

Patricia (Tish) Speed Schwartz
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Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Women as Mentors

Patricia Schwartz discusses the women who gave her valuable advice on the job.
Interview recorded June 22, 2015

Again, I was kind of cloistered in the committee, and unless a Member became a Ranking Member in a subcommittee, or the chairman of a subcommittee, I didn't really get to see them, nor did I get to interact with them. They had a buffer, their staff, our staff, and then me. So I was kind of like back behind our staff, you know. And occasionally I would break free and actually get to talk to the staff in the Member's office, and that comes with the confidence and the support team you have. After a while, they said, "Okay, you can come, take that and run with it," and that kind of thing. But it took a while to build that. But I did notice, and the one thing I did notice, was the women that were, had the power were in Members' offices, and they were AAs. And I developed a mentor with a Ranking Member, Congressman Larry Winn, from Kansas. He was the Ranking Member on the Republican staff, and his administrative assistant at the time was Nan Elder. And she was a former flight attendant, too. And so we kind of bonded, and she really took me under her wing. She was the one who would make sure that I had things correct for the Ranking Member when he went to committee. You know, "He doesn't like to be called this. He likes to be called that. Put this in there, get this out, three spaces this way, you need to do this for him, you need to do that for him." And it just became seamless, so I became like another arm, and we developed a great rapport.