

**Women of the Senate Oral History Project**

**BLANCHE LAMBERT LINCOLN**  
**United States Senator from Arkansas, 1999–2011**

Oral History Interview  
May 10, 2017

Senate Historical Office  
Washington, D.C.

**AGREEMENT AND RELEASE  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
U.S. SENATE HISTORICAL OFFICE**

I, Senator Blanche Lincoln, agree to participate in the Women of the Senate Oral History Project and understand that the physical audio recordings and transcripts of my interviews are and will remain the property of the United States Senate.

In entering into this agreement, I understand that all or portions of my oral history may be made available to the public in an online feature on the Senate website, may be made available to researchers and may be quoted from, published, or broadcast in any other medium (consisting of all forms of print or electronic media, including the Internet or other emerging, future technologies that may be developed) that the Senate Historical Office may deem appropriate. I also approve the deposit of the recordings and transcripts at the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and any other institution that the Senate Historical Office may deem appropriate.

In consideration for my inclusion in this project, I understand I am entitled to receive a copy of the transcripts of my interviews. While I hereby relinquish any intellectual property rights or interests I may hold in the content of my interviews, I acknowledge that the Senate has the discretion to decide whether or not to make all or any part of my oral history available to the public.

The Honorable Blanche L. Lincoln

Dated: 03/06 / 2019

I, Betty K. Koed, accept the interview of the Honorable Blanche Lincoln for inclusion into the Oral History Project of the U.S. Senate Historical Office.

Betty K. Koed  
Betty K. Koed, U.S. Senate Historian

Dated: 3/15/2019

## Introduction

When Blanche Lambert Lincoln took the oath of office in the U.S. Senate on January 6, 1999, she was the youngest member of that body at age 39. As a member of the House of Representatives (1993–1997) and as a senator, Lincoln enjoyed working across the aisle. She focused on supporting working families, particularly mothers and children, and those living in rural communities. At the time she took the oath of office, Senator Lincoln was raising toddler twins and she describes the challenges of tending to her family’s needs while working in an institution with an unpredictable operating schedule. She brought her perspective as a member of a two-parent working family to bear on many Senate debates, at times challenging her colleagues to consider the value of quality, dependable child care to working families. A 12-year member of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, Lincoln served as its chair from 2009 to 2011, the first Arkansan and first woman to serve in that position. In 2010 Senator Lincoln lost her bid for reelection.

*About the Interviewer:* Katherine Scott is associate historian with the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of the University of Washington, she received a M.A. in history from the University of New Mexico and a Ph.D. in history from Temple University. She is the author of *Reining in the State: Civil Society and Congress in the Vietnam and Watergate Eras*, published in 2013, as well as various articles, essays, and chapters about recent U.S. political history.

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**Women of the Senate Oral History Project**  
**Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln**  
**Arkansas (1999–2011)**

**May 10, 2017**

**KATE SCOTT:** In anticipation of the upcoming centennial of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment providing for women’s suffrage.

**SENATOR BLANCHE LAMBERT LINCOLN:** How wonderful.

**SCOTT:** Yes, we’re really excited about it. We really are. And of course, then, following that, the appointment of the first female senator, Rebecca Felton, in 1922.

**LINCOLN:** Yes.

**SCOTT:** So we are collecting these interviews over the next few years, and we anticipate that by 2020 we’ll have a nice Web presentation where these interviews will be archived for people to look at, to listen to, to read, to use for their scholarly work, we hope. But also to—

**LINCOLN:** I’ve got some wonderful photos. You know, Hattie Caraway from Arkansas was the first woman elected in her own right.

**SCOTT:** Yes.

**LINCOLN:** And when I got elected, it was really interesting, people offered up so many interesting things about her.

**SCOTT:** Yes, she’s a fabulous historic figure in her own right. I mean, so many firsts happened under her tenure in the Senate.

**LINCOLN:** But the funny thing to me was reading the book where they put part of her diary in there and she was appalled at the cost of a cup of coffee.

**SCOTT:** Yes (laughs).

**LINCOLN:** You know, how typical of a woman, who’d been in charge of the household finances, as they were and probably still are—I still am. But you know, to say, “Well, my goodness, they’re ripping us off up here.” You know? “I can make a cup of coffee as good at half the price!”

**SCOTT:** (laughs) And that diary is so precious, isn’t it, as a historic object? We’ve been able to make so much use of it to learn about what the Senate was like in the 1930s, but particularly what it was like for her to be a woman in that environment. Very challenging.

**LINCOLN:** Well, and being torn, because she was in mourning.

**SCOTT:** Yes.

**LINCOLN:** And you know, for a woman at that time, not to wear a hat was a big deal! I can even remember, because both of my grandmothers—oh, one of them would never leave the house without her hat, her gloves, her purse, and all of the accoutrements; handkerchief, the works. Alright, so you tell me when we get started.

**SCOTT:** Well, I would love to get started. And thank you for joining us.

**LINCOLN:** Oh, I'm delighted.

**SCOTT:** I am so happy to have you here with us in the Senate Recording Studio. It's May 10, 2017. And I guess I'd just like to start off with a little bit about your childhood, and ask you if you had female role models growing up.

**LINCOLN:** Oh, absolutely.

**SCOTT:** And what kind of impression did they make on you as a child?

**LINCOLN:** I had a wonderful upbringing. I'm the youngest of four children. My mom and dad were high school sweethearts, and it was really interesting in the sense that both my paternal and maternal grandmothers were very big figures in my life. I grew up in a very small town. My dad was a farmer. And we're a seventh generation Arkansas farm family, so we go way back. I think my grandfather's grandfather was the first listed on the county courthouse books in Monroe County, Arkansas. So it goes way back. And as a matter of fact, one of my cousins used to work for Senator [J. William] Fulbright, and he used to do a lot of our history. And he actually got to be buddies with the Library of Congress. He was over there doing some stuff, and they said, "Well, we're not transcribing the diaries of the soldiers from the Civil War." And they had found reference to the Lamberts, which is my maiden name, and how I was first elected in the House.

But anyway, the women figures in my life were gracious, they were very strong, and they were helpful. I mean, not just in the duties that they had. Both of my grandmothers ran wonderful households. And my maternal grandmother was widowed at a relatively early age. And she was widowed for a long time. She was probably a widow for 30 years. So it really, for multiple reasons, moved her into being kind of a liberated woman before it was really hip to be liberated. She sold real estate. She used to love to go to the coffee shop and listen to the men talk about business. She had a children's shop. She sold clothes, all kinds of things, as a widow, not only to be able to make a living, but also because she enjoyed it. She enjoyed business and she was a great business woman.

My other grandmother was, again, lovely, and a beautiful household, and was very strong, but also very adoring. She adored my grandfather. She adored all of us. She made a big deal over grandchildren, which was lots of fun. My other grandmother did too, but it was kind of in a more fun way, where, you know, we could walk home from elementary school to my other grandmother's, and she would have those little marshmallow circus peanuts? Those orange, horrible—that are just terrible for you? You know? (laughs) I mean, she was the one that would kind of let you go, “Okay, well we're going to have cucumber sandwiches for lunch, and circus peanuts!” And you'd be like, “Okay!” But then my other grandmother, everything was very formal, but it was lovely. And she was always inclusive. She always had Cracker Jacks at her house, for the kids. So anyway, I grew up with women that were strong, that were doers. They were not lazy at all. And they believed very strongly in giving back, whether it was to their community or to their church, and particularly to their family. And so you always felt like anything was possible, because you always had somebody at your back.

And my mom has always been a remarkable woman, in the sense that she's kind of followed both of them. She has always been gracious. Her home is always open. She loves to entertain in her home. And it didn't have to be her own contemporaries, it could be ours. She was famous for birthday parties. When we all got to high school, particularly during integration, she was very warm and open to our classmates in high school, an integrated high school, which was wonderful, at the time. She also was a business woman, because Dad was a farmer. She kept the books. Mother had actually been able, at a time when it was unusual for women to go to the state university without going to a woman's college first. Her older sister spent two years at Mary Washington, which then was a woman's college, and then came back to the University of Arkansas. And my mother was the youngest of three, and she convinced both her older sister and older brother to convince my grandmother that it would be perfectly fine for her to go as a freshman to the University of Arkansas. And Mother was very smart. I mean, back then, a home ec[onomics] degree required organic and inorganic chemistry, animal husbandry, microbiology—it was a serious degree. And amazingly, when she finished school and had done really well, at a time when, again, women were mostly becoming nurses or teachers, she got offered a job with a food company. Yeah! She didn't take it.

**SCOTT:** She didn't take it?

**LINCOLN:** No. Well, my dad was a class ahead of her in high school, but went off to Korea, as an infantryman, and spent his 18 months there and then came back and met up with her at the university. So they were then in the same class. And he had signed up for the Air Force ROTC, because they'd never been called out, and of course, two months before their graduation, they got called up. And so they headed to the Azores after they graduated from college—got married, and did that. But Mother was always very—as I said, she kept the books on the farm. She knew exactly what the price of soybeans were at any given moment of the day, because she was calling the grain elevator and figuring that out, knowing what was going on, making sure

that whatever was necessary for equipment and other things was happening on the farm. All the time, she was also director of Sunday school at the church for 25 years, or she ran the church bookstore. She was the head of the PTA, and very active there. So she was a very busy woman, engaged in all of those things. And those were great examples, not only that women could do what traditionally had been their roles, but they could also do other roles, and they could be very effective in business and really anything they set their mind to. And so, you know, I don't think it's unheard of that I would run for the House of Representatives, but it was definitely out of the ordinary.

**SCOTT:** I wanted to ask you, what were sort of the societal expectations for you, then, as a child? Did you have a sense, from your parents, that you would likely have a career? Or that you would follow more in the path of your—

**LINCOLN:** Well, it was interesting, because I think, even to this day, the expectations of my parents' generation still are different, in many ways. I can remember I was working towards a degree in art history, and my father managed to mention that he thought maybe I should get something else that might be more helpful in getting a job. So he did, I think, expect that I would probably need to have a job. And so I got a degree in biology and had thought I was going to be a nurse. I thought, well, I'll just get my degree in biology—I went to a woman's college—and go back to Arkansas and get my nursing degree. But in the interim, I came here and worked. I was a staffer on the Hill the fall after I graduated from college. And it was interesting when my parents would come to see me because my father—my father is just the quintessential American. You know, he believed very strongly in his service to his country, to the point where my grandfather sent him off to military school because my father was one of the older kids in his class, and so my grandfather knew that he'd turn 18 before he graduated from high school. And he wanted him to graduate from high school and he knew that my father was—so he sent him off to a military school. And of course, he graduated from military school and came home, and two weeks later, enlisted for Korea. (laughs)

But he was also one of those people who believed very strongly that he had a responsibility to be engaged with what was going on up here. When he passed away, the drawers of letters, the file folders of letters, that he had written—copies of which he had written meticulously to his member of Congress, to his senators, was really amazing. I mean, I knew he was that way, but I just didn't know. And there was an occasional letter I got when I ended up being his congresswoman about things. And I frequently asked him about it. He used to come up and testify. He served on boards. He felt very—as my whole family has always felt, which is being engaged. But he served on the Lower Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association board, and so they used to come up and testify before the Appropriations Committee about what their needs were and what the local levee boards were doing and the monies and resources they were putting in and what they were asking of the U.S. government to contribute and participate in. And I never will forget, he came up when I was a staffer and I was delighted to see him and we



went out to dinner. And anyway, he looked at me and he says, “You know, there are children running our government.” He said, “These staff are so young.” (laughs) And I said, “Well, Dad, you’re lookin’ at one. I’m one of ’em!” And I said, “And to be honest with you, that’s really all the government can afford.” Because back then, I mean, you were just happy to get a job up here, and it was not going to pay you a lot. You know, there were, I think, three of us living in an apartment or a house or something, which was tons of fun, mind you. (laughs)

But anyway, those examples from both my parents, and certainly the women in my life—my sister—my oldest sister—probably saw an awful lot of that as well. She was one of the first women film directors in Hollywood, at a time when women were really not trusted by the studios because it was expensive to make movies. And so they were a risk. That was taking a risk to be able to hire a woman director. But she really got her start in music videos, which was an avenue where women were able to actually prove themselves. I think Penny Marshall was probably the first, and my sister was in a crop of those that followed after. But still, it was just—it was the way that women could produce. Politics is a little bit different, in terms of national politics like this. But you can prove. And I guess there, too, I was a little bit of an anomaly because I didn’t come up through the ranks. I didn’t come up through the county committees. I was a young woman. But I did have experience. And that’s one of the things, at the time, that I think people were anxious to know, was that I wasn’t going to get up here and get lost in the hallways, you know? But I knew where the committee rooms were. I knew exactly what I wanted in committee assignments and exactly what I wanted to do.

**SCOTT:** So do you think that that experience as a staffer—that was, I think, 1982 to 1984—for William Alexander, Jr.?

**LINCOLN:** Yes.

**SCOTT:** Did you just find yourself loving politics at that point and knew that that was what you wanted to do? Was that a really important turning point for you?

**LINCOLN:** Well what I really loved was not necessarily politics, but government.

**SCOTT:** Okay.

**LINCOLN:** You know, I just kind of felt—I really didn’t know as much about my government, other than the civics class, which was pretty thorough, but nonetheless, to see it in operation. And I think what I began to see in the ’80s was a lot of what we see today, and it was just starting. And I could see that instead of proactively trying to solve problems, our government was slowly becoming just reactionary. It was reacting to crisis instead of preparing ourselves for the growth in our population, what would that mean to our healthcare system? What would it mean to our education system? You know, different trends and things that we could see was a trajectory, but we were failing to act, or at least try to prepare ourselves, you

know? And yet I could see that the system was designed for that. I mean, you do five-year farm bills and five-year education bills and five-year—you do those bills and usually five-year increments because you're testing. I mean, you're doing what you think is right. You're doing what you think is necessary. And in that, you find that some of the things you did were really good and worked, and some of the things didn't work as well as they should have and needed to be changed. And so those five-year authorizations were really important.

But it was of importance to me because I continued to see that we were reacting to crisis as opposed to being proactive in figuring out the solutions. So being a staffer, yes, was very helpful in understanding how everything worked. And not only was it helpful to me, but it was a part of what I fell for. And I still have tremendous respect for the process. I'm a huge believer in the committee system. It is truly where you vet and figure out what is the best solution for everybody, not just Democrats or Republicans or whoever's in charge of the committee. But how do you—using that committee system—using the Rules Committee in the House—and then seeing that, when it gets to the Senate, it will cool off, hopefully, as people work together, hopefully in a more solution-oriented way.

So anyway, I had great role models and again, an environment where I felt like that people would support me in what I wanted to do. I mean, they still might have thought I was crazy. I remember my dad saying, when I came home and decided to run for Congress, and he said, "Well, we've tried to teach you all to reach for the stars and believe in yourself and go for it." He said, "I don't know, we might have done too good a job on you." (laughs) And then he said, "But then you got your big sister. I mean, she's out there in Hollywood and doing her thing."

But the other thing, I think, that particularly the women in my life taught me—and they reinforced to me in the way they lived their lives—was that you have to make choices. The only thing I ever knew in life that I wanted—people always say, "Oh, did you know you wanted to be a senator or a politician?" No, no. The only thing in life I've ever known I really wanted was to have a family, because I grew up in such a wonderful family. And so I can remember my mom saying to me, "You would never eat an entire cake in one sitting, because it would make you sick. You can't have it all, all at once. But you make choices." And there will be times when you have to say to your husband, "I need to spend some time with the kids." Or you may say to your kids, "It's date night. Dad and I are going to the movies." Or you may have to say to all of them, "I need to go work at the food bank." Or, "I need to go get my nails done." Or something that you feel good about in terms of what you are doing. And she said, "You'll always make those choices, and you'll know when they're right if you really are making them for the right reason." And so I was so very blessed to be able to think through those things. And I was criticized for some of them. Bringing my children here. But I was not—I hadn't worked that hard to give up my family, and the boys were two when I came to the Senate.

**SCOTT:** Well let's talk about that a little bit. You decide to run for seat in the House, and you win. And you served two terms.

**LINCOLN:** Yes.

**SCOTT:** And I'm going to skip over those two terms because I want to get to the Senate, and my House colleagues can interview you about your two terms.

**LINCOLN:** A lot happened in those two terms, I gotta tell you!

**SCOTT:** A lot happened in those two terms?

**LINCOLN:** Yes, I got engaged. I got married. We had twins. And so a lot happened in my life the whole while that I was very actively engaged in getting a seat on the Energy and Commerce Committees and, you know, begging Pat Roberts to let me be on the Ag[riculture] Committee in the House. To this day, he just looks at me and just cracks up laughing. (laughs) So anyway, but yes.

**SCOTT:** Did anyone give you advice about entering the world of politics? About being a politician?

**LINCOLN:** No.

**SCOTT:** You didn't have role models in your life who had political experience?

**LINCOLN:** No, and it's interesting, because back then, in '91, when I ran, there weren't a lot of women.

I remember when I decided to do it, my parents said, "Look, we'll be helpful in any way we can. We're limited in resources, so we'll make a contribution, but that's it. And we recommend that you don't put yourself at financial risk. Don't take out a big loan, but just do your best." Because I don't think anybody really had a thought that I would win. But I remember when I drove home to start my campaign, there was an ad in a magazine. It was the National Women's Political Caucus back then. I don't think they exist anymore. But anyway, they were having a seminar in Nashville, Tennessee, about how to run for office. And so I went. Signed up, put my money down. And it was hysterical. I mean, some of it was really truth-telling. I mean, they'd video you and then they'd make you watch the video and you'd realize how ridiculous you look, and I'm sure I do now, too. But you know, to yourself, you always don't look like you should in a video.

But then there were these little breakout sessions and they'd say, "Remember, always, always, have a stick of lipstick in your pocket. Always carry an extra pair of panty hose. Always carry a fresh shirt. Because the standard is higher for you." Because, you're gonna—and

particularly for me, because I was out at implement auctions and fish fries and things like that. And so, for a woman, their expectation would be that you'd always have on a suit. Don't wear trousers because it makes you look young or disheveled. You've got to have a suit on. You've got to have a skirt on. And you always need to look fresh. You can't look haggard. The men could just take off their suit coat, roll up their sleeves, take off their tie, and all of the sudden, they were just one of the guys. But it was really—in '91, you couldn't really do that. They didn't want you to be one of the guys, and they wanted to know that you had the poise and the stature to be able to do the job. And that was something I learned, not from anybody, but just from being on the road and you could tell. You could tell when people didn't have confidence in you because you had on a jean skirt. I mean, you'd go to a picnic or something and you'd have on a jean skirt and, you know, a blouse, and it would be like, "Hmmm." And so those were things that you learned along the way.

And it was comical at times. There was one night where there was a candidate night, which they used to have, and all of the candidates would come and of course, again, I was gung ho. I was taking it seriously. And it was a candidates' night. I was going to be there. Well it was pouring down rain, and I was the only one that showed up. (laughs) I think everybody else got the memo that, well, it's a toad-strangler out there and we're not going to do it. Anyway, the county judge was there and he was so thoughtful, and he said, "Well, we've had a few people show up, so we certainly want you to speak." I was challenging an incumbent and so they were very cautious, giving equal time to everybody and being fair and whatever. And I never will forget, so I spoke and then it was time to go. It was raining. And he was being so polite and so thoughtful of me. And I had on a suit. I mean, I had dressed appropriately for what I was going to. And he was holding the door for me because it was raining—and umbrella—and he had a coffee cup in his hand and the door caught loose and hit his arm and so it went all down the front of my pretty blue suit. And he was so apologetic. And I said, "It is not a problem. I promise you. It needed to go to the cleaners anyway." So I get in the car and this kid that was volunteering—because that's all I had was volunteers that first race—he looked at me and just died laughing. And I said, "What is wrong with you?" And he said, "The judge." And I said, "I know, he just spilled that coffee on me and he felt so bad and I just didn't want to make him feel any worse," or whatever. He says, "That was not coffee. That was the judge's spit cup, and you have tobacco juice all down the front of you!" And I was like, oh, gag! (laughs) To this day, I'm pretty sure he's still there. He's not still the county judge. But every time I'd run into him, he would just be mortified!

That was one of the things that I carried in my notebook, and it was a quote from Hattie Caraway, and it said, "If I can run for office, have fun keeping a modicum of dignity," she said, "it will be worth it." Or something—you know, I can't—I'm not quoting it completely. But that was one of the things that I was raised by women who said, "Find happiness. Find happiness. Go do—go reach for the stars, but be happy about it." There may be some difficult times. And I never will forget when I left the Senate, a reporter asked me, and he was really trying to get me

to speak bad about some of my former colleagues, you know, “Who did you not like?” or whatever. And I looked at him and I thought about it and I thought, I liked everybody. I said, “Because, you know, that’s what I was taught. I was taught to look for the good in people and to enjoy the positive things about them. And so, I had a great time.” Which was, again, those examples from those women who—I can just see my grandmother sitting in that coffee shop, sitting there having fun listening to those men talk about business. (laughs)

**SCOTT:** Well tell me about your decision to run for the Senate. Dale Bumpers, a four-term senator, right? He announces that he won’t seek reelection.

**LINCOLN:** Well Dale had said he was going to run, and so everybody kind of thought that he would. And then in July—that was July of ’97—he announced he wasn’t. And my sweet husband, we’d been married four years, and the boys were little, and a couple of people had asked him, I think. But nobody really ever asked me to run. You go to these meetings and people talk about, “Oh, well, they asked me to run.” Nobody ever asked me to run. And so I called a couple of friends from my House days. I still see both of them. And they’re so funny. They said, “Yeah, we told you you were crazy, not to do it. But you did it.” But I think the most important thing was my husband. And he said, “You know, let’s make a list. Let’s make a list of the pros and the cons of you running. And let’s talk about what the changes would be in our life.” And he said, after we had done all that, he said, “You know, it’s going to require me leaving what I’m doing and moving me and the boys to Washington, because with the schedule, you’ll never be here.” And he said, “But it’s also probably the best time ever for you to run.” Well, he said, “People still know who you are. You’ve still got some name recognition.” He said, “The boys are at an age where we can handle them.” And he was right. He usually is. (laughs)

**SCOTT:** Do you tell him that? (laughs)

**LINCOLN:** Most of the time. Most of the time. And he was so supportive. And you know, he said, “It’s going to be tough, but you can do it.” And he said, “I don’t want you to ever wonder what would have happened if you had run.” And it was a harrowing race, because there were four of us in the Democratic primary. So I had to run a Democratic primary, and then I had to run a runoff with the attorney general. And then I had a Republican opponent in the fall. So I had three campaigns in less than six months. So it was kind of crazy. But we won. And you know, he said, “You’ll never know unless you do it.” And I said, “You’re right.”

**SCOTT:** You were the only female candidate in the primary as well as the general election?

**LINCOLN:** Oh yeah. I mean, again, that was ’97-98, so it’s not as if—I think when I came to the Senate, there were eight.

**SCOTT:** There were eight and you were the ninth.

**LINCOLN:** That's right. There were eight women.

**SCOTT:** Well tell me about that campaign. Well those three campaigns, then. (laughs) Tell me about that. I mean, you're 38. If elected, you would be the youngest woman ever elected to serve in the U.S. Senate. You are a woman not from a state who's had many female candidates, you know, since Hattie Caraway.

**LINCOLN:** Hattie Caraway, that's right. (both laugh)

**SCOTT:** So tell me how much those factors, age and gender, were factors in the campaign. And then how did you deal with them?

**LINCOLN:** Well it was interesting because my age was a bigger issue than my gender, both in the House race and in the Senate race. You know, obviously from the Senate race, I had served in the House, and I chose not to run for reelection, because we had intended to keep going [having more kids], thinking that it was going to be a single singleton, but when we discovered it was twins, my husband, who's an OBGyn, said, "Look, this is just going to be—a briefcase and a baby is one thing, but a briefcase and two babies and two car seats and two—" And plus, I was—they continued to remind me up until I went into the delivery room that I was chronologically challenged. (laughs) I think as I signed the paperwork at the hospital, it was "chronologically maternally challenged." But I hit all five categories for an at-risk pregnancy at that point, so we just made that decision. We knew how important our family was to us, and he said, "You know, we need to do everything we can to bring these boys into the world healthy." And he was right. (Babies—because we didn't know if it was boys or not.)

But anyway, my age had been an issue then, but I think I felt like I had at least proved some things because I got onto good committees. I worked hard on things that were important to Arkansas. And I was able—and of course, Bill Clinton was here at the time. I mean, we ran in '91 and '92 together, so—of course he was running all over the country. I was just running in east Arkansas. But anyway, I had been able to, I think, prove myself as having the ability to integrate myself into the Congress and to be effective.

But then the Senate was a whole different ballgame. And of course, the titans in the Senate, from the Arkansas standpoint—the Fulbrights, the McClellans, the Dale Bumpers, the David Pryors, Joe T. [Robinson]—I mean, just amazing. So that was a challenge at my age, particularly with two infants.

**SCOTT:** Right.

**LINCOLN:** I never will forget—and often times it was women—but I would go to an event, and I came home one night just in tears. My husband was like, "Well, where have you been?" And I said, "Well, I went to this event and it was mostly older women, and there was this

one woman that just flat stood up and said, ‘There’s just no way you can be a good senator and a good mother. There’s just no way.’” And my husband, he could tell how rattled I was. And he said, “Blanche, 51 percent of the residents that I teach in OBGyn are women, and they’re good mothers. They may spend 72 hours in the hospital. But they are still good mothers. Think of all the female corporate lawyers or the female flight attendants, or all of these female engineers, female linemen. Think of all of those women. They’re good mothers. They’re working. You can be a good mother, and,” he said, “we can be a good family, and you can still be a senator.” And he was enormously supportive of me, and still is, God bless him. So that was an issue. I was a young mother and—

**SCOTT:** How do you respond to—when people make that point to you on the campaign trail, how do you respond politely and respectfully, but still stand your ground?

**LINCOLN:** I think one of the most important responses I had to that kind of a comment was, “There are very few people in the United States Senate who know and understand what working moms are going through.” And I said, “I think working moms need to be heard.” Patty Murray was here. She had small children. And most of the other women that had children, their children were older. But I never will forget when we were doing welfare reform in the Finance Committee, and we were talking about child care, and Olympia [Snowe] and I—Carol Moseley Braun had served on the Finance Committee for one year, I guess, and then Olympia and I came on together, and oh gosh, I couldn’t have asked for a more wonderful seatmate, classmate, fellow woman on the committee, because Olympia was charged and excited about the difference we could make. And we did have to kind of hold hands every now and then and keep our comments going.

But we were talking about childcare and it wasn’t disturbing to me from the sense that it was what they thought. What was disturbing was the repercussions that it might have. But some of the older men on the committee were—they had stay at home wives, you know? And they probably lived—I don’t know—but the one comment came out, one of the men said, “Can’t their grandparents take care of them?” And that kind of rattled me into the whole idea of how important it is. That it’s not just that you’ve got women here, but that you’ve got women that are not only women, but they’re current in what’s going on. And I’ll never forget the chairman looking over at me, and he looked around the room, and he says, “Uh oh, she’s about to blow her top over there.” And I was trying to get recognized. And I just had to tell them that my kids had been sick that week, and so they’d stayed home from school two days, and then all of the sudden, it snowed, and so there were two snow days. And I said, “You know, they’re up in my office right now because it is a challenge when both parents are working, and making sure that your kids are well cared for. That they’re in a healthy environment. That they’re safe. All of those things are critically important to mothers and to fathers when you’re both working.” So I think that was my best answer, was really the world is changing and women are a huge part of the

workforce and it's not just me. I do have a lot of good backup, whether it was my husband or babysitters or—

We were in a preschool co-op, so I had to help teach. My husband kept saying to me, “Why are we doing this?” Because dads had to—

**SCOTT:** (laughing) It's a lot of extra work.

**LINCOLN:** Well, it was. And God bless my scheduler, because I had to double co-op with twins, so I had to teach at least twice a month, and it was always either a Friday or a Monday. And the other mothers were great because they'd trade with me because—if we had votes or whatever. But my husband said, “Now, why are we doing this?” And I said, “Because it really does show us how appreciative we need to be of our teachers.” And he came back from his first time of co-opping and he looked at me and he says, “Oh my gosh, the woman is amazing!” And I said, “What are you talking about?” And he says, “The teacher! She's going to come back tomorrow and she's going to be just as thoughtful and disciplined and creative and compassionate.” And he said, “I might take off work tomorrow because I am wiped out!” (laughs) And he looked at me and he says, “We don't pay our teachers enough.” And I said, “That's why we're doing this.” And he says, “Yeah, you're right.” (laughs) And he was a trooper.

But anyway, I digress. I always do. But I think that that is a critical part. And it doesn't need to be shown in a way that is, “I know more than you do.” It's just that I'm going through this right now, and I just want you to know, because I'm going through it. It's a good lesson, and that's what we learn in life. We learn from our lessons in life. And that's what I was learning at the time. And it was something that, again, having Olympia there was wonderful. Because I told Olympia, “You know, I know we can't spend as much as the Democrats want to spend, but I also know that the Republicans aren't going to spend enough.” I said, “We've got to come in there somewhere in between so we at least get ourselves down the road on this thing. Because women are not coming out of the workforce. It's going to continue to be an issue with both parents working or single moms or whatever.” So I think our own personal experiences are a huge, huge education.

**SCOTT:** Now is this—have you been talking about the child care tax credit that you were working on in 2003?

**LINCOLN:** Well that was something else that we worked on.

**SCOTT:** That was something else, okay.

**LINCOLN:** Well, because this was—we had done, in welfare reform, some of the childcare—federal subsidies on childcare. And then we were doing it again in the Finance



Committee. And then Olympia and I also locked arms on the child tax credit, making it refundable. Because if it wasn't refundable, then most of the people who needed it the most—I mean, the child tax credit was designed so that if you're working and you're taking care of your kids, then we want to incentivize that and we want to keep you doing those things. But if you were making, which a lot of women were, making less than \$40,000 a year, unless it's refundable, you don't get it. And so, again, it was just—it was having, I think, those of us that could see and were going through it there at a time when we could say, "Okay, we're not going to go for the whole enchilada, but we got to get enough that we're just getting ourselves down the road."

**SCOTT:** You fought so hard for that in 2003, and they pulled it out in conference. Were you—how did you feel after that? Were you surprised?

**LINCOLN:** More determined to come back and get it.

**SCOTT:** Okay. (both laughs)

**LINCOLN:** And I think the more we talked about it, and because we—Olympia and I finally got it done. But it was tough. But it did give you an opportunity to go to some people and just put some real visuals in front of them. You've got a mom, she's working. Maybe she's working two jobs. She's trying to make an income. She's trying to take care of these kids. And some of it was just childcare. Some of it was availability, because in places like Arkansas, and in Maine—we had a lot of similarities. Sue [Susan Collins] and Olympia were great friends to me, and we had a lot of similarities in terms of our demographics. But rural areas—there were some women that I would see when I'd go home who had to drive to another county for their job, but the only daycare that was in—so they had to get the kid to daycare over here, come back through there, get over here to work, get back there and then get to daycare. So it wasn't exactly like they were just dropping them off on their way to work. So making sure that folks in these rural areas could actually produce the kind of daycare that we were putting the requirements on; whether it was a healthy snack, whether it was the number of teachers per child, whether it was the environment, all of those things.

**SCOTT:** Well, I think one of the impediments to women running for a seat in the House or running for a Senate seat is funding. They have—

**LINCOLN:** It's huge.

**SCOTT:** That's a huge problem. And I know some of these seminars today are about, like, how do you raise money to run for public office. So my question to you is in this '98 Senate run, were there women's groups at that time who were helping to support candidates like yourself? Did you have the financial support of some of those groups that we think of today like an Emily's List?

**LINCOLN:** Yeah, some, but they, often times, were all or nothing.

**SCOTT:** What do you mean by that?

**LINCOLN:** Well, I mean, you had to have a hundred percent—be in a hundred percent agreement. And I think some, going back to having been a staffer, I never signed pledges. Pledges were horrible, because the pledges were always to somebody else. They weren't to the people that you were answerable to. Whether it was the "term limits pledge" or "no taxes pledge," or whatever, I didn't do those. That's not who I was representing. I was representing the people of Arkansas from my congressional district or my state. And it was all very prescriptive and I just had a little bit of an independent streak, knowing that I had to answer to the people that sent me and not to some of those groups. Emily's List helped me in my first race, I believe, and maybe one of the others. But it's hard. It's hard for women to raise money. It was particularly back then, and I would say that it still is in many instances.

One, I think for me anyway, it was harder to ask. I hated selling raffle tickets as a kid, or cookies or whatever. I didn't like going to people and saying, "Can you give me money?" I felt like I needed to earn it. And yet, the party—which, the parties have become more a part of that in terms of money and where they put their money and how they put their money, and the groups that they represent. We've created a very divisive system where you've got these pure congressional districts that your only opponent comes from your own party, in most instances, now. And I don't know—and again, the parties were probably somewhat reluctant. They wanted to keep my seat, particularly in the House. They wanted to keep my seat. So they would participate, but I didn't have a lot of the party connections, because I hadn't come up, again, through the county system—the county coordinators, the county whatever, or the state Democratic Party folks. And those people work hard, and so I think an initial feeling, at one point, was probably, oh, she didn't do her time. So it's not that they didn't support me, it's just that I kind of didn't come from that direction, and I think that may have been some of it. But not much. Once I got elected, the Democratic Party in Arkansas was really very good to me. But then the state parties are not really the ones in control anymore. It's really the national parties. That's where the majority of the money is.

**SCOTT:** Oh, and was that true when you were running?

**LINCOLN:** It became true, yeah.

**SCOTT:** What was the greatest challenge in that '98 race?

**LINCOLN:** It was interesting. I think some of it was to have to toot my own horn. I was never very good at tooting my own horn. But I had served in the House of Representatives, and I guess the most highly elected individual in that race, particularly in that primary, was the state attorney general, who I made it to the runoff with. But having to really talk about myself. And I

think that's even more important today, because people now are less likely to follow your record. It's just like the rules of the Senate. I've been disappointed in both sides in changing the rules, or allowing the precedent to be set for a change. I believe very strongly in the rules of the Senate and the rules of the committee, but then people are not really speaking to their electorate anymore. They're speaking to the media. They may try to speak to their electorate, but the media's going to tell the electorate what they want them to hear. And it's hard. Each word has to be crafted in a way that nobody can turn it around or flip it, which means you can only use probably less than 25 words, which if you're really in the midst of trying to make a difference—

I can remember trying to explain to one group, they said, "Well, you voted against us." I said, "No, I voted against the motion to proceed. When your stuff came up, I stood up and was one of those that helped pass it. But if I had voted for the motion to proceed, I would have also been voting against my veterans," or my—because there's always a gotcha in there. But nobody really thinks about it that way anymore—or thinks about it other than what it's portrayed, and it's, "Oh, she voted against that," as opposed to, "Did you really support that initiative?" "Yeah, I supported it, and I supported it when it came up for a vote. But if I was going to move to a bill that was going to, you know, cut veterans benefits, that would have been horrible." But we could stand to really, I think, help people understand how important the process is and how important the rules are, not only for the minority, who sometimes doesn't see that, or they forget that they're going to maybe be the majority within the next 10 years, (laughs) those kind of things. But anyway, I had a lot of people that supported me in that primary who didn't want to be visible, which was fine. I didn't care.

**SCOTT:** Because your opponent was the attorney general?

**LINCOLN:** Yeah, well that, and there were other people. There was a former Senate staffer and a physician, a doctor, and they were good people. They're real good people, and I usually had a connection to one or the other. So you just didn't—I never wanted to call out my opponents. I didn't like—I can say what they may have done in terms of, one was in the legislature, one was an attorney general, this is something I disagree with. But just to—in today's world, you—

**SCOTT:** It's personal.

**LINCOLN:** It's personal! They don't like the way your hair looks, or whatever. (laughs) But I always believed more strongly in trying to present the positive that I had to offer, as opposed to the negative. Even in my last race, where I lost, I didn't want to say ugly things. I had worked with John [Boozman] and he was a good man. He and Kathy are lovely people. I just wanted to show people what I had done and what I felt like we needed to do. But again, it goes back to that being able to toot your own horn. And I think some of that has to do with the difference between being a politician and being a public servant. And that goes back to my roots. My parents believed in public servants. Somebody that was there to do a job, not someone that

was there to be titled. I can remember my staff—the first time I won, I remember going to some of my dad’s contemporaries, and they were totally confused with what to call me. They didn’t know. They said, “Well, we always knew what to call a congressman. You just called him Congressman. Do we have to call you Congresswoman?” And then they looked at me, and that’s why I say my age has always been a bigger issue than my gender, and they were like, “You know, you’re Jordy’s youngest child.” And I said, “You can call me Blanche!”

But then it was funny because I had a lot of seasoned staff, and a lot of staff that were going through some of the things—I had several women chiefs of staff. My first chief of staff, and longest chief of staff, was an amazing man who taught me an awful lot. And he said, “I know you see this as a public servant and you don’t want to be just a title.” He said, “But the title is important for people to see you as a public servant.” And so, you know, he was always very—he made sure the staff always referred to me as Senator, even though some of them were almost my age. (laughs) But he said, “It is important for others to see that your staff respects you and that they can help encourage other people to respect you for what it is that you’re here to do, and that is to be a senator.” And that was very helpful to me in understanding, but it didn’t make it any easier when people would say, “Well, what do we call you?” And I’d think to myself, well, what did you call Senator Bumpers? You called him Senator Bumpers. You didn’t call him Dale. You called him Senator Bumpers.

**SCOTT:** That’s an interesting point.

**LINCOLN:** Yeah, well, I mean, and they were his contemporaries. And you know, I have contemporaries that are my contemporaries, too, that I knew before I ever got into politics. And certainly they called me Blanche. But it was just one of—that was a transition that was really hard for people to make. Or I guess it was a precedent that was hard for people to see, that they’d always called Senator Bumpers Senator Bumpers, but what were they going to call me? And I said, “Well, Senator Lincoln is okay, but if you’re uncomfortable with that, you can always call me Blanche.”

**SCOTT:** So what did they do? Did most people call you Senator Lincoln? Did it take some time?

**LINCOLN:** Well, yeah. It was kind of a—it was a transition. And it didn’t offend me.

**SCOTT:** You didn’t take it personally.

**LINCOLN:** I didn’t take it personally, but I could see the way that it changed their view of me.

**SCOTT:** Oh, really?

**LINCOLN:** Yeah.

**SCOTT:** For the better?

**LINCOLN:** Well, no—well, if all of the sudden they didn't feel comfortable calling me Senator Lincoln, then it was like, well then, are you comfortable with me being your senator? Do you think I have the capacity? Am I capable of doing the things that need to be done? And I think that there are some people that, I don't think they saw it, but I did, that maybe the reason they didn't want to call me senator was either they didn't think I deserved it, or they didn't think that I could do as good a job as a man. But I don't know. I think, at the end of the day, people saw how hard I worked and the things I was able to accomplish, much of which, I was able to accomplish because I got to the right places. And again, going back to having been a staffer—

**SCOTT:** Right, knowing the committee assignments you want and how to get them. Well, let's talk about that. You have some, and we just—maybe this will be the last question, you come to the Senate in 1999 and you get these terrific committee assignments. How did you realize how to get those assignments? For some people that's sort of a real puzzle. How do you ask? What do you think you'll get?

**LINCOLN:** Well that, particularly in the House, because I came into the House in '92, and that was the largest class. There was 114 of us. So it was the largest class since 1940, I think, or something like that. And one of the advantages I had there was, having been a staffer, I knew the process for getting committee assignments. You used to go through your regional caucus, which for me was kind of abnormal because my regional caucus was Oklahoma, North and South Dakota. I grew up on the Mississippi River, five hours north of New Orleans, so I considered myself a southerner. But I was not—for issue areas, I was a member of the Sunbelt caucus, which was mostly the Southeastern part of the United States. But for regional caucuses, I was paired with, I think, Kansas, Oklahoma, and further places west and north. But I knew that I had to have the support of some of the members in my regional caucus, and so I immediately—Mike Synar was there at the time. He was from Oklahoma. I went to Mike. He was on Energy and Commerce. I said, "Mike, I really want to be on the Energy and Commerce Committee." And he wrote letters, he helped me, told me what I needed to do.

In the Senate, it was the same thing, but it's not your regional caucus that does it. In the Senate, it's basically the majority leader. It's the chairman of the committee. And I had worked with some of the members on the Finance Committee from the Senate when I was in the House. I'm pretty sure John Chaffee was on Finance. But John Chaffee was wonderful to work with. He and John Breaux both were senators that would work with me as a House member. And I knew that was the committee I wanted. And I went to Tom Daschle and he said, "Boy, that's a big lift." And I said, "Yes, it is." And I said, "All you have to do is teach me what I need to do to get there." He said, "Well, I can help by telling you,"—but he had to, obviously, make choices in a lot of that. So then I went to Max Baucus and Max was so kind to me. So kind to me. And he said, "This is what you're going to need to do. You're going to have to talk to the members of

the committee. You're going to have to talk to these people in the leadership. You're going to send letters. Then call them until they answer your call" or whatever. And it was good old female patience and perseverance that paid off on that on both occasions—was to say, and to point out the reasons why. One, you don't have any females on the Senate Finance Committee. Who do you have representing rural areas? Who do you have representing southern states? Who do you have representing—pointing out the advantages that you bring and really selling it. But all the salesmanship in the world doesn't work if you don't have other members helping you.

**SCOTT:** Who were your mentors? Who were your Senate mentors when you came?

**LINCOLN:** Well Max was tremendous. He really taught me a lot about the committee.

And Dianne Feinstein, to this day, I am a huge fan of. She is just remarkable in her diligence. She knows her issues. She takes home a briefcase at night and studies them. She doesn't look at it as a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. She looks at it as an issue—what is right about this issue? What is right? What is it that we have to do that is right, going forward? And I learned a lot from just watching Dianne. And our worlds couldn't have been more different, you know? (laughs) I probably had peanut butter and jelly on my shoulder, and she probably had couture on. (laughs) But she was so kind to me as well. Never did I ask her a question or advice that she didn't give me both sides of it. She said, "This is what I believe and this is what I'm going to do," she said, "but I want you to know what the other side of this coin is." She just was and remains remarkable in my boat.

Mary Landrieu was great. I never will forget, I went over to see Mary. She just had had a minor surgery. It was outpatient or whatever, but anyway, she'd gone home and I'd heard about it and so I made some chicken spaghetti and a bag of salad and a loaf of bread and a bottle of wine and I went over and I knocked on her door. Because I lived out in Virginia and she lived on the Hill. And I knocked on her door, and she said, "Blanche, what are you doing here?" And I said, "Well, I know you'd been sick," and I said, "At home, where we're from, this is what you do for your friends, is you take them dinner when they've been ill or when they've been in the hospital." She looked at me and she says, "Blanche, I don't think they do that up here." And I said, "Well, I got to tell you, if we forget where we've come from and the things that are important, then something's wrong." And she said, "You are exactly right." And so Mary and I shared a lot of kid stories and that kind of stuff, which was interesting.

I'm trying to think. All of the women were—Olympia was just great, and Sue, too. Sue and I co-chaired the Diabetes caucus, and I feel like we just worked hand in glove together to bring about some visibility. And just great women to serve with.

Patty Murray—Patty and I used to sit back there and she'd say, because her husband was in Washington with the kids, and we talked about the difficulties of keeping up with all of that.

And she was very patient and very supportive. You know, “Don’t worry, you’re going to get through this.” So that was—so a lot of fun people.

Maria [Cantwell] came to the Senate. She and I had come in together in the House in ’92, so we were the first two Democrats, and then I think, I want to say Ileana [Ros-Lehtinen] was the Republican—there was another Republican—to play in the congressional baseball game, which was hysterical. We were like, “Are y’all crazy? You want us to meet you at 5 a.m. in Anacostia to practice?” Those guys were so serious about it. So serious. (laughs) And Maria and I were, “Okay, we’ll chime in. Yeah, sure.” And then they’d always put us in the outfield. It was horrible. We’d be way out there in the outfield and they’d crack some ball, and I don’t know about Maria, but I was used to softball. And then these guys all played college baseball, so they were serious. And they’d hit that hard ball out there and I’d stick my hand up like this. (both laugh) So Maria and I had some fun times together, and she, too, brought, I think, a perspective that was really helpful, having been in business. She had grown up in a congressional family, because her dad was a chief of staff up here. So she knew politics and she knew that, but she also knew the environment of the work world when she came to the Senate, and I think that was really helpful. Just—I mean, I think the women of the Senate—

Barbara Mikulski, she was great. You know, Barbara was tough, and it was a great example to me because I probably needed to be tougher. But she was also helpful. Enormously helpful. And, oh my gosh, the queen of one-liners. She’d have this deadpan look on her face, and then all of the sudden she’d come out with this one-liner and you’d be like, oh my gosh, I’m just going to bust a gut, it’s so funny! So, just reminding us that this is supposed to be good. We’re supposed to be making a difference, but we’re supposed to be enjoying one another.

The other thing that was really great was—and Elizabeth Dole. Elizabeth and I, we used to come over to votes together, and she and I both adore our mothers. And we used to talk about our moms. And her mom lived to be [102]. Yeah, but anyway, I remember when her mom passed and it was really tough for her, and all I could think of was how close I am to my mom. And [Elizabeth] is just wonderful, and always looking to make a difference in something.

But the dinners we used to have with the female justices every year, and I’m assuming they still do it. I hope they do. But we would do—one year the female justices would host us over at the Supreme Court for dinner, and then the next year we would host them. But listening to Elizabeth Dole, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sandra Day O’Connor; those three particularly, because when they came, I mean, that was pretty amazing. Because I want to say that Ruth and Elizabeth were in the first graduating class at Harvard that had females in it, or something like that. Or maybe the second. But anyway, they really forged some trails. They were some real trailblazers. But those were wonderful dinners, to hear those stories. And I think it was wonderful for them, too, to hear mine. They would always ask about the boys—“How’s preschool? How’s first grade?” (laughs) Which was neat.

And then Kay Bailey [Hutchison]. Kay adopted her children, who were about the same age as my boys, a little bit younger. And it was just wonderful to have somebody with kids the same age that was—I just never will forget, my boys were, I think, probably a couple of years older than hers, and we were getting in the elevator to go up for a vote and I said, “Are you okay?” She says, “I’m exhausted.” She said, “This teething stuff is crazy!” And I said, “Frozen bagels.” She said, “What do you mean, frozen bagels?” I said, “Frozen bagels and Tummy drops. I’m just telling you, been there, done that. It’s really helpful. They can’t choke on ’em. They make a huge mess, but it’s great.” (laughs)

So we were, I think, we were a little clan, us women. And it was good. If I think about all of them—

Oh, Lisa Murkowski. Lisa was great. I served with her father. But then when she got here, she and her husband were just lovely. He used to fix dinner for us every now and then over at their townhouse up here on Capitol Hill, and the women would gather over there. But her boys were older, and I remember her saying, “Oh, my boys are just going to hate me, but,”—well, first of all, I said, “How are the boys?” And she said, “They’re going to stay in Alaska.” And I said, “Lisa, I’m just telling you, the commute, for me, was horrible, but I can imagine what the commute is for you.” And I said, “I don’t know, but there’s some really great schools around here and having your boys at home when you get home, and being there.” And that was in the fall or late summer. And then, after Christmas, she said, “The boys are moving to D.C.” And I said, “You will love it.” And she says, “Well, they’re going to hate me for a while.” And I said, “No, they won’t. They’ll get over that in a nanosecond.” And it was like a month later, she said, “They love Gonzaga. They love school. They love their sports. They got to ski in Alaska and do all of their skiing in January, and they’re going to go back and work their summers there.” And she says, “And I get to see them.”

So it is just nice to know that you’re not going through things by yourself, and everyone was always really wonderful. I’ve always been very, very proud of the women of the Senate, and American women in general, who do choose to look towards public service as an opportunity to make our country better. And I think everybody gives something in their own way, and I hope and pray that I’ve given a little something in my own way. And I think we all have.

**SCOTT:** This has been a terrific interview, and we really only covered about half of this material that I hoped we would get to, so maybe if I can interest you in coming back and talking to us more about the time you spent here?

**LINCOLN:** Absolutely, I apologize for being late.

**SCOTT:** No, that’s fine.

**LINCOLN:** But that was another thing that was always interesting: the traffic.



**SCOTT:** The traffic, and managing it and negotiating it. Planning for it.

**LINCOLN:** Well I was one of the few that lived in Virginia, but I did so because I wanted my boys to go to public schools, and so my staff (laughs), I used to always call and say, “Okay, I’m on my way.” And they’d say, “Okay, yeah, sure you are. Where are you?” And I’d say, “Well, I’m about to cross the river.” And finally one day, Jonathan was one of the most fabulous people, still is one of the most fabulous people, he said, “Which river are you crossing?” I said, “Well it’s not the Mississippi.” (laughs) “It is the Potomac.” He just died laughing. So, but that would be another topic though.

**SCOTT:** Okay.

**LINCOLN:** Would be staff.

**SCOTT:** Good.

**LINCOLN:** Because I think women—I don’t know, my staff are all saints. I’ve nominated each one of them to sainthood. (laughs) Along with my husband. (laughs) But staff is critical because they were the ones that understood that I wanted to be a mother and a wife and a good senator, and they helped me do that.

**[End of Interview]**

## Index

- Agriculture Committee, House of Representatives, 7
- Alexander, William, Jr., 5
- Baucus, Max S. (D-MT), 17, 18
- Boozman, John (R-AR), 15
- Breaux, John B. (D-LA), 17
- Bumpers, Dale (D-AR), 9, 10
- Campaign
  - House of Representatives (1992), 7–9
  - Senate (1998), 9–11, 14–16
- Cantwell, Maria E. (D-WA), 19
- Caraway, Hattie (D-AR), 1–2, 8, 10
- Chaffee, John H. (R-RI), 17
- Child Tax Credit, 12–13
- Childcare, 11–13
- Childhood, 2–4
- Clinton, William Jefferson "Bill," 10
- Collins, Susan M. (R-ME), 13, 18
- Committees, Senate and House, 6. *See also*
  - Individual committees
- Congressional Baseball Game, 19
- Daschle, Thomas A. (D-SD), 17
- Dole, Elizabeth H. (R-NC), 19
- Election
  - 1992 (House of Representatives), 7–9
  - 1998 (Senate), 9–11, 14–16
- Emily's List, 13, 14
- Energy and Commerce Committee, House of Representatives, 7, 17
- Feinstein, Dianne (D-CA), 18
- Felton, Rebecca (D-GA), 1
- Finance Committee, Senate, 11–12, 13, 17–18
- Fulbright, J. William (D-AR), 2, 10
- Fundraising, 13–14
- Ginsburg, Ruth Bader, 19
- House of Representatives
  - election to (1992), 7–9
  - member of, 5–6, 17
  - working for, 4–5, 5–6
- Hutchison, Kay Bailey (R-TX), 20
- Lambert, Jordan Bennett (father), 2, 3, 4–5
- Lambert, Mary Kelly (mother), 3–4, 6
- Landrieu, Mary (D-LA), 18
- Lower Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association, 4
- McClellan, John (D-AR), 10
- Mikulski, Barbara A. (D-MD), 19
- Moseley Braun, Carol (D-IL), 11
- Murkowski, Lisa (R-AK), 20
- Murray, Patty (D-WA), 11, 18–19
- National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), 7–8
- Nineteenth Amendment, 1
- O'Connor, Sandra Day, 19
- Pryor, David (D-AR), 10
- Roberts, C. Patrick "Pat" (R-KS), 7
- Robinson, Joseph (D-AR), 10
- Senate, U.S.
  - committee assignments, 17–18
  - election to, 9–11, 14–16
  - mentors, 18–20
- Sexism, 7–8, 10–11, 16–17
- Snowe, Olympia J. (R-ME), 11, 12–13, 18
- Supreme Court, dinners with female justices of the, 19
- Synar, Michael, 17
- Work-life balance, 6, 10–12