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"EVANS & NOVAK"

AIR DATES: Saturday, July 30, 1983 at 6:30 & 11:30 P.M. (EDT)  
Sunday, July 31, 1983 at 9:30 A.M. & 4:30 P.M. (EDT)

ORIGINATION: Washington, D.C.

GUEST: FAITH RYAN WHITTLESEY  
Assistant to the President for Public Liaison

INTERVIEWED BY: Rowland Evans and Robert Novak  
Syndicated Columnists

PRODUCER: Elissa Free

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EDITORS: This is a rush transcript provided for the convenience of the press. Print and broadcast media are permitted to quote this transcript with credit given to "EVANS & NOVAK," Cable News Network. Video and audio cassettes are available upon request to the media. For further information, please contact Elissa Free or Chris Guarino at (202) 298-7400.

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MR. NOVAK: I'm Robert Novak. Rowland Evans and I will look into the gender gap and other issues by questioning the top political woman in Ronald Reagan's White House.

MR. EVANS: She is Faith Ryan Whittlesey, a conservative Republican, from Pennsylvania, who is the President's chief link with citizen groups all around the country.

MR. EVANS (on tape): Faith Whittlesey was brought back from her job as Ambassador to Switzerland to replace Liddy Dole several months ago as the President's contact with outside groups, including women, and she has been in the thick of controversy ever since, sometimes too much controversy it seems, because the key problem of President Reagan's relationship to women, the gender gap, has now been elevated to the personal charge of White House Deputy Chief of Staff Mike Deaver.

But as the top woman in the White House, Mrs. Whittlesey has plenty to say about the gender gap.

MS. WHITTLESEY (on tape): And furthermore, the gender gap isn't anything that's new. It's widened, but it's been around for awhile. We've always suffered a gender gap in the Republican Party. We're doing everything we can to correct it.

MR. EVANS (on tape): President Reagan put it a bit differently in his Tuesday evening press conference.

PRESIDENT REAGAN (on tape): I will match our record against any other administration that has ever been here with regard to what we have accomplished for women.

MR. NOVAK: Ambassador Whittlesey, isn't the fact that the responsibility for this political problem, the gender gap, has been shifted from you to Mike Deaver, doesn't that indicate a lack of faith in you by your colleagues on the senior staff of the White House and by the President?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, not according to what the President told me. He, of course, told me to go ahead and continue to do what I was doing, and I would challenge your assumption that it has been shifted. Nothing has changed in the White House. I'm doing exactly what I did before: I'm handling outreach for women's issues; I'm still chairman of the White House Coordinating Counsel on Women; and the record of this Administration with respect to what we are doing for women is better than the record of any administration in the history of the United States.

MR. NOVAK: We'll be back to talk about women and a lot of other things after these messages.  
(Announcements.)

MR. EVANS: Madam Ambassador -- I don't know whether we should call you that or Mrs. Executive Assistant -- Faith, this question of faith in Faith -- Kathy Wilson, the head of the Women's Political Caucus, said of you the other day, "She was basically a fall-guy," unquote, on the gender gap controversy. That what the White House did was to finger you as a victim because they knew they had a major problem and nobody could fix it, including you. Is that true? Were you a fall-guy?

MS. WHITTLESEY: I don't -- No, no, Mr. Evans. I don't think I'm a fall -- fall-lady or a fall-guy. I'm articulating the President's position. And the President's position is that he is greatly concerned about the changing needs of women in this society and is going to do something about it, and has done a lot.

MR. EVANS: But, Mrs. Whittlesey, the fact is you have been subjected to a barrage of anti-Faith Whittlesey in the press, liberal press mainly, women's organizations. You talk of these leaks, what you call leaks, as "creative communications." Don't you think there's been a lot of anti-Faith leakings?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, I don't deny that and it's very disturbing, but the President has reaffirmed his confidence in me and I'm expressing the positions of the President of the United



States when I say that the greatest benefit that we can confer upon American women for the future is a growing and expanding economy and a continued slow-down in the rates of inflation, which is the cruelest tax of all on all Americans.

MR. EVANS: Let me just continue though along my theme that you are a victim, you have been victimized on this women's issue, and quote Judy Goldsmith, who heads the Women's Truth Squad of the National Organization of Women. She said the other day, after the press conference that the President had on the Latin commission, she said that the President's statement on women's treatment by his Administration, and I quote her, "is outrageous and insulting, that he presented us with yet another all-white, all-male commission. Token mentality," she says about the President; nothing about you.

Why do women hate Ronald Reagan?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, I'm a woman and I like Ronald Reagan.

MR. EVANS: Well, I'm not talking about every single woman in the country, but why is this -- Why does this exist?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, you are hearing the expressions of opposition from the Washington-based feminist leadership organizations, which are traditionally Democratic and liberal in their political philosophy. The leaders of those organizations, their most prominent spokesperson is Bella Abzug. And Bella Abzug and Gloria Steinum do not represent mainstream American women. They have always espoused basically liberal, isolationist, political views, dovish defense policies, big government, higher taxes, and big spending. And that's what they continue to espouse now. They may have a new spokesperson in the name of Kathy Wilson, but basically she voted -- She says she voted for Jimmy Carter in 1980. She's not a Republican. She has a Republican label, but she's espousing liberal Democratic philosophy.

MR. NOVAK: Ms. Whittlesey, I don't want to beat a dead issue to death, but I'd like to try to find out exactly what happened, factually. You went into a Cabinet meeting and said there was no gender gap. True or False.

MS. WHITTLESEY: False.

MR. NOVAK: What did you say?

MS. WHITTLESEY: I said, Mr. Novak, that there was a gender gap, but that if we analyzed it carefully we also find that there's a marriage gap, that women who are married tend to be more supportive of this President, that older women tend to be more supportive of this President, and that the Democrats have a huge problem with a male gender gap, because they are losing support among men by the thousands.

So, I said first of all, we have to look at the statistics very carefully and -- and admit that we do have a problem, but analyze our response to it. And then I said that -- that I don't think that the gender gap was any reason to deviate or to suggest that this President deviate from his basic policy of -- of belief that a strong economic recovery is what this nation needs. And that's the message that I carried in that Cabinet meeting.

MR. NOVAK: All right. Were you challenged at that Cabinet meeting?

MS. WHITTLESEY: I was not challenged to my face, nor have I ever been to my face.

MR. NOVAK: All right. Subsequent to that Cabinet meeting, there was a number of newspaper stories saying that this issue had been taken out of your office and given elsewhere. Were you ever told that by anybody?

MS. WHITTLESEY: No.

MR. NOVAK: Has there been anything operationally that has happened to indicate that it's happened?

MS. WHITTLESEY: No, there has not. There was a meeting -- There was a group that Mr. Deaver had already in operation, which was a combination of various elements of the White House policymaking group, and that group continues, and I have offered constant support to that group, as have various other officials in the White House organization.

MR. NOVAK: Now when you call this leakage "creative communication," does that mean lying?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, I don't -- I don't what to characterize it. It goes on in Washington --



- MR. EVANS: Oh, go ahead and characterize it please. Please do.
- MS. WHITTLESEY: It's untrue and it's really -- It's not constructive.
- MR. NOVAK: Untrue.
- MS. WHITTLESEY: It's untrue and I was deeply disappointed by it, but it's life in Washington, and I guess I was initiated to it.
- MR. EVANS: But then that goes back -- That goes back, Mrs. Whittlesey, to my initial thought that you have been victimized. Do you not agree that there has been a certain amount, an effort has been made to make you the victim of a political fact, a political reality; that is, the gender gap?
- MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, I suppose that someone might -- might say that, but I don't. -- I don't operate on the theory that I'm a victim. I think I have to go forward and do what is right for the American people and for this President, and I've continued to espouse his policies enthusiastically and, perhaps in the eyes of some, courageously, despite the opposition of those who hold a different political philosophy.
- MR. EVANS: Now let me ask you this. Do you think it is possible that the press plays very hard on this issue called the gender gap, and as the polls indicate, there really is a gender gap, that women don't like Mr. Reagan as much as men and a large percentage gap between the two against him -- Do you think this could bring men in larger numbers over to him, in a conscious way, as though to say, look, if the women aren't going to be fair about this, then we're -- we're gonna rally to the President's side?
- MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, we'll take votes wherever we can find them and support wherever we can attract it. It would be hard to speculate what the results of it would be. But we are not writing-off women. We're making an active effort to communicate with American women and stress the enormous accomplishments of this Administration.
- MR. EVANS: Well, one last question on the gender gap for me. Is the gender gap closing or widening right now?
- MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, it's hard to say, but it seems to be widening, but we intend to try to correct that by stressing the fact

that if we had to nominate a woman for President in 1984, the Republican Party would have many more experienced high-level women to select for a presidential nomination than the Democratic Party. We have two women in the United States Senate, the Democrats have none. We have three women in the Cabinet of the United States, more than at anytime in the history of the United States.

MR. EVANS: And one on the Court.

MS. WHITTLESEY: And one on the Supreme Court, as well.

MR. NOVAK: Ambassador Whittlesey, I'm -- I'm always interested in the abnormal psychology of White Houses and abnormal sociology of White Houses, and I'd like to understand what happened to you. Because you came in there as a -- apparently, everybody was very upbeat about your appointment. And before I knew it, White House aides were telling my partner and I that you were a disaster. What -- What did you do that was so wrong so quick?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, I've been a woman in the political world relatively alone for some ten years and this is not unusual. I don't mean to imply that it's sexist treatment, but I've never felt that I had to change my -- my policies or my behavior because of it. It happens in all the institutions of society today to women and it's unfortunate, but --

MR. NOVAK: What did you do that they didn't expect you to do? Did you have your own opinions or something bad like that?

MS. WHITTLESEY: I had my opinions, and I spoke out about my opinions, and I wanted to make sure that this President was -- was keeping his campaign promises to all the women of America and to all the citizens of America.

MR. NOVAK: On what issues, for example?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Generally the economy and his pledge to provide economic growth and opportunity by cutting back on the size of government and reducing the tax burden on middle Americans.

MR. NOVAK: And wasn't that popular in the White House?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, some of the positions of the organized women's groups here in Washington are suggesting programs that cost vast



sums of money, billions of dollars and increased regulatory burdens, you see, which are directly contrary to our goal of reducing regulation and spending.

MR. NOVAK: I understand that, Ma'am. But I'm asking what in the world in that did your senior colleagues in the White House find obnoxious? That's what I don't understand.

MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, I really don't know. I don't know. My children were puzzled. I have three children and they were surprised, but this is a part of life in Washington and I'm not discouraged.

MR. EVANS: Mrs. Whittlesey, would you spend more time these days on the Latin crisis, Nicaragua and El Salvador, with your contact work for the President around the country, or would you spend more time on an issue like the child -- the enforcement of the child protection laws in the cases of divorced families, when the father runs off and doesn't pay his child support? Which is the most important in your office?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, we do both issues and we recognize that the care and nurturing of children is one of the most important concerns that we face as a nation, as more women enter the workforce and children are faced with coming home to empty households. That's why we're stressing private sector initiatives to expand day care opportunities for children.

But we are also concerned about the growing threat to our national security and our human rights responsibilities in Central America, with developments in Central America. And we speak out to all of the interest groups who come before us about their responsibility as Americans to think seriously about developments in Central America.

MR. EVANS: Well, the statistics and the polls show that a tiny minority of American citizens have any concept of what's really going on in Nicaragua and El Salvador, can't even identify the side that we -- that the Administration says is the right side and which is the wrong side. Does this bother you? I mean since you're the -- Since you're the agent in a sense of the President in explaining these issues

and getting support, that you haven't been able to do this?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, we've just started. We started our series of out-reach meetings some eleven weeks ago when the President made his address to the Joint Session of Congress. And we stress to our interested constituent groups the human rights aspects of what is happening in Nicaragua, that the government of Nicaragua is not a "Robin Hood" government, that the Russian "Foreign Legion," so to speak, is there, that -- There's been so much attention paid to the small number of military advisers in El Salvador, and yet there's thousands of East Bloc, PLO and Russian and Cuban advisers in that little country of Nicaragua.

MR. EVANS: Let me ask you this. Do you think that Kathy Wilson, who's been mentioned on this program, and Judy Goldsmith, of the Women's Truth Squad and the National Organization for Women, that they care as much about these problems in Central America as they do about the so-called women's issues?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Apparently not. As a matter of fact, their positions are -- are dovish on foreign policy. They are in favor of the Freeze and a smaller defense budget. I believe personally, and I think many women of America, as well as men, believe that the greatest challenge we face in this country, in these coming years will be how we respond to the Soviet challenge on our southern border.

MR. EVANS: So you think that one of the main factors in the gender gap, or a factor, is that these leaders of women's organizations are really way out of step with what the President is trying to do in foreign policy, and that they fear him or they don't like his foreign policy and his military program.

MS. WHITTLESEY: Yes. There's a different approach to the best way to achieve a peace. I have a 17-year-old draft age son. I want to make sure that he stays at home. And I think the best way to do that is for America to be strong, because history has taught us that -- that weakness creates aggression. And I want my son to -- to be healthy and happy at home, rather than having to go fight in a foreign war.



And I know that if America is strong, he's likely to stay at home.

MR. NOVAK: Ambassador Whittlesey, I want to, if I could, just follow-up, make one more try at what I was asking you before. You were quoted, or you were described by one of your colleagues in The Washington Post as being, having a "more conservative than thou attitude." Is that the problem, that they found that you were a real Reaganite and didn't like it at the White House? Is that -- Is that the basic problem?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Well, I have been committed to President Reagan for a long time, and his political philosophy. I am an outspoken person. I've never hidden by own political views. I espoused them in Western Europe as the Ambassador to Switzerland. I don't know -- I don't think that's the problem, because we're all on the same team in the White House, and we all believe that the President's policies are the ones that should be implemented in this government.

MR. NOVAK: Would you like the President to be talking more about Latin America than he has or do you think he's -- he is finally now talking enough about it?

MS. WHITTLESEY: Oh, I think he should be talking more and I think he will be talking more, because, as we see, the encroachment and the creeping cancer of Marxist expansion in Central America I think it will become evident to all Americans that -- that his leadership proved to be sound and that he -- he is a leader, not a follower of public opinion.

MR. EVANS: Ms. Whittlesey, you just made a statement that puzzles me a little bit, it astonished me. You said we are all on the same team in the White House. You remember the controversies over whether there should or should not be a tax increase, which the President took the side of no and Mr. Baker and others in the White House took the side of yes. Many controversies like that have split the White House wide open. Many times it's top people against him. How do you -- How do you say we're all on the same team? Isn't there a major difference of opinion there that hurts the President?



MS. WHITTLESEY: No, there aren't major differences of opinion. There are differences of tactics. And the President wants to have the broadest range and discussion that he possibly can on a wide variety of issues. He's the one that makes the decision. Various people have different points of view as to how to accomplish his goals and we have -- We have quite heated discussions sometimes about how best to accomplish his goals, but -- but we are unified in support of the President.

MR. EVANS: You have no criticism, and I ask not this question to get you in trouble with anybody, but you really think the Baker end of the White House is doing exactly what you would like?

MS. WHITTLESEY: I would say that the leadership that has been provided in the White House for this President chaired by Mr. Baker has been responsible for the -- the popularity of this President. We are going into a re-election mode now with great optimism and Mr. Baker has been Chief of Staff during that period.

MR. NOVAK: Let me ask you a couple quick questions about personnel. We have less than a minute-and-a-half left. Do you think that the so-called "Briefinggate" or "Debate Book" controversy will result in anybody getting fired on the White House Staff?

MS. WHITTLESEY: I don't know. I think it is largely passed because I think the American people are now focussing on the more fundamental issues and the more important issues like Central America, like the battle of the budget.

MR. NOVAK: You haven't seen the F.B.I report yet, have you?

MS. WHITTLESEY: I certainly have not, but I'm sure justice will be done, whatever is required will.

MR. NOVAK: Secondly, your old colleague and political ally, former Secretary of Transportation Drew Lewis, will he come back to run the campaign?

MS. WHITTLESEY: I hope that he will. We are trying to persuade him, but he's taken a very important job in New York, and -- With his leadership, I think that the President would be

unbeatable if he chose to run.

MR. NOVAK: Well, he said -- It was his company, Warner-Amex Communications, said that he would not be leaving there, he would only be a part-time volunteer. Is that -- Is that your understanding?

MS. WHITTLESEY: I don't think any final decision has been made as yet, but I know Drew is considering various alternatives and in the midst of discussions.

MR. NOVAK: Thank you very much, Ambassador Whittlesey.

MS. WHITTLESEY: Thank you for inviting me.

MR. NOVAK: We'll be back with some comments after these messages.  
(Announcements.)

MR. NOVAK: Rowland, Faith Whittlesey is often described as a tough conservative politician. I think watching this interview confirms that. She made clear that she was never repudiated in her view about the gender gap in the Cabinet, and I thought she rather gave the impression that she feels it's because she is trying to keep Ronald Reagan Ronald Reagan on spending cuts, tax cuts that she has come under fire, and it doesn't really have much to do with the women's issue.

MR. EVANS: I think that's right, Robert. And I think also that she took after Bella Abzug and Gloria Steinum on our program. They hadn't come into it. I think this explains the basic difference between her and the so-called -- or the leaders of the women's groups. Bella Abzug, like her or hate her, is a figure in the women's movement, so is Gloria Steinum, but not the kind of figure that our guest today thinks is significant in expressing the real aspirations of this country and of women. And this came out, I thought.

MR. NOVAK: And I think she also took off after those women's organizations, indicating that they're for defeatism in -- in Central America, they're for isolationism, that they are left-wing deviants, shall we say, and I think it's a very tough approach on trying to reduce the gender gap by attacking the women's organizations. That, I think, is not the approach of Mike Deaver.

MR. EVANS: In fact, the approach might be counter-productive, Bob. I think that's fair to say. And that's why I asked her about differences in the White House and the White House Staff. I was shocked with her answer. She said, oh, we are a very happy crew, from Mr. Jim Baker, the White House Chief of Staff, all the way down. Now I know there are differences on that White House Staff and she's a good soldier, she's going into a re-election campaign, she didn't want to finger them, but the fact is she played a good soldier all the way through when she defended Jim Baker. That was my reading. I'm Rowland Evans.

MR. NOVAK: I'm Robert Novak.

(End of broadcast.)