

**Rochelle Dornatt**  
Chief of Staff, Representative Sam Farr of California

## **Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

### **“I Wanted to Break Out”**

Rochelle Dornatt discusses education and employment expectations for women.  
*Interview recorded January 18, 2017*

It was still expected—even, even my dad wanted me just to learn shorthand, and become a secretary, because everybody always needs a secretary. So you can always make a good living if you can take shorthand and type. I did not want to do that. I did not, I did not. I tried to learn shorthand at one point, and I thought, “This is crazy.” And, and I didn’t want to be pigeonholed like that. And when I finally got to college, and it was a liberal arts college, and I was studying political science. “Oh my gosh, what do you do with that, Rochelle?” You know, my dad was like, “You’re out of your mind.” I, I didn’t care what he said. I wanted to break out. I wanted to break out. So, yeah, there were expectations, especially coming from, you know, a poor or middle class family where you needed a job to, to survive. And so, you know, one of my older sisters was a secretary, and a very good one, and actually high, high-paid for the role that she played, but I just did not want to do that.