ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS INTERVIEW
MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

Rochelle "Shelly" Lazarus
Businesswoman
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Interviewed by Chris Durrance
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START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Makers: Women Who Make America

Kunhardt Film Foundation

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Rochelle "Shelly" Lazarus

Businesswoman

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Businesswoman

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CHRIS DURRANCE:

Let's start with your childhood, where you grew up, your family…

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
Well, I grew up in New York. I was the oldest of three children, I had two brothers. My father was a CPA, he had a small firm. My mother was a classic homemaker, wife and mother. And I had a very sort of normal childhood. I grew up in the suburbs and then my parents came back to the city, actually. Dangerous move when I was going into high school. And so it was just sort of a normal 1950's suburban childhood. Very happy and good.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Did you have a sense of possibilities as a woman? I mean, was there a sense that career, job, as you were growing up would be part of your horizon?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
No. I actually never thought about having a career. I mean, I presumed because of the time in which I grew up, that I would be a wife and mother and that would be fulfilling and that would be the end goal. And so, no, I never had aspirations that way, but on the other hand, I never had a sense that a woman couldn't do anything. And I went to an all women's college, which made a huge difference. So I went to Smith.

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And I always said that I didn't realize it at the time but afterwards, when anybody said to me that a woman couldn't do something, I just found it

completely preposterous ‘cause I had gone to college with two thousand women who could do anything. They were the most capable, competent, achievement oriented, successful people I had ever met. They had happened to be women. So actually being educated that way through college made an enormous difference.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
So when did that change for you?

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ROCHELLE “SHELLY” LAZARUS:
Well, for me, it's- I'm probably the only person who went to get an MBA to get married—and I don't mean to meet the guy. It was 1968. My boyfriend, who's now my husband, was in medical school and we wanted to get married and somebody had to earn a living. And in 1968, if you wanted to enter the commercial world and you were a woman, you had to type. Now, you could pick where you typed.

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You could type in an advertising agency or type in a law firm, or you could type in some big corporation, but you'd be typing and I just thought that was an awful prospect. And I must have looked so crestfallen at some interview when some recruiter was telling me this, that she said, “I bet if you got an

MBA, they couldn't make you type." And this wasn't even a sure thing, it was a hypothesis.

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And so I- Frankly, I didn't know what an MBA was, but I found out and I went to Columbia. My husband—was my fiancé at the time—was at Columbia Medical School. I discovered that not only did Columbia University have a business school, but that you could go through it in fifteen months because they had a full summer semester. So I enrolled four days after I graduated from Smith. I enrolled in the MBA program at Columbia Business School.

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I went from an all women's college to a class of three hundred, where there were four women, five days later. And so, kind of like, the rest is history. But I definitely- I had no career aspirations when I went to Columbia. I just needed to get married, I needed to earn money and I didn't want to type.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And being one of the four women, how were you treated by the other students, by the professor?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
Oh, I was- We stood out. Oh, there was no question that we were… You know that old saying, "If you can't be smart, be memorable?" We were very

memorable, and I actually recall there was a finance professor at that time who used to blush when I walked into the room. I mean, he was very pale and blonde, and you could actually see the color rise into his face when I walked into the room. So we were very unusual. In some instances, it was a really good thing.

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I remember a operations research professor who told me—he told me this—that he had three daughters so he really helped me 'cause I wasn't the most quantitative person that the world had ever seen. And so he helped me, kind of, as a daughter. There were- In four of five instances, I was asked if I would help these professors with their research or be the reader or… So I was always sort of singled out in some way for some special task. But everybody knew that I was in the room.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
When did the career- when did business as a lifelong pursuit start?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
I will go back to when I was like nine or ten. I was actually quite interested in the stock market. I'm not sure why, but at the age of ten or eleven, my father bought me some stock and we started to have a conversation about the stock market and about business and I started to… You know, it was ITT, I even

remember. We started to track this company. So I always had some interest. When I got to Columbia Business School, I started to take marketing courses and I really, really liked them.

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So it was not just, kind of, getting through it. That was the reason I went there in the first place, but once I arrived, I actually realized I really like this. I was fascinated by marketing. And then after three semesters, I couldn't go four semesters straight through, I actually worked as an intern at General Foods, which is now Kraft, and I loved it. I just loved it. We introduced a new product, Maximum Freeze Dried Coffee, nationally. So I rolled out a product.

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Two, it was the time of the Vietnam War so two of the guys who were working on this brand, had to go into the reserves for five months, and because it was just five months, they weren't going to replace them. So I actually came in and I did the work of two men—two experienced men—I had no idea what I was doing, but I just loved it. So from that point on, I was smitten. I was taken with it and I still love business. I still love business problems.

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I'm fascinated about why people make the decisions they do. I'm fascinated about how you can get people to change their perceptions of things. And so, it's just been just total fascination for me from the time I entered business school.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
What was it about advertising in particular?

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ROCHELLE “SHELLY” LAZARUS:
I graduated from business school and I went to the client’s side. I went to work for Clairol. And as I was there, it did occur to me that the time that everybody got really excited, the time you could sort of see your ideas come to life, was when the agency came. And so it's just because so much of marketing—so much of business I would argue—is ideas.

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And so I got very intrigued by what the agency, how agencies worked and then I got a call. I love Clairol. I mean, I had a great time. I introduced Herbal Essence, which is still a great brand. It was the ultimate marketing challenge. The Senior Vice President came in, put this green stuff- It was just sort of a clear bottle of green stuff on my desk, and he said, "Smell this." And it smelled fantastic. And he said, "Okay. Now we need to-" He had brought it from the UK.

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He said, "We need to figure out how to introduce this in the United States." And so, it was really creating a brand. But while I was there I got a call from a headhunter who said that Ogilvy was looking for someone who knew something about hair, because there was a Unilever shampoo that they had

the assignment for and they needed someone to work on that. So I thought, "I love Clairol. I'm never going to go to Ogilvy." But while I was a t General Foods as an intern, Ogilvy was actually the agency. So I knew these guys.

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So I said, "Well, I'm never going to go there, but I haven't seen them in awhile. I'll just go and say hello." And I got completely seduced and sucked in. And I decided, "Well, I'll go to Ogilvy for two years." So two or three years on the client side, two or three years on the agency side, and then I would figure out what I would do for the rest of my life. And I went there and I never left.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
You mentioned '68, and this is a fascinating time in an open history book. Civil rights, you got the war, and then you got a burgeoning women's movement. I think the Miss America protest is '68, for example. 1970 is the march, the big march, hundreds and thousands on Fifth Avenue. Talk about that—those times, as well, what that meant for you personally.

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
It just made you think about a lot of things. I mean, and… The Women's Movement in particular, it wasn't that big an issue for me. This seems odd to say, but I never in my own head thought a woman couldn't do anything. I

mean, ‘cause I would think about it personally and go, "I'm just gonna go get what I want and no one’s going to stop me."

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But it was very encouraging. It was heartening. It sort of propelled me forward to think it's not just me. It’s “women are gonna take over the world," was the feeling. And also just on the university front, that was the time when all the Ivy League schools were opening up their classes to women. Because when I graduated from Smith, I mean Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth—they were all all-male.

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Amherst, just down the street. And it was just a year or two after that the universities started to say, "Well, now maybe we’ll actually take women as well." So it was a time of enormous change.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
For some women, they talk about having to fight for it, having to struggle for it. It wasn’t like the door’s ajar and you just have to push it open. But it was, you did have to pick the lock, you did have to batter the door down…

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ROCHELLE “SHELLY” LAZARUS:
No, I never felt I had to batter the door down actually. I sort of… In retrospect, I think I was so naive, and there's no question when I interviewed

as I was finishing Columbia Business School and all the recruiters would come, I mean, there were people who said things to me like, "We only have like, five slots for entry level people and we couldn't waste one on a woman." Or someone else said to me, “We'd love to hire you but what would the other employees' wives say if you had to work late with their husbands?"

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I mean, these were things that were perfectly okay to say in 1970. And you just look back and you go, "I can't believe that people said these things." But again, in retrospect, what's more unbelievable is that I didn't stand up, pound the table and walk out the door. All I did was say, "Thank you very much. I guess this wouldn't be a good place for me to work." And you just sort of accepted- you accepted discrimination. And so I just said, "Well, I'll keep going until I find a place that's happy to have a woman."

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Or more importantly, where it doesn't matter that I am a woman. And so, I guess I wasn't very political in that sense. I was just kind of… I'm almost—and this is not a word but—undauntable. You can say all these things to me and I would just go on to the next interview until I finally found happiness at some places where they were actually happy to have a woman.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Talk about advertising at that time as well. I mean, was the advertising as egregious as some of those job interviews sound?

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ROCHELLE “SHELLY” LAZARUS:
Oh, yeah. Oh, no, no, the advertising- it wasn't that it was egregious. The assumption was that a woman's worth was actually measured by how clean her husband's shirts were and how well fed her children were. And so the advertising was a total reflection of that. And… it didn't seem wrong. I mean, that's the other thing, is you go, "Well, that's right. That is how women sort of, think about most women, think about their worth."

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And there was this- I mean, Ogilvy even did this commercial where… it was all about- they called the Maxwell Housewives. And the value of these women was measured by how good a cup of coffee she made. And you kind of think back and you go, "That was okay with women? That actually was motivating to them?" But the truth was, it was.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Famously, when you read about advertising today, people talk about the importance of women because they’re doing the bulk of purchasing decisions. Was that the case then as well?

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ROCHELLE “SHELLY” LAZARUS:

Oh, they were doing the bulk of the- Oh, no, no, definitely. Women were… All this advertising was to women. I mean, it was about men approving them, but all the advertising was definitely directed to women because they were… Most of the packaged good products that were being advertised at the time were being purchased by women and supermarkets. And so this is one of the ways I derived all my power at the start,-

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-was when there was no woman in the room, ever, at the start of my career, there would invariably come this moment when we were looking at advertising and trying to make a decision on what advertising to run, where the whole room would kind of turn to me and go, "Well, Shelley, what do women think?" And I would be speaking on behalf of all women in the world. Which actually was ridiculous on the one hand, but on the other hand, I had a better idea than most of those guys. So I wielded enormous power for years, way beyond what my station was.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
When I look at the time, I'm thinking that you're there, you're starting out at a period of fascinating change.

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:

During the early years, I mean, I watched the transition when we went from making the assumption the woman was the housewife to she became superwoman all the sudden, somewhere in the interim. And then we had these commercials about doing it all, about, "I get up at five in the morning and I clean the bathroom and then I get breakfast for my family and then I put on a suit and I go to work and I do all that and then I come home and have a dinner party and then I plop into bed, gorgeous and fulfilled at midnight with my husband."

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Which were equally absurd, but at least we were getting into a more interesting portrayal of a woman. And it was more affirming, I think, of what women could do and women's aspirations.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Talk about the agency's perspective. Was this a difficult transition?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
No. No. I actually don't think it was difficult for the agency. I mean, what happened was also, that I'd say two or three years after I joined Ogilvy, that some more women started to come in. And that wasn't as important as that some women started to be present at the clients', because a one-way dialogue doesn't work. But more women came into the workforce in general.

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And so, it wasn't that women's issues came forward or anything like that, but there was just a more balanced conversation about different things. And so… it sort of had a natural evolution to it, and there was not sort of some one great moment where everyone said, "Okay. Our target has changed. We're not going to talk to housewives anymore." I'd say it was a slow transition with a series of refinements, correction… and eventually got to a place where women were being portrayed as women were.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And so talk about Maxwell House. I mean, I presume you kept them through that period. I mean, how did that change?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
We went to a woman owning a store, which was- So it was… Margaret Hamilton played Cora for years. The woman who played the Wicked Witch of the West in The Wizard of Oz. And the storyline was that she owned a store in the country, and the only kind of coffee that she sold was Maxwell House. But here at last, you had an entrepreneur. There was a woman entrepreneur named Cora who had Maxwell House coffee.

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And so that was, again- I don't think anyone at the time realized that this was a major change. But if you look at the history of Maxwell House advertising, it was a huge change to actually portray a woman as an owner of something.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
What are the other signature-sort of these big, signature ads of the period that really embraced this change…

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
One of the more fascinating projects I've ever done was for American Express. And American Express at its start, as it was just achieving scale, was all about the card that was used by traveling businessmen. So once you started to travel, once you were a big important guy, once you had a big job and a big career, you'd get an American Express card.

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But what they observed, sometime in the mid 80's, was there were all these women in the workforce but they didn't have an American Express card. And so we went out and we did focus groups, and I recall them, to this day, where there were women sitting around saying, "Well, people like us don't carry American Express cards." And what they were saying was women don't carry American Express cards.

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And so we took on the women's project for American Express and it was as simple as showing women using an American Express card. It was just, you had to get people to think that women in fact have owned, have used American Express cards. And this should not have been that big a moment, to say this, but it just changed women's perception of American Express. They never thought they were allowed in, that they would be invited, that they were part of the community.

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And so as soon as you showed them that there were women who used American Express cards, the floodgates opened. And all these women started to apply for American Express cards. So, this again was a moment in history. It was part of the evolution of women, I would argue, that they could see themselves- It wasn't American Express who didn't see them as card members. It was the women themselves, and as soon as you said, "No, no, no. Come on in. No, no. You're welcome. You're part of this club," they came in droves.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
For feminists as well, it seemed like there was an uneasy relationship. Because on the one hand, the empowerment of women presumably was something they were celebrating. On the other hand, it seemed like Madison Avenue was also coming in—in the late 60's and early 70's—for some stick

from the women's movement about some of the more, what they would call, retrograde ads. I mean, talk about that. Talk about that.

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
There's a lot of debate about the role of advertising in culture and in social change, and having done this for so many years, I can conclude that advertising has to reflect the values of the time. It can accelerate change but it can't create it. Because if it doesn't resonate with what people believe, see, the way they live, then they don't even hear it or see it.

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So I think it's unfair. I always thought it was unfair to put all the burden on advertising and to say, "No. No. You have to show the ideal world. No, you have to show a world where men and women are equal." I mean, because you're just walking a very narrow line, and I think advertising did its job, actually, in most instances of, kind of, pushing the image of women along, even before the majority of women would like the women who were portrayed in the advertising.

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But they're not going to go all the way away to show what would be an unrealistic portrayal of what women are like. With the exception of laundry detergent, which I think took forever to get to a place where it wasn't about how white your husband's shirts are. I actually think- They were the laggards

and eventually they came over to the right side, but I can't explain it. But it just went on forever.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And then body image, it's a really fascinating story there as well. Because it seems like there's a disconnect between what people really do actually respond to and want to see, and what maybe they think- people may dislike the uniformity, the artificial nature of what's portrayed. But… it works? I don't know how to explain it.

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
Well, this is how the whole Dove campaign came about. The campaign for real beauty. It started with some research that- to everyone's horror, revealed that only two percent of women in the world consider themselves beautiful. We did an actual research study that said only two- "Answer. Do you consider yourself beautiful?" Only two percent of thousands of women surveyed in the world said they considered themselves beautiful, so at this point you have to say, "Well then, we need to rethink what the definition of beauty is."

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And Dove set out to kind of start a dialogue about what is real beauty, and started showing women who were beautiful but were out of the prototype. So we had a 98-year-old woman who was beautiful. We had women in their

underwear who were a size twelve, up in Piccadilly on an outdoor billboard. And it was so startling to women to see images like that, which are not the classic images that are usually portrayed in advertising,-

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-that this dialogue started online, with women all over the world about what is real beauty and how do you define it. And then we did this famous film that went online, which actually shows that the beautiful woman that you see on a billboard is not a real woman, that she's retouched, that nobody has cheekbones that high, eyes that wide, lips that beautiful.

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And the thing that was incredible to me—this is kind of the after story—was that you show this film to young girls to show them that no one can look like that and they still want to look that way. It is so deep down in the psyche of young girls, you don't know, where does it start, how does it happen. But it's there. And so can you change it? I'm not sure. Can you have a conversation about it? Yes, definitely.

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So I would take on the responsibility for advertising to start the dialogue, to have the conversation, but I'm not sure you can ever, ever really fix what's deep, deep down, in the hearts and minds of young women.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:

And is it there when you found it? Or is it there because these images are everywhere?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
I think it's both. I think young girls grow up seeing what- Where does your image of beauty come from? Where does your definition of beauty come from? And we know through time, it changes because that's obvious when you just have the evidence of it. But definitely it has some influence. But as I say, even if you show young girls, older women, women who are not size zero and all that, and say, "No, they're beautiful too," they don't really see it and the younger they are, the less they see it. And so it's something we're going to have to continue to talk about and deal with.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
When you come to today, are we going through or have we gone through another shift as big- in terms of women and advertising, in terms of how they're appealed to, how they're portrayed…

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
No. I actually think there's more comfort with women, however they come. I mean, there's sort of a naturalness about it now, which I think is the

healthiest state, is that there's not one view that all women are superwomen, or all women are housewives, or all women are CEO's. It's kind of… Women can make choices now. And they make a million different choices, millions of different choices, and it's all honored and respected. And so I think it's actually quite a healthy place to be.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
What is advertising? How should I explain what you do?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
Advertising, it depends what you mean by advertising. I say, we used to have "Big A Advertising," and now we have "Little A advertising" 'cause everything is advertising actually. And everywhere you go, there are messages about a product or a service or a brand, and it's all advertising. Anything that makes you aware of something, anything that tries to persuade you of the value of something—it's all advertising.

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I always say the most precious advertising that any product has is on the package. The packaging is advertising. So, it's all advertising. The trick is to make sure that there's an idea in the center of it so that it all adds up to an idea about a brand. And I think that's relatively new, that we're paying attention to a whole suite of messages about a brand,-

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-that all have to add up to a perception that something is valuable and it's something that you would like to have, use, rediscover, have part of your life, or whatever the appropriate circumstance is. But it's kind of, everything is advertising now.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Let's go back to Ogilvy then. So you join, and you're the only woman in the room in many instances. How far did you think you could go at that point? Where there role models for you, female role models?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
There were no role models. There were no female role models. There were some women, who I'm still close to now actually, who worked in market research. There were a few creative women- Actually while I was there, the creative head of New York was a woman. She was promoted into that spot. But there were no women on the account side. There were no women on the client side, the business side. And it was…

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I kind of had to make it up as I went along, which was good. I sort of- Somebody said, "How did you dress when you first got to the agency?" And I said, "Well, I didn't have anyone to- who I could model myself on." 'Cause the

creative people walked around like, with little short shorts and things like that, so I just started to wear whatever I wanted to wear. And then I'd say about five or ten years later, when more women came into the workforce, they started to dress like men, to my horror.

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There were these stores that opened in Manhattan that sold suits with white shirts and there were like, ties but they were soft ties, and I thought, "What are these women doing? Why are they dressing that way? So not having a role model, in a way, was good. And all the men became my friends. I mean, I never felt awkward. I never sort of felt that I wasn't invited out to drinks or- I always was. No. I was part of the gang from the beginning.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Was there a moment when you thought, “Ok, now, this is something?”

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ROCHELLE “SHELLY” LAZARUS:
There was never a moment when I actually thought about my career. Ever. I sort of found something I loved to do and I just kept doing it. I never, in all honesty, had a thought about, “How far could I go?” And so, I always say my career was marked by these moments where someone would come into my office and throw another title on me- and usually I was so engaged in whatever I was doing, I wasn't even paying attention. And then an hour later,

I'd think, "Oh God, I'm not ready for that. But fine. Whatever. If that's what they want me to do, okay."

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And it went up that way until I was named CEO, where… there was some sort of symbolism to this, I think. I actually got the call from Martin Sorrell, who's the CEO of the holding company that Ogilvy was part of, asking me if I would be CEO while I was at Field Day at my son's school, standing in the middle of the relay races.

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And I couldn't hear Martin 'cause it was the old days of cell phones, when they weren't very good and they were big and all that. And I kept going, "What? What?" And then I finally said, "Martin. I have to call you back 'cause I can't hear- I think I know what you're saying, but I can't really hear you." And so, it was just sort of the perfect culmination of my career to be standing in the middle of relay races at my son's school, trying to talk on a cell phone, being completely oblivious to the possibility even that I could be CEO, and having to go somewhere else to take the phone call.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
When did it sink in?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:

The idea that I was being asked to be the CEO of the global company didn't sink in until that night actually, when I could get finished with everything else I had to do, and I thought, "That is really pretty cool. This is a company that I've loved, that I've worked at for so long, that I love—continue to love—and now here I am, having this role of CEO."

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And then I thought about the people who had preceded me as CEO, and then I thought, "No. This is actually preposterous. I'm not like those people. I'm not like those big, important, powerful people." But, I was thrilled nonetheless.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
You brought up family. So, through this time, how did you balance?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
Well, I'm often asked the question, "When did I decide to become a working mother?" Which to me is just a ridiculous question. Because what happened was I had a child- I had my first child, and I loved working. So it never dawned on me actually, that I would give up something I loved just 'cause I had a child. So I thought, "I'm just going to make this work." And that's how I went through three children through all the career advancement that I went through.

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And what I've discovered is, you can fit into your life anything you love. And so, you just have to find a job that you love and it kind of works. Now it's not easy. It is not easy. There are some days I cried, for sure ,when it was just so overwhelming. It was usually after I had bought all the Christmas presents, and done the dinner, and then we had to go skiing the next morning and I had to pack for three people, for skiing clothes. It was usually those moments.

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But all in all, you just make it work. And my kids helped, I mean, and my husband was incredible 'cause he was always totally supportive, and we just kind of worked through it. And you can't do it all. No. It's just- you do have to give certain things up. You have to set your priorities, you have to decide what's important to you. There was one day that always sticks in my mind when my son was about to walk out- one of my sons was about to walk out the door and he literally had no buttons on his blazer.

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I mean, there were none on the front. There were none on either of the sleeves. And so I'm not that good of button sewer, I guess. And he knew I was looking at him and looking at the buttons, and he kind of looked down. He said, "Ah God. Brooks Brothers, They just don't make these jackets very well anymore." As if it's not my fault, it's Brooks Brothers fault. So the kids would help. They would help emotionally, and then you go, "You know what? It doesn't matter if he doesn't have buttons on his blazer. If he doesn't care, I don't care."

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And there were days when my kids had holes in their shoes, and so it's just- you just go with the flow and you have to decide I'm not going to let little things that don't matter make me crazy. I know it's important. I know the things that I have to do and I'm not going to let the rest of all that little stuff bother me. And you just kind of, get over it and you just go on with your day.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Back to work now, what was your proudest moment there?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
I don't think there's one proud- that there's a moment. I think what I'm most proud of in general is that I feel that I handed on the leadership of Ogilvy- I'm now the chairman, I gave up being CEO about a year ago. But that I led Ogilvy through fifteen years as CEO, where we reaffirmed the values and beliefs of the founder, and in a time of tumultuous change in our business because of technology and all the new media and all that.

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We're still Ogilvy. We're still- The culture is intact. The values are strong. The belief basis is there as the foundation. And we live through change but the center held.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
What's the standing of women in the industry today?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
Oh, I'd say the industry is at least half women. I always think now, when I walk into a room, that in the 1970s, I would be the only woman, because now when I walk into a room at a company or a conference or whatever it is, there are as many women as there are men. And that's the huge difference. I mean, that's what's happened since the 1970s.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
At the top as well?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
Well, no. There are never enough- there are not enough women at the top. But it is a bit of a numbers game. I mean, and the real issue for me is whether women are staying in the workforce. I mean, that's- There's enormous talent there. I think there's acceptance. I think there's openness. But whether women are willing to hang in there long enough to take some of those roles at the top, is the issue for me. Because when they do, they get them.

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But because it's a numbers game, if the pool only has ten percent women, then you're not going to see as many women at the top. So I think that's where we have to focus now, is how to make the game itself work—rewarding enough, doable while also raising a family. And I'm not smart enough to know the answer to that, but that's where we have to focus.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Where do you see the issues, even if not the answers?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
Well, I think the issues are, how do you balance it? And I do believe that the answer is deep inside the woman, as opposed to at the company. Women are- We're so hard on ourselves. There are women who are really bothered by holes in shoes and no blazer buttons. And if you are, if you can't get beyond that, you're going to drive yourself crazy because you're going to have to give something up.

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So, how to get women comfortable with not being perfect at everything—I mean, that's the game. You can't be the perfect mother, the perfect hostess, the perfect wife, the perfect executive. You're going to have to give something up on all of those dimensions. And what you have to do is figure out for

yourself what you're willing to give up. That's where I think the answer is. Now how do you get women to be more accepting of themselves?

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To let themselves kind of, be a little slack on certain things? I don't know the answer to that. But until that happens, I don't think we're gonna- we're still going to face the issue of having women stay in the workforce.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And I presume you get bombarded with questions from young women, women starting out-

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
Of course. Yes.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
What are you hearing from them? I mean, I presume their expectations are very different.

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:

Well, first of all, I mean, I think they're much more relaxed about the whole thing. And I don't think they have this same sort of linier career aspirations that women did at one time. I mean, I think work for them is somewhat episodic, that they'll do two or three years if it interests them. And then maybe they'll stay home for a while, and then they'll come back and do two or three years at something else. And that might be healthy, actually.

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That might take the pressure off, versus women who have decided that by the age of forty-four, they're going to be a CEO. That's a lot of pressure. So, I think this generation is different. I mean, my daughter who's been very successful is… I think she wants to have this balance and have time to be with her kids. And she works one day a week from home.

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She's a fantastic mother. She goes home when she needs to and she works from home. And so I think everyone's a little more relaxed about things these days and that's got to be for the better.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
You know your business is the meaning of words, and we talked about David Ogilvy's copywriting skills. What is it about the word feminism? Tell me about the word feminism and what it means to you.

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:

To me, feminism has quite a broad meaning. But I know, to a lot of people, it's very politically charged. And it's charged with thoughts like, "Women should be put forward as women." There's a lot of controversy these days about women on boards, which is something I'm involved with. I sit on some boards. On public boards. And people have decided that it is outrageous that women hold so few board seats in major public companies.

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And in Scandinavia, they've put in quotas. Norway now says that forty percent of all seats on any board have to be held by women, which to me is demeaning to women frankly. But the goal is noble. And so, I think it's news to say, feminism, it smacks of all those things, of pushing women forward because they're women, as opposed to opening the world to everybody no matter what their gender is.

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And to me, the second way at it, the openness, the open-mindedness, the "no preconceived notions because someone is a male or a female," would be the ideal state. And this constant harping on, "We need more women, we need more women, we gotta promote more women, you got to put women in," is a less ideal state, but it might be necessary to get to the ideal.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:

Because if you don't have women on selection committees, then you're likely to choose what you're familiar with.

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
It's just true. As soon as you get women in senior management anywhere, you get more women. And I don't know how to explain that, but it's just true so just go with it. We don't have to be too analytic about why that happens. But if you just get more women in senior positions, it'll all work out.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
One of the words we didn't mention was—that's come up a lot in this debate about women, especially women doing that last step to the top—is ambition. What does that word mean- Where do you think that fits in to us today?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
Well, I think ambition is personal. I mean, I think talking about ambition is a way of- "Do women have enough ambition?" I don't know how to answer that. I actually think it's the wrong question. I think it's helping women to define what their own ambition is, and that it doesn't have to be, to have the top role. I mean, a great ambition is to have a job that's completely satisfying with enough time to spend time with your family.

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That's a very legitimate ambition. But I think you have to be somewhat conscious of what your ambition is, and I think it's wrong for society to judge what a woman's ambition should be. I mean, I hate people who go- and it's usually men, who go, "No, you have to be a little more ambitious." Well actually, it's quite personal, what your ambition is.

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And I think that the great thing about living in this age that we're in, is that women are allowed to have any ambition that they can dream of. If you can dream it, you can do it. And that has not been true for most of my life.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
What role does advertising have then, in this debate?

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ROCHELLE “SHELLY” LAZARUS:
Well, I don't think advertising- Advertising always has to shine a light on society. And as I said before, if it's not true to what people experience, it's not that they'll even reject it, it just won't penetrate. It won't have any meaning ‘cause it's not authentic. So I think advertising needs to reflect the lives that people are leading and that's always been true. And that's why you had all the problems in the '70s of, it was reflecting the lives that women were leading in those days.

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But advertising can lead a little bit, but it can't get too far ahead of what public perception is. So shining a light on people who are leading interesting lives… At American Express- We did this great campaign for American Express years ago that we called Interesting Lives. And it was just about all kinds of different lives that people were leading—men and women.

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And it was very successful, because it was not the usual sort of, "You have to do this and this by the age of 42, and this and this and this by the time you're 55." And it was just people who had made different choices.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
You mentioned this sort of, challenge of technology. Can you just flesh that out a bit, unpack that for me? What that disruption…

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
Well, we live in a world now of all this new media. There are thousands of ways to communicate with people. When I started in the advertising business, basically if you did two television commercials and three print ads, you were done for the year. And you would decide whether it should run in the morning or in the evening, or in Ladies Home Journal or Good Housekeeping. But that was about- those were the options you had.

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And now you can just go everywhere. And it's interactive. I mean, that's… When I worked in direct marketing, we used to say everything we did was to try to simulate a conversation, an actual conversation, with a prospect or a customer. Now you can have an actual conversation. So everything has changed. And the way you use those media as advertising media is challenging. We don't know how to do it exactly yet.

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And so we're trying to figure out how do you use the new media as a way to inform and persuade people. And I think we're just in the baby, baby days of figuring that out. But it's completely new. The most creative part of any presentation these days is what I call the media part. Not what you're going to say, but where you're going to say it. And once you figure out where you're going to say it, you're going to have to modify everything that you do in terms of advertising.

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The idea stays the same, but the way you actually communicate it changes enormously as you go across the spectrum. And so, it's just fascinating. And the people who love change, the people who love creativity, they love it. And the people who were just put on this earth to make great television commercials, they don't like it so much.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:

Would Dove be different now? If it was done now, then when it was done.

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
I think Dove would be the same 'cause one of the things that we figured out with Dove was how important the online experience was. And we sent all these people online to start to have a conversation around the world, which is one of the great things about technology in the new media. Not only can you have a dialogue with users, but you can get all your users to have a conversation about your brand. And that's miraculous for a marketer.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Are there gender differences here in the way that men and women use social media? Does one use more than others? Do they respond differently?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
I don't think we know that yet. I mean, I think there are hypotheses about how they use media differently, and especially the social media. But, no, I think we're in this great learning moment now. 'Cause I don't even think you can ask people themselves, how are they going to use the new media. I remember when the iPad came out, the journalists all said, "Well, there's

really no need. No one needs this. It doesn't fill a hole in anybody's life, or you can't now do things that you couldn't do before."

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But people just loved it. So you don't always know what's gonna take off, how people are going to use things. And I think that also, there are sort of curves to everything. You get high usage and then it falls off. You get high usage or it continues on for the rest of life. And that's why it's fascinating. That's why it's much more art than science.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
The most meaningful, most useful piece of advice you've ever received?

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ROCHELLE "SHELLY" LAZARUS:
The most meaningful piece of advice I ever got was from David Ogilvy, who said, "It's always, and only, about people." And that, "The people with the best people always win." And therefore all you have to do as a leader is find the best people, put them in a position where they can be as successful as they can possibly be, and then just keep nurturing them, loving them, and begging them to stay.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:

And the one piece of advice you'd give to a young woman?

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ROCHELLE “SHELLY” LAZARUS:
I'd tell a young woman to find something she loves to do professionally. Because if she doesn't love it, her life will never be in balance. I always say this to young women, "I promise you you're going to love your children. So if you don't love your work, your life will always be out of balance. You'll always resent being away from the thing you loved, doing something that you find frustrating, tedious, unfulfilling. The only prayer you have is to find work you truly love, and just keep at it till you find it.”

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