Speech to Marriage and Family Counselors, September 19, 1980:

Thank you for your invitation for me to come this morning. Thank you for your interest in the subject of equality under the law for all people.

I choose not to begin with an introductory joke as most speakers do. There are two reasons for this. Equal rights is not a laughing matter. Further, there is much emotionality and irrationality in discussions of ERA. In a familiar professional jargon, I choose to speak to your most critical, factual "adult", rather than to woo your playful "child".

I will present a few facts about the Equal Rights Amendment, will outline what you as an organization and as individuals can do to assist in its retification by the 1981 Georgia legislature, and then will respond to your questions.

To help you in "judging the source" as I speak, let me briefly introduce myself. My name is Carmie Cochrane. I am a woman, wife and mother. I am a psychologist. I am a writer. I am an officer in professional organizations. But as I apply for jobs, receive insurance benefits or pay premiums, am paid for work and look forward to the future, I would like to be treated as an ordinary, single, equal human person. Such has not been the case in past, nor is it my situation presently.

When I was graduated from high school, I could not go to the college of my choice as it was for men only. When later, I was transferred to that college in its first year of accepting women as students, I applied for a parttime job there. Because I would not promise the prospective employer, a college Dean, that I would be "his right hand gal" and stay on to work for him in the years following my graduation, I did not get that job. In graduate school at the University of Georgia, I applied for a scholarship purported to be based strictly and solely on past academic achievement. Although I literally had all A+'s at the time of that application, I did not get the scholarship. When my department chairman inquired of the committee why, he was told, "Well, she did have the highest grades, but 'she has a husband to help her out'."

When internship time came, three of us were awarded stipends to Georgia Mental Health Institute. Two of us were women, one a man. The man was offered $2000 a year more in stipend than the two women. Many conferences later, GMHI did not yield, so I interned 250 miles away from husband and child, in another hospital in another state, where stipends for men and women were equal. I taught a whole year at the University of Georgia before learning that I had received about $1500 less for my work that year than had a more poorly qualified male colleague. I applied for a job with the Student Mental Health Service at the University, and was being interview by the appropriate Dean. When I stated that I thought the offered salary was low, he responded, "I think it's pretty good -- for a woman." As I understood the position was for a psychologist, rather than for a woman, I said so, and did not get the position. When working in a state merit system position, I questioned why I paid the same life insurance premiums as a man, but benefits to my survivors would be less than to the male's survivors. I also questioned, why, when I had become divorced, my auto insurance premiums jumped upwards, whereas my ex-husband's did not change. I now note that while one-third of the members of the Georgia Psychological Association are women, I have been the only woman on its seven-person Board of Directors for the past three years, and only one of two women psychologists who have held statewide office in that group in my memory. And finally, if my husband dies today without leaving a will which "gives" me certain rights, I have no automatic ownership of any of our possessions accumulated since our marriage, because Georgia has no community property law.

* A situation which has since been changed.
Enough of personal experiences — else you can believe that I am a single case who is not representative of today's women. But you know that I am not. You may even think that I am a woman engaged in this ERA work out of personal bitterness. But you know that I am not.

Let's move on to the general and pertaining condition — the facts of the matter.

The entire Equal Rights Amendment is made up of three sections. Section I states: Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex. Section II states: The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this Article. And Section III states: This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

This entire amendment is made up of only 51 words. Fifty-one words which could guarantee equality under the law for all of us and our children regardless of whether one is born male or female. Unfortunately, as Erma Bombeck states, "These are the most misunderstood few words since 'One size fits all'!"

I've read the full text of this Constitutional Amendment because, as I'm sure you are aware, an incredible number of untrue implications have been read into this simple and clear statement of equality regardless of gender. You have heard, I'm sure, that is the Equal Rights Amendment is ratified, we will have co-ed bathrooms, all mothers will be snatched from their infant children in order to be put into combat, marriage as an institution will disappear, homosexuality will be legalized, abortion will get totally out of hand, and the homemaker will lose the protection she now has.

It is distressing to me that so often those women who have the least legal security and who are primarily dependent on the generosity and goodness of their husbands for their economic survival are also so often the most vocal opponents of the ERA. Such women say "if the ERA is passed, we will lose our protections". I ask, "What protections?" "My husband will no longer need to support me; a mother will no longer be guaranteed custody of her children upon divorce, women will be forced out to work." It is unfortunate that these folks do not know the law in Georgia.

Women in Georgia have little legal protection. Husbands in Georgia are no longer required to support their wives. When this was the law, it did not hold up in court, except for providing the barest of necessities, because the courts do not interfere in ongoing marriages. The only way a woman can try to insure economic support would be to file for divorce and to try to obtain alimony. To me, this does not "preserve the institution of marriage."

In fact, in only 14 out of every 100 divorces is there an award of alimony at all. Less than on-half of the women who are given custody of their children receive child support, and less than half of these ever collect regular payments. So, in reality, perhaps 7 of 100 women receive alimony and maybe 21 of 100 mothers and children receive child support.

In addition, there is no law in Georgia which guarantees the mother custody of her children upon divorce. Another fact: there is no law which can force anyone, male or female, to go to work.

In Georgia, the assumption in marriage is that property belongs to whoever paid for it. Therefore, personal property, household goods, etc., acquired during the marriage is presumed to be the husband's if the wife is a homemaker who does not earn a monetary wage. So there is no legal economic recognition of, nor economic protection, for the non-wage-earning homemaker. No law in Georgia states that a husband must allow.
his wife joint ownership of property, joint bank accounts or joint credit history.

Even the working wife in Georgia must prove financial contribution to property acquired during a marriage in order to establish any claim to it. Further, upon the death of a husband, a wife may be required to pay inheritance taxes on certain property which is in her name if you, yourself, had not actually paid for it. If your spouse had paid for it, he would not have to pay taxes on it, if the wife died and this property was then left to him. Georgia is one of a few states where a surviving female spouse can be disinherited, a situation not made more tolerable because of the "year's support" law, as exercise of rights under the latter can be a real legal hassle.

More facts: There is a strong veterans' preference law in state employment opportunities. This has impaired women's ability to gain State employment. A recent study found that, in the South, women are represented on State Boards and Commissions, at a far lower rate than their proportion in the population. A recent study by the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights found that the Georgia State Employment System is blatantly discriminatory against women. There are far more men in lower paying jobs, and women receive lower salaries than men for equivalent jobs in Georgia. Recent studies show women professors in the University System with the same credentials (degrees, years of teaching, number of research publications, etc.) may still earn about two-thirds of the salaries of their male colleagues.

One additional mind-bending fact: Georgia did not officially ratify the right of women to vote until 1970.

I will move on to another myth: that the ERA will legalize homosexuality. The fact is that the ERA states that equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged on account of sex. This means that the law shall not discriminate because of a person's gender. It has nothing to do with the gender one prefers.

To those who speak about co-ed bathrooms: The ERA will not interfere with the constitutional right to privacy. Further, in states which have state ERA laws, men and women still have separate toilet facilities.

One of the most emotionally laden issues to be confused with the ratification of the ERA is that of abortion. ERA does not address the whole topic of abortion at all. The ERA would mean that if a law applied to a person of one sex, it must apply to a person of the opposite sex. So, until men can get pregnant, the issue of abortion if not relevant to the Equal Rights Amendment.

Many businessmen and others familiar with fair employment practices in industry state that ratification of the ERA is no longer necessary because we have laws addressing equal employment. Here are some facts. As of 1976, women with four years of college were earning only as much as men with eight years of elementary schooling. Twenty years ago, a woman's earnings were about 63¢ of each dollar earned by a man. Today, believe it or not, a woman is earning 59¢ to each man's dollar.

U. S. Labor Department figures reveal that 42% of the work force is now female. Women take home 65% of the paychecks between $3000 and $5000 a year. Only 5% of women's paychecks are above $15,000 annually. Also, 4/5ths of the workers in the eight lowest income occupations are women. Only 6% of women workers become managers. And the longer women live, the worse off (economically) they become. Of the elderly poor, 70% are women. Of the women who were not classified as financially "poor" while married, 25% of white women and 40% of black women live in poverty after the loss of their husbands.
There are also those who say that ERA is not needed because of the 14th Amendment —
the equal protection clause. Fact: The 14th Amendment has been interpreted incon-
sistently by the U.S. Supreme Court with regard to gender. For example, it was
necessary to pass the 19th Amendment in order for women to have the right to vote.
In 1974, Supreme Court Justice Douglas stated, "The main purpose of the equal protection
clause was to end racial discrimination. Sex discrimination was no concern of the
framers of the equal protection guarantee."

There are others, including the Republicans apparently, who believe that no constitu-
tional amendment is needed, merely a statute or simple law. The fact is that any
"simple law" can be as easily changed as passed. As personnel change in the courts,
in Congress, or in the state legislatures, simple laws may change with them. A con-
stitutional amendment stands. Besides, it is intolerable to consider that any fair-
minded person could vote for continuance of a situation in which it is legal to
abridge any rights in our country on the basis of gender.

One more issue: the draft. It may come as a surprise, but the Congress does not have
to await ratification of the ERA to draft women. Congress has that authority right
now! If women were drafted, not all would serve in combat anymore than men do. In
fact, only about 4% of all male draftees ever see combat. Physical requirements con-
stitute criteria for this determination. Also, family situations would continue, as
now to be a basis for draft classification. For many women today, the Armed Services
is one of the few ways to obtain an education or a marketable skill, an opportunity
denied most women today.

The ERA is not a cure-all, but it is a firm national commitment and mandate toward
equality for all people. The ERA will not affect our private lives. It will not dic-
tate what you can do in your bedroom nor with whom, who should pick out the new
family car, nor how to practice religious beliefs.

The woman who enjoys baking biscuits will keep on baking biscuits; the man who feels
responsible for his family will continue to bring home the bacon. No law nor Constit-
tutional Amendment can change people's caring for each other. The law is not the
reason why many married women have a good life — they have a good life because their
kind and generous husbands select to make it this way. Other wives, even these wives,
single women, divorced women, widowed women, all need important rights and protections
under the law not dependent on a spouse's benevolence. Legal security is necessary,
and ERA is necessary to provide this status for all citizens.

Some people refer to the ERA as a women's rights amendment — and I have just been
citing the need of many women for this amendment. Perhaps, women have more to gain
initially under the Amendment because women have more often been the victims of sex
discrimination. However, there are many ways in which men would benefit from ratifi-
cation of the ERA.

For example, a revamping of the Social Security system, would given widowers' the same
rights as now are received by widows. Men also benefit when their wives who work
outside the home earn salaries equal to those paid to men for the same work, and when
the wife's salary is considered in loan and mortgage applications. There will be
psychological benefits for men as well. My husband asked me to be sure to say that
men will never be free and equal themselves until they are relieved from the burden
of resentment women feel toward them for being the "collectively guilty party" which
has denied women certain rights throughout history. Most mature, self-assured men
do not want women as property, women on pedestals, nor women as playthings — they
want women as partners!
Finally, as mental health professionals, you are concerned with the treatment of emotional problems as evidenced by the clients with whom you work. It is my premise that every people-helping professional should be concerned as well with the prevention of problems which disrupt individuals and families.

A colleague of mine, Dr. John Trice, this summer gave an invited address in which he cited the impossibility of ever sufficiently funding and staffing the health services delivery system in a way to offset what he termed the "disease delivery system". Components of this disease delivery system are: unemployment, poverty, poor educational opportunities, poor health education and care, malnutrition, toxins in our environment, natural disasters, wars and legal statutes which impose penalties on the family unit (such as present tax and social security regulations). I would respectfully add to Dr. Trice's list: prejudice and discrimination on the basis of gender. I would define gender discrimination as anything which limits an individual's perception of his or her own worth because of being male or female, or anything which puts limits, because of gender, on the opportunities available to him or her.

That's why I work for ERA. That's why I'm here this morning. This is one way in which I can make a difference in countering the disease delivery system. This is my contribution to prevention of the distress and disorder which results from inequality and lack of equal consideration of all persons under the law.

Will you help? Will you stand tall and proudly for this simple and basic right for all? I was asked to come this morning with an action plan for your organization and for you as individuals.

As an organization, you can affiliate with ERA, Georgia. You can send a representative to the METRO CANDIDATES FORUM on October 1 where legislative hopefuls in contested races will be present to assess the support which ERA has from many organizations.

As for individual action, I have prepared a two-page fact sheet, listing what you can do. Let me have these passed out now. Please read over these and if any suggested action is not clear, please ask me about it. [See handout attached].

That's it. It's that simple. ERA can pass in Georgia in 1981. I believe that — and I will personally give a lot of my time and effort between now and January to help that happen.

When, someday, I'm an old woman, and one of my grandchildren comes home from school, he or she might ask, "Grandmother, did you know that, one time, in the United States, it was legal for a man to have services and rights that a woman did not have?" And, I will say, "Yes, child, I remember". "Well, Grandmother, did you think that was fair?" "No, child, I did not think it was right for people to have different rights just because they happened to be male or female." "Well, Grandmother, did you try to do anything about it? Did you have anything to do with the Equal Rights Amendment passing?" I'll be very proud to say, "YES!"

Thank you for your concern, for your attention and for your help.

Carmie Thrasher Cochrane, Ph.D.
STAND TALL FOR EQUAL RIGHTS BY TAKING THESE TEN STEPS:

1. Join ERA, Georgia by using the membership form below.

2. Attend the METRO CANDIDATES FORUM, on October 1, 7-9 P.M., Room 1, Midtown YWCA Building, 45 – 11th St., N. E. (Between Peachtree and W. Peachtree, one block south of Colony Square. Enter by front door. Free parking is available). Let candidates in contested races know by your presence that you care how they will represent you on ERA if they are elected.

3. Support Senator Lawrence (Bud) Stumbaugh in his contested race out in Stone Mountain. He has been targeted by anti-ERA forces to be made "an example of" for his pro-ERA stand. He needs money and volunteers. Sign up as a volunteer by checking the space below on the ERA membership form. Attend his campaign "kickoff" tomorrow morning, Saturday, Sept. 20, at 10 A.M. at 3411 Covington Drive (Exit at Covington Highway from I-285, turn left from Covington Highway onto Covington Drive). Or, call his office at 262-2100.

4. Call Linda Hallenberg at 432-4692 (she's President of Women's Political Caucus) re: working for PRO-ERA candidates. When candidates need help, they let Linda know, and she knows which candidates are pro-ERA.

5. Write letters to the Editor of your newspapers. Keep them short, simple, clear. They will not all be printed, but some will be. Remember smaller newspapers around, as well as the big ones.

6. Make individual contacts with your legislators. NOTHING is more effective than face-to-face meeting with your representatives. If you don't know your representatives, call up your county courthouse and give your address, they will tell you your district(s), etc., and your representatives. Then, call that legislator, tell him you are a constituent of his/hers, and that you wish for him/her to represent you accurately in 1981 by voting for passage of ERA. Follow up the call with a letter, reaffirming your wish and your directive to him/her (they are elected to represent you!) Legislators quite properly weight their decisions on certain votes by the numbers of folks they hear from for and against the issue.

7. If you would like to speak out against inequality, speak out for ERA. Just indicate below your willingness to be a speaker, and we will contact you.

8. Many of you work during the day, and so are not available to assist at the ERA office on Maple Drive during its usual, daily hours of from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. Would you be available, however, if called ahead of time, to donate an evening there if we have a big mailing, big telephoning, etc. to handle in a hurry? If so, check in the space on membership form below.

9. Would you be available to be contacted when it is necessary to go to the legislature, to show strength by numbers, etc. This can be needed at day and evening times. You don't have to say a word, just be there! If you can volunteer for this kind of help, please indicate below.
10. Enlist your colleagues, clients and friends in this effort. Call ERA office at 237-3978 for more brochures, more membership forms.

A P.S. Since I typed the above, I got a call from Bud Stumbaugh's campaign folks asking me to also tell you about a fundraising barbeque for him which will be October 9, at the Mathis Dairy Picnic Grounds at Stone Mountain. A $5.00 BBQ costs, plus contribution is desired. RSVP to Barbara Greeson, 436-5855.

As timid and tardy as I was in getting involved (this morning is my first speech for ERA), I can invite you to join me and us in the above ways, and can "testify" that I feel more "at home" with myself, and even proud of myself, for reaching through my inhibitions to finally ACT on some of my beliefs in this area.

We at ERA Georgia welcome you, and are grateful for you, but more importantly, Georgia's men and women, boys and girls, need your help to ensure each of them equal rights under the law.

ERA Georgia, Inc.  
3110 Maple Drive, Atlanta, 30345

Thank you,  
Carmie Thrasher Cochrane, Ph.D.  
Volunteer for ERA

I believe in equal rights. I support the Equal Rights Amendment.

Name:  
Address:  
Phones: Office ; Home  
County of Residence  
If you know, please also list your State Senator  
Legislative District No.  
Membership Category:  
Sponsor, $500  
Patron, $100  
Donor, $50  
Contributor, $25  
Individual/ Regular, $15  
Individual/ Special (Senior Citizen or Student), $10

I will attend the METRO CANDIDATES FORUM.
I will assist in the campaign of Senator Lawrence (Bud) Stumbaugh. Have his campaign manager call me.
I will call Ms. Hallenborg to find out how candidates on any contested races in my district stand on ERA.
I will write letters to Editor of papers I read most often.
I will make personal contact with my legislators and ask them to vote for ERA.
I will be a speaker for ERA, Georgia, as they may ask me to, and as they will furnish information, materials, data for me to use.
I will respond, if I can, if called to an EVENING WORK PARTY at ERA office, to help get out big mailing or whatever needs to be done.
I will respond, if I can, if called to come to "swell numbers" of folks who believe in ERA at legislature, meetings, etc, where show of strength would be important.
I will enlist my clients, colleagues and friends in this effort. Please send me ______ application blanks and brochures.

On the reverse side, please give your comments, including names and addresses of others who support equality and dignity for all people.