

**The Honorable Mary Rose Oakar**  
U.S. Representative of Ohio (1977–1993)

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

**Making History for Women: Part Two**

Representative Oakar explains how she made history at a White House meeting.  
*Interview recorded March 2, 2017*

So I get this invitation. I didn't know what gate to go in, so I was real early. First time in my life I was early for something. And, I, I, I go in. And I see Sam Donaldson and Helen Thomas and the other reporters in there going, "Yay, the first woman ever to be at the leadership meeting." And I said, "Oh, thanks," you know. And they said, "Are you nervous?" I said, "Sure," you know. And so I go in. And there's this oval table. And I look around the table. There's name cards. I look for my name card. It's not there. And the head of protocol for the President was standing in the corner. And I said, "Where's my name?" And he said, "It's, it's, you're sitting over there in the corner somewhere, not at the table." And I said, "Not at the table?" I said, "Well," I said, "I'm leaving, I'm going to have my first press conference outside about this that you're not allowing a woman at the table." And so he comes running after me. "No, no, no, I just changed it, I just changed it, come on, come back, you're at the table." And here he had put, changed my name, because there weren't enough seats, they were big seats, and they took up every inch of room, and he put Jack Kemp in the corner. And I got to sit at the table. Jack never knew why he was in the corner, but he didn't care. He's a nice guy. So that is the story. And thanks to Gerry I got to go to those leadership meetings. It was a great honor, great honor.