

KUNHARDT **FILM** / FOUNDATION

BARBARA WALTERS INTERVIEW
MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

Barbara Walters
Broadcast Journalist
5/21/2007
Interviewed by Gloria Steinem
Total Running Time: 41 minutes and 35 seconds

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Makers: Women Who Make America
Kunhardt Film Foundation

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Barbara Walters
Broadcast Journalist

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00:00:08:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

When you and I met in 1965, it was because you were big news. You were the first non-beauty contest winner. Not that there's anything wrong with it but...

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I beg your pardon.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, no, but I mean you were the first professional...

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BARBARA WALTERS:

That's prejudicial, just because I hadn't won a... I'm laughing at...

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GLORIA STEINEM:

You were a professional journalist and the very first female professional journalist on the Today Show.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Yes. That's true.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

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There had been absolutely no others. Now how did you get the nerve or the idea or the dream?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

None of the above. First of all, I cannot believe that we have known each other that long. Isn't that nice?

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GLORIA STEINEM:

It is.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

And we've both gone through so much together. It's very nice to be with you.
It really is.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

No, it really is.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

1965.

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00:00:52:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Right.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I didn't have the dream and I didn't have the nerve. What happened was that I was working on the Today Show as a writer. In those days, even before I was on the air, they had one female writer out of something like seven. And the only way you could get the job is if that female writer got married or died. The best thing to do is to get married and then die because then there'd be no possibility.

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And they would then hire one other female writer who would do the "female pieces," the fashion shows, the celebrity interviews, what I call the tea-pouring interviews. So I did that, and I was thrilled—thrilled!—because I had worked in television before. Every show I worked on went off the air. I'd been in public relations for a while. I hated it. So now I was writing and I was the, quote, "Today" reporter. I went off and did stories. You were the first Playboy Bunny.

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I did a Playboy Bunny story, as a matter of fact. I did the day in the life of a nun. Not exactly the same as the Playboy Bunny, but we had variety. Then

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what happened was that every, quote, "Today Girl," had been a model, an actress, some kind of a performer, and- Very good, as a matter of fact, and that's what they looked for. And the last one was Maureen O'Sullivan, the mother of Mia Farrow, right?

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An actress and she just couldn't cut it, because they made the same mistake we make very often, and that is, someone wonderful being interviewed, can also do an interview. And so they had to let her go, and they had to pay off her contract, and they had to put someone on the air. So they put me on for 13 weeks and I stayed on for 13 years. So, it's not as if I said—as I sometimes—"What about me? What about—" I never thought it was going to be me.

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I was too serious. I didn't speak that well. I was from Boston. I didn't pronounce my R's. I wasn't beautiful. I was, what, "pert." But I never thought it would happen. The last two years of my contract, the then-host was a man named Frank McGee and he died of cancer. Nobody expected this to happen because he was a young man.

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And when he did, NBC said, "We're looking for another host." And my agent—Because we didn't even have agents in those days, this was someone very new, said in my contract, "co-host." Well, he wasn't going to die. He wasn't going to leave. He was going to be a co-host. But it happened. And so two years before I left, I was named co-host, doing the same job. From then on, every woman on a morning show, and on most shows, but certainly on the

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network morning shows, is co-host. I'm very proud of that. I think that's a lovely legacy.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

So, what did you envision yourself doing as a career? Did you think of yourself as a journalist? Before the Today Show?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

When I graduated from college- I went to Sarah Lawrence College where everybody seemed to know exactly what she—because it was an all girls' college then—was going to do. And I liked children. I thought I would teach. And then you had to go on for a masters to teach in the New York City schools and I didn't feel like continuing school and my father was in show business. My father was very well known at the time. He owned and ran and did the shows for big nightclubs, very famous, called the Latin Quarter.

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He was an entrepreneur. So I had all of these contacts. And when I got out of college, I went to speed writing school. I was number one in my class in speed writing. And I can still do it. That is a success of my career. That and the fact that I don't very often have to go to the bathroom. Those are the two reasons for my- And I don't sweat. Those are the three reasons for my success. I'm

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being facetious, but I really didn't know what I wanted to do. And I worked for a while in public relations in here and there.

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And then I started in the publicity department of the local station at NBC, because I had the contacts. So I didn't have this great vision. But then I realized that I could write, and I could write for television. I could write the way I talked and then the rest, a little by little, I began to work in television as a writer.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Did you have any role models-

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BARBARA WALTERS

No, there were no role models.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

-or was this all role improvised as you went?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

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No, today you would've been my role model, but you and I were contemporaries. So, no. There were a couple of women on television. There was Pauline Frederick who was a United Nations correspondent, but as time went on, they used her sparingly. She was so smart. But they never used her full-time.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Because to age was not acceptable.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

To age was not acceptable and she wasn't beautiful. There were very few.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

So our Walter Cronkites-

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BARBARA WALTERS:

There were no Walter Cronkites.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

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It were nipped in the bud because it wasn't allowable to age.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

No. And the Today Show at that time was the only morning show. And it was still a male-dominated show for many years. On the Today Show, I did the tea pouring chores. And as a writer, my big breakthrough was when I was allowed to write for the men. Not to appear in the air, just to write for the men. When Hugh Downs came on as the host of the Today Show, I wrote the introduction to him.

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I wrote many of his questions, most of his questions for years. I sat in my little cubicle with one of the male writers and, well, as writers do today, the interviews, the questions and so on. And when I went on the air, the big thing for me was I could write my own questions. And when we began to do film reports, I could edit. I'm a good editor. That's what I do best. The beginning, the middle, the end- The middle's not so important.

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Beginning is very important. End is very important. Those were the qualities I had. Not my looks or my great personality, I don't think. But I could do those things. No woman had done them. But the biggest thing that happened was when Hugh Downs left the program. A newsman named Frank McGee came in. He was very unhappy doing the Today Show. He thought it was beneath

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him. That he should have been doing the news at night. And he never really liked working with me, although on camera, he was okay.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Now, how did that manifest itself, that he didn't like working with you? How did you know that?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Because the major interviews were the interviews- The hard news interviews were pretty much as they do today, coming out of Washington. And he wanted to do them by himself. "This girl sitting next to me shouldn't be able to do them." Well, I wanted to do some too. By that time, I was beyond the tea pouring and I thought that I had something to offer, but I didn't usually fight for it. But at this, I did.

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And he went to the president of the network and said, "Barbara should not be allowed to come in on this interview until I have asked three questions." Does that not sound unheard of? And the president of the network agreed with him. And so, when we did these interviews, after three questions were asked, I could come in. And this is when I began to do interviews outside of the studio.

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I would film them. Because outside of the studio, they were mine. And this is when I got a good reputation of being a real journalist, but also the reputation of being a pushy cookie.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Did you get people other people couldn't get, even then?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Yes, because I would do what I've always done. I would write and tell them why they should do it. Not why I wanted to do it, but why it would be good for them. I would phone. I would phone again, I would write again. I was very persistent. We didn't have bookers, so called, in those days. We had the writers, they didn't do that much. So yes, I mean I did, I think the first interview that Henry Kissinger did. That's a long time ago.

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I can give you a lot of "The First". And little by little, NBC began to recognize this. When Richard Nixon went to China, I was sent there. I was one of the, maybe... I think I was the only network female journalist, although there were several others. And so in time, my work became accepted, and I'm getting ahead of myself. But for many years, I could only write men. I could only do female interviews. It's now as if we're talking about the Civil War times.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

But the miracle, then and now, is still the same to me. When restrictions are so pervasive, where does the courage come from, or even the idea to break through? Did you think about that or- Where did the self respect come for you to say, "Wait a minute, I should be able to interview the Washington subjects too."

00:11:07:00

BARBARA WALTERS:

Well, I don't want to put myself down, but I don't think I ever had your kind of courage. I think I loved what I did and I thought the way to do it was to just work very hard and it would be noticed. I never- I did at that time, because I was so offended, go up to the president of the network, a man named Julian Goodman. But for the most part, Gloria, I just worked extra long. I worked extra hard. I did not make waves because...

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GLORIA STEINEM:

But now wait a minute.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

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I might have drowned.

00:11:48:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

That's- I did the same thing incidentally. You may think- We each think the other one is courageous.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Okay. Maybe we both were.

00:11:58:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But each of us was trying to be a "good girl." If we just worked hard and we're good girls, everything would be fine. But somewhere you got the courage to demand to go to the president of the network. Where did that come from?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I don't know. As I think back on it now, because nobody's asked me that question I think, I don't know. Where did I? Why didn't- And when I was told that I couldn't come in until after the third question, well, today I would've quit, but there was no other job to go to. And at that point, probably, I think at

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that stage, I was a single mother, more or less supporting my child. I didn't say, "How dare you?"

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There was no human resources to go to. I didn't call one of the newspapers and say, "Let me tell you about my hardship." You swallowed, and came in in the fourth question.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Tell me what else was going on, because this has... use in the future because women now and in the future need to confront restrictions, where they may be different restrictions, but nonetheless they need the courage. So, were there other things going on backstage? We all have our favorite sexual harassment story. Do you have a sexual harassment story?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

There were people who had their girlfriends promoted. We didn't do anything about that. I have a sexual harassment story, but I just managed to avoid it. I didn't have the person. He was a very high executive.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

So, how did you avoid it?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I stayed out of his way. It was so different because you had no support. There was no place to go and complain. Nobody would've cared if you'd complained. It probably would've been considered your fault. So get out of his way or get out of the studio or get out the... The men that I worked with on camera were wonderful men. I never had that problem. Well, I did with one. Ah, yes. Who would call me all the time, and I just avoided it.

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Hugh Downs was wonderful to me. I'd make that very clear. He was not the manager, Joe, Gary... These were the men I worked with mostly. You just did the job and you didn't complain.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Did you feel lonely as the woman only?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

No, because I always had an outside life. I always had friends. My life- Although my job was the most time consuming and the most competitive. And when I went to ABC, hugely competitive, and that's where I was my biggest failure. I was a co-anchor, the first female co-anchor of a network

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news program, with a man, Harry Reasoner, who couldn't accept me. I was miserable. I was a failure. And it was a very different and very difficult time. But on the years on the Today Show, it was just a matter of working very hard. And I had a private life, and a child.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

What happened when women at NBC began to organize? You must have felt... How did you feel about this?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

They hadn't organized until it was almost my last days. There were so few women in television. I'm so proud of the number of women. We take it for granted now. But there were very few.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Those early women at NBC brought a lawsuit against NBC-

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BARBARA WALTERS:

That was quite late on. Quite late on.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

But you were still at NBC when they brought the suit.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

If I was- And I was then- I remember when they did bring it on, but by that point, I'd almost gone. I almost left.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

So is that why you didn't join the suit?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

It was a suit that did not just have to do with women, it also had to do with discrimination in a...

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Racial and- Race and sex discrimination. But you were asked to join it.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

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If you're bringing up something, I would not deny it but I don't have any memory of it. It was almost when I left. It was almost around the time that I was leaving and I had other decisions that I was making. I certainly didn't oppose it. And it had much more to do with racial discrimination, as I remember, than it had to do with women being on the air. But I'm very foggy about it.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Now, it did have to do with both, I think, if our research is accurate-

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BARBARA WALTERS:

But I have not done the research.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

You didn't join it, but when it was-

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I would certainly have supported it.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

You contributed some money toward it.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Yes, I would certainly have supported it if I didn't join it itself. And I'm not being vague, I really don't remember it that much, end of my time there.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, Harry Reasoner is also the person who predicted that Ms. Magazine could not possibly last more than six issues because we'd said everything there was to say in the first issue.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

There was so much resentment against women. We'd moved ahead to that. This was 1976 when I came to ABC. Had I been a man, he would have resented it anyway. Had I been Mike Wallace, because he wanted to do the show alone. But the idea that I was a woman and that I had started in television and not the men's domain, the associated press of the United Press.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

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And how did- Tell me a story, any incident of how that manifested in your daily work life?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Well, I had left the Today Show where I had really, in the last years, been very happy. Frank McGee had gone. Jim Hartz was there. Nice man. I was, I think, the stronger personality. I was doing the kinds of stories that I wanted to do. A Good Morning America had begun. It wasn't making very much of a dent. CBS Morning Show had- At one point, my big rival was Sally Quinn who was a writer for the Washington Post and they'd made a big noise about that and it hadn't worked out. I was very happy and fairly confident. And then came this offer to go to ABC. And I fully understand why Katie Couric left by the way.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Explain why you left, and also how that relates to Katie.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Because it's similar, although the times are very different. I'd been doing the show for 13 years, getting up at four o'clock in the morning. I was also doing another show that was very successful called Not for Women Only, a syndicated show that had been put on by the local station of NBC. Because of

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FCC, you had to do a certain number of news shows. And it took off and NBC began to syndicate it. Had I stayed with the syndication, who knows?

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I mean, I would've had hundreds of millions of dollars as a big syndicated show. So I was doing all of those shows. I had a young child, seven years old. I was pretty tired. I didn't think I was tired until I thought about it. Here was this new opportunity. They told me that the news was going to be an hour. They told me that I could do interviews. Anything that I had wanted and it could only go up. Well, that's not necessarily so. It can also go down.

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I was so lost and miserable when I came to ABC. When I think about it now- It's taken me years not to get tears in my eyes. I was so lonely. I would walk into that studio and Harry would be sitting with the stage hands and they'd all crack jokes and ignore me.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

What kind of jokes?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Not dirty jokes, but funny things-

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GLORIA STEINEM:

But related to you being a female.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

That, and not related to my having no part of it. The only time we could talk about anything was because I was a Yankee fan and I could talk about the game.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

So it was like going into a locker room.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

No one would talk to me. The stage hands later, I was working with, said how bad they felt, but nobody said so. There was not a woman on the staff. From the producer to the cameramen to the everything, except my long-time assistant and my makeup person. I used to sit in the dressing room and wipe the- keep wiping them. They'd keep powdering me and I'd keep wiping. And I remember...

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GLORIA STEINEM:

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Because you were tearing?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

It was so lonely. And I was failing. And I read about it in every paper and magazine. One had a headline, "You are a flop." And when I saw the person who had written it, and I said, "This is so painful." He said, "Well, you are a flop." And it was everything about me. I then had to work my way back, and that was my salvation. But I'm getting ahead of the story. It was the loneliest time. I was a failure. I had left a place where I had been happy. The newspapers hated me, the public hated me. How dare I even think I could do this to this nice house.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Was this the million dollar problem too? I remember the resentment and attention in the press because you got a million dollars a year.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Well, it was huge. Now, at the same time, there were people doing syndicated shows like Mike Douglas, who were getting tons more money. But when I left NBC, they were very nasty about it. Today, everybody says, gives going-away parties. But they were very nasty. And at that point, I did have an agent and I

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got \$500,000 a year for doing the news, which was what Harry was getting—he was probably getting more—

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—and \$500,000 for doing four, one hour primetime specials, which I still do today. They were enormously successful. That was paid for by the entertainment department, quote, “entertainment department.” So it wasn’t that I was making a million dollars for the news. But nobody cared about that. I was the million dollar baby. And poor Harry Reasoner, who had worked, was not. And this added to the fact, the woman who came from the Today Show, who didn’t have the solid news background, who had not had the credentials of the men, who had the nerve to even think that she could be an anchor.

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Well, I guess if we’d done research, we would’ve realized how much resentment there was. And the hour news, the affiliates wouldn’t accept it. It turned into a half hour news. And the interviews that I did, the first night I interviewed Anwar Al Sadat The second night I interviewed Golda Meir. How could I do interviews in the news? Look at today, I mean, everybody’s trying to get on the news. The big scoop, the big leader, the big interview. It was the most awful time.

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There were certain highlights. I got a telegram one day from a man I didn’t know. I opened it up and it said, “Don’t let the bastards get you down.” And it was signed John Wayne.

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00:22:48:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

That's interesting.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

And then I would get so many letters from women, Gloria.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes, tell me about...

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Well, that was the shiny side.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Were you getting by this time- Were there enough women either in the audience or in the profession...

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I don't think so much watching, because ABC News was number three and it stayed number three. So it isn't as if we particularly lost viewers. We just didn't get any. Except for the first night. Second night, David Brinkley and NBC said on his telecast, "Welcome back" to the audience. But the letters that I got were what saved me. "If you can do it, we can do it. Hang in there. We're having the same problems." I hear it today. I hear it today.

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And I would sit in that dressing room and read hundreds of these letters. And when I went home at night, I went and answered them. As many as I could. We didn't have computers and we didn't have email. And then when Roone Arledge, who had been in sports, became the head of ABC, he made the decision that Harry and I had to be split up. He made a whole new configuration in years and he let Harry go back to CBS. He could have kept Harry. And he made the decision to bet on me.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

So really he was choosing you?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Yes, he did. And this is when I worked my hardest and did probably the best interviews of my life, the joint interview with Menachem Begin and Anwar Al Sadat, when they- when Anwar Al Sadat first went to Israel. I spent a great

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deal of time in the Middle East, very torn between my travels and my child. Very torn. I did a huge interview with Fidel Castro. Spent weeks there. I mean, the most important interviews that I did, I did in those years of little by little, working my way back.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Do you think that the support of those letters from women played a role in your ability to hang in there-

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Yes.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

-until that was possible?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Yes. They meant so much to me because I realized it wasn't just me and my job and the discrimination against me. Because it was discrimination. It was discrimination within the studio and in the press. But the idea that women in all different fields, whether they were just beginning an industry or whether

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they were lawyers where there was the glass ceiling at that point—it wasn't glass, it was steel—or in any aspect of their lives, they understood what I was going through when they were with me.

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It made an enormous difference. And it still does. When people come up to me now and say- I don't know, "You—" I'm sure they say to you every day, Gloria. "You made a difference." Or, "My mother says you made a difference" or, "I wouldn't be doing this if it weren't for you." I mean, that's the reward, isn't it?

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes. And there was a little girl named Oprah who was watching you on television, as she has explained, with a notebook in your lap, understanding that she also could do that.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Well, Oprah has said that when she was looking for jobs, and she didn't quite know how to present herself, that she would look at me because I used to look down at my questions and up and I would sit like this. And she copied me. Now, fortunately, she got the job. So I take full credit for Oprah. There was also in my early days in the year, *Bawa Wawa* on Saturday Night Live.

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00:26:28:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

How did that feel?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Well, Gilda Radner did it and she was wonderful. And she not only did the *Bawa Wawa*—which I hated because I do pretty much pronounce my “R”—but she sat like me. I don't know whether you can see this, but I used to sit with one leg tucked under the other and like this. And she said that she got it from my makeup artist who came from NBC and used to do me. She was my—Thank goodness, she was there because I had somebody I could cling to. And she also did Gilda. So in the beginning, I really minded. I still do today when someone says this, “*Bawa Wawa*.”

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But I went into my daughter's room. At that point, Jackie was maybe 10, and she was up late watching it. And I came into scold her and I said, "How can you watch this?" And, "Look what she's doing." She said, "Oh mommy, where's your sense of humor?" And that did it. And when I finally met Gilda—and what a loss that she's no longer with us, that wonderful humor—I was then thrilled. I thought, "What a great—" I don't know, "What a great compliment." But did I like it? No, I did not like it.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

I have a theory that women get more radical with age. Do you feel that you have experienced this in your life? That you're better able to fight for yourself now, than you would've been 30 or 40 years ago?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Well, I think that all women are better able to fight for themselves. I think that the things I care about, I care more deeply about. I had, at this advanced age, met somebody whom I had just met, and I thought, I don't even know whether I want to have another dinner with him. And I walked in, the second time I saw him, and said, "I have to ask you two questions. The first one is, how do you feel about stem cell research?" And if he said "I'm against it", I would've said, "That's it" and walked out. Now, I'm not sure I would've done that years ago.

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I probably would've been so grateful that he was taking me to dinner. So that- My convictions are much, much stronger. I don't care about success or competition the way I used to. I'm not ambitious. So I don't feel that I have to. I don't know where that went, but it went. A different kind of feeling came in. A sense of time, a sense of what's been accomplished, a sense of pride in how much women have accomplished. So I don't have to fight so much, but if I did, I would.

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In those days, it's very hard for young people to imagine what it was- If you had a problem or a fight, there was no one to go to. No one. You worked it out yourself. If you made a big scene, you'd get fired. So you didn't. What did you do? You made yourself irreplaceable.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

And you also created vehicles for women, *Not for Women Only. The View*. You have brought all of these women onto television.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Yes, I have. I'm not sure that I did that for the right reason. *Not for Women Only* became successful because we took a little syndicated show and did the most, at that time, outrageous subjects. Because of the ratings, I was always doing sex. I know more about male sex. I could tell you more about premature ejaculation than most doctors. And so the program became very successful. And we took on big subjects that people hadn't done.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes. But they were women taking them on.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

But they were women taking them on. It was a woman panel and pretty much a woman audience. *The View*, I hadn't realized how different it was going to be-

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GLORIA STEINEM:

But it was *The View*.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

It was for women.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

The View was your idea, was it not?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

The View was my idea. I didn't know anything about daytime television. It was a simple idea, and supposedly a very bad time period to had been making it. What was the idea? Four women of different generations and different personalities and different opinions sitting together and talking the way you and I would be if we were having a cup of coffee. And in its way, it

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was the first. So sometimes you stumble into things, but there have to been something in your head, maybe, that made you stumble into it. If I'm going to take any credit, is that it was there somewhere because it wouldn't have happened otherwise.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, it was your life experience.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I guess.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Having coffee with women, getting letters from women.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Talking and liking each other. Liking each other. Not women just competing. Not women trying to outdo each other. But being able to have these kinds of discussions and arguments and liking each other. I think that was such an important lesson in *The View*. But it wasn't set up that way. I didn't say, "I'm going to do a show and show that people can have different opinions and blah

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blah, blah, blah, blah. Women." But it has obviously to have been somewhere in my experience.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

This is one of the few places where people see friendship among women.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Well, we've often talked about the chemistry, and the chemistry is another word for friendship that we can even argue, and very vociferously, especially about the Iraq war and about George Bush and so on, and still walk away or still end the program, friends. That's unusual. But you don't often see men just sitting and talking in the same way without being confrontational. You wouldn't see four guys sitting around discussing what was going on. That would still be today considered sissy talk.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

This is an impact of The Women's Movement. You are as much as anything on Earth, The Women's Movement.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

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No, you are.

00:32:00:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

It has to be plural. It has to be plural, Barbara, or it's not a movement. So I mean it's all of these things.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

It is.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

What do you think of when you think of The Women's Movement?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I think that we have come so far, especially in communications. In everything. Not enough. There's always not enough. But we have wonderful directors in films. They're not all just cutesy-poos in front of the camera. We have women in every aspect of television. And yet, we still have so many of the same stigmas.

00:32:35:00

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Women, we hear, don't want to be like you and me, who worked. They want to stay home with the children, because it was too much stress working. And so now it's gone the whole other direction. I hope that isn't so.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

It's not so. It has no statistical reality. No.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

And we are able, more and more- Even though it's always going to be tough, that balancing act. It is always going to be tough to have them. The marriage, the career. Not the job. The marriage, the career, the children. But with the help, one hopes, of the man in your life, maybe your husband, maybe not, you can have more of a balance than we did when I was starting up.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

So you think that The Women's Movement belief that men can raise children as well as women can, and that the job patterns can change since they're changed in every other modern democracy in the world, they've changed. You don't think that that- You think it's always going to have to be women.

00:33:40:00

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I think we still have a prejudice in this country about the man who stays home and the man who prefers to bring up the children. And we see it much more or whatever-

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GLORIA STEINEM:

But it's not an either or. It's that both parents would be able to.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I'm talking about even the ones who stay home. I mean they really are- "Honey. What's wrong with you that you're with your child?" The fact that both men and women want to care for the children, that's new. Relatively new. But I'm not sure that The Woman's Movement, per se, has the same significance to women than it did when there were so many barriers against us. I'm not sure it's so in front of people's thoughts.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

If you look at the public opinion polls, it's much better.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Maybe, but I don't care about it as much as I did all the time, when there were those barriers that you could see. Today, the barriers are less seen-

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GLORIA STEINEM:

What would you say are the barriers now?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I still think that there are employers who are concerned about hiring the woman because she's going to have the baby. I still think there- the idea that the man calls in and says, "I have to stay home today because little Johnny has the mumps," there's still a kind of, "You do?" There still is that sort of domestic imbalance. I still think that industries, although it's changing, in which women are on the top and take executive positions, is still tough.

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But so much less than it was when you and I met in 1965. It is worlds away. And I don't want us to sit here and say, after you, Alphonse," but you did it, Gloria. You did it, and other women with more courage than I had. You did it by fighting. I did it perhaps by example. You did it also by example. But mine was what it said in those letters. "Hang in there. If you can do it, maybe we can too."

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Human beings are communal creatures. Young women, or anybody who's having a hard time who may be watching this many years in the future, probably will still need to know that they need support from others with similar experience.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

But I have found, and again I'm generalizing, that women are enormously supportive of women in the issues that we care about. This doesn't mean that we don't compete for a story, but so do men. But I try to be very supportive of women because I know what I went through and women do need that help. And it is still a little difficult for men to understand it. The fact that we are going through still the same kind of thing.

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The fact that we still have the same pull between the career and the child and the marriage. Yes, men do to a degree, but not the way women do. Katherine Hepburn, whom I interviewed several times—she has that wonderful grouch—said, "You know, you can't have it all. And I would never get married and have children and I can do it in my sleep. What if I had an opening night and little Johnny or little Katie had the mumps, I'd want to kill them. I really would want to kill them." Well, I'd said, "You have to make the choice." "Well, you damn well better make the choice." Well, you don't have to make the choice today, but it's still difficult.

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00:37:13:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I always wanted to write you and say to you that it seemed to me that Peter Jennings didn't take you seriously.

00:37:18:00

BARBARA WALTERS:

Peter Jennings always put me down. I had a very difficult time working with Peter. Very difficult. And I miss him as a journalist, but he never took me serious. Once in a while he said to me, "That was a good report." Like, "Oh, what a surprise." And that's not that long ago. And I don't want to put Peter down, he was a superb reporter... But he did, he put me down. I was not-

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GLORIA STEINEM:

But how did it happen? What's an incident of it happening?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

There were times when I said I'll no longer work with him. He would interrupt. He would ask me a question, I would answer it, and he would sort of look away and go to the next question without any regard for what I said. On the night of the bicentennial, when I was in Paris, because we were all

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sent to different places—not a bad place to go—he made my life miserable before- It was one of the unhappiest-

00:38:10:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

By doing what?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

"You better understand this. You better understand the French- Not the French Student Revolution. You better understand that you don't know anything. You better learn it. You better..." He was just very tough on me. We worked on program after program and he would put me down, or- I mean, the audience even noticed it. It was very...

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GLORIA STEINEM:

So you did get letters?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I did. I said I won't go on. He was too big a giant at that point. And I said I don't want to be in the next program with him. There were programs that I refused to go on with him. There were times when he got letters and he

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would send me emails and apologize because he was like a big bully. I was used to working with bullies. When I stopped to think of it as we talk, he was the third bully that I've worked with. Frank McGee, Harry Reasoner, Peter Jennings.

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But I also had enormous respect for him because he was such a wonderful journalist. And we did program- We covered weddings in Great Britain, Princess Diana and Prince Charles. We covered funerals- I remember the wedding of Prince Charles. There was- I said something about the flag and Buckingham Palace, when it was used and not used—don't ask me now, I don't know—and he said, "You're wrong." I was right, but he never came back in the later and said, "You're right." And I look today and think, it was part of my philosophy, which was shut up and do your job.

00:39:31:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But here's the miracle, Barbara. I know you say this is very simple, "shut up and do your job," but where does that strength come from?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Maybe ambition, maybe survival.

00:39:46:00

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Maybe self respect, self authority.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Now I'm going to have to go home and say, "Now where did this come from?"

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GLORIA STEINEM:

I have the feeling your father did, and perhaps your mother did too, respect your opinion.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

No, I don't think that. I don't think that-

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GLORIA STEINEM:

It didn't come from them?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

No, it didn't come from them. I did not have parents in those days who said—I had loving parents—who said you can do anything you want. What I

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did have was a father who was in show business and my fear that it could all be gone tomorrow, and that I had to work. You and I have that, for different reasons, in common. I had to work. If the job was grubby, I could not say I'm going to leave it and get married because I wasn't very good at that, and I didn't want to have that as my safety net. I had to work and maybe somewhere, maybe that's it.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Let me try another theory. Did your mother have dreams that she couldn't realize?

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BARBARA WALTERS:

No, not that I knew. There were more serious problems in my family than my mother having dreams that she couldn't make. I didn't think in my mother's generation, that had occurred to her that she was going to have a career.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Because some of us are living out the unlived lives of our mothers.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

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I'm not.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

I am.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

I know. I'm not. It is very touching for me to sit here opposite you and to see how we've grown and to see that we are happy women. And maybe that says more than anything else about our lives, that we're okay now. And I thank you.

00:41:20:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

No. And I thank you. I remember, was the one writing about you. You were the on camera person that inspired me.

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BARBARA WALTERS:

Whatever it was. Look at us today.

END TC: 00:41:35:00