

# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

KATHRINE SWITZER INTERVIEW  
*MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA*  
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

**Katherine Switzer**  
**Marathon Runner**  
**April 11, 2011**  
**Interviewed by Betsy West**  
**Total Running Time: 1 hour, 29 minutes and 22 seconds**

START TC: 00:00:00:00

**Kathrine Switzer**  
**Marathon Runner**

BETSY WEST:

Can you just tell me a little bit about your upbringing and what your family was like?

00:00:12

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I had the most amazing childhood. And I- I think mostly it was because I had really motivational absolutely can do anything kind of parents. My dad was a military officer. And my mom was a schoolteacher and then became a guidance director. And they always raised me that I could do anything if I put my mind to it. Uhm...and there was also no difference when I was raised between my brother and me. So no allowances were given to him that weren't given to me. And at a certain age, I was allowed to come in at midnight also

and that kind of thing. And- and we learned to drive a car and learned to do the stick shift. And all those kinds of things were very equal in our household.

BETSY WEST:

Why do you think they were so enlightened? I mean, we grew up in the same era; right? We grew up in the '50s and not all families were like that.

00:00:55

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Well, you know, I wouldn't say my parents were so enlightened in every way. Because my father, in many respects, was an extremely conservative guy. But I think there was also a hidden agenda here, where my mother was so discriminated against in her childhood. And- and the- the brother was favored. So he got the college education and she had to get scholarships. So it was r- really important, they felt, to give us both opportunities, and the girl as well as the boy. It was really funny later in my life when I began competing in sports. And uhm... I would always try to compete against my brother. And whether it was tag or climbing trees or whatever. And he was always ahead of me, 'cause he was three years older. But I never thought it was because he was a guy. I thought it was because he was older than I was. That's an important mentality, I think, to have for a little girl.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Kathrine Switzer

6th Birthday Party, January 5, 1953

# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

BETSY WEST:

Did you identify with one parent or the other more?

00:01:43

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I think all children identify with one parent more than the other, at least, at the beginning. Uhm. . y- you know, I just adored my father. And- and who couldn't adore him? He was 6'5", he was gorgeous. He looked like Clark- Clark Gable. And he was always motivating. "You can do it, kid. Come on, you can do it." Whereas my mother, you know, little girls want to please their fathers, I think. And uh. . it wasn't 'til I was about 35 did I realize that my mother was just unbelievable. And provided an example for me that was subtle, uhm...but very impactful.

BETSY WEST:

And that example was what?

00:02:14

KATHRINE SWITZER:

My mother not only got herself through college and worked the whole way and got scholarships. But then, she became an educator uhm...after she raised us kids. So she entered the workforce late. And just went right to the top as one of the top educators in the country. Uhm...became a top guidance director, helped create the whole uhm...aspect of guidance directing. And uhm...and could balance everything. I mean, she-- incredible Christmases, incredible cooking, and getting up at 5:00 in the morning. And uhm... I- I of-- I think one reason why I didn't have kids is I thought, "I could never do it as

well as she could do it." She was the original "Super Mom." And I didn't realize that until much later in my life, because she never laid that on me. She just let it happen. And- and I think it was the greatest kind of love.

BETSY WEST:

Did you feel that one of them or the other had more power in the family?

00:02:59

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, it's interesting about power in the family. I- I always think that uhm...there is a dynamic in a relationship. Uh...but- but now that I've been married for 25 years, I- I realize that you-- sometimes there's a waxing and waning. My father, I think, being a dominant male and very, very masculine guy was the dominant figure. But I think my mother was really the power behind the throne, if you see what I mean. I think my father really knew he wouldn't have been as successful as he was if he didn't have my mother as a partner.

BETSY WEST:

How did your parents see gender roles? I mean, did they express it? And what did they think about your future? What idea did they give you about that?

00:03:41

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I was always told, "You've got to earn a living, and to be a professional person, and to be able to pay your own way. You can never rely on anybody else to do that for you. You can think of nothing else but to get a college education. And

we're gonna pay for that college education, 'cause we had to work our own way through college in the depression." And I heard all these depression stories. So these things were laid out, "You will do this." You know, I didn't-- it was, like, "Don't even think about anything else. "Uhm... and it was also, like, "We're giving you opportunities that we didn't have. "I- I suppose there was plenty of guilt there. But it was uh...you didn't have to be a pea brain as a kid to understand that your parents did go through a very tough time. You've got a gift here. And uhm...you really have the responsibility for doing your best. I think I grew up with an incredible sense of responsibility.

BETSY WEST:

We know what you wound up being. But I'm just wondering what did you want to be when you grew up?

00:04:33

KATHRINE SWITZER:

What did I want to be when I grew up? Well, it's really funny. You know, I think kids cast about for- for things. I- I-- believe it or not, I really loved flowers. You know, I can't see very well, can't hear very well. But I can really smell things. And I just love flowers. And I was very, very good at helping my dad with the gardening. And uhm...and I loved biology in high school. And I- I thought, you know, I'd like to be a- a horticulturist. That's what I'd really like to do. And-- but, boy, did I love to move. I mean, I love to- to run and to play hard. But I also love very feminine things. Uh...it was really funny. I mean, I would go out and play war and build forts and climb trees and jump off the roof, like- like all the boys in the neighborhood. But I would always come in

and want to put on my party dress and play with my dolls. And I didn't see any uh...difference in this. But as- as for growing up, I was not interested in being a teacher, not particularly interested in being, like, a mother. Uhm...but I really wanted a profession. To me it was-- it was something that grew. And I think that- that that's a very interesting choice for a young kid to- to help produce something that's gonna grow, flowers.

00:05:37

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I think I wasn't a particularly good student. I was incredibly hard working. But, in my own defense, I have to say my parents started me in school in an experimental educational program, at age five. So we were all age five in this start up school, this program. But as I grew up and we moved, because we were in the army, suddenly, I was two years later with kids who, in the next class, were a year or even two years older than I was. And then, that happened all the way through the rest of my education. I was always the youngest one. And I was always behind. Because sometimes, a kid's brain doesn't develop, you know, to- to-- you know, uh...embrace concepts. And so I had a difficult time. But, I mean, I- I made Bs. Uhm...but I wasn't an A student that's for sure. And I really, really had to work hard.

BETSY WEST:

When did you get a sense of yourself as being athletic?

00:06:30

KATHRINE SWITZER:

There's a funny story about being-- getting a sense of yourself being athletic. My story, kind of, began with uhm... me seeing in high school-- and I was in high school not-- you know, I was only 12 years old. And I was seeing the really popular pretty girls were cheerleaders. And I thought, "Oh, well, that's the passport to being popular and to being attractive. And, you know, being grown up." And so I came one day, and I told my father I was gonna be a cheerleader. And I was practicing and things. And he said, "No, no, no. You don't want to be a cheerleader, honey." And I said, "Why?" And he said, "Cheerleaders are cheering on the sidelines for other people. You want to be in the game." He said, "Life is to participate, not to spectate." And, I mean, what a thing to tell your little girl. And I thought, "Whoa, he's right." He said, "You really want to play. You can run. You ought to get out there. And your school has something called field hockey. And you could play on that field hockey team." And I said, "Oh, I can't, Dad. I can't do that." And he said, "Why not?" He said, "I know you've never played it before, but it's a matter of conditioning. And if you get out and run a mile every day, you'd make the field hockey team."

00:07:30

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And that was actually the turning point in my life. I wasn't to know that, then, of course. But I started running this mile a day. And he was really amazing. We had a-- we lived on a like seven-eighths of an acre plot. And we measured off the sides of it. And seven laps equaled a mile. And he helped me do that measuring. And then, I went out, and I ran seven laps. And I did it every single day. You know, I- I told you that I really work hard. I'm not particularly bright.

But I've got a great work ethic. And I would do this dutifully every day. And we were living in northern Virginia, outside of Washington, DC. And in the summer it's like living in a swamp. It is so hot. And I still did this- this mile run every day. And by the time the hockey season came in the fall, I was really one of the best players. Because I was in such great condition. But the amazing thing that happened was the transformational experience from this mile. I was this little girl who was out determined to do this mile every day. And every day I did it, I had this enormous sense of accomplishment. And really that was like a victory under my belt every day that nobody could take away from me.

00:08:32

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And it translated into everything else I did. I said, "Well, if I can run a mile a day, I can do this, or I can try out for the poetry club. Or I can work in the- the dance committee or whatever." It gave me a lot of confidence, courage, and belief in myself. And as I said, that's the thing that changed my life.

BETSY WEST:

I'm wondering, did you ever have a sense that it was maybe not a good thing to be a girl? Did that ever occur to you?

00:08:59

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I always loved being a girl. I love being feminine, and I love dressing up. And I loved being strong and tough. I love the surprise of the- the duality. And it always caught people off guard. And, of course, much later in life when- when



I was asked to be a speaker at something because I was one of the first marathon runners. They- they always-- it was great to watch the audience, 'cause they're usually guys. They're expecting a behemoth to arrive. You know, and they were always surprised that you were actually feminine. So I- I enjoyed that duality for a long time. But no. I- I always liked being a girl. And- and I'll tell you something else. The reason I think I really liked being a girl was-- it was two things. One, I loved the physicality of it. You know, I loved the- the monthly change that my body would go through. I felt like I was part of nature, very, very much that m-- that way. And I loved, also, the fact that I felt so strong physically that it translated to my mental strength. And that made me very unintimidated around boys and men. And I was always accepted by them, because I was not defensive or uhm. . afraid of them.

BETSY WEST:

Did you have any childhood anxieties? I mean, everybody has them. What did you worry about when you were a kid?

00:10:12

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Oh, I worried about plenty when I was a kid. You know, I don't think you grow up with a dad who's away in Korean War and hearing stories of the depression. And going through the Cold War and- and living right outside of Washington, DC with all the missiles pointed at you. And growing up with this, you know, drummed in, you know, that the communists can take you over at any time. Uh, without those fears, I was afraid for my family. I was afraid for uhm...losing freedom. I was afraid for things that were beyond my

control. And that's another reason why I think that running was very important to me. Because, at least, I could control that. And I felt powerful in myself. And, in fact, I think, you know, you look at your childhood fantasies. And a lot of my childhood fantasies on the run were of being able to escape things. And being able to survive things.

BETSY WEST:

Did you ever worry about how you appeared to the opposite sex?

00:11:03

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I never really worried about how I appeared to the opposite sex because I always thought I looked pretty good. It's amazing. I mean, but I worked at that. It's true. I-- in my races and things, I- I always tried to uh... not look like the Russian shot putter. And- and to- to look feminine and to debunk the old myth of- of sports equals masculinity. Uhm... yeah, and like a little girl, I was always terribly worried about my appearance. And too much so. I mean, I can remember my father saying, "No lipstick. You're too young for lipstick. " And I went, "Oh, Dad, everybody wears lipstick." And uhm. . you know, and I- I look back on that. And I think, if I had a little girl and she was 12 or 13, and she wanted to wear lipstick, it'd drive me crazy too. But that's- that's the way girls are. And uhm...yeah, I- I h-- I had no problem with that.

00:11:51

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I remember very distinctly the 1960 Olympics. And I remember seeing Wilma Rudolph, beautiful flowing across the-- and winning the 100 meters. And-

and then, this is in *Life Magazine*, a big pictorial magazine, which doesn't exist now. But it was an amazing magazine. And that would be on one page. And the other page was of Tamara Press, the shot putter. Uh... and she was just really huge and had dirty bra straps showing. And- and a crew cut haircut, and- and kind of ripply, you know-- you know, hams, for arms. And- and I thought, "Oh, is that-- is that what it means to be a female athlete?" And that's what scared me. But I kept looking at the two pictures. And I decided no. I can look like Wilma Rudolph. In my dreams. But- but- but it's true. I decided that you had to work at that image. And being a marathon runner, it isn't particularly easy. 'Cause a marathon is a particularly grueling, sweaty, hard experience. But uhm... you know, I think I did pretty well at it. And I think it was important. Now, what's great, you know, at my age, at 64, I can look like anything I want to look like. It's really amazing.

BETSY WEST:

Do you ever remember other kinds of sexist treatment that you were subjected to as a kid?

00:13:03

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I don't remember sexist treatment, per se. Except uhm... people saying I shouldn't be doing that. And- and I thought that they were silly. And here's an example, I'd be out running in the summer. And the milkman would come and knock on m-- the door. My mother would come out. And she-- he'd say, "Listen, I see your little girl out running. I mean, is everything okay?" And she said, "Oh, yeah, yeah, she just-- she runs every day. That's what she does." And

he said, "Are you sure she's okay?" You know, 'cause they thought I was some kind of deviant or running away or was hurt or something. 'Cause little girls didn't do that. Uhm, certainly running for a long time, people would- would try to run you off the road or would throw things at you. And believe it or not, women were worse than men at- at doing that to me.

00:13:44

KATHRINE SWITZER:

In school, the guys didn't not want me to participate. But I wasn't chosen first to be on their team. But I was always the first girl chosen. So I always took that as a compliment. Uhm and it was true. I could see that normally they were bigger and stronger and- and faster than I was. But I also knew that there were things I could do that they couldn't do. And I could always outlast them running.

BETSY WEST:

Why would people run you off the road?

00:14:11

KATHRINE SWITZER:

There are hoons out there all the time who are drinking. And they throw the beer can at you or they throw an egg at you. They think it's really cute. Or- or they- they play chicken with you and come close and see if you're gonna jump. And I always jump. You know, I'm not-- 'cause people often are drunk or people lose control of their car. But they think it's really cute. Uhm...or some people are just angry. And guys sometimes would run you off the road because they obviously sense that there was a woman running. And she was

exemplifying power, or she was doing something that they couldn't do. I didn't really psychoanalyze them. I just jumped, you know. And I didn't try to antagonize them back. But the hurtful ones was when I was run off the road by women. And they would really come boring down on you. And it was-- uhm... I remember saying to my coach once. I said, "Why do they do that?" And he said, "Oh, they're just jealous." And I said, "What could they be jealous of?" They could just go put on shoes and go out and run themselves. And he said, "No." He said, "You're doing something that they feel they can't do or feel that you shouldn't be doing. But they are just jealous of you having the freedom to do it."

00:15:12

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And uhm... it took a long time for me to uhm... to get over that. Because I thought somehow women didn't get it. And then, I realized within a few years, it wasn't that they didn't get it. It's that they didn't have the same opportunities that I had. And that's also a life changing moment for me because I really thought, "I'm gonna change these-- the system so that I can create opportunities for them. So they can experience the same sense of empowerment and joy that I have." And- and many of the women uhm... that I-- uh... I saw in my early years, in my 20s, let's say, who lived in the same apartment complex or whatever that I did. Who used to tease me when I used to go out and run. Uhm... became runners themselves and have written to me or made contact. And said, you know, "I'm so sorry I treated you so badly, running has changed my life." And so I said, "It's okay." You know- you know, as long as you get it in the end.

# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

BETSY WEST:

Marathon had been going on for 70 years.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Women's Field Hockey Team

Lynchburg College, 1966

BETSY WEST:

-you think-- you're a 19-year-old college student that you could run this race?

00:16:12

KATHRINE SWITZER:

When I went to college, I went to Lynchburg College, in Lynchburg, Virginia for two years. It wasn't my first choice. I wanted a big ten University. My parents were paying for it, so I really had to- to go with their decision. And then, my dad said that after two years, I could make my own choice. So at Lynchburg College, I played field hockey and lacrosse and basketball. But it was one spring in '66 that the track coach came out. He saw me running after- after hockey practice. Uhm...and said could I run a mile. And I said, "Of course, I can run a mile. I can run three miles." And he said, "Well, we've lost some lettermen off our team. And I- I need somebody to help run the mile. We only have one miler this weekend. And if you could run the mile, uhm. . you- you would get points." And I said, "Sure, Coach. I'd be glad to do it for you." Not thinking a thing about it. And so I go out there. And this is-- creates

a huge uproar in the small southern school. Everybody who never watched a track meet in their life came out to watch. Now, what were they watching for? Me to fail? Me to be able to do something superhuman or whatever? They thought running a mile was just like climbing Everest.

00:17:12

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Anyway, I ran the mile. I broke six minutes. I think I ran a 558. I got points for the team, but it made national news. It just went everywhere. And it-- the- the exceptional thing was that a girl ran on a men's track team. And I just thought, "Well, great. I'm helping out the team." I was going to transfer schools anyway the next year, and I did. I wanted to go to Syracuse University because I wanted to study sports journalism. I had figured out that once I graduated from University there was gonna be no sports for me. There was-- you know, there was no Olympics. Uh... there was-- for women uh... to speak of, except to sprinting-- in sprinting. There was no hockey or lacrosse, things I was playing. And once I realized I graduated from college I wasn't gonna have a sport. So I'd really better sure run. Because that's something I could do by myself and stay in shape and have a real sense of em- empowerment, as I told you before. So uhm...but when I got to Syracuse, I was astonished at this huge powerhouse University, having really only intramurals for women.

00:18:18

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Uh...and the emphasis was- was on football. It was on lacrosse. It was on basketball and ice hockey, for the guys. Huge for the guys. Nothing for the women. And that's when I first, kind of, got upset about sexism. And I

thought, "Well, maybe the women themselves have chosen this. And if that's the case, and the sports don't exist for women, maybe I can run on the men's cross country team." So I went out and talked to the- the cross country and track coach. And he was, kind of, astonished. He said, "I've been the coach here for 30 years. And we've never had a- a woman be interested." And he said, "I can't let you run officially on this team." He said, "I heard about you running at Lynchburg. That was a different conference. That was allowed. Here, we're in the NCAA conference. Women can't compete on the men's team." But he said, "I would welcome you. And the team would welcome you if you came out to practice with us." I said, "That's fine. That's all I really want." And so I came out and began training with the men's cross country team. And again, here was an amazing moment in my life.

00:19:13

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, we're talking about the- the autumn of 1966. This is the- the eve of the women's liberation movement. Women are- are going and sitting in men's bars and demanding to be served. And- and I didn't quite understand that. Although, I certainly a- applauded, you know, equal pay for- for equal work and that kind of stuff. But I thought these guys would think I'd be really in their face when I came out to- to run on the cross-country team. And instead, they were totally motivational and totally welcoming. And that is where I met the assistant coach, who wasn't really a coach. He was the University mailman. And his name was Arnie Briggs. And Arnie Briggs uhm... had been a really, really good runner. Uh... in fact, he still held the upstate New York record in a marathon. And he had been training with the men ever since he



got back from World War II. And he had never seen, obviously, a girl come out before. And he was so excited. And said, "We've never had a girl. We've never had a girl." And he really helped me and motivated me.

00:20:13

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And he had run the Boston Marathon 15 times. Now, to me, somebody who'd run the Boston Marathon 15 times and finished 10<sup>th</sup>, you know, in the top 10. I mean, that was like the Olympian gods. And he would tell me these stories of all these great legends in the sport. And I was absolutely electrified hearing them. I-- you know, Clarence Demar and Johnny Kelley, the elder and Johnny Kelley, the younger, and Tarzan Brown and all these stories. And every day there would be another Boston Marathon story. And, you know, as the weeks went by, the stories would repeat themselves. It was, kind of, like a loop film. And pretty soon, I got so I could tell the stories, also. Then, there was another pivotal night, which was in December right before break and then, during exams. Snow coming down, blizzard in Syracuse, and-- in- in case you don't know Syracuse, I mean, it's like caverns of snow. I mean, just canyons and- and mountains of snow. And it was freezing cold in a blizzard one night.

00:21:10

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And he said, "Oh, a woman can't run the Boston Marathon." And I said, "What?" And he said, "Yeah, the marathon distance is too long, 26 miles 385 yards." And I said, "What? We're running ten miles in a blizzard. And you're telling me I can't run a marathon?" He said, "There's a big difference between 10 miles and 26." I said, "I know that, Arnie. But when I met you, I could only

run three miles." And he said, "No woman can run the marathon." And I said, "Arnie, you're really wrong." We started arguing. You know, I was a young kid, 19. I was crabby. And I-- and I was just really irritated about being out there that night. And I- I said, "You're wrong, Arnie. Other women have run marathons, including last year, Roberta Gibb ran the Boston Marathon. She jumped out of the bushes, and she ran the race." And he exploded. I mean, he said, "No dame ever ran no marathon." And I said, "She did, too. I read it in the-- in- in *Sports Illustrated*." And he said, "No woman ever ran a marathon." He wouldn't believe it. And then, he got, kind of, reflective. And he said, "I'll tell you what, if any woman could do it-- I've thought about this-- you could do it, probably. But you're the only woman I could imagine. But you'd have to prove it to me.

00:22:15

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And you-- if you-- in fact, if you showed me in practice that you could do it, I'd be the first person to take you to Boston." So the grin came across my face. And I said, you know, "Hot damn." You know, I've got a coach. I've got a plan. I've got a goal. And I've got a dream. I mean, those are all the ingredients for success.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Kathrein Switzer & Arnie Briggs

1970

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And at that moment, again, another thing happened. I just began focusing. I said, "Okay. We're gonna do this."

BETSY WEST:

At that time, what was considered an acceptable distance for a woman to run?

00:22:42

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, it was really amazing. The longest distance in the Olympic games was-- in 1960, was the 800 meters. Two laps around the track, a half-mile. And this was reinstated into the Olympics with enormous controversy. Because in 1928, after a long battle that began at the turn of the century, women's track and field was allowed into the Olympic games. And one of the events was the 800 meters. And the first three women-- the first set a world record. But the first three women finished in uhm... I wouldn't say a distressed condition. But they were out of breath and, kind of, would lay on the infield and hands on their knees and things. And the Olympic officials were so upset at seeing women in-- as I said, in a distressed condition, exhausted. Uhm... it was unseemly for this to occur in public. People were horrified. You know, this was not the- the image of women that we had in mind. And they--

ON SCREEN TEXT:

1928 Summer Olympics  
Amsterdam, Netherlands

KATHRINE SWITZER:

-struck that event from the Olympic games until 1960.

BETSY WEST:

Did your own coach worry about this?

00:23:42

KATHRINE SWITZER:

My own coach did worry about this. In fact, the night of the blizzard, when he was obviously, you know, concerned and saying no woman could run a marathon. What I didn't know until sometime later is that when Arnie returned to the post office to- to clock out after-- to-- with running with me in the afternoon. The guys at the post office are giving him a really hard time. Saying, "Hey, Arnie, you're gonna ruin that girl. You know, she looks like a pretty nice girl. And you're out running. And- and, you know, you better not go too far with that girl. You know, she-- you're gonna ruin her." Uhm... there was this- this sense that- that if you overdid, you were gonna turn into a man or a behemoth or something. And so Arnie was really torn. You know, he had somebody he could run with in the snow. He had a friend. He-- and somebody he could mentor. Uhm and just hung on every word. And uhm...and- and yet, he was afraid of pushing me too far. And I- I just couldn't run far enough. Every night when I'd come in from working out, I'd say, "Wow, five miles. Wow, ten miles. Eleven, fifteen, fantastic." It was just a great-- a great feeling.

00:24:44

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I always say a goal gives you a- a tremendous focus. My goal began to show Arnie Briggs that I could run the 26 miles in practice. And so w- without making a long story of this, we- we worked for many weeks. And finally came the day we were going to do it. We started early in the morning, because we figured it was gonna take most of the day, which it did. Uhm...but we measured off several loop courses out into the country, out in back. And when we came in to 26 miles 385 yards, Arnie said, "I can't believe it. You look great, and you're gonna do it. You're-- I'm so proud of you." And I- I thought that it would be like, you know, the Olympic medal was gonna be waiting for me. And it was just so flat. And I said, "Arnie, I feel really good. Maybe we mismeasured the course." And he said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "Well, you know what? We got-- when we go to the Boston Marathon," which is my reward now; right? "Uhm...I've got to make sure we can-- we can really cover the distance. We-- I mean, maybe we mismeasured. Let's run another five miles." He said, "You can run another five miles?" I said, "Sure. I feel great. Don't you?" And he goes, "Uh. . sure, I guess. Okay. "

00:25:42

KATHRINE SWITZER:

So we went out another five miles. Now, a mile from our finish now, Arnie starts turning as gray as his sweat suit. And he's all over the road. His eyes are gone. And I said, "Oh, man, he's out on his feet, you know." And I said, "Come on, Arnie. Come on. We can do this. Got a mile to go." And put my arm through his. I said, "Come on, come on, come on. We can do it. A mile to go, mile to go." And we- we finished in the parking lot where we had the car. And I said, "Wow, we did it. We're going to Boston." And I threw my arms around him.

"We did it." And he passed out. And I sat him down on the curb. And when he came to, he said, "You can run the Boston Marathon." And then, he said, "Women have hidden potential and endurance and stamina." And that's when I realized what he had been thinking all along is what I was feeling. Which was I can't go as fast as these guys. I can't lift weights. I can't be as strong as the guys. But I can run forever. And that is my secret weapon. And maybe it's the secret weapon that all women have.

00:26:39

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Who knows? It's certainly what I have. And the next day, Arnie was delivering the mail all over campus. And he was saying to people, "She ran me in the ground. You know- you know, she ran 31 miles." And- and I was feeling so great because I knew I got to go to the Boston Marathon. True to his word, Arnie came over to my dorm that afternoon. We weren't gonna run that day. Uhm... this is the day after the workout. With all the applications for the Boston Marathon. And he said, "Okay. This is a serious race." Now it was all business. "This is a serious race. You've got to fill out the entry form. You've got to go to the school infirmary and take a physical." In those days, all the men had to have a physical exam before the race. He said, "You have to have a ph-- uh... to get the physical exam, they prefer a medical certificate," he said. "Because you don't want to be running around in the gym with all these guys who are naked getting their exams. Go to the- the school doctor. Fill out the form." Uhm... and I said, "Oh, Arnie," I said, "Do I have to enter the race?" And he said, "Yes. This is a very serious race. These guys at Boston are very, very strict."

00:27:40

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And I said, "But what if it's against the rules some place?" And he said, "Oh, I knew you were going to ask that. I've got the AAU, Amateur Athletic Union rule book right here." And we went through men's track and field, women's track and field, cross-country. The longest distance for women's cross-country was a mile and a half. Men's, I believe, at that time, was- was five miles or 10k. And then, the last category in the rulebook was the marathon. Nothing about gender. And I said, "I mean, that's-- maybe we're pressing a point." And he said, "No. Nothing about gender." He said, "People just wouldn't believe a woman could run it. Well-- and why would they make a rule about it?" And I said, "Well, you're right there." And so I looked through the entry form. Nothing about gender on the entry form. So I filled out the entry form. I signed my name with my initials. I signed, "K. V. Switzer." And when I signed it that way, obviously, when the form went in, they couldn't tell it from a guy's. I didn't do it to defraud them. I signed my name, "K. V. Switzer" because my dad misspelled my name on my birth certificate. He left out the "E" out of "Katherine." My name was always misspelled.

00:28:41

KATHRINE SWITZER:

So at age 12, when I decided I wanted to become a journalist, and I loved J.D. Salinger and T.S.Eliot and E.E. Cummings. I thought K.V. Switzer was also cool. So K.V. Switzer it was. And it went in and that was another thing that changed history. Because when the entry form arrived at the Boston Athletic

Association Headquarters, they thought it was Kurt, Kerry or Ken, but not Kathrine.

BETSY WEST:

Can you describe the scene the morning of the marathon and who was with you and what were you thinking, what was going through your mind that morning?

00:29:13

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I'm gonna start with the scene the night before because we left after class and so we didn't even arrive in Boston 'til about 10:00 at night, and it was just sleeting and raining and horrible, horrible weather and we were all joking about how we're going to have to wear our heavy gray warm-up suits the next day because it was just really totally miserable. And the next morning, absolutely, it was coming down only the rain was great big snowflakes, the kind that come down and melt on you. So everybody was getting soaked. And, indeed, I had put on my heavy gray warm-up suit and underneath, I had a really cute pair of shorts and a top on that I really wanted to show off 'cause I wanted to look good and I decided, I have to keep warm here. It was about 33 degrees with a headwind and, of course, you know, Boston runs west to east so it was a headwind the whole way. I thought, these are terrible, terrible conditions. In fact, I think they're the worst in Boston history. On the other hand, I'd been training in it for Syracuse. That's exactly what we had all the time in Syracuse.



# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Kathrine Switzer & Arnie Briggs

Boston Marathon, 1967

00:30:08

KATHRINE SWITZER:

We drove to the start of the Boston marathon at Hopkinton High School. Arnie parked in front of the school. The snow was coming down. He said, "Wait in the car, I'll get the team packet." We had entered as a team, the Syracuse Harriers, so they were all in one envelope together. So he went in and got the team packet and our numbers and- and came out and we pinned them on in the car, waiting until the absolute last minute to get out and warm up. And went and parked in the church parking lot. I have to tell this because, you know, nowadays, you can't get within 20 miles of Boston with your car so we parked-

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Kathrine Switzer

Boston Marathon, 1967

KATHRINE SWITZER:

- in the church parking lot and was doing our warm-ups there. They had us all herded into a fenced off area at the end of Hayden Row, right by the Hopkinton Common there, and uh the officials were totally rattled because the weather was so bad. And they were covered with snow and had their hats and their overcoats on and they- we- we pulled up our shirts to show our

numbers and they just pushed us in and checked off the numbers off a checklist. And so, when they pushed me in, I looked at Arnie and Arnie said, "See? Told you there'd be no problem."

00:31:10

KATHRINE SWITZER:

For me, it was like going to Mecca, you know? It was the moment I had waited for, for many, many years to run this great race and here I was doing it with my friends and I knew I- I knew I was really well trained not to go fast, but I'd run 30 miles in bad weather in Syracuse and I could- I could face this. So I wasn't expecting anything but a good, hard race and- and joy.

BETSY WEST:

So you didn't have anxiety at that time really?

00:31:37

KATHRINE SWITZER:

No, because all the guys were coming over to me in the- in the pen and saying, "Hey, that's great, hey" and they were saying, "That's my wife, let's take my picture with my wife." And uhm.. also, "Would you give me some tips for my wife?" or my girlfriend to run? You know, "I'd really like her to start running, she would really enjoy it." And I said, "Sure," you know, "Put your shoes on and go."

BETSY WEST:

Then what happens? Shortly after this race starts, tell me what happens.

00:32:05

KATHRINE SWITZER:

First, you roll down this street by- by the Hopkinton Common and it was just such a great sensation of finally, when the race starts, the nervousness goes, the anxiety goes because you know you've just got 26 miles ahead of you and, as people came flowing by us, because we were- we were going slowly, uhm... they would say, "Go for it", you know, "We're with you all the way," you know, "Have a great race," "See you," and then came this beeping. And the beeping was the press truck. Now, if you can imagine, Boston was so poorly organized in those days, they started the press truck behind the runners and then beeped at everybody and made them move over and went by and then another beeping comes and there is another bus that's alongside and on- in this bus are the officials uhm... who are being dropped-- the timers and the officials and the- the uhm... the scribes, journalist scribes because they were inside, writing. And apparently the guys on the bus were teasing him, saying, "Hey, Jock, there's a girl in your race and she's wearing numbers. Wonder what her name is, Jock?" and they looked me up and said, "Oh, is it Kurt or Kerry? Wonder what her mother thinks, Jock?" you know?

00:33:08

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And he came up behind me and, at the last minute, I heard the scraping of leather shoes, just like you hear a dog's claws when you're running, suddenly, and suddenly I turned and he just... and then he started clawing at me, starting- trying to rip my numbers off. And I jumped away and went "ah, ah" and Arnie started screaming and batting him and saying, "Leave her alone, she's okay. I've trained her. Leave her alone. She's okay. I've trained her." And

he said, "You stay out of this, Arnie," and I thought, "My god, these guys know each other." Well, I tried to get away, you know, fight or flight, and, as I ran, he grabbed my shirt and pulled me back and kept trying to grab these numbers away like this. And Arnie said, "Run like hell." And down the street we went. And I was wiping tears away by this time 'cause I was so scared and Tom was cursing and Arnie was cursing and saying, "Jock should never have done that," So they got the pictures of this whole incident and I was so humiliated and so ashamed and scared. I was really scared because uhm... I felt so unwelcome, I felt like- like a- an amateur girl, that I wasn't welcome, that I was uhm... I was messing up a really important race, you know, Boston was, like, second to the Olympic games and I was messing it up somehow.

00:34:17

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And it didn't occur to me that, at first, that I deserved to be in that race. I was just humiliated. It was sort of like walking into a dinner party where you think you're invited and you're not. Uhm... and then a great thing happened. Suddenly, I really got angry. I really got angry, like, I could have murdered him, I could have murdered him. And I just started getting angrier and angrier and the press truck stayed with us and stayed with us and then they got very aggressive. "Where are you from? What are you trying to prove?" And they hung there because they obviously thought I- I was there for a prank or some kind of publicity stunt. And I was so insulted at them. And then I heard this- this grinding of a- another bus come by and it was the same officials' bus and Jock had gotten up and gotten on the bus. And he was standing on the running board, you know, in the old days, when you hang

onto the side on the running board, and he shook his finger at us and cursed again and said, in a wonderful Scots brogue, "You are all in big trouble."

00:35:18

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Well, you can imagine what all the guys around me did and said to him 'cause they all kind of banded together and said, "Oh, it's terrible," all that kind of stuff. I just looked down. My mother always said, "Ignore people when they are really awful to you or aggressive, you know, ignore them." I put my head down and uhm...and Arnie screamed at him and- and said, "You just get out of here, Jock" and the bus just went off in a cloud of dust and- and the press truck hung with us for a long time.

BETSY WEST:

Did you think about quitting at all? Did that ever occur to you because this horrible thing had happened?

00:35:53

KATHRINE SWITZER:

It never occurred to me once to quit. I absolutely would not have quit. Uhm...two- two things. One, of course, you worried in a marathon that physiologically, and, of course, this is the intrigue of the marathon, anything can happen. You can get extremely fatigued, you can get diarrhea, you can get bitten by a dog, you can fall down, all these things can happen in the marathon but it couldn't happen to me. And, if they did, I was gonna have to finish anyway. The second thing and a little more sinister was the fact that he was a very angry man and he was going to have the last word. You can tell

with those kinds of people. I could tell when he went off on the bus and uhm... I said to Arnie, I said, "You know, we might get arrested." So we were going to go around a corner, he's going to have told the cops, "Pull her off the course." And uhm... he said, Arnie was saying, "Nah, not sure about that" but there were an awful lot of cops on the- on the course that day. All of them were very, very nice to me and uhm...it was- we finished without incident but uhm.. indeed, later, I read in the newspaper that he had told them to and they- they said, "No way" you know? So I went ahead and finished so he- he really was a very angry guy.

00:37:01

KATHRINE SWITZER:

But now an interesting thing happens when you're running 26 miles and one of the best things is you can't run that long and stay mad. You- you know, you work out all your aggressions,--

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Kathrine Switzer Celebrates Best Run Time  
Boston Marathon, 1975

KATHRINE SWITZER:

--you come to resolution, finally, and some place over Heartbreak Hill after I had murdered Jock Semple in every way you could murder him, and- and being angry at people and especially other women. Why aren't there other women here? And then it begins- I began to get angry and say, "Why is the longest event in the Olympic games 800 meters? Why don't we have

scholarships at Syracuse or any other place? Why isn't there prize money sports for women? Why aren't there other teams?" You know, all of this sudden- it began occurring to me and then the light went on. It's not because women don't want those things, it's because they've never had an unintimidating experience and an opportunity to prove themselves. And so, by the time they get to be 20, they've heard all the myths all their lives about getting big legs or growing hair on your chest and they're- they're afraid to take part in something that's arduous and having no experience to prove otherwise, of course, they're going to think that they're weak and feeble.

00:38:05

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Uhm... or that it's inappropriate. And I said, "I'm going to create those opportunities." It was a wonderful epiphany and I'd forgotten all my anger about Jock. He was just a product of his time. He was just ignorant. We can go forward from this. Other women don't understand. I'll create the opportunities for them. And by the time I finished the race, you know, I'd come out of that trough of exhaustion, I felt terrific. If it weren't for badly blistered feet, I felt like I could've run all the way back to Hopkinton. Because I, kind of, had a life plan. I'd finished my marathon. I was gonna create these opportunities. And the other thing I wanted to do was to become a better athlete.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Kathrine Switzer Training For Boston Marathon

White Plains, NY, 1975

# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I knew I could run faster. I knew that I was gonna be criticized for being a jogger, 'cause 4 hours and 20 minutes in those days was considered a jogging time. And I wanted to become a better athlete to prove that I could. And also to prove to myself that I could. So I had all these goals laid out before me. And I felt so happy. It was a total resolution.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Kathrine Switzer & Arnie Briggs  
1972

00:39:03

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Women were finally made official in the Boston Marathon in 1972, the year before. And it was really important. We'd done a lot of legislation. We'd proved ourselves. And I think it was after that race that Jock realized how well we ran. Because we had to meet a men's qualifying standard of 3 hours 30 minutes, which is tougher than it is even today. And we- we all did that. And I, in fact, got a trophy in the race. And- and Jock had to present me with this trophy. It was broken. Broken in packing or something. And he handed me the trophy. And he said, "Oh, I'm sorry"-- you know, "I'm sorry you got a broken trophy." But he said, "But I've been mad at you for five years and you deserve a broken trophy." So that was how I-- that was my award presentation for '72. But then, in '73, there I am on the start line of the race. And all of a sudden somebody comes up and grabs me. It was Jock. And I



went <gasps>, 'cause I thought he was gonna hit me. I thought he was mad at me or something. And he- he put his arm on my shoulder and turned me around. And planted a big kiss on my cheek in front of all of the TV cameras and the press cameras.

00:40:02

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And said, "Come on, lass, let's get a wee bit 'o notoriety." And I- I often say that was Jock Semple's way of saying, "Thank you." A man who'd n- never apologized, ever, in his life for- for this. Uhm...but some people don't say, "Thank you." And that was his way. And it was interesting because the *New York Times* used that photograph uh...in the paper. I always felt kind of sorry for the winner. Uhm... but the caption said everything. It said, "The end of an era." And it was true. That was a sea change in women's sports. Where if Jock Semple, of all people, could welcome women into the Boston Marathon with a kiss, that uhm... it- it really meant that women were accepted. And that- that we were accepted on a level of the guys. And we'd fought hard for that. But it was a wonderful moment, and I was thrilled with it.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Kathrine Switzer & Jock Semple

Start Line Of The 1973 Boston Marathon

BETSY WEST:

Going back to the race. I mean, after you got through this trauma and the violence and the reporters and the quiet, then, what happened on the race to you?

00:41:00

KATHRINE SWITZER:

There's an expression on running. You know, you can't run very long and stay mad. And certainly you cannot run 26 miles and stay mad. And so about 21 miles, I had murdered Jock Semple in every possible way there was to murder him. And- and then, suddenly it occurred to me, you know, it's not his fault. He's a product of his time. He's a man of his time. He's ignorant about this. He doesn't know I'm serious. Uhm and then- then, I stopped being mad at other women. 'Cause I was saying, "Why aren't other women in this race?" And then, I started to think, "Why is the longest event in the Olympic Games a- a mere 800 meters for women? Why aren't there women scholarships at the universities? Why aren't there more intercollegiate sports? Why aren't there paid professional opportunities in sports for women?" And suddenly, it began to occur to me that it wasn't women's fault. It was the fault that we didn't have the opportunities to give them an un intimidating experience to- to try. And to- to prove otherwise and- and to refute the myths. So, you know, if a little girl is told not to climb trees when she's 12 years old because, you know, she's gonna turn into a guy. And- and she's gonna grow hair on her chest, by the time she's 20, she's not gonna run a marathon because she's gonna be too afraid of a myth that's been- been given to her all these years.

00:42:09

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And- and, worse, she's gonna feel that it's inappropriate to try. And therefore, she's gonna miss all the same em- empowerment in the experience that I'd had. And the epiphany came then. You know, it was, it's not Jock's fault. It's not women's fault. It's opportunity. I'm going to try to create those opportunities. I also wanted, at the same time, to try to become a better athlete. I knew I was gonna finish this race slowly, 4 hours and 20 minutes. It's not slow now. I mean, millions of people run 4 hours and 20 minutes. But at the time, it was considered jogging time. And I wanted to prove that I could be a better athlete, not only to- to prove on behalf of women that it could be done. But to- to prove to myself that I could get better. And by the time I finished the race, I was-- I was very happy. I- I felt, in fact, light. I felt-- except for the blisters on my feet, I could've run all the way back to Hopkinton. And I had a life plan, you know. I was gonna create the opportunities. I was gonna become a better athlete. And I knew what-- I knew what the whole-- the whole focus was going to be.

00:43:06

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, it's amazing to think in a marathon that all these things can happen. But there is an expression in a marathon that you do go through sort of, a lifetime of experience. You- you, either, live it in your head or you feel it in your bones. And I often say that I started the Boston Marathon as a girl. And I finished the Boston Marathon as a grown woman. And it's true. That race changed my life.

BETSY WEST:

The reception that you got? Crossed that finish line?

00:43:34

KATHRINE SWITZER:

The reception at the finish line was left a lot to be desired. They were very crabby officials and very crabby journalists. Not many. It was so bitterly cold that everybody had given-- there were very few spectators even out on the course when we were running. People had just given up. It was so miserable. And at the finish, there were only a couple of timers there, who refused to acknowledge our time. There was one kind official who threw army blankets over us, 'cause it was so-- we were so wet and freezing. Uhm...but the journalists were the best. They were so irritated. And it was clear that they'd gone back to the newsroom, and somebody said, "You've got to go back out there and wait for the girl to finish." And they were miserable. And they asked very aggressive questions. And- and were v-- were- were very pushy. And I gave as good as I got, at that point. And I said, "Yes. I'm absolutely gonna be back next year. You know, women can run. Women deserve to run." Uhm...is- is this an equal rights issue? And I said, "Yeah, it's becoming an equal rights issue." So I was really-- uh.. it- it amazed me that I had the presence of mind to say those things.

00:44:32

KATHRINE SWITZER:

There was only one journalist. And his name was Joe Concannon from the Boston Globe. And he was my age, uh...young, 20. 'Cause it was-- must've been his first big assignment. And he actually asked me very kind, good,

insightful questions. And Joe Concannon and I became dear friends for a long time. And he was a great crusader on behalf of women.

BETSY WEST:

Did you run this race for you, or to prove a point?

00:44:56

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Oh, I never ran Boston to- to prove a point. And it was really interesting. I was very naïve about the women's rights issues. I felt that other women some how just didn't understand sports. And, you know, it wasn't until I was in the race that I knew I wanted to change that for women. But uhm no. Boston-- the Boston Marathon in 1967 was my reward for showing Arnie Briggs in practice that I could do the distance. And so we went in as just, sort of, kids doing- doing the race. Once Jock Semple attacked me in the race, however, uh...the- the whole issue changed.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Kathrine Switzer

Boston Marathon, 1967

BETSY WEST:

Tell me about the Amateur Athletic Union's reaction. And, sort of, how that played out initially and then, over the years, what you had to do.

00:45:37

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, I was back at my-- uh... on campus for about uh... 24 hours. And I got a special delivery letter from the Amateur Athletic Union in-- uh... I believe it was based in Washington at the time. But uh... anyway-- and it-- it expelled me from the Amateur Athletic Union. Which was like-- if you're a Catholic, it's like being excommunicated from the church. Serious. It's very serious. I was so mad at that point. Because I felt we had done all the things right. We had filled out the entry form. We paid our entry fee. I was a card-carrying member of the AAU. I took my physical. I'd done the-- the w-- distance in practice. I'd done everything right, according to the rules. And now, they said it was because I had run more than a mile and a half. I had fraudulently entered the race. I had run with men, which was the worst. You know, 'cause there's a sexual implication to that. I'd run with men. But the best thing was I had run the Boston Marathon without a chaperone. And-- and the-- we all looked at each other. And I said, "What kind of rules are these?" That-- you know, it was just amazing.

00:46:38

KATHRINE SWITZER:

So I was expelled for those four reasons. And they guys, also, were expelled. Uhm... Arnie never renewed his membership, and he never spoke to Jock Semple again. I decided that I was gonna have to work with-- within the establishment if I was gonna make change. And uhm... that also changed my life. Because I had to, then, learn a lot about the system. And uhm... a year or so later, I had a hearing, where I got back into the AAU. And I began organizing races because I knew that was the way to create the opportunities.

# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

BETSY WEST:

Ultimately, you did get the ban lifted?

00:47:11

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Yeah, I got the ban lifted about 18 months later. But there were fun- fun moments, also, with that. Because right after the uh...expulsion letter came an invitation to run a marathon up in Canada. And I felt like a Vietnam draft dodger going up there to run these races. But it was so great to be welcomed into a competition.

BETSY WEST:

You won your first marathon in '74.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Kathrine Switzer

New York City Marathon, 1974

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Can you tell me about that, what that was like for you?

00:47:33

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, I ran and won many marathons or was the first woman because I was often the only woman in the race. And after this time at Boston, I got in-- a lot of invitations because uh...the race director knew that he was gonna get a lot of publicity if there was a girl in his race. And- and I must tell you-- this

is very important-- the guys in running and- and the g-- race directors, for the most part, were really welcoming to me, really, really helpful. It was just a few really crummy officials, who- who were very narrow minded. And the rules uh... were set up to- to be narrow minded. The guys, themselves, were wonderful. So uhm.. when I won the New York City Marathon, though, in 1974 that was a big deal race. By that time, women had been official in running for two years. And I really uh... wanted a big title. And when I-- when I won it, I was disappointed in the fact that I hadn't broken three hours because I trained to break three hours in the marathon.

00:48:29

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Three hours in the marathon in those days separated the men from the boys, or the girls from the women. What- whatever way you wanted to put it. And I really wanted to be in that league. But it turned out to be uh... four laps of Central Park on a very, very hot day. It was-- started at 100 degrees, humidity, breaking thunderstorms. The irony of this thing is that I did win the New York City Marathon in 1974 by the biggest margin of victory in the history of the New York City Marathon, 27 minutes. That's never going to be eclipsed. But the following year at Boston, perfect weather conditions. And I thought I was going to win the Boston Marathon and go well under three hours. I was beaten by a woman from Germany who set a world record. I did, indeed, run a personal best of 2 hours 51 minutes, which would've won the Boston Marathon for women in every previous year. But she set a world record in the biggest margin of victory in the history of the Boston Marathon. So we- we-- you know, I got it on both sides. It was really fun.



# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

BETSY WEST:

Tell me about the Olympics. Why was it so important to you?

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Summer Olympics

Los Angeles, California, 1974

BETSY WEST:

– what did you have to do to get women's marathon into the Olympics?

00:49:40

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, the Olympic Games is what we have as the highest level of sport.

Everybody in the world understands the Olympic Games, and when the marathon for women got into the Olympic Games in 1981 for the 1984

Games, then women themselves would realize, “Oh, I can be a marathon runner because it’s in the Games.” You see it’s then accepted and

acknowledged that women can achieve at the highest level in the most arduous event that is in the Olympic program. So it was a phenomenal moment, and I said when we got that vote finally from the- the uhm...

International Olympic Committee in 1981, I said, “Nobody’s going to understand how important this is until the first woman comes through that Olympic tunnel into that stadium,” and indeed, you know, that’s when, you know, I said, uh... 90,000 people are going to get it in the stadium, but it was more than that. It’s when 2.2 billion people globally are watching it on

television, are understanding that these are women running 26.2 miles or 42.2 kilometers, and every country in the world understands how long that is, that they've ridden a donkey, or they've ridden a bicycle over the distance, and they know it's a long race.

00:50:48

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And here are women doing it, and that more than anything is going to change people's notions about women's sense of limitation, and I believe it has. To me, in fact, getting the women's marathon in the Olympic Games is as important in a way as giving women the right to vote. It's the physical equivalent of the right to vote because it's acknowledgement of the highest level that women can achieve anything physically.

BETSY WEST:

How did you feel watching that race?

00:51:12

KATHRINE SWITZER:

At the time of the 1984 Games I was working as a commentator. It was-- it was really one of my first big television broadcasts for the marathon, to cover the first women's Olympic marathon, and I was a bit torn because Joan Benoit Samuelson now uh, took a wild lead in the race uhm... and it was either the greatest gamble in the world or one of the most foolhardy things to do, but she held it, and she came into the stadium, and so when I saw her coming in the stadium, you know, take a deep breath and try not to be emotional uhm because uhm it was a very, very emotional moment for me, but I had to be a

journalist, so I had to be as strong as I could and just, you know, tell the story. But afterwards it was, you know, a tremendous sense of- of relief. I was terribly worried, of course, and- and we had an argument even on the air about this-- about Gabriel Anderson Chase, who came into the stadium from Switzerland, and she was in a dehydrated condition, and I felt that the television was playing this for all its dramatic-- melodramatic worth uhm, when I knew she was dehydrated, and it- it wasn't a death-defying situation.

00:52:16

KATHRINE SWITZER:

And we were dragging it out. Uhm... and I was afraid that it would set women's running back just like 1928. I thought, "Oh, my gosh. What if they pull the marathon after this thinking that this is a dangerous thing for women?" In fact, fortunately, you know, Gabriel was made a heroine, uhm, for- for triumphing over the distance and- and finishing in, you know, a tough way, and she was fine the next day.

BETSY WEST:

What were the objections and what arguments did you use to counter them?

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Women's Olympics Marathon Trials

Los Angeles, California, 1974

00:52:44

KATHRINE SWITZER:

The biggest objections to getting women's marathon in the Olympic games was that women shouldn't be running with men. Because in the Olympics, you have separate events. And so far, in the marathon, we'd been running with men. So we needed to prove that we could do it on our own. That's why I set up a women's only running circuit of races globally. The second thing, of course, was the old medical chestnut about women turning into men or losing their reproductive capability. Or become less of women because they were doing something arduous, that it was too difficult. That we would damage women. So we had to refute that. And we had wonderful doctors working with us and giving great evidence. Like Dr. David Martin in Atlanta, Georgia, who was doing these studies to prove that we did have the endurance capability.

BETSY WEST:

Throughout your life, it seems it's so important for you to be physically active and also feminine. A lot of people, I think, still conceive those traits as somewhat exclusive. Do you still see that?

00:53:41

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Yes. It's interesting that many people still imagine that if a woman is an athlete, she's got to be some how masculine, not feminine. Certainly that exists in a lot of countries. I'll never forget when I was organizing races in Brazil. The head of the Athletic Federation there said, "Our women aren't gonna run your race. Uhm... you know, women here are feminine." I said, "Well, there's nothing unfeminine about running." And he said, "Oh, well," he

said, "My wife will not come with me to the race. And I won't permit my daughter to run." That was the level of fear. This was 1979 and 1980. He said, "Your race isn't gonna be successful. You'll probably have 150 women." We had 10,000 women. And, you know, you can't ignore 10,000 women in shorts running through the streets of Rio. And the women, themselves, of course, found it joyful and wonderful. They just wanted the opportunity. Well, fortunately for me, he got on my side. And we got a vote for- for the Olympic inclusion. But yes, there are many, many countries that still equate the strength of a woman runner, uh... with some how being masculine and therefore, being inappropriate.

00:54:37

KATHRINE SWITZER:

We- we have major problems in the Olympic movement with many countries, you know-- you know, don't let the women go out in the street alone. They have to have their faces covered, a completely different social and culture situation. So how those women are gonna ever have an Olympic opportunity is going to be very, very difficult. And it's something that we have to realize.

00:54:56

KATHRINE SWITZER:

In some of the races I've organized in Kuala Lumpur, for instance, it was interesting. The society-- third of the society is- is Muslim, and the women ran covered. And it was really fantastic to see thousands of these women with-- they had their arms covered, and they had head cloths and long pants. But they were out there running. A girlfriend of mine runs-- organizes a race in Marrakech. And to see these women running in burqa is fantastic. Five

thousand women, and many of them fully covered. But they're out there running because this is an opportunity in a women's only environment, where they still can express themselves. They're lucky. There are many, many women who can't even go out the door.

BETSY WEST:

Can you talk a little bit about the, sort of, self-imposed limitations? You know, what they are and where do they come from, and what do you do about them?

00:55:43

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, I think we all have self-imposed limitations. It's because, you know, you can't imagine something until you can feel something. That's why I think that the women's sports movement, and women's running particularly, is nothing short of a social revolution. Because you feel the sense of power and accomplishment. And you- you know that that's gonna translate into other parts of your lives. So, for me, the key thing was to create an opportunity where women could begin at a very beginning level. And then, imagine the next step and the next step and then, even imagine the marathon.

ON SCREEN TEXT:Kathrine Switzer

1980

KATHRINE SWITZER:

When I organized my Avon series of races, eventually, 400 races in 27 countries. It was really phenomenal. We would start with an 11 or 12 week series of clinics, "How to run" clinics. "Here's how to get a pair of shoes. How-- here's how to put on shorts. Here's how to run. Here's how to-- you know, what you do." And so that they could get through, let's say, a 5k, a 3.1-mile race. And then, if you can do that, you can imagine that you can do 10ks and et cetera, et cetera. Many of those women became Olympic athletes. It's one of my greatest sources of pride, to see that somebody who didn't imagine they could do anything, could become an Olympic champion.

00:56:50

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Often, it's very hard for a person themselves to realize they can do something. But one of the greatest things about this mass movement of running is that it's very, very public. And so, let's say, the New York City Marathon, for instance, or the London Marathon. Millions of people go out in the street and watch. And you will see every age, every size, every level of ability going by. You know-- uh.. you know, handicapped people, as well. And you say, "Boy, if they can do that I can do that." And- and then, they, maybe, go out privately and go around the block a couple of times. And they realize, well, maybe I can do more than that. Or they join a local running club. That's really, really important, yes, to overcome your own sense of-- uh.. of limitation. One of the best things to do, I often say to women, is to get with a group. And- and get your buddies and your girlfriends together or your neighbors. And just go out in the morning or evening and- and walk, jog, run together. Uhm... and suddenly you realize you're doing a few miles. And then, you can-- you can go

from there. It's- it's just letting your mind expand. And I- I think it's uhm... it's so dramatic with running because in a way it's-- I'm not gonna say it's easy. But it's very, very simple.

BETSY WEST:

Can you talk about the status of women's professional sports now? When you look at professional sports for women, what do you think about the opportunities and how people view it?

00:58:06

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I think one of the most amazing things is we have parity at last in the Olympic Games. There are as many women's running events as there are men's running events now, and that says a lot. Of course in the Olympic Games our- our big challenge now is to have countries uh... with women-- all women being represented in-- from every country, so that's a-- that's a very big challenge. In professional sports, other professional sports, again I- I have been slightly disappointed. I would really love to see more professional women's basketball, more professional uh... baseball perhaps or softball, uhm...hockey, I don't understand why different cities don't find it really interesting to have women's teams. You know, I spent a lot of time in my life in New Zealand. My husband's a New Zealander, and I'm a New Zealander now also as well as an American. I live half the time there, and when women play sports there, they join clubs also, and they have, after work, field hockey or basketball or net ball or- or whatever they're playing, and they-- they're



# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

very, very feisty and are very, very competitive, and I don't see communities with women's teams uhm, even pickup teams, and I'd like to see that happen.

BETSY WEST:

Why do you think that is? People don't seem to want to go see professional sports played by women as much as they do played by men? Why?

00:59:28

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I think it begins at the grassroots. I think that uh... once people are through with high school or- or college, that they think that they have to put the toys away, a- and- and they don't go out and create their own community field hockey team, let's say. I think-- I can't understand why every community doesn't have a- a group of women who are playing field hockey as they did in high school or college. Uhm... and then the professional comes from there with an-- with an upward mobility or farm teams and on to professional's things. Um, again I'd like to see women themselves take charge of that, but uhm... it hasn't happened in a way I would imagine it would.

BETSY WEST:

You witnessed as a young woman incredible anger on the part of men over what you were doing to assert your right to be an athlete. Didn't want you to compete. Does this kind of anger still exist? Do you ever see it now?

01:00:18

KATHRINE SWITZER:

The anger that existed in running was really only from officials. I was extremely lucky in that the- the people I trained with, which were really guys because other women weren't running then, were wonderful, nothing but totally supportive, so my bias is completely different. I didn't experience that anger at all. The only hostility I experienced was from officials who were odd people, spectators maybe, or people alongside of the road.

BETSY WEST:

Has that anger gone away, that kind of, you know, official "You're breaking the rules," or, "Women shouldn't..." has that gone away?

01:00:45

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Because of the Jock Semple incident, everybody thinks that I e-experienced tremendous amount of anger in- in running. The- the opposite is the case because the guys I ran with, uhm...coaches, and- and in most race directors were nothing but welcoming and motivational and encouraging. I was extremely lucky. Uhm... I know that, and does the anger still exist, not in running-- not in running. It was-- you don't see any animosity whatsoever in the sport, maybe in a different culture, okay. I couldn't speak for the Mid-East, for instance. So uh... clearly, you know, uh.. we- we live in a privileged culture in- in North America. But uh, other sports I know have had tremendous problems. I was appalled to see, you know, what was happening in- in ski jumping, for instance, just recently, which finally has been admitted to the Olympic Games. There was some real hostility there.

01:01:34

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I was getting calls from the women themselves who were ski jumpers wanting to get the event in the Olympic Games, and they-- it was the sale old chestnut about women's fragility and- and displacing the uterus from- from ski jumping when it was just ridiculous to- to throw that out after all these years when the marathon, you'd think, would've disproved all these things. So it- it was sad to see uhm obv- obviously anger passed on in this way.

BETSY WEST:

What was your very first paying job?

01:02:00

KATHRINE SWITZER:

My very first paying job was my second choice. I really wanted to be a journalist, but by that time I was married, and I was putting my husband through graduate school, so I had to take a job in public relations. Oh, my gosh. I thought I'd prostituted myself when I went to work for Bristol Laboratories Division at Bristol Meyers in Public Relations, and within about two weeks I loved my job, and I loved what public relations could do and went back to university at night, to Syracuse and got my Masters degree in public relations, and it was one of the best things I ever did.

BETSY WEST:

How important was it for you to earn money as a woman?

01:02:35

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, you know, if you read my book, you'll read that money was always a really big issue for me because it seemed that I never had a lot of money, and it was hard for me, you know, and my parents to put me through school, and I had to get part time jobs, and I also then got married, and I was putting my husband through graduate school, and he was trying be-- make the Olympic team, and so he was having expensive equipment, and I was running in-- with holes in my running shoes. Uhm... and on and on that seemed to go, and I was determined uhm... to some day make some pretty good money, and that was one reason why I went back to school at night to get my-- get my Masters degree, because I knew that I wasn't going to be taken too seriously uhm... when I had to compete for a job against a guy, for instance, unless I had more credentials in my back pocket than that other person did, so that's why it became important to me. Fortunately, you know, I did succeed, and uhm... I'm- I'm certainly not a wealthy person, but I'm okay.

BETSY WEST:

What about success? How important is success to you?

01:03:35

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Success was really important to me because uhm... it was a way of showing that I was right about women's running, and, you know, there were so many naysayers about women's running and so many people who didn't believe women could or should run. Uhm... by being both successful in a career uhm... a- and with a program that disproved all those myths uh... that was important to me. I organized, eventually, with Avon Cosmetics a series of 400

aces in 27 countries for over a million women. That was a huge success because those races were often the very first time a country had ever put on a women's race, so it was a matter of going from country to country to country teaching them everything about course measurement and traffic control, and how to put up toilets and grandstands and finish line banners and tents, to scoring and timing and- and getting the women themselves onsite. It was a huge job, but incredibly fulfilling, and the fact that I got paid for it, it was just very, very exciting to me.

01:04:35

KATHRINE SWITZER:

How could I get paid for doing my dream? It was really amazing. I like telling that story to people because, you know, if you know that there's something deficient or wrong in society, and you go out to change it and make it better, it often can become a job. And sometimes uhm... that job is going to be very fulfilling.

BETSY WEST:

I wonder what you think about women's attitude towards power, ambition?

01:05:00

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I have always been ambitious. Uhm... people always laugh at my- my own running ability because, you know, basically on paper I don't have talent, but I'm willing to do the miles and willing to do the hard work. I was also always willing to be the person stay late in the office, in fact all night sometimes, to get the job done. Uhm...and it- it paid off. I had tremendous stamina and

endurance to do that, but it was-- I was ambitious. I really wanted to be successful.

BETSY WEST:

What about women along the way, both as a runner, but also I'm thinking professionally? Have women been very supportive? Have you seen them as allies or otherwise?

01:05:38

KATHRINE SWITZER:

It's interesting in business about how women perceive other women. And when I first started in business, there were not a lot of executive women. I was often always the first who got a salary rather than punching a time card. I was always the-- I was the youngest manager, or I was the youngest director, etc. Then-- and there were two factors working here. One, I wasn't afraid of the male environment because I had trained and worked with men, so I felt unintimidated in business meetings and-and in confrontational situations. The other thing is there weren't a lot of other women who were there to be role models for me, but the ones who were there, I- I think I was pretty fortunate. I didn't get any queen bee syndrome, "I work up the hard way, and therefore you will, too." They were pretty- pretty welcoming. I must say my biggest corporate job was at Avon Cosmetics, which is a women's company. Uhm... most of the executives now, in fact, across the board are women, and uhm... they are really sharp, put together, and uhm...it was a great environment to go up the ladder in.

BETSY WEST:

I'm wondering about your expectations about marriage, relationships, were you brought up that marriage was a given? How did that work out?

01:06:48

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, the personal stuff was always hard. I-- I've got to say... I wrote about this. I said I could face any business or athletic situation, but the domestic stuff at home, cleaning a bathtub in New York City was always the thing that drove me to tears, I mean because I could never keep up with that. Uhm... but-- and- and that's what made me understand how difficult it is to balance the domestic stuff and the family as well as a career. I never had kids by choice. Part of the reason was is I married the wrong guys until I got 40, and by then I just really wanted to enjoy this wonderful man, Roger Robinson.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Kathrine Switzer & Roger Robinson

KATHRINE SWITZER:

But if I had married Roger when I was 24, I wonder, you know, if we would've had a family. We probably would've. If I would've been as successful as I became, I doubt it. I don't think you can stay in your office overnight, and I don't think you can go on six weeks trips to- to China, Japan, and Malaysia to break down athletic barriers for women and create events when you've got little kids at home. Uhm... I think it's very, very hard, and women who have- have made that balance uh... have my greatest, greatest respect. Do I regret

not having children is of course the question everybody asks me. No, quite frankly, but I'm lucky because every time I see a woman out running, I say she's one of mine. So I've got a couple million women out there who are-- who are my own children, I feel.

BETSY WEST:

Talk a little bit about the sort of expectations about what gives in these family pressures?

01:08:20

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, in terms of family pressures, you know, I-- I'll never forget, you know, the only-- one of the few times I was really kind of bitter was I was home late i- in the afternoon on a commuter train, and I got off the commuter train with all these men, and the men were met by their women-- their wives in the car. The women got out of the cars, and they were in their tennis outfits and things, and I'm saying, "Well, no wonder they're successful. They've got somebody running the show at home who's, you know, handling all of that and probably doing the bills and- and paperwork as well as running the house and managing. Boy, I'd really like a wife, too. You know, that would be terrific." And then I thought, "Boy, you know, this is-- it's such a hard balance." I don't know how women can do it.

01:09:00

KATHRINE SWITZER:

It was a sad thing. I think I was as-- maybe one of the last generations, and maybe it exists now, but not as bad that- that women were expected to give



up their careers for the family. Uhm... to the point where certainly I remember once, you know, in one job uh... I'll never forget my boss telling me, he said, "You know," he said, "If I'd hired a guy for your job, I would've had to pay him twice the salary." I mean, you know, I could've sued him for that, and I didn't even realize it. I took it as a really left-handed compliment. But it's just absolutely amazing. But now what is wonderful is people are seeing the value of women's work and the value of women's contribution to the family as well in different ways, and it's shared often. I see it in running a lot. I see where uh... in a couple where they have a c- and let's say uh several children, the guy will do his run at a certain time. She watches the kids, and then he will watch the kids so she can do her run, and they balance their lives like that. I find it very, very healthy.

01:10:00

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Often the guy said, "Well, it's my year to do the Boston marathon, but she gets to run the New York City marathon." So they trade off. It didn't used to be that way.

BETSY WEST:

Yeah, you didn't get to trade off with your first husband that much.

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Tell me about it.

BETSY WEST:

Was that hard for you after you'd entered the Boston marathon and done all of that in the next year?

01:10:20

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I could tell you so many stories about my first marriage that would make you laugh and make you cry, but well I think one of the hardest things is- is that I, too, kind of believed that somehow his career and his Olympics was going to be more important than my career because I was always told, "Well, you're just a jogger. You know, you can run a marathon, but you're still not really very good." But what happened is- is that I would get up at five in the morning and go run because then I had to go to work to support us. Uh, and then I would run again in the afternoons a- a- when I got home, and then I would go to night-- to graduate school. Now, how I kept up this pace is really quite amazing, but the astonishing thing is- is when you run hard and train hard, you get better, and I got really better, and I got a lot better as a runner than he ever got as a hammer thrower.

01:11:03

KATHRINE SWITZER:

So, unfortunately, what happens in that kind of relationship then is the other person becomes very jealous instead of supporting you and saying, "Hey, you know, you're becoming a really great runner. You know, let's work out this together," he just became very, very jealous of, you know, "You're basic, no talent, and I'm the talent," and feeling that the world deserved-- owed him a living. Uhm... and it was really sad that that relationship ended. Uhm... but it was bound to happen.

BETSY WEST:

What did you think of the women's movement?

01:11:27

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Early on in my life, I did believe certainly in the women's movement. I believed that women should be entitled to every opportunity that men had, that- that they certainly should get paid for equal work. I didn't understand why it was necessary to barge int- what I felt barging into men's places, men's only clubs, for instance. Like, who'd want to sit at McSortley's Bar anyway? And- and it's just a smoky old place. You know, pay-- give me some childcare here, you know. That's- that's really what I thought- thought the issue was, so that we could succeed in our careers. I thought that was really critically, critically important. But one thing that very much upset me is that after my first Boston Marathon in 1967, there were members of the women's uh...lib movement who tried to appropriate my running the Boston Marathon as a- a gesture for uh the women's lib movement, and uhm... it-- that wasn't the situation at that point for me. I wasn't trying to prove, when I ran the race, that I deserved to run the race. I just assumed that I deserved to run the race, and it was only afterwards that I really realized that it was a big issue, but it- it wasn't something they had done, and I felt that they shouldn't appropriate that, that they should go out and run and ex- understand what other issues we were fighting for in the sports movement.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Women's Liberation Movement  
Washington, D.C, August 26, 1970

BETSY WEST:

What do you mean by that, and what were they doing that annoyed you?

01:12:44

KATHRINE SWITZER:

The-- one of the things that most annoyed me is- is that, "Please come to our women's lib movement because all men are horrible and prevent us from doing thing," and I said, "No, no, that's not true. In running, the men were the people who helped me the most. My coach was a guy." And they said, "Oh, no. All men are like Jock Simple, and they don't want us to run in the-- uh... they e- they're putting up roadblocks, and they're preventing us in all areas of society," and I said, "No, I don't think that's true. I think you need to go out and do it and get involved with them and to show them, and- and to show that- that we can do these things." So I- I really objected to that kind of appropriation. It wasn't until much later when I realized that these women couldn't understand until they had the opportunity that the-- they were going to change, and that's why I kept saying, "Please, let's create these sports opportunity because if you can feel the power uh from the opportunity, then change will happen."

BETSY WEST:

Do you think of yourself as a feminist?

01:13:38

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I think of myself as an ardent feminist. But, you know, the definition of feminist is only someone who believes in equality. I used to say, "I'm not a feminist. I'm a humanist." Well, sorry, a feminist is a humanist.

BETSY WEST:

When did you make that switch?

01:13:54

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I think I made that switch when I was about 28, and I realized that the definition of a feminist is- is somebody who just believes in equality. And there are plenty of men who are feminists, too.

BETSY WEST:

Why do you think so many younger women consider the word feminist a kind of dirty word?

01:14:11

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I think the younger generation doesn't understand. I mean they better go to a dictionary, and uhm... I think that they are worried about, you know, some kind of movement, maybe that's quite radical bra burning, uh.. w-when in fact it's only about equality. It's only about opportunity, and it is only about humanistic-- I- I just-- in sport I just keep coming back to it, because to me when you look at the future of sport, we're going to be doing things as men and women together, not just going out and running and jogging together, but

events that are team events together. This is going to be the future of sport where men with their power and strength and speed are going to combine with women's flexibility, endurance, and stamina, and create a team that goes the distance in many, many w- I-- we cant even imagine what the event is right now, but I'm throwing this out into the public to say you guys, this next generation, you think of it. Nobody believed that women could run a marathon, and we did that. So let's think of the next thing.

01:15:04

KATHRINE SWITZER:

There are many events, for instance, that are, like, uh.. a-- six day events or endurance events or eight-- eco-challenge events, and the guys will even admit that it is the women who are bringing the team home. The guys are pushing from the front, but it's the women who are bringing the team home, not just because they have more endurance capability, but perhaps because of our inborn capability of being mothers that we have the ability to cope with stress while we are fatigued, and we are finding that we're in an orienteering when you're totally exhausted after three days of running and can't read the map any more, the women can still be calm and- and can- can figure it out. Well, you know, if you've got six or seven babies at home screaming their heads off, and you're-- haven't slept for three days, and you can still cope, that-- maybe that comes into play.

BETSY WEST:

Do you think that younger women understand the way it used to be for you and other women?

01:15:54

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, I'm not sure that younger women understand the way it used to be for me, but uhm they find it fascinating, and I find that really very, very wonderful. Uhm my mother never expected me to understand the way it was for her. You don't as a mother or the-- or a pioneer. You just want people to follow and go on to the next level, so when I find that young women are fascinated by it, I'm thrilled because I know that they're going to just kind of pick up the baton and go to the next step.

BETSY WEST:

Did you look back and think of the women upon whose shoulders you were walking in any way? Or did you see yourself as kind of an original?

01:16:28

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I think I'm a little embarrassed to say that I didn't think of a lot of other women who broke barriers. I mean, I certainly knew about Susan B. Anthony. I knew about Gertrude Ederle, but I didn't think of me standing on their shoulders as much as I really did. I had no idea that the fight for women in- in the vote took as long as it did and that it was as terrible a fight uh... as it was, and so I'm ashamed of that, but fortunately you come to that knowledge later in your life, and it's really interesting. Now, uh.. uh.. let's say in television if I'm interviewing a young woman runner, I understand exactly her whole life what she's- she's doing, but she doesn't know I've already been through that, and

so she's explaining things to me in a very simplistic way, and I say, "Yes, I- I do understand that.

BETSY WEST:

The Women's Movement has been criticized sometimes as being focused on issues that really only matter to educated middle class white women. Do you think this is a fair critique?

01:17:27

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I don't, actually, but I think that probably the women who have the courage and the education to lead the drive certainly are talking to their peer group. I mean we have-- let's just say the- the Mid East or- or in Africa, you know, we had a tremendous, tremendous need to go there, but uhm how can we reach them if there aren't people there who are spreading the word? Fortunately, again, I come back to running. You know, uh.. uh.. in Africa, the Kenyan women uh.. s- some of them are just incredibly third class citizens. It's just terrible to see women traded, you know, when they're young as a wife for cattle and that kind of stuff, and yet I see such hope with the women runners who are coming out of Kenya. They win prize money, and they go back to their villages, and they're building schools and inoculating kids and sanitizing water. They are changing the social fabric of those countries and their villages, and they are now taking an active role in politics. That's where the change is going to be happening. So we can only do as much as we can do, but uhm.. yes, uhm.. it's- it's happening. I- I don't find that a criticism.



# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

BETSY WEST:

Did you ever read the *Feminine Mystique*?

01:18:32

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I remember Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* so very well because it was right at the top of my consciousness when I first showed up on the golf course with the men's cross country team at Syracuse University, and I think they're going to say-- this is the eve of the women's liberation movement, you know, and- and these guys are going to think, you know, I'm- I'm a- a crusader or something, but yeah, certainly I remember that book, and interestingly enough all these years later, I'm reading it again. It really holds up, too.

BETSY WEST:

Did, uh—the Miss America protests? Any of those things? Do you remember that?

01:19:02

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Yes, but, you know, I- I gotta tell you I really thought the whole Miss America pageant was awfully silly, too. And uhm... yeah, I wasn't really to protest it because I thought a woman should be able to be in the Miss America pageant if she wanted to be in the Miss American pageant, but one of the- the things I loved was when they finally started at least getting uh...scholarships and educational opportunities. Uhm... and I just felt that- that women could do anything, that they didn't have to not do something because it was, you know, pandering to the male establishment is- is the way that that was portrayed.

01:19:34

KATHRINE SWITZER:

There was a part of the Women's Liberation Movement that did upset me a lot that was you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. So, for instance, in my case here's another running thing, I ran in little tennis dresses because shorts were not designed for even men in those days or women to run in, and they really badly chafed your legs. So I realized that I was very-- ran very well in my hockey tunic. I could run in a little tennis dress, and I looked pretty good as well. So I took an unmitigated amount of grief for this because I was looking too girly girl, and I was pandering to the male establishment, and I thought, "I am just trying to prevent my legs from chafing." Now here we are 45 years later, and the running skirt is all the rage, and I think it is so great we can do anything we want to do. But to run in a pink running skirt in 1971, oh, forget it.

BETSY WEST:

Would people say things to you?

01:20:29

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Absolutely, "What are you trying to prove?" You know, "Are you trying to," you know, I-, "What, are you trying to pick up guys or something?" Oh, just ridiculous, you know, I just, you know, blew them off, but it was-- it was very annoying and hurtful, and I said, "No, I'm just trying to keep my legs from chafing. That's all."

BETSY WEST:

Do you remember Roe v. Wade?

01:20:45

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Who could've ever forgotten Roe v. Wade, I mean we- we were so pro-choice uhm... in- in those days, and we had, you know, many experience among our friends uh.. hearing terrible stories about, you know, botched abortions, and it, you know, to me it was a total non-issue that women didn't have choice. I- I couldn't believe it, and so when we got the Roe v. Wade uhm decision that was wonderful. I think what concerns me now is- is young women today maybe don't understand how important it is uhm... and uhm... therefore, uh.. you're always in danger of losing something if you don't defend it.

BETSY WEST:

What about politics, Geraldine Ferraro, Hillary Clinton? Do you have memories of female politicians? Is this something on your radar or mean anything to you?

01:21:30

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Yes, of course. I mean I remember Geraldine Ferraro's political move and, of course, you know, Hillary Clinton and I really feel uh... very badly for them because the country just wasn't ready for them, and it-- and it was great loss. I remember voting for Bill Clinton because I thought I was getting a two for one special because he's a very bright man with an incredibly bright wife, and it seems to me that you don't go to bed at night and not talk about how the

day went and ask for each other's advice, and uhm... I thought, you know, if you had somebody that's that bright-- that bright behind you uh.. it's going to be good for the country. Uh.. so, yeah, I find right now it's still going to be a long haul uhm... just as it's being a very difficult haul for President Obama right now because the country just has to adjust to the fact that uhm.. we need sensitive, intelligent people uhm... who can make correct decisions uhm... and not be biased by other thoughts.

BETSY WEST:

We've now had three female Secretaries of State. We've had a female candidate for president. A woman has been named the head of the Democratic Party, but you also look at Fortune 500 companies. I'm looking at the statistics here, women occupy 15 percent of board seats, 3 percent of the CEOs. There's still a 23 percentage point earnings gap between men and women, and a lot of women go to graduate school, and then they drop out. I mean, what's going on here do you think?

01:22:58

KATHRINE SWITZER:

We have these two tracks happening, you know, there- there are more opportunities than ever, and we, I think, have men who are more accepting of women than ever, but I think often it's really hard uhm to live up to all the expectations that you have, and I think that sometimes people get tired, and I think that also we still have the same reality of being at home, and, "My life is going past," and, "When am I going to have kids?" And I think kids deserve everything you can give them, and so you don't want to be anything less for

them and that maybe you can catch up later. I think that maybe that's what it is. I don't know. But uhm I- I am incredibly disappointed that there's still a wage gap. I find that one of the most shocking. I don't find it shocking that there are less women in corporate uh.. uh.. chairman uh.. uh.. or chairpersons, rather, of w- Fortune 500 Companies because that does require sort of a 24/7 kind of job. And maybe they're just not willing to do that. I think they know they can, though. I think that's the difference is I-- that- that the opportunity is there if they're willing to sacrifice and go for it.

BETSY WEST:

So, title IX.

01:24:13

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, I remember when Title IX was passed because it was an amazing year, 1972, 1972 women were official in the Boston Marathon in April. In early June we had the-- organized here in Central Park the first ever women's only road race called the Crazy Legs Mini Marathon, women only. Then Title IX was passed, the Quality of Education Amendment. We didn't understand, many of us, me in particular, that that would have huge impact in sports. I thought it was absolutely essential because it was equality of education in ever federally uh.. funded institution, so that-- or that seems absolutely right to me. But by the 1984 Olympics it was profound, the change it had made and changing the attitudes of our schools. It's still not perfect. There's still controversy about it, but I'll tell you it has changed this country phenomenally, and it has been absolutely fantastic.

BETSY WEST:

Can women use their sexuality as empowerment?

01:25:11

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, it is interesting that women can use their sexuality for empowerment. A lot of women, we couldn't say this before uh.. uh.. I think in the women's liberation uh.. radical time in the late '60, early '70s because it was not the thing to say, but sex is f-, is powerful. Sex does make you feel strong. You know, uh.. uh.. plenty of women have used sex for centuries uhm.. as- as- as a powerful tool. Uhm... we feel sexy. When we run, we feel sexy. You feel your body. You move. You love what you can do. Uhm.. s- and I think that- that sexiness isn't like just sexual. It's also sensuous. It's body awareness. I love the fact that Madonna's out there strutting her stuff. I love the fact that young girls can go out and run in a skirt now and bra top. I think it's- it's fantastic that they're enjoying their bodies, and they don't have a sense of uhm.. restriction, and I think it's very important.

BETSY WEST:

Do you think it's gone too far when you look at very young girls trying to dress in a sexy way?

01:26:17

KATHRINE SWITZER:

If I were a parent, of course I would be very concerned about that because I would be very concerned about the images that young girls get about uhm.. is

this the only way to be. That's what makes parenting even more important in- in showing alternatives and showing y- you know, accomplishment in strength and accomplishments are the-- are key, not just sexiness. But sex has been around forever, and it's going to be there, and I think that, you know, yes, I think you- you have to be careful with your children that way, but uhm.. little girls are always going to want to gravitate to- to lipstick and makeup dolls. You know, you could take uh.. a boy and a girl and raise them exactly the same, and they're- they're going to be that way, but the important thing is to give girls the opportunity and to be able to make the choice.

BETSY WEST:

What's your advice to young girls?

01:27:10

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I think my advice to young girls is to realize that they have every opportunity in the world if they'll go after it and that- that restrictions are often only opportunities for them and that opportunities can even become a job and that uhm.. that they need to believe in- in themselves by proving to themselves that they can do something. That's why to me sport, running in particular, is very, very important because they get a sense of getting back what they put into something. The more you put into running, let's say, the more you're going to get back, and the bigger the sense of accomplishment. But I think it is really critical for young girls to go out and try and to not put up artificial barriers in front of themselves.

# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

BETSY WEST:

How do you feel when you're identified as the first woman to officially run in the Boston Marathon? How do you feel about that?

01:28:03

KATHRINE SWITZER:

Well, first of all I'm very proud of being the first woman to officially run the Boston Marathon, but I really don't want to just be identified as that barrier breaker because the incident that happened to me happened to me. I didn't create the incident. What I really would rather be remembered for is somebody who created opportunities for millions for women to go- go beyond their self-imposed sense of limitation uhm... and to even get-- help get the women's marathon into the Olympic Games. That is what I'd like to be remembered for. But, yes, in terms of helping anybody along the route, I am very pleased with that.

BETSY WEST:

That's a wonderful legacy.

01:28:47

KATHRINE SWITZER:

It is a nice legacy. Uhm.. as I say, you know, not having children of my own to go out and see a woman running, and to feel like that's one of my daughters is an extraordinary feeling. But I think even more is to receive a letter from somebody who never believed they could do something uhm... to say, "I started running, and I just put one foot in front of the other, and I've lost 200



pounds, and I ran the Boston Marathon, and I know I can do anything." That to me is really overwhelming and makes me feel better than anything.

END TC: 01:29:22

KATHRINE SWITZER:

I could see that women's opportunities were key, so that women themselves would believe in themselves. And would, also, then, have the opportunity to get match tough, to get-- to train up to the marathon distance. And they needed this un-intimidating environment. So I was organizing races like crazy. But the goal, to me, always was to get the women's marathon into the Olympics. And, of course, it was like a pipe dream. Because the longest event was still 800 meters until-- uhm.. until the uh...1972 Olympics, when they finally let in the 1500 meters. And that was a big deal. But at- at that rate of progress, it was gonna be 2012 before a marathon was gonna be in for women, if we took it an- an event at a time. And I knew that we had the talent. And we also had the endurance capability. And that's another thing that was important is to refute the medical myth. And replace it with good valid medical data. And we had plenty of doctors who were working with women, showing that indeed we'd had- had the capacity for endurance and stamina.

KATHRINE SWITZER:

You know, women's attributes are flexibility, balance, stamina, and endurance. Men are speed, power, and strength. It doesn't mean one is better than the other. It means we're different. And we haven't, and we're just now beginning to explore the opportunities for women in these uh.. other attributes. So that sports may be completely changed from what you and I know at this moment. But at that point, it was to get the women's marathon in the Olympic games. Because that was the official huge world forum, the pinnacle of achievement. And people, women themselves in fact, wouldn't take themselves seriously in distance running, until it was in the Olympic games. There were many women I knew who were incredible runners. People like Greta Vites [ph?], for instance. Here's a very good example. Who was running 1500 meters, winning the world cross country championship. It never occurred to be-- her to be a marathon runner, because it wasn't in the Olympic games. And it wasn't until she came on an invitation for a vacation to run the New York City Marathon and won it in a world record, did she begin to realize that the- the marathon is valid. So when we got, then, the marathon into the Olympics, the world would know and women themselves would know. That became the object.

KUNHARDT **FILM** / FOUNDATION