

MCS Tours the Pacific...

(taken from the Anecdotes File as told by
Representative Margaret Chase Smith)

Along toward the end of World War II, certain members of the House Naval Affairs Committee were permitted to make a trip for purposes of observation and reporting back conditions on islands in the South Pacific. I was one of those designated. It was a large group and the nearest to what I would call a junket of any trip that I made during my entire House service. The escort officer was Captain Don Ramsey who was attached to the Committee and assigned to the group. Because one of the Representatives had a heart condition, a Navy nurse was also assigned to the group. It was a long trip, quite time consuming and interesting to me as I had never had such an experience. We flew in one of the old prop planes, first stopping in Hawaii where some of us were entertained by Admiral Chester Nimitz at dinner, who, with Admiral Spruance, took some of us out on the old SARATOGA. It was on this brief trip that I saw how kind Admiral Nimitz was to his men yet how firm he could be with his officers. When we left Hawaii, Nimitz personally saw us off and presented me with a lei of small orchids and a very large purple orchid saying that he knew the rules prohibiting the wearing of flowers on uniforms (I was wearing a Navy seersucker blue-gray outfit) but he was giving me a special dispensation, wanting me to go off the right way. As he handed me the large orchid, he also handed me two large pins, saying he knew how essential it was to have something to attach it to my blouse.

Some of the highlights included stops at Kwajalein, Manus, Guam, Saipan, Australia and on the way back just before landing, the Johnston Islands.

At Guam, I was given the Marine General's quarters with the silk nylon draped ceiling, tour of the Six Chaplains

stations, etc. It was in Australia where we had more time for sightseeing and more to see although the country was pretty badly damaged. We did visit Canberra, the Capitol, but Captain Ramsey and some of the men appeared to do some of the things we often read about such as "wine, women and song." Everywhere we went, he made many purchases and was most attentive to the nurse. On the way south, we stopped at Saipan against orders. The Japanese were still sniping on the mountainside which divided the two areas of the entire island; and when word was out that we were there, we were promptly moved. When we went into Manus, it was necessary to dock some way out and go in on small boats, I being on one of the first. We were met by Commodore Boke who appeared a little uneasy, saying that with 45,000 men on the island which had not

been developed, it had been quite a problem to know what to do with a woman but that his men had done the best they could to make his own quarters comfortable for me. My room was bare but comfortable with a narrow cot, small tumbler full of wildflowers and a book or two. As I walked down the hall, I saw out of the side of my right eye something pink and turned around to see a full pink bathroom across from the Commodore's quarters. The Commodore noted a flush on my face and said, "Yes, Mrs. Smith, that is it," and proceeded to tell me the story. I had a complaint from a minister in Augusta, Maine, sometime before about a young man from the Capitol City, writing him about the hardships they were facing while assigned to the island of Manus—that the enlisted men were sleeping on the beaches (cont. pg. 2)

Representative Margaret Chase Smith with unidentified military personnel aboard the USS SARATOGA in the South Pacific in 1944

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(Pacific

cont. from pg. 1)

where it was wet and uncomfortable while the officers had quarters with “hot” closets on the mountainside, that even the commanding officer was privileged to have a full pink bathroom! Whereupon I talked with Admiral Morrell who reported, after sending a special Task Force to Manus to investigate, that it was true, that this was the first group assigned to the island, that plans were going through for development, that “hot closets” were only small closets with small electric bulbs to keep officers’ uniforms dry but that the pink bathroom was complete and he was taking steps to determine how this happened. It seemed that Commodore Boke had been retired but very much needed in this particular assignment; and when he agreed to go to Manus and get them started, he said facetiously, “I’ll go if you’ll send a pink bathtub with me.” Someone took him at his word and shipped the facilities which were installed. The enlisted men, when unloading it, thought it was a piano which they had been hoping was being sent to them, opened it, and to their amazement, found that they uncovered a real secret.

After stopping at Hawaii on our return, our last stop was one of the little atolls, Johnston Island. I could well understand why such a visit was discouraged because it was a very bleak, unattractive, wet, buggy place. The men had worked long and hard to clean the place up and prepare dinner for the 24 of us in the group. The dinner consisted of delicious steaks and all the fixings. This troubled me greatly because we were going back home where we could find steaks and felt they should have kept them for those who so seldom saw them and not give them to us. We did not get the ice cream, however, that was prepared for us because some of the sailors decided that they wanted it more than any of us could possibly want it.

I was tired and went to bed early—the only one to do so—so was up early and took a walk around. In wandering about, I went into a small area which could be called the dispensary—spic and span as it could be with all the rust and damage done from the salt winds and rain, talked with the Commander in Charge, thus coming away from the island more informed perhaps than anyone else in the group. Sometime later in the year, I walked into the House Chamber and heard a Representative making a speech about the Naval Affairs

MCS CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY PAYS TRIBUTE

A special edition of **Focus on Public Policy**, published by the Margaret Chase Smith Center for Public Policy at the University of Maine in Orono highlights Senator Smith in an article entitled: “Celebrating 97 years of Senator Margaret Chase Smith.” Filled with excerpts from “Margaret Chase Smith’s brilliant career: A guide to the Archives of the Margaret Chase Smith Library” and some never before published photos including Nelson Rockefeller, Dwight Eisenhower, Edmund Muskie, Clifford McIntire, Astronauts John Glenn, Alan Shepard, and Gus Grissom; John F. Kennedy, David Broder, and many miscellaneous photos. The MCS Center for Public Policy is a nonpartisan public service division of the University of Maine. It was created in 1989 to improve the capacity of the University to study public policy and to improve the quality of public dialogue about policy issues.

Committee junkets and just at the point that the gentleman was saying that the only member of the entire large group visiting the Pacific to show any real interest in the Navy or anything they were sent out for was the lone woman, Margaret Chase Smith, who, early in the morning before the committee left Johnston, visited whatever she could find available and as Chairman of the Medical Subcommittee, had interested herself in making inquiries at the little dispensary where his son was in charge. The Representative was the Honorable Karl Stefan of Nebraska. One never knows who is watching!

Rep. Smith with General Clifford Cates watch 4th Marines in battle practice on Maui, Hawaii, 1944

MCS receives lei from Mrs. Mossman during joint session of House/Senate in Hawaii, 1945

FELLOWSHIP STUDENTS HERE FOR 10-WEEK STUDY

March begins a busy season of research and fellowship studies with the arrival of two Northwood University Margaret Chase Smith Library Fellowship recipients. Jens Vagelpohl is from the Michigan campus, a junior from Germany, majoring in Automotive Marketing/Management. Jens has a deep interest in both politics and economics. He hopes the Fellowship experience will give an added dimension to his education in the United States. Jens is from Friesoythe, Lower Saxony, West Germany where he lives with his parents and twin brother, Uwe. Friesoythe is a small town of about 6,000 in the rural northwestern part of Lower Saxony. His parents own a VW/Audi dealership which employs 50. After high school, Jens completed an apprenticeship program as a car technician. Jens actively participates in the Northwood University AutoShow each year and has been on the President's List every term. He is a member of the Vintage VW Club of America; the Michigan Vintage VW Club, and the Type 34 Karmann Ghia-Registry. He is an avid reader of political fiction and a photography buff, developing his own b/w shots. His goal is to enter Dartmouth for his MBA.

Nicholas Tortorello, a native of Hunterdon County (Pattensburg) New Jersey, a small, country town, is from the Florida campus, a junior majoring in Marketing/Management. Nicholas is hoping to broaden his knowledge and experience base with this valuable program and plans to become a business entrepreneur. He chose Northwood because of its ideal, no-nonsense business curriculum. He has a strong commitment and belief in entrepreneurship and a strong work ethic. His hobbies include biking and hiking and he has made good use of the facilities at Sports Medicine East since arriving in Skowhegan.

While here the young men will study different facets of the remarkable career of Senator Smith to produce finished papers for course requirements and enjoy a bit of the cultural and economic side of our State of Maine by way of visits to the Maine State Museum, Cascade Woolen Mill, Chinet Company; S. D. Warren, L. L. Bean Distribution Facilities, Maine Maritime Museum and Shipyard, Bowdoin Art Museum, and a maple syrup facility. Jens' study while here centers around Senator Smith's World Trip in 1954-55 and "the Home Front during World War II." Nick is interested in Senator Smith's "Second Declaration of Conscience" on June 1, 1970; and a study of the Kennedy years.

It is the hope of the Library that this well-rounded program will prove rewarding and cause these young people to return to Maine again and again after their 10-week stay. Welcome to Skowhegan and Maine, Jens and Nicholas!

