

# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY INTERVIEW  
*MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA*  
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

**Phyllis Schlafly**  
**Attorney & Conservative Activist**  
**8/26/2011**  
**Interviewed by Betsy West**  
**Total Running Time: 41 minutes and 40 seconds**

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Makers: Women Who Make America  
Kunhardt Film Foundation

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Phyllis Schlafly  
Attorney & Conservative Activist

**Phyllis Schlafly**  
**Attorney & Conservative Activist**

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BETSY WEST:

Can you tell me about your upbringing? Where and when you grew up, and what your family was like?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

I grew during the Great Depression in St. Louis. My father lost his job during the Depression. My mother ultimately became the main source of support for our family. She was the librarian at the Saint Louis Art Museum for twenty-five years.

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BETSY WEST:

How did that affect you? How did that kind of disruption in your family, to have your dad lose his job- What impact did that have on you?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, it just made me realize that I wanted to get a good education and be prepared for whatever eventuality life would deal me.

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BETSY WEST:

How important was religion in your upbringing?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Religion was very important. We were all Catholics and faithful Catholics.

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BETSY WEST:

Tell me what kind of student you were.

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

I was a good student. I graduated first in my high school class, and I got mostly A's in college and entered Harvard.

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BETSY WEST:

So that came easy to you?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Yes it did. 'Course I worked my way through Washington University as a gunner on the night shift, testing thirty and fifty caliber ammunition. I worked 48 hours a week, half the time midnight till eight in the morning, and half the time four to midnight. And then went to college in the morning.

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BETSY WEST:

And how did that happen? Why did you come to do that?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, I had to pay the tuition so I had to get a job. So I did, and I went and applied, went to work on my 18th birthday and that- I made enough money to pay my way through Washington U, and then I saved up enough to go have a year in graduate school at Harvard.

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BETSY WEST:

That job was kind of like the Rosie the Riveter job, right?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Sort of, except I was in the building that was testing the ammunition. So I did all the different tests for the thirty and fifty caliber ammunition—the accuracy, the penetration, the aircraft function—and then I would examine misfires, the ones that didn't go off. I photographed tracer bullets in flight. And that's the way it was. I was trying to do that and that was my job.

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BETSY WEST:

Was that the beginning of your interest in military affairs, national security-

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

I would say yes. It certainly was.

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BETSY WEST:

You've been called one of the great grassroots organizers of our country. Was there a moment when you realized that you had a particular talent for organizing people in issues, around issues?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

No, actually, I grew up very shy. I was not a very social person or a very- a person who organized anything. And when I got into the political fight, I then began to come out of a shell. And my first venture into politics was a 1946 congressional campaign, when I ran the campaign of a Republican candidate in the city of St. Louis and he won.

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That was a big Republican year. Things were simple in those days. I was the campaign manager, the speechwriter, the scheduler, and it was very victorious. And politics have been my hobby ever since.

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BETSY WEST:

Tell me just a little bit about your husband. You had a lot of suitors. What was so special about him?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

It was a very lovely intellectual companion relationship, as well as everything else. And he was very supportive of everything I did. In fact, somebody asked him one time, "Why do you let Phyllis run for all these offices?" He said, "Oh, she can run for anything she wants, just so she doesn't win." So I did run for Congress a couple of times and didn't win-

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BETSY WEST:

You thought you would though, didn't you? At one point, didn't you think you were going to win?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Yes. It was pretty close. But it was a great learning experience. I tell people when you run for office there are three possible solutions: you win, you lose, or you learn. And it was a learning experience for me.

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BETSY WEST:

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How did you manage to do this with your family?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, most of my books I wrote after I put them to bed at night, after ten o'clock at night. And there were constant conversations with my husband. We had the telephone. Of course this is pre-Internet and all those other conveniences. But I made the Republican National Conventions one of my hobbies. I've been to all of them since 1952. And then when the Barry Goldwater campaign came along,-

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-I wanted the new delegates to that convention to know what had happened before. And that's why I wrote my little book *A Choice Not an Echo* on an old standard typewriter, and sent it off to be printed as a paperback, and sold three million copies out of my garage.

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BETSY WEST:

Tell me the thesis of that book.

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

The thesis was the New York Kingmakers were dictating who our candidate for president should be on the Republican ticket. And I lived in Illinois and

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Illinois was solidly for Bob Taft in 1952. And basically, it was stolen away from him then. And I wanted the delegates to the 1964 convention to know that kind of thing happened before and not to let it happen again, because again, Illinois was solidly for Goldwater.

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BETSY WEST:

So what impact did that have, that book?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

The book brought millions of people into the conservative movement. Every week, I meet some prominent person who says, "Mrs. Schlafly, I came into the conservative movement reading *A Choice, Not an Echo* in 1964." And usually they say they were in high school then, and so it had a big impact on people.

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BETSY WEST:

Now, '64 was a pretty productive year for you. Could you just summarize what happened in that year?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

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Well, the Republican Convention was in San Francisco. It was very exciting and Goldwater was nominated. And then, of course, we all know he had a smashing defeat, and after that, conservatives began to believe that they could never really win with a real conservative. They had a defeatist mentality. And that's why they took Nixon. They thought he was the best we could do.

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And meanwhile... I started the Phyllis Schlafly Report, now in its 45th year. It's a monthly newsletter. It looks just the same as it looked when I started it. And I would research something each month and write about it and also with some chit chat about politics. And in February 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment was moving through Congress and I wrote one issue called *What's Wrong With Equal Rights for Women?*

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And pretty soon, I began to get telephone calls from friends around the country saying, "Phyllis, I took your newsletter to our legislature and they defeated ERA." And then I realized we had something. So in September of 1972, I invited one hundred friends from thirty states to meet me in St. Louis, and put them on a bus and took them down to the riverfront and to the Goldenrod Showboat.

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And I climbed up on the stage where all those melodramas are played and I gave my speech on leadership, "Go home and be a leader in volunteer politics, and defeat the Equal Rights Amendment." And that was the start of our

movement. So this bunch of women I brought really were knowledgeable about politics, and they learned even more, and that was the core of the group that we first called Stop ERA, and then a couple of years later, incorporated as Eagle Forum.

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BETSY WEST:

So many people were in favor of the ERA. What was wrong with the ERA?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, it was a take away of women's rights. It was a cheat. It was a fraud. I testified in 41 state legislative hearings, and there was never a single one who came in and said, "This is a benefit that it will give to women." There was no benefit. In fact, the only time anybody bragged about a benefit was the one who said that their state had a law that said that wives could not make home made wine without their husbands consent and the ERA would remedy that.

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Why now, I don't think we need to change the Constitution for old-fashioned laws like that. But there were real issues like the military draft. When ERA came out of Congress, we had a draft and we had a war. And I had sons and daughters who were about draft age, and my daughters thought this was the dumbest thing they'd ever heard. You're going to give women a new

constitutional amendment and the first thing is they have to sign up for the draft like their brothers? You gotta be kidding.

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BETSY WEST:

What other concerns did you have about the implications of the ERA?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, it would take away the preferential rights of wives and homemakers. Because the laws of every one of the fifty states said that the husband had the obligation to financially support his wife and children and provide them with a home. And again those are sex discriminatory laws, based on the obvious fact that women have babies and men don't have babies.

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BETSY WEST:

What was your strategy about tackling something that looked like it was kind of on its way to being passed?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

I established the battleground we fought on, and that was the legal rights that women would lose if this went through. And not other issues. That's the issue

that I established and wrote, ultimately, nearly a hundred of my Phyllis Schlafly reports on various aspects of this issue, which is an issue of tremendous variety and interest.

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And all I had to do was to take my newsletters and they knew what they could say at these various hearings. The hearings were the only place where we got fair treatment. Most state legislators thought that if you're going to have a hearing, you're going to hear from both sides. Now that wasn't the way the media acted. As you mentioned early, everybody who was anybody, who was for the Equal Rights Amendment.

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All the prominent politicians, all the way from Ted Kennedy to George Wallace. Three presidents, Nixon and Ford and Carter. All the media. And we didn't get a fair break anywhere except in the hearings. And when we would come in, we would present the legal arguments of the rights that women would lose if this went through. So that was our strategy.

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BETSY WEST:

You've been called a brilliant debater, even by your opposition, and you led seminars teaching other women how to debate. What would you say to people about the key to being an effective debater?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, stay on message, be sure of your facts, don't engage in what I call "epithet argument," which they do all the time. They try to use nasty words about their opponent. We don't do any of that. And, in other words, be a lady, and just lay out the facts. And that's what we did in all of these hearings.

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BETSY WEST:

As you said, it was a long shot. Was there a moment when you realized you really were gaining momentum in this argument?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, I always believed we could win but nobody else did. The turning point really was The International Women's Year. In 1977, Bella Abzug was in Congress, and she got Congress to give the feminists five million dollars to have a big splash at a big convention in Houston, all paid for by the taxpayers. And there was enormous media coverage of this. It was just a big media event.

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And the feminists looked upon this as their key to getting the rest of the states they needed to ratify The Equal Rights Amendment. But when they got together, they passed a resolution for The Equal Rights Amendment, but then they followed that up with passing a resolution for unrestricted abortion,

support of Roe V. Wade, they passed a resolution supporting the entire gay rights agenda, and supporting federal daycare.

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Because the feminists look upon one of the ways that women are victimized in this country is that people expect mothers to look after their own babies. And that's the patriarchy oppressing women. That should be lifted from their backs by the taxpayers. And so after they had all this spread on television, they never got another state. They never had another victory. The American people saw what the movement was all about and they said, "No thanks."

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BETSY WEST:

This convention was happening, you also went to Houston. Tell me about that.

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, the feminists excluded most of us. They didn't allow anybody against ERA to speak on the platform, but they had all the razzmatazz. They had three first ladies on their platform. That's Rosalynn Carter and Betty Ford and Lady Bird Johnson, and we didn't have any glitz like that. We took another hall in Houston that seated 18,000 people and invited our friends to come at their own expense.

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And thousands of them rode on buses all day, and the papers reported that we had 20,000 people in the hall that only sits 18,000. And that really was the start of the pro-family movement. There was only one congressman who was willing to be seen with us, who was Bob Dornan. None of the dignitaries were noticing us, but we had 20,000 people and I think that's where the whole term "Pro-Family Movement" went into the vocabulary.

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BETSY WEST:

Talk a little bit about the Pro-Family Movement. That was a religious coalition that hadn't happened before, is that right?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

I sent out appeals to the various churches, and we brought them in and we had many rallies in Springfield, Illinois, including a great one in 1976, when I prayed we would have a thousand people and a thousand people came. And we had them from all the denominations. We had the Catholics, the Protestants, the Evangelicals, the Mormons, and the Orthodox Jews. We had a wonderful Chicago Rabbi who testified repeatedly for us at the Illinois hearings.

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And I taught them all not only to be involved in the political process as volunteers, but also to work with each other. And you realize this was a time when Baptist and Catholics had never been in the same room together.

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BETSY WEST:

What did you think of Betty Freidan?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, it's hard for me to see how any young woman could consider her a role model. She was very mean and nasty in debate. She said very unkind things. She had communist training before she got into the feminist fight. And it's just hard for me to see how anybody could consider her a role model.

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BETSY WEST:

And her arguments in the book that she published—it was the bestselling book in 1963—seemed to strike a nerve with a lot of women that there was a problem.

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

The book was a big success, no question about it. It certainly launched the feminist drive against the full time homemaker. And I think their principal goal through the years has been to get the full time homemakers out of the home and into the workforce. She called the home a comfortable concentration camp and put down the role of the full time homemaker. And the feminist movement has tried to move them all into the workforce, which I think is very unfortunate for them and unfortunate for the children.

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BETSY WEST:

How would you assess your opposition to the feminist movement?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, I think the principal problem with them is that they are teaching women that they are victims of the patriarchy. In fact, that was reaffirmed by one of the modern feminists Jessica Valenti in The Washington Post just recently. And I think that's so unfortunate, to have women wake up in the morning, believe they're never going to get a fair deal. If you get a job, you won't be paid what you ought to be paid. If you get married, your husband will probably beat you up.

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It's extremely unfortunate, and I think... I mean if they pick the wrong man, that was their mistake. It's not society's problem. They try to make all of their

personal problems society's problem. And I don't think it is. I think they have had the personal problems.

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BETSY WEST:

Women were paid much less. Women were being passed over for promotions, training men to be their own bosses.

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, for the most part, they were not doing the same work as men. And there was- We did live in a society that gave priority to the husband who was supporting a family. And I think that was a perfectly reasonable societal decision. And for example, when my mother was looking for a job during the Depression, there was a rule that the married woman couldn't get a job as teaching because they assumed their husband was supporting her.

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Now this was a benefit to the single woman who didn't have any other support. So there were good reasons for some of those old rules, which have now been changed. When we fought The Equal Rights Amendment, we had a big bunch of women who were factory women, blue-collar women, and they wanted the special rules that they had for women. For example, the special rule that they cared about the most was the rule that the women could not be made subject to compulsory overtime.

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And there are many employers who find it more economical to simply work their main employees overtime instead of hiring new people, and the women wanted to keep that. Now they've got rid of all those separate rules now which- all the women who work with us against ERA didn't want to lose those special privileges.

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BETSY WEST:

Do you think we ought to go back to that time?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, I'm not going to make- We'll let them... do what they think they want. I'm not going to make that decision for them.

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BETSY WEST:

When you were fighting this battle against the ERA, did you feel underestimated at first?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

They definitely underestimated me. They did not believe I could win. In fact, I didn't have, really, any particular help from the conservative movement as it was then, because they didn't think it was possible to win.

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BETSY WEST:

It became very personal and very mean, the battle. How did you keep your cool through that?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

I don't let these things bother me. I mean, they're the ones with the problem.

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BETSY WEST:

Did you learn how to do that? Or is that just the way you are?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, I will say my husband helped me to learn to take controversy. He said, "If you can't take controversy, get out of politics." That it's like a doctor who gets queasy at the sight of blood. I said to my doctor son, "Do you have any medical students who get queasy at the sign of blood?" He said, "Yes. We send them into psychiatry." You don't want to be on the operating table with a

doctor who gets queasy at the sight of blood. And if you can't take the controversy, get out of politics.

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BETSY WEST:

Did you ever say anything you regretted? Did you ever go to far?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

No, I don't think so. I'm not into this thing of making personal attacks. I just stuck to the facts.

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BETSY WEST:

Well, as a class of people. You didn't make a personal attack on people, but sometimes you would say some pretty nasty things about, sort of, feminists in general.

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, I do think the feminist movement is an extremely destructive movement. I think it has poisoned the attitude of so many young women. And even today, these women's studies courses in college are teaching young women to plan their life career without any space for marriage, husband and

children. Now, people can plan their life any way they want, but there are plenty of women- and you're seeing their tearful complaints all the time now, who get to be thirty-five and forty years old and they realize life is passing them by.

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The feminist movement tells them there isn't any biological clock. Well, there is. And it's unfortunate that they're giving all this wrong message to young women.

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BETSY WEST:

Talk to me about Illinois because it was an important- probably the most important-

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

It was the front line.

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BETSY WEST:

It was the front line. Talk to me about rallying those troops in the rotunda. Paint the picture for me.

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, you realize that this is pre-Internet, pre-fax machine, pre-email, all that sort of thing. They said, "Phyllis would send out her rotunda letter." "Meet me at the rotunda at twelve o'clock on Wednesday," and so forth. And that's what I did, and we would get there and then we would lobby the legislators. And once a year we would have our bread day and we would take them home baked bread.

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We'd give one to every one, whether they were for us or against us. And the feminists called that our dirty trick. But at any rate, it was a good move. It was pretty cute. The legislators were glad to get our bread and we were nice to them. We sent them Valentines, we sent them nice notes. Meanwhile, the feminists were really pretty ugly, even to their own friends. And even the people who were sponsoring their amendment, they really weren't nice to them.

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Remember, toward the end, they went to the slaughterhouse and they got these plastic bags of pigs blood, and came back and then they wrote on our marble floors at the Capital, the names of the people they hated the most. You can see that picture, I think probably on my website, or some of our videos. And we were nice to the legislators, and so I think that pays off better than being nasty to them.

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BETSY WEST:

You had a different tactic.

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

We did indeed.

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BETSY WEST:

Do you remember that key moment, and can you describe to me the scene and the legislature when the battle was over?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

I remember they put Eleanor Smeal in front of the camera for Nightline and said, "Well, Ms. Smeal, you told us it was going to pass. What happened?" And I remember she said, "There was something very powerful against us." Well, we won. And they tried, and this was the day, you see, that President Carter was calling the Democrats and offering the Democrats a public housing project in their district if they would vote yes, and Governor Thompson, who was a Republican, was calling the Republicans and offering them dams, roads and bridges if they would vote yes.

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And Mayor Jane Byrne, you remember her in Chicago? Was calling the Chicago guys and telling them their relatives would all be fired from city jobs if they didn't vote yes. So that was a pretty heavy fence we had to climb.

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BETSY WEST:

So how did that feel?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, it felt like all our hard work was justified.

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BETSY WEST:

Now, you used a number of arguments against the ERA. In the end, what do you think was the argument that resonated the most?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

That's a very good question. In the early years, it was the draft argument 'cause that was real, could not be rebutted. The feminist all admitted- They said that women wanted to be drafted. Of course, they didn't have any daughters. But as the time went on, the attack on the full time homemaker

became apparent. And then about midway it became clear that abortion was part of it.

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Because the feminists with their pals in the ACLU were filing lawsuits to try to get courts to uphold where they had a state ERA, that if you denied Medicaid funding to women for an abortion, you were discriminating on account of sex within the meaning of the state ERA. And in those cases, they won some and lost some. The clearest one was the one in New Mexico, where the state Supreme Court upheld their whole argument.

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So it's clear that abortion was one of the reasons that they wanted ERA. And then after that, it also became clear that they wanted it for same sex marriage. Now early on they denied that, but at that big rally in Houston in 1977, Betty Friedan and Eleanor Smeal and the rest of them came around to the gay point of view, and made impassioned pleas that they welcome the gays and pass their resolutions.

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So while early on, when I had suggested that possibility, they criticized me up and down as making things up. After 1977, they were admitting it and it became an important part too, so I really think that if ERA had been ratified, we would have had same sex marriage twenty-five years ago.

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BETSY WEST:

In some ways, you won the battle, but ultimately, was it a hollow victory in any way?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

No. It was a tremendous victory, because it would've given new power to the courts to redefine words like sex and words like equality, and make these decisions that ought to be made in the legislative process. No, it was a tremendous victory and we're very glad that we have it. Now the feminist movement has continued, no question about that. And that's why I wrote my new book, *The Flipside of Feminism*, to show how really destructive it is.

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It has hurt generations of women, and feminism is what's taught in all the colleges. It's seeped into everything. And again, it's giving women the wrong view of society, the wrong view of men, the wrong view of marriage, the wrong view of how to plan their life. Now I don't say everybody has to be married, but we just have so many examples now of women who get older and then are so bitter about it.

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Take Germaine Greer, one of the intellectuals of the feminist movement, and she's bitter as she can be that she doesn't have a baby. And she said she tried so hard and, "I have the medical bills to prove it." And some of these women I debated are now very bitter about it. But feminism taught them wrong and

well, I hope we can help them to see that it's better if you plan your life to give you what you really want.

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And most young people don't have any idea how your life really changes when you have a baby. I remember when my son and his professional wife called up one day, they had their first baby, "Mother, why does the baby sleep all day and stay awake all night?" Well, it was a big shock to them. They were totally unprepared.

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BETSY WEST:

Feminist movement considers itself one of the great movements for human rights.

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, we have moved from a society that is maintained by husbands and fathers who are supporting their family, and now we have a forty-one percent illegitimacy rate, which means that the taxpayers are supporting the kids. And this is the principal reason for this tremendous federal spending that they're all fighting about today. If the husband provider is not around, the taxpayers are going to have to pick up the tab.

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BETSY WEST:

And you're saying that's because of feminism that this has happened?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Yes. Principally because of feminism, but also because of the federal subsidies that are given to single moms. Federal subsidies. As Ronald Reagan said, "If you subsidize something, you're going to get more of it." And we've been subsidizing non-marriage for the welfare system for years, and as a result, we're having more non-marriage.

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BETSY WEST:

Some historians have argued that in some ways the amendment became irrelevant because of what Ruth Bader Ginsburg and other lawyers did, in using the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment in fighting some discrimination in the laws, that many laws were changed anyway. Was the ERA really, kind of, irrelevant?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, many laws were changed, which just shows we could do it if we want to do that without any ERA. But Ruth Bader Ginsburg would never say it was irrelevant. She had a couple hundred pages of telling you all the changes it

would bring about. And a lot of them I think are just plain nutty. Like integrating the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

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BETSY WEST:

Some feminists have grudgingly called you “a fabulous example of a liberated woman.” What do you think when you hear that?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, I've had a very supportive husband. And the women who are successful, mostly have had that advantage. I can't help it if the feminists don't know how to pick good husbands. But you look, Margaret Thatcher had a very supportive husband and she had a great career. You don't hear the feminists bragging about really successful women. They are not for women's success because they don't believe women can be successful. They think women are ground down by the patriarchy.

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BETSY WEST:

What do you think are the differences between men and women?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

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I think there's so many differences. It starts in the cradle. And it's very unfortunate the way the feminists dominate even the elementary school and pretend there's no difference between girls and boys. And they have the attitude that little boys in school are just unruly girls and they have to make them behave like girls. But boys won't behave like girls, and when they don't behave like girls, then they want to give them a drug to make them pay attention. They're very unfortunate.

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BETSY WEST:

Are your daughters and sons living a different kind of life than you led? How is their life different?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, I'm sorry that the younger generation doesn't have as many children. And of course, this is- you see this everywhere. We've got this great dearth of babies in this country. And I only have fourteen grandchildren. I ought to have thirty-six. And I don't know why that is. I've always let my children live their own lives.

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BETSY WEST:

One of your sons has said that he is a homosexual. In the past, you called homosexuals perverts. Has his coming out changed your attitude about homosexuality?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

No, I think it's not right. But a lot of them are very fine people. My son is a very fine man and he does work with me in Eagle Forum. He does a wonderful job. He's both a lawyer and an accountant, and he's extremely valuable. And he does understand the importance of traditional marriage, which he's willing to speak up for. So again, I let my children live their own lives.

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BETSY WEST:

What do you think are the challenges that face the next generation of women?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, I tell the people on the college campuses, when I was growing up, we only had one problem: money. I'm sorry you have all these problems today, so many that I didn't have. So they do have lots of problems. And... some of

them, I guess, of their own making, but some of them are the way society has moved, which I don't think is an improvement.

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BETSY WEST:

What do you mean by that? I mean, you look really sad about it. I mean, what problems are they facing?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, you think of the millions of children in this country that are growing up without fathers. It's just a national disaster.

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BETSY WEST:

I mean, I haven't heard you acknowledge the reality that in today's economy, the single income often can't support a family the way it could 50 years ago. Given that, do you think that there has to be an accommodation between the roles that men and women play?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, I don't think that's moving in the right direction. We had an economy where husbands and fathers supported their family. Now, our government is

encouraging girls to have babies without husbands. That means the taxpayers have to pay for it, and I think that's completely wrong and counterproductive and- No, I don't think we should restructure the job pattern to accommodate that.

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BETSY WEST:

I guess what I'm saying- you know, both- they need to earn money, they got to go out there, make a living. Should wives still then be expected to keep the home and do all the cooking and the housework- you know, that kind of work-life balance that people talk about?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

You've got to figure out how to live your life. But the amount of time it takes to keep the house today is so small in comparison with what it used to be. For example, when I got married, all I wanted in this world was a dryer so that I didn't have to hang up my diapers. Now they have paper diapers, and there's just so many labor saving conveniences. You can even buy your onions already chopped in the grocery store. I mean, I don't know what these housewives have to complain about.

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BETSY WEST:

Reading about your life, you have lived an amazing life. You had gifts. I mean, obviously, you are very intelligent, you picked a really good husband. The women who are less fortunate, for whatever reason, either they make a mistake or they were just born into a different circumstance, how do you advise them to prepare for the uncertainties of life? Not everybody can expect to have Prince Charming come along, marry them and support them.

00:39:02:00

PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

Well, I grew up thinking that I wanted to get myself educated so I could support myself. That's what my life was going to be and that's what I think people ought to do. But if you pick a job that's going to require 24/7 obligation, that's going to interfere- may interfere with what you later on decide you want to do.

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And so, life's full of choices. I don't necessarily think it's possible to balance all of this. But the idea that you can have a full time career at the same time that you're raising little children, I think is really not possible.

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BETSY WEST:

What's the one piece of advice that you would give to a young woman today?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

I would hope that young women would plan their life in a way that would have some space for marriage, for a husband and for children. Because of the normal course of events, when you get a little bit older, you're going to want that in your life, and if you haven't arranged for a space for that, you're going to have a hard time fitting it in.

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BETSY WEST:

We know what you wound up doing with your life, what did you want to be when you grew up?

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PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

I'm not a person who had my whole life planned out, or a single goal that I was chasing. I took one step at a time, and each time I took a step forward, I saw the options that were out there and tried to make what I hoped was the right choice. But I really did it step by step. I am not one of these people who had a whole life plan with a single goal at the end.

00:41:04:00

BETSY WEST:

What's the accomplishment that you're most proud of?

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00:41:07:00

PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY:

I'm very proud of my family, my six children, of building a happy home for them and a happy home for my husband. But if you're talking about politics, I would say teaching the conservative movement that it is possible to win. I think that was a real accomplishment and that could be the one I'm most proud of.

END TC: 00:41:40:00