

Cokie Roberts

U.S. Representatives Hale and Lindy Boggs of Louisiana

Insight on the political partnership shared by U.S. Representatives Hale and Lindy Boggs of Louisiana.
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My mother and father were a team from the time they were in college, really, where they were involved in student activism. Huey Long was Governor and they were protesting his actions. And they were on the student newspaper together and writing, you know, articles and editorials about, about the evil Long machine. And then they got into politics really as reformers. I always joke that in Louisiana that is something of an oxymoron, but they really were. And, opposing the Long successors who were corrupt and dictatorial. So, they had always been together in politics. My mother tells a very funny story of when she was a very young woman the party coming to her and asking her to be a precinct captain and she said, "I'd be happy to do it but I thought that the police took care of that." She was talking....They were talking about a voting precinct, she thought they were talking about a police precinct. And of course to be a poll watcher—a precinct captain—was again a pretty dangerous thing because these thugs would come in and knock out the lights and steal the ballot boxes and sometimes knock out the watchers. Which is one of the reasons they had women do it because they were less likely to sock a woman in the face than a man. So she was always involved and because of the peculiar nature of Louisiana politics at that time – it was a one party state – there were many Democratic factions but they tended to be more on the local level than the national level so most of them endorsed my father. But he couldn't pick somebody from one of those factions to be his campaign manager or his spokesperson or any of that because it would alienate the other factions. So my mother did that and she was, really, as it turned out, a world class campaign manager. She still knows how to run a campaign pretty much better than anybody I have ever met. One of her dictums is the first money you spend is the money you put aside for the last week of the campaign so you never run out of money at the end. She was his manager. She ran his offices—particularly once he went into the leadership she really did run the district office. And, she was here at the Capitol all the time. Not only doing work in the offices and just helping out with the staff, but she also did a certain amount of soothing over the rough spots that my father could occasionally raise with a more abrasive personality. So, she would, she would make everyone think that everything was fine and he was on all of their sides. She would bake for them and do things that made them happy.