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GLORIA STEINEM INTERVIEW
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Gloria Steinem

Writer, Activist

Interviewed by: Peter Kunhardt

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START TC: 00:00:00:00

Gloria Steinem

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00:00:03:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

Your father was just 64 when he died. Can you tell me about him at the end and-- and-- and if you were able to see him?

GLORIA STEINEM:

My father was, of course, long divorced from my mother. And we had not been living together since I was about ten or so. But he came back east once a year from his, you know, gypsy travels-- in the Sun Belt. So I was in touch with him. And we saw each other. But he had been in a car accident in Orange County in California. He hadn't-- he must've told the-- doctor in this

kind of battle station hospital behi-- beside the highway to call me. And I was out of the country somewhere. So I didn't get the message for-- for quite a while. And when I did, my sister and I, and I allowed my sister who then had little children and couldn't have gone herself to say, "Well, why don't you wait to go until he has to leave the hospital? And then you'll be able to transfer him, you know, to his apartment and so on?"

00:01:22:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I shouldn't have done that, you know? I should've gone right away. But I think that-- a deep part of me feared that if I went, I would never come back, that I would end up caring for him, you know, as I had for my mother when I was little. So, I didn't go. And then we got a call from the doctor saying he's taken a turn for the worse-- so I should come. And-- he-- died while I was en route. My sister called me and reached me, paging me in-- in Chicago, I think. So, he-- he died alone. You know? And I regret that so much, that he was the-- I mean, I know, in a sense, that he'd chosen, you know, to-- to live alone. But-- I really regret that. So, I suppose it plays a role in my trying to be present not only for my mother but, for instance-- my dear friend Wilma Mankiller-- whose-- who-- who with her husband, Charlie, had done our marriage ceremony-- a dear friend. She has-- was very ill. And I stayed there for a couple of weeks before she died. And I'm so grateful that I did. And I went to see Blair (PH), my college fiancé, before he died. You know, I think-- I think

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I'm still trying to make up for not having been with my father or to learn from it.

00:03:06:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

Well, you've learned-- one-- one woman in our office-- our weekly meeting said, "You taught us how to live. And now you're beginning to teach us how to die." And it sounds like you've gotten a lot of insight into it.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I feel like Wilma, especially, others, too, are teaching me. You know, I don't know that I'm teaching. But I'm beginning to learn.

PETER KUNHARDT:

All right, we'll lighten up a little. Let me ask you, everyone notices your beautiful hands. And I wanted to know if you got those from your mother.

00:03:51:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

No, I got them from my father. I got my hands from my father, not my mother, who had-- very creative competent hands. My father had these long artistic hands, which he was kind of ashamed of 'cause he didn't think they were properly masculine. So he wouldn't wear a ring, for instance. But both my sister and I inherited his hands.

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PETER KUNHARDT:

Who-- you actually-- who do you think you were more like, your mother or your father?

GLORIA STEINEM:

I-- I'm probably much more internally deeply like my mother. But I certainly learned a lot from my father. And-- I learned how to be insecure (CHUCKLE), how to love insecurity. He loved insecurity, which is very handy if you're a freelance person and you never quite know what your income is going to be. I might have felt I had to have a job if it wasn't for my father. As it was, I couldn't even get myself to take a job.

00:04:56:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I once ha-- had a job, I think, two days a week doing a regional edition in the back of the Ladies' Home Journal. And I finally had to give it up because, like, I couldn't believe they actually expected me to be there (CHUCKLE) two days a week. You-- you may end up working longer and harder, but you have the illusion of freedom. He was very funny, my father, very, very funny.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Did-- I think he prob'ly gave you a love of show business that you've used in your work as well.

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00:05:25:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes, I-- my father-- my father's version of show business was running a summer resort-- and booking name bands into it and-- you know-- it wasn't direct show business. But nonetheless, he loved it. And he loved the dreams of it and the possibilities of it. And actually, when I first came home from India and he-- couldn't quite figure out what an overeducated person, female human being, was going to do, he sent me an ad from *Variety* that was an ad for-- a chorus line in Las Vegas that was to be called the High Phi Betas. You had to be over five foot seven, under I don't know what, 25 or something, and have a Phi Beta Kappa key. "Kid," he said, "Here's something. (CHUCKLE) At last, here's something."

PETER KUNHARDT:

Could you just state for us the fact that your-- your parents were of different religions and-- and of what that meant to you?

00:06:31:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Oh, right. My-- my parents were the mixed marriage of their era, I think, although I didn't absorb that until much later. But because my father came from kind of upper middle class Jewish family and my mother came from a working class Protestant family, neither family thought this was a good idea at all. So, they got married secretly once and then publicly a second time.

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Which meant my father used to write things, "To my second wife," (CHUCKLE) when he meant to my mother. By the time I came along, this was reconciled. I think it was dif-- very difficult at the time. But gradually both grandmothers and my mother all became theosophists. So, though I don't remember my paternal grandmother that well, I do remember-- going with my mother and her mother to theosophical lodge meetings as a child with my coloring book.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Great. Tell me about-- we have a lot of great footage on the ups and the downs of E.R.A. and you kind of going head to head with Phyllis Schlafly. Do you think it was Phyllis Schlafly who kinda brought E.R.A. to a-- to a-- to a close?

00:08:00:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

The E.R.A. didn't come to a close because of Phyllis Schlafly. It came to a close because state legislatures are not very representative. Most people don't even know who their state legislators are. So, many of them are controlled by the-- the businesses they regulate, say, by the liquor industry, the insurance industry, the real estate industry. And the insurance industry, for the most part, not totally, but-- was dead set against the Equal Rights Amendment because it would mean equalizing the actuarial tables. So, I don't-- I don't think that-- I mean, Phyllis Schlafly was in many ways the only woman they

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could find who was against the Equal Rights Amendment. She was like a creation of the Fairness Doctrine. Somebody had to be on the opposite side. And she either chose herself or-- or was designated. But, the-- the networks frequently couldn't find anybody who was-- they would call me up and say, "Bring an anti with you," you know, because they also didn't know anybody who was against it.

00:09:12:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

You know, that was a period, too, it was 1981, where-- where you called on women t-- to donate ten percent of their salaries to the women's movement. Was-- where did that come from? And-- and did that have a effect?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, (CLEARS THROAT) many women couldn't afford to. I didn't mean that everybody-- should-- should-- give ten percent, obviously, only those who could afford it. But I realized that the churches were powerful against the Equal Rights Amendment because people tithed. And perhaps we should think of-- of tithing as well.

PETER KUNHARDT:

We have-- great footage of you 35 years after you were an undercover Playboy Bunny interviewing with Hugh Hefner. And-- tell us about your

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feelings of meeting him after all those years and-- and kind of set that up for us if you could.

00:10:13:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Actually, when I first met-- Hugh Hefner after I had written the piece and I-- the piece about being an undercover Playboy Bunny and I was some-- few years later doing a-- a profile of him for McCall's, I ended up feeling sorry for him, you know, because he-- he just seemed so isolated and out of it. I really felt sorry for him. But I can't really indulge the luxury of feeling sorry for him because he's a destructive force in the world.

PETER KUNHARDT:

You could tell in this clip that you felt sorry for him. You told him he was out of date. (CHUCKLE) You were in the White House in 1963 when President Kennedy left for Dallas. Can you tell us that story?

00:11:12:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I-- I was in the White House because I was-- sitting there. I had been going out with Ted Sorensen who was a friend. And I was sitting in Ted's office. He was writing speeches for President Kennedy to give in Texas. I was, I think, not contributing much, maybe trying to think of a joke or two, you know, for-- to help him write the speech. But I do remember looking in the French windows and-- French doors and seeing-- President Kennedy walk across the

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larn-- lawn towards the helicopter. Then I got on a plane and came back to New York. And I-- I don't remember at what point Ted called me to tell me what had happened. But I remember being in a restaurant and realizing that something was wrong. I could see in people's faces that some new-- somebo-- some people knew something. And I could see it in the street, too. But then the news was just that the president had been shot. It was Ted who said, "No, you know, he was shot in the head. And, you know, it's-- it's over."

00:12:27:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

You were even kinda spiritually closer to Robert Kennedy. And when he was killed in 1968, how did you hear about that and how did that impact-- on you?

GLORIA STEINEM:

(SIGH) The-- for me, and I think lots of people in my generation, the Kennedys were our future. The Kennedys were the first people we could imagine reading the same things and responding in a similar way to-- to what we did. And for me, that was true, especially, of Bobby Kennedy who seemed to identify with outsiders in a very visceral way, with children, with anybody who was having a hard time.

00:13:18:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

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I don't know why. You know, maybe because he was a bit of an outsider in that big family of power, I don't know. But he-- but he did. And I only heard about his murder-- on television as perhaps most people did. I knew that he was campaigning in California. And I knew people who were with him, Dolores Huerta, for instance, and others from the United Farm Workers who had been helping him campaign. And it just-- you know, I just remember sitting there for I don't know how long, a day, two days, three days, I don't know. I just couldn't do anything but watch it over and over and over again.

PETER KUNHARDT:

So when Marth-- Lu-- Martin Luther King was killed-- you were-- you were put to work. But you'd-- you knew-- you had met him before.

00:14:16:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I had once been in the same living room with Martin Luther King because Harry Belafonte had had a meeting of a small group of people. But I think that was the only time I was ever in his presence. But obviously, you know, he was a presence in all of our lives. And -- and he-- and I heard-- on-- on television that he'd been shot. And I think I saw the footage of Robert Kennedy's addressing a crowd he had been told not to address because people were afraid of riots and so on. And he got up and said (CHUCKLE)-- "My brother, too, was murdered. And he was murdered by a white man." You know, it was

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so-- so much the right thing to say. And I was in this room (CHUCKLE)-- same room, just not knowing what to do, kind of watching and walking around and not believing it.

00:15:18:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But Clay Felker, always the editor, called and said, "You call yourself a reporter? You're not out on (CHUCKLE) the street, (CHUCKLE) you know, interviewing people?" So, he sent me to Harlem to 125th Street to interview people. It was one of the times I realized that sometimes it's an advantage to be a female reporter because I didn't quite bring the culture with me, you know? And I could always be safe by hanging out with the women-- not that I felt unsafe. But it might have been different, you know, for a white male reporter. And together with another reporter-- an African American journalist, a man, we wrote a piece-- for *New York Magazine* about all the events that were going on at that time, that Lindsay had been in the theater and someone officially passed him a note and he left, that-- you know, just the moment of-- of everyone learning that Martin Luther King had been murdered.

00:16:26:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

You know, this was the era-- and maybe you can explain this to me, where on-- on one hand, the late '60s, you're a struggling freelancer sleeping on

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ber-- borrowed couches and moving around, just getting to know the city. And on the other hand you-- you-- you-- you meet-- you-- you end up in living rooms with Martin Luther King. Or you're-- you know, in the Oval Office when-- when JFK leaves. You-- you have this overlap of two worlds that seemed completely different and yet I think you'd prob'ly say to me it wasn't so different, that you moved kind of seamlessly back and forth. But could-- can you explain how that occurred? 'Cause it-- it isn't co-- it isn't kind of the common thing that would happen to most people.

00:17:13:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I have to stop and think about how-- how it happened that those worlds overlapped. For instance, when I-- I had met Kitty Galbraith, the wife of Ken Galbraith. He then became Kennedy's ambassador to India. I had lived in India. We became friends. It was through him, I'm pretty sure, that I met Ted Sorensen. I was supervising-- Ken Galbraith's writing while he w-- for *Esquire* while he was off in India. You know, just-- one thing led to another. It-- it felt not strange. It felt kind of organic.

PETER KUNHARDT:

And very specific, I guess.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah.

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PETER KUNHARDT:

There were specific reasons for each th-- thing. Let me ask you what you think your greatest contribution has been to the women's movement.

00:18:11:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Honestly, if you ask me my greatest contribution (CHUCKLE) to the women's movement, I think I haven't made it yet. I mean, I-- 'cause I live in the future. So I think of what I wanna write, what I wanna do, what needs to be done, what-- and as for what it's been up to know, that's not for me to judge. You know, I-- I think the truth is that we don't know which thing we do is important. So, the imp-- the art of (CHUCKLE)-- of making change or-- or acting ethically or-- is to behave as if everything we do matters because actually we have no idea. Sometimes people will come up to me and t-- tell me something that was very important and changeful for them that-- I don't remember, was accidental, was-- seemed small to me. You know, I-- I-- I-- I just have no idea. So, if we behave as if everything we do is-- is important, even if it's very small, I think we have a chance of going in the direction we wanna go.

PETER KUNHARDT:

So you don't have a magic ball and plans for the future.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

No.

PETER KUNHARDT:

You just-- you follow the right course.

00:19:36:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I-- I-- I have a-- a f-- a hope, you know, ho-- hope is a form of planning. So-- and I'm-- as I often say, a hope-aholic. I've recognized that I'm a (CHUCKLE) hope-aholic. So, I do feel-- I do, you know, get hooked on what could happen positively. And I do think that not only do the ends not justify the means, but the means, but the means are the ends. So, we have to choose every day and means that are as close to what we want to achieve as we can manage and-- if-- if we're gonna get where we wanna go. But I-- you know, even futurists, I-- I don't exactly trust, you know, because (CHUCKLE) I think it's a kind of authoritarian urge, you know, to tell you what is going to be in the future and how people are going to live in the future. The-- the-- the-- the only trustworthy futurist I ever read was Marge Piercy, *Women on the Edge of Time*, brilliant novel of ideas in which she posits two alternative futures. One is the logical extension of the negative things that are going on. And the other is the logical extension of the positive.

00:21:02:00

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PETER KUNHARDT:

Well, looking back rather than looking to what is yet to happen, based on what's happened so far-- (OFF-MIC CONVERSATION). What would you want to be remembered for-- in the movement, based on-- based on--

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, I always used to ask other people that question when I was interviewing them. I'm so sorry I did because (CHUCKLE) it's so hard to answer. What do I wanna be remembered for? Well, I-- I-- I don't know even how to phrase it, but I would say it's for-- saying what is possible in a way that-- makes it more possible and-- helping all of us come together to move toward it. I think so-- some of what didn't continue from the '60s and '70s was due to the style in which it was done.

00:22:04:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

It was a bit divisive, a bit judgmental. Who was it? I think Che Guevara, who said, "All revolutiona-- true revolutionaries are motivated by love." I think that's true. People wouldn't believe that Che Gu-- Guevara said it. But-- he did. And that's probably who he really was. But I-- I ho-- I hope that-- it would be a sense of the possible, based on not only on the future, but also on what was true in the past. And we're only beginning to rediscover, you know, what the original cultures, the Native American cultures here, the Khoi and the San in

Africa, the-- you know, the-- the-- I mean, the-- the-- the really original cultures that were-- seemed to have been powerful for 95 percent of human history, what they understood.

00:23:05:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, the-- the paradigm was the circle, not the pyramid. The languages didn't even have gender. The idea was how you lived. So people readily adopted people from-- from other groups if-- you know, if you followed the way. There was often no word for nature because it wasn't separate from-- from human beings. There was a huge amount of sophistication about inner space. Now we're sophisticated about outer space. I'm not tryin' to romanticize the past. And certainly we can't go back there. But we can see that it wasn't always this way. I have-- a Cherokee friend who says, "Feminism is memory." Kind of sends chills up-- (CHUCKLE) up your spine, you know, that it was once about balance, you might say, between women and men, between people and nature and-- and-- and was there conflict? Yes, because there were very elaborate ways of solving conflict.

00:24:14:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

So, we know that th-- certainly there was conflict. But-- the very premises of-- of culture-- were different. And-- and they can be different again. But will they be? I don't know. It's like, you know, it's hanging in the balance, now.

PETER KUNHARDT:

I love that definition of feminism. What's your definition of-- of-- of feminism?
What-- what-- what-- what is a feminist?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, really-- you know, a feminist is what the dictionary says, which is a person, male or female, who believes in the full social, economic, political equality of-- of women and men, and I would say also acts on it. The dictionary (CHUCKLE) doesn't say that, just says, "believe". That's a feminist. And it's a world view, in fact, because once you question and-- and don't any longer believe in the-- in the first way we are divided into groups, which usually, for most people, is gender, that divides us into the leaders and the led or, you know, any way into two different groups, once you do away with that and start looking at us all as human beings-- it-- it does-- you no longer are likely to accept economic differences and racial differences and ethnic differences.

00:25:39:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

It just doesn't seem so normal, you know, to group people. And also, since you have to control reproduction in order to continue racism, the two things are intertwined, anyway. So, you know, you-- you have to-- uproot racism and

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sexism at the same time, anyway. Otherwise it-- it just doesn't work. So, you know, I do think it's-- fem-- feminism starts out being very simple, starts out being the instinct of a little child, male (CHUCKLE) as well as female, who says, "It's not fair. And you are not the boss of me." (CHUCKLE) It's something in us who knows that, right? And it ends up being a-- a world view that-- that-- that questions hierarchy altogether.

00:26:36:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

That's great. Your other de-- the other side of you, tell me about tap-- tap dancing. (CHUCKLE)

GLORIA STEINEM:

Tap dancing was-- the extremely impractical way I was gonna get out of Toledo. I went to dance school. And I watched Hollywood movies with the only women I saw who were doing something different, you know, were in Hollywood movies. And I couldn't sing. And I couldn't act, but I could dance a little bit. So, it was gonna be my ticket out. 'Course, I was never good enough-- to really make that work. And fortunately, my mother had sacrificed greatly to get both her daughters to college. So that was a little more practical than-- tap dancing and ballet, which was-- confined mainly to Elks' Club conventions and operettas and (CHUCKLE) and so on in Toledo.

00:27:35:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

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And it followed you-- you-- you've been continually asked to tap a few steps by people like Barbara Walters.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes, Barbara Walters-- you know, I knew sh-- she-- she was here, also in this apartment, sitting on the couch, interviewing me. And I had been told that she was gonna ask me to tap dance. So I disconnected the music-- the-- system. (CHUCKLE) So, and I said, "No, no, no, I-- you know, there's no music." And she said, "I'll sing." (CHUCKLE) So, I ended up-- I thought-- "Well, if she's willing to sing." So I did do it. And actually, the two of us did it at a benefit, then, later, in Carnegie Hall. We were both terrified. (CHUCKLE)

PETER KUNHARDT:

The-- I'm j-- gonna jump around a little bit. How did Ms. get its name? And speaking again of this apartment, is-- is it true that-- Yoko Ono and John Lennon were here brainstorming ideas with you?

00:28:32:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Ms. Magazine-- well, we were looking for a name. And we had a lot of idea, as you can imagine. We were gonna call it Sojourner after Sojourner Truth. But that was perceived as a travel magazine. Then we were going to call it Sisters. But that was seen as a religious magazine. (CHUCKLE) We settled on-- on Ms., which was an old-- we didn't know how old at the time, but an old form of

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address for situations in which you didn't know whether someone was married or not-- because it was symbolic and also it was short, which is good for a logo. We had many meetings about starting the magazine here in this apartment. But the meeting at which-- John and Yoko were was at Brenda Feigen's apartment-- which was here in Manhattan but not in-- in these very rooms.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Tell me about you and Henry Kissinger.

00:29:31:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

There's not a lot (CHUCKLE) to tell. He-- after Nixon was elected but before he was inaugurated-- I read a quote of-- from Henry Kissinger saying that whether or not you could go to Washington with the Nixon Administration was the collaborationist's problem, as he put it. Either you go to Washington and make a bad regime look better or you stay away and perhaps miss the opportunity to make a positive change. So, because I was then working f-- for New York Magazine, I called him up and said, "Would you write this article called A Collaborationist's Problem. And he said he would. We talked for a bit. He said Robert Kennedy was also his-- political hero. And at the time, he said, he could not possibly go to Washington with Nixon unless Rockefeller went. He was working with Nelson Rockefeller.

00:30:31:00

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Then time passed. I thought he was working on the article-- and one day he called up and he said, "You know, I don't know how to tell you this (CHUCKLE), but (CHUCKLE)--" and that turned out he was-- he was going to work for-- for Nixon. So, you know, that was-- that was the-- the source of-- of contact. And I s-- I s-- w-- when I was going to the-- White House for-- I mean, not to see the president, heaven knows, but I mean, for some research or something, I w-- I would see him once or twice maybe. I remember going into his office and he said-- there was a man in a suit sitting. And he said, "Gloria," he said, "I know you think-- (CHUCKLE) military officers are-- or military men are-- venal," or something like that. I said, "No, no, no, I don't think they're venal," I said, "Just-- just regimented, dumb." To-- but he said, "Well, I'd like you to meet Colonel Hague ." (CHUCKLE)

00:31:38:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

Well--

GLORIA STEINEM:

But, anyway, he-- we were photographed. The thing-- thing is that we were-- he-- a friend-- gave me a party after one of the very first and terrifying speeches I had ever given, which was at the Democratic Women's Club in Washington. She gave me a reception afterwards. He was there, and we were photographed together. And I believe that-- that George McGovern was on the

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other side. But they somehow cut him off and since Kissinger was, I think, pretty much the only unmarried person in the Nixon Administration, then we got to be an item. So, somebody from the *New York Times* called me up and asked me about it. And I said, "Unfortunately," prob'ly being a smartass, "I am not now, nor have I ever been (CHUCKLE) a girlfriend of Henry Kissinger." And then I woke up the next morning. It was the quote of the day, you know, how they put in the *New York Times*.

00:32:33:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

And then--

GLORIA STEINEM:

But-- but, you know, he seemed a-- a different person, y-- you know-- in my-- or a somewhat different person in my initial conversations with him. But I don't know.

PETER KUNHARDT:

The different men who have been in your life and who have played important parts and you've, to your credit, stayed good friends with them. We have great pictures of you with-- with each of them. And I just thought maybe I'd say a name and you could just say a phrase about each one and--

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Okay, if it-- you know what? I hate to do it without asking them. But I'll try, okay. (CHUCKLE)

PETER KUNHARDT:

Well, if-- if--

GLORIA STEINEM:

Okay.

PETER KUNHARDT:

And-- and if it-- if it's inappropriate--

GLORIA STEINEM:

Okay.

PETER KUNHARDT:

--we-- we don't need it. But we-- we do have good pictures of-- of-- you and Blair, which we've already spoken about-- Robert Benton.

00:33:23:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Robert Benton was very important in my life because I thought until I met him that I couldn't possibly be a writer because I didn't have the right

background. It seemed that most serious writers grew up in the lower east side or (CHUCKLE) you know-- I-- I'd-- and-- and-- and-- and Benton, as everybody calls him, used to say to me over and over again, "Tell me a Toledo story. Tell me a Toledo story." And because he himself wrote out of his own sense of growing up in Texas, he-- he made me understand that all our stories are okay.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Great. Paul Desmond.

00:34:06:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Paul Desmond was my neighbor when Barbara Nessim and I were living on-- on-- West 56th Street. He was-- a tall, quiet presence in the neighborhood who occasionally used to call me up and say, "Would I walk him around the Museum of Modern Art?" He was taking mescaline and he wanted to-- (CHUCKLE) look at the paintings. I remember going to see *Jules and Jim* (1962) with him. I think we were both in love with the movie. We-- you know, we saw each other over time. And he-- I mean, he was certainly a very accomplished musician. And his work is still out there. But he was also a wonderful writer. He was writing a book, which he never finished, called *How Many of You Are There In the Quartet?*, which was (CHUCKLE) about his travels around the country. It was very funny and very smart. And I'm so s-- sorry that he died so young.

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PETER KUNHARDT:

Tom Guinzburg?

00:35:10:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Tom Guinzburg-- was then-- a publisher. And I had met him because Benton and I were doing a book called *The Beach Book* (1963) for the v-- Viking Press of which, you know, Tom was the publisher. And-- we-- we were together for a while after that. And he was, you know, a very kind, funny, generous man, who still is being generous. I think he is now head or one of the heads of Make A Wi-- the Make A Wish Foundation. Also, he-- I-- I loved him and I loved his mother. And he and his mother didn't get along that well. So his mother and I used to meet secretly (CHUCKLE) and have tea together by-- by ourselves.

PETER KUNHARDT:

That's great. Mike Nichols.

00:36:11:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Mike Nichols-- you know, is incredibly smart. I mean, you know, just super, super smart. He had just then maybe done one-- he was more known then perhaps as part of Nichols and May at that time. He was just doing his first

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Broadway, or maybe second Broadway play, called Love. He was directing it. So he was not, you know, the-- yet the Mike Nichols we th-- think of today. And while we were seeing each other, he also did-- he also directed-- Virginia Woolf, which is why some of it is shot on the Smith campus (CHUCKLE) because they were looking for the house in which the couple lived. And I kept saying, "I know that house. I know exactly." And, you know, nobody listens to the girlfriend of the director, right? (CHUCKLE) So, no one was very interested. But finally, somebody went to look at it. And it was exactly the house where they (CHUCKLE) should live. And they did use it, which didn't endear me to Smith all that much, because then people thought that the whole thing had taken place at Smith.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Rafer Johnson.

00:37:28:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Rafer Johnson-- and I met at the 1968 Chicago convention. I think we were both involved in trying to get shown the excellent documentary about Bobby Kennedy that the-- Humphrey Lyndon Johnson people didn't want shown to the whole convention. Ultimately, we had to have it shown separately from the convention. And so-- you know, I got to know what a-- and see what an extraordinarily kind and gentle-- you know, there's a way in which men who are-- athletes and physically powerful can be gentle, you know, because they

don't have to prove themselves, ever. So we then saw each other for a while. And I met his family in-- in California. He's a wonderful man. I think-- I think that he mentions this, also, in his-- autobiography, so I feel okay about mentioning it.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Okay, well, we can X out any-- (CHUCKLE) I-- I saw the great picture on one table, here, of-- of you with Franklin Thomas. So, he's still a friend.

00:38:47:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes, very much, he's still a friend. Yes, Fra-- Frank Thomas was the head of-- Bedford-Stuyvesant when-- when we met, which is the country's biggest-- community development corporation, accomplishing incredible, incredible-- restoration of huge numbers of apartments and houses and families and, you know, just-- he accomplished so much. And he had a wonderful mother who was from Barbados, who had been a-- working in a some kind of war factory, plant, or something, maybe as a welder, I'm not sure, during the war. And he had seen her fired for no reason except that servicemen were coming home. And so women didn't count anymore. And he never forgot that. So, long before I knew him, he al-- he was making sure that-- women were working all-- on all the projects of restoring houses, doing carpentry, you know, all

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kinds of nontraditional tasks. And he also, then, helped to make the Ford Foundation the leading foundation for-- Equal Rights of all kinds.

00:40:07:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

We'll skip over Stan, you we spo-- you told that wonderful story about. And we'll end with Mort Zuckerman.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, let's see, what can-- Mort is a wonderful dancer and very funny. And we probably shared nothing much else but that. (CHUCKLE) We were politically quite different. So, I-- I would say that's probably, and I think he would agree, the-- it's the-- the-- the only person who isn't-- who didn't become family. We just didn't share enough interests. But the good news is that he has an older sister (CHUCKLE) named Carmen who-- I do share interests with. And we became sisters. And we still are.

PETER KUNHARDT:

That's great. Well, there's one other man who appeared to wanna be your boyfriend who was-- Moses. Do you remember the reporter Moses from 1968 from the Cana-- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation? When you did an interview, this was the interview Dylan was referring to when you were--

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Oh, right.

PETER KUNHARDT:

--kind of seductively lying on a couch or eating a-- eating a melon with him or ironing at one point. And we were just curious. It's-- it's such a-- it-- it's such a different kind of piece than anything else we've seen. I-- I wondered if you had any memory of that.

00:41:33:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, I-- I do-- I may not-- I have a memory of-- of-- ironing (CHUCKLE) because I was ironing a blouse or something. And so he was photographing me. But I've seen the thing of me lying on the couch. I don't remember that at all. He-- but I d-- and I don't think, and I think he would agree, that he-- I mean-- he definitely was not a boyfriend. I don't think he wanted to be a boyfriend. He-- he was much younger. He-- he was just looking for-- an-- an interview and an interesting mini-documentary because I think the march-- the first Women's March on Fifth Avenue was about to happen.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Could you se-- could you set up the fact that in 1972, Betty Friedan wrote an article about you in McCall's Magazine? I just would like to hear that coming from you.

00:42:25:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes, in the-- in the early '70s, Betty Friedan wrote an article in McCall's, I think, that included me. It wasn't totally about me. But it was about her disagreement with me and others in the women's movement.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Great, and likewise, the press came running after you and Betty after-- she made the accusation in the same period of time that you were profiting from the women's movement. And you-- you defended yourself in the Ms. offices very well. But if you could just s-- state that fact, if you remember it.

GLORIA STEINEM:

W-- when Ms. magazine was just getting started-- Betty Friedan, I think, gave a press conference or anyway gave a statement of some kind to the press saying that Ms. was profiteering off the Women's Movement. And this was extremely painful since all of us were working for nothing and (CHUCKLE) having a hard time raising money. So, we tried to, you know, give the real information.

00:43:30:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

Great. Perfect. What's your memory of the male press back in those days and their whole tone and attitude and approach to you when they would interview you or report on the movement?

GLORIA STEINEM:

People say to me now-- "Are you not-- upset sometimes when the press is hostile?" And I always say to myself, "Well, hostility's a step forward from the ridicule that we started out with." It frequently was ridiculing. And it would be a commentary on-- our clothing or-- that liberation must mean you went to bed with everybody as opposed to (CHUCKLE) being able to say, "No," as well as, "Yes," or-- you know, "Well, this is going against nature or God or Freud or something." It was-- it was very-- I mean, ri-- ridicule is-- is even more difficult to deal with, I think, than serious opposition. And there was a lot of it in the beginning.

00:44:33:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

And was it ridicule and also just a sense of discomfort? Could you f-- could you sense a sense of discomfort on their part?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Mm-hm (AFFIRM). Yes, there-- there was a sense of discomfort-- on the part of men who were interviewing and to whom this was new. I can understand

that. But I thought-- I s-- thought of it again during the 2008 presidential elections because-- men were on camera, a serious journalist, saying things like, "I cross my legs whenever I see Hillary Clinton. Does anybody wanna see a woman growing old in public?" all of these things. And I finally had an "ah ha" about it-- that reaches all the way back to those men, which is that we are mostly-- women, as well as men, raised by women when we're children. And we come to think that female authority is only appropriate to childhood.

00:45:31:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And that's-- so I think especially for men, when they see a powerful woman or a woman supposing equality, that they feel regressed to childhood. And I think that's the discomfort. So, I think both at the-- at the level of those reporters and one day having a female president of the United States, it has to-- it's rooted in men being equal parents as well as women, so that men are seen as nurturing as well and women are seen as authoritative in public life. Both are both.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Well, you bring up Hillary Clinton. So let's bring it to date. You-- you had the difficult choice of-- of-- of supporting either Hillary or Barack Obama, two great candidates. Was that a difficult, hard, time for you?

00:46:25:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

It-- it was-- it was difficult. I mean, I supported both of them for about a year because it was much too soon to make the decision. So people would say to me, "Are you supporting Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama?" And I would say, "Yes." (CHUCKLE) And I wrote a column to that effect, an op-ed page piece. When I finally had to decide, I made a list of everything on two sheets of paper. And it seemed to me that clearly in the absence of all other communi-- considerations, that Hillary was-- more experienced and especially with the ultra-right-wing, which seemed to me the greatest challenge and has remained the greatest challenge. So, I decided to support Hillary. And I did. But I never thought she could win because of what I was saying about us being raised, still, mostly by women. I thought, "We won't, in this particularly powerful country, be able to elect a woman who really represents women until-- both men and women are raising children and it's no longer assoc-- female authority is no longer associated with childhood."

00:47:39:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

So, may-- I supported her on the merits-- and I thought to myself, inside, though I didn't say this-- if-- Obama doesn't need me to support him. If I were Hillary and someone like me didn't support (CHUCKLE) Hillary Clinton-- you know, I would be very devastated by that or hurt by that. It would seem unjust.

SHEILA NEVINS:

We will get to your parents. But first, I wanted to ask you why women lie about their age.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Women lie about their age because the culture punishes women for being older in a way that it punishes men somewhat, but not nearly as much. And that comes from the idea that women are only valuable when they're potential or actual child bearers and child-rearers, and after that they have no value. So, it actually makes women get more radical with age incidentally.

00:48:39:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Whereas men get more conservative, because women lose power with age, and men gain power with age. But-- it does-- cause women to lie about their age more than men do. It's changing. After all, we think about Marilyn Monroe who thought her life was over at 30. Now there are viable sexual actresses in movies at 40 and 50, and Meryl Streep at 60. So, it's changing, a decade at a time, but there's still a big difference. We still remark upon it for instance, when we see older women with younger men, and we don't remark upon it the other way around.

SHEILA NEVINS:

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Let's talk about Ruth. I thought it was so interesting and-- and sad, and I thought it was interesting that you gave her her name rather than called her my mother.

00:49:35:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I called the essay "Ruth's Song" rather than My Mother's Song because I wanted people to know her. Not just in the role of mother, but who she was. She had not really been able to use her talents, and she was an enormously talented person. So, when I wrote "Ruth's Song," because she could not sing it, I was hoping that I could make the loss a little less by-- by saying who she was.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Was she mentally ill or deprived of a career?

GLORIA STEINEM:

I don't think she was mentally ill, no. But after I wrote that essay, sometimes people would say to me, aren't you afraid it's hereditary. And I had never even thought of it. I always said, well, only if patriarchy is hereditary, you know. (LAUGHS) Because I think she really became depressed because she was made to give up everything she loved.

00:50:35:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Her work, and she was a pioneer newspaper reporter, and even an editor at a time when-- when she started, she had to use a man's name because it was so unusual that she was writing at all. But she just couldn't make it all work together. You know, to be the perfect wife and mother and to have a pioneering career at the same time. She had what was then called a nervous breakdown, and was in a sanatorium for quite a while.

SHEILA NEVINS:

How did-- how did a nervous breakdown manifest itself then? What did that mean?

00:51:08:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well-- I-- you know, I wasn't ali-- I wasn't born yet, but I think that-- she just couldn't function, and she was put into a sanatorium. And part of her recovery was that she was given-- an early form of tranquilizer, which then she took the rest of her life, and became quite addicted to.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Was she a good mother? She was certainly an inspiration.

GLORIA STEINEM:

My-- my mother was-- I think was a-- great mother because her philosophy of childrearing was-- well, first of all, she was trying to counter her own child rearing. Her mother I think had been quite-- mean. And she did perform the miracle of changing that pattern in one generation, which is a kind of miracle. But also, she was a theosophist. And since theosophists believe in reincarnation, her child rearing philosophy was that children are little strangers who come into your life.

00:52:07:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

You have the duty and the joy of loving and caring for them. But they don't belong to you. And the idea is to find out who they already are, and help them to become that. You know, like a seed becoming a flower. And that is a great child rearing philosophy. It means you don't get pushed, you know, into imitating or conforming. You're listened to-- because you're perceived as a unique person. And I only wish that I had understood how great that was in time to say thank you to her. It's-- it took me more years to understand it.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Were you a good daughter?

GLORIA STEINEM:

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I-- I was a good daughter, a really good daughter in the sense of taking care of her-- even when it was very hard for me to do it, and supporting her, and taking her away on vacations. And, you know, we enjoyed each other's company. But I was not a good daughter in the sense of sharing interests.

00:53:18:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Because I was trying so hard or I was so fearful of becoming her. So, I look at her books now that I have, and I see-- how many interests we shared, and I regret that I denied her that companionship.

SHEILA NEVINS:

So, if she were sitting in this chair, and-- what would you say to her?

GLORIA STEINEM:

If my mother were sitting here where you are, I would say thank you so much for your philosophy of child rearing that was so way, way, way ahead of its time, and is still ahead of its time, because it wasn't about possession or making your child imitate you. It was about recognizing the uniqueness of-- of a child. And helping them, you know, become who they-- they already were. So, I would say from the bottom of my heart, thank you for that. And also-- I would say let's talk about some of the books and shared interests that we had and we never talked about. Or very little.

00:54:33:00

SHEILA NEVINS:

Was she mentally ill or deprived of a career? And did that stimulate what you fought for or fight for for women?

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, I don't think she was-- mentally ill. And even after a couple of years in a mental hospital when I was in college, there was really no diagnosis except-- an anxiety neurosis, they said. And I said, "Would you say her spirit was broken." And the psychiatrist said, "Yes, you might say that." So, I think she just-- had a life that did not allow her to become who she-- who she was. And she-- became depressed and retreated-- into another world much of the time.

SHEILA NEVINS:

If she'd been liberated and working, would she have been depressed?

00:55:28:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, she wasn't depressed while she was liberated and working. She was a pioneer in journalism before I was born. It was trying to-- be the wife of a very charming, wonderful, utterly irresponsible man, be the perfect mother to my older sister-- and do it all at once. Also, my father wanted to go off and start a summer resort in a very isolated rural part of Michigan, which made it

difficult for her to keep her big city newspaper job. And in the end, after a nervous breakdown, and being in a sanatorium for a year or two-- I'm not sure, she just solved the problem by giving up her life. You know, by giving up her job, giving up her friends, giving up everything she cared about, and moving to rural Michigan.

00:56:29:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And she ultimately became, by the time I was born, someone I remember as-- sitting in the car while my father went in to buy and sell antiques-- which is the way he made a living in the wintertime in his gypsy way. In the heat and in the cold, no matter what, because she didn't want to be home alone. So, she was this figure sitting in the car while-- I went in with my father and we-- I tried to help him wrap and unwrap the antiques he was selling. You know, it's-- it's such a waste. But I-- I think that I identified with almost every woman in the world before I had the courage to really identify with my mother.

SHEILA NEVINS:

So, would you say she was the-- the inspiration? I mean, what made you suddenly step out for women in this way?

00:57:31:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, women step out for women because it needs doing. So, many women with very strong mothers do what I do. It-- it wasn't certainly the--

the only inspiration. But I do think that a lot of us in my generation and still generations to come are living out the un-lived lives of our mothers. And I think-- I am doing that. And that's a proud and great thing to do, but I am so moved when I hear younger women, a few younger women say to me, "I hope I can have as interesting a life as my mother." Not the same life, as interesting. That's a big step forward.

SHEILA NEVINS:

So, we imagined that you were talking to her. But if she was talking to you now, what do you think she'd say about Gloria?

00:58:23:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

What-- what my mother would say to me now is probably a double message because I remember the double messages of the past. For instance, when I was engaged in my senior year in college, she said to me-- "It's probably a good thing you get married right away because if you are unmarried and you have a taste of independence, you'll never get married." (LAUGHS) So, is that a double message or-- so, I think she would be-- she would say to me that she's proud of me. She would worry about me because she worried about conflict, she worried about whether or not I'd be able to support myself. She-- when I came home, she would say to me things like, "You know, your sister just got a new winter coat and she didn't have to pay for it herself."

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SHEILA NEVINS:

Your sister was married?

00:59:19:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

My sister was married. You know, to a man who didn't make that much money, and she had six children. I mean, it wasn't rational (LAUGHS) in an economic sense. But my mother was fearful for me, that I-- that I wouldn't be able to-- to support myself, at the same time that she was glad to see me carrying forward what she hadn't been able to do.

SHEILA NEVINS:

If you had married your first boyfriend--

GLORIA STEINEM:

How far back are we going here?

SHEILA NEVINS:

We're going back to high school. Would you-- would you have become what you became?

GLORIA STEINEM:

If I had married my first boyfriend, I would've been married to, with luck, the night foreman at the Willy Orns Ford plant in Toledo-- if he got to be foreman.

I would have many children. I would be-- if I look at the women I went to high school with, I would be much older by now.

01:00:19:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But I might have ended up doing the same thing because I-- I went back to Toledo and met, you know, women who had grown up in a similar way to me, and a lot of them after their kids had grown up, had gone back to school, had entered politics, had gone into jobs themselves. So, if I had survived, which I'm not sure I would have, I-- I might be doing the same thing. And actually, what was remarkable to me was that the women in Toledo who hadn't gone to college and were really working-class family folks were less afraid than the-- by and large than the women I went to college with. Because the-- the women I went to college with were-- supposed to marry who they wanted to become.

01:01:11:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

The married professional men, lawyers, doctors, and so on. And so, they had not had the necessity of supporting themselves. My high school classmates eventually had to be cleaning women, or work in the electrical-- the Con-- for Con Ed or the equivalent, or-- you know, so, they-- they had more self-confidence. They-- they knew that they could support themselves.

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SHEILA NEVINS:

You said they were much older. What did you mean? You said when you went back they were much older.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well-- you know-- you know, they-- I think we-- we kind of-- or sometimes-- our style gets set in cement, you know, when we graduate from high school, if we then marry, or if we-- when we first graduate from college. So, stylistically, a lot of them had-- had not continued to change. There-- there have been a lot of studies that show that women who work at home, and it is work-- age physiologically up to ten years more than women who work outside the home. Because they're isolated, because there's not that much stimulation. It shouldn't be that way. It doesn't need to be that way, but it-- it has been that way.

01:02:31:00

SHEILA NEVINS:

Does weight have something to do with it?

GLORIA STEINEM:

My stomach just growled. He's gonna hear it, right? Um. Yes, I think-- you know, the country is-- is very, very-- overweight, as we all know. And I notice when I get on planes, I can tell where the plane is going. (LAUGHS) If it's-- if I

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get on a plane to Detroit or-- or Minneapolis, people weigh more than if are on their way to Los Angeles or Aspen or something. And I think-- staying at home is not the same-- with food constantly around you, with food as the only reward, means that-- that women who work at home have more of a-- problem saying-- saying no to food.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Do you obsess on thinness?

01:03:29:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I-- I don't obsess on thinness, and I love to eat. But I am concerned or aware, because both my father and my sister-- shortened their lives by how much they weighed. They really were seriously, seriously overweight. My mother, not so much. So, I'm conscious of it. I'm conscious of it.

SHEILA NEVINS:

So, do you think being-- your being interested in being thin is less cosmetic and more health?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, some-- some of my interest in being thin is-- is cosmetic, but it's not unhealthy. I mean, it-- it has more to do with being healthy. And I-- I'm aware of the weight at which I am the right balance between bone and fat, or whatever it is that you are. So, I-- I-- I'm in no danger of-- of having a dis--

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eating disorder. I mean, I would rather have a cold for two weeks than throw up once. (LAUGHS) And I love to eat. But I am conscious of-- of not getting fat, I'm sure because of the example of my father and my sister.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Tell me about your father.

01:04:47:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

My father was-- a gypsy. I mean, he-- he had two big things he was proud of. He never wore a hat, which in his generation people did, and he never had a job. So, it's part of the reason I can freelance probably, 'cause he trained me for that. He always said, "If I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, it might be wonderful." (LAUGHS) And he took us in a house trailer every winter when I was a child, buying and selling antiques along the way, never with enough money to make it to Florida or California or wherever we were going. And-- and I was his playmate. Which was great. I mean, because he treated me as-- as an equal. Trying to think of an example. Well, his favorite story-- one of his favorite stories about me was that he took me at age four or five to a little country store near us, and I asked him for a nickel. And he said, "What for." And I said, "You can give it to me, or not give it to me, but you can't ask me what it's for." And he said, "That's right." And he gave me the nickel.

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SHEILA NEVINS:

Sweet.

01:06:01:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Now, this was a story about me, but to me, it's about him. That he was the kind of person who would say that's right. And recognize the will of-- of a four or five-year-old child.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Did he ask your mother to give up her career? Why did she give it up?

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, I-- I don't know whether my father asked my mother to give up her career or not. But he did try to start this-- his dream, which was a summer resort in very rural Michigan. Which made it very difficult for my mother to keep her job as a-- by then, I think she was Sunday editor, which was very rare. I'm not sure.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Let's talk about cancer. And whether that changed your life in any way or whether it just got absorbed and you kept going. Was it like walking into a wall, or just walking on, or what was it?

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01:07:03:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

When I first got-- a diagnosis of breast cancer, which now is more than 20 years ago-- I-- I had already-- I had just come to the end of a period in a way, because the magazine had been sold. And so, I had that feeling of coming to the end of something. And I said to myself kind of without thinking about it, kind of ironically, "So, this is how it's going to end." And then, again, up from the bottom of my toes, like unconsciously, "I've had a wonderful life." And that was worth a lot. You know, that-- that realization. Of course, then I immediately began to fight like crazy. You know, and--

SHEILA NEVINS:

I don't think you used the word cancer at all in telling of the story...

GLORIA STEINEM:

I said breast cancer...

SHEILA NEVINS:

Ok.

01:07:59:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And fortunately, you know, I had a-- tiny lump excised while I watched them do it right here. I had radiation and no chemotherapy, so I was very, very

lucky. I remember getting out of the hospital and going to Barbra Walters's wedding that night. (LAUGHS) So-- and dancing. So, I was really lucky that I haven't had a recurrence. But in a way, it served a real purpose of making me a little bit more conscious of time. I'm still, you know, really profligate with time, I fear. But also, the moment of saying I've had a wonderful life was-- at 54 or whatever I was, was-- I remember that.

SHEILA NEVINS:

How-- how was it found?

01:08:55:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

It was found, as most canc-- breast cancer is, by me. You know, not by-- and in fact, the mammogram I had-- a couple of mammograms didn't show it. And finally, the women's clinic I was going to said, "Well, you know, let's take it out and see what it is." And to everyone's surprise, it was malignant.

SHEILA NEVINS:

How did you discover it?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Just-- just inadvertently. It wasn't as if I was so careful about doing breast exams. But it was in that kind of-- I just felt a lump right here. It was perhaps

palpable early because it was on the muscle here. So, it's a great lesson in the importance of self-exams.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But did you notice in the new dictums about it, it says that-- doctors have said the self-exam doesn't really matter, it's really the mammogram that matters?

01:09:24:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

They're wrong. The-- the doctors are wrong in saying I think-- if they're saying the mammogram is more important than self-examination, because for one thing, they're our own bodies. We're more familiar, you know, so we're more likely to recognize something unusual. And also, mammograms, even when they're well-read, which they usually are not-- are inaccurate in about 15 percent of the time.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Let's talk about abortion, and how that-- how your own abortion, which oddly enough, I don't think many really know about. I didn't really know it 'till I read the book.

01:10:19:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Really. Gosh, I feel I've talked (LAUGHS) about it endlessly.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Yeah. No, I knew-- I certainly knew what your thoughts were about it, but I didn't know of the desperation of the experience. And-- you know, having had one in that period, I'm just sort of interested about you telling us that story.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I-- I was fleeing to India, partly because I wanted to go to India on this scholarship, and partly because I was engaged and trying not to get married. So, I thought maybe I was pregnant when I got on the boat to go to London on my way to India, but I wasn't sure. My visa to India didn't come, so I was working as a waitress in London in a very dark and depressing winter, realizing that I was pregnant and not knowing what to do about it. And I was really quite desperate. Really, really desperate. I did all the dumb things.

01:11:18:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, that-- you know, all the remedies. All the things that don't work.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Like what? What-- how old were you?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Then, I was 22. Yeah, I was-- I was 22 when I was in London. And, you know, just the idea of going horseback riding, or-- you know, I don't know. I-- I went to-- a doctor who gave me some medication that was meant to bring on your period if you were not pregnant, but I was hoping it would in any case. I was-- I was quite desperate, because it just seemed the end of life. You know, it seemed that there was a choice. Either I gave birth to someone else, or I gave birth to myself. I couldn't do both. And ultimately, just in the nick of time, I was lucky to find-- a doctor who said to me-- a wonderful man-- who said-- "All right." He said, "If-- if two doctors-- certify that this is against your health interests or something," even though abortion was illegal in London, "then two--" or in England, "You can get an abortion.

01:12:28:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And he said, "You must promise me two things. You'll never tell anyone my name, and you'll do what you want to do with your life." So, he signed, and he sent me to a woman surgeon-- who did the abortion. And there was no Women's Movement then. There was no companionship, so I never told anybody. Certainly not the man I was engaged to, because he-- you know, wanted to get married. I mean, he would've used it, I think, and told everybody and tried to-- turn it into a marriage. But-- for years afterwards, I used to-- before the women's movement, I used to sit at the time that this child would've been born and think, "Okay, I'm going to make myself feel guilty now because I know I should feel guilty. And I'm going to think, you

know, exactly--" and I could never make myself feel guilty. No matter how hard I tried.

01:13:34:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I just-- it was just for me, the first time in my life that I said, "Okay, I'm going to take control of my own life instead of just responding to events." It was always positive, even though I tried hard to make it negative.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Was it formative in terms of your ERA work? And your-- I mean, was it stimulating in that way?

GLORIA STEINEM:

It-- you know, having-- having an abortion was formative in the sense that-- when I went as a-- as a journalist for *New York Magazine* to cover a hearing at which women were standing up and telling their abortion experiences, having had an abortion myself, and never told anyone, I suddenly realized why is it a secret. You know, if one in three women has needed an abortion in her lifetime in this country, why is it a secret, and why is it criminal, and why is it dangerous?

01:14:34:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

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So, I-- I owe to the women who were having that hearing that realization. I didn't have it on my own. As always, I think everything comes out of shared experience, not just your own. Your own, you may think you're crazy or wrong, but when you realize that other people are having a similar experience, it's different.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But you seemed to have realized all by yourself that this was the right thing to do.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I just-- but in a-- in a kind of backward way. You know, because I was trying so hard to make myself feel guilty, and I just couldn't.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Why did you think you should feel guilty?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Because all of society said I should feel guilty.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But why?

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, all-- all of-- you know, abortion was illegal. People didn't talk about it. People in my college years who had had abortions had endangered themselves, injured themselves. It was hushed up, it was secret. If you got pregnant, you would go off to-- a home for unwed mothers, and that, too, was secret. So, I just felt from the pressure of society that it was supposed to be wrong, but I couldn't make myself feel that it was wrong.

01:15:42:00

SHEILA NEVINS:

Did you consciously know you didn't want to get married? Or did you just not find anyone until very recently that you wanted to marry?

GLORIA STEINEM:

I didn't exactly consciously know that I didn't want to get married. I just knew I didn't want to get married right then. (LAUGHS) Because I had been told, and people sometimes still do, I suppose, but culture then said that once you got married, a woman got married, that was kind of the last choice you could make. Then after that your husband's career or your children's needs really dictated your life. So, if it's the last choice you can make, it really seems a lot like death. (LAUGHS) So, I kept saying, "I'm going to do that. Definitely. I'm going to do that. But not right now." (LAUGHS) And therefore, it kept moving off into the future.

01:16:44:00

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SHEILA NEVINS:

But the men that you dated and were with were not men that would've stopped you from making choices.

GLORIA STEINEM:

No. I think that's-- no, they-- I-- I-- because perhaps I was lucky to have-- a kind, gentle father who let me be who I was, I picked good men. But marriage as an institution was still out there in the cult-- in the culture in a way that told me that that was the last big choice I could make. So-- if you're-- if you're really told that-- you're supposed to marry the person you want to become, you-- you can't get married because nobody else is the person you want to become. You're unique.

SHEILA NEVINS:

So, why did you finally marry?

01:17:36:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, you know, I married at 66, which is already very different. I mean, you're-- you're definitely whoever-- pretty much who you're going to be by 66. We loved each other, we wanted to be together. We would not have got legally married had he not had visa problems. He was born in South Africa, had grown up in England. And the kind of permanent visa he had had been eliminated by Congress, and he was constantly afraid of a knock on the door.

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You know, he was convinced that the authorities were going to come get him. So, that was the reason we started to talk about getting legally married. Then, we were on our way to see Wilma Mankiller who was the Chief of the Cherokee Nation-- and to go to the big Cherokee national reunion, where I frequently went. We were driving there. And I called Wilma, a dear friend, and said, "You know, I'm thinking of doing this. What do you think."

01:18:37:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And she said she'd think about it. And so, she went out on her lawn, and looked at the stars for many hours, and called me in the morning and said, "Yeah, I think so. And we'll do your ceremony." So, the combination of the visa problem and a Cherokee ceremony (LAUGHS) was kind of irresistible. You-- I didn't tell anybody. I didn't ask anybody. I mean, you know, it was as much as a shock to me as it was, apparently, to lots of other folks. But it turned out to be very important, because he became very ill after a couple of years. And you know, it-- had we not been legally married, he wouldn't have been covered by-- my insurance. It would've been much, much harder.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Did you learn-- what did you learn from his death and dying? Anything?

GLORIA STEINEM:

I learned--

SHEILA NEVINS:

Because you seem to be such an optimist.

01:19:34:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

No, I learned so much from-- from his illness, which lasted a whole year. And from his dying. A lot. A lot. A lot. I don't know if I can explain this exactly, but the whole feeling of-- of not being real. You know, that I somehow was invisible, so unless I was being useful, I didn't exist. A year of flat-out suffering took that away. You know, just the reality of the suffering. I also think that I had never really mourned my childhood. You know-- I-- I put into my mother the emotion that I was feeling. I felt the tragedy of my mother, but I didn't feel my own. I did the same thing with David, but then I was old enough finally to realize it, or I've only recently realized it.

01:20:38:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Because his illness was a-- brain lymphoma, and that is devastating. You know, it takes away your coor-- coordination and your consciousness. And, you know. So, I really didn't know what he was feeling, which was haunting. And I put my own emotions into him, I think, in retrospect.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Did that--

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GLORIA STEINEM:

And that-- sorry.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Did he die here?

GLORIA STEINEM:

He-- no, he died in California. I mean, he was-- he was ill much of the time here. He was in Sloan-Kettering for a very long time, including in the ICU. Then I flew him in a tiny private hospital plane to California, because his children are in California. He was in a nursing home there-- there and that's where he died. And it was-- you know, the first year was awful. The first year was full of anniversaries. You know, everything was an anniversary.

SHEILA NEVINS:

You mean the first year after his death?

01:21:45:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

The first year after his death, right. But-- I-- it was only after that year, and only quite recently that I've realized that because of the nature of his illness, and because he could only speak what the physicians called social phrases.

You know, you never really knew whether they were responding to the world around him or not. There was not a lot of way of knowing what he was feeling or thinking. I was obsessed with his-- with was he returning to his childhood and feeling abandoned. Did he know that I was there? Did he know that his children were there? I was obsessed. And I stayed obsessed for about a-- year afterward.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Did he know that you were there?

01:22:32:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I don't know. I don't know. I still don't know. But that's why I finally, recently, had to understand that I was putting my feelings in him. You know, my feelings of being abandoned, my childhood feelings. It took me a while to figure that out. But, you know, a-- another-- this will show you-- shows me how we form families. I'm friends with almost all of my old lovers, and one of them-- was in Rome, and only slightly knew David, but knew I had been obsessed with whether or not he knew I was there. And he-- a lawyer, not a-- you know, a mystical person at all. Very concrete person-- was looking in a jewelry store window for no reason, and he heard-- he says he heard David's voice say, "Tell her I knew she was there."

01:23:34:00

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GLORIA STEINEM:

So, at the time, he was looking at a ring that was a serpent ring with a pearl in it. And he brought me that ring in a box with a note that said-- told me this story, and said, "When people, you know, mention this ring, or ask you about it, tell them it came from David." Now is that wonderful or what? You know, I mean, what a wonderful human being he is, right. And I-- I--

SHEILA NEVINS:

Who was it?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Stan Pottinger.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Oh, okay.

GLORIA STEINEM:

And we had been together for nine years. It was longer than-- you know. Probably each other's Olympic record, right? (LAUGHS)

SHEILA NEVINS:

Any-- romance regrets in terms of not having married one of these men?

GLORIA STEINEM:

No.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Who are listed in the book?

01:24:24:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

No. No, I think that we were part of each other's lives. We-- no, for the most part, my old lovers are family. Like my friends are my family. So, no, I don't have any regrets.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Does sexual desire, libido, do you think, decline with aging?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes, I do think sexual desire declines with aging. Yes. Because it's partly a trick of nature to get us to-- reproduce. And even though we're the only animals, I think, who can experience sexual pleasure, even when we can't reproduce, or the same degree of sexual pleasure. We don't have periods of estrus or heat like many other animals. Still, our hormones do change, and it

does-- it does change. And it's-- it's-- it's interesting because I think it's very hard to explain to-- to younger people that it's not a loss. It's not better or worse, it's different. You know, you kind of feel that suddenly, all these brain cells up here that were reliably dedicated to sex-- are free for other things. So, it's-- it's-- it's freeing, but I loved the intensity of-- of romance. And you know, I mean, I-- they're-- they're both-- great human states to enjoy.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Were you what we would now call or in my office they call a hottie?

01:25:52:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I have no idea if I was a hottie or not. I didn't see myself as a hottie, except sometimes when it was a detriment. You know, I remember walking into the-- most memorable was walking into a *Life Magazine* editor where my agent had sent me, and he looked up from his desk, and said, "We don't want a pretty girl. We want a writer. Go home." That was it. But fortunately, *New York Magazine* came along, and fortunately, Clay Felker, as an editor, was as open to ideas from-- from women as from men.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Do you have a favorite love song? One that when you hear you-- you go back?

01:26:39:00

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GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, there are a lot of favorite love songs. I don't-- for some reason when you said that, I was thinking of "Two Sleepy People." You know, do you know--

SHEILA NEVINS:

By Dawn's Early Light. The--

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Yeah.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Saginaw. Right.

SHEILA NEVINS:

What is it? What are the lyrics?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Do you remember something-- what. I can't remember. "We kissed in the hall, Father didn't like me at all ..." (LAUGHS) or something like that. I mean, it

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doesn't have great lyrics. But it has a-- great mood. If they ask me, I could write a book, which I think is from Guys and Dolls or Pal Joey.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Pal Joey.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah. I love that. A lot of-- a lot of Gershwin, great love songs.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Do you play them when you're alone, or no more?

01:27:27:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah. I do. I mean, I play music when I'm-- when I'm by myself. I also dance when I'm by myself. Well, I-- hopefully, I dance when I'm with other people, but-- but I mean, there's something great about being able to put on a record, and dance wildly for ten minutes, and then go back to your computer.

SHEILA NEVINS:

One particular record, or just any?

GLORIA STEINEM:

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No, anybody. Some-- sometimes it's-- Latin dancing, sometimes it's-- more often, probably disco because that was my formative period. Although I-- I-- just when I was in Zambia, I discovered the source of the bump. I was-- (LAUGHS) dancing with a bunch of women underneath a tree by the Zambezi River. As they were singing--

SHEILA NEVINS:

Like all of us. (LAUGHTER)

GLORIA STEINEM:

And they were doing the bump. I said, "Oh, so this is where it came from."

01:28:17:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Blair Shotenzoff, who I had been engaged to, and who, you know, was the reason I had an abortion, but I never told because I knew that he would then tell everyone, you know, and-- use that a reason why we-- we had to get married. So, I never told him but as-- as time passed, and I-- said this, you know, because Ms. magazine had done a petition of, you know, hundreds of women who had had illegal abortions, when it was illegal, and I couldn't ask them to sign without signing myself. So, because of the timing and because of talking about it frequently I was sure that he knew. But it turned out that he didn't because he only learned when Carolyn Hilebrand went to interview

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him. And he called me up afterwards, and he said, "Oh," he said, "That's so wonderful. It makes me feel so much closer to you."

01:29:17:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And that was a-- wonderful response. He wasn't angry or shocked. You know, he just felt it was something that we'd gone through in a way together, and now he knew the rest of the story.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But you'd gone through it alone.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes. But-- it-- by my own choice, because-- because I hadn't told him.

SHEILA NEVINS:

He-- he's not alive anymore, is he?

GLORIA STEINEM:

No.

SHEILA NEVINS:

He died?

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GLORIA STEINEM:

No. He's-- Blair, who was nine years older than I, died a couple of years ago. And I-- his daughters are my friends. And-- you know, one is a wonderful writer. I-- they asked me to come speak at his memorial. He was married twice, and one wife-- ex-wife is still living. So, the daughters had made a list of people to speak at the memorial.

01:30:13:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And I saw that I was on the list, but his living ex-wife, Kris, was not. So, I said to them, "Don't you think it's a little odd that I'm speaking and she's not." And they said, "Well, ask her." So, I went to Kris. I said, "Don't you think it's a little odd that I'm speaking and you're not." And she said, "No, no, no." She said, "I would be angry, and inappropriate. You weren't married to him, you'll be fine." (LAUGHTER) And at that moment, all of us were like one family, you know.

SHEILA NEVINS:

You're so easy to get along with, though. You're such a nice person.

GLORIA STEINEM:

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Well-

SHEILA NEVINS:

Aren't you ever evil or wicked or mean?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah, I'm sure-- no, I-- I--

SHEILA NEVINS:

I don't think so.

GLORIA STEINEM:

--I'm sure I am, but only with people I think have hurt other people.

(LAUGHS) Or hurt me, or--

SHEILA NEVINS:

But-- but in groups. But not personally. You don't ever really get angry. I mean, alone. You don't ever call anybody up and hang up on them, or say something mean.

GLORIA STEINEM:

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No, but I think it, though. (LAUGHTER) I mean-- I--

SHEILA NEVINS:

You think what? What do you think?

01:31:18:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I-- I think, you know, about revenge, and how to get even, and how this person is-- mean or-- or hurtful, and, you know-- but I'm too lazy to actually do it. But I do fantasize it.

SHEILA NEVINS:

I could give you lessons. (LAUGHTER)

GLORIA STEINEM:

And sometimes I say something and it-- it does-- you know, they totally miss it. You know, like-- it's so frustrating.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But you spend so much time making other people feel good about themselves. It's really extraordinary.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I think--

SHEILA NEVINS:

You like people to feel good.

01:31:59:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah, but to-- some-- some people who are really hostile, you know-- I-- I remember saying to some guy who was a terrible guy, and he kept saying, "I'm afraid I'll lose my soul." And I said, "You have nothing to worry about." And he didn't even get it. (LAUGHTER) So, I may outsubtle myself.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Maybe that's the point, if they're that mean, they don't get it anyway.

(LAUGHTER) What would you say to George Bush?

GLORIA STEINEM:

What would I say?

SHEILA NEVINS:

To-- to George Bush?

01:32:38:00

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah. Well, of course, now he's no longer president. So, it's-- it's a little different. But I guess now that he's no longer president, I would say, "Look at the disaster of the men in your family. Your grandfather forced your father to-- to enter politics. The guy only wanted to play tennis, you know." And he-- the-- the grandfather was quite punitive and hostile to his kids. Very authoritarian. You know, look at what you've created. Look at the devastation in the world that you've created in the world because, you know, you didn't undo this damage in-- in your-- in your own family. You just continued this idea of the cult of masculinity and domination, and craziness.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Masculinity. You think that's his problem?

01:33:25:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, it is-- when it's a cult, yeah. Yeah, because that's what says to him that he has to dominate, that he has to have all the oil in the world and invade Iraq and-- defeat his own father, and, you know, all this craziness. I mean, I-- think Olaf Palma, to go back to him, as the Chief of State in Sweden, is right, when he says that gender normalizes aggression and submission.

PETER KUNHARDT:

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Gloria, I wanna ask you to tell us about where we're sitting right now. You've lived here a long time. If you could-- I see a lot of African art and Eastern colors and pictures. Could you talk about living here and where we-- where we are?

01:34:09:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I moved here-- I think in 1968 because I remember going from here to the Democratic Convention in Chicago with Barbara Nessim. We moved in together just to these two rooms. I much later-- got the downstairs and made a little staircase here. We moved out of a one-room studio on West 56th Street where we were each paying \$62.50 a month (CHUCKLE) into this apartment which cost \$300 a month. And I remember waking up in the morning and thinking, "We've just spent \$10. (CHUCKLE) You know, where are we gonna get \$10?" So I've really been here a very long time. I never expected that when I moved in, never.

PETER KUNHARDT:

And is-- you-- you use that great expression, "homesick." Is this-- does this really feel like a home to you?

01:35:07:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

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This really feels like a home, now. It didn't for a long time because it was full of cardboard boxes. I was treating it like a big closet. I was traveling all the time. I hadn't really had the experience of having a settled home. It took me a long time to realize that I could do that for myself. I was past 50 before I and also friends of mine who'd lost all patience with the way (CHUCKLE) I was living-- undid the boxes and actually tried to paint and make it into a place I was happy to come home to. And it's made a huge difference. You know, the-- the home is the symbol of the self, people say. And I think that's true.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Well, I was gonna say, you're-- you-- you talked with Sheila a little bit about your style-- your look. And it-- and it's-- and-- and not wanting to be a lady. This place certainly speaks to that. The way you dress, maybe not t-- years ago, but you-- you ha-- you have kind of an earthy feel to you. Can you-- can you describe what a Glor-- Gloria Steinem style is?

01:36:15:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Probably not as well as someone else-- (CHUCKLE) because I just am drawn to things. And I think-- I'm drawn mainly to things that are probably not European because they're from cultures where arts and crafts are the same thing, the s-- is-- art is-- an object of use or a fabric of use, not just something that hangs on a wall in-- in a museum. It-- it has a kind of reality to it and a

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spontaneity. Who was it who said, "No more second-hand art?" You know, the people (CHUCKLE), we should all be able to make our own art. In a-- in a r-- real, grounded culture, we would all be singing songs. We would all be telling stories. And-- the things I love the most probably come from-- from those cultures, you know, where it's-- something is made beautiful because you're going to use it every day.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Great. Everyone's asked you this question over the decades. And I-- and-- and it's-- the k-- the question is, "You don't have any children." And, I-- I-- you-- you-- you've answered that very well saying-- that the f-- children of your family and friends have become your children. And you're surrounded by people all the time. But I think it's-- it may be hard for some people to truly b-- truly believe that and thinking that there must be some kinda place inside you that actually does yearn for children. Is that just not the case?

01:37:55:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, I used to think that I had to have children because I thought everyone did. And you were crazy if you didn't. In fact, I had a much older cousin who was the only person in my family who didn't have children. And she was crazy (CHUCKLE) and was treated as crazy. So, I-- like getting married, I kept saying, "Yes, I'm going to do that, but no right now." And it was

really courtesy of the Women's Movement that made me realize, "Wait a minute, I'm-- I'm happy." And if having children is to be seen as a choice, then I'm serving a purpose in a way, you know, by showing that you can be happy with and without children. You don't have to have children. I suppose if I-- intellectually think about it, I can understand that some of it may be because I was a parent to my mother and therefore felt I had done that.

01:38:48:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I don't know. But the truth is, I've just never felt compelled in any way to have children. And I don't have regrets. In fact, I was sitting in a women's center in New Delhi, I think, in a very poor area. And there were Muslim women and traditional Hindu women. Young girls were all sitting on the floor. And somebody asked me that question. And I thought, "If I tell the truth, I'll lose them, you know, because this is a different world. But what's the point in not telling the truth?" So, when she said, you know, "Aren't you sorry you didn't have children?" I said, "Not for a millisecond." And they all applauded. (CHUCKLE) Because I think we all want to know we have a choice. If-- if-- if we're going to honor having children, we have to say it wasn't compelled.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Great. Is there something that's called a maternal instinct? Does that exist?

01:39:53:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes, I think-- there's also-- there's a parental instinct. There's a paternal instinct, too. I think probably in most species, if an adult of the species is put next to a helpless child of the same species, the instinct is to care for that helpless being because that allows the species to survive. But I don't really believe that has to be-- something that came out of you. You know, I just-- I just think it's part of-- that empathy is part of our evolutionary equipment if our species is going to survive.

PETER KUNHARDT:

You've thought more about anger. We said, "Gloria never gets angry." But you do.

01:40:42:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes, I was thinking about-- it is hard for me to get angry in person, although I'm getting better at it and getting more honest, so I don't just, you know, repress it until it bursts out. But, I-- I do-- or have historically, anyway, gotten angry in letters. (CHUCKLE) You know, so, I remember I wrote a review for the *New York Times* book review section and they made me rewrite it a lot because I had said-- in a complimentary way that the author didn't use light and dark as good and bad, you know, which-- actually is a form of racism, right? And-- even though I kept rewriting it and trying to explain it, the editor

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finally wouldn't publish it. He said, "Well, that makes Blake a racist."
(CHUCKLE) You know, so he-- he wouldn't publish it.

01:41:37:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And I was so angry, you know, that he wouldn't make what seemed to me an important point about race and that he'd made me write it over, you know, three or four times, that I wrote him a letter that I-- I've-- I'm afraid began, "Have you always been a coward? Or is this something (CHUCKLE) that just came upon you?" (CHUCKLE) And-- and I remember, of course, no-- hardly anybody saw these letters. But I do remember that once Evans and Novak in the *Washington Post* wrote an extremely hostile column to Bella Abzug when she was a member of Congress. It was ridiculing. It was humiliating. It was dismissive. And I wrote a long letter to them (CHUCKLE) in objections which started out, "Someone who still reads Evans and Novak (CHUCKLE) tells me that you wrote this--" (CHUCKLE) and the Post actually printed it. I was shocked. (CHUCKLE)

PETER KUNHARDT:

It's a zinger. (CHUCKLE)

01:42:33:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But I-- it-- it-- it-- it's true that I do in writing-- which maybe is true of a lot of writers (CHUCKLE) what I am unable to do in person.

PETER KUNHARDT:

You were a problem solver so-- for so many of the people whose lives you touch. But do you have problems of your own personal problems that you'd like them to help you solve?

01:42:57:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I do. It's-- I do have my own problems (CHUCKLE) that I wish I had help with. I think I, early, got into the habit of being the helpful one, the problem solver, and not because I'm such a great person but because I thought that made me visible, you know, and necessary in some way. So I, early, got into the idea that I could do that for other people but other people couldn't do it for me because it didn't happen in my childhood. Nobody solved my problem so I guess I got into the habit of feeling that it wasn't possible. That was especially true with women. I mean, I-- I understood that-- that men could help me solve a problem. But I thought I could help women. And it took me a few years to get out of that. And-- and I had some dramatic examples of crazy things, you know, that I did from not understanding that. I mean, for instance, we had at the National Women's Conference in Houston, we had employed whole rafts of women in red t-shirts as the security.

01:44:01:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And then we got-- 'cause they had experience as movement security people. Then we got scared and we hired, for a lot of money, the police chief of Miami-- because the right wing was picketing us. And we were afraid, and I was too, that they couldn't-- the women couldn't handle it. Well, it turned out that the policemen had no idea what to do. It was the women in the (CHUCKLE) red t-shirts who-- who knew how to keep security. And it was just our lack of confidence in our own half of the human race. It-- it-- you know, it made us laugh in an ironic way that we, too, had fallen into that.

PETER KUNHARDT:

You know, you mentioned Houston. We screened, just the other day, wa-- one-- a marvelous piece of film of a group of angry women accosting the press who were kind of sitting around-- and-- and accusing them of-- of not paying attention to the-- to the women's issues enough. And we had a debate amongst ourselves about whether it was-- the-- the-- this didn't seem to be Gloria's way of working.

01:45:03:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

Gloria seemed above this kind of thing. But I wonder if you, you know, w-- you-- we talk about anger. We talk about-- the br-- the breadth of the movement. How did you respond to your peers in a situation where you-- you

were watching what was going on, but you-- you might not have been doing it yourself?

GLORIA STEINEM:

I'm not sure I wasn't demonstrating against the press myself. I mean, we-- I demonstrated against the *New York Times* because for 15 years they wouldn't use Ms. as a form of address. I was always-- Miss Steinem of Ms. Magazine. I demonstrated, you know, a lot. So I'm-- I'm not sure that I wouldn't have been there. But I do always try to think first of what would work with me. You know, suppose I was saying something exclusionary or biased. I would want someone to tell me. And I would want to-- them to tell me in an-- in an empathetic way. And if that doesn't work, then, you know, you can escalate from there. But I do try to do first what I think I would like to have done if I were making an error myself.

01:46:19:00

PETER KUNHARDT:

Well, this j-- this just did not seem to be your style. And yet I'm sure it was part-- part of what had to be done. You know, in another early clip, you-- you call yourself a survivor. And you-- you-- you said if five people came out of a concentration camp, you'd be one of them. And you said, "I don't unders-- I don't really know why. But I think I w-- I have those skills." And I just wondered if over the years you've come to realize why you're a survivor.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I-- I imagine, I think, I'm a (CHUCKLE) survivor, which is unrealistic, you know? It isn't-- it's the circumstance-- is overwhelming. You know, the-- the problem with saying I'm a survivor is that it could end up blaming the victim for not being strong enough to survive if you see what I mean. So I-- I think I have that odd and perhaps unrealistic feeling because-- I was on my own a lot as a child and because I was kind of making due or-- because I had to learn how to make a connection with people in order to survive somehow, you know?

01:47:34:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

It-- it just-- you know, I can think of all kinds of circumstances which could've turned bad and didn't. You know, I can 'member g-- getting off a bus or a streetcar when I was about, I don't know, 12 or 13-- and being approached from behind by somebody who wanted to do I know not what to me, a man-- and who said something like, "Turn this way," or, "Get in the car," or something. And I remember saying, "Well, then kill me because I'm not-- you know, you can either (CHUCKLE) kill me or-- or-- or walk away because I'm not doing it." And he actually walked away. Well, I mean, you know, that's just luck. But also, it's because I was not hurt or-- or hit as a child. So, I had a sense of myself, you know, like a cat has a sense (CHUCKLE) of themselves. I remember-- sitting next to a man-- who was an author, a very nice guy, on a couch in somebody's office.

01:48:35:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

We were waiting for them to come. And he grabbed my hands like this. You know, my hands were crossed. He grabbed my wrists and kissed me. And I was so instantaneously unthinkingly angry that he grabbed my wrists that I bit him. Blood (CHUCKLE) was running down his-- he was very nice about it. Ever after, I used to see him and he would say, "See, I have a little scar." (CHUCKLE) I didn't think about it. I just did it. And I think that instinct is probably in all of us as a self-protective instinct. But if you've been beaten or humiliated or put down as a child, you th-- you-- you know, you think you can't do that, you know, because you haven't been able to do it. So it's just luck.

PETER KUNHARDT:

It's a good story. You-- you-- you said of your Toledo days, "I learned in Toledo growing up how to get a man to fall in love with me." So how did you get a man to fall in love with you?

01:49:40:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well-- it's-- first of all, I would like to point out, they were all nice men. (CHUCKLE) I mean, they were-- because I'd-- because my father was a nice guy, I don't think I was ever-- really attracted to-- cruel or difficult men, which

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is a big thing. I mean, I was very lucky in-- in the father (CHUCKLE) that I had. But, I think-- I think it has to do with just listening and empathizing. Everybody wants to be heard.

PETER KUNHARDT:

This is-- a broad question. It actually comes from Dylan who wanted to know what the deepest love you've ever felt is.

GLORIA STEINEM:

To-- for a person or for a--

PETER KUNHARDT:

For-- for kind of anything in your life, is-- if-- does something resonate through as-- as being special?

01:50:39:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, there's-- there's a f-- I don't know how to describe it. There's a feeling of total, utter connection with somebody, you know, that can come for different-- different reasons. It can come out of tragedy-- can come out of their knowing what you're thinking, can come out of sex, can come out of a lot of-- so I-- I ident-- because I don't-- I think I've-- have felt love for-- not just

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one person and not just one kind of thing, but the feeling of love is what your question evokes.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Yeah.

01:51:26:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And that has to do with-- a feeling that you, at that moment, you understand each other totally and kind of are part of the universe. Does that make sense? I mean, there's kind of connection to the universe. And it just (SNAP) is like that. But-- you don't forget it.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Likewise, the-- on the flip side, in that-- in this big universal way, what regrets do you have?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I've wasted time, incredibly. You know, I-- I've kept on doing things I already knew how to do just because they seemed helpful or necessary instead of doing what scared me, you know, which is-- a sign of growth I think. Fear is a sign of growth. So if I-- my main regret, I think, is not having

done-- not-- having headed into the new but continued to do what I th--
thought was helpful but I wasn't necessarily learning from it.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Is that something women would do more than men, hold back adventure?

01:52:47:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes, I-- I think probably-- I hate to generalize. But I do think women
probably-- first of all, we are kind of empathy sick. You know, we-- we know
what someone else is feeling more than we know what we're feeling. So that
makes it hard to know what you want, you know, and what-- what you need
and what constitutes learning. And you feel responsible for the other person's
wants and needs. So it's-- it's harder to keep exploring, to keep taking the h--
the-- the personally adventurous road.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Yeah, for-- for decades after decade you avoided introspection. And you said it
was too difficult for you. Can you explain that?

01:53:37:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I-- I'm not sure I exactly avoided introspection. I just didn't know it existed. (CHUCKLE) You know, in the Midwest, at least where I grew up, if you were unhappy, you had a reason. You know, your father just lost his factory job and you didn't know where your money was coming from. Your, you know, out-of-work cousin was sleeping on the living room couch. You-- s-- you know, something bad had happened. I don't remember that-- the idea of-- of a mood or introspection was part of my life until I got to college. And then I discovered-- you know, I would come down to breakfast and some-- and a woman would be looking miserable. And I would say, "What's wrong?" And she would say, "Nothing, I'm just in a bad mood." And I thought, "Gosh, this is fantastic." And I immediately started to have moods.

01:54:30:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I thought (CHUCKLE)-- but I always knew that I could snap out of it in a minute. (CHUCKLE) Then there-- then introspection came after that. You know, I began to realize that-- only after I was 50, I think, that the (CHUCKLE) the reasons that I was doing something were not all in the present. I know that sounds, you know, really simpleminded. (CHUCKLE) But I really didn't understand it. I thought I was responding to objective reality. I didn't understand the degree to which my response was being magnetized by things that had happened to me before. So, that was a huge leap forward. And I think that realization came out of being depressed-- or as depressed as I've ever

been, which is not-- it was never immobilizing. But, there was a period of time in which the world was kind of black and white instead of in color.

01:55:31:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, and I began to realize that if I-- I mean, the simpleminded example is that if I went into a hotel room, they leave the radio on frequently. And I would leap across the room and turn the radio off because I found the sound incredibly depressing. So, suddenly it dawned on me, "Wait a minute, I don't find television depressing. And I don't find the radio music depressing. So why?" Well, actually that was the only sound in the apartment with my mother. But it had taken me all that time to connect it.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Do you-- do you think of yourself as depressed?

GLORIA STEINEM:

No, no, I don't think of myself as depressed, no.

PETER KUNHARDT:

When you-- when you had this valley, you went to see a therapist. Is-- tell us about that. And-- and-- and I'd like to know what you think about therapy.

01:56:34:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, for-- for a long time-- as you see from this-- what I think of as a kind of Midwestern literal kind of upbringing-- and maybe because I had in my mother when she was at her worst, I had taken her to her original doctor. And he was by that time very old and no help what-- at all and said, "Oh, well, we should put her in the state hospital," which, you know, even I at 12 or something knew that-- that-- what a terrible place that was. So I didn't see it as a-- a place of help, I think. But-- when I was just past 50, I think, I-- a combination of breast cancer and 15 years or so of tryin' to keep the magazine going, very, very difficult, and just things, you know, converged so that I actually went to a therapist. Which, up to then, I had thought, "Therapy is great," you know, "Abso-- I can see, you know, how much it helps people, just not me."

01:57:42:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

(CHUCKLE) "I should do something practical with my money." And that's (CLAP)-- that's very Midwestern, also English. The English are like-- you know, but fortunately, I found a very, very nice older woman who was very wise-- one, two, was an older woman, so it was the first time I had ever had a relationship with a woman who-- that was as if to a mother. And, for instance, I, who hug everybody, not everybody, but hug (CHUCKLE), I-- I couldn't hug her when I left or when I arrived. And I realized that I thought I would just

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dissolve if I hugged her. And it made me realize how much I had missed having a competent mother 'cause she represented that to me.

PETER KUNHARDT:

So y-- so, it was only after you ha-- ha-- began this therapy that you began-- looking inward in some regular way. We-- we-- we have a-- what was surprising to us clip of you on a BBC show being attacked for that and-- and-- and being accused of letting down the movement by-- by looking within when, in fact-- that was seen as almost a weakness. Do you-- do you remember that?

01:59:09:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

No, I do. And that's why I mentioned-- London, before, as a place that's-- or England as a place where therapy is not-- I don't know, that much accepted, I guess. Because-- I-- I do remember being attacked there. I was attacked here to some extent. I remember some reviewer saying it's like Trotsky saying (CHUCKLE) they have internal pr-- you know, but, it seems to me so clear that the two things are connected, that our self-authority is what allows us to defy external authority. And, you know, it's a circle. And that's why I-- wrote *Revolution from Within*, because I couldn't find a book in which they were connected. You know, there were books about internal change and books

about external change. But they weren't connected, which I believe they intrinsically are.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Well, one of your first serious bylines was on the pill. Can you talk about the pill in terms of the effect it had on your life?

02:00:16:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I-- I-- I remember the arrival of the contraceptive pill first because I was assigned by *Esquire* to do the first signed piece I'd ever done for them. I'd only been doing unsigned pieces about the pill. And I got interested in it-- for its social impact, but also for its development. And I wrote a whole piece for Clay Felker for the first time he was ever my editor. And he said, "You know, you've performed the incredible fete of making sex dull." (CHUCKLE) So, he sent me home to completely rewrite it. And I-- I-- so I wrote it in a less scientific way. And-- and I remember thinking, "This is very important. And you know, the-- the-- the sexual liberation of women is-- is happening. And are men prepared for it?"

02:01:14:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, that maybe they're-- I think I ended it that way, saying, you know, "There may not be enough sexually liberated men to go around," or

something. But at-- now we mark the 50th anniversary of the pill. And I've been somewhat alarmed to see that the pill is given credit for starting the Women's Movement, which is absolutely not the case. The Women's Movement started the pill. I mean-- you know, it-- it was women's money and feminist money, research money because no company or-- and the government wouldn't touch it-- that-- paid for the research on-- on the pill. Margaret Sanger and a friend of hers who was a scientist-- paid for the research and supported the research into the pill, one. Two, the-- the-- there have been women's movements without the pill, you know, certainly the whole suffragist era was-- was without the pill.

02:02:12:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And three, the pill really started the women's health movement in opposition to the pill because the first pill was so-- such an overdose of hormones that-- it was dangerous. And there was a book by Barbara Seaman called *The Doctor's Case Against the Pill*, which started congressional hearings on the pill. And women forced that to happen. So, you know, would there have been a women's movement without the pill? Absolutely. Is it-- is it an aid in providing another alternative now that it's safer? Yes. But it's not the cause of the Women's Movement.

PETER KUNHARDT:

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Tell me about your streaked hair and your aviator glasses. H-- how-- where did that come from?

02:02:57:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, the streaked hair I can-- directly attribute to *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961). (CHUCKLE) I somehow totally related to the character in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. She says at one point-- she's living in a tiny little house. She's married to-- in the country, she's married this guy just in order to be able to take care of her brother. He's a much older man. And she walks down the dirt road every-- she reads magazines and work-- walks down the dirt road every day a little further and a little further until finally she doesn't come home. So somehow, I really identified with Holly Golightly. (CHUCKLE) The aviator glasses were more about hiding, you know, because-- well, first of all, I'm very nearsighted and-- you know, very subject to bright sunlight. So th-- I needed sunglasses. But the bigger they were, the more I felt like I'd hide behind them.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Okay. You spoke with Sheila briefly about the 1971 Esquire piece. I'd like you to set-- set that up for us so that in your own words you can tell us what that publishing-- or what that-- what that article was and-- and why it upset you so.

02:04:19:00

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GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, it's been a long time now. But the-- there-- there was a kind of-- "Let's get these crazy feminists" mood abroad in the land-- mostly at Playboy but-- somewhat at *Esquire*. And this-- this piece just seemed to take everything I'd ever done and make it seem as if it was all Machiavellian or about ambition or selfish, as-- as if I'd glommed onto-- to movements insincerely. I hadn't been written about that much at that point. So, maybe my skin was not as calloused, either. But I found it very hurtful.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Could you just tell me the fact that in-- that *Esquire* came out with-- with a piece that basically attacked you?

02:05:22:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah-- in-- in the early '70s, *Esquire*-- printed a piece that I think was just called "Her." And it was-- attacking me in the text of the piece, in a cartoon, too, I think-- in a comic strip. And the thesis of it was that I was utterly insincere and just-- ambitious and Machiavellian.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Your friends in the movement rallied around you. And we have footage of a press conference that-- as they came to your defense. And we have a shot of you sitting off to the side, it looks almost like on the side of a stage looking

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very dejected and saddened by it. Do you remember that press conference and feeling-- you-- you spoke about how warm-- warm you felt by this-- by this gesture.

02:06:19:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I-- I remember that press conference of defense against the *Esquire* piece a little bit. I-- I especially remember Flo Kennedy-- who was a great defender to have, funny and outrageous. It's mixed up in my mind with the press conference to defend Kate Millett (CHUCKLE) because Kate had been attacked by *Time* on-- they had done a cover story in which she was the symbol of a-- the new women's movement. And then when she publicly discussed the fact that she was bisexual, they then turned against her and said, "Well, she can't possibly be a leader if she's bisexual." And we all rallied around Kate. So I think that, you know, we were being attacked and trying to support each other.

PETER KUNHARDT:

I wanna ask you two questions just because we have some terrific pictures from these occasions. So if you could say a sentence or two about each, if you could actually describe your wedding to David.

02:07:22:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

My wedding was early in the morning in the yard of Wilma Mankiller and Charlie Soap in very rural Oklahoma-- standing next to a sacred fire that-- Charlie had made in Cherokee. We-- there was hardly anybody there. I mean, in-- besides the principles and Wilma and Charlie and-- and a couple of friends who were there anyway for the-- for the Cherokee reunion. David's daughter had come, too, to bring me, among other things, my birth certificate which (CHUCKLE)-- which it turned out I needed. Because she was here staying in this apartment as it happened. We had a big wedding breakfast and then we all went back to sleep afterwards. And-- not so long ago, a magazine asked me for my wedding photographs, so I sent them.

02:08:22:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And they said, "No, no, no, we'd like your wedding photographs. You know, you're in blue jeans, here." I said, "Yeah, but (CHUCKLE) that's what I wore at my wedding." They said, "No, no, no, we want your we--" (CHUCKLE) you know, they couldn't quite seem to believe it. I think it was *O Magazine*. I kept saying, "No, no, no, you don't understand. These are my favorite blue jeans." (CHUCKLE)

PETER KUNHARDT:

Well, likewise, we have some images of you and David in the period of time you were husband and wife before you knew he was sick. Can-- can you describe that-- that kind of short period of time together, what-- what it was like being husband and wife?

02:08:59:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well-- David and I actually never got to the point of calling each other husband and wife. It seemed-- those terms seemed to apply to people other than us. So we used to say, "The friend I married." (CHUCKLE) We lived-- equally in Manhattan Beach, which is where he had been living with his kids. But by now his kids were out of-- were away. And here in New York. He traveled with me a lot when I was speaking. He really enjoyed that. And it turned out that he had a great-- purpose because I hadn't thought about it, but-- but women as-- especially young women on campus were so-- eager to see that a woman could be herself and still have a relationship, a love relationship with a man, that they loved that he was there.

02:09:53:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And he would always end up after a speech talking to, you know, hundreds of mostly young women, which he loved. So, you know, it was a very-- unconventional way of being, I suppose. But it-- it-- it felt perfectly natural to us. He-- his-- three children, one who lives in England, two who live in-- California-- and a fourth-- older daughter who then was in South Africa so I had not-- not met her. We became friends, which they were very generous. I mean, you know, 'cause you can imagine-- I imagine what it's like for them to suddenly have a whole new person, you know, as part of their lives. But I like

them a lot. And we still see each other. And we're still close. And of course, we became very close during the-- the-- year that he was so ill.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Well, you describe that year so well. What was the first sign of that? What was the signal he was getting sick?

02:11:00:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

When-- when he was in California and I was in New York-- he almost had a car accident. And it turned out-- in-- in retrospect, I realize that there had been symptoms before that we didn't recognize. You know, he would, in the middle of the afternoon, say, "What are we doing, now?" Or-- you know, or he would repeat himself. But he almost had a car accident. And in a panic, he went to the doctor and saw a neurologist. And they-- they thought he had a-- a-- a kind of brain disease that turned-- was-- not what he really had because you could only diagnose the brain lymphoma he had with a brain biopsy, which no one wants to undertake lightly. But that was the beginning. And it was-- loss of coordination, of memory, of-- the onset of a kind of paranoia. It's-- very scary because you-- it's very hard to figure out, you know, what degree is real and what is-- what is no-- or, you know, response to the outside world and-- and what is not.

02:12:15:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But-- this central nervous sim-- system lymphoma, 100 percent of people died within a f-- couple of years, within a year I guess, for most of the past. But there was a woman neurologist at Sloan-Kettering who had invented a form of chemotherapy that actually could reach the brain. And some people, 'bout 30 percent of people-- surv-- survived at least for a few years. But-- it was unlikely. And David did not. And it was very, very scary. In a way, for me, it was going back to looking after my mother. But now I was an adult and I could do it. So, it was as if life had given me a-- a chance, you know, to purge, live over, you know, a-- a kind of experience. But I realized that he, an abandoned child, was going back in his mind to that abandonment, too, which was torture.

PETER KUNHARDT:

Well, it was-- I think it was 1981 when your mother died just before her 83rd birthday. Talk-- talk about your mother's death and-- and how that happened and-- and ha-- what you went through.

02:13:43:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

My mother had been-- living with my sister. My sister generously, you know, gave her a-- an apartment downstairs in her home. And my mother had been well enough to sometimes work as a saleswoman in a local little pottery store. She was af-- still afraid to be alone. She still had agoraphobia. She didn't

wanna be at home with her children, for instance. She was afraid to be responsible for them. But she-- she was-- she lived a pretty good life. You know, and she went to theosophy meetings again and she had friends and all of that. But then gradually she-- you know, her kind of addiction to tranquilizers-- I-- I realize in retrospect that those tranquilizers may have played a much bigger role in-- in her fantasies and her lack of reality sometimes because of withdrawal, because of, you know, for all kinds of reasons. But we didn't know that then.

02:14:52:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And gradually sh-- she became less able to operate in reality and take care of herself. And her heart was irre-- heart rhythms were irregular. She had around the clock nurses. It be-- you know, it became impossible, really, for her not to be in a nursing home. So, for a while she was in a nursing home, a wonderful nursing home where the nurses were great to her. And she made friends. You know, she-- my mother made friends wherever she went because she was dependent. And so she knew how to get people to take care of her. When-- when she came here in this apartment to stay with me, if I went out in the neighborhoods afterwards-- everybody knew my mother, (CHUCKLE) you know, because she had made friends with the shoe repair guy, with the delicatessen person, with (CHUCKLE)-- and she retained that-- that ability. So she-- she did well in-- in the nursing home.

02:15:52:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But, gradually, her heart problems and her-- sometimes retreat from reality just became more and more and more pronounced. So, my sister called me and it was clear that my mother was, you know, in her last few days, I guess. And my sister was there most of the time. But she didn't happen to be there in these last hours, you know. So, I was sitting with my mother and-- she kept saying that she wanted to go home. And so I-- as I remember so well kind of lied to her one last time and said, "I'll take you home." And then she just gradually stopped breathing. And my sister and I-- I mean, my sister came. I called her and she came right away.

02:16:59:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And we sat with her for more than an hour, I think, because my mother had once read a story in which a woman was thought to be dead and was not. And it haunted her. So she had made us promise that we would sit with her body for-- you know, an hour or more, which we did. And the-- the-- and there was wonderful funeral. My mother had-- had joined-- a kind of hippie Episcopal church in-- in Washington that had breakfast programs and let poor people sleep in the pews and, you know, was definitely my mother's kind of church. She'd also given them the remainder of our property in-- in Michigan because she hoped that they would have a camp for poor children, preferably Black children, because she felt the neighborhood was prejudiced. They'd been prejudiced against my father because he was Jewish.

02:18:03:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

So she wanted, desperately, to have (CHUCKLE) a camp there. But actually, the church sold it, you know, because it was hundreds of miles (CHUCKLE) away. You know, it made more sense for them to-- to sell it. But it was her great gesture, there.

PETER KUNHARDT:

She died right in your at-- at a point in-- in-- in your life when you were being pulled in a million directions. Were you s-- were you feeling a sense of guilt as the-- a daughter who was do-- doing so much that you couldn't be with her more at that period of time in your life?

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, I don't th-- of course-- when someone dies, you know, I-- and especially your mother, I mean, the-- the guilt I felt more had to do with-- companionship, you know-- had I in-- in discussion, you know. It wasn't so much presence because I had been taking her away for vacation every year. And we saw each other. And we felt very connected, I think.

02:19:16:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But it-- so I think I felt guilty later, not at that moment, but later, after I realized how many be-- interests we really could have shared. She-- well and

the weird thing was that-- that sh-- not too long after she died, I don't remember, a few months, I sat down and wrote-- "Ruth's Song"-- 'scuse me, which-- I'm not a fast writer. I mean, if there were an Olympics for slow writers I would be a member of the team. But that kind of wrote itself. It was as if it had been writing itself somewhere before. You know, so it was somehow inscribed. And I was taking it down.

02:20:09:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Then after I wrote it and it was published, I couldn't read it for years. It was just too sad, even though I wrote it. It was as if some part of me, you know, in an emergency, part of you comes along and rescues yourself. (CHUCKLE) So, s-- a part of me had come along and allowed me to write it. But to really feel it-- to understand-- what it meant took much longer.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Do you think that life is too short? And if you can somehow incorporate the question in your answer in some way. Do you think that we're given enough time to do what we have to do? Do you feel cheated?

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, life is too short, but of course it's a lot longer than it used to be. I think in the 1900's, we were living to be 50. So, we do have 30 or even 40 years more. But-- I love it so much. I never want it to end.

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SHEILA NEVINS:

Are you scared about the ending? Or-- accepting of the ending?

02:21:12:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I certainly think about dying now. And I actually make an effort to think about dying, because at 76, if I continue to think I'm immortal, which I do (LAUGHS) it doesn't make me plan very well. You know, so I-- I do try to remember it. And about-- I don't know-- a few months ago, I was standing in my kitchen, thinking, as we all do, "I have to do this, and go-- do that," and you know, all the things of the day. And as if my from my toes, there rose up this-- understanding death is going to interrupt all my plans. And I laughed out loud in that way that you do, you know, with recognition. So-- it's amazing to me how long we can think we're immortal, and I do hope to live to 100. But I do try to make-- the time limit-- help me understand how precious time is.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Did it come with a certain birthday that you realized how precious time is? Or did you always think time is precious? Did you scatter it away at times?

02:22:18:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, I-- I-- I think I always knew time was precious, but I knew it intellectually. I re-- remember-- actually, I don't remember writing time is all

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there is, but somebody sent it back to me embroidered, so I guess I-- I did. I did write it. But I don't think it-- was absorbed in-- into my life. It was in my head. Some-- somebody said the longest journey is the journey from head to heart. I think my sense of time is making that journey.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Head to heart? Or heart to head?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Head-- head to heart. Right.

SHEILA NEVINS:

What does that mean for you?

02:23:00:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well-- it means that I-- I see when I look back at something I might have written or said that I knew intellectually something that I really hadn't absorbed into my life or my cells.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Do you think part of what you've given has to do with the fact that your head works so well? That you're so smart?

GLORIA STEINEM:

I-- I don't know. I mean, I'm a kind of smart, and I recognize the smarter kind of smart (LAUGHS) in other people. That is, I-- I'm a conceptual smart. I love to understand why. I love an aha. But I'm not a procedural smart. It's hard for me to figure out the process to get from here to there. And I so value, you know, people who-- who understand how to do that.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Who va-- who knows how to get from here to there? What woman, what person?

02:23:56:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I think first of Amy Richards, because we worked together. You know, she definitely knows how to get from here to there. And there are a lot of-- heads of organizations or people in Congress. Maxine Waters, for instance, understands process, and can figure out how you organize and who you have to persuade. I am more likely to get the idea, you know, for the legislation, or for the tactic, but not know how to take the steps.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But you've taken such big steps, on the backs of other people, or some way, you must have known how to make those steps.

02:24:36:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, no, I think-- I think that-- you know, it's very hard to see one's self, but I think if I were to try to describe the kind of thing I can do, it's to see a possibility. And-- state it in a way that makes it possible for other people, too. So, since that's a necessary part of change, if you can't see what could be, you can't move toward it, I think that's an important function. But it-- it still requires people to-- to figure out the steps from here to there.

SHEILA NEVINS:

So, you're the inspiration behind the march?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Or the idea. Or the aha, you know.

SHEILA NEVINS:

What does that-- tell me what aha is? What is aha?

02:25:18:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

An aha is a moment when you understand the why of-- of something. For instance-- to take something that's almost outside the movement, I would say people who channel. You know, I-- I was talking to a woman who really

believes that-- dead people and their wisdom is channeled through living people. I find that hard to believe. But while I was talking to her, and she was giving me examples, I suddenly realized that women channel men. That's an aha. Because-- you know, if you are a homemaker in Oregon and nobody's listening to you, but when you become a 5,000 warrior named Romtha, everybody listens. I'm not saying it's conscious necessarily but it's a motive. You know, you've put your wisdom in an ancient male authority.

02:26:17:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

So, I-- I went home and I-- out of this aha, I started to research to see if there were-- men who channeled women. I found men who channeled men a few, but the only man I found who channeled a woman was a man in Paris— A gay man in Paris who channeled Gertrude Stein. So, I thought that was something of an exception.

SHEILA NEVINS:

And--

GLORIA STEINEM:

But, so I wrote a piece called "The Politics of Channeling" because it had been an aha for me. Or-- or-- I'll-- my current example is that all of us-- I-- there are many of us, I think, are very concerned about the polarization in this country. More guns are being purchased, people are joining right wing-- neo-Nazi

groups at a-- at a record number. There's-- you know, the-- the gay and lesbian movement is making progress, but the backlash against it is very powerful. And it's scary, right.

02:27:17:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But I-- I suddenly realized that the model really for all human behavior is the family. And since we now understand-- domestic violence, we understand that the time a woman is in the most danger of being murdered is when she's about to escape, because she's escaping control. And I thought, well, it's true of the country. The country is escaping. We've turned against two wars in record time. I mean, much less time than we did Vietnam. We've-- we have a proud African American family in the White House. We're soon to be-- no longer a majority European American country. We've-- we're very skeptical about Wall Street now and about big industry like the oil industry. The country is escaping. So, that's an aha to me, because it tells me two things. One is that-- it's a time of danger. And we need to be careful and take care of each other. And the other is we're not going to stop.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Is it going to work out? Are things going to get better?

02:28:30:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

That depends what we do every day. But I think it-- it-- it helped me-- does that make sense. It helped me--

SHEILA NEVINS:

A little--

GLORIA STEINEM:

--to understand the parallel between so-called domestic violence and what's happening to the country because it made me understand there's not-- there's never just one alternative. There's always more than one. So, both-- it's-- it's-- yes, it's dangerous, but we're not going to stop. Just as we would never tell a woman to stay in a violent home, we as a country are not going to stop being free.

SHEILA NEVINS:

You know, it's very hard for me to understand why in all these cultures and all these films that I work on men hate women so much. Historically and in fun-- you know, like we're doing Lynn Nada and all this stuff. What are men so angry about? Why for generations have men punished women?

02:29:23:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, first of all, it's not all men. It's never all men. It's-- it-- it may be the dominant political system, but there have always been men who-- who have rebelled. You know, some-- somebody once said that the woman a man most fears is the woman inside himself. You know, I think it's partly because we all have a full circle of human qualities. Every one of us. And women are made to suppress more-- but men are made to suppress some, too. And then told that they're not real people, they're not-- they'll lose their identity if they lose their so-called masculinity. And women represent that. I think that's-- that's part of it. And part of it is how we got in this jam in the first place, which is that women are the means of reproduction-- and male dominant systems think they have to control reproduction in order to decide who owns children and how many soldiers they need, and how many citizens and so on.

02:30:31:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And yet-- you know, we're-- we're together-- men and women in the most intimate way. So, if-- if-- if some men, especially men in leadership, didn't-- distance themselves from women and-- and demonize women, they would be in danger of losing control in a big way, recognizing their own humanity, which is very scary. Because it means they're-- they recognize their own weakness and emotion and all the things they're not supposed to-- to have. So, it's hard to-- to keep on distancing somebody who is your mother, who is your daughter, who are your neighbors if you're-- you know, it takes a lot of effort. It takes a lot of cultural training.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Who are the men who have-- have done well by women historically and even now?

02:31:33:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I think-- the-- the men who've done well by women are the ones who defied the masculine role. And actually, they're the ones who are transformative leaders. Because the masculine role allows you to conquer, which is big. But it doesn't allow you to transform. So, it's Gandhi, you know, who-- who used, adopted the methods of the women's movement in India which were nonviolent, massive peaceful methods. He defied the masculine role by refusing to use violence. Mandela defied the masculine role, too. Cesar Chavez did in some ways, too, because he admired-- Gandhi and-- took to nonvio-- anybody who defied-- defies the masculine role then is able to make a connection with women.

02:32:30:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Olaf Palma, the Chief of State of Sweden. I didn't ever know him, but reading him, he's the only Chief of State I've ever known about who said that the gender roles are the deepest cause of violence on earth. That all violence, except that in self-defense-- is normalized by the idea that human nature,

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human beings are divided into active and passive, conqueror and victim, subject and object, whatever degree it is. And he said the-- the deepest role of all governments was to humanize the gender roles because they were the cause of violence, which we can't afford anymore on this planet, right.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Does that mean that women would not be as good warriors as men?

02:33:25:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Wo-- women-- Margaret Meade always said that women were even more fierce in self-defense, but less likely to be aggressive. So, if we're-- if we're defending-- our children, ourselves, someone we love, we're quite capable of being incredibly fierce. But not because we're better people or more moral, but just because we don't have our masculinity to prove, we're less likely to be aggressive.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Are women smarter?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Some women. Some women are-- can be as aggressive as men.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Is there a nature nurture-- when a baby is born, and it's a boy or a girl, is it-- is gender and ability determined by how they're brought up, or is there a basic difference between boy-- boy babies and girl babies?

02:34:13:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I-- I don't think it's nature or nurture. I think it's nature and nurture. You know, because if only about 15 percent of our brains are developed when we're born, and 85 percent grow-- you know, a baby's brain doubles in size in the first year or so. So, we're incredibly sensitive to our environment. But I think the main thing to remember is our uniqueness. You know, because the difference-- the generalized group differences between males and females are less great than the probable differences between two women or between two men. So, it's-- it's the individual difference that matters. Unfortunately, research money-- the same research money that used to go into proving racial difference, which lasted centuries, that deep belief in racial difference, now goes into proving sex difference. If it went into proven sameness, we would prove sameness.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Sameness? Identical sameness?

02:35:26:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

No. Unique individuality, but-- but not-- determined by-- you know, not-- I mean, you can't really divide human beings into males and females any more than you can-- I mean, race is a fiction. We know now. You know, and-- and clearly we all came from-- southern or eastern Africa and we just have minor adaptations of ourselves to climate. But, you know, race is-- is a fiction, and-- and gender is also a fiction. It varies from one culture to the next.

SHEILA NEVINS:

So, there is no-- there is equality from birth?

02:36:05:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

There's uniqueness from birth. There's two things at the same time. Uniqueness of each individual who-- I mean, if you think about it, we've been here-- we've-- you and I are-- represent millennia upon millennia of environment and heredity combined in a unique way in us. And there's a person inside every baby already. I mean, everybody who has ever met a baby knows there's a person inside every baby. So, the point is uniqueness, and the stop-- the point is to stop making group judgments and understand two things. Each of us is unique and each of us-- needs a community. And is part of the human community. I mean, we-- we're incredibly communal creatures. We're so sensitive to every signal around us. If people think we're smart, we're smarter, and if they think we're dumb, we're dumber. You know, so it's not one thing, it's two things. It's uniqueness and community-- and the common humanity at the same time.

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SHEILA NEVINS:

Did you ever wish you were born a man?

02:37:13:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

No, I never wished I was born a man. Never. Never. And I understand why-- girls would, and maybe if I'd gone to school regularly, and been more subject to the society, I would have wanted to be a boy, but I-- I never did.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Talk about men. I mean, like when I read Carol-- Carolyn's book, there was a whole idea of calling you a-- a manizer. Are you a manizer?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I probably was in a way. I don't know. I mean, womanizer has a connotation of unkindness. I--

SHEILA NEVINS:

Could you talk about manizing? Could you use the word, because people won't know--

02:38:01:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Right, right. Yes, I realize that somewhere I'm called a manizer, but I don't think it's comparable to a womanizer, because womanizer has a feeling of unkindness. I think it's probably true that if you repress the ways that women can be powerful, and certainly that was true in my growing up, and for many years, then the sense of power that women get for making men fall in love with them is-- you know, there are two kinds of power traditionally allowed to women, making men fall in love with you and shopping. (LAUGHTER)
And--

SHEILA NEVINS:

Which do you prefer?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, as you-- the good news is as you are able to be yourself and find expression and power in other ways, you stop doing both those things. I mean, there-- you know, you don't-- the-- there are too many other-- other ways. But I think I was trying to learn through men. You know, you can enter into a world through a man because you're treated the same way he is. Which has its downside. Then you see people the next day, they don't remember you because you're not with-- with the guy you were with the night before. And I've mostly fell in love with men I admired...

SHEILA NEVINS:

So, did--

GLORIA STEINEM:

...And wanted to learn from.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Did you use men to-- to-- I mean, going back to this *Esquire* article that-- I saw you cry twice in stock footage. One was the *Esquire* article, and the other was at the funeral of the Bella Abso. They were two separate things I guess. But why did the *Esquire* article make you cry?

02:39:50:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

The *Esquire* article-- made me cry because it was just so wrong. And-- cruel really. And that author-- was later telling people he had pieces of my underwear and-- that he had photographs of me having an affair with Margaret Sloane. I mean, you know, it was really-- it was tough. It was tough.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But it didn't make you angry? It made you cry?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah, well, that's a problem. It should've made me angry, I agree.

SHEILA NEVINS:

How come you're not angry ever?

02:40:21:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I am-- no, I-- I do get angry. It's just that-- it takes me a while to show it. You know, because I'm a Midwesterner and-- (LAUGHS) you know, you have to be on LSD to know what we're feeling. So, I can say on Wednesday that I was angry on Monday. But it's hard for me to say at the time. But I'm getting better. I'm getting better. It's much-- much easier for me to say it. And the other thing is, I-- I share with other women I think, which is that when I get angry, I cry. And it-- it-- you experience it, you know, as-- as a loss of control, or crying as you're not supposed to cry in public life. But I met a woman, an executive, a very high executive, who had the same experience and she said she had solved it by getting angry when she needed to with her mostly male colleagues, and saying, "You may think I am sad because I am crying. I am not sad. You know, I am angry. This is the way I show anger." And she just talked through her tears. And it worked. So, I'm planning to try that.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Well, you have time, because you're going to live to 100. (LAUGHTER) You can be angry when you're ready to be angry.

02:41:35:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

No, I'm better. I'm better about-- about stating it. Stating how I feel, because it's important to do it because otherwise you-- it builds up in you and then it bursts forth out of control because you hadn't been honest along the way.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Think women in general have trouble being angry?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yes. I think women have a big problem being angry because there's such huge punishment in the culture for an angry women. We were called angry when we're just being clear. You know-- we're called-- there's really a double standard in what is perceived as angry in women and in men.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Do you hate the word lady?

GLORIA STEINEM:

I don't hate the word lady, but I wouldn't use it because it has a class prison that comes with it. I mean, lady was invented to distinguish some women from others, so I prefer to use words that connect rather than divide.

SHEILA NEVINS:

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But if it was a ladies room and you needed it, you'd use it?

GLORIA STEINEM:

No, actually, I say women's room.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But what if it said ladies--

02:42:40:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

After-- think of Marilyn French. Marilyn French's novel.

SHEILA NEVINS:

That's right.

GLORIA STEINEM:

It was all about this, right.

SHEILA NEVINS:

No, I like-- I like when they have the pictures on the doors, or they have women's room or ladies room, and sometimes, I can't tell whether the picture is a man or a woman on the door. (LAUGHTER) They're getting some confused.

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah, sometimes they're poodles which makes it even worse.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Was there one-- you had lots of lovers. Lots of important lovers. Do you have regrets?

02:43:08:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But they weren't-- they weren't necessarily important when they were my lovers. They moved-- a lot of them became important later. I mean--

SHEILA NEVINS:

They were important to you.

GLORIA STEINEM:

They were important to me, yes. But I mean, it isn't as if I said to myself, there's an important person. (LAUGHS) You know. I think I'm attracted to him. The attraction came to the person, and maybe in later life, they became important.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Was it an impediment being beautiful?

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GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I don't think of myself as beautiful.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But you are.

02:43:37:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I-- I think of myself as-- I don't know. In the past, as a pretty girl, and now as-- you know, but the-- the-- the problem is getting identified by your outside instead of by your inside. So, I-- I think we all have to use whatever it is we have. You know, and for-- for good purposes. So, if I-- am counter to the prejudiced view of what a feminist looks like, I'm happy about that, because a feminist looks like any woman or a man, for that matter.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But do you think that you paid the price for good looks?

GLORIA STEINEM:

There is a price, but you can't--

SHEILA NEVINS:

A price for what?

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GLORIA STEINEM:

There's a price-- there's a price for being considered pretty or beautiful or good looking. And it's very hard to talk about it because it's like complaining about being rich, for which there's also a price. (LAUGHS)

SHEILA NEVINS:

But you can afford it.

02:44:39:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But-- because people think being pretty or beautiful solves everything-- which of course it doesn't. And also, the hard part for me-- I must say the painful part, is that what I-- that I work really hard and then the result is-- is attributed to looks. That's-- it's really painful. And you would think at 76, that would go away. But it's still there sometimes.

SHEILA NEVINS:

My-- my grandmother used to tell me that you can't be pretty and-- smart.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, that's-- one of the prices-- one of the prices of being pretty is that you can't-- you're not supposed to also be smart. And, you know, that's a horrible price. Terrible. But the-- the thing that we all share, and I'm always looking for what unites us. You know, is that we're judged by our externals, by the

way we look. So, if-- if we're pretty, then everything we did is attributed to that. If we're not pretty, then we're only doing whatever it is because we couldn't get a man, or because we're not-- you know. So, we all share this same problem of being identified by how we look, and we can work on that.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But you still-- you can be pretty and make yourself look ugly. I've seen women do that. You're pretty and you make yourself look as pretty as you can be.

02:46:14:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah, I don't-- well, let's see. How do I make myself look-- I-- I-- when I'm buying something, (LAUGHS) I always end-- I frequently end up saying that's too lady-ish for me. I really don't want to look like a lady. I don't see why I should make myself look unattractive and give into the idea that to be smart or serious, you know, you-- you have to-- give up all decoration. You know, we should be able to wear whatever we want.

02:46:55:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I met Reese Witherspoon. I was sitting next to her one day. And she said-- that she'd done the role, *Legally Blonde* (2001), because of me. I said, "Really. You know, amazing." I-- and she said, "Yes, because I heard you once say we should be able to wear anything we fucking well please and be taken seriously." (LAUGHS) So, I do believe that.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Does aging scare you?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Aging doesn't scare me. Death is another question. I mean, I-- I experienced-- 50 was hard. Sixty was easier. Fifty was hard because it was-- the end-- the end of something. And-- and I-- the end of the central years of life I suppose, and I treated it with defiance.

02:47:50:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I'm going to go right on doing-- everything I did before, so there. And it took me at least three or four years to realize that doing everything I did before was not progress. (LAUGHS) So, maybe I should look forward. And 60 was-- an entry into a new country. Sixty was very positive.

SHEILA NEVINS:

And?

GLORIA STEINEM:

And 70-- and 76 now-- you know, you-- our consciousness of mortality. Because I look back at something that happened 30 years ago, and it seems

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quite recent. I have to realize that I may not be here 30 years from now, and it's very poignant.

SHEILA NEVINS:

And do you cry or get angry?

02:48:33:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

At-- at-- do I cry or get angry at-- mortality? No. I just-- I try to hang onto it. I try to-- to use it in a positive way, to make me use my time better.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Do you have afterlife or death thoughts that are, you know, your own?

GLORIA STEINEM:

I-- I don't have-- faith in an afterlife or a belief in an afterlife. I don't believe in God in the usual sense of believing in God. But I-- I do believe that-- as the physicists say, nothing is destroyed. So, somehow, our molecules change form, and become part of the cycle. I don't know what that looks like.

SHEILA NEVINS:

So, is the scary part that you won't know when you're a molecule? What's the scary part?

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GLORIA STEINEM:

The-- the scary part is-- is kinda--

SHEILA NEVINS:

The scary part of what?

02:49:35:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

The scary part of-- of death is-- first of all, I love it here. You know-- I-- I tried to write a book once about people's last words. For instance, I changed the wallpaper here in-- you know, (LAUGHS) because I read Oscar Wilde saying in his hotel room in exile in Paris, his last words were, "Either that wallpaper goes or I do." I thought, "Well, I'd better like my last wall covering, right." And I was thinking about what my last words would be, and I can only-- right now, anyway, I can only think of saying-- I've so loved being here.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But you're not ready to go, that's for sure.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Oh, no, no, no.

SHEILA NEVINS:

What about this tombstone I read about? About the slut-- I want my tombstone-- is that just silly?

02:50:37:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well-- I-- I went back to Toledo once to do a lecture or something, and I was on local television with other women from Toledo. And some guy called up and called me a slut from East Toledo. East Toledo is where I grew up-- most of the time. And it's the wrong side of Toledo. It's where the factory workers work-- live. It's very-- the right side of Toledo is not so right, but this is-- (LAUGHS) East Toledo is definitely the wrong side. And I-- I thought that if I had been told that when I lived there, I would be depressed and feel awful, and think what have I done wrong, you know. But by then, I thought, you know, "This is a pretty good thing. I think-- I think I'll put it on my tombstone. Here lies a slut from East Toledo." I'm not really going to put it-- (LAUGHS) put it on my tombstone. But after that, I started to call everything-- East Toledo, you know, my-- if you have to make a little corporation or if-- whatever it is. I started in defiance to call everything East Toledo.

SHEILA NEVINS:

So, you were angry? You could've called it slut, too. (LAUGHTER). Can we break for a little bit?

CREW:

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Yep! Sure!

GLORIA STEINEM:

I don't know that I'm being very economical with what I'm saying.

SHEILA NEVINS:

No, you're being great.

(BREAK IN TAPE)

02:52:03:00

SHEILA NEVINS:

... anything that's different than themselves.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well but it's not about— The reason why the same groups are against Women's equality is—

SHEILA NEVINS:

They go against the same things, they're the same people.

GLORIA STEINEM:

It's the same people, but there's a reason.

02:52:19:00

SHEILA NEVINS:

...women's rights, you know, abortion rights.

GLORIA STEINEM:

What-- what comes at me on campuses is that they say to me, why is it that groups are both against lesbians and contraception, which-- strikes them as irrational, if you see what I mean. They all laugh, you know. But actually, it is rational, because the-- the ultra-right wing, this-- the male dominant ultra-right wing is saying that all sexuality is bad unless it can end in conception. So, therefore they're-- against abortion, against the family planning that could reduce the number of abortions, they're against sex between two women and two men, which symbolizes non-procreative sex. All the groups are against the same thing. In fact, the moral majority once took-- a resolution against masturbation, which was my favorite-- in a national convention.

02:53:21:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

So, you know, once you understand the logic of it, you see that they are indeed logical. For-- another example is that people will say, well, why are the same groups-- against abortion and for capital punishment? But that also is rational, because the point is who makes the decision. So, as long as the government, or the church, or the tribe makes the decision, it's okay, that's

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capital punishment. But if the individual can decide to give life or not, it's subversive. It's democratic. It's not authoritarian.

SHEILA NEVINS:

But doesn't religion enter-- enter all those things too?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

SHEILA NEVINS:

Is there-- is there anyone in these groups who's not also religious?

GLORIA STEINEM:

There are secular right wingers.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Many?

02:54:16:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, for instance, the whole-- Nazi movement was-- was secular. But used religion and was supported by religion. So, there are plenty of authoritarians who are not necessarily religious. But the religion helps a lot because it imposes a penalty or reward after death, unprovable-- but very useful to gain a kind of conformity on earth. And since all of organized religion has a certain

politics to it-- otherwise, God wouldn't look so much like the ruling class all the time-- it-- it-- it has grown up as part of-- I mean, the idea of a male god has grown up with patriarchal political systems. But the good news is that it's quite recent. I mean, it's certainly less than five percent of human history.

02:55:14:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Before that, there was-- something was divine in all living things. And it was quite-- it was much more democratic. I think we're trying to get back to that. You know, so you see people inside all the great religions that are trying to democratize from inside. I-- I would say there's a difference to me between spirituality, which is-- about the worth of all living things, including each of us, and religion, which often is quite political.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Are you a spiritual person?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Am I a spiritual person? Probably. Probably. Because I do believe in the worth of all-- of all living things. When-- when I was-- and even some not-so-living things. When I was little-- my grandmother taught me how to play Solitaire. And when I was playing it, I liked the hearts the best and the clubs the least.

02:56:22:00

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GLORIA STEINEM:

So, I went to great lengths to treat the clubs equally with the hearts so the hearts wouldn't have their feelings hurt. I mean, where does that come from? I have no idea. But I think kids, all of us, are pantheists in a sense. You know, we believe that there are-- there's a spirit in everything.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Tell me about Bella Abso.

GLORIA STEINEM:

Bella Abso-- such an extraordinarily valuable person, it's really hard to describe. She always knew that women could do anything, I think because her parents were immigrants, and they only had daughters. So, they gave her all the nurturing that they might have otherwise given a son. And she married a man who thought she should be president.

02:57:16:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

She fought civil rights battles long before there was a real civil rights movement. She went to the South and slept in bus stations because no one would give her a place to sleep because she was defending a Black man. She was a pioneer of the peace movement-- and of the women's peace movement. She-- of course, was a pioneer in Congress and so on. And she was

wonderfully funny and outrageous. She loved to dance, she played the ukulele. (LAUGHS) She was a great poker player. And she didn't come to the public as a lady, which was very important. She broke the lady prison.

SHEILA NEVINS:

How did you first meet her?

GLORIA STEINEM:

I met her marching outside the Pentagon. I've forgotten the year, but it was one of the early anti-Vietnam marches. And in the beginning, she scared me. Because I'd never seen a woman be that forceful. We were meeting with-- a lot of Senators and she had come back I think from Vietnam with a piece of shrapnel that proved we were using weapons we said we weren't.

02:58:25:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

And she was so forceful that she-- she really frightened me. And-- gradually, I realized that was a measure of my deficiency not hers. So, she expanded all of us, and-- and she was wonderfully-- comforting in-- in strange ways. I mean, I don't know if-- this makes sense, but-- one of the things that happened that actually did get to me was that a pornographer put a-- big poster of me nude-- a drawing with my hair and my glasses, and he-- he put-- penises down the side of the page, and big sign that said pin the cock on the feminist. And it was hanging right outside the Ms. offices. And I sent a lawyer's letter, and he sent me back a box of chocolates with a note that said eat it.

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02:59:25:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I mean, it was just awful. So, I was going to a benefit with Bella, and Bella said, "What's wrong," and I told her. And she was not impressed at all. You know, and I said, "But Bella, you know, you don't understand that there is-- you know, a drawing of me in full labial detail, and there are all these, you know, penises down the side of the road, and it has my hair, and my glasses." And she said, "And my labia." (LAUGHS) And somehow, she made me laugh so hard that it was okay after that. Now, who else on earth would say that.

SHEILA NEVINS:

What about Betty Freidan?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, you know, the-- the interesting thing is we hardly knew each other. I mean, people--

SHEILA NEVINS:

You have to say her name.

GLORIA STEINEM:

The-- the-- people assumed that Betty Freidan and I-- knew each other or worked together, but it was really quite rare. For one thing, she was-- almost a generation before me.

03:00:22:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

So, she had started now-- in 1963. And for another thing, it was a much more, I would say, conservative part of the movement, because the idea was that women should be able to leave the suburbs and come into the workforce, which I utterly agreed with. But I was already in the workforce and getting-- having a hard time. So, I didn't identify-- quite with *The Feminine Mystique*, though I certainly recognized the value of-- of that book. And-- and finally, it was just hard for her, I think, to-- accept-- other leaders regardless. I mean, she didn't get along with Bella either. So, mostly, we really didn't see each other that much. And mostly, she refused to speak to me or to shake hands. Or-- she once refused to shake my mother's hand. I mean, I think it was-- she really needed to feel that she was-- uniquely the head of a movement, which to me is counter to a movement. But on the other hand, you know, she wrote a book that was very important.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Was she jealous?

GLORIA STEINEM:

I have-- I have no idea. I mean, I-- you know, I--

SHEILA NEVINS:

Why is jealousy attributed to women and never to men? Are women jealous creatures?

03:01:47:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I think jealousy is attributed to women because it's attributed to any less powerful group who has to seek favors from the powerful one. So, servants were said to be jealous of each other. In the old days-- if-- it was said that Black people wouldn't go to a Black physician, for instance, because they didn't think he was-- you know, it's-- it's internalized aggression as-- as psychologists say. I don't think it's unique to women. But if you're supposed to compete with each other for the favors of someone else, that creates jealousy per se. And-- and what's so remarkable to me now is that women support each other so much, despite all these centuries of telling us we're supposed to compete.

03:02:39:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I-- I used-- I-- a symbol of it to me is that I used to pass on 42nd Street on the way to the Ms. magazine office a-- Black woman traffic cop. And it was a very busy corner, and she was like Toscanini, you know. And every time she saw me going on the way to the office she said, "Give 'em hell, honey."

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(LAUGHTER) And also, when I get on planes, it's like getting on-- it's like flying girlfriends. You know, because the flight attendants sneak me meals from first class and tell me what's-- what their job issues are, and tell me stories and volunteer. And, you know, it's-- the rewards are much bigger than the-- the punishments.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Why do some young people not know the name Gloria Steinem? Have you disappeared in the last seven or eight or nine years? Or is their-- their mistakes or their mis--

03:03:39:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I-- you know, every generation has-- has its own names. And it should. And sometimes, moms will say to me, "My daughter doesn't know who you are and be-- appalled by that, or disapproving." And I always say to them, "That's okay, the point is your daughter knows who she is." That's the point. Now, we do need to know our history. It-- it helps us realize that nobody gives you everything. You have to do it yourself. But-- I-- I like the fact that-- young women are not grateful. I mean, Susan B. Anthony said, "Our job is not to make young women grateful. It's to make them ungrateful so they keep going."

SHEILA NEVINS:

Don't you want credit?

03:04:33:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Yeah, I want credit, but I want credit as part of a process. And I also want credit as somebody who empowers other people. You know, not who-- did something no one else can do. That would be self-defeating.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Should women repair themselves as they get older? Have facelifts and fix things up? Would you do it? Did you do it?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, I-- I don't know if there are any shoulds in life. I mean, you know, we're so youth obsessed that I-- I'm not here to judge other folks who have-- facelifts or whatever. But I-- I couldn't do it myself because maybe I only notice the poor ones, but I find it's like a bad toupee. You know, I sort of can't stop thinking about it while I'm talking to somebody. And-- and I figure if we want people to pay attention to what we say-- probably better not to have a facelift. And also, I can't imagine Georgia O'Keefe with a facelift. You know, I mean, I just can't.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Don't you hate wrinkles?

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03:05:42:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

I don't love wrinkles, but-- I-- I-- I-- you know, it's probably as much fear as anything else that keeps me from having a facelift. Also, once when I was hosting the Today Show 20 years ago, and I had to get up at 3:00 or 4:00 or something like that-- and-- I had this-- a lot of fat up here, which, you know, my eyes were so swollen I couldn't even wear contact lenses. I went and had-- some fat sucked out of, you know. And it actually in the end looked worse. So, that-- not better. So-- it worked at the time, but over time, I-- you know, I didn't like the results. So, maybe that was-- a good influence.

SHEILA NEVINS:

You're so confident. Are you so confident? You're so there.

03:06:33:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

No. I don't-- I'm-- well, I'm-- I'm there because I'm here with you, but-- after this interview is over, I'll be walking around for two days thinking, "And another thing." (LAUGHS) And, "Why didn't I say this." You know, so I-- I second-guess myself all the time.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Do you have self-esteem?

GLORIA STEINEM:

Well, it-- you know, I think-- if I were to write *A Revolution from Within* over again, I think I would use the term self-authority, not self-esteem. Because self-esteem is wrongly confused with ego. Self-authority has more to say that, you know, you can make decisions or trust your-- inner voice or, you know, and I think-- I think mostly I can do that.

03:07:26:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

But the counterforce to that for me is that-- because of the way I grew up, because-- through it just happened that I didn't go to school, and I wasn't focused on it that much, I grew up feeling I was invisible. That the only way I could make myself visible was to be useful. So, I can easily, you know, get-- into saying yes to things I shouldn't say yes to.

SHEILA NEVINS:

Tell us about that growing up. You seem to sort of be edging into wanting to talk about it. How did you grow up? Worse than-- harder than most kids or?

GLORIA STEINEM:

You know, I-- I was-- I've-- I've realized in later life that I was extremely lucky that nobody ever hit me. That I always knew I was loved by both my parents.

That I was listened to. You know, that my parents always respected me as-- as an individual. All those things were very positive.

03:08:32:00

GLORIA STEINEM:

Some things were not positive. That is-- I was quite isolated as a child, living in books. So, I really believed things had a beginning, a middle and an end. I took care of my mother, who was an invalid much of the time. So, I was a small person taking care of a big person from about eight forward I suppose. And we were by ourselves from about ten forward. And that was hard. You know, that was really hard. So, I-- I have-- a permanent childhood image of walking beside a big highway because our old house was falling into this big highway. It was in a slum. As the only person not in a car, and kind of invisible. And that's the-- the-- the downside. It was extremely depressing and scary. Very scary. To be a child taking care of an adult is very, very scary. That's the hard part. And then, there was the good part. You know, which was that I always knew my parents loved me. They treated me as well or better as they treated themselves.

END TC: 03:10:02:00