminists were never able to show any benefit that ERA would give to women, but I could show a lot of disadvantages.

DePue: Let's get a little bit more of the context and the background here. Of course, women had a right to vote for decades before this time.

Schlafly: Yes, and I don't even know anybody who remembers. Old as I am, I do not even know anybody who remembers when women didn't have the right to vote, but you can't believe how many times I've gone out to debate a feminist or debate the Equal Rights Amendment, and my opponent will be whining around because women once didn't have the right to vote. You'd think, Get over it, move on.

DePue: It was 1920, I believe, that they gained the right to vote.

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: In 1963, if I've got my facts right, the Equal Pay Act passed the United States Congress, which established "equal pay for equal work."

Schlafly: Yes. So when the women's liberationists went on television or radio, they would imply that ERA was going to give them all a raise and a better deal in the workforce, but the employment laws were already sex neutral. The Equal Employment Act was passed in 1972 and as you just pointed out, the "equal pay for equal work" law was passed in—what did you say?

DePue: I said '63.

Schlafly: Sixty-three, yes. So ERA would do nothing in employment, which was the main thing they would be whining about when they went on the media to advocate their cause.

DePue: The figurehead of the feminist movement at that time—I don't need to tell you this—was the National Organization for Women, or NOW for short. In 1967 they came out and formally endorsed the ERA Amendment. Of course, December of '71, you're talking against it, but by that time it had already had a good head of steam in Congress. So March twenty-second, it passed Congress; at the House of Representatives, the vote was 354 to 23. So this is an overwhelming vote for the ERA. And in the Senate it was 84 to 8. So again, more than 90 percent voted for and really, from what I've been able to ascertain, only Sam Ervin—of North Carolina I believe? Only Senator Sam Ervin came out and forcefully spoke against ERA's passage. Otherwise, it was hardly even debated at the national level.

Schlafly: That's right. Senator Sam Ervin, later well-known as the Watergate Senator, was the principal opponent; he introduced, I think about eight or nine amendments which would have prevented ERA from doing a lot of the mischief that it would do. For example, an amendment to prevent women from being drafted. Understand, what ERA would do is to make all federal and state laws sex neutral. Now your classic example of a law that is sex specific, is the military draft. The military draft law said then, and still says, male citizens of age eighteen must register, and they still have to register today, even though we don't have a draft. So that is the type of law that ERA would abolish and make it sex neutral. Now, that meant that eighteen-year-old girls would have to register for the draft, and you realize in 1972, we still had a draft. That draft hung over the head of every young man, and we're still fighting the end of the Vietnam War. So you're going to tell all the eighteen-year-old girls, we're going to put you in the Constitution, we're going to give you this great new benefit called ERA, and the very first thing that will happen is you'll have to sign up for the draft like your brothers. Now that is an

unsalable proposition. I had sons and daughters about that age and my daughters thought this was the craziest thing they ever heard. You're going to pass ERA and make us sign up for the draft like our brothers?

DePue: The way you interpret it, would it also require the military to change so that women would serve in combat units?

Schlafly: Absolutely, absolutely. And when I started to study it, the main documentation that the ERAers used was a hundred-page article in the *Yale Law Journal*, by Thomas I. Emerson, who was quite a favorite of Franklin Roosevelt and then spent his later years as a Professor at the Yale Law School. He wrote this article describing all that ERA would do, and that gave me most of my information, because they were very frank and outspoken about this. I remember one sentence from that, in answering the question that you just raised about putting women in combat, he said, "As between brutalizing men and brutalizing women, there is little to choose." Again, that's not a salable argument. So we used the *Yale Law Journal*. That was **their** paper for why they wanted ERA. We used it against them to show how much we didn't want it.

DePue: I think it might be appropriate right now, to actually read the specific language of the Equal Rights Amendment, because the language is important when you're talking about the Constitution. ERA, Item one. "Equality of rights under law, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." Maybe I should let you comment after each one of these articles.

Schlafly: All right. Now you notice, equality is not defined and sex is not defined. Now, are we talking about the sex you are or the sex you do? We don't know. Leave that up to the Supreme Court. When you talk about equality of rights, are you talking about individuals, or are you talking about groups? Again, in one sense the language is a blank check to the Court to define it most any way they want.

DePue: But it's not dissimilar language from most of the other amendments or the language of the Constitution itself, which is, some would say, maddeningly vague in some respects.

Schlafly: No, nothing is as vague as that.

DePue: Article II. "The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article."

Schlafly: Well that means a big transfer of power from the states to the Federal Government, to Congress, over any laws that make a difference on account of sex. Now we have all kinds of laws at the state level that do make these sex differences. I'll list some for you. The most important one, which we used very effectively to fight it, is that every state had a law that said the husband

must support his wife. Now that's a fundamental law and this is how we rallied the homemakers and wives in this country. That would have to be made sex neutral. We didn't want that sex neutral. We believe in a traditional marriage and the wife has to have the babies, the man is not going to have the babies; society compensates for that by saying the husband has to provide the financial support. They are good laws and there were laws like that in every state, but ERA would make them sex neutral and we didn't want that. Every wife could see that her status was threatened by the Equal Rights Amendment.

Many other laws at the state level have differences. Laws about schools, laws about prisons, laws about insurance, laws about adoptions, certain criminal laws, statutory rape laws, all kinds of laws are sex specific and would be affected by ERA and not only made sex neutral, but the power transferred to Congress.

DePue: Article III of the ERA Amendment. "This Amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification."

Schlafly: Yes, well that's customary. There was no problem with that.

DePue: What's not in the specific language here is how long Congress gave this to actually have the opportunity to pass at the state level.

Schlafly: That's in the preamble to it, which is before what you read. They gave them a time span of seven years, which is customary on all the later amendments, because the Supreme Court had ruled, in an important decision, that in order to change the Constitution, you have to have super-majorities in Congress and the state ratifications in a contemporaneous consensus. In other words, it has to be within some short period of time. As a matter of fact, most of the amendments that we have added, most of the twenty-seven amendments, except one in particular, were ratified within two years. So seven years was really plenty of time to achieve a contemporaneous consensus. We can talk more about that later.

DePue: Yes, that will be an important issue, but we're several years down the road from that. So that's the basic language of the ERA amendment. I think you already mentioned that in 1973, there was more legislation that reinforced the quality of employment issues and things like that, for women. That legislation, I believe it's June 23, 1972, also included Title IX, which mandated if you receive federal funds, in colleges and universities for example, that you had to have an equal amount of those monies that goes to women's athletics as men's athletics.

Schlafly: That law did not have anything to do with money and it didn't have anything to do with sports. Title IX just simply said that if a school or university accepts federal money, it has to offer equal opportunities to women. It didn't mention sports and it didn't mention money.

DePue: Okay, very good. Let me just read that; I think I've got the language here. "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." Which is just a restatement of what you've already said here.

Schlafly: Well we can talk about that later, because I have plenty to say about Title IX. The fight over that really started to come later on, with the Jimmy Carter Administration.

DePue: So that's kind of the groundwork for what we're going to be discussing here.

Schlafly: Well now, my *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, which was a monthly newsletter... Every month I would research some particular topic I was interested in, and then boil it down to an article to publish in the report. Having given this speech on ERA in Connecticut in December of 1971, I decided to do a newsletter on it, which was published in February 1972, called "What's Wrong with Equal Rights for Women?" That is the one that sort of hit the fan and I have reproduced it in my later book, a compilation of my essays on feminism, called *Feminist Fantasies*, so anybody has access to it there. But I published that and thought, well, that's just one more month's newsletter.

I've forgotten the exact date, but maybe a month or so later, I remember I got a telephone call at eight o'clock one morning, from Ann Patterson, who was my leader in Oklahoma, and she said, "Phyllis, we took your newsletter to the legislature and they defeated the Equal Rights Amendment." Then I knew I had something. It was persuasive. It laid out the facts. I realized we were on to something and maybe we should take this on and defeat it. As you said, it had come out of the Senate finally, on March twenty-second, and it began to just roll like a cannonball downhill, across the states. Within the first twelve months, it was ratified in thirty states. Under our Constitution, it takes three fourths of the states, or thirty-eight, to put something in the Constitution, and in the first twelve months, they got thirty states. As far as I know, hardly any hearings were held in any of those states. It was as though somebody stood up in the legislature one day and said, let's all give three cheers for the ladies, and everybody would vote aye. And that's the way it passed. They thought it was non-controversial. This is what women want; we'll do something for the ladies.

DePue: I want to spend a little bit more time before we dive into this fascinating battle that occurred over the next ten years, to lay the philosophical groundwork on here. You've touched on a lot of this already, just when we were reading the amendment itself.

One of the issues I believe you made in the article you just referred to was undermining traditional family as well, and that's all part of what you were talking about, but can you elaborate on that a little bit?

Schlafly: Well again, what the Equal Rights Amendment would do is to make all of the laws sex neutral, federal and state. The crucial one, in answer to your question, is the laws that existed in every one of the fifty states, that said the husband must support his wife. We thought those were good laws and to wipe them out and make them sex neutral was an attack on the role of full-time homemaker, attack on the rights of the wife.

DePue: In essence then, your argument is that women have an advantageous relationship in that respect and you didn't want to undermine that?

Schlafly: Yes. My argument was that ERA would take away rights that women then possessed. Of course that was compensation for the fact that only women have babies. Now, the feminists think that women having babies and being expected to take care of them is an example of the oppression of women in our patriarchy. Nevertheless, that's the way God made us and there's nothing you can do about that, so it's, I believe right and proper, to have laws to compensate for that.

DePue: Did you maintain then, would you maintain today, that men and women are different in many respects?

Schlafly: Oh, absolutely.

DePue: More than just the matter of giving birth?

Schlafly: Oh, absolutely, they're different in a thousand ways. One of the biggest lies of the feminist movement is to teach young people that men and women are the same, that all these differences you think you see are just a social construct, that you have mischievously or unfairly done to your kids by giving dolls to girls and trucks to boys. I think they're in a fight with human nature. There are so many ways that men and women are different and we're entitled to reflect that in our laws.

DePue: One way this whole debate has been played out over the last few decades, is the whole nature versus nurture argument as well. You just mentioned it, that the feminists would argue that what happens is that women's role in society is something that we're taught from day one, after we're born, because of the constructs of society.

Schlafly: You know, they were so funny. When I started fighting the ERA, I think their dogma was that God goofed in making us two different kinds, men and women. And now, it has turned around to where most of the women's studies courses are teaching—of course they don't say it like this—but basically, they're accepting or believing that God turned us out the same and it's a social construct that has created all these differences.

When I did my last debate at Radcliffe College, I put it up to a couple of these feminist professors: Which theory do you subscribe to? And they wouldn't answer me. (laughs)

DePue: You mention one term in there I want to let you reflect on a little bit more: The existence of God and what God's plan is.

Schlafly: Of course they didn't talk about God's plan, but they started out believing that we were wrongly made, of two different kinds.

DePue: In many respects, they'd have to blame evolution for that process wouldn't they?

Schlafly: Well, maybe so, but they got all mixed up in their theories. Mostly, they are pushing the social construct theory now.

DePue: How about the whole issue of gays and lesbians, and how that's addressed in ERA or how that's ambiguous in ERA.

Schlafly: Well, as you pointed out, the language of ERA is that you can't have any discrimination based on sex. Now it stands to reason that if two men show up at the office of the City Clerk and say, We want a marriage license, and she looks at them and says, I'm not giving it to you because you're both men, she has discriminated on account of sex. Of course in 1972 and '73, we just didn't talk about a lot of these things; but by about 1975 and '76, I put out one of my flyers, showing that the ERA would legalize same sex marriages, because that's the obvious meaning of the language. The government can't discriminate on account of sex. I was much attacked for that; nobody backed me up. One of the things that happened shortly after that was the gays filed suit in the state of Hawaii; they got the Hawaii Court to rule that yes, Hawaii had a state ERA, and they ruled that the ERA required Hawaii to issue marriage licenses to same sex couples. So Hawaii had to go through the agony of passing another constitutional amendment that basically said: Well we didn't mean that when we passed our state ERA, and so we rescind that.

DePue: Was one of the arguments you were hearing from the opposite side of the aisle that well, this would be a matter of the courts to interpret and the suggestion from that side that of course the courts would interpret against gay rights at that time?

Schlafly: No, they just ridiculed me and said I was making things up. Of course their major strategy over the years was to attack me, understanding that they had no benefit that they could show. Their major strategy was to attack me and to try to answer my arguments and ridicule what I was saying. I will tell you that ultimately, over the ten years, I testified against ERA in forty-one state legislative hearings. The only time one of their people came in and said: Our state has a law that discriminates against women that ERA will remedy, was

in North Dakota, where they said, our state has a law that says that wives cannot make homemade wine without their husband's consent.

Now for this we need to change the U.S. Constitution? You've got to be kidding. And you understand, no lawyer ever came in to these hearings and testified that ERA would help women in the field of employment, because employment laws were already sex neutral.

DePue: A little bit more groundwork. You've already talked about quite a bit of this. Within a year, as you mentioned, thirty states had already passed this. From the very beginning, we talked about the votes in both the U.S. House and the Senate, and those were overwhelmingly in favor.

Schlafly: I will point out that there weren't many—there may have been only one—but there certainly weren't very many women in the U.S. House, but one of them was a Democrat named Lenore Sullivan, from St. Louis, and she voted no.

DePue: For what reason, do you know?

Schlafly: Well, she thought it was hurtful to women, or maybe she just thought it was stupid, I don't know.

DePue: Hawaii is the first, Nebraska raced through it to be the second so they could have that distinction. Most of the other states were quickly joining on. So in the middle of 1972, did it appear to you that it's inevitably going to pass?

Schlafly: That was the common belief, that it was inevitable and going to pass very rapidly. I saw so many holes in it and based on this call I got from Oklahoma, I felt we could take on the battle and it could be stopped. Henry Hyde was then in the Illinois State House. I think he may have been the Majority Leader, I can't remember.

DePue: Yeah, I think he was, I think you're right.

Schlafly: I went to an event in my town and I tried to tell him something about ERA. Oh, he said, "That's ridiculous, that will never come up." Then it came up the next week and they had a hearing. The first trip I made on this was in May of 1972 when I drove up to Springfield with some of my Republican friends to try to tell them to vote no.

DePue: Let me provide a little bit of background in Illinois, because this is one of the early states, and of course everybody thinking, well of course Illinois is going to approve this.

Schlafly: Of course.

DePue: May sixteenth is the vote in the House. The sponsors are Giddy Dyer, a Republican from Hinsdale, and Eugenia Chapman. I think she's a Democrat.

Schlafly: She was a Democrat, yes.

DePue: From Arlington Heights. You already mentioned Henry Hyde's opposition to it. Now, I don't know if you've heard this story or not, so I'll just tell you what I've heard from talking to other Illinois politicians, because I've been doing a series on Jim Edgar's administration. He was working as a legislative aide at that time. As he remembers that first battle, essentially one of the reasons that it failed in Illinois—everybody else was thinking, of course it's going to pass—was because Richard J. Daley [long-time Mayor of Chicago] got upset about what was going to happen, what was happening with his delegation to the Democratic Convention later in the year, that was going to be in Miami. As you'll recall, in '68 of course you had the huge dustup in the Democratic Convention. After '68, the Democrats rewrote their platform, how they chose delegates. They had to have afterwards, a certain diversity in the delegation, so they had to have enough women, enough minorities, enough youth, et cetera, to be an official delegation to the Democratic Convention.

Fast forward to '72 and the Democratic primary and the Daley slate wins, and the counter group immediately opposes that and says, Wait a minute, this doesn't meet the new Democratic rules for diversity in the platform. So in part, Daley is upset because Eugenia Chapman is leading that effort as well, to replace his slated delegates to the national convention, and so he puts the order out: Vote against this ERA thing.

Schlafly: Well I can't verify the details of that, since I'm not on the inner workings of the Democratic Party. But I can tell you that I don't believe the famous Mayor Daley ever made any public statement about ERA. I can tell you, when the ERAers had one of their biggest rallies—I don't remember which year but it was much later than what you're talking about there—and everybody who was anybody important attended this rally. Chuck Percy was there and I think Governor Thompson, and everybody who thought he was important in politics was there to join the ERA rally. I looked at that rally and I thought the most significant part was, Mayor Daley was not there. He was conspicuous by his absence, but he never said anything publicly.

DePue: Well that's what makes Illinois politics so interesting I think sometimes.

Schlafly: Yes. I want to point out that ERA was never a Republican-Democratic fight.

DePue: I want you to take a couple minutes then, and tell us at the beginning of this fight, how the lines were forming. Who was on the pro ERA side and who was on the anti-ERA side?

Schlafly: Well, it appeared that most of the media were certainly on the pro-ERA side. Most every politician, Chuck Percy, Governor Thompson, the members of Congress who chose to speak out on it, most of the politicians were for it. I

did convince Henry Hyde to be against it and it was important in the legislature, just only in those first couple of years.

DePue: Go to the national level. Were there any especially well-known names, luminaries, that were supporting it and again, on the opposite side of it?

Schlafly: Everybody was for it except Sam Ervin. There was hardly anybody else.

DePue: When you say everybody, all of the politicians, Republican and Democrat?

Schlafly: Yeah, yeah, and it was not a Republican-Democratic fight anywhere, in any legislature or in Congress or anywhere. It was only a handful of people who opposed it. Jim Buckley, who later became a Federal Judge, was one of those eight Senators who voted no. There were just a handful. Later on, Bob Dornan became one of our friends, who was in the House, but hardly anybody.

DePue: At this stage of the process, how was the media portraying this?

Schlafly: The media were 99 percent for the Women's Liberation Movement, supporting them, giving them enormous coverage, allowing them to be on. Of course we all know that a lot of the women's liberationists used what we call bad language, unacceptable TV language, and they covered for that; they never let any of those bad words appear on television. They had access for anything they wanted. If they had a little demonstration with six people, that would be on the evening news.

DePue: So are you making the allegation the media was not objective?

Schlafly: Oh no, they were not objective in any possible way. They were for them all the way. Early on, one of the things that began to rally the troops for our side was, Phil Donahue invited me on his show in April of 1972. People have forgotten him now but at that time, he was as big as Oprah [Winfrey], and he had a tremendous constituency of women who were home during the day. I went on his show and explained what's wrong with it and it brought me a ton of favorable mail. So that was one unexpected help, because Donahue was certainly not for me. In fact, he specifically called himself a feminist. But at any rate, I was able to get a few licks in on his show and several other TV shows.

We did have a number of public programs on radio and television, that took both sides. When they looked around for somebody against ERA, they came to me, and I got a few arguments in that way. Then Betty Friedan, who had started the feminist movement with her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, in 1963, agreed to debate me at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois. I'll think of the date, but it was in 1973, I'm pretty sure. That's when she famously said she would like to burn me at the stake. She issued the orders to the women's liberationists that their strategy should be to attack me.

- DePue: I think this is a good time then, to take up your strategy. You've already talked about the array of forces in favor of ERA in '72, '73 seemed overwhelming. You've talked about the media, you've talked about both Republicans and Democrats.
- Schlafly: Yeah, they had Congress, they had the President. They had ultimately three presidents: they had Nixon, Ford and Carter. They had all the governors. Some of the governors would march in demonstrations against us. They had 99 percent of the media. They had Hollywood; Alan Alda came out to Springfield, Illinois a couple of times, who was big then on television. They had organized forces everywhere and we didn't have anything but people.
- DePue: So the question is, how is it that you ended up leading this effort and then beyond that, what strategy did you develop?
- Schlafly: Well the reason I ended up leading it was, ultimately, especially in 1973, what I told everybody to do: Ask the legislature to hold a hearing. Most state legislators think if you're going to have a hearing, we've got to hear from both sides. So that's the only place that we got both sides, at the hearings. Then I would get on a plane and go to the hearing, and then they'd take up a collection to pay for my plane fare.
- DePue: Well why not somebody else, why always you?
- Schlafly: Well, I started writing a number of my newsletters on this. The February of '72 one was only the first. Ultimately, I guess I wrote nearly a hundred over the ten year period. I had several out in 1972 and more in '73. I was giving them the news and I was giving them the arguments, and my arguments were good. When I went to the hearing, I was able to do the rebuttals.
- DePue: How much of this was because you had a long track record? You've already established yourself in conservative women's circles, especially with the National Federation for Republican Women. You had lost the election but you mentioned earlier in this interview, well thank God I did. Was that a big part of the base of support then?
- Schlafly: The initial little group of women who stopped ERA in 1972 and '73 and '74, were my Republican women friends who had backed me in the fight for president of Republican Women. That was the initial group, a relatively small group, but they were the ones who went to the Capitol and who understood politics and knew how to call up their legislators and say it's time to have a hearing.
- DePue: And were used to being crosswise with the mainstream Republican Party as well?
- Schlafly: They were not necessarily crosswise. They were just smart about politics. In fact years later, I did a debate with some feminist in Chicago and the

moderator said to her, I don't understand why you guys lost. He said you had everything. You had all the important people, you had plenty of money, why didn't you win? This feminist said, "It took us several years to figure out how the process operates." Our women already knew how the process operates. Anyway, we were nicer to the legislators. We smiled at them and sent them valentines and the feminists were saying nasty things about them.

DePue: (laughs) Let's stay with the support group that you had to begin with. You mentioned earlier that for those first few years it was primarily this network of women that you already had.

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: So what was it beyond that point?

Schlafly: We started to win. I think the first hearing I traveled to was in Arkansas. The ERA spokesman who preceded me just simply bragged about how women were going to be drafted just like men, it was going to be an equal world. And you could just see the legislators were not buying this argument. So I went to a number of the hearings in '72 and '73. I suppose, getting to hear about it from one state to another, that I made a good case and made powerful arguments. What I did, really, was to establish the battleground that we fought on. The battleground we fought on was the legal rights that women would lose if ERA were ratified. And so my testimony was always, it was going to hurt women, A, B, C, D. Their argument was, Phyllis is a bad person. (laughs) I mean, they were playing a defensive game. They never went over the fifty yard line.

DePue: Because she's denying women their equal rights?

Schlafly: Right. They made up things, yes.

DePue: I wanted to go back again, to the group of people who were supporting it and I guess I'll make this statement. Don Critchlow, I believe it was, makes the statement that later on in this battle, evangelical women joined in on the fight as well.

Schlafly: Well, you want to hear about how that happened. The years went on and you could just feel the tide rolling against us. I kind of felt like King Canute, who was trying to stop the tide from coming in, but it was coming anyway, he couldn't stop it. I realized we had to do something dramatic. I decided we had to have a demonstration in Springfield, Illinois. I'll have to look up the exact date for you. Have I given you that date?

DePue: I have it someplace. I'm going to have to dig here to find it.

Schlafly: It was in April.

- DePue: It was May of '73, you had your debate with Betty Friedan.
- Schlafly: Yes, but it was in April; I can't remember whether it was in 1975 or 1976, but I prayed that we would be able to bring a thousand people to Springfield. That's when I sent out the call for more reinforcements, and the call to the churches, to come out. Most of these people had never been involved in politics, had never been to the State Capitol, and they came. We had a thousand people in Springfield that day. It was April 27, 1976. I think that is the day we invented the pro-family movement, because these were people who were new to politics, concerned about the kind of country you were going to live in, concerned about women losing their rights and families losing their rights, and they came. It was a stunning thing. I don't think Springfield, Illinois had ever seen anything like that before. It was a nice, orderly crowd. Some of them came on buses that said, "Jesus Saves," and some of them were carrying their babies. They got there and of course nothing happened. They didn't even understand, when nothing happened, that was a good sign.
- DePue: Was this response you got—I think this was in 1976, because Bella Abzug, in that year, was leading a counter group, bringing thousands of people into Springfield in support of passage of the bill for, I think probably the fourth or fifth time.
- Schlafly: That's right.
- DePue: Five years in a row they had been trying to do that. I'm trying to figure out how I want to say this. Was this, for this group of people, these women, much more than just the ERA that was involved?
- Schlafly: Well the ERA they saw as an attack on women and families and homemakers and morality, and they were ready to come out and do battle to object to all this.
- DePue: Were they afraid of what it could bring in changes to the family and society?
- Schlafly: Yes.
- DePue: Or were they responding to changes that were already beginning to happen in society?
- Schlafly: No. I think they were afraid of what ERA would do with the power of the Constitution.
- DePue: I read a little bit about this. Some of the things that you were doing that year or the group was doing: "Bella's Bunch is Coming to Town," which is supposed to be sung to Santa Claus is Coming to Town?
- Schlafly: Oh yeah, I did some jingles; that was fun. I took my bullhorn to the Illinois State Capitol. My friends used to tease me about sending out what they called

Phyllis' rotunda letters: meet me at the rotunda, at the State Capitol, on Wednesday at twelve o'clock. They came and we had many demonstrations, and they grew in size. Ultimately, when Jerry Falwell and the Baptists joined us, we had one that had ten thousand people.

DePue: Tell me the rationale then, behind the tactics that you employed when you had these big rallies: the jingles, the handing out pies to people, making bread and jam.

Schlafly: Every year, we had our homemade bread day and we brought a loaf of homemade bread to every legislator.

DePue: Why were you doing that?

Schlafly: To show that we represented the homemakers of Illinois and that the other side was attacking us.

DePue: Was there a little bit of... I'll just say it. It sounds awfully corny. Were you afraid that you'd be belittled because of that, or is that part of the strategy?

Schlafly: No. We knew the feminists weren't capable of making homemade bread, so we had a corner on that tactic. In fact, they called that one of my—what did they call them?—spooky tactics or something like that.

DePue: With an attempt, a little bit tongue and cheek, a little bit of sense of humor to do these things as well?

Schlafly: Well, we maintained our humor, no question about that, with some of these jingles. One day, a preacher joined our ranks. His name is long since forgotten, but he rented a monkey suit and carried a sign that said, "Don't monkey around with the Constitution." He almost lost his church over that, (laughs) but it was good for a laugh.

DePue: Were some of these things you were doing—I use the word myself—stunts? , Was that to get media attention for it?

Schlafly: (pause) Well, I would say no. The big crowds and the rallies that we had, they were to get the attention of the legislators. We had no hope that the media were going to do anything nice for us.

DePue: But that would argue for: this is a way to get the public's attention, that they're forced to give you some press because of the numbers you turn out?

Schlafly: I can't say that we got any particularly good press over it, but we did get the attention of the legislators. They saw we were real people and we were their constituents. It began to be clear that there were more of us than there were of them.

DePue: The pro-ERA forces would often have people coming from outside the state, not just Illinois, but other states as well. Was that the case for the anti-ERA forces, your forces?

Schlafly: We never brought in anybody from out of state.

DePue: Was that a matter of policy?

Schlafly: We didn't need anybody from out of state. We had plenty of people in Illinois who were against it. In fact, you know they'll tell you that all the public opinion polls said people were for ERA, but even their own public opinion polls showed that the majority in Illinois were against ERA, no doubt because we had more activity over more years in Illinois than any other state. There were a lot of states that were not in the battle. They ratified early and they don't even know what ERA is. But in Illinois, which occupied the attention of the legislature where it was voted on every year for ten years, people knew what it was all about.

DePue: The states that had not passed it were primarily southern states. Oklahoma, I guess you can consider that a southern state, Nevada, Utah and Illinois. And Illinois again, is the only northern industrial state. So beside the existence of this issue with Daley we had suggested before—which I don't know that you agree with necessarily—let's say besides the existence of you, being a citizen, a resident of Illinois, what was different about Illinois from Michigan and Indiana and Wisconsin and Minnesota and some of these other northern industrial states?

Schlafly: Of course, many of them had ratified early, but we had a number of other northern states. Nebraska was the first state to rescind ERA; that's certainly not a southern state. South Dakota rescinded ERA. Idaho rescinded ERA. Indiana hung out until the very last; it was the last state to ratify, only because the President's wife called one legislator and sweet-talked him into voting yes. Again, it was not a party thing and I don't think it was a geographic thing. It may be because I lived in Illinois and I was on quite a number of TV shows. I was on Donahue several times, but I was on a lot of the other ones: Mike Douglas, and who were some of the others? Because they looked for a good show, so they'd called me and I was on a number of the shows.

DePue: Were you making any of the evening talk shows, the late night talk shows?

Schlafly: Yes. There was one when they tried to get a married couple on each side. I've forgotten the name of the host, but he had an evening talk show. Anyway, they had a hard time finding a married couple who was for ERA, but they finally found one. After the show, I think she left her husband and joined her lesbian, good friend. So we got a little bit of coverage that way, but mainly it was direct lobbying with the legislators. And then there was a big event that brought a great change.

You see, ERA came out of Congress in 1972 and was given seven years [for ratification] which would have expired on March 22, 1979. Along about halfway, the ERAers realized they weren't getting there, I had slowed them down. Bella Abzug was then in Congress; she went to Congress and got Congress to give her five million dollars to have a big conference called International Women's Year. It was designed to have some kind of a meeting in every state, and then culminate in a big shindig in Houston in November of 1977. So we told the Congressmen, They'll only have their people in this conference. They said. Oh no, they'll have all points of view represented. Well of course that was a lie. They didn't allow anybody who was against ERA to be a speaker at any of the fifty state conferences, or at the one in Houston. When it opened in Houston in November of 1977, they had three first ladies on the platform. They had Rosalynn Carter, Betty Ford and Lady Bird Johnson. Every feminist you ever heard of was there; they all were delegates. They had kept as many of our people out as they possibly could. We had a few people who got elected at the state level but just a handful.

The purpose of it was to give them the razzmatazz to get the additional states; that was the purpose of it. So when they got there, they passed many resolutions about, as they said, what women want. Of course it wasn't what women want, it was what the feminists wanted. So they passed resolutions for the Equal Rights Amendment, improving *Roe v. Wade*—abortion on demand and taxpayer funded abortions, the whole gay rights agenda, taxpayer funded daycare, and other feminist objectives.

Now, this event had **enormous** media coverage. They had something like three thousand media people who traveled to Houston for this event. In fact, it turned out to be the week when one of the important news events of the twentieth century happened, when [Anwar] Sadat flew to Israel to make peace with Israel, so all the networks had to send their second team, since their first team was in Houston covering this feminist convention. So they had **enormous** publicity and the people saw on television, how they were for abortion and for all the gay rights agenda, and people began to understand what feminism is all about. They **never** had another victory after that. They **never** got another state after that. The purpose of it was to get three more states, but they **never** got another state.

We had a governor of Missouri at that time, whose name escapes me, but he was a one-term governor and a newspaper reporter asked him one day, Governor, are you for the Equal Rights Amendment? Well, he said, do you mean the old ERA or the new ERA? He said, I was for equal pay for equal work, but after those feminists went down to Houston and got tangled up with all the abortionists and the lesbians, I can tell you, ERA will never pass in Missouri. And that's the way the country reacted.

Now meanwhile, knowing what was happening, we decided we had to have a counter rally. I don't know how we had the nerve to contract for

another arena in Houston that had a capacity of eighteen thousand people, but one of our people put up the money to book that. We had our pro-family rally, and that is the day we invented the term, the "Pro-Family Movement." The only Congressman who dared to show his face with us was Bob Dornan. Nobody else would come, because all the important name people were at the feminist rally. I spoke and we had a number of other people speak. The women came on buses from all over the country. Most of them rode on buses, came to our rally, got back on the bus and went home, without ever going to a hotel. I can remember standing on the platform with Bob Dornan and he said, "Look at all those entrances." You know how in an arena like that, they have these arched openings around, and they were all body-to-body with people. Bob Dornan said, "Well I guess the fire marshal has decided God's going to take care of this place and they've gone home." The press reported we had twenty thousand people in the hall that was scheduled to hold eighteen thousand. That invented the pro-family movement. That's when they all came together and saw that this was something that people of all denominations could join together for a cause they all believed in.

DePue: Do you think the pro-ERA forces had basically, fundamentally misread where the American people were on the issue?

Schlafly: Well I don't know what was going on in their minds about misreading it, but they were a special interest group that was highly motivated and determined to push for their goal. They knew they had the whole government apparatus, the whole media apparatus, the whole academia apparatus, and the whole Hollywood apparatus with them, and they had plenty of money. So how could they fail?

DePue: Listening to you talk about this, there are distinct parallels with what's happened in the last year in the United States and what was happening then in terms of response to ERA then and with talking about the Tea Party movement now. The Tea Party movement, at least early on, was always talked about: this was a spontaneous springing up of resentment about what was going on with the size and the reach of the Federal government. How much was that spontaneous back then, and how much was it very well orchestrated by yourself and other people in this group?

Schlafly: It was pretty spontaneous. I'm just one person living in a little town on the Mississippi River. I didn't have any big resources to bring to bear, to organize the group. They saw enough of it on television to realize it was not a good thing. The International Women's Year conference was the point in history when the feminist movement joined forces with the gay rights movement. Initially, the ERA movement was not part of or affiliated with the gay rights movement. But by 1977, they realized they were not getting their ERA, and they needed reinforcements. The lesbians were a highly motivated, energetic bunch of people, and most of the leaders of the ERA movement made impassioned pleas to welcome the lesbians into their ranks. They did that from

the Floor. Betty Friedan did it, Eleanor Smeal did it and others, and that is when they coalesced. Since then, the National Organization for Women has been a total endorser of the whole gay rights movement.

DePue: I'm going to take a couple of different approaches here, a couple different issues and tie them together, because this has been a great discussion. I just want to get a couple of things out here. Financing of your group, where was that coming from?

Schlafly: It came from the subscribers to the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*. I would include a letter saying please send money to pay some of our expenses.

DePue: Here is what the allegations were in terms of who was financing this, and I'll let you respond one at a time. Organized labor.

Schlafly: Organized labor never gave us any money. Now, in the beginning, the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations] was opposed to ERA. The first time, the first round, they helped us defeat it in Ohio. Then the feminists got to George Meany²¹ and changed him, then he gave the orders that that union has to support ERA. I can remember that their top union representative in Ohio, a very nice man, came to me and said, I'm sorry, I've got my orders now. I have to be on the other side now. So then ERA passed in Ohio.

Now we did have a union guy in Illinois who was a top AFL-CIO guy, a state rep, affectionately known as "Terrible Tommy Hanahan." George Meany did call him and tell him he had to be for ERA, and he told George Meany it was a bad deal and he was not going to do it, and he stuck with us. But as far as money, we never got a penny from them.

DePue: What was the AFL-CIO's initial opposition to it about? What was their rationale?

Schlafly: The women in the union. We had a group of women in industry who usually testified at the hearings, a very fine woman who was some kind of an ordinary laborer and union member. Women had certain preferential treatments according to the rules that were then in force. There were a number of them that the women who worked in ordinary labor jobs cared about, but I would say the most important one was, they did not want to be subject to compulsory overtime. That was a very big deal with the union women, and that was a preference that was given to women. A lot of companies find it more economical to order the men to work overtime, rather than hiring new employees, but the women were exempt from that. That is just one of the special laws that accommodated women in industry.

DePue: The next group here was the John Birch Society.

²¹ AFL – CIO President from 1955 to 1979.

- Schlafly: Well, the John Birch Society would have been against the Equal Rights Amendment. They never gave us any money. Basically, they're not particularly political. They're an educational group. My impression of the John Birch Society is, they were never really involved in direct politicking, which I liked to be involved in.
- DePue: Now this harkens back to the 1950s, when there were allegations that you, and I think Fred, were members of the John Birch Society as well.
- Schlafly: We weren't members. I think they're fine people. We did attend one meeting at which [Robert] Welch spoke, that is true.
- DePue: But never members.
- Schlafly: We were not members, no.
- DePue: The next group: Roman Catholic Church.
- Schlafly: Well, the bishops never said anything, so far as I know. Now the National Council of Catholic Women had been opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment even before I was, for all the same reasons. However, they had an executive who was running the organization who didn't agree with me at all. Now on the local level, we frequently got members—it's a very large organization—members of the organization to come and testify at the hearing, and they were some help, despite the animosity of the executive who was running the organization.
- DePue: Another group: the Ku Klux Klan.
- Schlafly: I never knew anybody from the Ku Klux Klan. They had no effect on us at all. I don't know anybody. It never came into our life in any possible way.
- DePue: So where are these allegations coming from, that the Ku Klux Klan and organizations like John Birch Society, which also had a very poor reputation in American society at the time?
- Schlafly: Well, I told you, Betty Friedan issued the orders that their strategy was to be to attack me.
- DePue: Well that gets us to the next question then. Why you? Why did you have such a prominent role in this? What was it about you?
- Schlafly: Well, I became the leader because I traveled around and testified at the hearings. I told you I testified at forty-one state hearings. That's not forty-one states but that's forty-one hearings. I put out all the arguments in my newsletter, maybe about eighty-five or ninety of my *Phyllis Schlafly Reports* over ten years, plus a dozen or so flyers of various kinds, so it was probably a hundred pieces of literature I wrote, and I developed the arguments. Then

everybody who lobbied and spoke against ERA was able to use, and did use my arguments, which were valid. I told them which arguments to use and which arguments not to use.

DePue: You read the material from that timeframe and you read the biographies that have been written about you since, you were elevated and venerated by the women who were in this movement, that they incredibly admired what you were doing. I don't know you answer that, it's not really a question. Let me ask you this then. What particular traits and characteristics did Phyllis Schlafly bring to this fight?

Schlafly: (pause) Well, I never let the troops down. I never said anything dumb that was an embarrassment to them. I was completely consistent in the message I was putting out. And when they followed my directions, they won.

DePue: Did you enjoy being in the center of this?

Schlafly: I knew I had the right arguments and I was glad to have the opportunity to put them out. I think any movement has got to have a leader. That's what we're missing right now.

DePue: The Tea Party movement you mean?

Schlafly: Yeah, and the Republican Party and the conservative movement.

DePue: Well there are plenty of people who are lining up to be the next president, to be that next leader.

Schlafly: The troops haven't accepted them yet. (both laugh)

DePue: You had mentioned something before that I think is also very important in this, and that was the Supreme Court Decision in 1973, in *Roe v. Wade*. Obviously, this is where the Supreme Court makes the decision that abortion is protected under the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause and right to privacy. I wonder if you can elaborate a little bit more on that, because this is, I think, an important part of this long battle.

Schlafly: The pro-family movement or the now often called social conservatives, were a movement that really was started and built-up by the fight against ERA. After *Roe v. Wade*, the grassroots were kind of slow on getting started to fight that. In the first few years it was mostly statements by the Catholic bishops and a few people. A lot of people were very critical intellectually, of *Roe v. Wade*, but it didn't have the leadership to build a grassroots movement. Now that did come later on and when you get to 1975, '76, then you're starting to build a grassroots pro-life movement, which has now become very powerful and very effective. It's a very important part, a key part, of the social conservatives now. Today, much more important than ERA, which we consider a dead issue, but it was a little slower in getting started at the beginning.

DePue: I think I obviously know the answer to this, but your personal views about the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

Schlafly: Oh, it's terrible. I agreed with the dissenters, who said there's absolutely nothing in the Constitution to justify the Court doing that. It's so unfortunate that the Court made it a national issue like that. Several states had legalized abortion—California, Colorado and New York. They were kind of coming across the country, state-by-state, and we stopped it in Illinois in 1970.

I remember the day my husband came home about eleven o'clock and said, "I've got to drive up to Springfield and testify against abortion," a bill that was then in the Illinois Legislature. I had no idea what abortion was. It was not something I knew anything about at all. He drove up there and Illinois stopped it, and then there was a referendum in Michigan that stopped it, so those two things. I think it's just so unfortunate that the Supreme Court wiped out the laws of every state and nationalized the issue. If they had let it alone, I think we would have beaten it in the states.

DePue: Was your opposition then, to *Roe v. Wade*, primarily because this is rightfully an issue for the states to deal with?

Schlafly: No, because it's killing babies. I just don't think people ought to kill people. But of course, criminal laws ought to be state laws, and the states I think, would have handled it right if the Supreme Court hadn't injected itself.

DePue: We've been talking about NOW, and especially in your discussion about the national convention down in Houston, but backtracking on that a little bit. Following *Roe v. Wade*, about that same timeframe, you made this statement about women's liberation and feminists in particular. This is quoted from a *Chicago Tribune* article, and I suspect the *Tribune* is quoting this because they think this is not a flattering quote for you as well. So I'll read this and let you respond. "All women liberationists hate men and children. The real division between women doesn't have anything to do with whether they are educated or uneducated, or black or white, or rich or poor, or old or young, or married or single. The only thing it has to do with is whether they are happy or bitter. The liberationists are a bunch of bitter women seeking a constitutional cure for their personal problems. To them, children are a terrible nuisance. They are not planning to have any themselves and if by accident, well, they favor abortion."

Schlafly: Well, they could have said they favor abortion or having taxpayer-funded daycare, because they think—

DePue: But otherwise—

Schlafly: Yeah, I stand by it, they are bitter women. You look at them, you can see that. You know, that's one of the reasons Scott Brown won that fabulous election in Massachusetts. All you needed to do was to look at his opponent and you

see the picture of a feminist. They are unpleasant women, and you find people like Friedan and [Gloria] Steinem are clearly women who tried to make their own personal problems society's problems. They both had unhappy home lives and they want to make it a **societal** problem. People have all kinds of problems. You try to solve your problems but they're not society's problems. Scott Brown had the good fortune to run against a feminist, who are basically unlikable people.

DePue: Now I think part of the objection is what you just said, what you're saying in this article, are very blanket statements. It's labeling all feminists as bitter people.

Schlafly: Well I think they are all bitter people, and that's why I think feminist is not a word that any happy woman would want to be called.

DePue: What's your definition for the word then?

Schlafly: Feminism? Well, there's a modern feminist named Jessica Valenti, who just defined it in the *Washington Post* a few weeks ago. She said, Feminism is belief that we live in a patriarchy and it has to end. Harvey Mansfield, who's the one conservative Harvard Professor, wrote a book called *Manliness*, and made clear in his book that feminists are anti-men, they're anti-masculine, they're anti-marriage, they're anti-motherhood and they're anti-morality. In other words they're nihilists.

DePue: Do you think that Betty Friedan and Eleanor Smeal and Gloria Steinem would use that definition for feminism?

Schlafly: Absolutely. Well yes, they believe in the patriarchy and they want to overturn it and make it a matriarchy. And you know, the latest surveys by some national bureaus have concluded that, on the whole, women are not as happy today as they were in the 1950s.

DePue: How do you distinguish between the leaders that we just listed—some of them and there were many—and some of the rank and file who found appeal to the Equal Rights Amendment? Would you say everybody who supported the ERA amendment passage was a feminist?

Schlafly: No. No, I wouldn't, but the leaders certainly are feminist and they know what they're doing. Human motivation is very complex and plenty of women supported the Equal Rights Amendment; it just sounded good to them. They didn't really think deeply about it at all.

DePue: Now I'm sure you heard this over and over and over again for this ten year battle. Many of the feminists would point to your life and your career as what they were striving for, for everybody, that you were the ultimate hypocrite because you were opposing what you had attained yourself.

Schlafly: They did nothing for me. I made my successes before they got their movement started. They did nothing for me. All those opportunities were out there. I got my college degree by working my way through college in 1944. My mother got her college degree in 1920. Those opportunities were there for women; they didn't do anything for us. If women thought it was more important to get married and have kids, that was their choice. Now, they are the ones who are the hypocrites, because they don't believe women can be successful. This is why they're so spooked with Sarah Palin. Their idea is that in this oppressive patriarchy, women cannot be successful because they are held down by an unjust society that men dominate. Therefore, you never hear them talking about successful women like Condoleezza Rice²² and Margaret Thatcher.²³ Never, never, never. They don't believe women can be successful, and so when they look at Sarah Palin and they see she has a successful career, she's got a cool husband, she's got a lot of kids and besides that she's pretty, they can't stand it. They feel compelled to attack her because they don't believe women can do that. You look at all the women who won the election in November 2010. The feminists have been claiming they want women to be involved in politics and win an election. Well, a lot of women are involved in politics in the election and they turned out to be all Republicans and all pro-life. But they're not bragging about it because they don't believe in that. (laughs)

DePue: Do you personally see parallels between your life and your career and Sarah Palin?

Schlafly: Of course, I haven't been elected to any office except delegate to the Republican conventions. It's really all these labor saving devices that have given women all this extra time to have a fun participation in politics. I mean when I got married, all I wanted was a dryer, so I didn't have to hang my diapers on the line. Now they have paper diapers.

DePue: Well you mentioned marriage, let's bring in Fred. What was Fred thinking about all of this? This is ten years out of your life. Now obviously by this time, he's used to your being very heavily involved in a lot of things.

Schlafly: Oh, he supported me in everything I did. He was very happy about it. He enjoyed it. He knew somebody had to make the living so I could engage in politics, but he supported me in everything I did. In fact, I used to open my speeches at the colleges by saying, "I want to thank my husband Fred for letting me come here tonight." And **oooh**, the feminists just can't stand that.

DePue: In other words, you like to jab them some?

Schlafly: Yes. Well, it's having a sense of humor. Understand, feminists have no sense of humor. Nothing is funny for them. (laughs)

²² U.S. Secretary of State

²³ Prime Minister of Great Britain

- DePue: It sounds like you didn't miss many opportunities then.
- Schlafly: Another thing, when I ran for Congress one time. It was kind of a custom in Illinois for the candidates to run a little ad in the paper the next day, thanking their supporters for their votes. Fred would tease me and say he ran an ad saying Phyllis Schlafly thanks all those who voted for her in yesterday's election, and her husband thanks the many more who did not. (both laugh)
- DePue: I just read one of your statements here. Let me read a couple statements—these are primarily just from Letters to the Editor—in Illinois papers during this long fight. People who are writing in opposition to your position. This is one from a *Chicago Tribune* letter on “SCHLAFLY'S POSITION FOR A MANIFESTO.” And she comments, “The mutual exploitation of the sexes, that's basically what Ms. Schlafly is advocating, exploitation. Her position is a very selfish one.”
- Schlafly: Well, who am I exploiting?
- DePue: Well I think she would say you're exploiting men, because women are given these advantageous positions in things like a divorce and child custody issues, et cetera.
- Schlafly: Well their whole theory is that men are exploiting women and men are oppressing women. I don't really... I think she's confused, whoever that is.
- DePue: Again, these are just your average Letter to the Editor. Another woman writes, “She married a rich man, had a half dozen children at last count, and knows nothing about job discrimination or the laws which result in unequal learning opportunities between equally qualified men and women. All Schlafly and her ilk want to do is fleece any man they can trap, for all they can take him for, and they admit it.”
- Schlafly: I'd say my husband is successful. He's a successful lawyer. I don't know if you would call him wealthy but he was a successful lawyer. She's right, I didn't face any discrimination. I went to a great coed college, Washington University in St. Louis; then I got my master's at Harvard. There was no discrimination against women. The graduate school, when I went, was completely coed. I competed with all the boys. What's the problem? As I said, my mother graduated from a great coed university, Washington University in St. Louis, in 1920.

My job was firing .30 and .50 caliber ammunition, to test it for the government, and I didn't see any discrimination against women. I got about a slight less pay than the men, but I didn't have to lift the hundred pound plates that we fired the armor piercing bullets through, so I thought that was a good tradeoff.

- DePue: How about the obvious discrimination that the military had, to prohibit women from serving in combat units?
- Schlafly: That's an advantage. That's not a disadvantage. All polls show that the enlisted women do not want equal treatment, and when the polls kept coming back saying that, they stopped taking surveys.
- DePue: But certainly you thought, you think today, that if ERA had passed, if women could serve in combat, there would be some women who would seek to serve in infantry units and ranger battalions and things like that.
- Schlafly: We have a volunteer military now, but the jobs you do after you get in are not really voluntary. You do what you're told.
- DePue: So are you saying that—
- Schlafly: And you can't have a situation where, Well, we've got a really risky escapade we're going to go on now. Who wants to go and who wants not to go? You can't run an army like that.
- DePue: But again, for a woman who wants to serve in an infantry unit, would you be in favor of that?
- Schlafly: I am not in favor. I have no respect for men who send women out to do their fighting for them.
- DePue: Why is it just men's fight and not women's fight?
- Schlafly: Because that's the difference between the sexes. I think it's men's job to protect us.
- DePue: Okay. And that's why she's saying here that she's looking for unequal treatment, or what does it say, that this is a selfish—
- Schlafly: In the military, yes.
- DePue: Here's another Letter to the Editor, this one from July of '73. So these are fairly early in the fight. "Her logic, that to love a man properly is to stay home while he works himself to death, somehow escapes me. It is as twisted as her misrepresentation of what the proposed Equal Rights Amendment would do to women. Please do not let go unchallenged her statement that she speaks for most American women."
- Schlafly: I do think that we had, at that time, a society where husbands were the financial providers and women were full-time homemakers. We've kind of lost that society for various reasons. One reason is the feminists but that's not the only reason.

DePue: Why is that change in society bad?

Schlafly: Well, it's bad because the feminists are demanding taxpayer financed daycare, baby care, mislabeled early childhood education, mandatory kindergarten. In other words, having the taxpayers take care of children until they're about six years old, which I do not think is the taxpayers' responsibility. Understand the feminists think one of the examples of the way the patriarchy oppresses women is that we expect mothers to look after their babies and the taxpayers should take that burden off their back. But when Bernard Goldberg wrote his book, *Bias*, about CBS, he said, "The biggest story you will never see on CBS is what's wrong with daycare, because the feminists working for CBS won't allow it on."

DePue: What's wrong with daycare?

Schlafly: Babies don't like it. Babies like to have one caretaker. They don't like to see a different caretaker every day. They don't like to be treated like they're in a warehouse. Babies require more care than that and the feminists don't want to give it to their babies. They're always demanding taxpayer financed daycare; that's one of their big goals.

DePue: Is part of the objection then, the increasing reach—we've got some competition outside here. (fire engines passing by) Anyway, the increasing reach of the government, especially the Federal Government, in people's individual lives?

Schlafly: Well that's what it is, if you let the government take care of your baby.

DePue: In one of the most fundamental roles that any society has.

Schlafly: I do think if you have babies, the best way is to have a mother at home and a father who is providing for them.

DePue: I'm going to change directions here and take us back to Illinois for a little bit at least, because you mentioned already that this is an every year battle in the Illinois Legislature. One of the things that was different about the fight in Illinois—one of the reasons is because you're from Illinois—but also because of this three fifths rule. In 1970, Illinois adopted a new constitution, and the new constitution said for any amendment to the Illinois State Constitution, you had to have a three fifths majority in the House and the Senate to pass it. By the rules of the House and Senate, they decided to apply that for the federal amendments as well. So it wasn't that you got to a simple majority, but a three fifths majority in the state of Illinois. Quite frequently, as I know you're aware, they got to the fifty percent, but they couldn't get to the sixty percent. Do you think that played out fairly? Is that fair, for Illinois to apply that higher standard?

Schlafly: Well, it was a constitutional rule that was put in Illinois' modern constitution. It was just adopted about 1970 or '71. We now know, from research that one doctoral student recently, that the liberals put that rule in because they were trying to stop ratification of the Dirksen²⁴ push to pass a constitutional amendment to overturn the "one man, one vote" Supreme Court decision. There are many people who think that of all the Supreme Court decisions, that is the worst of all, because of course you know the U.S. Congress has the House apportioned on population, and the Senate apportioned on states or geography, and many states were like that too. With one man, one vote, it brought about all of this exotic redistricting. And now, with the sophisticated use of computers, they draw these district lines in amazing ways, so that you can put one house in one district and have one side of the street in one district and the other side of the street in another district. It's quite a game they play, which the state legislatures are doing right now to advantage their party, and doing it in both Houses, both the Senate and House, to abide by the one man, one vote rule.

Now, I understand that it's now admitted that the writers of the new Illinois Constitution put that in to keep the Dirksen Amendment from passing. So they got hung up on it with ERA. It made it more difficult to ratify ERA.

DePue: I recently had the opportunity to interview Dawn Clark Netsch, who was a delegate to the Constitution Convention in 1969 and 1970. She said exactly the same thing, and I think she saw it differently once it got to the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. I know that she was oftentimes your opponent in the Illinois State Senate.

Schlafly: That's right.

DePue: I'll read you one thing that she said in 1975, in the midst of yet another battle in the Illinois Senate over passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. She said, "There is an hysterical campaign against it. The opposition is organized and they have planted all of these fears. There is kind of a McCarthyism about it."

Schlafly: Well, name-calling, epitaph-throwing, that's what they did. Why didn't she tell us some benefit of ERA. They don't have any benefit.

DePue: Well, I didn't quote what she said about the benefits perhaps. I quoted this, but it's because it's a lively quote. Apparently, you weren't unfamiliar with those kinds of comments.

Schlafly: No, no. I just consider that in the arguments and debates on ERA, they never went over the fifty yard line. It was wholly a defensive battle.

DePue: I mentioned earlier that among your followers, your troops, you used that term yourself, a nice military analogy. Your troops, you were venerated, you were

²⁴ Everett Dirksen, a long-time U.S. Senator from Illinois

the leader, the unquestioned leader. Among the opposition, I think you were vilified. Did that bother you?

Schlafly: No it didn't bother me the slightest. I always said, I'm not going to let those slob ruin my day.

DePue: Did you understand why **you** were the target so many times?

Schlafly: The old adage, strike the shepherd and the flock is disbursed. Betty Friedan specifically gave the orders that that should be their strategy, to attack me.

DePue: I think we'll finish today here, because I want to leave some time. We've got an opportunity for tomorrow but today I'd like to finish with this. The pro-ERA forces: from what I have read at least, there were primarily two different and sometimes competing elements within that group. One was the National Organization for Women and another was a group called ERAmerica. Is that how they would have said it?

Schlafly: I guess so. Was that the one run by the woman from Detroit?

DePue: You put me on the spot now. I don't know for sure.

Schlafly: I don't know that they were competing. They would be supporting one another.

DePue: Part of the argument was that the anti-ERA forces seemed to be united behind you, and the pro-ERA forces did not seem to be united, that not everybody was buying into the agenda that the National Organization for Women would have. You talked about this before, where the emphasis was on abortion rights, was on gay rights, and some of these other hot button issues; that there were other forces who were for the passage of ERA, who didn't want to necessarily sign up for what NOW was pushing in their agenda.

Schlafly: NOW is a very radical organization that endorses all of these way-out goals. I'm sure there were some genuine people who thought ERA would be a nice thing to do, who did not buy into the gay rights agenda, for example. NOW completely bought into it. You could not be elected to any office in NOW unless you endorsed the gay rights agenda. So there would be divisions. They did fight among themselves, that's correct.

Well, I felt I kept faith with the people who followed me. I gave them good arguments that they could stand behind and I never let them down. I never got them out on the end of a limb saying dumb things, and it was a good strategy. Of course, the draft argument, you realize they never denied that. They said that's fine. Of course, they're all over draft age and don't have any daughters, and so they thought that was just a neat idea, but it's unsalable.

- DePue: Once it got to the public and their knowledge about that, that's where the public just wasn't buying that part?
- Schlafly: They were not going to buy that.
- DePue: But when you get to 1975, there no longer is a draft. So is it a non-issue after that?
- Schlafly: There still is registration and if you don't register, you don't get your student loan.
- DePue: Did you personally see any irony in that side of the argument and then the pro-ERA forces side of the argument, where so many of them were so strongly anti-war, and yet they were advocating for women to be drafted, women to serve in the military.
- Schlafly: Well, they decided they had to be consistent on that and of course, their Thomas Emerson, *Yale Law Journal*, article told them that that was part of the deal. Again, they believed that there isn't any difference between men and women, which is a nutty belief, but anyway, that's what they believed. They simply were caught in their own dumb arguments.
- DePue: Let's finish it up with this: a couple personal decisions that you made or personal things. One is the decision to go to law school, and that was 1975. Why? You've got a pretty busy life already. You're in the midst of leading this fight against the passage of ERA, you've got six kids. Why do you decide to go to law school?
- Schlafly: Well, that's a story. My husband's a lawyer and we have four sons. I thought we should have a lawyer son. The first one rejected it and when the second son came along, I tried to persuade him to go to law school and he didn't want to do it. So I made a bet with him: we'll both take the LSAT [Law School Admission Test] and one of us will go. So we both took the LSAT and he still refused to go. Carrying on with this argument, I applied to Washington University Law School. Of course my children, who were in on this and knew what was going on—I never told my husband—but my children said, Oh, they won't accept you, Mother, you're too old.

This was 1975. I applied and they accepted me. And one night at the dinner table, I announced I had been accepted for Washington University Law School, to start classes in September. Fred had a tantrum. I'd never seen him like this. He said, That's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard, you're trying to beat the ERA, you're making these trips around the country, you don't have time, it's just ridiculous—and it broke up the dinner. I remember everybody left the table and I walked up to my oldest son and said, "I'm just floored, I never saw him like this before." And John said, "Mother, you have everything else in the world and now you're trying to take his law practice

away from him.” Well of course that was the last thing I was thinking about. I said okay, if that’s what he thinks about it, I’ll give it up.

So I wrote Washington University and said thank you very much, but I’m not going to accept. So then I announced that. About a week later Fred came back and said, “That was a great idea for you to go to law school.” He said, “It will help you with your ERA fight, it will be good for you, go ahead and do it.” So again the children telling me, well you’ve given it up and they’ll never take you now. So I wrote back and said I’ve changed my mind, I would like to come now, and they took me. So then I was stuck.

Meanwhile, the second son went to medical school; he’s a doctor now. So that’s how I got into it. Of course, once I got into it, mother couldn’t be a dropout.

DePue: I don’t know that you had ever quit on anything that you’ve started.

Schlafly: (laughs) So, I went to law school and it was a lot more work than I thought it was going to be. But anyway I went and carried on a lot of my ERA leadership from the phone booth in the canteen. Do you remember what phone booths are like? We don’t have them any more, but I spent a great deal of my spare time in that phone booth.

DePue: Calling people in various states, and the leadership of the movement.

Schlafly: Yeah. I couldn’t be a dropout once I got started.

DePue: Was Fred’s decision that he decided you needed to go to law school, was that in the form of an apology as well?

Schlafly: No, no. He just thought I was debating these feminist lawyers and he thought it would just be helpful.

DePue: I had read someplace else that in the midst of testifying before one of these committees, and maybe it was in Illinois, that somebody was challenging you, why you thought yourself an authority on these things because you’re not a lawyer.

Schlafly: Yeah, they probably did that.

DePue: You don’t remember the specifics of it?

Schlafly: I don’t remember the specifics but that sounds true, because I was debating a lot of feminist lawyers.

DePue: I don’t think we had—

Schlafly: I want to say one more thing.

DePue: Sure.

Schlafly: In the early years, late sixties and through the early seventies, they called themselves the Women's Liberation Movement. You have to ask yourself, what did they want to be liberated from, and I think it's home, husband, family and children. They wanted liberation from the patriarchy and from the obligations of marriage and motherhood. Now along about '76, they decided they liked the term feminist better; you don't find them so often using Women's Liberation Movement much any more. They like to call themselves feminists, which they think, I guess, relates to more people. However, all surveys have consistently shown that a majority of women do **not** want to be called feminists.

DePue: We had failed to mention the creation of "Stop ERA" early on; that would have been October, I believe, in 1972. Was Stop ERA an acronym for something?

Schlafly: Yes but mainly it was to enable us to use the stop sign. Yeah, I think sometimes we used, "Stop Taking our Privileges." But mainly, we adopted the stop sign as our logo and called it Stop ERA. The way it started—oh, we're going back to 1972 now. I told you how I got this call from Oklahoma and I realized we were on to something and that we could start something. I invited a hundred women from thirty states, among my Republican women friends, to meet me in St. Louis. They came to St. Louis and we went to the Airport Marriott Hotel. I told them all about ERA and why we ought to go out and beat it. Then I put them on a bus and we drove down to the river and we boarded the Goldenrod Showboat. I climbed up on the stage and gave a speech on leadership, and told them to go home and be a leader in your community, and we're going to beat ERA. That's the way it got started.

DePue: It sounds like you started with a trot and quickly were at a run after that.

Schlafly: Yeah.

DePue: In 1975 then, this would have been November of '75, you decided to create the Eagle Forum. What was different about the Eagle Forum?

Schlafly: Well, we operated as Stop ERA in '72, '73, '74, and then I realized that our talented activist women were interested in a lot of other issues. Also, I had friends in the states where ERA was no fight. There were many states that never fought the ERA battle. They ratified early and then put it on the backburner and never thought about it again. So we needed a real organization. Stop ERA had functioned simply as somebody called up and said, I need you to go testify at the hearing. We had a little committee, so we wanted a real organization. So we looked around for names and we didn't like any of the names that had "women" in it. The feminists had taken many of them. The eagle pin was my campaign pin when I ran for president of the

Republican Women. Alton, Illinois is a great nesting place for the eagles; they come down the three rivers²⁵ in the wintertime and we just decided on Eagle Forum. We're glad to have men join us too. That's the way it was titled, and we are incorporated as Eagle Forum.

DePue: Was Stop ERA strictly a women's organization?

Schlafly: Well certainly, all the chairmen I had in various states were all women.

DePue: Was that a conscious decision, not to involve the men?

Schlafly: Well it's isn't that we threw them out or made a conscious decision not to involve them, but I always did feel that the leaders of the effort to beat ERA had to be women.

DePue: Because?

Schlafly: Because it was presented as something that was an advantage to women, and we needed women to fight against it.

DePue: Okay. What was the extent of the involvement of men early on in the Eagle Forum.

Schlafly: Mostly as husbands who were financing our activities. (both laugh) But I have several state presidents now who are men. Hawaii has always been a man. North Carolina, North Dakota I think. There are four or five of them who are men.

DePue: We've gotten through the discussion, through about 1977. I want to talk quite a bit more about Jimmy Carter's involvement tomorrow. There are some other issues as well, and then the big battle in Illinois in 1982 for tomorrow as well. Is there anything else that you wanted to mention for today, Mrs. Schlafly?

Schlafly: I did debate nearly all the leaders on the other side, except Gloria Steinem, who never would debate me. Among those I debated on some type of TV program would have been all the presidents of NOW—there were several of them—Wilma Scott Heide, Karen DeCrow, the older woman whose name escapes me at the moment, who has since passed away, Jill Ruckelshaus, Congresswoman Martha Griffiths.

DePue: I know Pat Schroeder.

Schlafly: Pat Schroeder, yes Pat Schroeder definitely. State reps like Eugenia Chapman. Probably everybody who was significant, except Steinem who never would. I guess that's about it. There's still lots more to tell. Some of the bitter battles came up in the later years.

²⁵ The Mississippi, the Missouri and the Illinois rivers.

DePue: But we have to save a little bit of the fun for tomorrow, don't we?

Schlafly: Right, right.

DePue: This has been fascinating, thank you very much Mrs. Schlafly. As we've said, we'll pick this up tomorrow morning then.

Schlafly: All right, the fight goes on.

(end of interview #4 #5 continues)

Interview with Phyllis Schlafly

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Interview # 5: February 22, 2011

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Tuesday, February 22, 2011. My name is Mark DePue, Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here with Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly. Good morning.

Schlafly: Good morning. Very happy to have you back.

DePue: We're hoping the equipment works a little bit better than we got started with this morning. Again, I apologize on the record for that, Mrs. Schlafly, and we'll keep a very close eye on this to make sure that it is recording properly. When we started, I was asking a little bit about the Eagle Forum and our location here. So if you can go over that quickly for us.

Schlafly: Eagle Forum grew out of "Stop ERA." Eagle Forum was incorporated in 1975. Right here where we're talking is our national headquarters. It's a beautiful building in Clayton, which is an upscale suburb of St. Louis. We have a small staff of four people here. Then I have the other office in Alton, Illinois, where I lived for so many years with my late husband, and have five people in that office. They think they do all the useful work and we're just here for show. They do the shipping and receiving and the computer work and so forth. And then I have a small office in Washington, on Capitol Hill, with two staffers and usually a couple of interns, which I've maintained in a wonderful location, a bank building—I feel safe in a bank building—since [Ronald] Reagan went to Washington in 1981. The structure of our organization is volunteer. I am a volunteer and all of my state leaders are volunteers.

DePue: Why don't we go into your discussion of 1976 and that important event that occurred that year for you.

Schlafly: In the first few years of fighting the Equal Rights Amendment, 1972 to 1976, we were putting our finger in the dike to keep the tide from rolling in, with just a few of my Republican women friends. I did have a national following, primarily as the result of my first book, *A Choice Not an Echo*, which was a history of Republican conventions. But by 1976, I realized the tide was rolling in, that 99 percent of the media was pushing the Women's Liberation Movement. They already had more than thirty states, they only needed a few more, so I knew that we needed reinforcements. So I sent out the call, primarily to the churches, but also to other people who had not been active in politics, to come and have a big demonstration in Springfield, Illinois.

Illinois was always the frontline of the ERA battle. Illinois voted on ERA every year for ten years, and so it was a live issue in that state. However, we had been trying to hold the line with just half a dozen of us driving up to Springfield every few weeks. I called for the demonstration and it came. On April 27, 1976, a thousand people did come to Springfield. I don't think our state had ever seen anything like that before. It was a stunning event. Most of them had never been involved in politics and were believers that ERA was a bad thing that they needed to protect our country against.

Now, what was so remarkable about these people is that I started a truly ecumenical organization. Eagle Forum is not a religious organization, but we invite and welcome people of all denominations. It really, in that year, in the 1970s, was quite something, to put Baptists and Catholics and all kinds

of evangelicals and Protestants and the Mormons and the Orthodox Jews in the same room and say, now we're going to all work together to beat ERA. Most of them did not know each other, had never worked with each other and were somewhat suspicious of each other, but they realized we had a cause we could cooperate on. That was the start of what we call now, the pro-family movement. I think that's the day I invented the pro-family movement.

DePue: You're willing to state that you were the one who did invent that?

Schlafly: Yes. I called for the thousand people to come and prayed that they would come and they did come.

DePue: Very good. Let's jump forward just a few months from that timeframe and get into one of your other avocations, which is to attend Republican national conventions.

Schlafly: Yes. Republican national conventions has been my lifetime hobby. I've been to every one, beginning in 1952—fifteen of them all together. I've been a delegate at most of them. I find it a real fascination. At some early date—I don't remember the year—the Equal Rights Amendment was put into the Republican platform. That was before I was interested in the subject. It was just thought to be just a nice tribute to the ladies. It wasn't controversial at that time, but by 1976, when the Republican National Convention was in Kansas City, I wanted to take it out because I thought it was by that time an embarrassment. So I went and testified before the Platform Committee and asked them to take it out; they had a vote and I lost that motion. My own Congressman, who was a member of that committee, told me it was a deliberate miscount of the vote. I decided I was not going to pursue it by taking the issue to the floor of the convention, because Reagan was running against Gerald Ford and I didn't want to be blamed for Reagan losing that nomination by injecting another controversy into the convention, so I just let it drop. However, we did put in a very strong plank for pro-life. That was the first Republican National Convention after *Roe v. Wade*. We called for a constitutional amendment to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. We have had a strong pro-life plank in the Republican platform ever since.

DePue: Talk a little bit about that race at the convention itself, where it was still somewhat in doubt between whether Reagan or Ford was going to be the one who goes forward.

Schlafly: Challenging an incumbent president is really a very brave and unusual thing to do. I talk about the cult of incumbency. Incumbents always seem to back each other and Republicans also seem to believe in primogeniture, a principle that I thought we got rid of when we had the American Revolution. That means the Republicans always want to nominate the next one in line, and they don't seem to want to go outside of that. But at any rate, Reagan did try to dislodge Ford, who was very unpopular among the people I knew. His wife was

showing herself to be a feminist, speaking out for ERA and other feminist issues. Ford had appointed the man we love to hate, Nelson Rockefeller, as his Vice President. As you know, the earlier conventions had been bitter in trying to keep Rockefeller from his lifetime ambition of being President of the United States.

So it was brave and Reagan came very close. He lost that nomination by fewer than a hundred votes, out of—I don't know—a couple of thousand votes cast. Then Gerald Ford did one very nice thing. After the vote, he invited Reagan to come to the platform and say a few words, for a concession speech. Reagan came to the platform and only talked about five minutes, but it was a wonderful, memorable talk and made most people think we nominated the wrong guy. So it was just really the start of Reagan's campaign for the next round in 1980.

DePue: When we started the conversation yesterday, we started with talking about the state of the Republican Party in 1972 and 1974. So of course you've got to mention Richard Nixon. Most of the country thought Richard Nixon was your standard conservative. The conservative wing of the Republican Party believed he was certainly not conservative but liberal. Then you've got the fiasco of Watergate²⁶ and this incredible down period for the Republican Party in general. That's a statement. My question is then, did you see beginnings of a resurgence, in 1976, of the conservative wing?

Schlafly: You were right about the despondency of Republicans during the 1970s. After Barry Goldwater's smashing defeat by Lyndon Johnson, the conservative movement in general believed that we would never be able to elect a real conservative. That's sort of why we took Nixon. In any event, Nixon had promised publicly, and privately to me also, that if elected president, he would restore our military nuclear superiority. That's why he got the support of people I admire, like the General Thomas Power who had been head of SAC [Strategic Air Command]—he was a good friend. Nixon had promised that he would restore the military superiority that had been dismantled under [John F.] Kennedy and [Lyndon B.] Johnson, by Robert McNamara. So we supported Nixon and he turned out to be not a conservative. Nixon even instituted wage and price control. Then of course there was Watergate and he resigned, the Republican Congress was wiped out, and people predicted the Republican Party would never come back.

In 1976, Reagan's little five-minute speech kind of gave us all a lift. And as I look back, it's probably a good thing that he didn't get the nomination,

²⁶ A political scandal resulting from the break-in of the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate office complex in Washington, D.C. which led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon, and the indictment, trial and conviction of other political operatives.

because we got Jimmy Carter and found out how bad the other side could be. Reagan spent those four years, between 1976 and 1980, traveling the country and refining his conservative ideology. He was constantly talking to small groups and getting their feedback. You know, he wouldn't fly in airplanes then, so he only went by train around the country. He spoke for dinner clubs for General Electric. He did his three-minute radio commentaries, which we now know that he wrote himself, on a yellow pad. He had no secretary or think tank or research department. He had a fine library and he did his own reading and writing.

Those were the years when he got feedback from the American people and simply refined his conservative ideology, which had not been all that conservative when he was Governor of California. So those were good developing years, and by the time he ran in 1980, he knew who he was and where he was going. He was able to attract the people we now call the social conservatives; the people I had brought in to the Stop ERA fight, and they made the big majority that elected Reagan in 1980.

DePue: Would you say that in 1976, that you and the fact that there had been a fight over ERA from '72 to '76, saw the beginning of a resurgence in the conservative wing?

Schlafly: In the first years, I was holding the line with just a handful of my Republican women friends and people who had read *A Choice Not an Echo*. But when we brought in this big crowd in Springfield in 1976, we began to expand our wings and to bring in people who had never been active in politics, and some who were Democrats, who saw that we had better answers to national problems—we called them the Reagan Democrats—and we now call this group the social conservatives. Reagan was able to build a coalition of the fiscal conservatives who were left over from the Goldwater battle, and the anti-communist conservatives who had been fighting communism at home and abroad for twenty-five years, and then the social conservatives, who were brought in first of all, by the Stop ERA movement, and then as the pro-life movement developed, the pro-lifers.

DePue: Mrs. Schlafly, you'll be happy to know that we're at fifteen minutes into the interview, so I think our equipment is working just fine now.

Schlafly: That's great.

DePue: What I want to do next then, is to turn some attention again to the strategy that you used, and the Eagle Forum the Stop ERA forces used, to actually defeat the ERA Amendment. Something that we did not talk about yesterday was this existence of your annual workshops. Talk to us a little bit about the annual workshops that you had and what the purpose was.

- Schlafly: I started Stop ERA by inviting one hundred women from thirty states to come to St. Louis. That was our first national meeting on that. I think we have the fortieth coming up now, and we call it Eagle Council now. It's a leadership meeting of the people who subscribe to what Eagle Forum believes in. Initially, they were concentrated on defeating the Equal Rights Amendment, but we soon spread our wings to many other issues. It's not a conference where we have a lot of name people. For many years, I would have only one name speaker and the rest of it would be a training session. We trained our people how to lobby, how to talk to the legislators, what to say, and what arguments to use and not to use and not to say. Our people became very skilled at passing good laws and defeating bad laws, and electing good candidates and defeating bad candidates.
- DePue: I know that one of the things you emphasized—was this all women who were coming to these events?
- Schlafly: I would say we started out about 90 percent women, and I would say as the organization has grown and the Eagle Councils have gotten bigger, it's probably 65, 70 percent women.
- DePue: Back in those early years especially, when the focus is largely on defeating ERA, why was there so much emphasis on appearance and on posture and things like that, for these people?
- Schlafly: Well, it was pretty easy to tell the difference between the two sides by looking at them. The feminists began to think that the reason they were losing and we were winning, was that we wore red and they may have worn blue jeans or something else, I don't know what, but they didn't look like we looked. You could spot the difference by looking at them. So one year they spent all their money to buy green dresses for their people who were going to the legislature, but that didn't get them anywhere.
- DePue: Were you putting out instructions that your supporters should be wearing dresses?
- Schlafly: I didn't have to tell them that; we all wore dresses then. (laughs)
- DePue: Well I would imagine that the other side didn't all wear dresses.
- Schlafly: No, the other side didn't all wear dresses. It was pretty obvious to tell the two groups apart, also in their language, the way they talked. We sent the legislators valentines and we thanked them when they were doing the right things. Once a year we had our bread day, when we brought homemade bread to every one of the State Legislators. The feminists called that our dirty trick. Of course, I don't think they knew how to make bread, so they couldn't compete with us on that.

DePue: One of the other things in reading about these workshops that really struck me was that you would hold mock debates and mock speeches, and then evaluate the women after they had done it.

Schlafly: Yes we did. We had a lot of training sessions in how to talk about it. I would say one of the principal reasons we defeated ERA, and maybe the principal reason, is that I defined the battleground that we would fight on, and that battleground was the legal rights that women would lose if ERA passed. I showed how it would take away the eighteen year-old girl's right to be exempt from the military draft. It would take away the right of a wife to be supported by her husband. Those things were a matter of laws and what the Equal Rights Amendment would do is to make all the laws sex neutral. So if you make the draft law sex neutral, you're going to have to draft girls. If you make the family support law sex neutral, that sends the wife out to get a job, instead of being supported by her husband while she is a full-time homemaker.

Then as the years went on, we began to realize that the feminists had other goals in mind for ERA. They wanted taxpayer funding of abortion. You may say the ERA doesn't mention abortion, which of course is true, but their smart lawyers developed the legal argument that since abortion is something that happens only to women, if you deny taxpayer funding for abortion, you have discriminated on account of sex, within the meaning of ERA. They tried that litigation in many states. They finally clearly succeeded in the State Supreme Court of New Mexico, which adopted the whole feminist argument, and that is the argument: since abortion happens only to women, if you deny taxpayer funding for abortion, you have discriminated on account of sex within the meaning of ERA.

Then, when they joined forces with the whole gay rights movement, which they did at the International Women's Year convention in Houston in 1977, it became clear that they looked upon ERA as a means to get same-sex marriage licenses. Again it's pretty obvious, based on the language. If two men show up at the office of the City Clerk and say, we want a marriage license, and she says I'm not giving it to you because you're both men, she has clearly discriminated on account of sex, and that is what the Equal Rights Amendment would forbid. Of course people ridiculed me for saying that, but it's pretty obvious from the language. They very early got the Hawaii State Supreme Court to buy that argument, and the people of Hawaii had to pass another constitutional amendment to say, we didn't mean that when we passed a state Equal Rights Amendment.

DePue: I want to back up just a little bit. Part of the strategy, in just reading the background on this, I know that you had oftentimes actually published some of the literature that the National Organization for Women came out with. "Out of the Mainstream, into the Revolution" was one thing, and I think in 1973, maybe their policy statement, "Revolution: Tomorrow is NOW." And you've already talked about the 1977 timeframe and actually the platform, the

resolutions that they passed in 1977. I'll let you respond here, but I want to read a quote that you said right after that; this is about some of the resolutions passed in Houston. "Women's Lib Movement has sealed its own doom by deliberately hanging around its own neck, the albatross of abortion, lesbianism, pornography and federal control." And then referring to the conference resolutions, "It's the best recruiting tool I've ever had. I just spent twenty minutes reading the Houston resolutions to them; that's all I have to do."

Schlafly: Well, I'll stand by that. That's exactly right. In fact, one of the publications of NOW was a paperback document of about twenty-five pages called, "Revolution: Tomorrow is NOW." I reprinted that to look exactly like what they put out, and at our meetings, I would urge people to buy it, for I think a dollar a copy, so that they could hear both sides of the argument. The radical nature of their resolutions was a turnoff to most people.

DePue: Of course all of this and the growing success of your movement to defeat, time after time, passage of ERA in a whole series of states, didn't necessarily make you popular with the pro-ERA forces.

Schlafly: Well no, I'll never be popular with the pro-ERA forces. But over the years, I debated oh, hundreds of times, all sorts of local feminists, but among the prominent ones I debated would be Betty Friedan several times, Congresswoman Margaret Heckler, Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick, Jill Ruckelshaus, Catherine East, Congresswoman Martha Griffiths, Thomas I. Emerson of the famous *Yale Law Journal* article, and even Birch Bayh, who was the sponsor of ERA in the U.S. Senate. Then of course I debated all the presidents of NOW, beginning with Wilma Scott Heide and then Molly Yard and then Karen DeCrow and then Eleanor Smeal.

I was on all the talk shows, because they knew I gave them a good show. I was on Phil Donahue several times, Mike Douglas, Regis Philbin, Barbara Walters, Merv Griffin. I felt that was a little help. Now of course it was a pitifully small amount of the network coverage of ERA when I got to do a debate with one of their people, because there was so much that was on the media that was just pushing ERA and pushing the feminist agenda. But it did give us a lot of help and people saw that **they** didn't have any arguments. The big defect of the ERAers is they were never able to show any benefit to women in passing it.

DePue: Again, there was certainly a lot of angst on the pro-ERA side. Do you remember the time in 1977, I think it was at the Waldorf Astoria, where you got a pie in the face from one of their supporters.

Schlafly: Oh, that's right. The Women's National Republican Club was giving me some kind of award at the Waldorf Astoria. They hired a professional pie thrower. Did you know there was such a thing? That's his business. He said he'll take

a contract on anybody except Mayor Daley; his thugs were too dangerous. (laughter) But he took it on me. We have a picture, because he lined up the photographer to take a picture. Usually, he throws custard pies because they make a mess, but because I was for mom and apple pie, he threw an apple pie at me.

DePue: What was your reaction at that very moment?

Schlafly: Well, I had to clean the pie off my face.

DePue: Did it scare you?

Schlafly: Oh sure, yeah it was stunning. The picture shows that; you can see, the photographer knew that this was coming but I didn't. That's clear in the picture.

DePue: Do you think those kind of tactics, those kind of stunts on the other side were effective for them?

Schlafly: No, I don't think they were effective. I don't think anything they did was effective, but they had plenty of money to spend, and their support by all the politicians that anybody ever heard of, plus all the media, plus some razzmatazz of some Hollywood stars, gave them a big plus.

DePue: I'm sure it was by this time, you were called all kinds of interesting and colorful names. Witch was one that came up a lot and I imagine the B-word came up a few times. Here's one of the things that they called you: a Barbie doll. Did that one bother you?

Schlafly: (laughs) Nothing they did bothered me and that irritated them even more.

DePue: What was the reaction of your family, especially the kids? You're in this whirlwind of publicity and all of these things are coming from a variety of directions. How did they respond to all of that?

Schlafly: Oh, they just thought that was mother's hobby and she was doing her thing. They thought it was a little fun. Every now and then I took one of them with me, but not very often.

DePue: Did they hear about it? Some of your children now are in college age, they're going off to college or they're going off to careers of their own, and hearing things from the outside world about this as well?

Schlafly: Sure, they would hear about it. That's right.

DePue: Did some of them take some heat because of your positions?

- Schlafly: I don't think they really did. My sons all went to engineering school and I am not sure the engineers knew what was going on, on this. It was not on their agenda. The girls were perfectly able to cope with it.
- DePue: Were there any personal threats on you or the family?
- Schlafly: Yeah, there was one of them who went on radio and said what the feminists ought to do is to punch me in the mouth. She did that publicly and I just think that just shows what kind of people they are.
- DePue: Did you get death threats or threatening phone calls or anything like that, to the family home?
- Schlafly: Not threatening but some ugly phone calls.
- DePue: Did that bother you?
- Schlafly: No, what the feminists did didn't bother me. I just sized it up to who they were.
- DePue: Did you ever have any concerns for the family because of the nature of the debate and how ugly it was getting in some corners?
- Schlafly: No. I'm just not one to worry about those things.
- DePue: Okay. I want to have you reflect a little bit on the election in 1976 and Jimmy Carter's victory then, and what that meant to the ERA movement.
- Schlafly: Well, what Jimmy Carter's victory meant was that the ERA drive was run right out of the White House. In the White House, they have something called the Situation Room. That was set up so that if [Nikita] Khrushchev [Premier of the Soviet Union] dropped the atom bomb on us, they would all rush into the Situation Room to decide what do we do now. That's where the ERA campaign was run. Mrs. Carter was actively lobbying for ERA, calling legislators. Some were invited to the White House for personal attention. I mean, a lot of people would do a lot to get an invitation to the White House, and some state legislators were invited there so they could be personally lobbied. Jimmy Carter—well, he announced he was going to push ERA through.
- DePue: Reading Don Ritchie, he makes the statement that the pro-ERA forces, especially the National Organization of Women, were not happy with him at all. They didn't think he was forceful enough, that he wasn't enough of an advocate.
- Schlafly: Well, I've forgotten exactly the dispute. It could have been about Bella Abzug, that he appointed her something and then fired her. She is a difficult person to get along with.

- DePue: He appointed her to the President's Advisory Council on Women.
- Schlafly: And then he fired her.
- DePue: At one of the meetings that they had, she accused him of not being forceful enough and he accused her of being more confrontational than she needed to be and that was the end of that. Then they brought in Lynda Johnson Robb afterwards.
- Schlafly: Yeah, that would have been Lyndon Johnson's daughter. That's right. Bella Abzug was not a person that many people could get along with. I think she couldn't even keep her staff. As a matter of fact, one funny sidelight: when all the press was in Houston to cover the International Women's Year convention, which was run by Bella Abzug, "Meet the Press" was filmed and broadcast from Houston, a sign of all the media being in Houston. Would it have been Tom Brokaw running it then? I think. But whoever it was, they were getting together with some of these feminists to plan who was going to be on, and of course it ended up where there were five women on the "Meet the Press" on IWY, so they had me four-to-one. But at any rate, they had planned to have Bella Abzug on. I wasn't there but I'm told that she started to talk about this program as her program, and that was too much for Tom Brokaw, so she was not on it when it finally aired. (both laugh)
- DePue: Again, you had mentioned Houston and the importance of that year, and the resolution's coming out being perfect ammunition. So oftentimes, you were using their words to defeat them, but I want to read just a series of quotes of your words as well and get you to respond to these. "Men should stop treating feminists like ladies and instead treat them like the men they say they want to be."
- Schlafly: Good point. They are offended by the word "lady." As a matter of fact, I did a debate one time with Gloria Allred, whom you may have seen on television recently, and we were in Iowa. They got some professor to be the moderator; he's opening up the evening by saying, "Tonight, we have two ladies who are here to debate the Equal Rights Amendment." Gloria shot out from her side of the platform, "**We're not ladies, we're women!**" And the professor, without batting an eyelash went on and he said, "Tonight, we have one lady and one woman." (DePue laughs) So they don't want to be referred to as ladies or treated like ladies.
- DePue: And the problem with being referred to as ladies?
- Schlafly: They think it's sexist, because it's their ideology that there really isn't any difference between men and women. That's why they want to put women in military combat, that's why they want to put women in coal mines or whatever, and there really isn't any difference.

DePue: Well this next quote is along a similar theme. “When will American men learn how to stand up to the nagging by the intolerant, uncivil feminists, whose sport is to humiliate men?”

Schlafly: Well, I hope they read my new book, which is coming out this spring, called *The Flipside of Feminism*. In that book, I give some advice to young women on how they can have a happy life, and advice to men on how they can stand up to these intolerant feminists who really don’t like men and don’t like anything masculine. Maybe some time in this broadcast or these tapes, we’ll talk about Title IX, but that’s a perfect example of how they not only are anti-men but they’re anti-masculine, because they have forced the colleges to cancel more than 450 wrestling teams. Now, you can see that’s not a matter of money. That’s the cheapest sport on the list; all you need is a mat. It’s a very masculine sport and they just can’t stand it. The idea of abolishing 450 wrestling teams is so outrageous, but that’s what they’ve done.

DePue: We certainly will have—I don’t think today—but we will have opportunity to take up a lot of these issues that are still playing out in today’s society. Here’s the third quote. “I’ll tell you in one sentence what’s wrong with ERA and women’s liberation. It’s the libber’s dogma that there are no innate differences between men and women, that there are only stereotypical differences that a sexist society imposes. That’s rubbish.”

Schlafly: Well that’s fine, I’m glad I said that.

DePue: And one more. “Feminism is doomed to failure because it’s based on an attempt to repeal and restructure human nature.”

Schlafly: Yes, their fight is with human nature, that’s right.

DePue: And no need to elaborate on that any further?

Schlafly: Well any sensible person can see that there are differences. Maybe some time we’ll talk about how the feminists dominate the teacher’s union and the elementary schools, and how harmful they are to little boys. Several scholars have written about that. Christina Hoff Sommers has written about that, with American Enterprise Institute. There’s a brand new book out called *Man Up!*, by the scholar who is with the Manhattan Institute, and how unfair the schools are to little boys, because the feminist teachers look upon little boys as just unruly girls, and they want to make them behave like girls. I think most of the teachers either don’t have children or they don’t have sons and daughters to compare. They’re different from the cradle and the idea of trying to treat them and put them in the same mold is extremely harmful to boys.

DePue: Let’s go back to our chronology here and get into 1978, and I’ll just take us back to Illinois again. Do you remember Carter’s visit to Illinois that year and his opportunity to address the General Assembly, and yet another battle in Illinois to try to pass the amendment.

- Schlafly: I don't remember that. He came to address the General Assembly?
- DePue: Mm-hmm.
- Schlafly: I must not have gone. (laughter) I don't remember that.
- DePue: Well I know that that was a big push year for the feminists because the clock was running down by that time. And so they had—this was the standard litany of names you'll recognize—Alan Alda, Marlo Thomas, Jean Stapleton, Carol Burnett. All these people showed up in Springfield, Illinois, along with the President himself.
- Schlafly: Right. They got Hollywood, a lot of razzmatazz, Hollywood. They probably had Phil Donahue in Chicago, although I don't know that they came to Springfield, but he was helping them.
- DePue: They had decided to focus their energies on five states, Illinois being at the top of the list, but also Florida, Oklahoma, North Carolina and Missouri, the states where it was closest and the battle was best waged. One of the strategies that they adopted was to talk about boycotting the states who had failed to pass ERA. Do you recall that?
- Schlafly: Oh yes. They got a lot of publicity for that and tried to line up people **not** to go into the states that had not ratified ERA. I think their boycott was... It kind of sounded like sour grapes. I really don't think it got them anywhere.
- DePue: I'm not sure, what specifically was the strategy then? We're talking about conventions and conferences?
- Schlafly: Yes, right, and even offices. For example, the American Library Association is a very left-wing organization, but it's been headquartered for generations in Chicago, with a pretty large staff and a lot of loyal employees. At one time, they tried to get them to move out of Illinois, because Illinois hadn't ratified. I don't know how many, they may have had a hundred or something employees? What an injustice that is to all of those faithful employees. They finally had to give up on that. But that's an example of how, oh, kind of nasty and bitter they were, even in that case to their own people.
- DePue: You had mentioned earlier in our conversation today, about the battleground, that you and the Stop ERA movement were careful to pick the battlegrounds. Was the battleground restricted to state legislatures or was it beyond that as well?
- Schlafly: Well, it was all in state legislatures until the ERAers realized they were running out of time. The seven year time limit extended from March 22, 1972 to March 22, 1979. Along about 1977 they realized, well, we're running out of time and we don't have our thirty-eight states. So they ran to Jimmy Carter, who was all for them, and got him to cook up this idea of a crooked extension.

Carter and his friends in Congress put in a bill to extend the time period for ERA, and at that point we had to go and lobby Congress against it, which we did. They passed it anyway; they had the votes. As Henry Hyde said, "It was the most unusual time period specified in any federal law ever." The extension was for three years, three months, eight days and twelve hours; it was designed to catch the Illinois Legislature for an extra year, because the Illinois Legislature has mandatory adjournment on June thirtieth, so it couldn't extend just to March twenty-second. They had to go to June thirtieth. Illinois actually voted on ERA for eleven years

Congress passed it. They passed the extension, not with the two-thirds majority that constitutional amendments require, but only with a simple majority. Then they stuck in the bill that they were not going to recognize—I think it was in that bill but I'm not sure about that—not going to recognize any rescissions. Meanwhile, we were getting some of the states that had passed ERA to rescind.

At any rate, they passed the bill to give themselves another three years. Now our position was, you can't change the ballgame after you've already started. The cartoonists had a field day with this. I've got one of these cartoons hanging on my wall out here. They treated it like giving three more innings to a ballgame that was not tied up, and they all saw this was an unfair thing. A lawsuit followed and the lawsuit involved both the extension and the rescissions, which they wanted to Court to declare illegal.

DePue: Do you know where the lawsuit originated?

Schlafly: Yeah, it originated in Idaho, because Idaho was one of the rescinding states. It went on and we won it at the District Court level. Then they used their influence to get it to bypass the Appellate Court and take it straight to the Supreme Court. So it went straight from the District Court to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court, in its wisdom, decided to sit on it until the extension ran out, and then they could declare it was all moot, it was dead, whether the extension was valid or not.

DePue: The actual bill passed on August 15, 1978. You've touched on, now this is a constitutional battle as well and obviously it was all along, but it's in the court system and in two respects. You used the word yourself, it was "crooked" the way the original bill was passed. Why do you think it was crooked?

Schlafly: You mean the extension.

DePue: The extension, yes.

Schlafly: The extension. Because it changed the terms of the game after the game was in process; that's the first reason. The second reason is they did not have the two-thirds majority that you're supposed to have for anything to do with a constitutional amendment.

- DePue: Those are the two issues that were brought forward by Idaho?
- Schlafly: Plus the rescission. They got the validity of rescissions in the case, too.
- DePue: Then what's your position? What was the Stop ERA's position on the rescissions?
- Schlafly: Oh, we were for the rescissions. We thought any state could change its mind within the same time period. You can't change your mind fifty years later, but if you're still within the time period that the amendment has not been ratified, then you should be able to change your mind.
- DePue: So then for that reason, these decisions were contrary to what the U.S. Constitution said in the first place?
- Schlafly: Well the U.S. Constitution doesn't say anything about rescission, but we thought the whole thing was trying to manipulate the Constitution in basically unfair ways. We saw no reason why, in the time period, the seven year time period that was given for consideration, a state legislature couldn't change its mind.
- DePue: I know this is another area of great concern for you, that you've written about. So let's take the opportunity, since we're talking about the U.S. Constitution and the Supreme Court and judicial activities right now, to get your feelings on the court system. I'm not doing a very good job in this at all. Let me just state it very bluntly. Would you come down on the side of the argument that says that the U.S. Constitution is a living document, or that it needs to be interpreted strictly?
- Schlafly: I think the Constitution is written on a piece of paper and it means what it says, and there it is. It's not alive. It's not an animal. It's there. It's in black and white. I think the term "living document" is just simply a codeword for the liberals wanting to read things into the Constitution that are not there, or manipulate it in any way they want, just like the abortion decision. They claim they found the right to abortion in the penumbra, in the shadow of the Fourteenth Amendment. Well it isn't there. I don't believe in shadows in the Constitution. There's nothing in the Constitution to authorize the Court to do that.
- DePue: Was this part of the debate in 1978 and 1979, once they did extend the time period?
- Schlafly: Well, I really don't understand your question. We had no problem with what the District Court handed down, its decision that we think was absolutely right, and then the Supreme Court punted.

DePue: Did you have some concern about how the Supreme Court was going to rule on it, because it was generally—I might be wrong on this, but generally a fairly liberal body at that time.

Schlafly: That wasn't high on our agenda, but let me say, the International Women's Year convention in 1977 was a major turning point. It showed the American people how bad the feminists are, how radical they are, how hooked into the abortionists and the gay rights movement they are, and they **never got another state** after that. Now, when they got the extension, again that was a turning point for us. There were legislators who early on, when they thought ERA was just three cheers for the ladies and signed onto it and felt they had to stick to their word, when the extension came on they said to me, I can vote against it now. So everybody recognized that the extension was crooked and unfair, and we just picked up votes right and left after that, so they never got another state.

DePue: So the irony of it is it worked to your advantage to certain respects.

Schlafly: It did, yes.

DePue: Except you had to fight it for three more years.

Schlafly: Except we had to fight it for three more years. Now, we believed that the constitutional end of ERA was March 22, 1979. So we had a big celebratory dinner at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C.; the ballroom seats about fifteen hundred people. Our friends who had worked on this issue for seven years came, and it was a tremendous event. I held a news conference before that and the reporters were so angry at me, I mean how **dare** you! We called this "The End of an ERA Dinner." How dare you proclaim that you've won, because you haven't won; we've got three more years of this? They were just so angry at me, that I was saying that we won on March 22, 1979, that they could hardly stand it.

But at any rate, nevertheless, we had a big party. So we're halfway into the program; the management comes in and tells us they've had a phone call that a bomb has been planted in the room. The police had to exit all fifteen hundred people. We had to go stand out on the sidewalk while they brought the dogs in and sniffed out the place. Then they all came back and we finished the program.

DePue: Without a hiccup.

Schlafly: That's right.

DePue: Going back just a little bit, to talk about 1978. I guess you can make the same argument for '76, '78, '80. Was another one of the battlegrounds you had to fight, legislative elections, that the pro forces are trying to get pro representatives into these state legislatures?

- Schlafly: Yeah, that's when I started my Eagle Forum PAC [political action committee], to raise and give money to our friends.
- DePue: How well do you think the pro forces did? Because they put, from what I've read, an awful lot more money into campaigns to promote their backers, to win elections, to get into the state legislatures to make the difference in these battles. They spent an awful lot more money.
- Schlafly: Oh, I bet it was twenty times more money.
- DePue: How successful do you think they were in that campaign?
- Schlafly: Well, I'm sure they elected some people, but we also elected a lot. Over the years there were many races that were won or lost by fewer than a hundred votes. We were effective. We didn't win every battle but we won a lot of them, and I raised a good bit of money in my publicly disclosed PAC account to support the legislators who voted "no" on ERA.
- DePue: How big an issue do you think that was for these elections? A deciding issue or just one of a whole list of different issues that candidates would be running on, one side or another?
- Schlafly: In individual campaigns, I don't know that it was a major issue.
- DePue: In both '78 and '80, these are tough economic times. I would think that that would be overwhelming any of the social issues that might be coming up.
- Schlafly: Yeah. I can't think of any particular race where the ERA was perceived as **the** big issue.
- DePue: Would it be fair to say then, as far as you and the Stop ERA movement were concerned, that you wanted to keep your main focus on the battles in the legislature, more so than in these campaigns?
- Schlafly: I lost you.
- DePue: Okay. If you've got a choice between focusing your energies, and maybe your money, into fighting the next round of legislative battles in the state legislatures, versus fighting the campaigns to elect legislators, which would it be?
- Schlafly: It's all part of the same fight. I don't think there's a choice there; it's all part of the same fight.
- DePue: We're up to 1979 and you've already talked about that a little bit.
- Schlafly: Would you excuse me?

(break in recording)

DePue: We took a very quick break and we are back again. Mrs. Schlafly, I think where I'd like to start then is moving into 1979 and take us back to Illinois. This was pretty much the standard routine in Illinois: every year there would be two phases of the battle. One phase would deal with this three-fifths rule and once that was decided—and it was always decided to retain the three-fifths rule, that it would take three-fifths in both the House and the Senate to pass—then they would get into the discussion itself.

Schlafly: Well let me explain about the three-fifths rule. We've already discussed how it got there, but the feminists found they were hung up on this and so they filed suit to try to get the Court to throw it out of the brand new [Illinois] constitution. The case went before Justice Stevens, who is now on the Supreme Court.

DePue: He was in the Fifth District at that time I believe?

Schlafly: He was based in Chicago. I never can remember the numbers, but he was the District Court Judge that the case went to, in Chicago. He handed down a kind of typical, confused decision—on the one hand, on the other hand type of decision—in which he said, Yes, the three-fifths rule was constitutional, but each House would have to adopt it every year. So that meant that we had to have votes on the three-fifths every year.

Now, back to the legislature. You can see, the whole thing is a very hot potato. It absorbed the legislature for ten years and you had a certain number of legislators who wanted to give something to both sides. So you had some who would be for the three-fifths and against ERA, and they would play one side against the other, so they would vote differently. You also had some of the pro-lifers who were doing that. You had really quite a few who claimed they were voting pro-life, but refused to accept the obvious tie-in between abortion and ERA, so they'd vote yes on ERA and no on abortion. So this is the way we had to play the legislature and try to line up enough votes.

DePue: And again, every time the three-fifths question was brought up, that was defeated, even after the decision by Justice Stevens.

Schlafly: It was upheld.

DePue: It was upheld, yes.

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: And then shortly thereafter, they would have the debate about the passage of ERA itself. It was always a close vote; typically, if they got more than 50 percent, they didn't get to the three-fifths.

Schlafly: That's right.

DePue: But again, one of your protagonists in Illinois was Senator Dawn Clark Netsch. Her comment after 1979's defeat, "We will keep bringing it up until it is passed."

Schlafly: Well that was her attitude; they kept bringing it up. I've lost count of how many times it was brought up.

DePue: It was later that year that President Carter—I'm sure wanting to play to that side of the party and to certainly be supportive, and I'm sure Mrs. Carter was very supportive—holds an ERA summit and pledges the full support of his administration to gain its passage. Does that particular year stand out or just kind of the general position that Carter was taking throughout?

Schlafly: Well, he was helping them all along. I told you they were doing White House lobbying. What year was that?

DePue: Nineteen seventy-nine, October.

Schlafly: Yes. Well, I knew he was working for it. He was speaking publicly in favor of it and his wife was. She is credited with calling the legislator in Indiana. Indiana was the last state to ratify, which they ratified by one vote, and I think Rosalynn Carter is credit with calling that legislator.

DePue: Do you recall what year that was? Was it '77?

Schlafly: Probably, yes.

DePue: Because after Houston, you said no state—

Schlafly: That's right, so it must have been early '77.

DePue: This might be a bit of a distraction, but I'm sure there is some connectivity here. You had started your career being anti-communist, being very much about strategic defense, and I'm sure you have some opinions about Jimmy Carter and foreign policy, and specifically Panama, SALT II [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks], those two issues, and then Iran later on.

Schlafly: The Panama Canal issue was a very important issue with the conservative movement. I spoke frequently on that issue. It was a big issue with Ronald Reagan. This was in the period in between '76, around '77, '78. It was right in that period that Carter and [Henry] Kissinger gave away the Panama Canal. It was a very big issue with conservatives, who thought that it was a terrible thing that Carter manipulated, to give it away to that drug-pushing dictator.

DePue: What specifically was your concern then, about the Panama Canal?

Schlafly: Well, it was ours. As Reagan said, “We built it, we owned it.” What more needs to be said?

DePue: Strategic concerns as well?

Schlafly: Well yes of course. Yes, of course, because now the Chinese run it. It was a terrible thing to give it away.

DePue: And SALT II. You had an awful lot to say and write about on SALT I.

Schlafly: Incidentally, during the Panama Canal debate, I did a debate with Bill Buckley, on his “Firing Line” program. Buckley was for giving away the Panama Canal, and that is clearly because of his friendship with Henry Kissinger. Everything Kissinger did was bad. Buckley and I had a rather famous debate and I clearly came out better on that. It was very costly; Buckley lost a lot of donors over that debate, which was nationally televised. He was really quite ugly about it. He tried to treat me like his intellectual inferior, and he didn’t get by with it. He was so angry at the way I beat him on it—it was in New York—that he left me alone, to go out on the street and get my own cab afterwards. But it became kind of a memorable debate that practically everybody saw, and the whole conservative movement was with me on that issue.

DePue: Is that why you say today, with so much certainty, that you won that debate?

Schlafly: I knew I had better arguments.

DePue: And one measure of that is, his donations started to decline afterwards?

Schlafly: Oh yes, I know some of his top donors who never gave him another dime.

DePue: SALT II and Jimmy Carter.

Schlafly: Yes, well, I opposed that. Again, everything to do with SALT was a Kissinger invention. Kissinger’s policies were just dreadful. In 1975—I checked my records—and all this time the Equal Rights Amendment was going on, that was not the only thing I did in my life. I was going to law school, but I came out with the book, *Kissinger on the Couch*—846 pages, a major opus—with Admiral Chester Ward, and I did mucho numbers of speeches and interviews and everything on Kissinger. Kissinger was one of those responsible for giving away the Panama Canal. Kissinger probably wrote the SALT treaties, the worst part of which was the ABM [Anti-Ballistic Missile] Treaty. The best thing that George Bush did was to renounce that treaty and get us out of it.

DePue: Bush the elder?

Schlafly: No, I think it was Bush II who did that. It’s one of the first things he did.

DePue: Okay.

Schlafly: Everything Kissinger did was hurtful to the United States. Giving interviews and defending that book occupied a great part of 1975.

DePue: Well we started this discussion by talking about Jimmy Carter and you immediately linked with Kissinger as well. I'm concluding from that, you've got a lot more angst over Kissinger's role in all of this than Carter himself?

Schlafly: Yeah, well Carter was too busy trying to pass ERA. But Kissinger was undermining our missile force and our military strength.

DePue: Do you think that, from your own personal efforts with some of these older issues, like Panama Canal, like SALT II, were they a distraction or did they actually in some way help the ERA fight as well?

Schlafly: No, had no effect on the ERA fight. They were different people who were involved, and this is what is so important about Reagan's victory. Reagan's wonderful victories in '80 and '84 did not depend on everybody agreeing with everything. It was a coalition of different groups who saw in Reagan the means of achieving their goals. So you have the fiscal conservatives and the national defense conservatives and the social conservatives; they're not the same people but they're all essential.

DePue: Well that gets us into 1980. That's a perfect transition then, to get into 1980. That's a crucial year. It's a presidential election year. It starts off with a very lively series of primary elections on the Republican side. Primarily, you've got Bush, Sr. versus Reagan that year.

As far the ERA fight is concerned, one of the early events. You fight the battle again in Illinois and several other states, but there's a huge Mother's Day rally in Chicago that drew fifty thousand in support of ERA. Do you recall any of that?

Schlafly: Yes. I don't know that they had fifty thousand, but they did have celebrities, they did have the Hollywood people. We had a rally in Springfield. I've forgotten the date, but there was one rally we had that had ten thousand people. Jerry Falwell had brought in a lot of the Baptists and I was there, and that was a momentous event.

The big crucial vote on ERA in Illinois really came on June 18, 1980. That's the day that the feminists had predicted and announced would be the day they would pass it, and all the national media were there. They had all been tipped off that this was the big day. We had our crowd there. I remember I stood up in the [Capitol] Rotunda and I accused—which was true—Carter of calling some of the Democrats and offering them federal spending in their district if they would vote “yes” on ERA.

DePue: I believe earlier that he had actually invited several of the Illinois Legislators to Washington, D.C., to discuss with him about the passage.

Schlafly: Yeah, he did. There was lobbying right at the White House.

DePue: This probably plays right into it. Normal Lear was charged with actually setting up a slush fund of two hundred thousand dollars to support the amendment, to convince some legislators to change their vote.

Schlafly: Yeah, Norman Lear was for it. They thought getting Hollywood was going to help them. I don't understand this but, anyway, that's what they thought. Then, we had a Republican Governor, Jim Thompson, who was for ERA, and he was promising Republicans dams, roads and bridges if they would vote yes. All the national media were there that day—it was an enormous event—because they had been tipped off, this was it. This was June 18, 1980. They still had two more years of their extension but this was to be the day. I was standing in the balcony of the House. They vote electronically, and the numbers climbed up and we just made it. We defeated them again. God brought us two votes from Chicago we never had before and I don't know where they came from.

DePue: It sounds like you were a bit surprised that year. You were concerned.

Schlafly: Our count showed that we didn't have the votes, yet they climbed up there. It was extremely dramatic. Our people were all in the galleries and all around, and I remember—who was the big ABC interviewer?

DePue: Jennings? Peter Jennings?

Schlafly: It was Ted Koppel. He put Eleanor Smeal in a seat in the Gallery so that the background would show the platform down on the lower level, and said, "Well Ms. Smeal, you said you had the votes. Why didn't you win?" And she said, "There was something very powerful against us, and I don't mean people." (DePue laughs) That's the day we won it. Now meanwhile, all this other stuff is going on. They had their hunger strike in the Rotunda.

DePue: Well that's a couple of years down the road.

Schlafly: Yeah that is, that's later. We'll get to that later.

DePue: I did want to ask you about the two legislators from Chicago. Do you remember who they were?

Schlafly: No.

DePue: Were they African-American?

Schlafly: I don't remember. They were just lights on the board as they went up.

- DePue: Well being from Chicago—maybe I'm wrong in making the assumption—these were Democrats who had switched votes.
- Schlafly: Well, we had a lot of Democrat votes. Let's see, the Mayor then was Jane Byrne; she was threatening to fire the relatives from the city payroll if they didn't vote yes. Some of the Democrats who felt they had to vote yes were literally crying on the Floor. But we got it. That was the crucial day.
- DePue: It sounds like that was the day you were most fearful that it might actually pass in Illinois.
- Schlafly: Well yeah, and you've got the whole national media there. I mean they've been told: This is it.
- DePue: Had your forces done anything different or exceptional in terms of trying to bring out some opposition forces against it for that year?
- Schlafly: No, we just did our lobbying and talking to them and being there and thanking them when they did the right thing.
- DePue: Let's move forward a few months then and get back to your avocation of Republican National Conventions in 1980. Where was the convention in 1980?
- Schlafly: Detroit. When I reviewed the network coverage of ERA over the ten years, which I was able to get out of the Vanderbilt Archives, 50 percent of the network coverage of ERA was on the 1980 convention, which shows you what a big thing the media thought this was, because that was the year that I was determined to take ERA out of the platform. It was an embarrassment. It was an embarrassment to Reagan, who had said he's against ERA. So I planned our strategy and testified before the Platform Committee and got my people in the subcommittee that dealt with it, and we got it out.
- DePue: Talk to us a little bit about the timing then, or the sequence of events at these conventions. Was the formation of the platform, the writing of the platform, something that occurred before the formal nomination of the candidate?
- Schlafly: Yes and it usually—they don't seem to do this any more—but very often, there would have been hearings by the Platform Committee the week before, or whether or not they had it the week before or earlier than that. Then when the convention gathered in the city where it was going to, those who were on the committees would come in three or four days earlier and would meet then. The Platform Committee has about eight subcommittees. The subcommittees would hold their meetings and their vote, and then their votes would go to the full committee and the full committee would have a vote. And then it would go to the floor.

DePue: The sequence of events is somewhat curious, because the Platform Committee develops the platform, the issues on which the party is going to run for that presidential election year, and then you select the presidential candidate, who might have different views on the platform.

Schlafly: Well tough for him, we've decided what the party's all about.

DePue: And that's the way it always works out, in a perfect world at least?

Schlafly: Well, unless you have a Bob Dole, who says he didn't read it and isn't going to pay any attention to it.

DePue: Well that sounds like an election yet to come. By that time though, you knew that Reagan was the candidate you were writing the platform for.

Schlafly: Yes. By that time we knew Reagan was going to be the candidate. I was not on the committee but our people, our Eagles, were on the subcommittee, and they took ERA out. Then I knew there would be tremendous pressure on them to recant when they went to the full committee, because all subcommittee members are members of the full committee too. I knew there would be tremendous pressure on them. They came out of the subcommittee about, I don't know, six o'clock, and I took the whole subcommittee to a private dinner at the Detroit Athletic Club, and kept them there until midnight. The Chairman of the committee was John Tower; he spent his evening trying to call them and was totally frustrated that he couldn't get anybody. Fortunately, we were pre-cell phone era, and he couldn't get anybody, so they all hung firm. The Platform Committee met at nine o'clock the next morning, and they went in and the Platform Committee approved the subcommittee vote, ninety to nine. That's my recollection, ninety to nine.

The media were all around and they were in total shock, total shock when we took it out. Then Mary Dent Crisp went out and held a press conference and cried real tears for the press. The Co-Chairman of the Republican Party. Margaret Heckler was having a tantrum too.

DePue: We can get that into the transcript later.

Schlafly: Yes. I know it well but I can't think of her name. She's the one who held the press conference and cried real tears about this terrible thing that happened, said she was leaving the Republican Party. She's the National Co-Chair, said she was leaving the Republican Party, and she went out and backed John Anderson, who was a third party candidate trying to defeat Reagan.

DePue: Curiously, an Illinois Representative.

Schlafly: Yes. Who by this time was much despised by Illinois conservatives, because he had started out as a real conservative and gone left when he went to

Washington. But anyway, we succeeded. We got it out, got ERA out. Of course we kept pro-life in.

DePue: The previous First Ladies, both Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Carter, were very strong proponents of ERA. Did you know where Nancy Reagan was on the issue?

Schlafly: No. Nancy Reagan managed Reagan's social life, but as far as I could tell, she had no influence on his public policies.

DePue: What did it mean to you in person, personally, that Ronald Reagan now was the candidate for the Republican Party?

Schlafly: Well, I was certainly very much for him. Oh yeah, this was kind of a vindication of the starting of the conservative movement with Barry Goldwater. This was the fulfillment of it.

DePue: Now you probably remember this period better than I do, but my recollection is that at that time period, the media was portraying him as basically too conservative to win the general election.

Schlafly: Well, they probably were, but they really were more trying to ridicule him as just a Hollywood star. They certainly weren't for him.

DePue: So again, I asked you before about the objectivity of the media. You don't think that they were objective when they were discussing that particular convention or Ronald Reagan in general?

Schlafly: No, they were not for Reagan; they were against Reagan. As far as in general, they certainly were very much opposed to whatever I was working on.

DePue: We've talked about this before, but I think it's important enough to emphasize again. What Ronald Reagan was able to do in terms of the conservative movement.

(door opens and closes)

Schlafly: Yeah, who is it? That's fine.

DePue: A very brief interruption there. Anyway, Ronald Reagan is bringing together these three aspects of being a conservative, for maybe the first time in a general election. Can you reflect on that a little bit more for us?

Schlafly: Yes, he did. You had these three branches of conservatism who were backing him. I really think the media did not understand that. They never did understand the social conservatives. A lot of them didn't think of themselves as Republican, they wouldn't report in as Republican. I remember, to get a lot of the ones in Chicago... When I started out, I didn't know there were conservative Democrats, but there were some in Chicago. Your typical, even

machine Democrat in Chicago was basically a God, home and country guy, who loves the country, a good guy, family man. We devised a button and they wouldn't wear "Republicans for Reagan." These are the guys who really thought they were going to die and go to hell if they pulled the Republican lever. (DePue laughs) But we had a nice button with a shamrock on it that said, "Irish for Reagan." Of course the Irish have always dominated the Daley machine, and that worked just fine, they could relate to that. They thought, you know, Reagan must be a good guy—he's Irish.

DePue: Was that part of the explanation for the blue collar, the old Democrat Reagan? Was that where it was coming from, that these were social conservatives more than they were fiscal or anti-communist conservatives?

Schlafly: Well, we had brought them in through the Stop ERA and pro-life movement.

DePue: What was your thought then, leading up to that election, in terms of Reagan's chances of actually winning? Were you optimistic through the fall of '80?

Schlafly: No. Conservatives really didn't believe they could win. It was a big shock when Reagan won. (laughs) I remember that night. In my house, we were all gathered in front of the TV, and Walter Cronkite was reporting. For some reason Indiana always comes in first. I don't know whether they count the votes faster or what. So Indiana came in and they defeated Birch Bayh, who was certainly one of our targets; he was the sponsor of ERA. In fact, his ambition in life was to write more of the Constitution than James Madison. He had all kinds of amendments. That was great, so things were looking up.

Then the next thing that came in, and Walter Cronkite announced, they defeated the Equal Rights Amendment, which was on the ballot in Iowa, because the people were worried about it causing a change in the rules of girls basketball. This had been a big fight. We can go back to the ERA fight, but that was a big issue in '80. I remember my son turned to me and said, "Mother, you ran all those expensive ads against the homosexuals in Iowa and you didn't know what the issue was." (both laugh)

DePue: Well being from Iowa, there is this **longstanding** tradition in Iowa athletic history where the girl's basketball tournament, year after year, would draw more than the boys. It was all these small communities who were playing six-on-six girls basketball, where the offensive players would stop at the center line and the defensive players.

Schlafly: Right. That's the way I played basketball, you had offense and defense, and that's the way Walter Cronkite reported it. Yes, I knew what the issue was on ERA. It was not girls basketball.

DePue: So a huge surprise, and he didn't win by just a little bit.

Schlafly: He won big and even with a third party, John Anderson, trying to defeat him.

DePue: How much of his victory was explained by what was going on in Iran at the time?

Schlafly: Well, I'm a little fuzzy on the dates, but weren't the hostages released just after the election?

DePue: Immediately after the election.

Schlafly: Yeah, so that didn't help him win, but the fact that Carter had not been able to do anything about it, yeah that was probably a help to Reagan.

DePue: I was thinking the perception of the general American public had, that Carter's response to the Iranian Revolution and the hostage-taking was weak, that we were coming across as weak.

Schlafly: Yes, that was a help.

DePue: Then how did the ERA—

Schlafly: Well you know Jimmy Carter, as a one-term governor from a southern state, it was kind of remarkable that he got nominated by the Democratic Party. But it was really the evangelicals who gave him his margin of victory in 1976, because he talked their lingo. He used the proper buzz words and they voted for him—a lot of them first-time voters. Then he really betrayed them. He was not what they thought they were voting for, and he ended up appointing a whole list of anti-religion judges. Every time you hear about a judge throwing out “Under God” in the “Pledge of Allegiance” or the Ten Commandments or the Boy Scouts or anti-parent, it's a pretty good bet it was a Carter-appointed judge. He really betrayed them all. So by 1980, really they shifted their vote to Reagan.

DePue: That gets us into Reagan's first year of 1981. Actually, I don't have too many things to discuss for 1981, and perhaps that's because 1982 is that final year in that huge fight in Illinois. Do you have anything that you wanted to mention for '81 in particular?

Schlafly: No, I don't remember. But you know, all these ten years of ERA, how many other things I'm doing. Of course, I went to law school; that was three years. I'm giving a lot of speeches on other subjects while I've launched several books. *Kissinger on the Couch* was a major undertaking, and I did speeches on that all over the country, many of them. I came out with my next book, *The Power of the Positive Woman*, which I did a lot of interviews on. I was running Eagle Forum and Eagle Council every fall. I served ten years on the Illinois Commission on Status of Women. I had a very active role in the DAR. [Daughters of the American Revolution] I was running the National Defense Committee and putting on big programs every year. I was doing “Spectrum” on CBS. I did that for five years. So every week I would drive down to KMOX [St. Louis] and record two commentaries, which then went out all

over the world on the CBS Network. I had about a half a dozen foreign trips that were extensive. I took the children several times to Europe and Asia. I don't know, a lot of major foreign trips.

DePue: Were those foreign trips just family vacations?

Schlafly: Half a dozen of them were just to take the children sightseeing. But then Fred was active in anti-communist work and we went to Asia a couple of times, to Taiwan. (pause) So I was doing all kinds of other things.

DePue: Well, you mentioned the trips and mentioning Taiwan, you didn't mention mainland China, communist China.

Schlafly: No, I went to Hong Kong but I didn't go into mainland China.

DePue: This is backtracking quite a bit, but what was your reaction to Nixon's détente with both China and the Soviet Union?

Schlafly: Well, I didn't approve much. I don't think I approved of much of anything Nixon did. By 1972, I was ready to run a candidate against him. Of course that didn't go anywhere.

DePue: Which was more troubling for you: SALT I or his efforts to establish relationship with the Soviet Union and with China?

Schlafly: SALT. SALT was terrible. SALT was a Kissinger-written document and it was accepting nuclear inferiority for the United States. Many Republican platforms have called for military superiority; I think that's the best key to our security, but it's also the best key to the peace of the world, if we're on top. That's why I'm worried about China today.

DePue: Let's head back to the Equal Rights Amendment territory then and talk about 1982.

Schlafly: Things got really ugly in 1982. They started their hunger strike. That was started by the excommunicated Mormon and she was joined by some veteran hunger strikers left over from the Vietnam War.

DePue: This is May eighteenth, and the name Sonia Johnson?

Schlafly: Yes, Sonia Johnson, that's her name. Oh, she lay on the couch in the Rotunda of the Illinois Capitol. Of course when it started out, we kind of treated it lightly. I said, Well, great idea if you need to lose weight. But then after this went on, we began to worry something bad might happen, so we didn't say anything about it. And then we had the lesbian chain gang, who chained themselves to the Senate door on the second floor.

DePue: That occurred from June third, and apparently it lasted for several days?

- Schlafly: Yeah. And the police just left them there, but the Senators had to step over them to get in.
- DePue: But that didn't stop them from doing their business?
- Schlafly: No, it didn't. No it didn't, and it didn't gain anything for the feminists. It blows your mind, how they think this is going to help them. Ultimately, they went to the slaughterhouse and they got plastic vials of pig's blood. They came back and they wrote on our marble floors, the names of the people they hated the most.
- DePue: That occurred though, after its final defeat. I want to take these one at a time here. The hunger strike. How effective do you think that was for them?
- Schlafly: Zero.
- DePue: It didn't elicit any sympathy, sway any votes?
- Schlafly: No. It was dumb.
- DePue: How about the chain gang?
- Schlafly: No, it didn't. *LIFE Magazine* ran a picture of them and so it was on the cover. I think it was on the cover. Well I'm not sure if it was on the cover, but *LIFE Magazine* ran a picture of them and our legislators didn't even want to look at the picture.
- DePue: That was an embarrassment to them?
- Schlafly: Yes. It got them nowhere. They were stupid tactics.
- DePue: Would you say that they were counterproductive then?
- Schlafly: Yes, I certainly would.
- DePue: Do you recall when Laurence Tribe—
- Schlafly: No, but let me say, now you've got all these women in the legislature who are nicely dressed, they look like typical business and professional women, and they had no criticism of this. They were hoping that these tactics would get them the votes, so they were kind of passive supporters of these tactics.
- DePue: And I'd suspect that at the time—again, I've interviewed Dawn Clark Netsch on this whole series of events—at the time, she wasn't being vocal but she certainly also thought it was counterproductive, some of these stunts, let's call them stunts. Do you remember Laurence Tribe coming to talk to the legislature? Here's this authority on constitutional law, I think from Harvard?
- Schlafly: Yes, oh yeah. I don't remember that. Do you have a date when he came?

- DePue: That was also during this 1982 series of events. I do have a date here, I can get to it pretty quickly.
- Schlafly: Well, I guess they brought him in to be on the wrong side.
- DePue: That would have been May twentieth, so right in the midst of the argument.
- Schlafly: Well it was too late to change any votes then. People were dug in at that point.
- DePue: So the final vote comes on June twenty-fifth. I think that's the final date and we can check that later on. Immediately after, it goes down to defeat. In fact, I don't think it even comes to a formal vote because it was defeated in committee, because Senator Phil Rock realized suddenly that they didn't have the votes, and so he never called it to a question in the first place. Immediately after that, as you mentioned already, the women get this pig's blood and start painting names on the marble floor outside the Senate Chamber. You're just shaking your head.
- Schlafly: Would that get your vote?
- DePue: Here's the question I have for you then. Jim Thompson is one of the names they're painting. He had been a supporter of ERA.
- Schlafly: Yes, but he stood with the three-fifths. You have to understand, these feminists are ugly to their own people. At one point—I can't put a date on it, midway or something—their sponsor of the ERA in the Illinois Senate was an impressive, tall black named Cecil Partee. P-a-r-t-e-e. He was their sponsor and their friend, you understand. Okay. They held a news conference the morning that a vote was expected and they said, at this press conference, that Cecil Partee is an SOB, and they pronounced it all out, "son of a bitch," for not calling up ERA before now, and if he doesn't call it up today, that's nothing to what we'll call him. Now he's their friend, he's their sponsor. (laughs) And you think that you're surprised that I call them bitter and discourteous and hard to get along with. (laughs) Poor Cecil Partee. (laughs)
- DePue: Were you there in Springfield during all of this then?
- Schlafly: Oh, I made dozens and dozens of trips to Springfield, over the highway that was then known as the most dangerous highway in Illinois.
- DePue: Was that before highway I-55 was built?
- Schlafly: Yes, but that wasn't the dangerous highway. It was the one that got me over to 55.
- DePue: What was your feeling then, after that final defeat, when you knew this is the final defeat?

- Schlafly: Yeah well, we won. It was fun. As a veteran of many defeats, it's more fun to win.
- DePue: Were you more elated after that victory in 1980, or in 1982?
- Schlafly: You mean Reagan?
- DePue: No, no, in 1980, when you defeated—
- Schlafly: Oh that. Oh no that. Well, with hindsight we look back, and that was the day we defeated ERA. Of course I didn't know that then. I didn't know that there wouldn't be as exciting a vote after that, but that's the day that marked the victory. Now, the next hard-fought state was Florida and the one after that was North Carolina; they both voted in those last couple of months and defeated it. I think I have those dates on my film.
- DePue: And again, we can certainly get that included into the transcript if you'd like, or if you want to take a moment to look it up now, that will be fine.
- Schlafly: I'm not sure I have it, let's see. Yeah, on June twenty-first, Florida defeated ERA for the last time.
- DePue: Does this mean that you're flying between Missouri and Florida, and driving to Illinois and flying to North Carolina, back and forth and back and forth, during this time period?
- Schlafly: Well I did fly all over the country, but I had a wonderful chairman in Florida who did most of the Florida work. In the hunger strike, Dick Gregory²⁷ joined the hunger strike.
- DePue: And he had had hunger strikes himself in opposition to the war.
- Schlafly: He was an experienced hunger striker I think. On June fourth, North Carolina defeated ERA for the last time, and the pro-ERAs then sent disgusting bags of chicken manure to the twenty-three Senators who voted no.
- DePue: Which I'm sure the people in Illinois are paying attention to as well. Again, you're shaking your head, thinking this is not an effective tactic.
- Schlafly: No, it's not an effective tactic.
- DePue: What I'd like to do now is some general questions about the overall ten-plus year fight on ERA. I certainly hope that in the future, we'll have more conversations about what you did with the rest of your life after this. But some general questions about ERA. Do you think ERA would have passed if you had not gotten involved with this movement?

²⁷ A well-known African-American comedian and social activist.

Schlafly: Yes, because what I did was to provide leadership, the strategy and the arguments, and they needed those in order to win.

DePue: In fact if you allow me, I'm going to read a couple other quotes that emphasize even more strongly that point. Martha Shirk, who I believe was a reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, your home turf. "Phyllis Schlafly is the Stop ERA movement." That it was impossible to envision Stop ERA or the Eagle Forum without you in person. Henry Hyde, who at that time was in the Illinois Legislature, at least at the beginning of this fight, those first couple crucial years. "Without her..." In other words without Phyllis Schlafly. "...I can say without a twinge of doubt, ERA would be part of the Constitution unquestionably."

Schlafly: Yeah.

DePue: So the next question is, how different would the United States be today if ERA had passed?

Schlafly: I think we would have had same sex marriage twenty-five years ago. I think taxpayer funding of abortion would be in the Constitution, instead of being able to restrict it as we do.

DePue: How about the effect on the military?

Schlafly: Yes, I think women could not be barred from some jobs in the military. They would have to have all the jobs open to them.

DePue: In other words, they could serve in combat units.

Schlafly: Correct.

DePue: Well considering all of that, what's your view—all of what you just mentioned is part of the national debate today—let's take them one at a time and start with reverse order. Women in combat. There is now again a push to include women in combat.

Schlafly: Well, the feminists are a movement and the movement has not gone away. Their people are very heavy into the bureaucracy, the Judiciary, the media and academia, as well as Hollywood. They have put feminism in the air and sold a lot of their myths, like women have been oppressed by the patriarchy and somehow you owe them something, and that they need to be treated equally with men, the same.

Well, John Stossel did a TV program called—I think it was called "Boys and Girls are Different." He told how he initially bought into the whole feminist ideology. Then he got married and had a couple of kids, and he saw they were different. And so he did this TV program, a documentary for ABC, I think he's with.

DePue: I think he was at that time. He's moved to Fox since then.

Schlafly: Yeah. So he stuck the microphone in Gloria Steinem's face and said, "Well now, if you're in a burning house, wouldn't you prefer to have a man to carry you out?" No, no, she said, it will be all right if the woman dragged me down the steps with my head bopping on each step; maybe there's less smoke down there. Then he put a microphone in Bella Abzug's face and she was trying to say that men and women are the same, and it's all our fault because we gave dolls to girls and trucks and guns to boys, and we just perpetuate these old stereotypes. So then he goes to the toy manufacturers and says, well why don't you make dolls for boys and trucks and guns for girls? He had one of these manufacturers saying, "We've tried that but they just don't sell." (DePue laughs) Oooh. Then he showed the tryouts for the Los Angeles Fire Department, and the women just can't—they can't do it.

DePue: What's your rationale when you hear—this is in the context of equal pay for equal work, and the argument that women are paid less. When you hear arguments like, the average woman receives something like 75 percent of the pay of an average man in the American economy?

Schlafly: Well it's a lie, because they are comparing the pay of all women with the pay of all men. That statistic includes women like me, who haven't been in the workforce since 1949. The women work fewer hours, they don't stay on the job as many years as men do. They graduate with a degree in some stupid subject like "Women's Studies," instead of something useful like math and engineering. We don't believe in equal pay for everybody. We believe in equal pay for equal work, and the women do not do the same work as the men. On the average, they do not work as many hours per week as the men do, so there's no reason why those figures should be equal.

DePue: Another issue that you mentioned, in terms of how—

Schlafly: But of course, once we beat them on ERA, they moved into certain other issues. One of the first ones they tried was the issue they call comparable worth, which means setting up a government commission to subjectively decide that jobs held mostly by women are **worth** the same as jobs held mostly by men, which is a subjective decision and pays no attention to the environment that you work in. Women like to work in carpeted, air-conditioned offices. Men take a lot of unpleasant jobs to support their families. This is the same issue that [Barack] Obama calls paycheck fairness. That's what it would do. It is their old issue that they called comparable worth.

DePue: A couple of the fields that they would include in that definition would be childcare workers, women who work in nursing homes, and overwhelmingly, the workforce there is in nursing homes. Those are tough jobs, especially working in nursing homes. Your response to that side of the argument?

Schlafly: That it's a tough job?

DePue: Mm-hmm, and that they are grossly underpaid.

Schlafly: They're not going to get killed on that job. Ninety-three percent of the occupational fatalities are men. Men take all kinds of really dangerous jobs. It's what the market wants to pay and the women are willing to work for. What do you want?—the government to set wages? We've tried that. We don't like government wage control, but that's what they want. They look to the government to solve all their problems.

DePue: Well this one, certainly in the last ten years, has been a very hot topic. Gay marriage. You say if ERA had passed, we would have had gay marriage twenty-five years ago. We're in the midst of that debate, have been for the last several years.

Schlafly: They are debating it, that's correct. I don't think they're going to get it but we are debating it.

DePue: What's your view then, on the role that the Courts are playing out in that?

Schlafly: Well, my second to latest book is called, *The Supremacists*. I think the Court should not be making major policy decisions that are legislative matters, and certainly the definition of marriage is one of those areas that the Court should not be making that decision. Congress passed DOMA, the Defense of Marriage Act, overwhelmingly, a bipartisan bill signed by Bill Clinton. There are over a thousand federal laws that depend on the definition of marriage as a man and a woman. It's a fine law. Obama and the gays are out to get rid of it and we're not going to let them get rid of it, it's a good law. Thirty-one states have passed these constitutional amendments to maintain their state law.

DePue: You say Obama has come out in favor of gay marriage officially and formally?

Schlafly: I don't think—I didn't say that.

DePue: Okay.

Schlafly: I said he has come out in favor of repealing DOMA.

DePue: DOMA, okay. What does DOMA stand for again?

Schlafly: Defense of Marriage Act.

DePue: I'm sorry for being dense.

Schlafly: It passed in 1996, signed by Bill Clinton, overwhelmingly passed.

DePue: How about the recent administration's decision to overturn Don't Ask, Don't Tell?²⁸

Schlafly: I think that was a mistake.

DePue: Is it a mistake politically as well?

Schlafly: I think it is, but it's certainly a mistake for combat effectiveness of the military, according to what the military thinks.

DePue: Can you be a little bit more explicit in terms of the argument?

Schlafly: Well, there's no such thing as privacy in the military. You're in very close quarters. We're hearing all kinds of examples, now, of sexual harassment of women. You could run into the same thing. People are thinking about sex instead of winning the war.

DePue: Again, for many years, the dividing line in the military has been, if you're in a combat unit, then women are prohibited from serving in those units. But in the combat support and service support kind of units, and we're talking about quartermaster and finance and engineer units, construction engineer units, even military police, that women were allowed to serve and they were welcomed to serve. Do you think that dividing line in the military was about right?

Schlafly: No, I think it's terrible.

DePue: That they had gone too far even in some of those units?

Schlafly: Yes. And I don't think they have the legislative authority to do it, because there are certain restrictions in the way Congress passed the law, and I don't think the military has abided by the law.

DePue: We spent the last two days talking almost exclusively about the Equal Rights Amendment. We did touch on a lot of those other issues keeping you very busy and very active throughout the decade of the 1970s and into early 1980s. Again, I want to have more discussions with you on what's happened in your life after that, but I'll give you an opportunity here to conclude with some reflections on ERA and its importance.

Schlafly: The ten-year fight over the Equal Rights Amendment was clearly a fight worth making. I never tired of it because it has so many ramifications in so many areas of our life, our laws and our culture. I think it did a great deal for

²⁸ The name for the U.S. military's official policy concerning homosexuality, first adopted during the Clinton administration, and overturned on September 20, 2011 by the Obama administration. The act prohibited any homosexual or bisexual person from disclosing his or her sexual orientation or from speaking about any homosexual relationships while serving in the United States armed forces. The act specified that service members who disclose that they are homosexual or engage in homosexual conduct shall be separated.

the conservative movement, because it brought into the conservative movement, people who care about maintaining our culture. I must say, in politics, that you win sometime, you lose sometime. It's certainly a lot more fun to win than it is to lose. It is quite an example to people of how the grassroots can rise up and beat all the powers that be. I'm not sure there's anything you can name that was an issue that had such a formidable array of powers against us and yet we beat them all.

DePue: It was during this time period, you were named, in several places, one of the most influential people in the United States or in the world. Did you feel like that was the case? Do you think that's justified, to be put in that kind of company?

Schlafly: Well, I think we had a big impact. The defeat of ERA was our biggest and most publicized victory, but we had a couple of other things that were striking, significant victories. For example, after we buried the Equal Rights Amendment for the second time, on June 30, 1982, we then discovered that there was this silly effort to plunge us into a new constitutional convention; this had been developed by the people who were for the Balanced Budget Amendment. They had been unable to get Congress to pass out a Balanced Budget Amendment, so they were running around to state legislatures, getting them to vote to call a constitutional convention. And under Article V, if two-thirds, thirty-four, of the states passed such resolutions, Congress must call a constitutional convention.

I believe this would be a terrible thing for our country, because there are no rules, and once the convention is called, it can do anything it wants. I've been to fifteen Republican National Conventions and I've seen every possible rule broken that is possible to try to put in place. When I picked up this fight, they had thirty-two states. I picked up immediately after June 30, 1982, and we defeated them. We had knock-down, drag-out battles, just like ERA, in Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey and Montana, and we beat them. These were all conservatives I was fighting, people who wanted the Balanced Budget Amendment. They were so angry at me, they were very ugly to me. However, we beat them. There are other people working on it now and I guess we'll have to take that on again. My constitutional law professor always felt that that victory was more important than beating ERA.

Then the other fight that I had going on simultaneously, which I think was a tremendous victory, was making the Republican Party pro-life. The Republican Party that I came up through early on was not pro-life. In the 1970s, Nixon and the Republican Party were pro-abortion. I have led the battle to make the Republican Party pro-life. It's been a bitter, mean, nasty, knock-out, drag-out battle at most Republican conventions, and we have finally won. Nearly all the Republicans who were elected in 2010 are pro-life. There were about a dozen women who were elected—about seven to the House, one to the Senate, three governors; they're all pro-life. It has become

so you can hardly get a Republican nomination without at least saying you are pro-life. Pro-life is a good part of the future of the conservative movement, because they're young people. If you look at all the figures, the young people are pro-life. I think the pictures have made it clear. Anybody can look at the picture of the unborn baby and realize, it really is a baby. I think those other two victories, which are all simultaneously going on, are just about as important as beating ERA.

DePue: Very good. Any closing comments for today then?

Schlafly: No.

DePue: We've talked quite a bit; this is over two hours. It's been fascinating once again and I look forward to having more. Thank you very much, Mrs. Schlafly.

Schlafly: Okay.

(end of interview #5 #6 continues)

Interview with Phyllis Schlafly

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Interview # 1: March 29, 2011

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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A Note to the Reader

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DePue: Today is Tuesday, March 29, 2011. My name is Mark DePue, Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here today with Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly. Good afternoon.

Schlafly: Good afternoon. And when we finished up talking about the Equal Rights Amendment, did we talk about the celebration, the rainbow dinner on June 30, 1982?

DePue: I don't think we did.

Schlafly: Well, the expiration date, as set by what we call the crooked extension, was midnight on June 30, 1982. We celebrated by having a big dinner in the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., the same place where we had had the first burial of ERA, when the first seven years expired in March of 1979. Again, we had about fifteen hundred people in the ballroom who came from all over the country, particularly the women who had defeated it in the particular states that were so hard-fought. The most hard-fought states were Illinois, Florida and North Carolina. Then of course there were the five states that rescinded and a few other states that were somewhat of a battle, like Oklahoma, Missouri and other states. It was a great event. Everybody was very excited at it. We knew we would have the bomb scare like we did at the first burial in March 1979, which meant that at the middle of the dinner the hotel would come in and say, We've had a call that a bomb has been planted and everybody will have to evacuate the room. So I took it up with the Washington Police, that that had happened at the first burial, and insisted that they come with the dogs and sniff out the room before we got started. True to form, the call did come and we were able to ignore it then, because the dogs had already secured the room and we knew that it was a fake, just something to scare us.

Anyway, we had our great celebration. I think we had music like "The Impossible Dream" and we were very happy. Then I think when it was all over, I left and went on the "Larry King Show." He was on radio then.²⁹

DePue: We have talked quite a bit about your long involvement fighting the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. That took us up to 1982, with this story right here. But I want to backtrack a little bit and focus on your impressions of the Carter administration, the years of Jimmy Carter's presidency. This is all leading up to Ronald Reagan and the conservative ascendancy.

Schlafly: Well, we didn't like the Carter Administration; we thought that he was running the Equal Rights Amendment battle right out of the White House, particularly Rosalynn Carter. They invited some of the state legislators to come to the White House to be personally lobbied. There was one in

²⁹ Later King had a very popular TV show, *Larry King Live*, which went on for many years until he retired.

particular, a Florida legislator, who was given the red carpet treatment at the White House, trying to get him to switch from no to yes. He didn't. I was no fan of the Carter administration. We were very happy to have the change with Ronald Reagan in 1980.

DePue: Now you got your start, in terms of conservative politics, by being a nuclear strategist, about focusing on national defense. So what did you think of Carter's foreign affairs policies?

Schlafly: I'm trying to remember what were the main features of that. Well, giving away the Panama Canal was a big event. It was a big plus for Reagan, who was on the right side of that issue: Opposed to giving it away. He said, "We bought it, we paid for it, it's ours, and we ought to keep it." That was what conservatives believed. Carter made his deal with that drug-peddling head of Panama³⁰ and signed the treaty and gave it away. It was a big issue for conservatives and a big issue for Ronald Reagan.

I did a rather famous debate with Bill Buckley³¹ on that issue. Buckley had established a personal friendship with Henry Kissinger; Henry Kissinger had put him on the wrong side of that issue. It was kind of a famous debate. I went to New York for it and frankly, I beat him on it. The show on "Firing Line" was very hurtful to him. I know for a fact that he lost many of his big donors over that debate.

DePue: One of the issues for the Carter Administration obviously, was the Iran hostage crisis, and that was one that was going to take it right up through the election period. How do you think he responded to that crisis?

Schlafly: Well, we all thought he was a weakling in foreign policy. Of course they let the hostages go just right after Reagan was elected, because they recognized Reagan as a different type of President. We thought that Carter was weak on foreign policy and could be pushed around by these foreign dictators.

DePue: Last time, we talked about the 1980 Republican convention, and certainly, we want to talk about each one of the conventions, because you were always central in terms of being there and being a participant in those. I know we talked about that especially in terms of making sure there was a couple issues that got on the Republican platform that year, primarily an anti-abortion platform. I want to jump ahead and look at the election itself, and ask you to reflect a little bit about why you think Reagan was able to win that crucial election.

Schlafly: Reagan was so clearly superior to Carter in the debates. He was a new leader, a fresh face. He represented everything that we conservatives had been working for, for years. Reagan wasn't a total conservative when he was

³⁰ Manuel Noriega

³¹ Buckley was a well-known conservative, and host for many years of the TV show "Firing Line."

Governor of California. After he narrowly lost the Republican nomination at the convention in Kansas City in 1976, he spent the next four years traveling the country and speaking to small groups, and that is when Reagan confirmed his conservative ideology. He was hired by General Electric,³² he talked to a lot of dinner clubs, he talked to small groups. That's when he did his radio commentaries, which we now know, from the research discovery by that wonderful black female historian, that he wrote himself, on yellow pads. He had no secretary, no think tank, but he had a library and he read books. His commentaries, his three-minute commentaries, just like I've done for the last twenty-six, twenty-seven years, were written by himself, handwritten on yellow pads. Of course in those days he traveled the country on trains. He did not fly at all. You remember trains? (laughter) They were great in their day. In any event, he was ready for the run for the presidency in 1980.

Now, Republicans had been so used to being beaten up, that they weren't at all sure he was going to win, but it was a wonderful night when we watched the returns coming in from the 1980 election.

DePue: With the exception of 1964, where your book *A Choice, Not an Echo* seemed to make the difference for Barry Goldwater, but so many of the Republican conventions before had ended up with—I think you would describe—moderate or even liberal Republicans being the candidates. Or perhaps a more descriptive term is weak candidates.

Schlafly: Well let me say that after Goldwater had his tremendous defeat in 1964, Republicans became convinced that we could never elect a real conservative as president. That's why we took Richard Nixon. Richard Nixon made promises to us, to restore our military and nuclear superiority, which he promptly broke as soon as he went into the White House, by the appointment of Henry Kissinger, who then ran his foreign policy and defense policy throughout the Nixon Administration. By the time Nixon was running for reelection, conservatives had no more interest in him and actually tried to support a candidate against him, but Nixon had the good fortune to be running against [George] McGovern and so he won again. Then we had Watergate after that, and [Gerald] Ford after that.

Conservatives were very happy to nominate Reagan in 1980, but in their heart they weren't completely sure he could be elected. So it was a great surprise and a great joy to watch the election returns in November 1980.

DePue: At least for awhile, it was a contested race between George H. W. Bush and Ronald Reagan. So what's different in 1980 that a conservative, a true conservative, was able to win. In particular, what role would you and the Eagle Forum and the ERA fight have played in that?

³² Ronald Reagan hosted a TV show as GE's spokesman.

Schlafly: There were not enough Goldwaterites, the fiscal conservatives left over from the 1960s, to elect a president. But meanwhile, as we have previously discussed, we brought in this whole new group of social conservatives, mostly to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment but also fighting against abortion. These are the people you call the social conservatives; they brought a whole new element to the party, just like the Tea Parties today, and they added another dimension to the Republican Party. Reagan was able to put together a coalition of the fiscal conservatives, the national defense conservatives and the social conservatives, and that is what made his great victory.

DePue: I think unquestionably, at that time in 1980, 1981, when he takes office, you're one of the leading conservative figures in the United States. Were you expecting, or were you wanting, to get some kind of an appointment in the Reagan Administration?

Schlafly: Well it was pretty funny; my main leaders flew into St. Louis to tell me that they did not want me to take any job with the administration. (laughs) It was unanimous; they did not want me to do that. They were afraid I would, and then I would be gone from the movement, I would be locked in the administration. No, I had no interest in taking a job in Washington.

DePue: Were you aware that there was some talk about that, speculation within the administration as well?

Schlafly: Yes, there was some talk about it but I didn't want it and my friends clearly didn't want me to take it.

DePue: Would it be fair to say then, for the next two years your focus is primarily on ERA?

Schlafly: We're talking about 1981 and '82?

DePue: Yes.

Schlafly: Absolutely. That's when ERA was really absorbing our efforts, because the final battles were taking place in the key states.

DePue: I want to departmentalize the different aspects of the Reagan administration, between the social, the economic and the national defense or foreign affairs, and take each one and let you reflect on those. Let's start with economic policies, because clearly, Reagan walks into office and the country is in some serious economic straits.

Schlafly: Yes. We had sort of a depression, that in those days they talked about as stagflation; that meant we had high interest rates, high inflation, a declining dollar and loss of jobs. It was pretty bad, what Carter left us with. The question was, was Reagan going to keep taxes high—tax rates were very high when he came into office—in order to balance the budget, which has always

been a conservative goal? Or was he going to cut taxes in order to let business get going to starting to pull us out of the depression? Apparently, it was a big contest within his own people. They were divided and Reagan had to make the decision himself. I am told by somebody who knew reliably what happened, that when the decision came to Reagan, he said that when he was making movies, and making a lot of movies a year, his accountants came to him in February and said, There's no point in your making any more movies because the tax rates are so high, you'll pay all of it to the government.

DePue: At that time it would have been 90 percent. JFK [John F. Kennedy] is famous today for having cut taxes from 90 to 70 percent for that top bracket.

Schlafly: Well, I think Reagan cut it more than that. But at any rate, Reagan said, based on his own experience, he said he quit work then in February, hung around the Brown Derby, drank too much, his first wife divorced him, and he said, I'm not going to do anything that discourages people from working. So he cut tax rates. As we know, he started a great new period of economic growth and prosperity in our country.

DePue: Were you a believer at that time, in what was known then as supply side economics?

Schlafly: I never wrote much about supply side or took a position on that, but I certainly was in favor of cutting tax rates.

DePue: That gets us to the realm of social issues. I want to start with asking you about your impression of the Moral Majority as a political group, as a movement as well.

Schlafly: The Moral Majority was extremely helpful. When Jerry Falwell came into the anti-ERA fight, that was extremely helpful, because he brought in the Baptists and that was a big part of the so called religious right or the social conservatives. So they were very helpful.

DePue: Is the continuation of the Eagle Forum—you're still writing the "Schlafly Report"—were you on the radio as well by this time?

Schlafly: (pause) I don't remember the years, but there were quite a few years when I did those fifteen minute broadcasts on radio, which I did under the sponsorship of the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution]. I called it the "America Wake Up Series;" I've forgotten which years they were. I was not doing the three minute commentaries that I do now; I've been doing those for about the last twenty-eight years, but I don't believe I was doing those in the early eighties.

DePue: I do want to give you an opportunity to talk about several of the books. One of these was in the late seventies—1977—*The Power of the Positive Woman*.

Schlafly: Well that was a book I wrote during the ERA fight; it described not only what was wrong with ERA, but really what was wrong with the feminist movement. It expanded on my belief that American women are the most fortunate class of people who ever lived, so I wrote that book. It had only a limited sale, but it is interesting that I get a request now, and have for the last five years, almost every week, from some textbook or anthology that wants to print some passage from it, because I guess I was the only one in those years who was writing an anti-feminist line. So the book had a much bigger influence since it's out of print and college professors are using it to show one page of the other side to the feminist nonsense that they're teaching the rest of the time.

DePue: You say one page of the other side. Are you suggesting that most of the textbook is taking a different stance on ERA and women's issues?

Schlafly: Oh, well yes. I think feminism has completely taken over academia. The women's studies courses are the most extreme type of feminism, and often lesbianism, and they openly talk against me. But if they want to show what I believed and pretend that they're telling you what the other side thinks, they write for permission to quote from *The Power of the Positive Woman*.

DePue: Why the phrase *positive woman*?

Schlafly: Because I think that the feminist movement is principally at fault by teaching young women they are victims of an oppressive patriarchy. They have a very negative view of society, of men and of women. The feminist movement does not believe that women can be successful. One of the reasons I could defeat the Equal Rights Amendment was the feminists did not believe I could do what I was doing. They were very conspiracy minded. They thought there were all kinds of money and conspiracies behind me, because they don't believe in successful women. This is why they hate Sarah Palin so much. Whatever you think of her, she's obviously successful in everything she's touched. You never hear them talk about Margaret Thatcher or Condoleezza Rice or any truly successful women, because they don't believe women can be successful in this patriarchy.

DePue: The next book, 1981, *The Power of the Christian Woman*.

Schlafly: Well that was a Christian publisher who took *The Power of the Positive Woman* and made some edits, which they did clear with me, to make it more attractive to Christian groups. So it's basically the same book, with a few Bible verses added.

DePue: Nineteen eighty-two, *The End of an ERA*. I took that to mean a double entendre: both E-R-A and era.

Schlafly: Well, that was the name of our celebration. That was not a book. That was what we called our celebration dinner in Washington.

DePue: Nineteen eighty-four, *Equal Pay for Unequal Work*.

Schlafly: Well, in the 1980s, I put on a lot of very scholarly conferences. After the feminists lost ERA, one of the things they moved into was to espouse their notion called comparable worth. Of course the Equal Pay for Equal Work law had been federal law since 1963, but when they espoused this view called comparable worth, they wanted to set up feminist commissions to decide that certain jobs that were dominated by women were **worth** more than certain jobs that were dominated by men. They wanted pay to be based not on work but on **worth**, which would be evaluated by feminists with the power of government behind them. They espoused this view. They fought it in legislatures, they fought it in the courts. I put on a scholarly conference on that and the book, *Equal Pay for UNequal Work*, is a compilation of the splendid addresses that were given at that conference. Of course I called it *Equal Pay for UNequal Work*, because the work would not be equal, and really they would always pay no attention to working conditions, which are very important to women, probably more important than men, who are willing to take a lot of risky and unpleasant jobs to support their families. Women seem to like nice inside jobs with carpeted floors and air-conditioning and feminists don't want to pay any attention to that. They want to have government dictate wages; it's basically wage control, which the American people have rejected, and we don't want. So my conferences were very successful and I published the speeches as a book.

DePue: 1984 also must have been a busy year. *Child Abuse in the Classroom*.

Schlafly: Well, our organization, Eagle Forum, was extremely interested in the subject of education and what is taught in the public schools. We were interested in some regulations published by the Department of Education, which would give parents more control over what was being taught to their children. Some of the curricula, parents found objectionable, and the nosy questionnaires that they would give children, we found very objectionable.

We kicked up a fuss about what was going on. The Department of Education held, I think it was seven hearings, across the country in seven different cities, took testimony from parents who were complaining about what was actually going on to their own children in the schools. It was quite a mountain of evidence that was taken. When that series was finished, I carried on a campaign to try to get the Department of Education to publish them. They refused to do it.

I had a friend somewhere in the caverns of the Department of Education who got a hold of the box of transcriptions taken down by the court reporters hired by the Education Department. She boxed it up and shipped it out to me. I went through that and the book, *Child Abuse in the Classroom* is several pages of excerpts of those testimonies given by parents, about the outrages that were going on in the public schools. So I am the owner of those

original transcripts. It's absolutely authentic; every word of *Child Abuse in the Classroom* was what was given by some parent at these hearings. The book was a big revelation. It had quite a big sale and was very important in alerting people to what the public schools were teaching and not teaching. The book became a useful guide in the hands of parents.

DePue: What kind of abuses are we talking about here? Can you be more explicit in that respect?

Schlafly: Well, we're talking about their theory of values clarification, which meant to teach the child to cast off the values of his parents and erect his own sense of values. Teaching them moral relativity. Gross, obscene sex-ed courses. The school would require the kid to answer nosy questions, like what kind of illegal drugs have you used, which ones and how often, what kind of sex have you engaged in and what devices did you use and how often, how many times have you tried to commit suicide. The questions were not only none of the school's business, but they were very leading, to make the kid think that, well, everybody's doing all these things, I'd better be one of the crowd. That particular aspect has been a big thing with our organization. We've been involved in a number of lawsuits. One notorious one ended up in the Ninth Circuit more recently, in which a Federal Judge said that the right of the parents over the care and custody of their children does not extend beyond the threshold of the school door; the school can teach the child anything it wants to about sex or anything else, and your only recourse as parent if you don't like it, is to take your child out and send him to a private school.

DePue: That was one of my questions. What is your personal view on public versus private schools? You grew up in the private school system in the first place, I believe.

Schlafly: Well my own experience: I started out in a public school in St. Louis which was fine, I guess that many years ago. But then I had most of my education in a private school. All my children started out in a Catholic parochial school and then continued in some private school, but that doesn't diminish my concern about what's going on in the public schools, because 89 percent of the children in America are in public schools. We're all paying for them and I think it is very tragic, what they're teaching and what they're not teaching.

DePue: Ronald Reagan was well-known for his plan, his desire to see the Department of Education abolished. Were you supportive of that initiative?

Schlafly: Yes, of course. The Department of Education was only started by Jimmy Carter. It was a payoff to the NEA [National Education Association] for supporting him in his race for president. I notice that a lot of the Tea Party people have raised that issue again.

DePue: What's your rationale, the argument for why we don't, as a country, need a Department of Education?

Schlafly: There's nothing in the Constitution that gives the Federal Government any authority over public schools or any right to spend money on it, or to control education in any way. The whole thing is completely unconstitutional.

DePue: Nineteen eighty-seven, *Pornography's Victims*.

Schlafly: That was another case where I took the transcript of a major commission. That was a commission that was set up by the Attorney General's commission on pornography. I've forgotten who he was at that point, but they took days of testimony; they heard from law enforcement people and from psychologists and sociologists and professors and all kinds of people. It was a mountain of testimony they took.

I went through all those volumes of testimony and extracted just the testimony of the people I called the victims of pornography, because the liberals were circulating the notion that pornography is a victimless crime. I put together the testimony of the people who were victims of pornography, both men and women, and put them together in the book called, *Pornography's Victims*, to make the testimony available to people and to disprove the notion that there are no victims.

DePue: What is your position then, when you hear the argument that pornography is protected by the First Amendment—it's a form of free speech.

Schlafly: That's not true. In my book, *The Supremacists*, I have an extraordinary original piece of research in the chapter on the Supreme Court cases on pornography. Pornography was never considered to be part of the First Amendment for the first couple of centuries of our country's existence. The Warren Court in—let's see, I want to be precise about the years. It was in about an eighteen month period of the Warren Court, where they took something like twenty-six cases from the pornography industry. It's extraordinary to take so many cases on one subject, from the pornography industry, from one industry. They completely overturned the law of pornography by basically wrapping it in the First Amendment. This is the same Court that is trying to clamp down on religion and saying that doesn't have anything to do with the First Amendment.

DePue: Are we talking the 1950s and 60s?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: I think Earl Warren came in—

Schlafly: Earl Warren came in, in '53, but the pornography cases were in one eighteen month period. Yes, it would have been around 1966. I'll have to supply those exact dates. [1966 – 1968]

DePue: We can get that fixed in the transcript then.

Schlafly: Right, because it was a short period of time, like a year and a half, where they took, I think it was twenty-six cases, and overturned all the lower court cases, all the laws of all the states and basically made pornography a First Amendment right. That is an original piece of research, because when the Supreme Court upheld these gross pornographic materials, they didn't tell you what it was they were doing in the Supreme Court decision. In order to find out what it was they were legalizing, you had to go to the lower court decisions in order to read what exactly was the gross, vile stuff they were approving. I did all that original research. It really is an extraordinary chapter in my book called, *The Supremacists*, because the Warren Court completely overturned the law about pornography and wrapped it in the First Amendment.

DePue: These last two books we've been talking about, *Child Abuse in the Classroom*, *Pornography's Victims*, in both these cases there are hearings, there's information available. How well did the regular media convey these stories to the general public?

Schlafly: Well in regard to the education hearings, it's unlikely that there was anything in the press about it. The hearings were held in faraway places, towns across the country that the media were not interested in. There was coverage of the Attorney General's commission on pornography, but there wasn't the emphasis on the victims that I thought there ought to be, so hence, my book.

DePue: Well, child abuse in the classroom, you would think, would be the kind of thing that would sell newspapers and bring viewership.

Schlafly: I thought it was important, and that book had a very big sale. Hundreds of thousands of copies of that book were sold.

DePue: You alluded to this before, in terms of taking on an advocacy role, and helping with some individual or groups' lawsuits. Was that a function of the Eagle Forum, that you would take on that role as well in some cases?

Schlafly: We did no litigation. We were not a party. We didn't instigate any lawsuits. All we have done is to file amicus briefs; they're all on my website. We've probably filed about forty maybe, in all kinds of cases. It's a function of Eagle Forum education and Legal Defense Fund. We have filed briefs in First Amendment cases, religion cases, the Pledge of Allegiance, the Ten Commandments, feminism cases, property rights cases, father's rights cases, all kinds of cases, and they're all available on our website. They have been mostly either written or supervised by my son Andy, who is a Harvard Law

graduate and a lawyer in private practice in New Jersey. That is somewhat later than the period we've been discussing.

DePue: Just to clarify the record here. For those of us who don't have a law degree, an amicus brief is...?

Schlafly: Friend of the Court. That's what amicus curiae means, a friend of the Court, and it means you're not a party. You're not doing the litigation. You're not controlling the case in any way, but you're giving the Court the advantage of your opinion, probably making some arguments that the main parties to the case may have overlooked or for one reason or another may not have made.

DePue: We have been going through the litany of different books. Obviously, you've been very busy. In many cases you explained that you're taking other people's words but there's still an awful lot of work putting all of this together. They all focus on social issues and yet, you got your start in politics on nuclear strategy and national defense issues. So let's turn now to foreign affairs and what you thought in terms of what Reagan was doing in foreign affairs. Shall we start with the rebuilding of the military?

Schlafly: Of course, I told you about my important meeting with Reagan, when I met with him in his office in Los Angeles before he was elected. When the one favor I asked of him was **not** to let Henry Kissinger have anything to do with his foreign policy or defense policy, Reagan did promise me that and did keep his promise.

As we previously discussed, the Kissinger policy was the same as the [Robert] McNamara policy. Kissinger's policy was best expressed in what he personally said to Admiral Rickover. Kissinger felt that the Soviet Union was going to be the one superpower and his job, Kissinger's job, was to negotiate the best second best position he could. Now when Reagan came in, he changed the policy to "we win, they lose," which was an entirely different approach. The main factor in that was building up the military and in particular, building an anti-missile defense.

I remember the exciting night in 1983, when it was announced he was going to have a nationally televised speech. I'm watching Reagan in my living room and he's describing the need for an anti-missile defense, and showing charts about the Soviet increase in strategic missiles. That was the key to ending the Cold War. That's what Ted Kennedy called Star Wars; they tried to ridicule it, but it was absolutely necessary and we still need it today.

DePue: The official name was the Strategic Defense Initiative?

Schlafly: Yes, SDI, the Strategic Defense Initiative. He was determined that we would have the defenses. The policy we had been living on was known as the MAD policy, Mutual Assured Destruction, which was a policy that if the Soviets hit us with nuclear weapons and killed millions of our people, we would hit back

and kill millions more of their people. As Reagan said, "Isn't it better to save lives than to avenge them." So he stood strong for an anti-missile defense.

Now, in 1985, it was planned that Reagan would meet [Mikhail] Gorbachev in Geneva. As soon as that came out, the feminists got into the act and Bella Abzug announced that she was going to take a group of women leaders over to Geneva to protest against Reagan's anti-missile defense, basically to support Gorbachev. Of course, Bella Abzug had had Communist training. And there was some Hollywood star who said she was going to take some Hollywood glitter over there, some flashy dames, to help Bella Abzug and try to get Reagan to give up his anti-missile defense. At that point I said. We have to do something.

So I gathered a team of twenty-five heads of women's organizations and took them to Geneva to back up Ronald Reagan. This was in 1985. We did all the things Americans do. We had a press conference, we had a demonstration in the park, we let off balloons, we let everybody know that we were over there to back up Ronald Reagan. He of course did not acquiesce in what Gorbachev wanted and he was very grateful. He called me afterwards to thank me. I remember that day. My assistant answered the phone and the White House Operator said, "The President is calling." And I remember she said, "The president of what?" But anyway, he was very grateful.

Now we all know that the final postscript of that was his meeting in Reykjavik [Iceland] with Gorbachev. At Reykjavik, Gorbachev offered Reagan everything. He practically said we'll give up every missile we've got if you will just give up your anti-missile defense, your SDI. Everybody was against Reagan. His own State Department was against him. *TIME* and *Newsweek* proclaimed, Reagan has lost the Cold War because he wouldn't give in to Gorbachev. Reagan stood firm. In the PBS [Public Broadcasting Service] documentary about Reagan's life, I remember seeing the picture: Reagan came out of his last meeting with Gorbachev all alone; he had no aides around him. He walked down this big flight of steps and got in his limousine and just slumped down in the back seat because he had done that all alone. We now know, from documents that have come out since the end of the Cold War, the documents in the Soviet Union, that that is the precise moment when Reagan won the Cold War without firing a shot, as Margaret Thatcher [Prime Minister of Great Britain] famously said.

DePue: Did you understand the rationale behind that? What we now hear is that basically, the American economy was so much more robust than the Soviet economy, that we could cause them all kinds of economic and psychological stress just by spending money on the buildup of the military and on strategic defense initiatives and other things, and push the Soviet Union into bankruptcy. Was that an understood policy at that time?

- Schlafly: It was understood by Reagan. That was why he built up our military and wanted to build up our economy. We know that's why Gorbachev caved in. He realized he couldn't compete with us, so he basically gave up after that. And you know, it's not just the liberals who had this idea that the Soviets couldn't be countered on this. The whole American intelligence community was convinced that the Soviet Union would be the superpower, because they were a totalitarian power and they were able to divert all of their resources into nuclear weapons, whereas, in America, there's just a limit to what the American people would spend. We want goodies in life other than nuclear weapons. So the intelligence community was supporting the idea that the Soviets were the biggest and strongest and were ultimately going to win out in the arms race and be the main superpower. Reagan was just alone and he was right. He convinced Gorbachev that we had the power; we were going to be able to shoot down any of their missiles, and we had the economic power to outdistance them. Gorbachev didn't; he knew his economy was collapsing.
- DePue: One of the other things that Reagan was roundly criticized for—I mean, he'd come out of this period of détente that Nixon and certainly Carter continued—but the terminology he used, the “Evil Empire.” What did you think about the use of such provocative words as that?
- Schlafly: Well I thought it was great, but you realize, we had a very informed grassroots in those days. As we previously discussed, the conservative movement was built up on the basis of these small study groups. We had studied the congressional documents about Communism and we knew it was the evil empire. It was no surprise when he said that. It was just what we already knew, that Communism was evil and the Soviet Union was an evil empire.
- DePue: The media wasn't portraying them that way though.
- Schlafly: No, but we had a very well-informed grassroots that understood Communism.
- DePue: So you thought that was not just accurate but the right strategy to take, to be that provocative?
- Schlafly: Oh yeah. And his famous statement, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.”³³ We now know, his speechwriters kept removing from the speech and he wrote it in and said it anyway.
- DePue: I think part of this whole process of—I don't know, brinkmanship might be the wrong word—that Reagan was employing at the time, was also the deployment of Pershing II missile systems in Europe, which also caused quite a stir. Do you recall that?

³³ The quote is from Reagan's famous speech from Berlin. This speech, given on West Germany's side, was televised. The speech, and especially that quote, has become one of the iconic moments of Reagan's presidency..

Schlafly: I don't recall any particular details about it, but Reagan was right. He had the right policy.

DePue: Let's turn our attention to a different part of the world, Central America, and Reagan's policies in Central America, especially Nicaragua and Honduras.

Schlafly: Yes. You realize, the grassroots who had been studying Communism all these years, knew that the Communist strategy was to encircle the United States and take every piece around us that they possibly could. I think it was [Vladimir] Lenin who said, "America will fall like an overripe fruit into our hands." So when the Communists were trying to take over some of these little countries to the south of us, Reagan was trying to help the "Freedom Fighters."

One of the things we did in those years, we made freedom fighter packages to help those guys: little packages that included toothpaste and toothbrush and soap and little necessities like that to help them. We made thousands of those and sent them down there to support what Reagan was doing.

DePue: When you say we, you mean the Eagle Forum?

Schlafly: Eagle Forum, yes.

DePue: Also on the foreign affairs arena, but this is Reagan's scandal as well: the Iran Contra Affair. What was your response when you started hearing about the allegations that were coming out about this exchange of weapons for...

Schlafly: Well a lot of us didn't see anything the matter with it. It was much overblown by the media. It was kind of a neat idea.

DePue: You weren't concerned about the allegations, the pushing the envelope of the law, and violating the law in some cases perhaps?

Schlafly: Well, I think it's debatable whether it was actually violating the law, but I think a plausible case can be made for what was done. I thought it was much overblown. It didn't bother Reagan's friends particularly. The media, of course, made a big thing out of it.

DePue: The last session we had, you talked a little bit about this movement that some conservatives had for a constitutional convention, because they were seeking to get a balanced budget amendment. Why did the conservatives think it would be more likely that they could get a new constitutional convention to push through a balance-the-budget amendment, versus just passing an amendment?

Schlafly: There was a conservative group that worked specifically on the goal of getting a balanced budget constitutional amendment. They were probably the richest conservative organization; they raised more money than anybody else. They'd

been quite effective in using that money to elect state legislators as well as congressmen, and they tried hard to get Congress to pass a constitutional amendment. When Congress balked at passing that—and of course we know it takes two-thirds of each House of Congress—and they couldn't get that, then they changed to the policy of trying to call a constitutional convention under Article V language, which presumably would pass a balanced budget amendment.

They went around to the states, they had elected the state legislators who agreed with this view, and they were able to get thirty-two states. We buried the Equal Rights Amendment on June 30, 1982, and at that point, this other group had amassed thirty-two states to pass resolutions calling for a constitutional convention. Under Article V, it only takes thirty-four. At that point, I took up the battle, because I think it's a terrible idea. We like the Constitution we have and we don't want anybody tinkering with it.

At that point, in the next couple of years, we had events that were very similar to the state legislative hearings and rallies that involved the Equal Rights Amendment. These battles were in Kentucky, New Jersey, Michigan and Montana. I went three times to Trenton, New Jersey, for example, and we beat it. They never got any more states once I got into the act. They were very angry at me for stopping that, but nevertheless I think that was the right thing to do. We did not want to risk a constitutional convention.

I had, by that time, been serving on the Bicentennial Commission on the Constitution with Chief Justice Warren Burger. He wrote me several letters in which he said the constitutional convention would be a terrible mistake. Once it's called, it could not be restrained. It could do whatever it wants; it could do all sorts of bad things that we didn't want. There was nothing to limit it to just considering the possibility of a balanced budget amendment. My Constitutional Law Professor at Washington University thought my defeat of that effort, for a constitutional convention, was more important for our country even than beating the Equal Rights Amendment.

DePue: Well now you've had an opportunity to upset, to anger a completely different constituency than you had in the ERA fight. Would that be accurate?

Schlafly: Yes. The balanced budget amendment people were very angry at me, but I think they were wrong. They finally had to give up. Now there is a new drive for that by a new crowd of people. I think it's pushed now by people who really don't know a whole lot about politics. For example, I have been to fifteen Republican National Conventions, plus several other Republican National Conventions, numerous state, district and local Republican conventions, and I have seen every crooked machination you can think up. The guy with the gavel controls the show. I've seen them cut off mikes, recognize only the people they want, throw out duly elected delegates, all sorts of crooked things; disobey the rules and credentials. These people [who]

have that the idea that they can set some rules that the convention will have to obey, just don't understand politics at all. So I think it is a terrible mistake now being pushed by people who don't understand how politics functions.

DePue: A point of clarification for me then. Amendments to the Constitution: do they have to originate in Congress or can they originate at the state level?

Schlafly: The normal way is that a constitutional amendment is passed by two-thirds of both Houses of Congress, and then sent out to the states to be ratified by three-fourths, or thirty-eight states. That is the way that all of our twenty-seven Amendments to the Constitution have been ratified. The Constitution offers an alternate plan in Article V, which says that two-thirds of the states, which is thirty-four states, can pass resolutions requesting Congress to call a constitutional convention for the purpose of considering amendments, in the plural. There are no rules. We don't know anything else. We don't know where it would be; we don't know how it would be apportioned; we don't know who would pay for the delegates. We don't know what they would be required to do, what kind of a majority they would have to have. We don't know anything about it. It is a plunge into the unknowable.

DePue: So it wouldn't necessarily rewrite the entire Constitution but the Devil's in the details of what it would possibly change.

Schlafly: Well you could amend it so that it would be a different document. You could amend it and amend it and amend it. You could get rid of the Second Amendment. There are all kinds of people who want changes in the Constitution. There are people in this country who have been rewriting the Constitution for years—academics who want to get rid of the electoral college, who want to give us a parliamentary form of government, who want to get rid of the Second Amendment, who want to get rid of the amendment about how Senators are elected, want to get rid of the electoral college. There are just all kinds of ways people want to change it.

DePue: This is probably a great opportunity to get into my next series of questions dealing with the courts and specifically with Ronald Reagan's appointment to the courts. I believe on his first opportunity, he appointed Sandra Day O'Connor. What did you think about that appointment?

Schlafly: I opposed that appointment. I thought it was a mistake and it proved to be a mistake; I opposed it at the time. He made the unfortunate comment—I suppose some of his campaign aides thought it would be a nifty idea—to say his first appointment would be a woman. That was a mistake, to promise that. She was the only one he interviewed for that and he just got taken by Sandra O'Connor.

DePue: Were there other women who had different credentials, more conservative credentials?

- Schlafly: Oh sure, but he was not given any other woman to interview by his staff.
- DePue: Do you blame Reagan or his staff for that?
- Schlafly: Well, Reagan has to be blamed for it but I'm sure his staff set it up.
- DePue: Was she something of an unknown quantity at the time, as far as Reagan personally was concerned?
- Schlafly: That's right, he didn't know her. He took her on recommendations. I think she had been a classmate of [William] Rehnquist, so what could he say but, Yes, she's a nice lady. But her record was such that I knew she was a bad choice. She had a record in the state legislature and in her speeches, and she was just a bad choice.
- DePue: Were you trying to get that word to the President himself, or were others successful in getting that cautionary message to him?
- Schlafly: Yeah, but he had made the announcement before we knew anything about it.
- DePue: I'm not sure we have talked about your own personal philosophy of what a judicial philosophy should be for the Supreme Court. I know that later on in your career you wrote, *The Supremacists*. We can talk about that a little bit now and a little bit later if you'd like, but what was your view of what would make a good Supreme Court Justice?
- Schlafly: Well, the best ones we have on the Court now are [Clarence] Thomas and [Samuel A.] Alito. They believe that the Constitution ought to be interpreted the way it was written. They believe the job of the Court is to live up to the Constitution, because they take the same oath of office as other people who work for the government. It's these other people who espouse the false idea that the Constitution is a living document that they can reinterpret. It's not living, it's a piece of paper with words on it that we all can read and see what they say. This ties into a couple of other things and what really happened to the Court.

This is one of the crooked deals that happened at a Republican National Convention. You talk about bad things that can happen at a convention. The worst thing probably, that ever happened at a Republican National Convention was in the 1952 convention in Chicago, which was the contest between [Dwight D.] Eisenhower and [Robert] Taft, the Eisenhower people went to Earl Warren, who was the Governor of California, and made a crooked deal with him: you deliver the California delegation for the votes on credentials and rules and you will get the first appointment to the Supreme Court. They made that deal and Warren delivered.

The first vacancy on the Court turned out to be the Chief Justice. Of course Eisenhower was never told anything about this. So they said, Well, we

didn't promise you the Chief Justice. Warren said, Tough, you promised me the first vacancy, and he demanded it. So Eisenhower felt he had to live up to the promise and he appointed Warren Chief Justice, and that was a disaster. Practically all the bad things the Courts have done can be traced to Warren. Warren had no judicial experience; he'd never been a judge. He was a petty, dictatorial type who set out to make the judiciary the most powerful branch of government. The Founding Fathers planned it to be the weakest branch of government, because it didn't have guns and it didn't have money, but Warren was the first one to say that whatever the Supreme Court says is the supreme law of the land. That's not true. The Constitution says the supreme law of the land is the Constitution and the laws that are made in pursuance thereof. But Warren set out to make it the most powerful. All of the bad lines of cases that have done so much damage to our country, whether they're religion cases, or property rights cases, or immigration cases, or pornography cases, they all start with the Warren court. This is all set forth in my book that's called *The Supremacists: The Tyranny of Judges*. It was the crooked deal at the Republican convention of 1952 that gave us Earl Warren and all of the progeny of that bad decision.

DePue: Probably the most famous decision that he is remembered for today is the 1954 decision, *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka*.³⁴

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: What is your opinion of that decision?

Schlafly: I think the Court should have just confined itself to overturning its bad decision in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. The problem with the Brown decision was they're using some obscure Swedish sociologist as their authority, who had nothing to do with American law. I think they could have come to the same decision by overruling the original bad decision in the area of race.

DePue: What do you say then, to those people who argue that the Constitution needs to be a living document, because our Founding Fathers simply could not have imagined the kind of world that we live in today, with instantaneous communication, with the Internet, with the growth of the country and the diversity of the country today? They just couldn't imagine that and so we have to have a more flexible document to respond to that.

Schlafly: I don't see any reason for it to be more flexible. If you have your free speech, what difference does it make whether you're writing on a piece of paper or whether you're doing it on the Internet? It's the same doctrine and I don't think anything needs to be changed on that. I don't see any need for that at all. The fact that you're using different methods, I don't see a problem. Incidentally, Eisenhower was later asked, Did you make any mistakes while

³⁴ The court ruled that state laws establishing segregated public schools were illegal, thus overturning the 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

you were President? He said, Yes, two, and they're both sitting on the Supreme Court. One was Earl Warren and the other was [William J.] Brennan; they are responsible for so many of the problems we have today.

DePue: The next two—appointments that I believe Reagan had the opportunity to make—were William Rehnquist and Antonin Scalia. Your opinion of those two appointments.

Schlafly: (pause) Are you sure those are Reagan appointments? I thought his only other appointment was [Anthony] Kennedy.

DePue: I'd have to go back and check. I thought that was the case.

Schlafly: Who did you say?

DePue: Rehnquist and Antonin Scalia. I thought that's what I had just read yesterday in Critchlow as well, so I could be wrong. (pause) Were you thinking that [George H. W.] Bush had appointed those two?

Schlafly: Why don't I go get a drink of water and I've got a book I can look that up in.

DePue: Okay, we will pause here.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Okay, we have just checked our facts. Actually, Mrs. Schlafly, you checked my facts; I had them wrong. The mistake was that Reagan appointed Rehnquist as Chief Justice, which opened up a position, as you pointed out to me, which brought in Antonin Scalia.

Schlafly: There was no problem about Scalia. He sailed through on the confirmation, as did Rehnquist, with his promotion to Chief. But then came the fight over [Robert] Bork. Reagan appointed Bork and the liberals went after him as hard as they could, until Bork has almost become a verb in political language, to Bork somebody. When he bowed out, Reagan appointed Doug Ginsberg; it's really a national tragedy that he didn't make it. But then the fallback was Anthony Kennedy; as we all know, he's gone back and forth with his decisions on the Court.

DePue: Let's talk a little bit about the Bork decision. You mentioned that his name has practically become a verb, that a person "has been Borked," I guess meaning that they'd been attacked so viciously they never were appointed in the first place. What did you think about when that occurred?

Schlafly: Well, we all thought it was terrible the way Bork was treated, but since that confirmation hearing, the hearings are pretty bland. The nominees really don't say much of anything. They avoid trying to reveal their views when they go through the confirmation hearings.

DePue: There've been a couple others. Certainly Clarence Thomas—most would say that wasn't a bland hearing when he was nominated.

Schlafly: Well, the Clarence Thomas hearing was just an outrage, a complete outrage. I was certainly active in supporting Clarence Thomas. I think he's the best one on the Court. He's well qualified. His decisions are wonderful. He has great respect for the Constitution. I think we're very fortunate to have him on the Court.

DePue: There had been a tradition for a long time, that the people who the President nominated for the courts, for the Supreme Court in particular, that the members of the U.S. Senate who had to confirm were generally deferential. They might agree or disagree with the politics, but the assumption was, this is the President's nominee and unless there's really—I'm looking for the right word—blatant things that are about this person's past and judicial temperament, that we should be deferential to the President. That seemed to be violated in the case of Robert Bork's hearing. Would you agree with this, that the Republicans have generally been more deferential than the Democrats since that time?

Schlafly: My impression is that the Republicans do not do as effective a job in interrogating any witnesses in the hearings as the Democrats do.

DePue: What do you credit that to?

Schlafly: I don't know. Maybe they're not as combative. I don't know. I think they ought to do a better job in a lot of cases.

DePue: We've been asking you questions about each one of the Republican conventions. We haven't asked you about 1984 yet. Do you remember anything in particular about the 1984 convention?

Schlafly: Oh yes. The 1984 convention was a lot of fun. It was just a celebration all the way around. There wasn't any contest about who was going to be nominated for president; Reagan was re-nominated. That was the year I served on the Platform Committee with Henry Hyde, as the Illinois delegates. The Platform Committee consists of one man and one woman; Hyde and I were the Illinois representatives. That's when we put the language in the platform that the unborn child has a fundamental, individual right to life that cannot be infringed. That is the language we've maintained ever since, very important language. It was a better statement than what we had had earlier, although we've had a pro-life statement ever since *Roe v. Wade*,³⁵ starting at the first convention after that in 1976.

In 1984 in Dallas, I put on one of my most fabulous parties. I've had a non-official party at almost every one of the Republican National

³⁵ The Supreme Court decision which struck down many state laws which restricted abortion.

Conventions. I guess the first one was in 1960, when I launched Barry Goldwater before a national audience in Chicago at a luncheon we called the Hawaiian Hukilau. I think we talked about that earlier.

DePue: We did.

Schlafly: Okay. Well, I've had one at every convention, but the one in Dallas was particularly spectacular. We had a fashion show with all the wonderful fashions provided by one of the main shops in Texas, and had all the prominent Republican ladies, like Mrs. Jesse Helms and Mrs. Jack Kemp, who were the models. I wrote a new musical script for about a fifteen minute show; it had a lot of humor in it and it was well received, a lot of fun.

DePue: Let's jump ahead four years and get to the 1988 convention, and maybe the primary season itself. That, of course, is the year that George H. W. Bush ends up becoming the nominee, but was that the year that Jack Kemp, for a while, was considered one of the up-and-comers of the party, or was that a different year?

Schlafly: I don't think Jack Kemp was ever seriously considered as a major contender for the presidential nomination. It's curious why—I don't know why—because I thought he was quite an important leader. He was credited with being the author of the tax policy that Reagan adopted that was so successful. But somehow the Republican Party seems to believe in primogeniture. I thought we had abolished that when we got rid of the British. But it does seem so often that Republicans just choose the next one in line, and George Bush had spent eight years with Reagan, being a dutiful supporter of Reagan. He was in line so he got the nomination.

DePue: ,At the time, who did you think should have gotten that nomination?

Schlafly: Well there wasn't any real contest. That convention was in New Orleans. I had a party that included some of the leaders then, including Phil Gramm and Jack Kemp, and I've forgotten who else, but Bush had it all wrapped up. I did participate in quite an activity, to make sure we got a conservative vice president; I think that was why we got Dan Quayle.

DePue: What did you think of the way the media treated Quayle when he was nominated?

Schlafly: Well, I thought it was an outrage. Quayle was a fine man, a good conservative, and I think he would have made a good president.

DePue: What were your concerns about George Bush then, as a candidate?

Schlafly: George Bush, The First, had played his role very well and very carefully during the eight years of Reagan. The minute George Bush got in the White

House, he started moving away and trying to undo Reagan. It was a change of personality overnight.

DePue: Change of personality or change of political...?

Schlafly: Change of policy, yeah, a change of policy. George Bush was obviously a “New World Order” type. In fact, he used that expression, New World Order, so often, they made fun of it around the White House. At one time they were told that that expression should be in almost every speech he made.

DePue: I think I know, but what was your concern about that phrase, New World Order?

Schlafly: He was an internationalist. It was an entirely different view from Reagan.

DePue: Do you remember his famous pledge from the election campaign: “Read my lips—no new taxes.”

Schlafly: No new taxes. When he reneged on that he lost.

DePue: Did you believe him when he said that to begin with, in the campaign?

Schlafly: Sure, I believed him; I thought he was honest. Maybe he believed it himself, but he had advisors who told him that he had to change once he got the opportunity. He did and he lost.

DePue: One of the most significant events that occurred during the Bush administration was the collapse of the old Soviet Union, and with it most of eastern Europe as well. Talk to us about the emotions you were feeling at that time and reflect on why that happened in the first place.

Schlafly: Well it happened because of Reagan, because Reagan really ended the evil empire. We didn’t see the results of that until 1990, but it was all Reagan’s doing. Unlikely that Bush could have done it. Reagan had the policy, as we previously discussed—We win and they lose—and he made it clear that we did.

I was in Berlin in 1990, and it was very interesting. The Berlin Wall was half up and half down when I was there. I brought back a couple of pieces of the Berlin Wall. It was something to see.

DePue: You had spent your early career especially, writing about the Soviet Union and the Communist threat, about nuclear strategy and things. What were you feeling when you were watching those people dancing on top of the Berlin Wall in, I think, 1989?

Schlafly: In all those years of fighting Communism, we never dreamed that we would live to see the collapse of the Soviet Union. It just was not something we

believed could happen. It was terribly exciting. Of course it started when we began to see the pictures of the people who were running out of the Communist countries into Austria and West Berlin. It was just so exciting, it was hard to believe.

DePue: Were you surprised how quickly it happened?

Schlafly: Yes. Gorbachev just kind of gave up. It was interesting that week that I was in Berlin, in 1990. I took it up with the concierge, Well what should I do? Oh, he said, You have to go to the opera. But the opera was in East Berlin. I said, I don't know, do I want to go to East Berlin? Oh yeah, he said, no problem. He said, You have a taxi take you to the opera house and when it's over, you just walk two blocks to the hotel—and he named it, the big hotel there—and you have them call a cab, and there will be no problem getting a cab from West Berlin, because they'll know you have good American money. So we did that; I went with my daughter. Then we walked and got in the hotel and the hotel was a fabulous hotel. It looked like the Fairmount Hotel in San Francisco; high ceilings and chandeliers and a balcony where some pianist was playing concert music, and everything was lovely. We called a cab and went back to our hotel. The next day I said to the concierge, My, the Communists certainly kept that hotel in wonderful shape. Oh, he said, That's a new hotel; they just built that for the foreign trade and they keep it at small occupancy, just to entertain American businessmen. So it wasn't an old hotel at all; it was a brand new hotel.

DePue: How about your views about the way that Communism in Communist China was evolving and continues to evolve?

Schlafly: China is a Communist country. It's completely controlled by the Communist Party and people need to realize that. Communism has not disappeared. It's there and all the money that Americans spend at Wal-Mart to buy Chinese goods, is going right into military weapons to threaten the United States.

DePue: But they seem to have abandoned some of the economic principles that were the underpinning of Leninism and Marxism.

Schlafly: Well, yes and no. They fixed it so the Communist elite really control everything.

DePue: Do you think the fact that the old nemesis, the Soviet Union, collapsed so quickly and with it the rest of the eastern bloc countries, and basically that Communism was discredited in many respects, did the fact that the conservative movement got started in the late forties and early fifties by emphasizing that is the threat change the conservative movement in America afterwards?

Schlafly: (pause) The opposition to the Soviet Union and to Communism was a unifying force in the conservative movement. All branches of the Republican

Party in the conservative movement were anti-Communist. That factor isn't there any longer and the force of Communism has diminished generally. But more than that, the media have pretended that it's diminished much more than it has. I think there are plenty of Communists in China, in Venezuela, in many other countries, and on college campuses. But now we don't have a well educated grassroots. We've got a whole generation of people who didn't learn any American history when they went through school, and people don't read any more, so we have, I think, a harder time because of the lack of general information that the American people have.

DePue: Another one of the changes that was occurring in the late 1980s, and certainly has continued on to this day, is what most would consider as the emergence of an alternative media. It started with Rush Limbaugh, in roughly 1988 I believe. Another law, I believe that passed during the Reagan Administration was—now I can't remember.

Schlafly: Getting rid of the Fairness Doctrine.

DePue: The Fairness Doctrine, yes. How has that changed the discussion in the media in the United States?

Schlafly: Well, once they got rid of this government control of the media through the Fairness Doctrine and Rush Limbaugh appeared, I think he has had an incredible impact on American views and American politics. We really do have a free market in talk radio. The liberals are so boring; they can't get the ads to sustain their programs on the air. That's why they have to have the taxpayers providing them with NPR, National Public Radio, because they can't get the ads to get people to listen to their boring programs. The conservatives dominate talk radio.

DePue: We're going to pick up this theme of the media, probably tomorrow when we get towards the more contemporary era, but I want to ask you one more question about George Bush and foreign policy. Certainly the other thing that he is remembered for is the Iraq War in 1990/1991. Give us your report card analysis of George Bush's handling of the Iraq War.

Schlafly: George Bush One's handling of the Iraq War...

DePue: I guess we should call it the Gulf War.

Schlafly: ...the Gulf War. He did the job and pulled out. He did not try to engage in this phony nation building. But when George Bush II came along, after telling during the campaign that he was not going to engage in nation building, he promptly proceeded to do that. Now the idea of building Democracy in the Middle East is really nuts; it isn't going to happen. Those people are not ready for self-government. If they had some kind of Democracy, it is probable that the wrong people would get elected and be in charge. So I am opposed to the Woodrow Wilson type of thinking, that the United States can dictate the

boundary lines and the type of government that other countries can have. I just don't think that's our mission and we shouldn't spend our treasure and blood to try to accomplish something that's doomed to failure.

DePue: Just for the record here, we are talking on March 29, 2011, As we speak, within the last couple of months there has been an overturning of the government in Tunisia; there has been an overthrowing of the Mubarak government in Egypt. Just last night President Barack Obama spoke in terms of his rationale for imposing a no-fly zone over Libya. There are serious rumblings in Syria and Yemen and plenty of other places, so we'll have to check a few years from now and see how this democratization movement is going on in the Middle East, as we speak about it today. Apparently, you have no great faith that that's going to emerge in places like Egypt and Libya and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Schlafly: That's right; I certainly don't have any faith in that. I think it's wrong to call it democratization. We don't know who these insurgents are. In Libya, maybe they're worse than the guy who's been in charge. Who knows? Nobody knows who they are. We have to realize that most of the countries of the world change their government by some kind of revolution, an uprising. America is the only country that has had a couple of centuries of peaceful changes of regime time and time again, without any type of revolution. These other countries, if they want to have peace, they can copy our model, but I do not think we are capable of forcing our model on them.

DePue: Why do you think that the Middle East, the Arab world in particular, is not good fertile ground for democracies to develop?

Schlafly: Well, I suppose there are a lot of reasons, but one reason is they all marry their first cousins, so it's a tribal society. That means you don't have any allegiance or loyalty to the country; you only have it to your tribe and your family. Of course, they have this royal family in Saudi Arabia that's been in control; it's a polygamist society and they're all related. I don't see how you can build a representative type of government with that type of society.

DePue: Do you think religion plays a role?

Schlafly: Well, I don't know how much it's religion and how much is just simply the society that they're used to. It's just very different from what we have. I don't think they can adapt to our form of government. If they have a Democracy, an election, they may elect all the bad guys.

DePue: I wanted to finish today then, with your reflections on Bush I and the his Administration, but in particular that 1992 Republican convention.

Schlafly: (pause) That leads us into the fight over the platform. Do you want to talk about that?

DePue: We can either finish with that today or start with that tomorrow; it's your choice.

Schlafly: Well, we can finish with that today. In 1990, two women suddenly made the announcement that they were going to set up an organization and raise funds to take the pro-life plank out of the Republican platform, which had been in since *Roe v. Wade*, since 1976, and enhanced in '84, as we previously discussed. One of these women was just a fundraiser—her name was Ann Stone—who had been connected with some Planned Parenthood organization. The other was a woman named Mary Dent Crisp, who had been co-chair of the Republican National Committee and was so upset with the Reagan nomination and our taking ERA out of the platform in Detroit in 1980, that she held a news conference, cried real tears and said she was leaving the Republican Party. She went out and supported the third party candidate, John Anderson, in an attempt to beat Reagan, which fortunately failed.

Okay, in 1990 she's back, announcing she's going to leave the party again, and wanted to take the pro-life plank out of the platform. Now you might say these two women were not particularly important, but they had the media with them and that was a powerful force. They were able to raise a lot of money. So I organized Republican National Coalition for Life, as an organization specifically missioned to keep the pro-life plank in the Republican platform. We did all kinds of things, like getting public officials to sign our petitions, fixing up a box of petitions for every one of the fifty states, making a splash, getting state Republican conventions to pass resolutions, building up toward the 1992 Republican convention in Houston. It was a knock-down, drag-out fight. We had a lot of people against us and we won; we kept it as it is. That type of fight continued through the Republican conventions of 1996 in San Diego, 2000 in Philadelphia, 2004 in New York. Finally, by the time we got to St. Paul, Minnesota in 2008, we had really established the Republican Party as a pro-life party, and we didn't have a lot of trouble.

DePue: But a lot of that is somewhat irrelevant if the candidate himself isn't pro-life.

Schlafly: No it's not irrelevant. The platform is the statement of what the party stands for. Now, we had a lot of trouble with Bob Dole in '96, in San Diego; he tried to get us to change it and we refused. We had the vote of the subcommittee and then the vote of the Platform Committee, and then the vote of the whole convention and they rejected it. He then announced he wasn't going to pay any attention to it and he lost.

DePue: You've already indicated that as far as George Bush was concerned, you were no enthusiastic supporter. He was not the conservative that Reagan was; he was not the conservative that you were looking for. But once the convention nominated him—of course by that time with the primaries it's a locked-in deal—were you able to support his run for president?

Schlafly: Sure, I'm a Republican. I certainly supported George Bush.

DePue: What did you think about Ross Perot's campaign?

Schlafly: Well it didn't attract me at all. I do not believe in third parties, I think they're dead-end roads and I discourage people from joining them.

DePue: Any final comments on what we've been talking about today then?

Schlafly: I have played a significant role in the platform fight in most of the Republican conventions. I think platforms are important. It's sort of like the flag; it's what you hold up for something you believe in. I think my work has made the Republican Party pro-life. It didn't start out that way. Under Nixon it was not pro-life and little by little, we've made it pro-life. I'm very proud that in the 2010 elections, nearly every Republican who was elected is pro-life, including the women. That is an extraordinary change and I think it's good for our country and good for the party.

DePue: Okay. I think that's a great way to finish today. We've got just short of twenty years more to talk about tomorrow. Thank you much, Mrs. Schlafly.

Schlafly: All right.

(end of interview #6 #7 continues)

Interview with Phyllis Schlafly

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Interview # 7: March 30, 2011

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, March 30, 2011. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here today in Clayton, Missouri with Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly. Good morning.

Schlafly: Good morning. Happy to see you again.

DePue: I think, Mrs. Schlafly, this will be our last session. We've had a lot of very interesting and stimulating conversation, but we're going to try to wrap things up today. I think it's appropriate, since you have lived your entire career in the public eye and have had opportunities to express your opinions and views on practically everything in modern political discourse for the United States, that we touch a lot of those things as we finish up this series of interviews.

Yesterday, we got through the George H. W. Bush administration and I think we got Bill Clinton elected. So I'm going to start with some of your views on the Bill Clinton Administration. Let's start with some of his economic proposals, specifically the healthcare initiative.

Schlafly: The Clinton—or shall we say the Hillary healthcare plan—was a big issue during the Clinton Administration. Eagle Forum took that on early, when some conservatives thought it wasn't a problem. We fought it all the way, every possible way. We felt it was a great victory when we stopped getting it passed through Congress.

DePue: Did you have any alternative proposals to what became known as "Hillary Care?"

Schlafly: Well, we don't believe that healthcare should be a government job. Everything the government gets into costs more. The idea that it's going to cost less if the government does it, is just nuts. It never is true. We didn't think the Hillary plan was good for the country or good for individuals. In fact, I made a little mockup of the individual identification card that she was touting and passed it around for people to know how their whole medical history would be put on computers and under the control of the government. We felt it was a great victory when we defeated Hillary healthcare.

DePue: I notice how quickly you brought up Hillary Clinton's name.

- Schlafly: Well, it was really her plan. She was the head of that Clinton administration initiative. She kind of staked her career and her reputation on it; she made a good target for us to go after.
- DePue: Let's turn our attention then, to foreign policy issues during the Clinton administration. A couple of these are a continuation of things that, at the end of the Bush Administration, were coming to the forefront. I think yesterday you talked about your concern about this concept of the New World Order; let's start with that. I'll give you a chance to reiterate what your disagreement with that concept is.
- Schlafly: The first George Bush used the expression "New World Order" repeatedly. It was in many speeches. The staff even kind of laughed about it around the White House, because it was used so often. However, he never defined it. When Clinton got into the White House, he undertook to define it and tell us what it meant. Basically, it was making ourselves subject to a lot of United Nations treaties. It was an internationalist viewpoint, which I think Bush shared, except that he never defined it when he was in office. Clinton was only too happy to define it. He thought that we should be subservient to the United Nations. He had his own war that he got us into. I'm not sure we were backing the right side in that war. I think the expression New World Order is certainly the viewpoint of anybody who would be in the internationalist wing of politics.
- DePue: I assume that when you're talking about Clinton's own war, you're referring to Bosnia in 1996. Is that correct?
- Schlafly: Yes.
- DePue: What was your objection, in particular, to his decision to commit troops to Bosnia?
- Schlafly: Well, I don't think we should be involved in those foreign wars. Foreigners are fighting all the time. They change their governments by means of revolution instead of elections. I do not think we are capable of setting them up with any kind of democratic type of government. I thought it was an extravagant waste of our money and manpower.
- DePue: Under what terms and conditions would you think it's appropriate to commit American soldiers?
- Schlafly: If our national security is threatened.
- DePue: You saw nothing of that in Bosnia?
- Schlafly: That's right.

- DePue: Part of that was an appeal from the United Nations and also, I think more particularly from NATO [North American Treaty Organization], that we get involved. We've always had a leadership role in NATO. Did you think it's appropriate that we respond to UN's or in particular, NATO's request?
- Schlafly: Well so what? Yes we have leadership, but that doesn't mean we do what they say. Leadership would mean they should do what we say.
- DePue: And in your position, we had no business in Bosnia?
- Schlafly: That's right.
- DePue: You mentioned that you weren't even sure we were on the right side of that.
- Schlafly: We were backing the Muslims against the Christians.
- DePue: Does that mean that we should have been backing the Christians instead of the Muslims?
- Schlafly: Well, I'm not ready to re-fight that war, but I don't think it got us anywhere.
- DePue: We'll be picking up the issue of radical Islam and Muslims a little bit later. Let's turn to World Trade Organization as another perhaps manifestation of this New World Order.
- Schlafly: Bill Clinton conspired with Newt Gingrich to put our joining of the World Trade Organization through Congress in a lame duck session. It was of course, a treaty, but it did not comply with the treaty provision of the U.S. Constitution. In fact, Council on Foreign Relations documents show that the provision of our Constitution they hate the most is the treaty provision that requires a two-thirds vote in the Senate. They've tried to get around that several times by having what's really a treaty pass by a simple majority in both Houses. They did that with NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] and they did it with the World Trade Organization. The World Trade Organization means you've got a bunch of bureaucrats over in Europe who can presume to decide some of our trade policies and actions. I think they ruled against the United States something like twenty-five out of twenty-eight times, so they're no friends of ours. There's no appeal from it, they meet in secret, and I don't think we should belong to it.
- DePue: You mentioned NAFTA, North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, and Newt Gingrich. A couple of these things were very much championed by conservatives: the notion that there shouldn't be high tariffs that restrict trade across international boundaries. How would you feel about that?
- Schlafly: That wasn't accomplished by the World Trade Organization. That was these individual treaties that were negotiated by our trade representatives. I feel that policy has been responsible for transferring millions of good, well-paying

American jobs over to Asia, which has been a disaster for our economy, a disaster for individual families. It tended to wipe out the role of the full-time homemaker, because when a blue collar guy, who has been making fifty thousand dollars a year, has to take some menial job paying twenty thousand a year, he can't afford a full-time homemaker any more. So I think the free trade advocates have done a lot of damage to our country. There's nothing free or fair about the system. What the foreign countries do is: as they have lowered their tariffs to comply with the trade agreement, they have simply raised their VAT, their value added tax, about the same amount that the tariff used to be. Now the value added tax is a tax that Americans have to pay when they ship and try to sell goods in a foreign country. When the plants in the foreign country want to export to the U.S., their government reimburses them for the taxes they've paid. It's an extremely unfair system that is very hurtful to the United States. I think it's just a racket to call it free trade, because the foreigners have all replaced their tariffs with the VAT, whereas we have just let their products in to uncut what we're producing in the United States. This system has kind of destroyed our manufacturing system, and you see a lot of the evidence now.

Our government is trying to take away from us the Edison light bulb, one of the greatest inventions of all time. General Electric has closed its last plant and laid off all of its two hundred people in this last plant, which was in Virginia, and moved the production of these new, curly bulbs to China, which are more expensive, more dangerous, and will come in without any tariff. It's not what the American people want. We like the light bulbs we have.

DePue: Well that gets into a couple of other issues, but one of the critiques of the supporters of this—and most of them seem to be on the side of free trade, is that it makes goods in the United States cheaper for the entire populace, that it controls inflation if you will.

Schlafly: Well, if you haven't got a job it doesn't really matter does it? We've lost millions of good jobs. Now, we find, with the tsunami in Japan, Japan was making many of the parts for automobiles; now the automobile companies can't get their parts.

DePue: A lot of the discussion today about this issue is concern about our imbalance of trade with countries like China, where we are spending so much more money in this equation than they are in terms of what they're purchasing of our products. Is that part of your concern as well?

Schlafly: Well yes. All the money that people spend on cheap Chinese goods is going right into military weapons to threaten our country. That's where China is spending all the money they're making off of selling us their cheap products. I just do not think Americans should be required to compete with Asians who are willing to work for thirty cents an hour and no benefits.

- DePue: How about this criticism about China and the control of their currency, as another way of undercutting American products.
- Schlafly: It is another way of undercutting us, that's true, but it is a small part of the labor costs. The labor costs are just so incredibly small in China, that the currency might be 5 percent of the problem.
- DePue: Were these things criticisms that appeared in the Schlafly Reports that were coming out on a regular basis?
- Schlafly: Somewhat. Not a whole lot, because I had too many other issues to talk about. I have been critical all along of sending our jobs overseas. I think it's a great mistake. When we got into World War II, the reason we were able to gear-up and be the industry for the whole free world, was that we had everything to make all of the weapons. They could almost overnight, convert from making automobiles to making the big vehicles and weapons we needed to fight World War II. We can't do that any more.
- DePue: Was much of your focus in the Schlafly Report still on social issues, through the eighties and early nineties?
- Schlafly: My report certainly was not confined to social issues. I did a lot of writing about national defense and politics.
- DePue: This brings us to a subject I know is a little bit more painful for you. In September of 1992, your enemies on the left certainly did not go away. Your son John is outed as a homosexual in *Queer Week* magazine. What was your reaction to that happening?
- Schlafly: Well these were the people who said they never outed anybody, and they tried to make an issue about John. As you know, the consistent policy of the people who don't like me has been to attack me. He doesn't have any enemies. The whole purpose was to attack me, and the press made a big thing of it. Then it blew over. I'm not completely convinced that he is a homosexual.
- DePue: What has he told you in that respect?
- Schlafly: It's just not something that we discuss.
- DePue: What was the reaction of Fred [Schlafly, her husband] and the rest of the children, to this happening?
- Schlafly: I believe Fred was passed away before this happened. He died in 1993 and I believe he had passed away when this came out. He never knew that.
- DePue: How about the rest of your children?

- Schlafly: It just really wasn't a big topic with us. We all love John. John works for me. He supports everything that I do. He supports all of my campaigning and writing about traditional marriage. All my friends like him very much; they call on him for all kinds of advice. John is both a lawyer and an accountant, and my eagles across the country have discovered that they can call him for all sorts of sound advice about dealing with money and regulations and government problems. This is only a thing with the left that likes to attack me.
- DePue: One of the specific charges, this gave them another opportunity to cry hypocrisy on your part. Here you've been supportive of the family and you've been critical of homosexual issues and especially things like gay marriage and yet, your own son is...
- Schlafly: Well, he's not supporting gay marriage. I don't see any hypocrisy at all. My views are extremely well-known. I'm a big supporter of traditional marriage and in particular of DOMA, the Defense of Marriage Act, which was overwhelmingly passed in 1996, even signed by Bill Clinton. John has supported me in every political stand that I have made.
- DePue: You just mentioned the death of Fred. Was that something that surprised you at the time?
- Schlafly: No, no, no. It had been coming for years. As a matter of fact, he didn't know me for the last couple of years of his life.
- DePue: Was that dementia or Alzheimer's?
- Schlafly: Probably. Don't know exactly.
- DePue: What were the doctors telling you, the diagnosis for his disease or his condition?
- Schlafly: Unclear. I did make a deal with Washington University to donate his brain for their Alzheimer's project down there. When they finally issued a report, it was incomprehensible. They had some other long name for it that I didn't recognize, something related to Alzheimer's I suppose.
- DePue: How difficult was that for you to deal with?
- Schlafly: Well, I kept him at home. He was at home until he died; he died at home.
- DePue: Did you find it painful that the man you had fallen in love with and lived for so much of your life with was...
- Schlafly: Yes, because he never did anything unhealthy in his whole life. He was a strong, athletic man. Of course it had all started with arthritis of the hip. He had three hip replacements. They were really not successful; they handicapped him and they were quite painful. So yes, it was difficult.

- DePue: Did that distract you or slow down your work at the time?
- Schlafly: Well I can remember that it was around 1990 that he said, “Phyllis, you’ve got another good ten years; make the most of them.” So now it’s over twenty years since he said that.
- DePue: Well that brings me to another question I wanted to ask you. At the time of his death, you’re close to seventy. Any thoughts of retirement?
- Schlafly: No. What would I do with my life? I’ve built up a great organization and it’s had reliable, keep-the-faith leadership. We haven’t had any personnel problems like many other organizations have. I hadn’t done any dumb things that embarrass the organization. I’m looking for a replacement now.
- DePue: A replacement for yourself?
- Schlafly: Yeah.
- DePue: Does that mean you’re thinking about retiring now?
- Schlafly: No it doesn’t, but I assume I’m going to die some time.
- DePue: But at eighty-six—is that your age today?
- Schlafly: Yeah, eighty-six.
- DePue: You still seem to be going very strong.
- Schlafly: Well, I was giving a speech at Berkeley a couple of years ago. I fell off the platform and my hip was broken; I spent a month in hospital and rehab in Berkeley, California. I’m recently recovered from that.
- DePue: Berkeley. That doesn’t seem to be the most friendly venue for you to travel to.
- Schlafly: Oh, well, I’ve faced all kinds of unfriendly college crowds. That’s no problem. I enjoy them.
- DePue: Anything in particular in terms of your treatment when you go to these unfriendly venues?
- Schlafly: Well in the seventies and eighties, they could have been very ugly. I have a speech I give sometime, “Is it Safe to Send Your Child to College?” in which I tell about a lot of the really unpleasant experiences I had at colleges. But they’re reasonably polite now. They were polite that night. The students don’t do really ugly things now. The worst thing they do is to get all the women’s studies department out. I always invite them, and they think up all the tough questions they can think of and come and ask them. Of course I think they make no sense at all; they put out a lot of nonsense. We have a good time

when I go to the colleges. I've been to well over four hundred, five hundred probably, of the college campuses.

DePue: What are some of the tough questions they try to throw at you? Can you think of any in particular?

Schlafly: Well there are no tough questions. They really can't think up any questions that somebody hasn't already asked, but some of the ugly things that they do... We've had the bomb threats, so that we had to move the location. One college lighted up marijuana in protest of my coming. I guess the worst was when I went to the University of Wisconsin in Madison. The university was so apprehensive about my coming that they assigned an armed guard to meet me at the plane and stay with me the whole time, and check me in a motel under an alias and had twenty-two security people on duty the night I spoke. Now with all that, nothing happened. I think I was, at that point, the only conservative speaker who had ever visited that campus.

DePue: Do you remember the year for that?

Schlafly: Well, it was while Donna Shalala³⁶ was the college president. I can't put the year on it now.

DePue: This is about the same time—I think 1993, you can correct me if I'm wrong here—that the Eagle Forum moved to this location?

Schlafly: I bought this building in 1993, yes.

DePue: What was the reasoning behind the move and what was the goal you had when you made the move?

Schlafly: Well, I had been looking for a permanent headquarters for several years. I had thought of putting it in Dallas and made a couple of trips there. I looked at many properties and then we found this one. When we saw it had a flagpole on the corner with an eagle on top, I knew it was destined for me.

DePue: Any particular change in mission for the Eagle Forum at that time?

Schlafly: No, no change in mission. You see, '93 was the year my husband died and I decided to move out of my big house on the bluffs of the Mississippi. I just didn't want to keep this enormous house any more.

DePue: That was still in Alton?

Schlafly: Ah-huh. A beautiful house on the bluffs of the Mississippi. So when I moved out, it took me a year to dig my way out of my house. There were some

³⁶ Donna Shalala was Secretary of Health and Human Services during President Clinton's entire administration, with several other academic connections as well.

closets I hadn't been in, in twenty-five years. I think about a fourth came to my new house in St. Louis, and about a fourth of my things went to my children and a fourth came here to the Center, including my dining room table—which we're sitting at right now—which was too big for the house I moved into. My square piano—do you know what square pianos are? They were made about 1850 and they're not square, they're rectangular. My children didn't want it, so I took the music off the top and put a granite slab on, and it is the most beautiful desk I ever saw. It's got mahogany legs and it's gorgeous. My library of about five thousand books, my video collection, about a thousand videos, the old VHSs, and forty-three filing cabinets, all came to this location, so we have an extraordinary set of archives. The other fourth went to trash. (laughter)

DePue: Moving is never a fun thing to do.

Schlafly: No. I hope I never have to do it again.

DePue: When you go to the Internet, this is always identified as the education center. Was there a more explicit emphasis on education when you moved to this location?

Schlafly: Well, before I moved here, everything came out of my house and it was all mixed in together. This was bought by the education fund, which I started, the C-3, in 1981. That's one of the values of my son John; he's very scrupulous about making sure things get paid by the right account. So this is the Education Center. Then I've had a small but very nice and well-positioned office in Washington, D.C., ever since [Ronald] Reagan went to Washington in 1981. When we moved here, I had a little loyal staff of about four people, who had no interest in moving to St. Louis, so I rented some office space in Alton, and that is where they work. They think they do all the important work and we're just for show in this pretty building.

DePue: But you continue to employ four people over in Alton?

Schlafly: Yeah. I have four people there and four people here and two people in Washington.

DePue: The four people in Alton versus the four people here: what's the difference in roles that they play?

Schlafly: Well this is strictly the education arm. The education arm does a lot of work. For example, we publish the *Education Reporter*. I do two series of radio programs, both the daily three-minute commentaries which I've been doing now for about twenty-eight years, and the Saturday talk show, which I've been doing—I don't know, maybe twenty years—I can't remember how long. The monitoring of the National Education Association, conferences that we've put on or participated in, some seminars we've held here. So there's all kind of educational work that is based in this building.

DePue: Do you actually record your radio programs here?

Schlafly: No I don't. I use the facilities of a local station, which is about—I don't know—a couple of miles from here.

DePue: What time of the day do you record those?

Schlafly: Well the dailies, which are three minutes a day, five days a week, so the number for the months vary from twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two or twenty-three, and I do them once a month. I go to a local recording studio about a couple of miles away from here. Then the Saturday program is based at KSIV, which is a couple miles from here, and that's done live, in that local studio.

DePue: But you're recording these three-minute spots all at the same time.

Schlafly: A month at a time.

DePue: Wow.

Schlafly: And then we make them available on a CD.

DePue: What's the planning process in determining what each one of these three-minute sessions is going to be addressing?

Schlafly: I just have to write twenty-plus three-minute commentaries every month and get them all ready for the day I record.

DePue: That's an awful lot of work then?

Schlafly: Yeah, well I regurgitate a lot of the material I use in my columns, because I write a weekly newspaper column that's put out by Creator Syndicate, from the *Education Reporter*, and then from the daily news.

DePue: Well that would be something that would tire somebody who is fifty or sixty years old, let alone somebody who is eighty-six, I would think.

Schlafly: I work hard at what I write. I'm a kind of person who writes and rewrites and polishes and goes over, and makes it as perfect as I can.

DePue: Tell us a little bit about what the two people in Washington, D.C. do.

Schlafly: They monitor what's going on in Congress. Their function is to make the Congressmen think I'm in Washington. I'm not, I'm in St. Louis, but they are our presence in Washington. One of them is in charge of putting out the alerts that we put out. We have an alert system to advise our members when Congress is going to have a crucial vote, tell them some talking points about it, what to say. It's a sophisticated, modern system that enables them to check right into their own Congressman's office. The other one does a lot of

networking with other organizations. There are a lot of other conservative organizations in Washington; they're having meetings all the time and she networks with them. I think before the last election, she interviewed two hundred candidates, to size them up and decide who we like and who we don't like.

DePue: Congressional Senate candidates?

Schlafly: Yeah, ah-huh.

DePue: The names of the two people you've got in D.C.?

Schlafly: Colleen Holmes is the one in charge. We just had a replacement for number two; it's now Glyn, G-l-y-n, Wright, usual spelling.

DePue: Are they both registered lobbyists?

Schlafly: No, they are not registered lobbyists.

DePue: Any thought ever, of doing some lobbying for all of these issues that you're concerned about?

Schlafly: We make the information available, so we get their constituents to do their own lobbying.

DePue: Well let's go back. You mentioned Newt Gingrich and 1994. That's an important off-year election because of the outcome of it. I guess the consensus is, from historians, that the American public was so upset about the "Hillary Care" as you've called it, that it was a huge year for the Republicans in the off-year election, and they won both the House and the Senate. Republicans controlled the Senate for some time before that, but this was the first time in thirty or forty years.

Schlafly: Since 1946 I think.

DePue: Reflect on the role of Newt Gingrich and just the victory that year.

Schlafly: Well, Newt Gingrich played a major role, maybe the major role. What he did really, was to nationalize the election. It was not a national election, it was a congressional election. You know the famous line that all politics is local. What he did was having them all stand on the steps of the Capitol, talking about his "Contract with America." The effect of that was, he nationalized the election and the people came out and voted Republican, like they did in 1946.

DePue: Did you have any heightened expectations because finally, both Houses of the Legislature were controlled by the Republicans?

- Schlafly: Yes, indeed we did. We hoped for a lot of things. That was the Congress that tried to reform welfare, which was a tremendous boondoggle, and spending program that did a lot of damage. They did pass a pretty good welfare reform.
- DePue: Part of that is the positioning of Bill Clinton himself as something of a moderate, or working with the Republicans in Congress to pass welfare reform and a couple of other issues.
- Schlafly: Well, Clinton was a smart politician. I think he either vetoed or rejected welfare two or three times and then finally signed it. He also signed the Defense of Marriage Act in '96.
- DePue: Which I believe happened after—and you can correct me if I'm wrong here—after Massachusetts Supreme Court had determined that the prohibition against gay marriage in Massachusetts was unconstitutional.
- Schlafly: Yeah. Well I've forgotten the exact date of that event, but certainly Massachusetts was on the mind of people, because DOMA had two provisions. One was that marriage would be the union of a man and a woman under Federal Law; the General Accounting Office identified over a thousand Federal Laws that depend on that definition. But DOMA also had a second section, which basically said that if Massachusetts jumps off the cliff, the other states don't have to recognize it, despite the faith section of the Constitution.
- DePue: Okay. Nineteen ninety-four I believe, is also the year you came out with *First Reader*; something of a difference in terms of your publications at that time.
- Schlafly: This has been a big issue with me all my life. Probably the book that had the biggest influence on me was Rudolf Flesch's great book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, which came out in 1955, in which he showed how stupid the schools were in not teaching the children how to read by phonics. He was an Austrian immigrant who had studied the English language to come to the United States, and he knew what was wrong with the teaching. That book was serialized in the local St. Louis newspaper, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. I read it, and that happened to be the very year that my oldest child was ready for school. Have we discussed this before?
- DePue: Yes, we did discuss the—
- Schlafly: Okay. Well, the books that he recommended that I used with all my children—the Hay-Wingo Reading with Phonics—were out of print when my grandchildren came along. When the grandchildren started arriving, they were not available any more. The education establishment was simply determined to wipe phonics out of education. In fact, I saw some article that some liberals wrote, that they really thought phonics was a right-wing plot. So then I thought, well, I have to write my own. So that's why I wrote *First Reader*, then I published it and sold quite a lot. Everybody who has used it has been

happy with it. Really, everywhere I go, there's at least one person who comes up and says, "I taught my children to read with your *First Reader*."

DePue: Along the same theme then—this is several years later, I believe 2001—you published *Turbo Reader*.

Schlafly: Well, the reason for that is, there were just so many children whom we heard from, or heard from their parents, who hadn't been taught to read in the first grade; now they're in the fourth or fifth grade. They can't read, because they've never been taught how to sound-out the syllables and put them together to make bigger words. I found that *First Reader* didn't really suit their needs, because the illustrations were designed for the five year-old; it was a little bit of a put-down to the fourth or fifth grader to see these kiddie pictures and to read from a book that said *First Reader*. So *Turbo Reader* is essentially the same book, but it has completely different illustrations; a few minor improvements, but the English language is the English language.

DePue: Was that also well received?

Schlafly: Yes, it was well received. We've sold lots of them. That's what I tell people, "How old is your child?" If your child is four, five or six years or even seven years old, I'd give him *First Reader*. If he's older than that, I'd buy *Turbo Reader*.

DePue: Your early books—especially *A Choice Not an Echo*, but others as well—you deliberately priced very low so they would get the widest readership. Did you see these two books as a little bit more an opportunity to make some money?

Schlafly: Well, I'll tell you why I can't make money on it. The whole retail business is based on subsequent sales. If you use my *First Reader* or *Turbo Reader*, you don't need a second reader. You can go to the library and read anything you want. So I have no second reader to sell; it's pointless. I've completely taught you how to read with these books. So I don't have repeat sales. There's nothing more to sell. Go to the library and find some good books.

DePue: (laughs) Where was the money coming from to support the Eagle Forum then, and the Eagle Centers?

Schlafly: The Eagle Forum is based on memberships and contributions of its members, completely. We don't get any government money and we don't get any big foundation money.

DePue: Have you ever sought grants?

Schlafly: We have, and I've been a big failure at that. I've gotten a few. I used to get a grant every year from the John M. Olin foundation because he was a friend of mine, but that's closed now. He was a smart guy. He fixed it so that they

would spend all the money while it was still in control of the people he knew, and go out of business and not be around for the liberals to take over.

DePue: (laughs) Are you suggesting that some of these other foundations, they have—

Schlafly: Oh sure, the Rockefeller and the Ford Foundation are national scandals.

DePue: That takes us back into politics, so let's dive in there and ask about one of your great avocations over your life, the 1996 Republican Convention and the lead up to that.

Schlafly: Republican National Conventions have been one of my major hobbies. I find them very exciting. I've now been to fifteen of them. The first one was in 1952. I have been a delegate or an alternate at most of them. When I moved out of Illinois after my husband passed away, and to Missouri, people said, Oh Phyllis can't be a delegate any more. But I've been three times elected a delegate from Missouri. I find them exciting, and I have had probably the biggest and best social event during convention week that has taken place, every one, going back, I think to '64. In more recent years, instead of calling them Eagle Forum, we've done them under the name of Republican National Coalition for Life, and made them a pro-life event.

In 1990, when there was an organized, well-financed, media-supported campaign to take the pro-life plank out of the platform, then I have made my parties centered around the pro-life issue, because I believe that standing for pro-life has got to be an essential part of the conservative movement and the Republican Party. Now, you're asking specifically about the '96 convention that was in San Diego. I was a Buchanan delegate from Missouri. Missouri was his best state.

DePue: Why Buchanan? Pat Buchanan this is.

Schlafly: Pat Buchanan, yes. Well, he expressed the best views that I thought were available at the time.

DePue: And that included his position on World Trade Organization, NAFTA, those issues?

Schlafly: Yes, sure. I liked all of his positions.

DePue: What concerned you about Bob Dole as a candidate?

Schlafly: Bob Dole was not an attractive candidate. He was really kind of a disagreeable person and he didn't like our pro-life activity. He was among those who were trying to get the pro-life plank changed and to substitute some vague words about tolerance and unity. He got the nomination because he was the next in line. I told you the Republicans seem to believe in primogeniture and they

tend to nominate the next one in line. So he got the nomination. Then he ran a poor campaign and lost.

DePue: Anything particular you remember about the convention itself, because you already mentioned you're a Buchanan delegate. Obviously, because of the primary system, it's already determined that Dole is the party candidate going into the convention.

Schlafly: Well, when I publish my revision of *A Choice, Not an Echo*, you'll get my full account of that, but there were a lot of crooked things that were done by the chair at that convention.

DePue: Who was the chair?

Schlafly: Oh, I don't know, but whoever was wielding the gavel, the party establishment. They did all they could to be nasty to the Buchanan delegates. They didn't want to count them. You'll find that they never gave a count of how people voted. They had big thugs walking up and down the aisle, so we couldn't walk around and compare notes with other delegations. They had loud, obnoxious music playing most of the time, so you couldn't hear yourself think. It was kind of almost run like a military room, where they told you when to stand up and when to cheer and when to do this and when to do that.

This is one of the experiences that have convinced me that these people who think they want a new constitutional convention today, as allowed in Article V, are just nuts. I've seen every crooked thing that's ever possible at these conventions, and whoever is banging the gavel can control it. These people who think they can pass some rules in state legislatures which would control a national convention, just don't know what politics is all about.

DePue: You had started your writing career with the '64 convention, talking about Barry Goldwater as the first true conservative candidate. I'm assuming you didn't see Bob Dole anything like a true conservative candidate. Is that correct?

Schlafly: That's right.

DePue: How disappointing is it to you then, that after the Reagan years, you've got George Bush, who is a moderate certainly and probably self-proclaimed moderate Republican, and then you've got Bob Dole. How disappointing is that trend to you at the time.

Schlafly: Well, it just raises the challenge, we have to retake the Republican party for conservatives. We did it before; we can do it again.

DePue: When you say we, who do you mean?

- Schlafly: The conservatives, the conservative movement. The people who believe in real conservative principles.
- DePue: Let's jump forward to the 2000 convention, and the lead up to that, because it's much more a lively primary campaign that year.
- Schlafly: (pause) I'm trying to think of who was running. We've got George Bush the second. Who else was running?
- DePue: I believe Buchanan was running again, but you put me on the spot as well.
- Schlafly: The 2000 Republican National Convention was in Philadelphia.
- DePue: Phil Gramm was one of the candidates early on.
- Schlafly: Oh, I think I endorsed Phil Gramm. I can't remember. There was one time when I endorsed Phil Gramm. There was another time when I endorsed Steve Forbes. I remember trampling all over the agricultural fields in Iowa for Steve Forbes.
- DePue: John McCain, I believe also was a candidate that year.
- Schlafly: Well anyway, George W. Bush got it. The convention was in Philadelphia. We had our pro-life event and the disagreeable feminists were all standing outside with a big picket line, but we succeeded with what we set out to do.
- DePue: The disagreeable feminists. What was their concern that year?
- Schlafly: They wanted to get the pro-life plank out. Most of the feminists consider support of abortion a litmus test. We had our party at the Philadelphia Union League Club and they were marching up and down outside, but that didn't destroy our fun.
- DePue: Where was George Bush on that issue?
- Schlafly: George Bush always said he was pro-life. He was acceptable.
- DePue: And you believed him in that respect?
- Schlafly: Yes. I have no reason not to believe him on that. He was a New World Order type; he was an internationalist. But I don't have any problem with him on the pro-life issue.
- DePue: What did you think about his emphasis on this thing he called the compassionate conservative?
- Schlafly: Well we now know that his speechwriter was not a conservative at all. After Michael Gerson left George Bush, I think he went to work for the *Washington Post*, and he writes for other liberal outlets. I think he invented that phrase and

he put a lot of words in George W. Bush's mouth. If you follow the subsequent writings of Michael Gerson, you cannot say he's a conservative.

DePue: The election comes and of course right after the election, you've got this long recount going on in Florida. Your thoughts about that. Of course, Bush was running against Al Gore.

Schlafly: We all hung in anticipation for weeks, but it worked out all right.

I am convinced that there are all kinds of frauds in the whole election system, and it needs to be cleaned up. I think after it was all over and all decided, somebody discovered there were five hundred people who voted both in New York and Florida. There was difficulty with the military ballots not getting counted at all. There were all kinds of problems, but fortunately we lucked out.

DePue: The liberal challenge in that election was—they would basically agree with you—there were all kinds of frauds and inconsistencies and irregularities that go on in these elections, that traditionally undercount the liberal vote or the democratic vote.

Schlafly: It over-counts the liberal vote. We now know all the shenanigans of ACORN [Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now], and the crooked way they register people. Some of them have even been convicted.

DePue: I know that the role of the court system is one of your issues you've been concerned about for a long time. I want you to reflect on, first, the role that the Florida Supreme Court took in that, and then the role that the U.S. Supreme Court took.

Schlafly: I'm not ready to re-fight that battle. I think a lot of them did the best they could. Actually, I think it could have just constitutionally been turned over to the Florida Legislature and let them decide, because the Florida Legislature was a Republican body and they could have made the decision. It's not wholly clear how it got into the courts but nevertheless, it seemed to work out okay.

DePue: George Bush wasn't in office too terribly long when the defining moment of his presidency occurred, and that's obviously 9-11, September 11, 2001. Do you remember that?

Schlafly: Oh yes, of course we remember.

DePue: What was your immediate reaction?

Schlafly: Shock.

DePue: When you saw the first airplane, were you thinking much about the implications?

Schlafly: Well no. I may not have seen it until the end of the day, when we could see all the pictures, but the American people were just simply shocked by it.

DePue: What was your thought about the enemy that we faced at that time?

Schlafly: Well, it was a Muslim attack. It was one of a long series of Muslim attacks on Americans.

DePue: Again, going back to the early part of your own personal career, you had put your mark on the wall initially because of fear of communism, stressing the nuclear defense national strategy issues. Of course, communism becomes unraveled in most countries of the world in late 1980s, early 1990s. Were you as concerned about the threat of radical Islam and terrorism, leading up to the events of 9-11?

Schlafly: The other attacks—I think there were about eight before then—were isolated attacks in different parts of the country. I didn't know. I'm no expert on the Middle East and the Muslims, and we just didn't know. I thought it was a terrible thing. The American people never thought that it could be possible that a commercial plane could be used as a weapon like that, to fly into the Towers, but we have smart people in the Defense Department who play war games all the time. I kind of don't understand why there wasn't some forewarning of that type of attack, after the other attacks had taken place.

Our rationale for opposing the Soviet Union was based on, they were somewhat reasonable people. They wouldn't do something to destroy their country—that was the theory of Mutually Assured Destruction. But the Muslims are different people. They train their people for suicide; suicide is their gate to heaven. So it's a different type of enemy. I kind of don't understand why the smart people who play these war games and play out scenarios of what could happen as they work to defend our country, didn't anticipate that.

DePue: A couple questions then, on the series of decisions that President Bush made in terms of fighting the "War on Terror." The first one: involvement in Afghanistan.

Schlafly: Well, we had reason to think that that's where the people were trained, and that was the locus of the conspiracy that devised this attack, because it certainly was a coordinated attack to bring down several attacks at the same time. So it had to be coordinated by somebody, and we had reason to think that the main place where that was located was Afghanistan. So there was reason for doing something about Afghanistan.

DePue: That leads inevitably, to the discussion about the decision to go into Iraq in 2003. There had been a long discussion, national debate, about that through the latter part of 2002, leading in to 2003.

Schlafly: There are a lot of things George Bush did I disagreed with, but I do think he was an honest man. I don't think there was anything devious about him. I think he was genuinely convinced that Iraq had these weapons of mass destruction. He's just not a devious type of person, to make that up, so I think he did what he thought was right. He does have this idea of nation building. When he was campaigning, he promised he would not engage in nation building, but he immediately tried that in Iraq, and I think it was a mistake. I don't think it's our job to try to impose democracy on other countries and if we do, we have no guarantee that the right people are going to win elections.

DePue: Does that mean that you were opposed, in 2003, to the invasion of Iraq, the occupation of Iraq?

Schlafly: The occupation, yes.

DePue: Would you have been in favor of eliminating, removing Saddam Hussein, and then letting the Iraqis sort it out from there?

Schlafly: Based on their genuine belief that he was building weapons that could hit the United States, yes.

DePue: I'm trying to recall the name of the legislation that became so controversial, that was passed immediately after 9-11, where the liberals were very vocal in their opposition after it was passed with wide majorities in both the Houses and the Senate, about restrictions on American liberties and some of the things it allowed Bush to do.

Schlafly: Are you talking about the Patriot Act?

DePue: The Patriot Act, yes.

Schlafly: Ooh. I don't think I want to discuss that. That was not something I wrote about.

DePue: I'm intrigued now. Is there a reason or just something that you weren't compelled to write about at the time?

Schlafly: I had too many other things to write about.

DePue: Okay. Another issue very much being discussed at the time was this notion of the Kyoto Protocol, tied to this concept that global warming was a serious threat and that we as a country needed to do something to try to minimize the impact of global warming. That was something that George Bush was not supportive of. What was your position on the Kyoto Protocol and on global warming in general.

Schlafly: Well I think it's all a big fraud. I certainly was not in favor of Al Gore signing some treaty in Japan that would bring more government control over how we

spend our money and live our lives. We just live in a world where a lot of people—I don't know if there are a lot, but there are powerful people—are so envious of Americans' high standard of living, that they want to cut us down and make us give our wealth to other countries. We do have a high standard of living. I think the private enterprise system, plus a lot of hard work, has earned that for us and we're entitled to use energy, to make a good life. I think most of the global warming propaganda that's put out is false, at least cannot be proven. I just don't think we have ability to control the climate. They can't even tell us if it's going to rain or snow tomorrow. How are they going to tell us what it's going to be like in fifty years?

DePue: Some of the right wing of the conservative movement would even suggest that this is just an opportunity to increasingly impose governmental control over every aspect of society, that with the death of communism you got the socialists moving into this arena instead.

Schlafly: Well I think that's true. I think the whole cap and trade bill that passed the House and did not pass the Senate, and was responsible for defeating a number of people who voted for it in the House last year, was an attempt for more government control of our lives. Just look at what they're doing to the light bulb. I think the light bulb is a good example of what it's all about. This is one of the greatest inventions in all history. We like our light bulbs, and they tell me, eventually we're all going to have to change all the lamps in our house in order to accommodate a new style bulb. I like the lamps I have. Why should some government bureaucrat tell me I have to use these Chinese made bulbs? Actually, I tried one and it burned out the fixture. There are all kinds of hazards with it and it's not made in this country and I mean the light bulb is a good example of the fraud of the whole plan.

DePue: Let's move on to the next publication, I believe it's the next one, 2003, *Feminist Fantasies* is published.

Schlafly: *Feminist Fantasies* is nearly a hundred of my essays on feminism, written over thirty years, including the one that started my work in that area, which was the February 1972 "Phyllis Schlafly Report" called, "What's Wrong with Equal Rights for Women?" But there are nearly a hundred essays, many of which were columns originally or parts of the Phyllis Schlafly Report. They're organized into different subject areas, so it's quite an interesting book.

DePue: Was this something that you wanted to do yourself, or somebody approached you and said, Let's do this?

Schlafly: I can't remember, but I did spend some time collecting what I thought were the best essays that were still relevant.

DePue: Do you recall how well received this was?

Schlafly: Collections of essays don't sell particularly well. I haven't had any particular criticism about it, but the book did not have a big sale. But I think it's an important piece of history because it covers a lot of the issues that this country debated between 1972 and the mid-nineties.

DePue: You've got a foreword written by Ann Coulter. Was that something that you reached out to Ann to write?

Schlafly: I did. I asked her to write it.

DePue: Ann Coulter is perhaps—well, she has the same kind of reputation today that you had in the 1970s. Most people aren't lukewarm about Ann Coulter; you either love her or you hate her. She seems to relish in poking the liberals right in their eye.

Schlafly: Well, she has a very different style and it's interesting. She's kind of a phrase maker. I think she has an important role to play and I like her. I like her as a person and find her writing delightful. It's not my style but it's her style.

DePue: I'm going to read a couple things.

Schlafly: In the small world department, I think she tells in that foreword, as we previously discussed, the thing that got me interested in the subject of feminism was a speech I was asked to come and give in Connecticut. It was based on the research I had to do for that speech—they picked the subject of the Equal Rights Amendment and feminism—then I launched a whole series of writings about that. But it turned out that her kid brother, who was then in high school, was part of that group at this local bookstore that invited me in, which I didn't know until Ann wrote the forward in the nineties.

DePue: Well that is a small world, isn't it?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: I want to read a couple of the critiques of *Feminist Fantasies*, because it certainly got attention in some circles. This one I got from the Internet. "brothersjudd.com" is the Internet site; I don't know much more about it than that.

Schlafly: I never heard of it.

DePue: Here's the review. "It's said that success has a hundred fathers while failure is an orphan. Certainly, the conservative revolution has its share of legitimate claimants to paternity, from Russell Kirk to William F. Buckley to Barry Goldwater to Ronald Reagan, with many others in between. But the triumph of modern conservatism has just one mother, Phyllis Schlafly. In fact, her significance goes far beyond the conservative moment, to American politics

generally, where it must be said, she is one of the two or three most consequential women in American history.”

Schlafly: Hmm. This is some unknown person who wrote that?

DePue: Well again, I got this from brothersjudd.com.

Schlafly: Never heard of him.

DePue: Rather a flattering statement, would you agree?

Schlafly: Yes, yes it is. George Gilder has said similar things. I think there’s no question that the Equal Rights Amendment would have passed and the feminist movement would have been nationally not challenged if I hadn’t taken it up. There are plenty of people who agreed with me, but any movement needs a leader and that was my function.

DePue: On the negative side—this is also I believe, from a blog site—in one of these exchanges of information going back and forth one of your detractors wrote, “Schlafly is the acid to many others’ base, and that is all. The most remarkable thing about her—and she is indeed remarkable—is that she does stand so alone, as you know. That does not have much to do with the failures of liberalism as you infer, but the unwillingness of conservatives to allow a woman to have any sort of real power.”

Schlafly: Well, I think that’s ridiculous. Of course this comes from somebody who thinks women are oppressed by the patriarchy and do not believe that women can succeed. It’s true that when I started opposing the Equal Rights Amendment, everybody was against me, including powerful Republicans such as Nixon and Ford and Betty Ford. I suppose there were some female politicians. I don’t know, but when I ran for office in 1952 and 1970, I had full support of the party. I really never had any opposition from the men in the conservative movement or the Republican Party, except the ones who had been misled into signing on to the Equal Rights Amendment when it was in its early stages and everybody just thought it was like giving a rah-rah-rah for the ladies.

DePue: She continues in following the same theme. “Schlafly’s fame comes from being a single woman buoyed up by a huge machine that continues to play her as, ‘But she’s a woman too’ card. Schlafly didn’t get her blessing until the good old boys were absolutely sure that she would not use her position to gain public ear, and then turn on her sponsors.”

Schlafly: That’s the conspiracy-minded left wing writing that. I don’t know what that means. I was friends with all the powerful people in the conservative movement and the Republican Party. I never heard anybody who voted for or against me because I was a woman.

DePue: What's your reaction then, when you hear the critiques of your role, that you were merely a reactionary, that you were responding to this inevitable change that was going on in society, and it was nothing more than a reaction against that change?

Schlafly: Well, I certainly was reacting to the feminists. I think they are a disaster. I think they have poisoned the society, led a lot of young women down a dead-end road. I think the one Harvard Professor who is a conservative, Harvey Mansfield, wrote in his book, *Manliness*, that the feminist movement is anti-men, anti-masculine, anti-marriage, anti-motherhood and anti-morality. In other words, it's nihilistic. Surely, I was reacting to that, because they had the control of the media. The feminists are still very dominant in the media and biasing the news that we get.

DePue: I was looking for another quote here.

Schlafly: Their continued dominance in the media and in academia is the reason why I wrote my latest book, *The Flipside of Feminism*, to tell young women how bad feminism is, and don't fall into that trap or you'll probably have an unhappy life. The surveys made by the liberals say that women are less happy today than they were in the 1950s.

DePue: I'm going to read another quote from the Brothers Judd review; this is kind of an analysis of the major themes that you put in *Feminist Fantasies*. "There is one unifying theme. Human nature is real and God-given and it endures despite the fevered dreams of the left that they can remake it."

Schlafly: Well that's true. Really, the feminist movement is at war with human nature. They teach, in the women's studies courses, that... You know, it's pretty funny. When I started out in the anti-ERA fight, their theory was that God goofed in making us of two different kinds, and they were out to remedy His mistake, or sometimes they said Her mistake. Now, the theory that's taught in most of the women's studies classes is that—well they don't talk about God—but the theory is that maybe we came out originally the same, and all these differences we think we see are just a social construct. They're induced on men and women, boys and girls, by their stereotyped upbringing, such as mothers giving dolls to girls and trucks to boys. When I lectured at Radcliffe a couple years ago, they had a dinner for me and for some of these feminist teachers, and I said, "Which one of these theories do you subscribe to? Because they're very contrary." They wouldn't answer me. But I know from other sources that they are teaching, generally, in the women's studies courses, that gender differences, sex differences, are a social construct and not natural. Now, that just means the whole feminist ideology is at war with human nature, because rational people understand that there are a lot of differences between men and women other than anatomical ones.

DePue: Let's move to the next publication. This is one we also talked about a little bit yesterday, *The Supremacists: The Tyranny of Judges and How to Stop It*. Why that book?

Schlafly: The Founding Fathers thought that the judiciary would be the weakest branch of government, because the Judges didn't have any guns and they didn't have any money. Now, one of the famous crooked deals of history was when the deal was made at the 1952 Republican convention to give the first opening on the Supreme Court to Governor Earl Warren of California, if he would deliver the California delegation to the RINOs [Republicans In Name Only]—we called them Rockefeller Republicans then—on the rules and credentials votes. He did, he got the job, and he set out to make the Supreme Court the most powerful branch of government. Nearly all the bad decisions that have happened since then follow from being started in the Warren Court. I mean the religion cases, the pornography cases, the immigration cases, the property rights cases, the criminal law cases, all of them. I have chapters on each one of these and show these bad decisions, as the Courts have tried to make the major decisions of our time. For example, right now the judges are trying to make the major decision as to what is the definition of marriage. They have no business making that decision. That's not a judicial question. That's a legislative question and a question for the people to decide and we've already decided it, and the Courts are trying to overturn that. That's an example of why I call them supremacists. They think they are supreme over the other branches of government and over the will of the people.

DePue: Well let's just quickly mention something that was right out of the headlines for yesterday. The U.S. Supreme Court is currently hearing a case. Several women, I think it's five or six women, who were employees of Wal-Mart, are claiming that Wal-Mart had systematically discriminated against them because they were women: prevented them from getting advancements, promotions. They were trying to make this into a class action lawsuit for all of the women who worked at Wal-Mart, so we're talking—

Schlafly: Millions.

DePue: A million and a half, is I think the number I heard yesterday. Your view on that particular case.

Schlafly: The Court ought to throw it out.

DePue: It gets right back into something you and I have talked about quite a bit already—you know, the story on the evening news last night right after that was that women only make seventy-one cents for every dollar that a man makes, on the average.

Schlafly: Well that's a lie. That's not true at all, because in that government statistic are people like me, who haven't had a salary since I got married in 1949.

Obviously, that's going to pull the average down for women who have been in the workforce.

DePue: The last chapter of your book, *The Supremacists*, is entitled "How to Stop Judicial Supremacists." Can you tell us in a thumbnail sketch what you laid out there?

Schlafly: Well the principal thing that I promote is the constitutional right of the Congress to define the jurisdiction of the Courts. Now Congress cannot decide how a Court will rule in a particular case, but the Constitution does not set up three co-equal branches; that is a great myth that is propagated. The Constitution gives Congress the power to decide what kinds of cases the Court can take. The Congress has done this many times in the past, but we're having a hard time getting Congress to withdraw jurisdiction over some of those areas where we don't trust them.

DePue: We don't trust "them," being the Courts?

Schlafly: The judges. We don't trust the judges. I would specifically mention cases involving the Pledge of Allegiance, the Ten Commandments, the Boy Scouts and the definition of marriage. We just plain don't trust them. Congress could very easily pass a law saying the judges can't take cases on those subjects. Congress has done this many times in the past, but now all the law schools and the lawyers are saying we have to have an independent Judiciary. Well what they mean by independent is independent of the Constitution.

Just to give you an example, a recent example. When Daschle was the Majority Leader in the Senate.

DePue: Tom Daschle?

Schlafly: Yes. He put through a law, which is the law today, that the courts have no jurisdiction to consider any cases that involve brush clearing in South Dakota. He didn't like what the environmental agency was trying to tell South Dakota to do, so that is the law. Congress can't take any of these EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] cases about brush clearing in South Dakota.

I'll give you another example. Congress passed a law to build a fence in San Diego, to keep the illegals from coming in. EPA harangued San Diego with lawsuits and litigation that went on for years. Finally, Congress passed a law saying the courts couldn't hear any more challenges to the fence in San Diego, so then they built the fence and that was the end of that. Of course the illegals are now coming into Arizona, but San Diego pretty much solved its problem, except for the tunnels.

DePue: Well that gets us to the question of immigration. That was another very hot issue during the Bush Administration, especially the last two or three years.

The concern was the flood of illegal immigrants. Your position on Bush's handling of that issue.

Schlafly: I wrote extensively on that and made speeches all over the country on that. Bush had the same position as Ted Kennedy and John McCain; he just wanted open borders.

DePue: Because?

Schlafly: I don't know, I'm not analyzing his motives. He just plain was in favor of open borders to let all the illegals in.

DePue: What would be the problem with doing that?

Schlafly: Well, there are probably ten million Mexicans who would like to come in, and I don't think we want to do that and I don't think we want to let people in who have no respect for our laws. I don't think we wanted him to do it, to give them amnesty under such euphemisms as legalization or path to citizenship, which are just code words for amnesty.

DePue: How about the whole issue of the anchor babies—the illegal immigrants that come here and then have children who automatically become American citizens.

Schlafly: That's a tremendous racket, bringing in pregnant women to have their babies here and then cash in on all our financial handouts, and then bring in all their relatives. I think Congress should pass a law to stop that. [Congressman] Steve King has one introduced on that.

DePue: But that was a decision of the Courts.

Schlafly: No, there's no decision of the Court on that. The Court has never dealt with that case. The people who are against stopping the racket of anchor babies rely on the Fourteenth Amendment.

DePue: Equal protection clause?

Schlafly: No. The Fourteenth Amendment, which says all persons born in the United States are citizens, but they forget about the next phrase which says: "...and subject to the jurisdiction thereof." Now the purpose of that phrase in the Constitution was to make sure that the blacks were citizens. The Fourteenth Amendment was passed what, around...

DePue: Eighteen sixty-six, somewhere around there, sixty-five maybe.

Schlafly: Yeah, and that was the purpose of that, to make sure that the blacks are citizens. The Supreme Court had previously said Blacks were not and could not be citizens. The amendment was to overrule that Supreme Court decision

and address that unfairness. But it is clear that they understood, and everybody understood, that it didn't mean that everybody who was born on our territory is a citizen, because it did not make the Indians citizens, and the Indians were obviously born on our soil. The Indians were not made citizens until about fifty years later—I think it was in the 1920s. So you have to be subject to the jurisdiction thereof, and the illegals are still Mexican citizens and they're not subject to the jurisdiction. I think a law by Congress can stop this racket—and it is a racket. There are people who set up moneymaking projects just to bring in pregnant women. They bring them in from Asia as well as from Mexico. They run billboards in Mexico: Come on in. We'll take care of everything for you. They have a racket of bringing in Asian women to have their babies here, and then they get all their expenses paid and all kind of financial handouts and Medicaid, and eventually they can bring in all their relatives.

DePue: Your positions on immigration make you subject to the allegations that you're a bigot, that you're racist.

Schlafly: I think as Ronald Reagan said, a country that doesn't have borders isn't a country. We have borders. We're entitled to say we're only going to let in people who abide by our laws.

DePue: One of the things we haven't talked much about in terms of all of the issues that we have, are issues dealing with civil rights and race. Your basic fundamental position on civil rights?

Schlafly: I think everybody ought to have all their full American rights. You're an American citizen, abide by our laws. I think if people are mistreated because of some irrelevant quality, that ought to be addressed. We have a whole department of government that's ready to file suit on your behalf if you're discriminated against in employment or other reasons.

DePue: How about the whole concept of affirmative action, to make right what had been wrong historically in American society in terms of race.

Schlafly: I think that's wrong, because the person who gets the benefit is not the person who was hurt. Just because somebody was mistreated a hundred years ago, doesn't mean somebody today should get the benefit.

DePue: Two thousand five. The next book, I believe, is *Judicial Tyranny: The New Kings of America*. Does that ring a bell or is that kind of a rehashing of *The Supremacists*?

Schlafly: That's not my book.

DePue: Okay, that is not.

Schlafly: I don't know what that is.

DePue: I wasn't sure about that one. Two-thousand five though, was the year that Don Critchlow came out with the book, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade*. Let's start with this question. Who is Donald Critchlow and why did you decide to cooperate with him in writing this book?

Schlafly: Donald Critchlow is a tenured history professor at St. Louis University. He came to me and said he would like cooperation to write a biography of me. I had learned from the previous biography, written by Carol Felsenthal, who did likewise, that I can't stop people from writing biographies about me; that's free press and all that. I decided to cooperate. He seemed like an honest man, and so I said I would cooperate and let him see a lot of my documents and archives. He spent five years on the book and turned out a very good book.

DePue: Did you have any idea at the time he first approached you, what his political leanings were?

Schlafly: Well I checked up on him and I wasn't wholly convinced that he was a conservative. I had some people who warned me against letting him do it. But as I say, I couldn't stop him and you know how college professors are supposed to produce books. Apparently he figured he was here in St. Louis and I was in St. Louis and I was a good target for his next book. So I thought, well, better to cooperate than not.

DePue: Were you generally pleased by the book that he wrote?

Schlafly: Yes. He worked five years on the book. He spent the first year in my basement, going through all my old records. Yes, I was generally—and it was interesting to see him get more conservative as the years went on. I don't have anything to hide. I wonder if there's anybody else in the country who is willing to stand by what he wrote fifty years ago, but I let him go through all those old boxes that date back to the 1950s, that I hadn't looked at in decades. I figured I didn't have anything to hide.

DePue: The first book [by Carol Felsenthal] was based extensively on interviews with yourself, but also with lots of associates that you have, people back from your days in grade school and high school and college.

Schlafly: Well let me tell you Critchlow's view of that. She [Felsenthal] was just a journalist. All she did was interview people; she interviewed all my high school classmates and my relatives and everybody she could find. Historians don't do that. Historians go for the documents, so he had an entirely different approach. Your real academic historians kind of look down on the journalism type of writing and they like all the documents, so that's what he did. He spent his five years going through everything I'd ever written.

DePue: Did he sit down and interview you?

Schlafly: Well I guess he did, but there wasn't a whole lot of that. There wasn't much of that.

DePue: Did he come back to you occasionally and get clarification on certain issues that he was addressing in the book?

Schlafly: Somewhat, but basically it was all based on documents. He went through what I had in my basement; then he went through a lot of what's here in the archives at the Eagle Forum Center. But what was very interesting about this was, here he is, a tenured Professor of American History and his field is modern American history, and he knew practically nothing about the whole anti-communist movement of the fifties and sixties, because that has not been written about by the academics. When he got into my files, he saw it was an enriched collection of files that nobody has seen and academics haven't written about. So he was kind of fascinated with that whole part of my life.

DePue: Was there a price he had to pay because he wrote generally, a favorable biography of you?

Schlafly: I think the answer to that is yes. You could ask him, but yes, I think the answer to that is yes. He got the contract for this from Princeton Press. Most of his books have either been published by the Princeton Press or the Harvard Press. Yes, I think he had some flak on it.

DePue: Five years, is that a longer time than he spent on other books that he's written?

Schlafly: Well, I don't know. He's writing a book now on conservatives in Hollywood, and I think he may spend that long on that book.

DePue: I want to read some passages from the critique of Critchlow's book that was written for the *New Republic*.³⁷

Schlafly: Oh. (laughs)

DePue: So you know where that's coming from.

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: "It was a stroke of considerable inventiveness for Critchlow to persuade Schlafly to cooperate with him. Too bad that the book he produced is dreadful. Let it be said of Phyllis Schlafly that every idea she had was scatterbrained, dangerous and hateful. The more influential she became, the worse off America became, (Schlafly laughs) but Critchlow can barely bring himself to lift his eyes from the Schlafly Papers long enough to examine her views with anything approaching a critical perspective. His book is fair and balanced in the Fox News sense of those terms. Not even saints should be

³⁷ A very liberal magazine.

admired as much as Critchlow worships Schlafly, (she laughs) and Schlafly is not a saint.” (still laughing) Is that the first time you heard this review?

Schlafly: I knew there was an ugly review. I’m not sure whether I ever read it or not. But yes, the liberals were upset about the book, that is correct, but the book is accurate. What the liberals are really angry about is that they see all of American history through the prism of believing we are a racist, oppressive society; that issue played no role in everything that I did. It just wasn’t part of my life and so, he didn’t write about non-events. He only wrote about what happened, not about what didn’t happen. It played no role in my ERA fight. It played no role in my anti-communist fight. But the liberals are just obsessed that everything has to be seen in terms of racism, and in the world that I lived in, it was not an issue.

DePue: Well that’s precisely though, why I asked you about your views on immigration and the liberal critique of your views.

Schlafly: Well that’s not a racism issue.

DePue: But that allows them to levy that charge.

Schlafly: That’s not a racism issue. That’s an issue of maintaining our American identity and people who obey the law.

DePue: Let me continue with another passage from this. “The ugliness of American politics today can be directly traced back to Schlafly’s vituperative, apoplectic, character-assassinating campaign against the ERA.” Then it goes on to say, “And the wild, filthy rhetoric of Coulter, and some of her screaming, reactionary colleagues, owes a great deal to Schlafly. We are lucky, come to think of it, that Schlafly flourished in the days before cable.”

Schlafly: Well, he doesn’t have any examples. I don’t use any vituperative or ugly language. I don’t even use the kind of language that Ann Coulter does. She has her style; I’m not responsible for that. If he had some examples, let’s hear them. My arguments are always very factual. When I laid out the campaign against the Equal Rights Amendment, it was based on the harm that it would do to women. They’re the ones who called me nasty names, like saying they wanted to burn me at the stake, or that other awful woman who said the ERAers ought to go out and punch me in the mouth, which she said on radio. I never used any language like that. I just laughed at them.

DePue: As you laughed when we read some of the passages from this review.

Schlafly: Yeah, because he doesn’t have any evidence.

DePue: How about this. One of the things that Critchlow does assert in the book—and this is towards the concluding pages of it—that your work contributed to the polarization of American politics.

Schlafly: I'm very glad to be now contributing to the polarization between family types and feminists. I think feminism is a destructive element and I think people ought to understand that it should not be compromised with or attempted to improve or credit it with anything good, or somehow come to terms with it. I think, as Harvey Mansfield said, it's anti-men, anti-masculine, anti-marriage, anti-motherhood and anti-morality. I think identifying it as completely unacceptable and something that should be fought and defeated is a good thing.

DePue: And you're proud to take up that banner?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: Let's move back to American politics again. Did we talk about the 2004 Republican convention? I don't think we did. I think I might have moved beyond that. Anything you remember from that year?

Schlafly: Well, that was in New York City, in Manhattan. We had our RNC Life party at the Tavern on the Green, a famous restaurant in New York. We gave awards to certain pro-life leaders, and we again were successful in getting our pro-life plank in the Republican platform. If you're talking about polarization, certainly the issue of abortion has been a polarizing issue, and it's now clear that we have won that battle in the Republican Party. The Republican Party is pro-life and almost everybody who was elected in 2010 by the Republicans, is pro-life. It is clear that [Barack] Obama has made his deal with the feminists and pandered to them on so many issues. I could rattle them off. The first thing he did when he got in the White House was to abolish what we know as the Mexico City policy, which prevents us from giving money overseas to countries that spend their money on abortion. The second thing he did was to sign the Lilly Ledbetter law, which was to allow women to sue for discrimination that happened fifty years ago, after everybody she's smearing is dead. The third thing he did was to endorse FOCA, the Freedom of Choice Act, which fortunately was not voted on, but which would wipe out all of the good regulations about abortion we have. So if there's any issue that has polarized American politics, it certainly is the issue of abortion. I mean it's Obama and the others who have done that.

DePue: How do you think this issue is playing out in the court of public opinion?

Schlafly: The pro-lifers are winning. All of the surveys show that more people are pro-life every year. It's particularly interesting that the surveys show that the young people are pro-life. So we're winning the battle with the young people.

DePue: Two thousand eight Republican Convention and the lead-up to the Republican Convention, when you also had a pretty crowded field of Republican candidates, as well as Democratic.

- Schlafly: Well, we're back to the Republicans believing in primogeniture. McCain was the next one in line so he got it. I do not think he was the best candidate.
- DePue: Who do you think was? Who were you supporting?
- Schlafly: Well, I tried to support Duncan Hunter, but his campaign didn't get off the ground.
- DePue: Once that occurred, who did you turn your support to?
- Schlafly: I'm a Republican. I certainly wasn't going to support Obama, so I supported McCain, tried to get him elected.
- DePue: What did you think about McCain's vice presidential selection?
- Schlafly: Well I thought it was a good choice and so did the people at the convention.
- DePue: There was a lot of comment that that was the one thing that energized the Republican Convention—Sarah Palin's selection and her acceptance speech. Do you recall that?
- Schlafly: I know people who had come to Minneapolis, deciding when the roll call was taken for president, they were not going to vote. After Palin was announced, they're standing on their chair cheering. That's the dramatic effect it had on that convention.
- DePue: Did you understand—maybe you better than anybody—the reaction that Sarah Palin's nomination got in the American media and from the liberal wing of the Democratic Party?
- Schlafly: Well it's another example of the control that the feminists have over the media. They cannot resist attacking her and it's not just because she's a Republican and a conservative, it's because the feminists don't believe that women can be successful in this patriarchy. Whatever you think of Sarah Palin, she is a very successful woman. She's got a cool husband, a bunch of kids and a very successful political career and now she's making lots of money—the feminists just can't stand it—and on top of all that she's pretty. They just can't stand it, so they keep talking about her and the more they talk about her, the more they build her into a celebrity. Yes. You asked me if it was predictable for the feminists to attack her. Yes of course it was.
- DePue: Do you know her personally?
- Schlafly: I have met her, yes.
- DePue: Did you give her any advice, since you'd been down this road so many years yourself?

- Schlafly: I did. I told her not to let other people put words in her mouth.
- DePue: What was her response to that?
- Schlafly: (laughs) Well, I don't know, she didn't say anything.
- DePue: Did you get any people who were comparing Sarah Palin to Phyllis Schlafly? There's an awful lot of similarities in the careers.
- Schlafly: No, I don't think so. Of course, she was elected a governor and I was never elected to anything like that.
- DePue: Any other comments about the general election campaign, the way that played out, the way that McCain ran his campaign?
- Schlafly: The campaign taught him a bit about immigration. When he went to Iowa he said, "I didn't know immigration was such a big issue." Of course he comes from Arizona and it's unclear why he didn't understand that.
- DePue: Well, he had been well known in American politics long before this, but he obviously had been one of the champions of immigration reform, akin to the Kennedy—
- Schlafly: The Kennedy-Bush plan, yes.
- DePue: He moved away from that plan once he was running for office?
- Schlafly: He tried to.
- DePue: But still, you've said many times before and during these series of interviews, you're a Republican first and you don't believe in third party candidates.
- Schlafly: That's right. I think third parties are a dead-end road.
- DePue: So did you have any problems with finding the enthusiasm to support McCain and to work for his election?
- Schlafly: I did work for his election. I certainly didn't want Obama.
- DePue: Because?
- Schlafly: Obama was a creature of the left-wingers who espoused everything that I was opposed to.
- DePue: He presented himself, he positioned himself, as something of a moderate during the campaign. Did you see him in that respect?
- Schlafly: No. I also recognized him as a machine candidate. The first time he ran for the state Senate, he had about three opponents in the primary and he got the

machine to throw them all off the ballot, so he had a free ride. So he's a Chicago machine candidate.

DePue: What do you think about the certain element of the conservative movement that is fixated on the birth certificate and his origins and the lack of information we have about his early life?

Schlafly: Well, I think it's pretty funny. He could end the controversy by releasing his birth certificate. Why won't he do it?

DePue: Do you believe there's anything to that allegation?

Schlafly: I don't know. I wasn't there, but I think it's very funny how he left the Governor of Hawaii out on a limb. The Governor of Hawaii is an older man, a Democrat; he announced he was going to end this controversy by having the state release the birth certificate, and Obama wouldn't let him do it. (laughs)

DePue: But they've got birth certificates up on the internet for you to see.

Schlafly: Ah-huh. They don't look like our birth certificates. I don't know the answer to that question. It's not my battle, but it's obvious that Obama spent a lot of money and effort to keep from answering it. Look, I've got to take a break.

(pause in recording)

DePue: We took just a very quick break. I want to get into the Obama Administration itself. Let's start at the very beginning—in fact the tail-end of the Bush Administration, when you had the housing market collapse, then some extraordinary measures that were taken to prevent a depression—that was the allegation or the suggestion at the time—then leading into the early part of the Obama Administration with passage of TARP [Troubled Asset Relief Program] and then a stimulus bill. We haven't talked a lot about economic issues, but do you have any views on those series of decisions that were made?

Schlafly: Yes. I was against all of them.

DePue: Even though Bush himself was saying we had to do this to prevent a serious depression?

Schlafly: That's when McCain lost it, when he terminated his campaign and said he was going to Washington to vote for that first bailout. That's when he lost it.

DePue: Okay.

DePue: Another very quick break. Let's turn our attention to healthcare reform, because that was the signature issue that President Obama decided to take up in his first two years in office.

- Schlafly: We at Eagle Forum opposed that all the way. We just don't believe that government should run the healthcare business, one-fifth of our economy. It's certainly not going to be cheaper; it's going to be more expensive. We have an example of it in Massachusetts, which is a fiscal failure.
- DePue: What did you think about the way in which that legislation moved through the U.S. Congress?
- Schlafly: Well, they violated a lot of their procedural rules in order to get it through. Obama was absolutely determined to get it through. Nancy Pelosi famously said, "We have to pass it and then you'll find out what's in it." The final version, I think, was over two thousand pages.
- DePue: Are you concerned that through that process the administration was garnering more and more power for the executive branch of the government?
- Schlafly: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Many provisions are designed to make a general statement and then leave it up to the Department of Health and Human Services to write the regulations which would have the details of it. It's a tremendous grab for power, so we opposed it all the way. I hope that we will elect a Republican Congress and it will repeal it.
- DePue: Well, just this last year we had a midterm election, and once again there is a major sea change in terms of political alignment in the United States. But I want to start with the emergence of a Tea Party movement. Your thoughts about that?
- Schlafly: I think it's wonderful. These people are people who have probably never done anything in politics in their life. When Michele Bachmann called for Americans to meet her on the steps of the Capitol to protest against "Obamacare," I know one woman from Missouri and one man from New Jersey who had never gone to a political rally in their lives, had never done anything politically, who got on a plane and went down and stood on the steps with her. I found that most extraordinary. That's true of just—I think the majority of the people in the Tea Party. They're new people coming in. We welcome them.
- DePue: I want to read—I'm looking here for a quote. What I'm looking for, I'm not finding quickly, but basically it echoes what criticism we heard before, that came out when books like Critchlow's book and *Feminist Fantasies* were coming out, that you were basically a person under the control of the old dominant forces in the Republican Party, and that at one time you were leading a grassroots movement, but those days are behind you. Now you see this last two years, we've got the emergence of a Tea Party movement again that almost everybody would describe as a grassroots movement. Do you see any parallels with what you were doing in the seventies and what's going on in the Tea Party movement today?

- Schlafly: Yes, I think it's very parallel. The people I brought in, in the 1970s, were again, people who had never been active in politics before. Most of them had not participated in any way. A lot of them were religious people who thought politics was not something in their life that they should be concerned about. They suddenly realized they needed to get involved in order to save the life that they believed in and the principles they shared. I think the Tea Party people are very much like that.
- DePue: There's one difference that's obvious to me. You were the clear, identifiable leader of the Stop ERA movement. There is no identifiable leadership in the Tea Party movement, although there are some who are trying to position themselves as that. Is that a problem, do you think, for the future of the Tea Party movement?
- Schlafly: I think it's probably a good thing. We were focused on one particular, specific political goal. Today, there are so many things to be concerned about and the Tea Party people may have different priorities. Some may be worried about the spending, the debt. Others may be worried about the healthcare bill specifically and the takeover of the management of their healthcare. Others may be interested in the marriage issue, which is a tremendous issue, or the abortion issue. So I think it's probably good that there is no one specific leader.
- DePue: What's been your reaction to the way the Tea Party has been portrayed by some on the left and by the media in general?
- Schlafly: Well, they're worried about them. These are the grassroots coming out saying we want to take back our country. They're worried, and they ought to be worried. The Tea Party people are the kind of people who swelled the votes for Republicans in 2010.
- DePue: There are consistent claims by many of these critics, that it's just another haven for the old bigots of the south, for KKK [Ku Klux Klan], for racists.
- Schlafly: I don't think the Tea Party people are concentrated in the south. I think they're all over the country.
- DePue: So you don't give any credence to this charge of racism that's being levied against the Tea Party?
- Schlafly: No, I certainly don't. Again, that's just more evidence that the liberals like to see all subjects through the prism of racism.
- DePue: How about labeling them as extremists?
- Schlafly: Well that's the favorite epithet of people they don't like. It's argument by epithet.

DePue: Another feature of the last election cycle that we went through, the off-year elections, is the number of prominent women who are running for office.

Schlafly: Yes, but you've had a great deafening silence from the feminist movement, because it turned out that most of these women who won were Republicans and pro-life, and that wasn't what they planned at all.

DePue: You apparently take great delight in that. (both laugh)

Schlafly: Oh.

DePue: Are they standing on your shoulders in a certain way?

Schlafly: No. There just are various things that have... Of course, I've been trying to get women involved in politics all my life, but running for office is difficult. There are never going to be as many women who want to do that as men. It's a dog's life.

DePue: Are you proud to see that trend?

Schlafly: Well, I want somebody to vote right when that person gets into the legislature. I don't care if it's a man or a woman, but I think these women who won last year are very attractive and that's fine. Maybe they will join the woman's caucus down there and shape it up, just like Allen West will join the Black Caucus and they won't know what hit them.³⁸

DePue: That's causing a stir as well, isn't it?

Schlafly: Oh yeah, yeah. He's wonderful.

DePue: After the break, you gave me a copy of your newest book, *The Flipside of Feminism: What Conservative Women Know and Men Can't Say*. You co-authored this with... Why don't you tell us about this book.

Schlafly: Suzanne Venker is my niece, my sister's child. She had written one other book about the whole feminist idea. I thought it was a very useful collaboration because she kind of writes in a young person's style and has a young person's point of view.

DePue: The cover jacket is very provocative. We've got a woman who is obviously pregnant, cradling her belly.

Schlafly: Well, the feminists are really against motherhood. We know their views on abortion, so that's one aspect. But the other aspect of it is that they think it's grossly unfair that we expect mothers to look after their own babies—that's an

³⁸ Allen West is a conservative Republican African-American congressman elected from Florida. He decided to join the Congressional Black Caucus, becoming the only conservative voice in an otherwise overwhelmingly liberal group.

example of the patriarchy's oppression of women—and the taxpayers should take on that responsibility with taxpayer-funded daycare centers. The advice we are giving to young women: If you think you're going to want to get married and have babies, you should think about it while you're young and you should plan your life to include space for that. Now, they don't plan it that way when they go to college. Everything about the college courses and the women's studies courses, is to plan a life in the workforce, without any space for men, marriage or babies. You find a lot of women turn out to be rather unhappy about this. Some of them don't discover it until after it's too late to have babies. Some of them find that this just doesn't fit into their career and they become unhappy about this.

One feminist wrote a book, Sylvia Hewlett, in which she thought she had made an amazing scientific discovery, that women are less fertile after age forty than they are under age forty. Her book didn't sell; nobody wanted to read that, although she had more publicity than any book I ever saw.

My new book has some good useful advice to young women. My niece had had a first marriage and was divorced. She told how, when she had pre-marriage discussions with her boyfriend, they had the attitude: Well, we'll get married and if it doesn't work out, we'll get a divorce. Well that's the wrong attitude to go into marriage about, and she tells us how it's wrong. So I think it's useful to have a young woman's take on some of the ideas that I've lived with for many years.

DePue: Certainly in 1982, you felt like you had beaten the feminists because you had defeated ERA. They certainly did not go away. What would you say is the condition of the feminist movement today?

Schlafly: They have gotten themselves so solidly entrenched in the media and in academia and somewhat in the judiciary, that they are a powerful force. The purpose of this book is to show people what they're doing and how wrong their ideas are.

DePue: Do you think they're still attracting younger women, career minded women?

Schlafly: Yes, I do. However, there are more younger women today who can look around them and see they don't want the kind of life their baby boomer mothers had.

DePue: I want to turn your attention now to the state of journalism in America today, because this is another institution, one of the bedrock institutions of American society, that's gone through something of a revolution in our lifetimes. Especially when you look back at what it was like in the sixties and early seventies, where the press was dominated by three television networks and by major newspapers, and the emphasis at that time was always on print

journalism. How do you explain, how do you understand the changes that journalism has gone through over the last thirty, forty years?

Schlafly: We have so many more options to get our news. Really, the way I get my news is, I have a son who roams the internet in the morning and prints out things that I will be interested in. That certainly gives me news that I don't get in the local newspaper or in the *New York Times* at the present time.

Let me make one more comment about the feminist control of journalism. When Bernard Goldberg wrote his book, *Bias*, about CBS, he said the biggest story you will never see on CBS is what's wrong with daycare, because the feminists who work for CBS will not allow it on. If they have babies, they're dropping them off at a daycare institution in the morning and picking them up at night, and they simply won't allow any news on the air that shows how harmful this is to babies.

But anyway, I'm very happy about all the new sources of news. Take for example, much of the immigration news is not making it on the national news at all since CNN fired Lou Dobbs. The way you find out what's going on is through local stories; we find all kinds of local stories that don't make the national news.

DePue: Bernard Goldberg's book *Bias*, the name of the book tells you everything you need to know, that there is a strong liberal bias in the media. Do you think it was there as strongly back in the sixties and seventies? I assume you agree with his contention.

Schlafly: Yes, I certainly do. Was the bias as strong in the sixties and seventies? Yes. Yes, I think it was, and it certainly was strong for the feminists. Part of it is the feminists infiltrating it and the other part is intimidating the men, because the feminists are very intimidating to men. That's why the subtitle of our new book is, *What Men Can't Say*. I wanted to have it say, *What Men Don't Dare to Say*.

DePue: But women **can** say?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: Well speaking of women and speaking of women who are expressing themselves on the conservative side of the equation today, voices perhaps you didn't hear twenty or thirty years ago, Ann Coulter. We've already talked about Ann, but she is certainly not alone any more. You've got people like Michelle Malkin and Laura Ingraham and Peggy Noonan. Some are more of a moderate position. Monica Crowley. Your view of those women who have emerged as powerful conservative voices in the media today?

Schlafly: Well, they're wonderful and I'm glad to see them. They do an excellent job.

- DePue: Could that have happened in the seventies, when you were leading the charge against ERA? Would they have been able to find a voice?
- Schlafly: Well, they had Barbara Walters on one of the networks then, which is kind of amazing, because she has a little speech defect and somebody with a little speech defect, to have that prominent position on one of the networks. And then of course you have the example of Oprah [Winfrey], certainly one of the most successful entrepreneurs in all history.
- DePue: We talked a little bit about the Fairness Doctrine yesterday—about repealing the Fairness Doctrine, which gave opportunities to voices like Rush Limbaugh. Do you think that was the beginning of this realignment of media voices in the United States?
- Schlafly: No, the realignment was brought about by technology, but the elimination of the Fairness Doctrine did put a free market in talk radio. I think, as we've previously discussed, that when you have a free market and what gets you on the air is being able to attract sponsors who pay the bills of the station, the conservatives can do that and the liberals can't. That's why they have their tax paid NPR [National Public Radio]. And we now, due to the great work of James O'Keefe, have shown that they admit that they have a tremendous liberal bias and really nothing but contempt for conservatives, and the taxpayers are paying for it.
- DePue: That's certainly part of the debate right now, when the new Republican majority in the House of Representatives is trying to de-fund National Public Radio and Public Broadcasting [System]. You think that's a good thing?
- Schlafly: Oh, absolutely. I think so many things that government does should not be done at all and that's one of them. Why should the government control a station that puts out news every day? It sounds like Hugo Chavez.³⁹
- DePue: What's your opinion then, of the emergence of Fox News as a major source of news, and a competitor now with what they would themselves call the mainstream media?
- Schlafly: Well, they claim they have more viewers than any of the other stations.⁴⁰ It is an interesting channel. I don't think it's a hundred percent conservative by any means, but it is interesting and it does have news that I don't find elsewhere.
- DePue: Your views about what is currently going on with the print media, the newspapers in particular? They've been facing some very tough times for a long time. One of the concerns that you'll hear in many circles is that the old investigative journalist who goes out and spends a lot of time studying a

³⁹ Brazil's dictator who tightly controls all media.

⁴⁰ Fox News asserts that the network has more listeners than any other cable network.

particular story is dying because the money isn't there any more and circulation is dropping dramatically.

Schlafly: I think a major reason the circulation is dropping is that people can't or won't read anymore. They've consistently dumbed down what they put in the newspapers to about a fourth grade level, and there are just large segments of our population who aren't even taught how to read, people graduating from high school who can't read, and I think that's as big a factor as anything else.

DePue: Do you think the liberal slant of many of the major newspapers is also a turnoff for a lot of the readers?

Schlafly: Well, I do. I do take the *New York Times*, but its pro-homosexual bias is just really tremendous. They've got a homosexual story practically every day and it's become mostly an international paper. You can hardly find any American news in it at all.

DePue: I want to talk about a quote from Ann Coulter's foreword that I thought was provocative as well. "That Phyllis Schlafly is the mortal enemy of a movement that claims to promote women, tells you all you need to know about feminism. That many people alive today are unaware of Schlafly's achievements, tells you all you need to know about the major media."

Schlafly: (laughs) Well, Ann Coulter has a flair for saying things. I think she's right on both counts.

DePue: The thing that drew my attention here was, do you feel slighted by the major media?

Schlafly: Well, they certainly have slighted me yes, but it's not going to ruin my day because I've been winning anyway.

DePue: Do you feel overlooked by all of these—you've talked about it quite a bit—these women's studies programs?

Schlafly: Oh, I'm in all the women's studies programs. Every week, I meet people who have taken one of those courses and they've had a lecture or a chapter in their book attacking me. So they're talking about me.

DePue: Any more comments on the role—

Schlafly: I really think—you know, a couple years ago, Washington University in St. Louis gave me their highest honor, which is an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters. The faculty women, the female faculty, led a protest. They really thought they could stop the university from giving it to me. They couldn't, but they kicked up a big fuss and made it a real cause célèbre. The students even picketed the chancellor at his home for two days. These professors made a big fuss and kind of ruined the commencement for a

thousand kids who didn't have any idea what the issue was. You ask yourself, **Why** were they so eager to discredit me? I don't think it was because I beat the Equal Rights Amendment. I think it is because I stood up for the role of the full-time homemaker. They find that threatening and offensive, because they are teaching children the feminist line, that a full-time homemaker is just a parasite, she is living an unfulfilling life, that it is a job that is not worthy of an educated women, and that your only chance to have a fulfilling life is to have a career in the paid labor force. I think that is the real crux of why they hate me so much. They just resent that I have stood up. I give an award every year to some famous full-time homemaker and they find that threatening to their whole ideology. I think it's pitiful.

DePue: We're at the point of the interview now, where we can wrap things up. You're probably saying finally, finally. I did want to mention, you were talking about things you've been recognized for. In 2003, from CPAC, a conservative PAC, you're honored as the conservative movement's founding mother. Do you remember that event?

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: Any particular memories of it?

Schlafly: I don't remember that but I do remember some award they gave me this past year, and it was a Revolutionary War rifle. I thought that was great. (both laugh)

DePue: One you hadn't expected.

Schlafly: That's right.

DePue: Much of this that we need to address here—and again, I'm trying to flip through my notes—addresses the central role you played in the changes in the conservative movement over the last fifty years or so, and so let's start with that. Where do you place yourself in the changes that the conservative movement has experienced since you started back in the 1950s?

Schlafly: The consistent theme is that I want the grassroots conservatives to control the Republican Party, to nominate the candidates they choose. That was the purpose of *A Choice, Not an Echo* in 1964, which was what gave me my national following and which had the incredible sale, as I sold three million copies out of my garage. Every week, I meet people who say, I came into the conservative movement reading *A Choice, Not an Echo* in 1964. The purpose of that was, we were tired of the people we then called the Rockefeller Republicans—which we now call the RINOs, Republicans In Name Only—had controlled the convention process and who was the presidential nominee. My goal was for the grassroots conservatives to have the candidate they wanted, and that's what I followed through subsequent Republican National Conventions.

Now, of course there are all the years of the anti-communist fight, and the nomination and election of Ronald Reagan, which was a great joy. Again, this was the conservatives taking back the Republican Party after it had been led astray by Richard Nixon and Watergate, because in the Nixon years, conservatives thought, well, after we lost Barry Goldwater, we can't elect a real conservative. But then we brought in the social conservatives, the people who are against ERA, and we were able to elect a real conservative, Ronald Reagan, so they took over the party again.

Then, I think people were misled about the conservatism of the Bushes, [Presidents, George H. W. and George W.] for various reasons that we haven't got time to go through here. But really, both of the Bushes were internationalists, New World Order types, who didn't think conservative, and so we got astray on those and had some candidates the grassroots were not enthusiastic about. I think what we're seeing now is: the social conservatives have become dominant. The Republican Party is now pro-life, it is the pro-life party, and now we have the task of taking back control of the party. I think we saw just the first leg of that in the elections of 2010. We welcomed the Tea Party people in because they are authentic grass-rooters who care about the Constitution, who care about the founding principles in our country. We have the task again and we know we can do it because we've done it before.

DePue: When you came of age—you might disagree with this—but liberalism was on the ascendancy. Liberalism was the dominant theme in American society and culture through much of your early life. That is not the case today. It's the conservative movement that seems to be on the ascendancy, if you look to polls and ask people where their leanings are today. Your discussion just now was on what was going on in the Republican Party. Why do you think conservatism is on ascendancy today?

Schlafly: Mainly because of the people who have been active in politics and working on it. You are certainly right. When I was going to college, the prevailing conventional wisdom was that liberalism was the wave of the future, that what we should aspire for was Sweden, the middle way, which was kind of a modified socialism. Everybody believed that. Businessmen believed it and academics believed it, and that's what we set out to challenge with my book, *A Choice Not an Echo*. Now I agree that conservatism is on the ascendancy and I think we're going to take the party back. We got misled by some of the people in the meantime.

DePue: Some of the people?

Schlafly: Well, Nixon and Bushes.

DePue: Okay. Looking back at the very long and fascinating career, what are the accomplishments that you're most proud of?

- Schlafly: My wonderful family would come at the top of the list. But if you're talking about politics, I think beating the Equal Rights Amendment, beating the drive for a constitutional convention, making the Republican Party pro-life, and making the Republican Party conservative several times, although it slipped away from us. Now I want to do that again.
- DePue: What would you say is your most exhilarating moment, in the public arena at least?
- Schlafly: Well, the Republican Convention in 1964 was very exhilarating. That was my first stepping on to the national stage. But then our rainbow dinner in 1982, when we buried ERA, was certainly an exhilarating moment.
- DePue: And on the flipside of that, the thing that caused you the most pain and anguish.
- Schlafly: Oh, I don't know. I tend to forget unhappy things.
- DePue: Do you have any regrets, looking back on your career?
- Schlafly: No major ones.
- DePue: How would you say your views have changed or evolved over time?
- Schlafly: (pause) Maybe the most important thing is the belief that conservatives can win, because when I started out as a young woman, nobody **believed** that conservatives could win. And of course, when we fought the Equal Rights Amendment, nobody but me believed that we could win. It's a big change from just thinking you're doing your thing, passing out your literature, you're the God's remnant that's keeping the faith, but of course you're going to lose. To move from that to a real belief that we're going to win was really the secret of Ronald Reagan winning the Cold War. When he rejected the McNamara-Kissinger belief that the Soviet Union was always going to be the superpower and adopted the policy, we win and they lose, that was when he was on the road to victory. This change, from believing you were destined for defeat, to believing that you really **can** win, is a tremendous leap.
- DePue: And an exhilarating leap I would think.
- Schlafly: Yes.
- DePue: Okay, next question then. Why did you agree to do this interview?
- Schlafly: Well, I thought it might be good to get some of these thoughts down on paper or recorded.
- DePue: Do you have any future projects in mind in terms of your writing?

Schlafly: I think my next book is going to be a revision of *A Choice Not an Echo*. Not revising the book, the book's okay the way it was. But you know what it is; it is a chapter on each Republican National Convention. So the last one was 1964. Well, we've had all these conventions since then and I want to write-up what happened at the subsequent conventions. The only thing that is holding me up is the last chapter, because I don't know who we're going to back for the next round and it's got to come out with the prescription for the next victory and I don't have that yet.

DePue: So you're in no candidate's particular camp right now.

Schlafly: That's right.

DePue: How about the possibility of an autobiography?

Schlafly: Well, I've been thinking about that for years. Maybe I will borrow some of your tapings for that.

DePue: You don't think that the two biographies that have been written on you do justice, or do you want to put your own slant on your life?

Schlafly: Yeah, I'd like to put my own slant on it. However, it's not going to have any sexy exposés like all these other autobiographies have. That seems to be what sells, but maybe mine won't sell because it won't have that.

DePue: Looking back at a long career, what would you like to be most remembered for then?

Schlafly: I'll have to let other people decide that.

DePue: Well if other people decide, I think it's unquestioned that it's going to be the defeat of ERA. Are you content with that?

Schlafly: Yes. That's all right, that's all right, because it was a ridiculous idea. It has no benefit in it at all and a lot of detriments.

DePue: Mrs. Schlafly, now this is your opportunity. How would you like to close the interview today then. Any thoughts?

Schlafly: Well, of course you were only asking me—this whole interview has been about my public life. I had a very rich and fulfilling private life with all my family. I guess that's not particularly different from millions of other people and not particularly interesting to history or your history project, but you've only covered part of my life.

DePue: Well there's another reason to write a biography.

Schlafly: Yes.

DePue: An autobiography.

Schlafly: Yes there is.

DePue: It has been a joy for me to have this opportunity to talk to you and I appreciate you putting up with these frequent visits and all the time that you've devoted to this. Thank you very much.

Schlafly: Well, I see you put a lot of work in this, in trying to think up some questions, both friendly and provocative, and that's okay. That's not unusual. The length of this was unusual and I kind of enjoyed it. Thank you for the hard work you've put into it.

DePue: Well I think the public will be the beneficiary of it. Thank you very much.

(end of final interview)