The Honorable Patricia Scott Schroeder

U.S. Representative of Colorado (1973–1997)

Oral History Interview
Final Edited Transcript

June 3, 2015

Office of the Historian
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

"It was very frustrating, when I announced for Congress, the newspaper said, 'Denver housewife runs for Congress.' I mean they didn't even put my name in. And I kept thinking, 'Well, yeah, I'm a housewife, but I'm also a Harvard lawyer. I also work at a university. I'm a hiring officer.' So it was really a problem from day one, from that standpoint. Women's rights were starting to come to the fore. They weren't quite there but they were beginning, it was all bubbling. And a lot of people were absolutely horrified because I had two children, two little children. And I will never forget when I won. So many people said, 'Oh, I don't know how you're going to do this.' And I was kind of the same way. 'I don't know how I'm going to do it either but I guess I've got to do it, so let's figure this out.'"

The Honorable Patricia Scott Schroeder
June 3, 2015

Table of Contents

Abstract

As a passionate and outspoken feminist, Patricia (Pat) Scott Schroeder emerged as a national spokesperson for women's rights during her 24 years in the House. Schroeder's unlikely path to Congress in 1973—as a young mother of two with little financial backing and no state or national party support—surprised experts and delighted supporters. In an era with few incentives or support networks for working mothers, Schroeder learned to navigate the halls of Congress juggling a young family and politics. In her interview, she addresses balancing motherhood and her career and describes the obstacles women faced when she first arrived at the Capitol, including inadequate bathroom and exercise facilities, restricted areas set aside for men, and the refusal of some male Members to treat their female colleagues as equals. Schroeder recalls the formation and evolution of the Congresswomen's Caucus and considered how the organization helped Congresswomen bolster their position despite their small numbers.

Not interested in blending in or waiting for change to occur, Schroeder adopted a more aggressive approach as a woman in Congress. She describes how she championed many issues affecting women during her time in the House—pay equity, job protection for family and medical leave, and women's health—and recalls her participation in the memorable protest march by women Representatives to the Senate on behalf of Anita Hill during the confirmation hearings for Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Colorado Representative also explains how, after winning her first election as a vocal antiwar activist, she earned a seat on the Armed Services Committee and used her position to help women in the military. Having first arrived in the House when women Representatives were rare, Schroeder later mentored many Congresswomen during her political career.

Biography

SCHROEDER, Patricia Scott, a Representative from Colorado; born Patricia Nell Scott in Portland, Multnomah County, Oreg., July 30, 1940; graduated from Roosevelt High School, Des Moines, Iowa, 1958; B.A., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn., 1961; J.D., Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Mass., 1964; lawyer, private practice; lawyer, National Labor Relations Board, 1964–1966; teacher, 1969–1972; elected as a Democrat to the Ninety-third and to the eleven succeeding Congresses (January 3, 1973–January 3, 1997); chair, Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families (One Hundred Second and One Hundred Third Congresses); was not a candidate for reelection to the One Hundred Fifth Congress in 1996.
Read full biography

Editing Practices

In preparing interview transcripts for publication, the editors sought to balance several priorities:

- As a primary rule, the editors aimed for fidelity to the spoken word and the conversational style in accord with generally accepted oral history practices.
- The editors made minor editorial changes to the transcripts in instances where they believed such changes would make interviews more accessible to readers. For instance, excessive false starts and filler words were removed when they did not materially affect the meaning of the ideas expressed by the interviewee.
- In accord with standard oral history practices, interviewees were allowed to review their transcripts, although they were encouraged to avoid making substantial editorial revisions and deletions that would change the conversational style of the transcripts or the ideas expressed therein.
- The editors welcomed additional notes, comments, or written observations that the interviewees wished to insert into the record and noted any substantial changes or redactions to the transcript.
- Copy-editing of the transcripts was based on the standards set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

The first reference to a Member of Congress (House or Senate) is underlined in the oral history transcript. For more information about individuals who served in the House or Senate, please refer to the online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, http://bioguide.congress.gov and the "People Search" section of the History, Art & Archives website, http://history.house.gov.

For more information about the U.S. House of Representatives oral history program contact the Office of House Historian at (202) 226-1300, or via email at history@mail.house.gov.

Citation Information

When citing this oral history interview, please use the format below:
"The Honorable Patricia Scott Schroeder Oral History Interview," Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, June 3, 2015.

Interviewer Biographies

Matt Wasniewski is the Historian of the U.S. House of Representatives, a position he has held since 2010. He has worked in the House as a historical editor and manager since 2002. Matt served as the editor-in-chief of *Women in Congress, 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), *Black Americans in Congress, 1870–2007* (GPO, 2008), and the *Hispanic Americans in Congress, 1822–2012* (GPO, 2013). He helped to create the House's first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of current and former Members, longtime staff, and support personnel. He earned his Ph.D. in U.S. history from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 2004. His prior work experience includes several years as the associate historian and communications director at the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, and, in the early 1990s, as the sports editor for a northern Virginia newspaper.

Kathleen Johnson is the Manager of Oral History for the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives. She earned a B.A. in history from Columbia University, where she also played basketball for four years, and holds two master's degrees from North Carolina State University in education and public history. In 2004, she helped to create the House's first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of Members and staff. She co-authored two books: *Women in Congress: 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006) and *Black Americans in Congress: 1870–2007* (GPO, 2008). Before joining the Office of the Historian, she worked as a high school history teacher and social studies curriculum consultant.

— THE HONORABLE PATRICIA SCOTT SCROEDER SCHROEDER OF COLORADO —
A CENTURY OF WOMEN IN CONGRESS

JOHNSON: My name is Kathleen Johnson. I'm with Matt Wasniewski, the House Historian, and today [June 3, 2015] we're very happy to be interviewing former Congresswoman Pat [Patricia Scott] Schroeder from Colorado. This interview is for the Jeannette Rankin oral history project that we're working on, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of her election and her swearing-in to Congress.

So again, we're very pleased that you're here [in the House Recording Studio] today, Congresswoman Schroeder, thank you for coming.

SCHROEDER: Thank you. I'm delighted to be here.

JOHNSON: We wanted to start off today just with a few general questions, before we get a little more specific. When you were young, did you have any female role models?

SCHROEDER: Probably two. Eleanor Roosevelt—I was raised thinking she was just an absolutely incredible woman, and Amelia Earhart. Those were two women that really fascinated me as a young child.

JOHNSON: And why was that? What drew you to those two women?

SCHROEDER: Well, I came from a family that liked to fly. My father was a pilot and I went on to get my pilot's license when I was 15, so there were pilots in the family. So this young woman out flying around, I thought was pretty cool.

I thought Eleanor Roosevelt was really pretty remarkable. Rather than being a gorgeous glamour queen or whatever, she was very interested in what was

going on in the world and how she could contribute to it, and seemed to have a lot of guts. When I was growing up in the '40s and '50s, guts was not a word that you would associate with women. They were not supposed to have that and she did. She had it, she was out there, and I just thought, "Good for her."

JOHNSON: When you were growing up, what were the expectations, the societal expectations for you as a young girl, as to what you would be when you got older?

SCHROEDER: Basically, when I was growing up, it was the idea that you either became a mommy, or a teacher, or a nurse. There really weren't a lot of options. You were just kind of narrowly channeled. Luckily, I had a family that was not so narrow in their views, and allowed me to do a lot of things that probably other girls didn't do.

When I got to school, when I got to college, I literally selected my college because my father said the most important thing I would learn in college was how to take care of myself, how to pay for my own way. So, I had to pay for my own tuition and books and everything else. I picked the University of Minnesota because they had airplanes. They had [American] Champion Aircraft that were for the ROTC program. The idea was that it was obviously for the young males in ROTC. So I went to them and I said, "I want to fly." And they said, "Yeah, well, this doesn't fit the category." But I absolutely love Scandinavians in Minnesota, because they always think, "Well, it doesn't say we can't rent them to you, so if you want to rent them. . ." So I was able to get a job in Minneapolis, at an insurance company, an aviation insurance company, adjusting aviation losses and renting airplanes from the university so I could make money to pay my tuition. {laughter} I had a very different

career path than a lot of young women that I grew up with. I think many of them were horrified and wondered what was ever going to happen to me.

JOHNSON: What first drew you to politics? What was your path to becoming so interested in politics?

SCHROEDER: When I was growing up, my father was always interested in politics and he talked about it. The dinner table conversations were always very vivid about what was going on. I went to high school in Des Moines, Iowa, where they didn't even allow Profile Bread, because it had a female profile on the cover of the bread. They didn't have alcohol by the drink and it was very, very, very . . . Oh, and you could only have shorts at a certain length. I mean, literally they would measure them and you could get a ticket for not having them the right length. We had a lot of discussions about that at home obviously, growing up.

I had a grandfather, a great grandfather actually, that was in the Nebraska legislature with William Jennings Bryan. He was a first-generation Irish immigrant, but he came out and he ran for office and he won, and served. He was obviously my father's grandfather, and so he talked about him a lot. But, I never thought of it as a career, never thought of it as a career.

When we moved to Denver, after I finished law school—I met my husband at Harvard Law School—we decided to pick a city where we wanted to live. He was from Chicago, I was from Des Moines, so we picked Denver. We moved to Denver and we got active in all sorts of community things, Young Democrats being one of them. And he ran for office in 1970, for a state house seat, and he lost by the narrowest margin ever. I think it was like 30 votes, or something. It was a very Republican area. So, after reapportionment, they came down and they literally carved our house out

and put us in an entirely different district, thinking about him. And he had decided in the interim, he really didn't like campaigning that much, so he really wasn't thinking about being a candidate.

But in 1972, when [Richard Milhous] Nixon was running [for President] and it looked it was going to be a runaway—it was against [George Stanley] McGovern—and Colorado was then the second most conservative delegation in the country right behind Arizona, he was on this committee of young firebrands, looking for someone to run for Congress, against the Republican incumbent [James Douglas (Mike) McKevitt]. And everybody they went to said, "What are you, nuts? I really don't want to be a sacrificial lamb." So he's going to these meetings and I'm home with our two-year-old and our six-year-old, and he comes home one night and says, "Guess whose name came up?" I said, "I don't know?" He said, "Yours." I said, "Mine? I haven't run for a bus; what are you talking about?" At that time, I was teaching at one of the colleges and he said, "Well you go out and tell your students to get involved, I can't believe you wouldn't do this." He said, "Of course you'll never win, but it's so important to articulate the issues." That's the beginning. {laughter} That's how I got into it. It was that happenstance, being totally assured I couldn't win, and I was just going to have this wonderful discussion with the people of Denver, about issues.

WASNIEWSKI: Did anyone offer you advice when you jumped into the campaign? Was there anyone with political experience who had words of wisdom?

SCHROEDER: Oh my, oh my. Well, no. They did, but it was all negative. We came to Washington to meet with the Democratic campaign group, the DCCC, the Democratic Congressional Campaign [Committee], and they said, "You won the primary?" And we said, "Yes," and they said, "Well, we really have nothing to say to you; we can't waste our money." {laughter} And I had

worked for a while, at the National Labor Relations Board in Denver, and so I thought, "Well you would think the unions would be very excited about me, right? This is Colorado, which is kind of a right to work state," but here I was. The AFL/CIO sent me $50, which I returned and said, "Thanks, but no thanks." Everybody was like, "What is this 31-year-old mother out of Colorado think she's doing?" It was like the altitude, less oxygen to the brain, or something must have happened to me. The first thing I would get when I would come here to talk to anybody was like, "You're a fluke, right?" {laughter} I'd say, "What do you mean I'm a fluke?" No, they really didn't think that my winning was possible.

WASNIEWSKI: Looking back on that now, across 40-plus years, what are some of the key moments in that '72 campaign that stick out for you?

SCHROEDER: Oh, my. Well, because we had no advice from the powers that be, we were kind of on our own. So, for most of the campaign, we ran it out of our basement, which is kind of unique. We were running against an incumbent [McKevitt] who was the most popular politician in Colorado. It was during the Vietnam War, and I had a group of people, we sat around the table and we talked about, "Well, how are we really going to just deal with issues?" At that time, you could look at everybody's brochure, and you really couldn't tell who was a Republican or Democrat. They always had pictures of themselves with little kids, with police officers, at a grocery store. And usually on the last page, Democrats might be on a bike and Republicans on a horse, but outside of that you couldn't tell the difference. So we put together this absolutely radical campaign around 3 issues.

There was the war that was a big issue, and we also had on the ballot in Colorado, the Olympics. Colorado had won the right to host the Winter Olympics, and many environmentalists said this is an absolute disaster for the

state. “We want to vote on it before it comes here.” The proper political answer was always, “I’m so happy it’s on ballot. Everybody will be able to express their viewpoint.” And then the third issue was about children and poor kids.

So, we decided to run with three posters, and we made black and white commercials that I was in, I mean the cheapest commercials you’d ever seen, because I’m telling you, my average campaign contribution was $7.50, so we’re talking cheap. It fit the posters. The three posters were an elderly woman walking down one of the streets in Denver, with a cane, and it said, “Cheer up, the Olympics are coming.” It was a rather strong message. We had another poster of the military cemetery in Colorado, with the gravestones and a bird flying out over the top, and a quote from one of Nixon’s speeches, saying, “Yes, many of our troops have already been withdrawn.” And on the backs of these posters we would have very serious comments about what I would do. But it was the poster that would grip your attention. The final one was a baby sitting under a crucifix, on a migrant worker’s farm. We have a lot of migrant workers in Colorado, and it said, “This radical troublemaker is out to get something from you: hope.”

They were printed on bright pink, bright green, bright orange paper, totally not red, white and blue, because we were able to get those free. {laughter} Nothing looked like traditional campaign material. You can’t imagine, when the DCCC saw those. They said, “Surely, these haven’t gone out?” “Oh yes, they’re out, they’re all over town. People are putting them up on . . .” “No, that can’t be.” Well it was . . . I was totally convinced I would lose. I never quit my jobs. {laughter} I had these part-time jobs teaching school, and I was a hearing officer for the state, which was like a judge; you went around and heard personnel cases. They were wonderful part-time jobs and I

thought, "It's hard to get a good part-time job, so I'm not going to mess up my life by giving them up, and then having to start over." So I kept them.

The biggest shock of 1972 was election night, when I won, and my favorite visual that night was my poor husband, at 2:00 in the morning, saying, "I'm going down to the election commission because I really can't believe this is right. What have we done to ourselves?" And there you go, the rest is history.

JOHNSON: Since you were talking about the campaign, one question we wanted to ask you about was—

SCHROEDER: Oh, the "She wins, we win?"

JOHNSON: Yes, the genesis for that slogan.

SCHROEDER: Oh, yes. Well, that's very interesting. This is not a happy part of the campaign. I remind you that this is the era of [J. Edgar] Hoover and the FBI and all of that. This was one of the things we thought of when we were thinking about a campaign slogan: "She wins, we win." We didn't want anybody to think I was male. Schroeder is such a long name, that we weren't going to do Patricia, but we wanted to make sure they knew I was a female. So, one of my students took the picture, we fixed it all up, made the buttons, those were the slogans, and while this was going on, we had our house broken into a couple times. We never saw anything missing. Well, we couldn't figure out, who's breaking into our house and why is nothing missing?

So we didn't think too much about it, and then after I got elected, I don't know, it was a year or two later, the front page of the *Denver Post* had this article about how this guy named Timothy Redford, had been arrested for breaking into houses, and he said, "You can't arrest me, because I've been

hired by the FBI to break into the Schroeder house." I asked for my FBI file, under FOIA [Freedom of Information Act]. The FBI thought this was a communist slogan: "She wins, we win." You've got to love that, I mean what imagination is that? They had all of these things that he had taken out of the house. He'd taken out brochures, and buttons, and stuff, but we would have given him those if he had walked into the campaign. Things like I belonged to the League of Women Voters, the Vietnam Veterans against the War, just regular stuff. But the "She wins, we win" really bugged them.

JOHNSON: What was the real meaning behind that? What were you hoping to convey with that slogan?

SCHROEDER: Just that people thought that it would be a whole new era. It would be a very different—obviously, we have been the plaintiffs on the busing suit, we have been on the fair housing board, the Young Democrats, all of these things, and as I say, the gentleman I was running against had been the district attorney who had closed down "I Am Curious (Yellow)" the movie. He would close down restaurants that served hippies because he thought they were a health hazard. But he was a big deal; people liked him. He was outgoing. He wasn't big; he was small actually. And that was one of the crazy things for when I would debate him, he would call me "Little Patsy," as he looked up at me. He just couldn't believe that anybody was going to vote for me.

He also had—now this tells you how things have changed. He had all these young women dress up in these little outfits all alike, that were "Mike's girls," and they would be out there. So, it was just, I was such a contrast. So the "we win" means we're really tired of all this stuff. {laughter} We want to go a different way. But we were never really convinced that 52 percent of the people were as tired of it as we were. {laughter} Thank goodness they were.

JOHNSON: You mentioned that you didn't want to put just Pat on the button, because you wanted people to know that a woman was running. How important was gender? How important of an issue was gender in your campaign?

SCHROEDER: That's really a good question. It was very frustrating; when I announced for Congress, the newspaper said, "Denver housewife runs for Congress." They didn't even put my name in. I kept thinking, "Well, yes, I'm a housewife, but I'm also a Harvard lawyer. I also work at a university; I'm a hearing officer." So it was really a problem from day one, from that standpoint. Women's rights were starting to come to the fore. They weren't quite there but they were beginning, it was all bubbling. A lot of people were absolutely horrified because I had two children, two little children. And I will never forget when I won. So many people said, "Oh, I don't know how you're going to do this." And I was kind of the same way. "I don't know how I'm going to do it either but I guess I've got to do it, so let's figure this out."

I'll never forget, getting a phone call from Bella [Savitzky] Abzug, and I thought, "Oh." I'd never met her, but I thought, "Oh, finally, somebody who's going to say, 'Yes, that's great.'" And she goes, "I hear you have two kids." I said, "Yes, I have a two-year-old and a six-year-old." "I don't think you can do the job," she said. "I don't know how you're going . . ." I'm like, "Oh." {laughter} So it wasn't even just being a woman, it was being a young woman with little kids, and that really threw people for a loop.

JOHNSON: Was your age a big factor too, in the campaign?

SCHROEDER: Yes, yes.

JOHNSON: Because you were very young.

SCHROEDER: I was 31 and just a few months older than Liz [Elizabeth] Holtzman, who I think was the youngest woman who ever ran. So the idea I was young, I had young children, what was I thinking, and when I came the then-Speaker of the House, wonderful Carl [Bert] Albert, he kept saying to my husband, "Raise your hand," and Jim kept saying, "It's her." And he'd look at me and he'd say, "No, raise your hand, I've got to swear you in." And he said, "No, no, no, it's her." And we would go to all of these events and they would come and say to me, "You're standing in the wrong place, the Member is supposed to be in front." And he'd say, "It's her." I think he got so tired of saying, "It's her."

WASNIEWSKI: You've alluded to this a little bit, by talking about the average campaign contribution being $7.50, but how much of an issue was fundraising for your campaign, and were there any women's groups that were able to offer support?

SCHROEDER: No. No, not in 1972. We're talking prehistoric times. Basically what we did, I always had this theory and practiced it. When I left Congress in '96, my average campaign contribution was $32.50. So, I've always run against the current on this one. But I always had the feeling, if you got money from people in your district, even if it was a dollar, they probably had four or five friends. So it reverberated into votes. If I had gotten lots of money from the outside—which I didn't from the DCCC, or from the labor unions, or whatever—then then you've really got to spend a lot more of it trying to find people in your district, with TV ads or something, and it starts to get really expensive. But we did lots and lots of wine and cheese parties and coffees and that type of thing. That's how we did it.

JOHNSON: So when you were elected, it was a small group of women. You were one of 14 women at the time. Because there were so few of you, did you gravitate towards each other once you were in the House?

SCHROEDER: Well, yes and no. I remember sitting down next to the then dean of the women, who was a woman named Leonor [Kretzer] Sullivan from Missouri, and she was the chairman of a committee. And I said, "I'm Pat Schroeder, I'm new here, and you're my dean, what should I call you?" She said, "My name is Mrs. John Sullivan." And I said, "Yes, I know that. What should I call you?" She said, "You can call me by my name. My name is Mrs. John Sullivan." So I thought, well we're not going to have a lot of bonding here.

We had, at that time, I think it was almost half of the women here had inherited—not inherited really, but had run for their husband's seats after their husband had died. Not all of them, but some of them, like Mrs. John Sullivan, thought they weren't just the woman. They were carrying forward, his agenda, whatever that was. There were also the Patsy [Takemoto] Minks and the Bella Abzugs, and Shirley [Anita] Chisholm. Yes, there was a nice bonding there, and then there's the others. Oh, Martha, from Michigan. She was terrific, Martha[Wright] Griffiths. But there was the other group that wasn't quite there yet and that's why we didn't have a women's caucus. Fourteen was small enough, but if you take about half of them out, that's seven. We've got to at least have double digits. So it took a while to get a women's caucus going.

WASNIEWSKI: You joined four other freshmen women at the beginning of that 93rd Congress; Yvonne [Brathwaite] Burke, Liz Holtzman, Marjorie [Sewell] Holt, Barbara [Charline] Jordan. Later on, two widows succeeded their husbands.

SCHROEDER: That's right.

WASNIEWSKI: Lindy [Corinne Claiborne (Lindy)] Boggs and Cardiss Collins.

SCHROEDER: Absolutely.

WASNIEWSKI: What kind of bond did you have with that group? Was that a special bond, with the freshmen Members of that Congress?

SCHROEDER: Oh, yes. Barbara Jordan was wonderful. She would come out and campaign and do things. Yvonne Burke was terrific. They were all terrific, they were very good. Marjorie Holt, I think really wasn't quite sure she wanted to be with the group, but she was friendly. But no, we were a lively bunch. It was a whole new day.

JOHNSON: A couple of those women that we mentioned were African-American women; there were a few. Did they have many barriers, even more barriers, do you think, than you had? What was their experience like from your perspective?

SCHROEDER: Well, Shirley Chisholm, I had been very excited about her when she ran for President, and as she said, it was almost worse being a woman than being African American at that time, although what I think the problem was, is at that time, the [Congressional] Black Caucus was all-male. And so when she comes into it, they're not so sure she should be the one of the group that runs for President, and they're not so sure she should be running for chairman of the caucus, which she did—those types of things. So she had a lot of pushback among her fellow male colleagues in the Black Caucus.

Yes, I think it was hard. Yvonne Burke was such a star—she was so gorgeous and so beautiful. And Barbara Johnson was unbelievable. She was like the voice of God. Everybody adored her—too bad that she didn't stay. They

were all wonderful in their own right, and I think there were other people a little jealous of them because of where they were and the attention they got. There's a lot of jealousy on the Hill. I don't know if you've noticed that, but a lot of jealousy, and a lot of egos and yes, all sorts of problems that you have to deal with.

JOHNSON: Did any of the women that you spoke of before, even someone like a Bella Abzug, who was here just a little bit before you, or Shirley Chisholm, or some of the women, like Martha Griffiths, did they serve as a mentor for you when you first came in?

SCHROEDER: Martha was wonderful. Martha was the introducer of the ERA [Equal Rights Amendment]. I still think about it. Martha quit because her husband was so ill. Had she stayed, she would have been chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, rather than Danny [Daniel David] Rostenkowski. It's sad. Shirley left early too, because her husband had been injured in an automobile accident. Barbara Jordan left early too, because she had a very tough time. She came from a very big state and as she said, when the Texas delegation gets together, nobody has a clue if the other guys show up or not. It's just a bunch of guys. But if I don't come, it's like, "Where was she?" And then almost every woman in the state of Texas adopted her as their special representative, but you don't get extra staff or anything. So she was just slammed with work, with people expecting her to be everywhere in Texas and do absolutely everything and answer every letter. I think they just wore her out. And Yvonne Burke, I think too; she had a young child while she was there. We had a lot of fun having all sorts of celebrations about that, but she got tired and went home. Life was easier than commuting back and forth to California.

It was a shame that we lost all of that, because they were really, such strong and wonderful women, but women have these different roles and they're very hard to make work. We were much more—well, I don't know, I'm sure there's some men that are equally as concerned about all those roles, but women seem to feel it very strongly. I know a good example. When I was doing family medical leave, I had both men and women able to take it. I used to go in the cloakroom and all these men would say, "If you would take men out of it, I would be for it," or "If you leave men in there, they're going to ask me to baby-sit at home, and I'm not going to be asked to do these things." Two wonderful men really helped me. One was Teddy [Edward Moore (Ted)] Kennedy, who took family leave when his son was hurt, and the other was Richard [Andrew] Gephardt, who suddenly got it when his son was injured. All of a sudden it was like, "Boing!" Now, you didn't have to do that with women; women got it right away. These guys were very good; they picked it up and we went on and we kept men in it, but for a couple years there, it was really very scary and there was really pressure to take men out. And as I say, a lot of these women just had a lot of pressure and decided to leave.

Those were the main mentors. I would say Martha Griffiths was kind of the real dean of the group. She was very proud of the women coming in. Bella was always, you know just a kick, and Patsy Mink. Patsy Mink was unbelievable. She was a real star in her own right. I kept thinking, I can't complain about commuting to Denver, because she goes to Hawaii.

JOHNSON: Did they offer you any advice that you remember, anything specific?

SCHROEDER: I think they basically just were trying to say, you know you're going to get asked much tougher questions probably, which used to happen all the time. You're going to constantly have people writing about your clothes and your

hair. Folks used to even send me money, asking me to go get my hair dyed or get a haircut. I don't think any male in Congress has ever gotten that. When we used to get together, in the women's reading room, we would just laugh about some of the things people would say. People would say things like, "How do you wear your hair when you're dressed up?" I would think, "Really?" I remember one reporter went on the air in Denver and we were all laughing about it, saying, "Pat Schroeder couldn't be here tonight. Her plaid dress was at the cleaners." I mean, "Really?" And there's always somebody that believes it. They all had stories like that, and we would, I suppose, more than mentoring, we would share them, because you either cry or you laugh. You may as well laugh and say eventually it will change, we hoped.

WASNIEWSKI: Did you get advice about getting onto certain committees and how to go about doing that?

SCHROEDER: Oh, man. No. I had already figured out what I wanted to do. I figured out I wanted to be on Post Office and Civil Service, because we had a lot of civil servants in Denver, and Judiciary eventually. But what I really wanted, because I figured all the money was going there, was Armed Services. I also knew how to fly a plane and I figured there weren't any women on the committee and it was very important to have a woman's viewpoint, too. Men said it was it's all about protecting women and children. And they were sucking up all the money, so there was never any money for education or anything else that I wanted because it was, "Oh no, we've got to have a strong defense."

So I thought okay, I want to be on that committee, and that started a real firestorm because the chairman did not want to put me on the committee. In 1973, when I got sworn in, there was an entirely different way of getting on committees. The Ways and Means Committee made the assignments then

and Wilbur [Daigh] Mills was then chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. This is life's little quirky things that you never know about at the time. Now, after I had gotten elected, I got this giant cheese from Wilbur Mills. And I thought, "I know who he is, but I have never seen him, shaken his hand. Why this cheese?"—Didn't think much about it. And then I got a call and he said, "I'm in charge of all of the committee assignments. What would you like to do?" So I thought, "Okay, well this is my chance." I wanted to be on Armed Services. Well, he kind of gulps but he said something like, "Well, yes, yes, it will probably go in the hopper and who knows what." Anyway, lo and behold, I'm on the Armed Service Committee. Wow! Everybody was surprised, "What happened?"

Well, later on we found out what happened, because Mr. Mills was discovered with his Argentine Firecracker, who was wading out in the Tidal Basin. It became a huge scandal. I knew Eliot Janeway, who was a big economist in New York. Suddenly I've got all the pieces put together. Eliot Janeway's wife and Wilbur Mills' wife were very good friends, and for some reason they were really interested in my campaign. They kept telling Chairman Mills, "Here's this young woman with these kids, running out in Colorado, isn't this interesting?" So they kept nagging Wilbur. Number two. Wilbur is so busy with the Argentine Firecracker, he doesn't have time to go home and campaign much. His wife's out campaigning all the time and she kind of has a mini stroke; one side of her face kind of froze. He starts feeling a little guilty, as well he should, and apparently she said, "I want you to do for that woman, whatever she wants." {laughter} So apparently, I gave him a pretty high bar, but he did it, and that's how I got on. I really thought it was my qualifications and my ability to make my case. It wasn't that at all. It was called spouse guilt—guilt about the Argentine Firecracker.

JOHNSON: Once you're on the committee, what kind of welcome did you receive?

SCHROEDER: None. No welcome at all on the committee. The interesting thing is it was the first time Ways and Means had overruled a veto from a chairman. The chairman of a committee had the right to veto a new Member. They would say we're recommending these Members, and if they didn't want them, they could veto it and that would be the end of it. The chairmen were then called the "College of Cardinals," and one cardinal would never overrule another's veto. So, Wilbur Mills, with his wife's voice in his ear, decided to override Chairman [Felix Edward] Hébert's veto.

I show up the first day and there was also Ron [Ronald V.] Dellums, an African American from Oakland, who had been elected two years before me. They put him on the committee and I do not know whether he had been vetoed or not. But it was very clear that he [the chairman] was not really excited about having an African American and a girl on his committee.

So we walk in and we're feeling pretty good, and he starts going off about, "This is absolutely horrible." He is bellowing like a bull elephant out in the jungle. "This is the worst thing that's ever happened. It's not even worth running for Congress any more. They've taken away all your power. There's nothing left." And he says, "However, I still have the power to determine how many seats are at the dais, and these two people are only worth half of the rest of my Members, so they're getting one chair." So Ron and I kind of looked at each other and we both had been in the antiwar movement, and the thing was, "Okay, now what do we do?" And we decided that we'd walk in with great dignity and we share a chair. So we sat there, cheek-to-cheek. Barney Frank used to always say it's the only half-assed thing I did when I was in Congress, but I'm not sure that's true. {laughter} But there we were and it was interesting because none of the rest of the committee even

pretended to notice. They were all there basically to support their own districts and their own bases, and they'd never want to upset the chairman.

So, later on, after several meetings, one of the staff was very nice and kind of put a folding chair out there. {laughter} It was crazy, just nuts, and it got better. I went to see him, thinking, "Well, I ought to at least go see him." He gave me a book he had written and he signed it. It said, "The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away. I am the Lord, don't forget." His name was Hébert, ("A-bear") spelled like we would say "he-burt," but they pronounced it "A-bear." He was from New Orleans, Louisiana. It was what we called a boll weevil Democrat—you'd back Nixon and all of that. So, it was really clear that we weren't going to get along real well. And he showed me his office. He said he had an adult room and an adultery room. I was like, "Well that's really interesting." So, I, being the shy, retiring westerner that I am, had buttons made up that said, "Help, I have Hébert by the tail," and handed them out to my colleagues. *Redbook Magazine* came and did a cover story of me with the "Help, I have Hébert by the tail," on the cover.

So, in '73, there was the war in Israel, and the committee is supposed to go over to take a look at what's going on. It was over Thanksgiving. I'll never forgive the Air Force for this. We all go out, get on the Air Force plane that we're supposed to go on. Every seat had a copy of the *Redbook Magazine*. I was like totally ostracized. Nobody wanted to be near me. {laughter} Yes, so it was an interesting time. I thought I needed a food-taster.

WASNIEWSKI: You mentioned earlier, how important it was for you to have a woman's perspective on Armed Services. Can you elaborate on that a little bit more?

SCHROEDER: Right, right. Well, there were lots of things. Number one, when I was a child, my father had been called up in World War II. He taught flying in the then

Army Air Corps. He never went overseas but we moved around a lot. I had always kind of watched what the military does and I always noticed that they really didn't care about families at all. Families would just kind of drag along behind. There really wasn't much different than the Civil War. So I really thought, with my concern about families, and women, and children, that that was essential to have somebody asking those questions that they really didn't want to answer. So I thought that was part of it.

Part of it is I wanted to see where the money went. And, of course, those were the days when we were finding $6,000 toilet seats and just ridiculous things, just ridiculous things. The money was just . . . so that was very frustrating, too. And I always thought that we should be savvy about what this is. You can't have that program because we've got to get another aircraft carrier to protect you, so you won't sleep with a nightlight at night. And I'm thinking, "I live in Denver, what is this aircraft carrier going to do? We don't have enough water to float a duck."

Then there were also a lot of issues in Denver. One in particular, as a pilot, I used to fly out of Denver Stapleton [Airport]. It's now closed. But I would look down and there were all these things sitting there on this place called Rocky Mountain Arsenal, at the end of the runway. I remember as a civilian asking the military, "What is that stuff?" It looked like nerve gas to me, or something serious. "What is all that at the end of the runway?" They said, "Well, it's classified." And I made a couple inquiries, and then, finally, some general said to me, "It's kept the Russians out of Denver." I thought, "Well, that's interesting." {laughter} So, there wasn't much I could do about that. It also became a local reason I wanted to get on the committee to find out what in the world this stuff was. I had a nightmare that if somebody ever wanted

to terrorize Denver, you take off a plane and you say, "I'm going to run it into those things unless you do A, B, C, D."

So, I ask and they no longer had a "classified" excuse, they had to tell me, and of course it was nerve gas, it was every awful thing you could think of. All of it had been nicely congregated in the Rocky Mountain Arsenal. {laughter} So, I then started my long process of trying to get that all cleaned up.

I also thought there were a lot of young women who wanted to go into the military and really wanted to participate. I had the Air Force Academy, obviously, in Colorado, and, of course, they were all told no, they couldn't go. I would go up there and I would say to the young men, "Why don't you want women?" "Well, they could wear their hair longer." "Does it interfere with the mission?" "No." "Do you want to wear your hair longer?" "No." "So what's the issue again?" "Well, they can wear earrings." "Do you want to wear earrings?" "No." "Does it interfere with the mission?" "No." We go through all this stuff, and it was a very, very, long, long time before we finally could get young women in. They've just finally opened all of the slots, to women this year. It has been a long slog. But, protecting families, those young lionesses in the military, dealing with the sexual harassment many of them went through, was why it was very important to have women on the committee.

JOHNSON: There weren't very many of you during your time.

SCHROEDER: No there weren't. And, the other issue that I did forget about, is people forget in World War II, they commissioned a lot of women to fly supply aircraft back and forth to Europe. They put them in uniform, they were under military command, and they were told they would be treated like other

military. Well, guess what? They weren't. And it took us many years, even in the Congress, to get that straightened out. A lot of them were gone by the time we finally got it straightened out. Just somehow, women were always dispensable. It's like, "Okay, that was nice of you, go home now, we're done." So, there were an awful lot of issues that I really thought it was important to have another look, some more eyes looking at it on the committee.

JOHNSON: Was there any kind of bond with the few women that were there? I know Marjorie Holt was on the committee, and Beverly [Barton Butcher] Byron was there as well. Did you work together on any issues?

SCHROEDER: Not really well, I'm sorry to say. Because I was so interested in the nerve gas, this was a great example with my dear chairman, F. Eddie Hébert again. There was a nerve gas international conference in Geneva, and I went to the Speaker [Carl Albert] and I said this is terribly important because this, Denver, Colorado, is apparently the number one storage point, all of it at the end of my runway. So he appointed me as his representative to go. I knew my chairman wouldn't. But then, the traditional thing was, the Speaker didn't have any travel funds, so if he's appointed someone, he just sent it to the committee chairman and they had the travel funds and that was it. So he sends it to Hébert and Hébert is like, "No way." So I went back to the Speaker and I said, "No problem, I'll buy my ticket." I'll go over on Icelandic, I'll drive down, you know I'll go to this, and so I did it. Hébert sent Marjorie Holt over as his sole representative, in this giant aircraft. Here I am with two kids, driving down the highway, from Luxembourg, because that's where the Icelandic stopped. {laughter} Never mind. I got there, I found out what I needed to know and went home, I didn't care. So no, it

wasn't always warm and friendly, which is really too bad, because we should have been better at that.

END OF PART ONE ~ BEGINNING OF PART TWO

JOHNSON: We're back on, okay. So we've talked about a lot of issues so far, but one thing that we definitely wanted to ask was about the atmosphere of the House when you were first elected. How would you describe that, especially as a young woman coming to the House?

SCHROEDER: {laughter} Well, let's see. I had several policemen attempt to arrest me for impersonating a Congresswoman. I don't know what that meant, but they'd say, "You young secretaries think you can just drive into this parking area," or whatever, "or at the airport."

One of my favorite things was an older gentleman from Texas taking me to coffee saying, "I don't understand why you're here. This place is about Chivas Regal, $1,000 bills, beautiful women, and Learjets. Why did you come?" {laughter} I thought, "Oh, is that what it's about? Silly me." So there was a wide, wide range. There were some people who were very kind obviously, and very helpful, but an awful lot of people really thought I must have been a fluke and I would be defeated two years later, so not to pay much attention to me. So there was the whole range of things, and then other people who were just appalled. "Shouldn't you be home? What's wrong with you?"

JOHNSON: How did you respond to those people and those kinds of comments?

SCHROEDER: It's really just not even worth your time. You just kind of smile at them and walk away. You're never going to get anywhere with them. They've got their own idea and you can always tell a Congressman but you can't tell them much. {laughter} I learned very early, so you just smile and say, "Well, yes, I guess we differ," or something, and leave.

JOHNSON: Were there certain parts of the institution that were more difficult for you to get access to as a woman?

SCHROEDER: Oh, absolutely. When I came, there were no women doorkeepers, there were no women police officers on Capitol Hill. There were all sorts of areas that were off limits to women. We were not supposed to go there. We didn't even have a restroom. It was like, what are we going to all have bladder infections? I remember there was one woman in the Senate—Senator [Margaret Chase] Smith from Maine. And when she retired, the Senators, quick, made a TV room out of her restroom. Yes, like there wouldn't be any more women coming. "So, well, we had that one and she's gone, so yay! Let's take over the space." No, there was an awful lot of that.

Women Pages, we didn't have any young girls for Pages. It was a male plantation. I'll never forget, walking out one time. There's a porch right off of the Speaker's Lobby, and I thought well, I'll go out and sit on the porch. It was a nice day. Oh my word, it was like I had violated every law in the book. There were guys out there sunbathing, they had taken their trousers off. I'm like, "I'm sorry, it never occurred to me. Blah-blah-blah-blah." So, yes, and of course the gym was a place where many things happen. They finally decided to put a gym in this building here, in Rayburn, for women, and it had 20 hairdryers and a ping-pong table, and a masseuse or something. It was like, "Is that your definition of a gym? Can I see what the men have for a gym?" And, of course, the swimming pool, no women could go in the

swimming pool. You just couldn't do that. You were really kind of cut out of a lot of those things. I think even socializing, people were afraid to socialize with us really. I don't know why. It was an interesting time. It was a different time.

WASNIEWSKI: I heard you tell a great story once, about a dinner you were invited to with Kay Graham, the *Washington Post*.

SCHROEDER: Oh, yes.

WASNIEWSKI: And Jackie Onassis.

SCHROEDER: This was early on, and the first committee they gave me was like a "nothing burger" committee. You're a freshman; what can they give you? They gave me Commemorative Days and Holidays. Okay. So nobody paid much attention, except, we were going into the Bicentennial. I got busy and we did all sorts of things. We were kicking stuff out. Jackie Onassis had edited a book called *Remember the Ladies*, which was from Abigail Adams's letter to John Adams, when they were writing the Constitution. Of course, he didn't but at least she tried. And the book was about colonial women and women's history. It was an excellent book and we thought that this should be *the* bicentennial book, when it comes out. It all went through the House unanimously because nobody was paying much attention. It was like, "We don't have to be on the floor for this, let's just . . . voice vote."

So, all of a sudden I get this invitation to come to Katharine Graham's house. I think I must be a really important freshman. I get there and here's Katharine at one end of the table and Jacqueline Onassis at the other end of the table, and all these Senators, and the issue was, they weren't going to have any part of her book. {laughter} I remember sitting there listening to this thinking, "What am I doing here?" These are probably the two most

powerful women I can think of in this city, and these Senators are saying, "No." And they're telling them very nicely, things like, "Now our vision for women for the bicentennial is beautification projects." And we were all like, "We can beautify and read, we could do both. We could really—we think we could work all of this together. We're not against beautification. We just think we could do a little more than that. A lot of us are educated now, we can read, you know?" They had no part of it.

So finally, their great compromise, by the time we got to dessert, was the book wouldn't be here in America, but they would put the book in the U.S. information libraries overseas. And of course Ronald Reagan comes in four years later and shuts down all the libraries. There you go, never saw the book. {laughter} It did make me drive home thinking, "If that's that controversial, what is the problem?" They just weren't going to allow it and they didn't.

JOHNSON: You mentioned the gym, and the pool, and the areas that it was difficult for women to access. How did you and other women, how did you eventually break down those barriers?

SCHROEDER: Well, there got to be more and more women and we did finally get a women's caucus, and more and more, we were able to speak with one voice about those kind of issues. We couldn't on all, but on those kind of issues it became really, we should be full Members and not kind of like mascots or something. We're not cheerleaders here. And so gradually it came around, but it was very slow. I don't even know now if the gym has really ever worked out. What they finally did, I think, was they put a dressing room for the women several floors down below the gym, so it really became a little difficult to use when we were in session, because to dress, to get up, to go back to redress, to get back up to get over to the floor. I mean, you've got to be a really fast dresser to do it, so I'm not quite sure where it went. Personally, I

was so bloody busy with the family and the kids and everything else that I must say, I didn't probably allocate as much time to that as I was to fitness issues.

There was that. There was the wonderful suffragette statue that was in the basement that should have been brought upstairs. There were all sorts of little things like that, that were just really snubs. Really, I don't know any other way to say it. It was just like a snub to women. "We really don't want to know that you ever did anything. What could you possibly do that was important?" The image was kind of, men came here on dangerous sailing ships, but we arrived on cruise ships, getting our nails done. And they put us up on pillars, and we just really didn't need to be in all this. It was pretty astounding.

WASNIEWSKI: In those early years, how did you—was it an adjustment for you to handle the media attention you were getting, coming out of your candidacy and being one of a small group of women in Congress? What was that like, being in that glare?

SCHROEDER: It never really bothered me. If they want to talk to me, I'm happy to talk to them. I realized a lot of them thought, "Oh my gosh! What is she going to say next?" My thought was always it helped me communicate with my constituents. I didn't do newsletters because I thought they were phony. I had made so much fun of my opponents' newsletters when I was running for office, that I didn't dare do it. {laughter} So, if the media came it was good, it was another time.

The wonderful thing that probably actually saved my skin, because I didn't have any money and I didn't have any real way to communicate that much, but at that time, there was the fairness doctrine. Ronald Reagan got rid of it,

but there was the fairness doctrine. So, my staff would watch, and if somebody got on the air and said, "I can't believe what that idiot did today, yada-yada-yada-yada-yada," I could ask for equal time. And I could say, "Well no, let me explain to you what I did today. What I did today was A-B-C-D." And I think that saved my skin. You can't do that anymore. That's a huge, huge problem.

I remember toward the end of my career, Rush Limbaugh would start calling me, "feminazi" all the time, which I thought was really an awful word. You can't get on the air. You can phone, but they don't have to let you through. They don't have to take your commercials, they can just keep going. The fairness doctrine is totally gone, and you can have it all one-sided if you want to. I don't think a lot of people understand that. I've often said, "I'm not sure I would have survived in this kind of climate." That fairness doctrine saved my skin many a time because somebody would get on and just go off. You'd say, "Well, I could tell you why I did it."

Oh, I remember, some guy went off—I love this—that I had voted to send rockets to the Eastern Bloc countries. This was during the Cold War. I thought, "Really, what in the world?" And we looked it up and there was a unanimous consent vote for Nerf rockets—those little kids' rockets—that was going to a toy fair in Czechoslovakia. So I went on and I said, "I did, let me tell you about it. It's a Nerf rocket, and there was a toy fair, and everyone in the Congress voted for it. Now, what else do you have to say?" And so you could do those things. Negative research is not anything new. They were doing it then and we got it 24–7, but you just put it out there. {laughter}

JOHNSON: You had said earlier, that people asked you how you could come to Congress and having little kids, and Bella Abzug saying is this even possible? So how did you do it? How were you able to balance both worlds?

SCHROEDER: You know I'm not sure I know. There are whole years I don't think I can reconstruct. I remember being so tired sometimes, that I would sit down and I would see holes in the wall that I knew weren't there. {laughter} It was just sheer exhaustion. We did lots of things.

I remember telling this to one of my favorite pediatricians in the world, T. Berry Brazelton, who was so helpful to me on children's issues. He one time said, "How do you work this out with your kids?" And I said, "I am so afraid to tell you, you will just have a stroke." And he said, "No, no, tell me." And I said, "Look, I'm a lawyer, my husband is a lawyer. My husband is an international lawyer, his big office is in Bangkok." We have this crazy life, what can I say? But I said, "We're both lawyers and so we sign contracts with our kids. We have family meetings once a month. We have a traveling gavel. You have to be three to hold the gavel, but everybody takes a turn. We take notes, it's 'What's upsetting you? What isn't?'"

Our kids like to travel, which is good, so we said to them, they were here, they lived in Washington and we said to them you can go to Denver with me—they did not have a family allowance obviously, so we had to pay for them every time they went. "So we're in this pickle, where we don't have enough money to send you to private school and have you travel back and forth whenever you want to do it, or go with us internationally or do whatever you want to do. So you can either get really good grades in public school, and we'll put the private school money in a fund and you can travel, use it for travel. Or if you don't get really good grades, then there really is no option, you're going to go to private school." Worked like a charm, never had to worry about it.

Reporters used to always ask me the question you asked, about how can you be a mother? And they would also say, "What is your biggest fear as a

freshman Congresswoman?" And I would say, "That my housekeeper quits." And they'd say, "Nobody ever says that." I said, "If they were a woman with two children that's what they would say because my life stops if the housekeeper quits. You don't understand, my housekeeper hangs the moon as far as I'm concerned." So it was a very busy, active time.

I think the other thing, we had to deal with Yellow Cab, that I could call any time and they would send a certified person to pick up the children and bring them, if we got stranded anywhere. I was kind of Yellow Cab mother of the year, I think. I often would have to call a neighbor and say, "Can you help?" Because this place is totally unpredictable, and it was always when you least expected, everything goes crazy.

I remember one time thinking, early on, "What can I do to thank neighbors?" And I thought "Well, women like flowers, so I would send flowers." I'll never forget the florist one day saying, "Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?" And I said, "No, what?" "Why are you always sending flowers to women?" And I said, "Oh my gosh because they bailed me out." Anyway, you just find whatever you can to try and put it all together. Actually the kids, I think really loved it. They went back and forth to Colorado, they had a great time. They traveled the world. They were probably healthier than if I was there all the time sculpting on them. I probably would have micromanaged their lives and they would have hated it.

JOHNSON: Were your colleagues supportive, especially when your children were young?

SCHROEDER: Oh, no. I would get on a plane and it was really funny, they would all pretend like they had no idea who I was. We came with pet rabbits, like Franklin Delano Rabbit we had. And we had dogs, we had ponies. Oh, we had everything. You get on the [plane]. We were like a traveling circus. And

they'd usually spill at least two Cokes and a glass of milk on me before I got off. I was always sticky. Crayolas and oh, it was just . . . People just would be horrified, but that's how we were.

One of my favorite days, I'm trying to look professional, right? Okay, and if you're in your early '30s, it's hard enough as it is anyway, and it's always been hard for me because I'm much too casual. But, we got on with Franklin Delano Rabbit. He has to go with us. And the airline said, "We've got a problem." We were in the tourist section and there was already an animal back there and they could only have one animal per section. But they said there's nothing up in first class, so we'll put Franklin up under the seat. Okay. So I see this dear little lady up in the first class and she's down there, "Oh, isn't that cute?" And this is back in the days when in first class, they used to roll down the aisle, a little salad bowl, make everybody salad. I'm just thinking, "No, she really wouldn't, she wouldn't." She gets her salad, she opens the door, and Franklin ran for freedom. The kids are out of their seats screaming, "Franklin!" Running up and down, you can't imagine. And I'm sitting there smiling. We're on our way to Denver, everybody's from Denver. "Hello, it's your Congresswoman here." We can do these stories all night long. You just finally say, "I'm probably never going to look professional." It's just not going to work, not with young children.

WASNIEWSKI: I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about the beginnings of the women's caucus, which was created in 1977. Just the background behind that.

SCHROEDER: Absolutely.

WASNIEWSKI: And some salient memories that you might have.

SCHROEDER: Wonderful Peggy [Margaret M.] Heckler decided that this needed to be done, bless her heart. And she had us all over to her house for dinner, and of course most of us were very enthusiastic. Some people were a little leery. It was like, "Well, you don't want to put too much in, in dues, and we really want it so we're all together," and so forth, and so on. So that's really how it started out. And after it got started, and I think we built a lot of confidence.

Peggy then came back and had gotten permission to take this whole group to China. It was the year of the woman, the international year of the woman. And Mao was still alive—we're still talking a long time ago. So we were only the second U.S. delegation going into China. It was really quite an event. They weren't really ready for us—it was so wonderful—nor was the Air Force. They flew us to Guam to refuel and I would say, all of the women there were basically fairly antiwar and they decided to take us over to show us the B-52s they used for the bombings in Vietnam. It was like, "This is really not your audience really. I don't think we're going to be too happy about this."

Then we went on in to China and Bella Abzug had brought her husband Martin. I remember there was this big ruckus in the hall of the people and her husband was over there explaining how the stock market worked to these guys. These guys were hysterical. My husband and Yvonne's husband were just awful. They went off and they would go on shopping trips and they would try on these silk jackets. Poor China, they had no idea what to do with us. I don't know what they thought we were going to be, but we weren't what they thought we were going to be. We were not docile little kittens. We had these very aggressive, Abzug, Mink, Schroeder, Holtzman.

But that trip built a lot of camaraderie among the group and then later on, Liz Holtzman took it over. And then when I took it over, we decided we

would let men in who had good voting records, and we could then support bills if we had a majority vote of the caucus. But it had to kind of evolve, so everybody felt more comfortable with each other, which is kind of strange isn't it? Why did we feel so uncomfortable? I don't know, but some did.

JOHNSON: One of the early issues that the caucus took up was ERA and trying to extend the period for ratification for states. What do you remember about that, and especially the caucus's role.

SCHROEDER: I absolutely do not understand why all these years, we still don't have women in the Constitution. We got it through in Colorado and we had a lot of fun. We had a group called Ladies Against Women and we had buttons that said, "I'd rather be ironing," and "Fifty-nine cents is enough," and all this kind of stuff, and we had little hats and gloves. And whenever a big conservative came, we always would come and try and get in the front seat, cheer, and want to have our pictures with him. We always carried an ironing board for registration, for all the people who wanted to register. And they knew we were putting them on, but we weren't being disruptive, so they couldn't throw us out. I really thought we ought to have some fun with this, right?

They were quite into having fun, but I never could understand why the hard sell. No one has ever put time limits on the Constitution, except when it was for women. It's women, so you only get so many days. So we were all very frustrated. Liz Holtzman was fantastic. She had really won because the gentleman she defeated had been against the ERA, and she was kind of our titular leader in all of it and we were just very exasperated. I hear they still introduce it every year and it still sits there.

To me the most interesting thing was that after it was over, there was a survey done, of all the newspapers and all the TV shows and everything, trying to

understand what image people got, of the Equal Rights Amendment. None of them ever printed what it was. It was just a few words, but the coverage was basically always somebody standing up and saying, "This is really very important; this is how you solidify women's rights." And the other side is saying, "Oh my gosh, we'll have unisex bathrooms, you'll be drafted, your mother will be wearing combat boots." It was just this really shocker thing. We did have the Congressional Research Service do a survey on all the things that would have to be changed in legislation if we passed the Equal Rights Amendment. That was a huge, long list, just a huge, long list. We thought, "Well this will help." {laughter} It didn't help either. We tried all sorts of things, but obviously it's just never been an agenda item for the rest of Congress, and I must say it's very discouraging.

WASNIEWSKI: This is kind of a two-part question. What role do you think the caucus has played in the institution of Congress? And also as a founder, looking back, how would you rate how it's operated over time? What are some of its strengths, some of its weaknesses?

SCHROEDER: Well, I think that for a while, we were doing a great job. We did the Women's Economic Equity Act every term. Everybody brought their bills together. It was all about improving the economic status of women. We put it in one big bill, then we broke it out in little bills. We tried to push whatever we could, wherever we were, on our committees. One of the ways we were able to do that so well is that at that time, the Congress would allow us to take—as you know, each Congressional Office has so many slots for staff. We could take a half a staff slot and move it to the caucus, and somebody else could take a half of one and put it to the caucus. And so we could then hire a staff that worked for all of us in the caucus, and their one

focus was on these bills and what to do. That was great, and they had an office here on the Hill, so they were very reachable.

We were the largest bipartisan caucus in the Hill, and we got an awful lot of things through. We got the Women's Health Initiative through, oh my goodness, remember that? That was back when we found out that they had done the breast cancer research on men only. They had no women in any National Institutes of Health surveys. They didn't even use female rats. So basically, they knew nothing about women's health. We've got all sorts of bills like that. We got Family Leave, lots of women having equal access to credit. I remember that we passed equal credit then found out that the Federal Reserve interpreted it to mean only for shopping. I remember having {laughter} Arthur Burns, who was then head of the Federal Reserve, over saying, "No it wasn't only for shopping. It doesn't say only for shopping, it says equal access to credit, period." So we got that straightened out. But anyway, we got a lot of things through that were not, there wasn't a lobby for or big money behind, so they would have not happened without the caucus.

When Newt [Newton Leroy] Gingrich became Speaker, he did not like bipartisan caucuses and he particularly did not like ours. He changed the rules so that you couldn't do these half a staff or quarter of a staff transfers, you couldn't do that type of thing, and that caucuses couldn't be on the Hill. So suddenly, you have to raise money from lobbyists, and the staff that you have are off the Hill. I think it's much harder to be effective that way. Getting in and out of here, if you are off the Hill, lots of luck. Raising money for one more thing, when people have to raise money for so much as it is already, it's very hard. So they're struggling onward but it's much, much harder than when I was here, and I think it's really sad.

I think one of the things you really need to be a good Member of Congress is information, good information, solid information. And the best way to get that is to have some people just dedicated to doing the digging, and the reading, and the finding out, and working all of that out. And it's hard to do that office by office because you only have so many staff and they're scattered, trying to cover all the other things that you're into. So the caucus was just a very efficient way to do women's issues.

I also belonged to a defense caucus where we did that. We did several [caucuses]. There was an environmental caucus. It was just a wonderful way to have a very rich amount of research done, in depth, and it's gone and it shows. Excuse me, editorial comment. {laughter}

JOHNSON: FMLA [Family and Medical Leave Act], of course, was a huge issue that you worked on for many years. Can you talk a little bit about your role in getting this legislation passed?

SCHROEDER: Absolutely, yes. I introduced the bill. It took nine years to get the bill signed. The bill that I introduced was very different than what we finally got passed, because we obviously had to water it down a lot and it took a lot to make it through. But to me, every country in the world has done this and they've done it with paid leave. We just keep pretending like, "It's your baby or your job lady, have a nice day."

So it was very, very controversial. I remember a gentleman who represented the chamber of commerces in the South saying, "Little lady, if this passes down here, we're going to have to shut down during hunting season. Everybody's going to count on their babies coming during the hunting season, so they can have these six weeks." I'm like, "Really? Boy, southern women must be a lot different than western women, because I don't know

anybody that's planning to have their babies so they can go out and strap it on their back and go hunting. Woo-hoo, dear, he's on, let's go." No. So it was very hard.

As you know, in 1987, I started out as Gary [Warren] Hart's campaign manager, and then Gary Hart had to leave the presidential race. In a moment of madness, I thought, "All right, well I'll run for President." You know it was way too late and everything. I'd come to my senses in the middle of the summer. In the interim, these absolutely wonderful people got a hold of me. Barry Brazelton and a wonderful guy named Gary David Goldberg, who was writing "Family Ties" then, which was really a hot TV show. And they said, "We really like what you're saying about family issues and all of this, and we're sorry that you got out of the campaign and what can we do?" And I said, "Well I have an idea. Why don't we have a Great American Family tour? I am so frustrated that I can't get these issues front and center, so let's go into the primary states and we'll have a Great American Family tour and we'll get together and we'll talk about family leave, daycare, what we should be doing for the American family and why aren't we doing it, because every other country has done it long ago." They thought that was great, so away we went, on a Great American Family tour through the South. {laughter} We did this for two weeks and we had bigger crowds than any of the candidates, and we recommended that everybody sign, on the back of their checks that they donated, "Not to be cashed until Family Leave passes." We were really trying to stir people up, and we met with editorial boards, we met with all sorts of people.

So, then the nominee, the first George [Herbert Walker] Bush (George Bush One) said that he was for family leave. We were all, "Oh yes, this is great." So I'm thinking, "We are making progress here, this is fantastic." So we come

back, we get it passed, it gets to Bush's desk and he vetoes it. And I'm like, "Excuse me, didn't you say . . ." He said, "I'm for it in concept. I didn't mean I was for it in the law." So I was beyond frustrated.

But one of the states we happened to be in—where we did our little family tour—was Arkansas, and guess who the governor of Arkansas was? It happened to be Bill Clinton. So when Bill Clinton came, bam, we passed that puppy right out of there and it was the first thing he signed. So, thank goodness, that was a wonderful day. We finally got it through after nine years. I was very happy to move it along. And we did a lot of things. We had to put in there that they were going to study it for two years to make sure that businesses didn't crumble all over America like we were told they would. They didn't. We had to take out the paid part, which breaks my heart. We still haven't gotten the paid part.

Just recently, they asked me to please come up here to celebrate the 20th anniversary and I said, "You know what? I'm not celebrating. You guys haven't added a thing, what's to celebrate 20 years ago? We're still at the bottom of the heap. Nobody does as little as we do. It's just that we finally do something." So yes, yes we moved it. And then I wrote a book called *Champion of the Great American Family* that we also put out in 1988, that had all of this stuff that we were doing in the Great American Family tour. But it took a lot of energy and effort to finally get that one bill done, and the fact that we still don't have the rest. [President Barack] Obama talked about paid family leave, thank goodness, but we still don't have it. I guess a couple states and a few places have it, but we're a long way and to me it just makes no sense. I don't understand how every other country has found a way to work this out and we just can't figure it out. I think we're smarter than that.

WASNIEWSKI: You were also one of a group of Congresswomen in the early '90s who marched over to the Senate to urge that Anita Hill have the opportunity to testify about then-Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. What do you remember about that event and the reception over in the Senate to that march.

SCHROEDER: That was a very gray day. First of all, Clarence Thomas, I was very aware of. On Post Office and Civil Service, Mary Rose Oakar, myself, and Gerry [Geraldine Anne] Ferraro, each had subcommittees, and we had, as the three subcommittee chairs, put our committees together to talk about equality, what was going on. And we had Clarence Thomas, chairman of the Commission on Equal Rights, come to testify. And he laughed at us and told us it was a stupid law and "da-da-da-da." So it was so frustrating, to think that this guy didn't believe in what he was supposed to be doing, so no wonder he wasn't doing it. Meanwhile, there he sat.

So, to begin with, we weren't fans of his, shall we say? So suddenly he's up for Supreme Court Justice. Suddenly this wonderful woman says, "I would like to testify." And we looked into her background and she was amazing. She was a southern Baptist all the way through—very straight arrow, straighter than straight. And she had some interesting stories to tell about working with the chairman. She had volunteered to testify and went over and asked to testify—that's how passionate she felt about it—and the committee said, "No, no thank you."

So we got really rather riled about that and one morning, we went in and did one-minute speeches. A wonderful young woman who did my press then, Andrea Camp, I said to her, "What could we do?" She said, "Go outside, walk over to the Senate." We knew they were having their lunch. But she said, "Do it outside so the media sees you, like it's a march. If you do it

inside it won't be as effective. Go up the stairs, go in there and knock on the door." So we did. Well, all the Democratic Senators were meeting for lunch, as they do every week. Knocked on the door and to our shock, the Majority Leader [George John Mitchell] answered the door and said, "We don't let strangers in here." We kind of said, "Strangers? We thought of ourselves as your colleagues, excuse us." And then we said, "See all these people out in the hall behind us, they're press. This is not going to be really pretty. What are you going to do?" So he says, "Come back at a certain time and I will talk to you. Let me find out what's going on." So, we were trying to be fair and we say, "Okay, we'll come back." So we come back and we sit down and we explain to him we wanted Anita Hill to testify. He says, "Well, I'll have to tell you. I'm sorry about this, but I finally got them to say that they'll have her come testify. Not the other women, but she could come, but that the Judiciary Committee chairman had promised Senator [John Claggett] Danforth that he would make this hearing very fast and quick and get this over." We're, "So his promise in the gym, to Senator Danforth, is more important than nominating this Supreme Court Justice?" "Well, your word is your word and the chairman of the committee feels very strongly that that's how it's going to be," said the Majority Leader.

So obviously, they put Anita Hill on early in the morning, when nobody's watching. They put him on, screaming, yelling, hollering about he was being lynched and all this other stuff that he was talking about. They didn't put the other women on and we got him for a Supreme Court Justice. We were very unhappy from a lot of different standpoints—the fact that the Democratic Senators were treating us like they'd never seen us before, that we were trying to invade their space. "Who are you people?" We used to say it always took the Senate longer to get cranked up because they had to iron their togas and everything. But we thought they'd see us, they know who we are, but

apparently they didn't. Then this whole thing about, "You don't understand the rules of the Senate. If someone in the gym gives you their word, then this is how it must be." Well, I'll be. {laughter} We can't even get into our gym, so I guess we didn't know that. I don't know. So anyway, it was really a bad day.

Now, the good news out of it is we got Senator [Dianne] Feinstein and Senator [Barbara] Boxer out of that, and we got a lot of other women elected out of that, because women were mad all over the country. It's not a good way to get elected because we also got Clarence Thomas and that's not been good news.

JOHNSON: In 1992, the press called that year the "Year of the Woman" because there were so many women elected to Congress. Twenty-four new women were elected to the House.

SCHROEDER: That's right.

JOHNSON: What did that feel like for you, to suddenly have more women in the ranks of the House?

SCHROEDER: Well, it was very exciting, and of course that was, I think, the fallout from the hearings that we just talked about, the hearings with Clarence Thomas People were so mad about Anita Hill's treatment. So a lot of women got elected and yet even then, we were not 10 percent of the House. And so I remember walking out there as they're swearing them all in, and one of my colleagues said to me, "Well I hope you're happy, this place is starting to look like a shopping center." I said to him, "Where do you shop, where only 10 percent of the people are women? Really, it looks like a shopping mall to you?" Yes, so there were some people really kind of shocked by it.

When I first got elected, I was in this really idealistic mode of isn't this wonderful? How long do you think it will be before almost half of the House is female? And so I asked the Library of Congress or somebody, what they thought, and they said probably 300 years. Well, I don't know, but I'm beginning to believe maybe they were right, because it has been very incremental, very incremental.

JOHNSON: Earlier when we were talking to you, you mentioned Congresswoman Sullivan and how she was the dean of women when you came in, and then you eventually rose to that position. What did you feel like your role was to other women, in being the dean at that time?

SCHROEDER: Well, we try very hard to not attack each other, and we've tried very hard to mentor new women who were coming in. When women are running it's a very tough thing, and so a lot of us would adopt women who were running for the first time. We tried to work out what we could put in these big packages, that we could get through, and how we might do it. Just basically seeing how much we could get done. I think it was a very important time to get done as much as you could get done, because you never knew what was going to happen next.

JOHNSON: Did you offer any advice to some of these younger women that were coming into the House, that didn't have as much experience as you did?

SCHROEDER: I always said to them, "Well one thing I found is I'm not an actress, so the best thing you can do is say what you think. And then if it turns out later on, you change your mind, you say, 'You know what, I didn't have enough information on that I guess then, and now I think this.'" I really find people are much more forgiving if you just deal with them very honestly, one thing at a time. If you start playing games then you can't remember which game

you played with which group. I also think that women are expected to do so much more, I really find. You're kind of expected to be everywhere and do everything, and that's hard, that's very hard. So, not burning yourself out, all those good things, and having some other women friends makes a big, big difference.

WASNIEWSKI: Do you want to move to the retrospective questions?

JOHNSON: I think so, sure.

WASNIEWSKI: We just have a few general wrap-up questions. We talked about, when we started, how there was this very small group of women when you came into the House, and now there's 108 women in Congress; 88 in the House, 20 in the Senate. Looking back then, looking at now, what role do you see women playing in Congress that's different from when you came in?

SCHROEDER: I think they have a lot more power. The debate academically has always been, you change an institution when women are a critical mass in it. You don't change it by just having one woman in there. Now the question, what a critical mass is, everybody's got a little different number. Well, we're getting closer to a critical mass. When we were 14, there was no one afraid of us, believe me. You could say, "I won't deliver my vote," but that would be about all you could do. But if you get a critical mass and they stick together, they could make a big difference long-term.

I think the women in the Senate have done a very good job with that. I've been very, very impressed with them. When the government shut down, it was the women in the Senate who got together and said, "Hey you know what? This is nonsense. We've got to figure this out." And they did. So, that to me is the role model of what we should be doing, and what I hope women will do in the future as they keep moving in.

JOHNSON: Do you think that your service in the House inspired any women to run or will possibly inspire future women to run for Congress?

SCHROEDER: I hope so, I hope so. But let me tell you a little story. I now live in Florida, and we have a thing called Ruth's List. It's very hard to say because it sounds like "ruthless," but it's Ruth's List. And we do this because we're trying to encourage women to run. Ruth Bryan Owen was the first woman from Florida. What an incredible story. Whenever I got depressed, I thought about how all these early women had to feel, and she was one of the ones I can't even imagine what it was like for her. She had a district that went from Miami to Jacksonville. She drove herself. This was in the '20s. She got creamed in every paper. "Who is this hussy driving this car around by herself? What is she thinking? She's got four kids." And she wins and she shows up and the guy she defeats won't leave because he says she's no longer an American. She's a foreign national because she had married a British officer who was wounded in World War I. This is 1926. It took her a year. She had to then go sue, and finally she got her seat. Now, imagine what that woman went through. And then imagine when she walks out on the floor, the greeting she must have gotten from her colleagues, who were standing with the guy she defeated. That must have been a lot of fun. {laughter} So, whenever I used to think I'd had enough, "Oh," then I'd think, "Well I have it pretty easy compared to what she had."

So I think you put it all in that perspective and hopefully, the real lesson is if there's more of you, and if you really can work together somehow, you can make a difference. Usually, you can always find something that you agree with people on. I think that that's what this Congress has lost of late. It's just much more fun to fire at each other than it is to sit down and talk to each other, and that's a shame.

WASNIEWSKI: If you had a couple sentences of advice to give to a prospective woman candidate who was running for Congress, what would that be?

SCHROEDER: I would say to do it. I think women wait to be discovered. All the books that have come out lately only confirm what I think. They keep saying men will apply for a job if they're only 60-percent qualified, but women have to be 100-percent-plus. They're very cautious about, "Oh, well maybe." Or, "If I have all that, won't somebody find me and ask me to do it?" They're not going to ask you to do it. You're going to have to raise your hand and say, "I'm going to do it. Deal with it." It's getting easier because each generation is getting a little more empowered. But telling women just to do it is terribly important, because if they don't go out there, they'll always find someone else to run. And they're not just going to come knock on your door and say, "Oh, we just happened to notice, you have all of the wonderful attributes that would make a perfect candidate." That's not going to happen.

JOHNSON: Based on your experience, how would you convince women to run? What would you say to them that you think that would get them to do it?

SCHROEDER: I was so frustrated when I ran. I was so angry about the Vietnam War. I was so angry about all the different things that were happening. And I ran because I thought, "Well, somebody's got to stand up and say something about this." My frustration now is when I hear people saying, "We're frustrated with everything, we're not going to bother." Well, if you don't bother, it's only going to get worse. You've really got to bother. Freedom is also a responsibility. It's a responsibility of every citizen to realize, they've got to participate, and if you don't participate and you don't want to be part of the game, then you really don't have any right to complain. You really have no right to complain. If you vote and if you get out there and you work for

candidates that you believe in, you can change it, you can overrule so many things.

The thing they haven't taken away from us yet is the vote. They're thinking about it. I'm sure right now somebody's thinking about, "How do we get the vote away from them too, so we can run the whole thing?" I must tell you, I can't tell you how frustrated I am by the number of people who say, "Oh, well big money has come in and this has happened and government just doesn't work and all the people are crooks, and I'm not going to have any part of it." And I'm like, "Really, you're going to just surrender? Why don't you go find five good people that you really like and say, 'Well we're all going to get committed and do something, and then have them find five. Why don't we . . .'" I don't know where we lost that spirit somehow. I don't know where we lost that, "We can do this." Yes. If we don't do it, it's not going to happen. As they say, "Freedom doesn't come like a bird on the wing. You've got to work for it." We've got a lot of work to do right now.

JOHNSON: Well one question that may be a good one to end with was what do you think your lasting legacy will be, with your 24 years in the House?

SCHROEDER: What did I say? I think what I said in my book was that I still have the same husband, that both children turned out to be okay, that hopefully I made some difference for America's families, which was what I was very concerned about, and had a little fun with people as we went along. If you can do some of those things, that makes a big difference. And I got the nerve gas out of Denver. {laughter}

JOHNSON: That's an important one. Is there anything else that you wanted to add today?

SCHROEDER: No, I think that's probably fine.

JOHNSON: Thank you so much.

WASNIEWSKI: Thank you.

SCHROEDER: Thank you so much.