

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas discusses Women's Suffrage*

Interviewer: Tell us something about your involvement in going to Tallahassee for the first time for women's suffrage.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Oh that?

Interviewer: Yeah.

MSD: Well that, you see... the amendment had been offered and the states had to ratify. And in 1916, it came up for ratification before the Florida legislature. So, Mrs. Williams Jennings Bryan, who had come down here not too long before, organized a committee of Mrs., oh, Mrs. Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, the old Governor's wife, and Mrs. Frank Jennings, another Governor's wife and down here me and Mrs. Frank Stranahan of Ft. Lauderdale, now dead, but she was, she and I were younger. She and I were the more younger elements in that! (laughs) We went up to Tallahassee to get them to pass, to try to ratify the Suffrage Amendment. The Senate had said they would ratify, so we didn't have to bother with them. We had to speak to a committee of the House, which we did. It was a big room with men sitting around two walls of it with spittoons between every two or three. And we had on our best clothes and we spoke, as we felt, eloquently, about women's suffrage and it was like speaking to blank walls. All they did was spit in the spittoons. They didn't pay any attention to us at all. That evening Mrs. Williams Jennings Bryan made a speech before the combined House and Senate, one of the best suffrage speeches I've ever heard in my life, and I heard a good many because I heard them in college, even. We were interested in suffrage and heard a great many of the great old suffrage women who were wonderful women. Mrs. Bryan made a wonderful speech, and a man next to me scared me to death: he was spitting in his spittoon that was right over there and I had my good dress on, so I was worried! (laughs) Well, the House absolutely refused to ratify. So Florida didn't ratify that until years and years later. It passed as a war measure, so when I came back from abroad in 1920, it was the first time women voted, so I voted then. But still, Florida hadn't ratified it until very much later. You see, it passed, but that was the result of our efforts! (laughs) I got a really good idea of political action, and some of these redneck people... you know what we used to call black... um... the Wool-hat boys in the red hills beyond the Suwannee. They were the ones that ran the state. They sure did. I thought then that it was a backwards state and I still have some of that idea.