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Boswell: This is an interview with Rosanne McCaughey on December 1, 2008. The interviewer is Sherry Boswell for the Women’s History Consortium and its ERA project. Thank you so much, first of all, for doing this. Let’s get started, if you would, by telling me a little bit about your family background and where you’re from and how you got to the Northwest.

McCaughey: I am a German girl from Eastern Washington. My family roots are German, although my maiden name was Hull, which is English. I have one English grandfather. My family history is in wheat farming. My mother and father were married in 1940. Dad was a college graduate, which was almost a little rare in those times, but for me turned out to be a very fortunate thing. Mom and Dad started their life in Spokane. Dad was with an insurance company and ended up in Sacramento, California, and that’s where I was born.

At about age four, we moved back to Ritzville, Washington. Mother’s roots were in Odessa, Washington, about twenty-eight miles away. The reason for this was that Mother was having health problems, which weren’t yet diagnosed, but she was having enough trouble that Dad was not able to continue traveling with the insurance company. So he came back to Ritzville and started a business, the Ritzville Trading Company, which is a farm implement business, and he had the Oldsmobile dealership.

Later on, Mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. So from an early age, my sister, who is five years younger, and I always had an ill mother in our lives. We did not know it at the time; for us it was normal life. But in those days, you didn’t have help. There were not social programs. There were not nurses in town. Our father and ourselves saw our mother through her illness. She died quite young, at age forty-two. Dad continued his business all that time in Ritzville and was a community leader.

My mother’s father, W.C. Raugust, was a state legislator and senator for about twenty-two years. He was a staunch Republican. I don’t believe I knew there was another political party until Nixon/Kennedy because you were either Republican or you were out in our family. [laughs] We were very much moderate Republicans, though, maybe tending to the conservative side, but moderate. We actually felt, as children in that family—I mean to speak out against anything Republican, we just didn’t do it. [laughs] We were probably going to be punished if we did.

So I have roots there and really admired my grandfather. He was senator for Adams, Lincoln, and Ferry counties, and he did a lot of work in this state to bring many things forward. The Lake Washington Bridge, the first one. He was chairman of Roads and Bridges for years.

So that was definitely an influence. Like my grandfather, I loved to take on an issue or a candidate and really research it and speak on the subject. That was a good influence in my life.
Boswell: Was politics of interest to you in school? Did that translate into being involved in groups? Tell me a little bit about your education in Ritzville.

McCaughey: I graduated from high school in 1959, from Ritzville High School. I went to Washington State for just a year. I had to leave to go to business school in Spokane because Mother’s disease was increasing, and she had to go to a nursing home. Money was a bit short, so I went to Kinman Business School in Spokane. From that, I did secretarial work. I did not go back for my college degree until 1976. I started at Bellevue Community College, went on to the University of Washington, graduated with honors in speech communication with a full minor in business administration, mainly marketing areas. I loved going to school. I could have spent the rest of my life going to college. [laughter] It’s great to go when you’re older because you’re so focused on what you want to do. So that was a wonderful experience.

Then I spent six months in a state of depression, trying to get a job after that because I was older, I was forty, competing with the twenty-two year olds who were graduating. I have a liberal arts degree, which I had to explain to everyone I interviewed with how I would use that. As it turns out, that particular degree served me so well in my work. I loved it. I eventually got my first job out of that experience with the Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. I had to fall back on my secretarial skills. Once I had that job, and once I left Hutch and had this bit of experience, I could go more for what I wanted. I had several different employments. I worked for Manpower Temporary Services as a sales rep there. I worked for Thousand Trails, and then I applied at Microsoft and I worked there for six years. Then I retired from work.

Prior to this education, going back after getting out of Kinman Business School, I worked for Pacific Northwest Bell in Seattle up to and after I was married here. Then I have this big space of time when I was at home raising my family before I went back and got my degree and went back into the work force. So that’s my background.

Did I do political things along the way? Yes, I did. I mean, one of my big thrills of my life was when I joined Toastmasters in Bellevue. It was the first organization I actually went out to do, and I loved that group. We had the best people, and the best gals. But sometimes we would get to debate political issues, and that was just great fun.

Other than that, I was very active in the Bellevue School District with my children’s classes. I was always involved in community. Community has always been part of my life, and I’m still doing it today. So that is what I’ve done.

Boswell: Tell me a little bit about, going back for a minute, you mentioned your first job after Kinman Business School. Tell me a little bit about getting into the working world at that age, and some of your experiences.

McCaughey: I worked for an electronic company in Spokane for a brief time while I was finishing business school. Then, by chance and by luck, Pacific Northwest Bell ran an ad in the paper. I applied for a job there as a service representative, and I got it. So that was going to be a move for me. I absolutely loved my work at Pacific Northwest Bell. All these years passed and I went to get my degree, and one of my goals was to go back to work for Pacific Northwest Bell. But by then they had been broken up as a monopoly. It was a whole different scenario. The people that were there when I was there, except for
one, were gone. They had tightened the belt. They weren’t hiring, and I couldn’t get on there. So from that point, I had to just full force ahead, go out into the job market and find a job.

Boswell: I know you mentioned that when you went to Kinman, part of the reason was your mother’s illness. Tell me a little bit about her influence on your life or on your expectations of what you wanted to do.

McCaughhey: My mother was a beautiful woman who was one of the most innocent human beings I ever knew. She just didn’t know a lot about life. It was because she was raised very strictly, in a very strict Christian home, as was done with the German people. But on the other side, she had enormous ambition. She was a tennis champion in high school, and she had that drive. When they moved from Sacramento back to Ritzville, she was going to work with my father in the business. And then her illness, still not diagnosed, became such a hindrance that that didn’t work out for her. Unfortunately, it left her pretty angry and bitter, and there were issues there.

But Mother was always supportive of doing, getting out and doing things and doing well in school. Whatever I took up, whether it was Girl Scouts or 4-H, or getting that purple ribbon, she was quite driven and quite ambitious and passed that on a lot to us.

Our father was very well educated, and a younger man, which in a German community was a blessing to have because most of my friends’ parents were older and not well educated. We could talk to Dad. We could bring up issues of all kinds, things we’d read in the paper, and we could have a good discussion. So it was stimulating to be in that environment with our parents. As I say with Mother, you didn’t discuss as much. She just had an innocence about the world. With Dad, you could talk, and it was very encouraging. And then the influence of my grandfather being in a public place, being able to discuss issues; it was pretty exciting, actually. It was a very enjoyable part of my life.

We had a lot of downsides in taking care of Mother, but we were loved and we were encouraged and we had a good home. And, you know, the downside just didn’t get a hold of you like it might have.

Boswell: And so, when you went back and were helping to take care of her, though, did that change your personal goals?

McCaughhey: Okay, I didn’t help take care of her at that point. Once again our father, a very bright and astute man, was determined that my sister and I get some education out of high school. What happened at that point for me was Mother had to leave home and go into a nursing home, which was expensive. It just helped cut costs to go to Kinman Business School rather than continue college.

At that point of my life, I will also be honest in saying, I had not really settled yet on what I was going to study or what I was going to do. In those days, ideas were so limited. Teaching, nursing, that was about it. I had a great friend who was majoring in accounting, and we used to just practically worship her. We couldn’t believe it. She was the only woman in her accounting classes at Washington State. I never thought of that as a choice. If I thought of going into business, it was as a secretary. I did not think about
going into management. I did not think about becoming an engineer. Women just didn’t. Teaching was it. Secretarial or nursing was it.

I had not really settled on what path I wanted to take. I didn’t know yet it was going to be speech communication. I wish I had known that at eighteen [laughs] because I loved it.

Boswell: Now tell me a little bit, too, about what role religion played in your life at that point in time and in your expectations, too.

McCaughey: I was raised a Methodist through age six with a German-speaking pastor. I didn’t understand a word I was hearing when I went to church, but I was there every Sunday. I continued with the Methodist religion as I grew up. The Methodist church today is thought of as a more liberal church. In those days, and being in a German town, it was probably just as conservative as any other church in town. We had seven churches in Ritzville, population 2700.

Boswell: Oh, my. That’s amazing.

McCaughey: But that was part of life. To not have gone to church in my hometown, you were looked at like something was a little funny. So we went to church. My criticism of church in my growing up days was that we heard, I think, far too much about fear of God and not enough about love of Christ, which was a bit of a conflict for me. I cannot tell you at that young age why I was feeling that conflict, but I did. It was not until 1972 that I accepted Christ as my savior.

Okay, but by then I had married, lived in Louisiana for two years, in New Orleans. I went to the Methodist church there. We came back to Bellevue, through the 1960s I became very unsettled with the Methodist church because they had taken on the Vietnam War as a cause, which is okay. But it became too much social-oriented, not enough scripture. The scripture was just almost being set aside. I left and spent two or three miserable years of my life looking for another church. I hate that. Hate that!

Finally I found Westminster Chapel in Bellevue, which is a nondenominational church, and it is there through the teachers and pastors that I finally really encompassed the message of the New Testament. This was a very good thing for me, and I learned a lot more about Christ, and his love, and his teachings. I really adopted that as a real value in my life as to how to live life. Rigid, rule-oriented—that has never been me. I would probably say even today that my spiritual belief is very strong. Church as an institution, I can still have issues with, because; of course, they’re made up of people. Issues can come up and corruption can be had, and all these sorts of things, simply because they’re made up of people. I still believe it’s a wonderful place to go on Sunday and be spiritually renewed. I don’t feel a real hard emphasis to be a member of a church, so to speak. I attend Port Ludlow Community Church here, but I still really consider Westminster Chapel my home church in Bellevue.

So that’s where I am. I still believe the religious teachings, especially out of the New Testament, are just a wonderful way to try to live. They’re a wonderful guideline for life. I still have issues in the Old Testament. To me, that takes a lifetime of understanding. I still will have conflicts there, so that’s not totally resolved or accepted
completely for me. The New Testament is, pretty much. So that’s my religious background. [laughs]

Boswell: Out of those beliefs and traditions, what role did you expect marriage and family to play in your own life?

McCaughey: At the time I was married, I had no doubt I was going to have the role of wife and mother in the home. I had no thoughts about continuing working. My husband was hired by the Boeing Company. We felt we were going to be fine that way financially, so my place was going to be in the home.

And again, women—you just have to understand—we came out of such a traditional pattern. We were still there at the time we got married, and it just seemed like the best thing. How your marriage unfolds, I think, has everything to do with how you continue that role. For me, I was most fortunate. My husband and I have never had power issues that would have distracted us from having a good family life together. I think he would have been perfectly fine had I gone to work at any point. We would have really had to consider seriously how we were going to handle the children.

But, at that point, at the time I was married. My role was going to be in the home, and I was totally comfortable with it. I was going to manage the home. We had a baby coming right away. I was going to have a child, raise the child. I was going to make good meals and just make this a wonderful place to live. That’s literally how we lived.

Boswell: Now tell me a little bit about how you met your husband and when you got married, and I know you mentioned you moved to Louisiana for a little bit, too. So tell me a little bit about that and having your first kids.

McCaughey: I met Bill at Washington State, but did not date him until I left Washington State. He’s seven years older than I was, and after dating him once I thought, “Well, this man is absolutely too old for me. What am I doing?” [laughs] But he was a great guy. I really liked him, and he pursued it. We dated again, and then took that seriously. He was in his last year at Washington State. He’s an electrical engineer, and when he graduated, he was interviewing. He took a job with Boeing. By then, I had moved. When the World’s Fair opened, April of 1962, is when I moved to Seattle. Try to find an apartment then! [laughter] I went to work for Pacific Northwest Bell. So we were definitely together then, and spent the next year. We were married a year later. At that time, after we were married, I continued working with the intent, I think, that I probably was not going to keep working after the baby came, our oldest daughter.

But in December, Boeing had a program cancellation. It was the Dinosaur program. [laughter] And it turned out to be the Dinosaur that was canceled. Bill was on that project, and his choice was to be laid off or to go to New Orleans for the Saturn project, the space program. So we, being young and courageous, did it. Bill had traveled; he had been in the navy. For him to make a move was nothing. I was very wide-eyed. We’re going where? Doing what? [laughs]

But we moved. When our baby was thirteen days old, we moved to New Orleans.

Boswell: Wow. That must have been quite something.
McCaughey: It was. It was. In those days, when you went to the airport, you dressed. You wore a suit, heels, gloves, maybe a hat. Men wore suits, ties. Oh, yes. [laughter] So we went. We had two very exciting years there.

Speaking of political influences, we were there in 1964. Okay, Kennedy had been assassinated in 1963. That was in November. We left in January. The Kennedy assassination was still just ringing with Americans. I mean, it was so unbelievable. We didn’t know what our future was going to be. All we had security in was that Bill had a job, had a good job.

Well, in 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed, and here we were in the Deep South. Innocent me, who knew almost nothing about the Deep South, got quite the education. It was also the year Goldwater won in Louisiana, if you can believe it. [laughs]

So we saw horrific things there. The day after the 1964 Civil Rights Act passed Congress, everything that was public in the city of New Orleans changed to private. The signs went up. They were already made. “This is a private pool.” “This is a private club.” Private restrooms. Private—just bang, like that.

So politically, my eyes just flew open. I was getting an education, whether I wanted it or not. It was very, very interesting, and it definitely influenced me. I came back from our two years there knowing that I was really going to pay attention to political issues. It interested me and it excited me, and it was something I enjoyed reading about and talking about. So I knew that somehow there were going to be other things in my life.

Boswell: Yes. Well, having come from the Northwest, where civil rights issues probably weren’t as much in the forefront at least as they would have been in the South, tell me a little more about that reaction.

McCaughey: We arrived in New Orleans, and this was the old New Orleans. I was hardly able to deal with how it looked, it was so foreign. It was like I was in a foreign country. We had the great good fortune to stay in a guesthouse, Mrs. Felton’s Guesthouse, which was a renowned place in later years. I think it’s now made into apartments. It was in the French Quarter. She took us under her wing. She saw that we were young, and we had this new baby, and we were simply staying there waiting to find an apartment. Bill had to go right to work.

So she took us under her wing and sat us down and talked to us and said, “Everybody in the Deep South, any other person coming in, was from the North.” There was no Northwest. There was no West. For people in Deep South, there was North and South. That’s it. So she would say to us, “I know you’re from the North, and this is how we live our life here. We have our colored workers. And you’re going to hear how little money they make. But remember, we take care of them. We send them to the doctor.” Them. Them.

Boswell: Yes.

McCaughey: So she was wonderful in that way. She was our first eye opener as to how things were. But then we began to experience them. Like I would jump on a bus, and be in the back of the bus and plop down because I had the baby and the infant seat and
everything else—sweating because the climate was unbelievably hot—and forget. I was in the back of the bus. People just turned; white people just turned and stared at you until you got up and moved to the front of the bus, even if you had to stand. Okay, that was just one experience.

You went to the service station, and they would service your car. If there was a white employee, he got the covered garage. The black employees worked outdoors in that heat all day, servicing your car. It was outdoors. When you gassed up, they gassed your car. The black man was not allowed to take your money. The white man came out and took your money. Of course, for me, I was just so offended. I had never seen anything like that in my life. I really did think everybody was treated the same, and there I was seeing it firsthand. They are not.

You know, when you’re living in a community that is two-thirds black to a third white, the black people were definitely the majority population, and yet you walk down a street, and if the street gets crowded, the black person steps off the curb, walks in the street. You walked on the sidewalk—a very haunting experience.

I opened my big mouth one day, out hanging up clothes. We lived in an apartment complex, and the people across from us had their black lady. She came at six in the morning and she left about seven at night. This is 1964 and 1965, and she made two dollars a day. She made that family’s breakfast, she got those children off to school, she did all the housework, all the laundry, everything that had to be done, got the dinner ready for the people at night. She went home to her nine children and had dirt floors in her house. The issue came up because something about raising, and of course, nobody ever wanted to raise salaries because then that meant everybody would have to. It came out, and when I heard the two dollars a day, I was in shock! And my mouth flew open. I said, “You’ve got to be kidding! You have got to be kidding! Two dollars a day from six in the morning till seven at night doing all this work?”

Then, of course, I was really chastised. I was really put down by the native women who were living there as to it was none of my business, and I didn’t understand the problem and I needed to keep my mouth shut, and I needed to remember that when that black woman needed the dentist or the doctor or something like that, the family provided it. Of course, she took the bus to work and home every day. But, you know, they put me in my place. “You are from the North. You do not understand how we live down here.” So, it was an education—the whole thing.

Boswell: And was there any sense that you really couldn’t change their minds?

McCaughey: Oh, no. Oh, no. Oh, heavens, no. I was white. Why wasn’t I getting along with my thinking a lot quicker than I was getting along with it? Why had I not, for example, enrolled my child in private school yet? Certainly she wasn’t going to go to public school. Children in New Orleans…if you were middle class or above, you enrolled your children in private schools when you found out you were pregnant because it took that long to be accepted and get in.

Public schools were horrible in New Orleans at that time. I don’t know if they’re any better now. I’m sure they must be some better, but they were not good places. I probably would have really thought about that. I never had before. I assumed my child was going to go to public school.
Boswell: Yes.

McCaughey: So, yes. Yes. Yes.

Boswell: Now coming out of civil rights, to a degree, the women’s movement began also to grow at that particular time. Was there any indication in Louisiana, any notice of that that movement that you saw?

McCaughey: Not at all. Not at all. The white women in the city of New Orleans were treated like the Southern queens they’d always been treated like. I had friends there who spent two, two-and-a-half hours dressing. I would sit there and think, “What are you doing?” [laughs] They would dress, and they had help dressing. They’d have their maid help with this, that and the other thing, and spent a lot of time. They were terribly gracious women, gracious, and would just take you into their arms and their hearts. But in a way, things of depth I just never found were discussed. I don’t think I knew that, and I think I knew it later. But in going to the Methodist Women’s Group, or whatever I was going to attend, the conversation was strictly on the level of the next fashion show, cookbooks we were going to put together, food, experiences going out with the family. Politics weren’t discussed, really. That really was thought of as the men’s arena.

The political situation in Louisiana was like nothing I’d ever seen. It was, without question, a total corruption. It was frightening. Louisiana has parishes rather than counties. For example, Plaquemines Parish, which was across the river from New Orleans, armed people. You didn’t just drive over to Plaquemines Parish. You needed to have a focus as to what you were going to do there and who you were going to see. Nobody told them what to do in their county. And you know the movie JFK, although that is not a historically correct movie by any sense of the word, but it talks about the reporter on the Times-Picayune there, when all this was going on. That was going on then, and the newspapers were just raging with the assassination issue.

That was going on, but it was men who gathered in groups, smoked cigars, drank liquor, and discussed the world. Women were always in another room, and the only time, really, you came together was dinners, balls, the wonderful Mardi Gras celebration.

Okay, what did we from the North do? We were so different! It was Chrysler and Boeing down there building the Saturn booster. We were from all over the United States: the Northeast, the Northwest, California, you name it. We had to be careful. I remember we had one friend who would just intentionally [antagonize] them. We had made friends with some New Orleanians, and if we were driving, they have all the circles with the statues. Well, of course, all of their statues in that town are of the Southern generals—Civil War people. If you brought up the name of the general from the North, it didn’t go well. You were looked at. You were put down. You may have lost a friend. It was bad manners. George just couldn’t seem to learn his manners. [laughs] The rest of did. We learned to keep our lips zipped and realized we were in another place here, you know.

But we boosted the economy in that town just tremendously because we were there. But custom-wise, we were never a fit, and it made it a little stressful sometimes. We looked out after each other, and we had all our holidays together because we didn’t go home and see family then. It was too expensive. So we have great friends that I still
hear from at Christmas that were part of that whole thing. It was an experience, a cultural experience, to live there. The food is out of this world. I put on my first twenty pounds there. The experiences were just great.

The heat and the mosquitoes were horrible, absolutely horrible. We named the mosquito the state bird of Louisiana. They were just unbelievable, and you were in that tropical climate. But you know, their history was so rich—their voodoo queens and everything there. So overall, it was a wonderful experience. It truly was. I’m glad you brought that up. As an adult, a young adult, at that time, even though I had grandfather in my life who was a politician, that experience in New Orleans really sparked a sense of politics and history and what goes on in decision-making.

Boswell: Now how did you end up leaving and ultimately coming back to the Northwest?

McCaughey: We chose to leave New Orleans. We knew eventually our daughter was going to be going to school, and that was becoming an issue. I didn’t love the climate; Bill was tolerating it. So he told Boeing that he wanted to go back to Seattle, and that was not looking good. If anything, we were going to get sent to Huntsville, Alabama. In a stroke of luck, they lost Bill’s records. In the process of having his resume, his record and stuff lost, an opening came up here in Seattle, and the guy wanted him, and he was hired. So we got to come back. Otherwise, our life would have turned out far differently. We’d have gone to Huntsville, Alabama, which is a big space center there. That’s what would have happened, but instead, we came back to Seattle. He got reemployed back here with Boeing, and then we’ve been here ever since.

Boswell: Oh, that is serendipitous.

McCaughey: Yes.

Boswell: Tell me a little bit about coming back. You’d had these rather eye-opening experiences in Louisiana. Tell me a little bit about resettling in the Northwest, and how you ultimately became involved in the greater Bellevue community.

McCaughey: When we returned, we lived on Mercer Island, in the Shorewood Apartments. That’s when they were all Shorewood Apartments, before the lower ones had changed into retirement homes. We loved living there because at that time we were living with all of the medical students from the University of Washington. They were young people who were out of medical school, into their specialties, and they had married and had families, so there were a billion little kids at Sherwood. At that point, I was glad to be back home, glad for our apartment. We were trying to have another child, but that wasn’t going too well. I didn’t do much on Mercer Island. I just was back in that groove of home and child and that sort of thing. Good social times with the medical students.

Then we bought our first home in Bellevue in 1967, and that was an experience. My children, to this day, don’t believe what our house payment was. I’ll tell you. A hundred and fifty a month was what we paid on our mortgage. We moved to Bellevue, and got settled, and became established there. I was, of course, at that time wrestling with
church issues because the Vietnam War and everything that had happened there, so that was a big unsettling.

And I was looking for ways to expand. I was always involved with my kids. I always did everything at school—PTA, that whole thing. I was very interested when my oldest daughter, when the time came to plan for her senior party. When we met, it was the same group of us that had started at kindergarten. [laughter] We all knew each other really well.

I thought Bellevue was a great place to live. One of the big draws in Bellevue was the wonderful newspaper at that time, the *Bellevue Journal American*. The editor did everything. He went to all the meetings. He covered everything. That was one of the best small town papers I had ever read. It was just extremely well done, and it’s very sad to me today that that it’s gone, and it’s a conglomerate running the paper there because it was a delight to read that paper. It was so good; he did such a good job highlighting organizations in Bellevue and what they were doing. I began to look at that and say, “Where might I do something else here?” And Toastmasters became the first thing I did. I loved that, just loved that group.

Boswell: What did you do in Toastmasters? Was it primarily public speaking? Or how did it work?

McCaughey: The organization is a public-speaking group in that you try all the venues of public speaking—impromptu, informal. As an organization, you can enter into speech giving and you can end up at the end of the year in a large contest where they give you this very formal—it’s like a debate question. You go to the contest and speak on that, and so forth. But besides that, it was a good organization for learning how organizations run. You can run for an office; you can organize this.

The other factor was, it drew all kinds of women. Everybody. I think that was one reason I liked it so much. I didn’t realize it at the time, but I was really being exposed out of my very traditional home/family thing. This woman does this; this woman does that. It was when Bellevue first gave attention to domestic women problems, and the first organizations were started there. A couple of gals that were in Toastmasters were working on that issue. So that became for me just very interesting, to know what they were doing, to be able to talk to them. I was always interested in what’s happening right now, and what are we doing about it, and all that kind of thing. So I enjoyed my time there. I didn’t continue on. I eventually left Toastmasters, but it was a wonderful springboard for me to get out and test myself a little bit and become more exposed.

I will always wonder about one woman in the group that she and her husband did not believe in insurance. I wonder today if they ever took out insurance because they didn’t carry any.—not car insurance, not house insurance. They just handled their life that way. They just paid for things as they go, if they had problems. I always wondered if they could sustain it. It was so interesting to me. [laughter]

Boswell: Yes, especially coming from your dad in insurance, at least originally.

McCaughey: Yes.
Boswell: I know education eventually drew you into some other community activities that I think also led you the ERA. But tell me a little bit about the experiences that led you into that project in Bellevue.

McCaughey: A very good friend of mine, Norma Jean Trabold, from Bellevue, and I were talking one day, and she uttered the words, “I think I want to go and get my college degree.” And she said it so quietly.

I said, “You know, I have been debating that to myself for a long time.” Because I knew from having worked that the way the American corporation works is you go so far without a degree, and that’s about as far as you’re going to go. Then as a woman, you have to make a choice: Well do I leave work, go back to school and get my degree and come back? Do I try to do it while I’m working? Or do I just stop here? But it was quite evident that if you were going to go on into management of any kind, they were going to look for that degree, and so I had been dealing with that. Should I go back to school, or should I just— I knew I was going to be going back to work, because we were going to have college to pay for for our oldest daughter, so the need for more income was evident.

So there she sat and there I sat. And I said to Norma Jean, “Well, if I go back, I’m going to have to go back and see if I can pass a math class.” Because in high school, I’d had first year math and general math, and that was it. That was the requirement. That was all I had. I was not very good at math.

So she and I talked to our husbands, and said, “This is what we’re going to do. This is how much it’s going to cost.” And they, of course, not believing we were going to take it any further, but we went over to BCC and took beginning algebra. [laughs] And we passed! We actually did very well.

So we got very excited. Norma Jean knew that she had abilities and wanted to become an architect. I still was flailing. I was thinking business because I had a high interest in business. We decided we were going to go to school, so we went to Bellevue Community College together. I remember when my daughter was a senior, she was taking college level math, the first course, and I was taking it at BCC at the same time. My poor husband, who is wonderful at math, was tutoring us both. She was getting it quicker than I was. We went through that, and I ended up even taking one more, business calculus. I still to this day can’t believe I went through all that math. Norma Jean had to go on for many quarters, for architecture, of calculus and that sort of thing.

So we supported each other getting through Bellevue Community College. We both had to take a language because we didn’t have one. Our only choice of schools was the University of Washington because we could not afford to go to private school. So I remember arguing about having to take that language, but I did.

And so we went on. She went right on to the university. I took a quarter off, applied and got in. While I was at Bellevue Community College, I took my first speech class, and I just fell in love with it. I came home and told my husband, “This is it. This is what I’m going to major in.” At which he turned pale and said, “You’ll never get a job.”

Women do have to put up with this for men. Would someone just once say, “Good! Go for it!” But no. But my husband was very good about it, and he supported me through this going back to college. I did what I loved, and it was a wonderful thing.

I had finished the entire lower business course at Bellevue Community College, and I went on and took some more marketing at University of Washington. But I was
primarily in my major, and really loved, really just loved that whole part of my life. I finished that degree in four years. I went to summer school a couple of summers, and my children were old enough then that I bussed in to the U. I remember setting up these elaborate schedules of people to contact in case my children had a problem while I was at the U.—every quarter.

So that was a wonderful experience. I knew, getting out, I was going to be going to work. I took a little time off then, and it was great mistake. I should have started interviewing for work immediately. I waited until fall. Bad time—very bad time. Number one, those others had been out ahead of me. Number two, business is heading into end of year. It was not a good time for hiring. So I’d just bounce out in the morning, full of energy, go get that job. I cannot tell you how many job interviews I was in that there were two of us—

Boswell: Oh, the final two.

McCaughey: Job after job after job. After six months, this was getting serious. I needed to get to work, so I fell back more on secretarial skills to get the job. I got the job at the Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, which I’m grateful for, because it was the stepping stone. I enjoyed working there very much and went on from there out to other work.

Boswell: I have to ask, though, in your decision to go back to work, was there any influence at all from the women’s movement or at least the new focus on women’s issues during that period or not?

McCaughey: There was an influence. As I came from being active in opposing the Equal Rights Amendment, I was at a time in my life when I believed in what I was doing, because I believe so much in this structure of the family. I was not totally aware how much of a learning experience that was going to be for me because the years then passed. We came through the 1980s. Upon graduating from the university and knowing I was going to go to work, I was keenly aware that I was now going to go into an environment that I basically had been against, in fighting the Equal Rights Amendment. Now I was going to go into it, and I was hopeful that it was going to be a better place than when I left it, as far as how women were treated. So I was aware of that, and I was hopeful it was going to be better.

Then as I got into my work experiences, I saw the reality of how women were treated, and I became very much supportive of the issues that women faced, particularly in work at that time. Of course, I was then older. In my work life from that point always I was older, and the rest of the women were younger. I mean, at Microsoft, I was a grandmother! They were all twenty-two. I mean, young! I worked with my children’s friends who graduated. You know, I used to have them to my house. I now worked with them. They were my colleagues. That was very different. But yet, I was keenly aware of that, that I was going to enter a work environment that was quite different from the one I’d had before all this happened. From what I’d learned, I have never let go of how I still feel regarding the family structure and how law applies and can affect that. I’m very strong that we need that. But as a woman in the workplace, it was going to be different, and I seemed to be aware of that.
I wasn’t that willing to just take anything that came. Part of that interviewing those six months was that I tried for everything and did not get hired in many places. But then there were some places where I went for an interview, and I walked in, and I said, “I am not going to work here,” by what had been covered. So, yes. It created an awareness.

Boswell: Let’s step back and talk a little bit about how you originally got involved in the anti-ERA campaign. You mentioned to me earlier that actually it started with a group of women in Bellevue who had some issues with some curriculum. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

McCaughey: Yes. Several of us had become aware of a social studies program in our children’s elementary school called MACOS. That was “Man, a Course of Study.” It was an anthropology unit. Anthropology in and of itself was not a problem for us as adults. We could all enjoy studying that. We also absolutely loved our school. We felt we had the best teachers on the planet. We had a wonderful principal. Our issues were not with the school itself, or public education itself, but this course was going to be taught to ten-year olds in fifth grade. We reviewed the learning materials, and they were a study of an Eskimo group in Alaska who, as their values, practiced suicide, infanticide, matricide—concepts that we thought for a ten-year-old child were a bit much. We would have rather seen this course of study taught at an older age in school, and we were concerned about it. We initially asked to have it removed. We did not want to see it taught at that level in the school. The Bellevue School District was not going to remove it.

At that time—we did not know it until a little later—but there was a group of people in Seattle who were working on the same issue with the same program. And that’s how we combined as a group of women to basically fight this social studies course. The group in Seattle had hired an attorney, so we got to meet him, and he went to bat for us in court. The outcome for Bellevue public school was all they did was move it a year ahead to sixth grade.

So we made some gain, and we certainly brought it to people’s attention. But that was our initial inkling, thread, of thinking “Wait a minute, is this good for the family?” Basically, we all had similar core values in that we were Christians. We belonged to many different kinds of churches, but we had these core values of this structured, stable family with man at the head of the household, earning the income; woman at the head of the household, running the home; the children providing this base. And we had a sense of how much children need to be exposed to at a certain age. It certainly was not today’s age of electronics. We’d have been sunk, because today, children are exposed instantly to everything. I don’t know whether that’s good or bad. I won’t judge.

But at that time, families had more control over what their children were taught, and they could take issue. They could say, “You know, we think this is too soon for this kind of thing.” So that’s how we proceeded. But it was at that point where we formed on this issue, and it was like, you know, battle guns came out of the wall at that point.

All of a sudden, Gloria Steinem was on television. I remember stopping my vacuum cleaner and listening to Gloria Steinem make her spiel about women and their place in society. It really sounded awful to me. I hadn’t yet formulated the idea that what she was talking about was women and power. It just sounded like we want women to
something they aren’t, and it’s going to destroy the home. I was really offended by her statements.

And then, of course, it all began. We were reading Betty Friedan and looking at these ideas and thinking, “My goodness, this can’t be a good thing for our society.”

So then, right after this event the State of Washington proposes an equal rights amendment, and that seemed like a threat because it didn’t make sense to us. It simply didn’t make sense to us that this amendment was a need in the law at that time. Number one, there were no laws on the books for some of these protections and powers that the advocates were stating. And number two, that whole concept of everybody being equal, something wasn’t understood. Equality is elusive; it’s like love, it’s an abstract. How do you define that? Who is equal? What we were just beginning to understand then was the group was mainly for it, I believe, because it affected women who were working, or who were going to work. That was kind of an isolated group; it wasn’t all women, and everything women were doing, and women in the home. It was just kind of—we women in the workforce are having these issues, and we believe the equal rights amendment is going to help resolve that. We just couldn’t grab hold of all that at the time.

So we were very opposed on the basis of how it would change protections in the law for women, such as divorce and alimony. There were just a number of things that we saw that would be changed, and not in women’s favor. That’s how we got going on these issues. We began to have these meetings. We’d get together and have a meeting. As an aside, we were almost all on Weight Watchers at that time. We would come to the meeting and pop our cans of tuna, and it would smell like a fish factory in there for about a half an hour until we got done eating our lunch. [laughter] And how were we going to proceed? Were we going to print some literature and get it out to people? Who was going to? It was so basic, so core.

I remember I left my youngest child in a preschool group for the first time during that time. Oh, she hated it, and I felt guilty for years. But I left her several times in that preschool to go out and do this work, called opposing the Equal Rights Amendment, because we just had to.

Betty Young, to her credit, would get calls to go on television programs. There was this station in Everett, and they broadcasted at three in the morning. She and I went and sat there and were interviewed and spoke at three in the morning. Like who could possibly be watching this program at three in the morning? But we did that. We drove through fog. We went everywhere we were asked, and sometimes even if we weren’t asked. If we saw something big was coming up and it was going to be a discussion of the amendment, and there was going to be the “pro side” and we didn’t get asked, we would call and say, “You know, there is another side here and do you want representation?” And we would go.

So we just spent a year, really, on the road, at the copy machine, trying to come up with a little money to support all this effort. We did not have a financial base, so we didn’t have any major monetary support. We literally out of pocket did our copying and our distributing and gas to get to where we needed to go. I personally spent time in the Washington State Legislature talking to those representatives and senators who sounded that they were against. I really worked as a lobbyist, I guess you would have to call it. I didn’t have a group, but I would go up and talk with them and present this side to help them along. Most of them did go along with us and support us.
Boswell: I was going to ask, were they fairly receptive?

McCaughey: Yes, they were. They were. Yes. Senator Washington, I remember, was very much so. I remember talking to one who was not, who literally wanted to boot me right out of the office because it turned out he was for it. But he did let me stay and present my case and then I left.

I am sorry. Right now I’m trying to think of the state legislator from the Mukilteo area at that time. Oh, he was totally supportive of us and came to our meetings. I think he also had a political motive in that he hoped our group would support him in election. His name is Jack Metcalf—he was the nicest man. He actually came to some of our meetings, and he spoke, and he was very supportive of us. So we did have something. It just became something that we felt it was very, very important to not put this into our constitution in the State of Washington. The need was not that great, that the constant interpretation of this and how it was going to be applied was going to be a boondoggle. That’s just how we saw it. You know, to step back and you would ask us or anybody else, “Well, don’t you believe in some equality?” Well, of course we all do, but it always got down to these applications.

There were some women in the state that I felt were doing the right thing. One is my cousin, Karen Fox, who I pay tribute to every day of my life. She was then head of the state Human Rights Commission, and she got through the legislature, I think, two laws on women and credit, and then there was another one. The work that took! But those were significant and they helped women.

Boswell: [Tape change] I’m sorry to interrupt. So you were talking a little bit about Karen Fox and her role. She was not in the legislature, though?

McCaughey: No. She was director of the Human Rights Commission here in the State of Washington. She worked in Seattle. I bring this up because in my mind, now she and I, if you can believe it, are blood relatives, first cousins. I mean, she was for the equal rights amendment; I was opposed to it. Yet, the work she did was exactly what I thought should be done. It was the specifics. I understood that to be the long road to resolve things, but it was important. I remember trying to get credit, and I couldn’t get credit just because I was a woman and wasn’t working at the time. The only thing I could get was if we gave my husband’s complete credit information. Those are very difficult situations, and when she got through these pieces of legislation, I thought it was wonderful.

I had a good friend who was absolutely destroyed because in those days, men could take the savings and checking account, because it’s a community property state, and take the money out for his business and never have to tell his wife that he was doing that. Okay, that’s now changed under the law, but there were very harmful things in the law towards women. There were very protective things, too. I think divorce and alimony were the biggest areas that if the equal rights amendment passed, it was going to change a lot of that, and make us all very equal, ignoring the fact that maybe many women would not be working women and would be harmed by what would happen there.

So for me, personally, that was the lesson. I could be opposed to this and not really see the value of having it in the state constitution. And yet, I could also look at the
specifics that women, especially in work, dealt with, and say, “Yes, we need to change that law.”

Boswell: So is it fair to say that you were more worried because it was a constitutional amendment, and it would set in stone aspects of equal rights that you didn’t like? And that we should move toward it more on a piecemeal basis? Or is that really fair?

McCaughey: Okay, let me clarify. I would say that those of us opposed to the equal rights amendment saw what the effect would be on the current law. In issues such as divorce and alimony they would then have to take that particular law they were dealing with and put it into the realm of equal rights and change that wording, and women would not do as well under that.

Then, the other aspect was this realization of what we didn’t have in the law in the first place. So what was the point of having an equal rights amendment? The laws that might help us further weren’t even on the books. And then, philosophically, religiously, we saw it as this threat to family life as we knew it. If you’re going to start calling men and women equal in everything in the law, might that be eroding to what we knew as our Christian married life and family life.

I hate to drop this bomb into the punchbowl, but many in our group would quote the Ephesians 5 out of the New Testament, which talks about the husband at the head of the family, as he is to Christ, and woman—that was so interpreted by the “for” side as women were subordinate to men, and less than, and second in line. Now, that is an interpretation. Everybody has an interpretation of that. It’s kind of too bad. I personally interpret that portion of the Bible as a lesson to men and women about being self-centered. In your married life to each other and your relationship to Christ, when things get out of line, it’s usually because you probably have taken a very self-centered attitude, action, whatever, and it doesn’t meld well. That’s how I interpret that scripture. But see, it could be one in a million interpretations.

Many of the women that were against the equal rights amendment were very strictly conservative on that. They stuck to it like glue, and they recited it every time they spoke. I mean, it was a real threat to that instruction by Christ of married life. So it was very volatile. Today we can sit here and analyze whether it would have been as destructive as these people thought. Well, people will say family isn’t faring too well today, so maybe it was. I don’t know. But it was an issue, and for the conservative religious part of the “against” group, this was very paramount. I would not lie about that. It was a very solid commitment to that concept.

And of course, then, on the “for” side, that would just get pooh poohed. Even sometimes there would be Christian women on the “for” side who would just say, “Oh, you women are out of your mind. You’re interpreting that wrong,” and that sort of thing. It was an undercurrent debate or discussion. Like all things from the Bible, we humans interpreted it, and it gets quite out of hand sometimes. But it was very definitely there. That was one thing—the big threat to so-called Christian family life.

Boswell: Now when you’ve been talking about “we,” who were the anti-ERA people, the people that you specifically worked with? Was religion and Christian family the basis of
your getting together with others that you worked with? Tell me a little bit about the
group specifically that you worked with.

McCaughey: When we first formed and got together over the school issue, we were there
over the school issue. We didn’t know each other yet, really.

Boswell: So you were primarily parents in the same school.

McCaughey: I knew Betty Young slightly. I knew Yvonne, a good friend of ours; I knew
her better. So they were women we knew in that particular elementary and high school
group. But it wasn’t until we actually got together over this issue and worked on it that
we began to realize our value systems were so similar, and it was coming from our
different religious beliefs. Those religious beliefs are like they are today. They went from
very conservative—so conservative you would have some right wing attached to it—to
conservative, to moderates. There were many moderates, but probably not so many
liberal viewpoints, yet, Christian women who all went to churches that have a little
different setup. It was then that we began to realize that a unifying thing is that we had
this set of values that were pretty much right down the line on how we felt the law was
going to affect or not affect the value system for our families.

Boswell: Had you been following the ERA on the national level in terms of actually
changing the constitution? I mean, had you been following that or not? Was it really the
local—local meaning state—issue that prompted you?

McCaughey: We followed the national issue really through the Phyllis Schlafly work. It,
of course, would have been something we wouldn’t have wanted either at the federal
level. So we followed it basically through that core, but we did our most work on the
state issue. How do I want to put this? We had another thing in common in that we were
all good readers and took an interest in reading, and our knowledge at the time was by
reading our newspapers, our publications. So our awareness at the federal level was there,
but not as prominent as the state level. The local was easier for us to get our hands around
and so forth. We would have had the same concerns at the federal level that we would
have had at the state.

All I can insert here is that I cannot, I guess, describe how fast this came on.
When I think about it, it was like we were women who really weren’t even talking on the
phone very much to each other. All of a sudden, we were on the phone for hours every
day, contacting, talking. What about this? What about that? How are we going to handle
it? How are we going to approach it? It just seemed like it all hit.

And then, of course, you had the issue and staying focused was not always easy.
Because you had the issue, sometimes you would have women decide to come into our
group, but they had this other issue that was perhaps a similar concern, but was a
different issue altogether. We have to be careful of that because it would have splintered
us so thinly that we wouldn’t have gotten as far as we did get.

Boswell: So like what would be an example?
McCaughey: Well, when you come into the realm of Christian family, and what affects it, you can take the world apart piece by piece. There might be someone come in with, “I saw this group and it’s pornographic, and this is bad for the family, and I need to join you because we need to conquer this.” No. Maybe, but we had really gotten focused on the equal rights amendment. It was important for us to stay there, even though these were important issues, too, and we would have loved to consider them. But as a novice group, we learned early on to bring some control to that, and we had to watch sometimes. Certain people would come in and actually were a little suspect as to why they were there. We weren’t quite sure where our information was going to go or end up sometimes because we’d see them for a while, and then they weren’t there, whereas the core of us was always there. So that was an interesting—[laughs]

Boswell: Now you mentioned Phyllis Schlafly earlier. Tell me a little bit about how she came into your radar, and what kind of influence she had.

McCaughey: She was introduced to me by my friend Betty Young, who had been doing a lot of reading about Phyllis Schlafly, and, in fact, had called her and talked with her on the phone. Phyllis had directed Betty as to how to get a lot of this information that she had researched, so Betty Young was key in being able to do that and brought the information to us. We could just see that as an opponent of the equal rights amendment, Phyllis Schlafly had done her homework. She had researched the law, the Bible—you name it—very well, and she was a very eloquent speaker. She was very clear, and because she had such skill and ability, she was invited to groups in Washington, DC, and corporations nationally. She was a speaker on the agenda along with those who were for the amendment.

So following what she did was a help to us. It was a great source of information, and if we had questions about things, we could go to that information and say, “Oh, this is it, and this is what would not be right, or would be okay if the amendment was passed.” She was not with us, but as an outside source of information for us, very valuable, and probably, I might go so far as to say, we would not have gone as far as we could go without that input. She just had done so much work that we could use.

Boswell: Now did she have an organization by that point? I know she had some newsletters.

McCaughey: Yes, a very interesting question. I do not remember that Phyllis Schlafly had a big organization. It was the women she reached through her newsletter, through her research, and we really were her organization. She was just extremely generous in talking to us, helping us via phone, so that we could continue to function. But I would say, I don’t remember her being associated with something that was an organization. It was just that for women who were against the equal rights amendment, she was a leader, and we were kind of her group out here. It made a large group of women who were in their communities doing what she was doing.
Boswell: I was interested that you mentioned that Betty Young actually would call her up and ask her things. Now didn’t she come out to the Northwest, or the to the Seattle area, at one point?

McCaughey: I cannot remember that. I’m right on the edge of saying yes, she did one time. But I can’t back it up. I can’t bring forth the memory. I wish I could. Oh, I wish Betty were here.

Boswell: There were other actual groups who did, you know, either oppose the ERA or had other issues as well. I know one was called HOME, which was Happiness of Motherhood Eternal, I think. Now was that one that you worked with at all?

McCaughey: I was never associated with that. I remember the name, but I don’t remember that association or being part of that. I just don’t. Was that here in Washington?

Boswell: Well, I think so. I had read it in the series of articles by Susan Paynter. It had identified you and Betty Young as members of HOME, but it really didn’t go into detail.

McCaughey: Isn’t that interesting that that doesn’t ring a bell with me because maybe we were called that group? Wait, I do remember this group and leader. I was not a member of HOME.

Boswell: Did your group have a name? I mean, did you formalize your group into a specific organization?

McCaughey: No, we didn’t, and that’s why I say that name is familiar to me. But I can’t put it into perspective. I don’t remember operating under that name, but it could be that Betty and some of those gals may have formed that. It could be. I’m just drawing a complete blank as to the name.

Boswell: Now there was another organization, and I’ll just throw it out, that was called HOW, Happiness of Womanhood.

McCaughey: Happiness of Womanhood, oh my gosh, what was that about? That rings bells. Was that started—oh, who was she? She was this blond. She looked like a Barbie doll.

Boswell: Jacque Davison.

McCaughey: Yes. And she came and spoke here.

Boswell: Now tell me about her.

McCaughey: She was the one who advocated keeping your husband happy. Have you ever thought of wrapping yourself in Saran Wrap and greeting him at the door? I
remember sitting there thinking, “No, I haven’t, I don’t think I will.” In my opinion, had that been the group, I probably would have been out of there sooner. It was too, too basic, I don’t know, how shall we say it? Her idea of woman was just really this person who wasn’t much. [laughs] I mean, total, total service to her husband. It went too far for me. I remember she was a real flash in the pan. That was, for a while there, very popular, and she wrote a book.

Boswell: Oh, did she? I didn’t know.

McCaughey: Yes, I think she wrote a book, and then she would come and lecture. Because she looked like a Barbie doll, the media just couldn’t quite believe that this little chick was going to come out here and talk against the equal rights amendment. But she really was focused on this woman in the home without any other motives in life. I remember rubbing against that. I remember talking to Betty and saying this isn’t quite my idea of what I want to be associated with; it isn’t quite how I would behave. You know, she was okay, I wouldn’t talk against her. She had her point and her way of doing it, but for me personally, it was a bit much. I don’t know, it wasn’t educational enough, or I don’t know how to express it. It was a little bit out of my realm of how I would approach the issue. I didn’t think that that was going to do a lot to further the cause of convincing people not to vote for the equal rights amendment. It was more her position of who women were and what they should be in their home. It was a very early 1950s concept in my mind, like we hadn’t progressed at all. I wasn’t there. I felt I was progressing, even though— I mean, I was working hard on this, in a very serious way. But that’s, yes. [laughs] I hadn’t thought of that for a long time.

Boswell: There are some newspaper articles with her picture very large that I’ll have to how you later, so I think you’re right there. Were there many men involved in this anti-ERA movement? Was it purely a woman’s group that you were involved in? Or were there men involved, too? I know you mentioned the state legislator, but otherwise?

McCaughey: I don’t remember a lot of men. I remember men sitting back, whether they were for or against it, in their chairs at home, waiting to see what we were going to do about it, to be quite honest. I just remember it being primarily women. You know, my husband was encouraging to me as far as what I was out doing and certainly supported me on it, but I just don’t remember a lot of men getting into the work of doing this and furthering it. Because it was the women who, like I said, went to speak to the senators and the state legislators and the different things that were being run by men. We went to speak to them. It wasn’t men who did that. That’s what I remember about it.

Now on the “pro” side, I can’t tell you, really. But I do remember some of those tough meetings we would go to and be part of the agenda for the meeting—that was all us. There were no men there.

Boswell: Now when you talk about the “pro” side, in your mind, who was it? If Phyllis Schlafly, perhaps, became a more national figurehead for the anti-ERA, were there individuals that you saw as being in that position for the pro-ERA? And tell me a little bit
about how you viewed generally the women who were involved in the pro-ERA movement?

McCaughey: I don’t know whether to use this name—and in fact, I don’t know if I’m going to agree to you putting it in anything that’s going to be documented here—but for the purpose of our chat, in my view, our beloved Jennifer Dunn of the Eighth District in Bellevue was one of the most fabulous political women I’ve ever witnessed. She started with League of Women Voters in Bellevue and worked her way up to congresswoman, and I felt was actually set aside by the current Bush administration when that was over. She did so much to support that. This is a fact you have to check out, because I cannot speak for her, but it seems like she would have been one who would have been for the Equal Rights Amendment. She put it strictly in the political realm, the law and the political realm, and she was very eloquent about it and very knowledgeable, and would have done more to further that. I mean, she was certainly different from the Gloria Steinem and the Betty Friedans. It was not that at all. She saw it as a reasonable thing to do in our state constitution.

But I would want to go back and check those facts, because I’m not absolutely positive. I don’t want to say that she was for it without checking, but she was such an outstanding, polished and professional person to be advocating that. I admired her. I might have disagreed, but I admired her. She did a beautiful job because she kept the emotions out of it, and this power thing of women and work. It was “Yes, we should have equality and the law.” So I would definitely cite her as a leader on the “pro” side that should be admired for the work she did. She was very good at it.

Other than that, boy, I’m trying to think. We were so consumed with the other media gals.

Boswell: You mentioned Gloria Steinem, though. Tell me a little bit about your specific reactions to her and her ideas.

McCaughey: I believe that Gloria Steinem is interested in promoting power in women, in the workplace and government, in the world at large. I believe she thinks it is okay to be that and do that even if it might mean destruction of the marriage or the family.

Again, I just felt Gloria Steinem’s motive was to promote power in women, particularly in the workplace and in government and the world at large, perhaps at the expense of family, of husband and child and those values. It was such a raw promotion of this woman who was going to go into the corporation and break glass ceilings, and everything that had been done to her previously was wrong, and we were going to right this situation. It was so harsh. As movements go, you will always have this kind of a person and this kind of a philosophy because it’s the extreme, but it helps promote the movement at large.

I saw her be interviewed here about a month or two ago on some program. She had not changed one iota. She is still as devoutly attached to those ideas as she was. I thought it was unbalanced. I thought it was unrealistic. Most of us in our group did. We didn’t see anything wrong with women going to work. It was this idea that you were going to go there with pants and a tie on and rip the place down. It was just what she gave off to that. We just did not see that as a force for good in philosophy or how we live in
America, or our value systems. We just really considered her a threat and not a good force for women.

It’s interesting, because I say that “for women.” It’s interesting how you have a group who was for the equal rights amendment, a group who was against, and yet all of us were “for women,” whatever those beliefs may be. I think that’s so interesting, that that’s the case.

Boswell: That is really interesting. You’re absolutely right.

McCaughey: Yes.

Boswell: You mentioned that you had seen her speak in Seattle, too.

McCaughey: Yes.

Boswell: Tell me a little bit more about that.

McCaughey: We were invited. Betty and I and a few other women from our group were invited to King 5, at that time, and Jean Enerson was interviewing Gloria Steinem. Jean Enerson was fairly new to King TV at that time. A lovely young woman, she had her long blond hair then. We all came, everybody dressed then in long skirts and long dresses. I would like a snapshot, really.

So Gloria Steinem came on the program, and she seemed quite rigid in her posture. She had a look in her eye like, “Jean, whatever question you’re going to give me, I’m going to smash it.” She did. She just had that “let’s go to war” look.

So we listened intently. We were bouncing in our seats because we just wanted to throw the questions and get the debate going. We weren’t allowed. I think Jean took one question, and they basically had people there to hold the audience down.

But as threatening as Gloria Steinem was to us, to see her in person, she was not a large woman. She was small and quite attractive, and of course, very eloquent in her own speech. But we could leave with the realization, that she was just one of us, too. She is not quite that enormous threat that we had envisioned, although she had the media’s attention. The “pros” were very strong in the media, so that was threatening. But the person, Gloria Steinem, was not as threatening to us upon leaving that session, being able to see her as she was at first, and that was a good thing. That was a good thing because we left feeling we really did have something to fight for here, and we felt we could go out and fight for it. So it was a good experience over all.

Boswell: Now when your group developed very strongly against the ERA, tell me a little bit about how the organization of it worked. Was there some kind of board of directors? I’m just curious about how you organized, and how people’s roles evolved and that kind of thing.

McCaughey: We had no organization, so to speak, by anybody’s chart. We met in homes. As far as the East Side was concerned, Betty Young was our leader. She was definitely a leader. We did not have a board. We simply met, and took steps we would
need to accomplish something. So we would meet and dole out the tasks and do those things. In the case of Betty and I, we were often planning. If we were asked to be interviewed or asked to discuss this somewhere, we were planning how we were going to get there and who was going to speak and so forth. So it really was very little organization. But the group, as I say, grew, and we had the Seattle component of ladies doing the same thing. I’m trying to think if we had something that was huge.

Well, when we began to speak to the senators and legislators, that became more regimented. We had to do that, and we had to do that on a schedule because they were formulating things, and that became far more organized at that point. But it wasn’t a huge operation at all. It was a big issue in the press, and therefore that sustained us as a group because we were constantly asked for our input. I guess that’s the best way to express it. Had it been a small issue and not much press, who knows how far we might have gone in getting our word out and our idea. But that was basically it.

We just pursued that until the vote, and we, of course, were devastated that it passed. But it passed by one quarter of one percent. We wanted so badly to do a recount, and we checked into it. The senator from Mukilteo that I can’t remember—Jack?

Boswell: Jack Metcalf?

McCaughey: Yes! Thank you.

Boswell: You’re welcome.

McCaughey: Jack Metcalf. He worked with us to find out how that could be done. At that time, it would have cost six hundred dollars per county to do a recount of the vote. We had no money, and we couldn’t get money, so we were doomed.

Betty really wanted to go ahead with that recount, and I know she was sorting ideas of how to maybe get a loan, or get the money. We basically discouraged her from that. That was personal money. [laughs] And then I wonder if it would have worked anyway, so that was kind of the end of it.

For myself, personally, it was after that that I kind of moved away from this group as far as activity. I was worn out. We’d done a lot, committed a lot, and I was just not ready to continue politically with a lot of issues that still lingered. So I kind of went out of it. I think Betty probably worked the rest of her life on these issues. She was a very, very devout, conservative Christian and really did see a lot of what was happening in the world as a threat to that life. She was so bright, and so honest, and was such a good researcher. She was a good leader, and she was a very strong woman and did an excellent job. I just commend her for it. It was an experience of my life. [laughs] So that was how it ended up.

But to answer you directly, we did not have any big organization. We were not the Chamber of Commerce, so we didn’t have a president and a secretary. We just all pitched in and helped. We were just very committed to getting the idea out there that somebody else had something else to say on this. It wasn’t just names on a sheet of paper we were going through. So because of that, we continued on.
Boswell: Looking really specifically at what the anti-ERA stood for, I get the sense from what you said already that the threat to the family, is it fair to say, was your major concern?

McCaughey: In the context of the historical times, 1969 to 1974, it was a threat to the family. To break that down, at that time we had in the law a lot of law of divorce and alimony laws that affected children. If you applied the equal rights amendment to many of these things, it actually took away protections for women. That, I remember, as being a core concern; it could be dangerous for that, and that was not wanted. At that time, so many women didn’t work. Their source of income was their husbands. If you entered into divorce and had alimony issues and so forth, support of that woman and her family would be diminished under the equal rights amendment. So I remember that as being hugely core. Then it filtered down into all other kinds of law that we talked about prior—credit, etcetera, etcetera. Remember the amendment only passed by one quarter of one percent—nearly fifty percent of women were opposed.

Boswell: I know that for some people, the draft was an issue, and whether the equal rights amendment would affect women’s status. Was that something that you thought about, too?

McCaughey: Yes. We definitely felt that women would be drafted and that was wrong. That’s how we felt. That’s what we believed. We did not believe that the military was a place for women. We just strongly believed that when you marry, when you bring children into your life, we just believed that the mother in the home was key to human life in our country. We just thought that was the most important thing. It was really kind of an innocent thought, in a way, but it is what we believed. Things such as the draft, drafting women, we did not see as a positive thing for women or for family. I would have never agreed to drafting women in my younger life.

I now see women in the military as – should we talk about choice? What has happened?

Boswell: Sure.

McCaughey: Choice is not because of the equal rights amendment. It’s been because of knocking down all these other walls over time since the 1970s. Not to be lengthy on the idea of choice; however, one would have to say that from that time forward, after the Equal Rights Amendment passed in this state, we still do not have it at the federal level. The whole thrust of the women’s movement bringing in this idea of choice, that women should have every bit of choice in life as men, began to really take hold. I must say that I personally believe that’s a positive thing that women do have a choice. But as much as I admire women in the military and the careers they can have, still their loss of life and the life they have living with men under those circumstances is not real good, from what we read. I would still say it’s not a place for women. I don’t believe it’s natural for women to want to go out on battle lines and kill people. I don’t think that’s our nature as women. I would still, if the draft ever came back into effect, I would still not be for that.
But women do have choice now. And I believe, for the most part, that it’s okay
that they have these choices. Again, coming back to my Christian value system, I would
question sometimes that the choices women are making, and whether they are in tune
with their values and their belief in God, if they have a belief in God, because some are
pretty harsh. When I see a lot of young women today struggling with their careers and
their families and these choices they’ve made for material things, to bring more money
in, you know, I have to question the idea of choice. Was it a good concept out of the
equal rights amendment or not? A lot of it is. A lot of it is good. Some of it, maybe not so
much anymore, but that is what happened.

Issues in the workplace are still ongoing. They’re not resolved. They have, for the
most part, improved in many areas, but they are not resolved by any means. There are
still not men leaving their jobs because the child is sick, and they have to go home and
take care of it. Women are still doing that. The men just aren’t doing it. So where do you
go with that in the law, and in equal rights amendments, and so forth? It’s a huge change
over time. Maybe we’ll reach that day of equality. Maybe we won’t.

Boswell: When you talk about choice, too, the other choice that comes to mind is
abortion rights, which followed along, to a degree, at least, with the equal rights
amendment. Did that figure large in your group’s thinking, or not?

McCaughey: This is going to stun you. I don’t even remember the issue of abortion
coming up. It wasn’t an issue then. It wasn’t an issue! I would have assumed everybody
was against it in 1972. I’m trying to think when abortion was a political issue. Was it
under Reagan? Did it go back even further than Reagan? I don’t remember, I don’t
remember that coming up. Oh, that would have been something. That would have been
something.

As I personally stand now is, this will shock you after talking to somebody who’s
been against the equal rights amendment, but I personally don’t believe in abortion as a
Christian value of mine. I do, however, support it in the law because it is, as far as I’m
concerned, totally a woman’s issue. If she needs to make a decision, she needs to be able
to do that under a law that helps protect her because I am from the era where it wasn’t
legal.

Boswell: Right.

McCaughey: And it was horrifying. I don’t ever want to see that again. I would prefer
nobody get an abortion, but if a woman has to make that choice, I would still fight for it
being in the law.

Boswell: That’s interesting. But from your perspective during that period, it wasn’t an
issue?

McCaughey: No! It didn’t even come up. I don’t even remember that as a discussion as
part of this. Isn’t that interesting?

Boswell: That is really interesting.
McCaughey: It wasn’t a very prominent issue at that time. I mean, after all, when you think about it, the women’s movement really had to get started before abortion came along as part of that issue. So that’s where we were—it was in the beginning or in the starting of this. There are a whole lot of things that have come along since then. You know, marriage itself, and now it’s very open, liberal. Do you even need to be married?

When I looked, prior to 1962 when I was a young adult, for example, into renting an apartment in Seattle, you would not have dreamed of having your boyfriend live with you. You would have been evicted. [laughs] It wasn’t done. You know, I had a friend who was getting married and received wedding gifts, and they would say “Mr. and Mrs. So and So” on them. When the apartment manager got wind of that, she was evicted because he accused her of having the man live there with her in the apartment. [laughs] We had a long way to go.

Even at the equal rights amendment time, in the early 1970s, that still was not—

Boswell: That was not really accepted?

McCaughey: Yes. I mean, when you think about it, coming out of the 1960s, you know, if it feels right, do it. The 1960s. For our value system, we were very opposed to that concept. But you’re coming out of that, going into the 1970s, so threats to the so-called family were going on even before this hit. I mean, the world was changing, and you had your free love movement, and all of these men and women were going to live differently than they have been in the past. So this was all changing, but it was the impetus. It was the impetus for us to form a group and oppose the equal rights amendment. I just have to be very honest about that. I’d like to say it was some wonderful, eloquent political reason, but that was the concept.

Boswell: You know, one thing that was interesting to me, and that was part and parcel of that time, is that, at least in a lot of Phyllis Schlafly’s material, there is also a threat of anti-communism, and a linkage of women’s liberation, perhaps, with communists. Was that part of your ideas?

McCaughey: That was part of some people’s ideas. [laughs] For our group as a whole—no. Certainly, I mean, they’re still with us. I don’t know where to put them, but I always say the very far religious right, the real right wingers who believe everything is a communist plot—socialism, the whole bit—that still exists. It existed then, and people could take this information and go there with it. They could say that that’s what the equal rights amendment would be. It just is a communist plot to make us all like Russia. I mean, yes, those people were around, and like I say, they would try to infiltrate. These were the issues we had to be careful of because we wanted to keep this reasonable. We wanted people to think that we were reasonable in our presentation about our issue. We had to be careful.

I remember one woman very well. We were never too sure who that woman was. We tried to check her out, but she would just kind of show up, then be away, and then show up. We were suspicious of her and what she was trying to bring.
So I would say to you correctly that our group as a whole, no, we did not take this in as communist plots. These are ideas and suggestions. When you work with the far right, these come into play. These things come into play, but our group was really interested in trying to present the facts as to where we thought this would not be a good thing in our constitution.

Boswell: Did you find that there were other religious groups who also opposed the equal rights amendment that you could work with? I know, at least later, some of the women in the Mormon Church became very active, especially after the ERA had passed, in trying to get it rescinded in the state and other things. Were they a group that had a presence during this earlier period or not? And how were they to work with?

McCaughey: I don’t remember any other religious group except Protestant and Roman Catholic religions represented in our group. I don’t remember any Mormon women being in our group or anybody else, for that matter. It was pretty much your Protestant Christian churches, a whole mix of them. As my daughter always says, why do we have 252 Protestant religions? Some Roman Catholics were part of that. I remember the Mormon thrust. Like you say, it was kind of after, but I don’t remember–

Boswell: Being so involved with that?

McCaughey: –Mormons being involved with us in particular. I think there’s probably a reason for that, now that I’m thinking back on it, because there is a difference in belief in that Christians believe Christ is the son of God, is God. Mormons do not believe that. So I don’t remember a mix, and I can’t think of anybody in my head right now that would have been associated.

Boswell: I was really interested to ask you more about your lobbying in Olympia with the legislators. I know that there were several women, although there weren’t a huge number at that time in the legislature, who did introduce and were supporting the amendment. Did you have the occasion to talk to some of the women legislators, too, as to their views of the ERA and why they supported it?

McCaughey: I did not. I did not. I did quite a bit of that, and there weren’t any women on my list that I could get appointments with. I talked to a couple of the senators, and a couple of the legislators. We had Jack Metcalf’s support, but I talked to all men who were basically against the amendment.

Boswell: I just was curious. I interviewed Lois North, who was a legislator. She introduced the amendment in the House, so I was interested to see if you had ever talked to her.

McCaughey: Yes, yes, yes, I remember her very well. [laughs]

Boswell: You were mentioning going out even at three in the morning–
McCaughey: To Everett. [laughs]

Boswell: How was the press generally? How did they regard you? Did they usually try to balance their interviews or not? I’m just curious about how you were able to get press, and how the press, in your opinion, treated you?

McCaughey: Press that gave us opportunity at that time was television. In the written press, you needed a crowbar. In fact, this was huge. This was huge! (looking at copies of articles written by Susan Paynter).

Boswell: Now when you say “this,” you’re referring to–

McCaughey: Being in the Seattle Times. Yes. Yes. Being in the Seattle Times with this interview, I mean, for us, it was our first, as far as journalism, really.

Boswell: Tell me a little bit about that experience.

McCaughey: Oh, it was great. It was a great experience. It’s hard to express what this was like because both sides were fired up. I mean, women were taking a stand. I’m either for this or I’m against it, and this is why. You just had those little fire bullets coming at each other every time you got together. You didn’t even know each other. But in this case, Susan Paynter, of course, we had pretty much thought she was pretty liberal. We were concerned that we weren’t going to get a very good interview out of this, and she was quite wonderful, though. She was, I remember, very somber, and stayed very conservative in her manner. But I’m sure we looked to her like we were going to jump her at any minute and accuse her of being a red flag liberal out there somewhere, [laughs] who wasn’t going to give us a fair chance.

But, you know, she did. The article is good. She quotes a lot, and she did a very good job, I think, and I personally was grateful for it. It was great exposure. You have no idea what this kind of exposure can get you. It was after this we would get phone calls from women all over who were against the equal rights amendment, with their input and so forth. They wouldn’t exactly come and support the group, but we sure got a lot of attention from doing that.

TV. On the one hand, we had a hard time with TV because we would get wind that so and so was going to be on speaking for the equal rights amendment, or as part of something. We would try to make our contacts and get on as an opposing view, and we were almost always turned down.

King TV—oh, I’ll never forget this because I was the one on the phone. They had a segment on the news. This was like dreamland. We were going to be on King 5 TV news. They put the “pro” person and their platform on. I don’t even remember who it was. And then they put ours on, following it, and something happened to the film. It garbled and messed up and went off the screen. We were all just sitting there like–

Boswell: Oh, no!
McCaughey: So I called the producer, and he was second in line down there at King at that time. I could hardly speak. My voice was shaking so hard, you know. [laughs] “What have you done to us! You have to make this right!” So they put us in. It was going to be the next or the second time slot after the ad, and they put the bit in there. But we felt it was really ruined because of that interruption, and we were just broken-hearted. So it did get on, but the connection wasn’t there; it had been broken. That really was hard for us, because we had a chance there to really do something.

Although television offered, we’ll say, the most opportunities, although there weren’t many, they were hard to deal with. There was the Jean Enerson interview, and Gloria Steinem, and that night when we were on the news. Other than that, we always felt we had to fight pretty hard to get our bit in with these different media, and this was quite an opportunity.

Boswell: Looking back, in terms of strategy, the vote was very close. What did you think was most successful in your mind in convincing voters that maybe the ERA wasn’t a good thing? I mean, was there one tactic, if you can call it that, that worked best?

McCaughey: Well it had to be, because we didn’t actually ever sit down and have a big strategy. We just knew what we thought and what we had researched and wanted to get the word out. I would say that for the public at large and our satisfaction, certainly mine, was that we created an awareness. That’s pretty exciting stuff, actually, even if you don’t win the vote. I mean, in America, where voting is so important, and you win or you lose based on the vote. But you can make people so aware during your process. That, for me, is reward enough—that we reached a lot of people who maybe hadn’t even thought about this. We reached a lot of women who, perhaps, may have gone either way on the issue, but we reached them, gave them a chance to become aware of this. Who knows what women might have gone on in political careers based on something like this? You just don’t know. But awareness is the greatest thing.

Acceptance—it’s elusive, and you almost never get that. That’s not the reward. We didn’t win it, it didn’t get accepted on our behalf, but, boy, a lot of people sure knew about this equal rights amendment by the time we got done. They knew both sides, which I just think in America, I’m so grateful for that. I have no regrets about participating at all. That just is a very exciting thing, so that’s where I am on the issue.

Boswell: Now you mentioned that you were all devastated by the fact that it did lose, and especially by such a fairly small margin. Can you remember back to that night? Where were you? Were you all together?

McCaughey: Well, I actually think we didn’t get the news until the next day. We were probably all so tired we went to bed that night. I don’t think we got the news until the next day. I’m sure of it now. It was in the morning, and it was in the paper. We got on our phones and discussed and were feeling bad. Of course, Betty was so strong on, “I’m going to look into getting a recount. This is just too close.”

So then we had a little uplifting. We thought maybe we can still go for that. But it didn’t turn out that we could. So that was it. Again, you know, we fought the fight, and we were happy with what we did. We felt we stayed true to the ideals that we believe
were going to be perhaps harmed by this amendment. That information went out, and there it is. It’s now history for you.

You know, if you sat my daughters down and had this interview with them, they’d probably say, “Our mother was crazy! How could she have ever been against something like that?” But that’s the way it is. Time moves on. It was 1973-1974!

Boswell: Sure.

McCaughey: But just bottom line, I would say to you that the success we felt was creating the awareness in people. That’s a very, very exciting human experience, to work so hard at something, and someone actually listens to you out there. It’s pretty powerful stuff.

Boswell: So tell me, in the aftermath, eventually you moved on to other things. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

McCaughey: Where were we? Let’s see. Let’s see, we’re still in the 1970s. I moved away from politics for quite a while. I really didn’t take an active role. Every time I picked up a newspaper, there would be something. I’d think, “Oh, maybe I should go work on this.” But I didn’t. I just left it alone for quite a while. Just at that time, I was just doing a lot with my children and their educations. They were starting to participate in soccer and all these things kids do, so I was very involved in that.

Then as those years kept going by, like I say, my good friend and I sat down and had this idea about going back to school. So that consumed my life from 1975 until—when did I graduate, in 1981? Not that I spent all those years, but when I took the first math class, [laughs] I decided, “Okay, maybe I can do this.” Those were fabulous years. It was during those years I was really in touch with Vietnam veterans. My awareness of veterans was huge. It was seeing these young men who were then coming back. [interruption] And then returning to Bellevue Community College, and to the idea of getting a degree. The campus was full of returning Vietnam veterans. It was the first physical encounter for me and so many women to these injured veterans, what had happened to them—young men shaking, and without legs and arms. Oh, it was such a dramatic encounter. They were younger than we were, and yet here they were.

And then there were women going back to school. I don’t know if you remember the term, but it was “returning women.” We were returning women. I’ve never been quite sure what that means—returning from what? But nevertheless, we made up a large percentage of community college students. There were the students, the young students, there were these Vietnam veterans, and there were these returning women, so our focuses were all kind of different. But it was an exciting time to be on the campus. And this association with these Vietnam veterans—I mean, if anything made me even more hard line about women going to war, it was seeing these young men. I just thought, “Oh, we can’t have women who are going to be raising children in this same boat.” It was just awful! So, you know, times were a’changing. That’s for sure.

Then I became very involved in my education, and what that meant. I was a really good student and getting straight “A”s, and it was an absolute thrill. I think we do that because we’re so focused, when you go back as an adult.
I went to the University of Washington, and was immediately greeted. I’ll never forget walking past Suzzallo Library, through that square, and these two really young guys, eighteen years old, walking past me. One of them shouted out at me, “Shouldn’t you be home taking care of your children?” That was my first experience at the University of Washington.

Boswell: Oh, that’s amazing! Did you say anything?

McCaughey: I was too stunned. I was too stunned, but I never forgot it. Then I was in so many classes, of course, with these young people and groups and so forth. I remember how I always dodged being labeled or being asked to be the secretary of the group, or the this or the that, because they just looked at me and assumed I would do that. I would say, “No, I’m not doing it.”

But my experience at the university was wonderful. I loved my professors and that whole idea of being educated, and particularly in a field I just fell in love with. So that was a very, very good experience for me there. I graduated and moved on to that ugly job-market scenario. [laughs]

Boswell: Now did you find once you did go back into the job market as a woman, did you feel like you had different opportunities? Or more opportunities than you did before? I mean, we did talk about it being a very different kind of a job market.

McCaughey: My first job at the Hutchinson Center was as if I began where I left off. Nothing had changed. That’s a patriarchal system. [laughs] It’s all researchers there, who almost all were men. There were very few, a couple of women, and that’s it. Basically, then, there’s the administration, which is the secretaries in the contribution area, which I worked in and so forth. At that point it actually was a little depressing for me. It was a great place to work, I’m not saying that, but it was like, “I’ve done all this work, but have I made any progress at all?”

I was only there a little under two years, and then I moved on with other jobs and saw different things. At Manpower, I was in a great position there, really in control of my job and what I was doing. I loved it.

Then at Thousand Trails, it was very different. The good thing about Thousand Trails was I could walk to work. It was a block from my house. [laughs] I didn’t love that work and moved on from there.

And Microsoft, of course, was a giant experience. That was a new company. They had none of the old ways of doing things. No structure. It was the most fascinating thing I’d ever done, because–

Boswell: Now when were you there?


McCaughey: I worked there six years. I believe I only got hired there because I wrote a resume that did not reveal my age. Then when they got me there in to interview, they pretty much had to say yes or we could have an age discrimination issue here. [laughs] But it turned out very well. Then the whole philosophy of Microsoft, or to even get hired there, you have to prove to them that you can take the task and go with it. There’s no more structure. It was really hard for me at first. I was on the couch with practically migraines every night for several weeks, trying to fit into this whole new system of work. It was the thrill of my life to be able to work there and do what I could do.

Boswell: What area were you in?

McCaughey: I was in sales and marketing. I had the education accounts in the Midwest and just had a great job. I mean, I couldn’t believe how much money was spent on software. I had sold a million and a quarter dollars of software per month and that kind of thing. It was just a fascinating experience, but you have to be totally self-motivated to do that. Nobody comes around with deadlines. Nobody says anything. You just work, and you get it done.

Boswell: Did you ever experience in any of those jobs unequal treatment, or something like that?

McCaughey: Some unequal treatment at Manpower, in that we had a manager who thought he was God’s gift to women. I didn’t catch onto it at first, but I think he was thinking he could maybe get some of us to go spend an afternoon with him. When I did catch onto it, I was quite vocal about it.

   Other than that, my experience went pretty well. At Microsoft, they’re just, like I say, the new companies. This men and women thing, it almost just doesn’t even exist. I had my first experience working with gay people there, which was very interesting for me. I had never, that I knew of, had that association before. You know, that is just a very interesting experience. It went well. But there, the focus is that company, and what you’re doing and what ideas you’re coming up with. All these issues and all these things we worry so much about, and fought for and against, just kind of melt away. So that was my experience there. It was a brand new one, and a great one to go into retirement on.

Boswell: In hindsight, can any of those changes and experiences, do you think, be attributed to the ERA? Or not?

McCaughey: I would say that the equal rights amendment probably has done one thing, and that is that it changed the language of how law was written. Because it became part of the state constitution, law then had to be written to cover all people. It couldn’t separate out men and women and say that this was for men, and women weren’t included anymore. So I suppose that is a benefit in that way. I would have to do a study of how it has affected old law and that sort of thing, and see whether our fear of things like divorce and alimony law was correct. Did it really disrupt that or did it not? I’d have to go back and study that, but I suppose if there was a benefit to it, it’s that. I don’t see how it could do anything else, but it would change the language of how law was written.
Other than that, who even talks about the equal rights amendment? I never even hear it brought up. People, a lot of people I’ve talked to, don’t even know we have one. “We do? We have an equal rights amendment in Washington?”

And I say, “Yes, we do.” [laughs]

Boswell: What about some of the changes that you feared that the equal rights amendment would bring in terms of either changed ethical or religious values, or family values, or men’s relationships with women? I mean, how would you assess it, looking back now?

McCaughey: I do believe, without knowing the specific laws that it has affected, that it definitely set forth an attitude that women could be or should be—however you want to interpret it—be on their own and not depend on this so-called support from men for finance, for security. That, I think, has been a very rocky road. I think it has, in many cases, been harmful to women; in some cases, maybe not. It is a very large, ongoing change in attitudes. In 2009 there are just under fifty percent of children being raised in single-parent homes.

We’re not there yet, but I think some of the things we thought were going to happen and would be harmful to family and marriage, I think they probably happened in some aspect. It just flip flopped the role of women and put them into a different role. And that role has been, I think, a hard road. It’s been a hard road. I take my hat off to any working woman today with children who is handling all of that. I still think it’s very difficult. Just because it happened, it didn’t mean that everything was there to make it agreeable or easy for them. So I think some of those things are confirmed.

You could take the other side and you could certainly come forward and say, “Gosh, it improved this, it improved that,” which is fine, if it improved it.

Bottom line is, though, really, when I think of the equal rights amendment, how much effect has it really had? Like I say, without going back and looking at individual laws, that is pretty hard to determine. But I don’t think it’s had as big an effect either way as we thought it would. At the time, it was just so attached to the beginning women’s movement or the beginning for that time. We know the women’s movement was clear back, but for that time, it was just part of this whole scenario—change the culture, change this, change that.

So that’s where I stand on it. I’ve come a long way. I’m far more middle-to-left on my view of things. I can still be very traditional and hard line about certain things, but when I see what some young women are doing today in their careers and so forth, I just admire them. I just think, “Oh, you are so lucky to have these opportunities and really go out and just choose that field you want to be in, and pursue it, without a lot of hindrance.” I’m all for that. It’s fine. [laughs]

Boswell: Well, thank you. Is there anything else you want to add or say?

McCaughey: It was just explosive what was going on. And Lois North, for her to even do what she did was pretty outstanding, to even bring it forward. She had quite a road to go. She was praised one day and shot down the next for her views. I’m trying to remember if she got reelected and so forth. I can’t. I don’t remember.
Boswell: Yes, I think she did.

McCaughey: Because I know it did threaten her opportunity.

[End Interview.]