

*50th Anniversary of
Declaration of Conscience
June 1, 1950 - June 1, 2000*

**SHIRLEY RICHARD
STANDS IN FOR MCS**

In an inspiring portrayal of Margaret Chase Smith, from the blue suit and white pearls to the red rose on her lapel, State Representative Shirley Richard read the history-making words said by freshman senator, Margaret Chase Smith, on June 1, 1950. In a combined Maine Town Meeting and 50th Anniversary celebration of the "Declaration of Conscience," participant attention was drawn to the famous words which echoed throughout the Senate chamber fifty years ago. Some attribute this speech as Smith's most defining moment and perhaps the beginning of the end of "McCarthyism," which threatened the American way of life by Joseph McCarthy's false charges and accusations of Communist infiltration throughout the country.

This wasn't the first time Shirley Richard portrayed Senator Smith. In honor of Smith's 100th birthday, Richard had the lead role in a play called "Woman of Destiny," which appeared at a local theater in Skowhegan in December of 1997.

"I speak as a Republican. I speak as a woman. I speak as a United States Senator. I speak as an American." Those words, spoken 50 years ago, may have changed the course of history. We, as stewards of her home and library, are proud to be a part of the legacy Margaret Chase Smith leaves to future generations.

Honorable Shirley K. Richard is shown in her portrayal of Margaret Chase Smith in honor of the 50th anniversary of Smith's "Declaration of Conscience."

special
edition

what's
inside—

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2000
Exhibit

'Declaration of Conscience' Speech—Commentary

By Gregory P. Gallant as it appeared in the *Bangor Daily News*, June 1, 2000. Dr. Gallant is the Director of the Margaret Chase Smith Library.

Today we mark the 50th anniversary of perhaps the greatest political speech to be deemed historically *insignificant* by leading American historians. True, on June 1, 1950, Sen. Margaret Chase Smith stood on the floor of the U. S. Senate and delivered her "Declaration of Conscience" speech in which she sought to restore reason to the anti-communist debate in America.

Following her courageous action in confronting Joe McCarthy's recklessness head on, Sen. Smith left for a United Nations conference in Italy, a move that illustrated her commitment to international participation. Shortly after she returned to Washington, North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel, invaded South Korea, and seemed to lend credence to the core of McCarthy's attacks on the Truman Administration's State Department. As a result, despite her principled and leading stance against his excesses and attacks upon innocent individuals, Margaret Chase Smith's "Declaration of Conscience" speech did little to slow McCarthy's crusade over the next four years. Rather, he continued to reign over the anti-communist movement until he foolishly took on other foes in the forms of the United States Army, Edward R. Murrow, and distilled spirits.

True, on that level, the "Declaration of Conscience" had little effect on the McCarthy era; a period in which Americans across political lines struggled with issues of loyalty, patriotism, national security and individual liberties. However, the greatness of this speech lies in its significance on other levels that have direct relevance to our political process today.

McCarthyism was a complex and dicey issue for Americans. It was not simply about the anti-communist threat internationally and domestically. Wrapped within its shell were deeply emotional debates that struck at the heart of changing American politics and the role of government in the 20th century. These were heterogeneous and controversial issues that divided Americans and caused division within the Republican Party in

particular. The impact of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and the changing of the guard within the Republican Party each played a pivotal role during the McCarthy Era. Many Republicans deeply resented the expansion in the size of the federal government that had occurred under FDR. This in part fed their willingness to support McCarthy in his erratic attacks on Truman and Roosevelt's legacy.

Others, usually Eastern politicians, accepted to some degree the changing role of government in Americans' lives and within the international community. The rift between Thomas Dewey and Robert Taft, the two leading Republicans of this period, illustrated the differences between internationalist and isolationist. Taft's ardent opposition to the New Deal led him to overlook some of McCarthy's tactics. Historian Stephen Ambrose quoted a Taft friend saying that, "McCarthyism is a kind of liquor for Taft. He knows it's bad stuff, and he keeps taking the pledge, but every so often he falls off the wagon." This intense motivation resulted in such actions as the 22nd Amendment passed in 1951, limiting a president to two terms. Driven by the complexities and uncertainties of burgeoning Cold War America, many were willing to overlook Joe's excesses in order to fight the good fight against totalitarianism and godless communism. As a result, politicians focused on issues such as legislation introduced in 1952 inserting the words "under God" into the Pledge of Allegiance.

In his journals, former New Deal administrator and Atomic Energy Commissioner David Lilienthal spoke to this conundrum when he wrote, "I ought to sit down and carefully think through what is being called McCarthyism. How does the country meet this thing? Just what does it consist of? How can one account for the number of decent people who agree that the man's methods are those of a hoodlum, quite illegal and hooligan, filled with insinuations and well-poisoned, but nevertheless saying: 'He is doing a good job, though I don't agree with his methods.'" Margaret Chase Smith was caught in the middle of this

dynamic and emotional crucible.

The Declaration of Conscience was Margaret Chase Smith's reaction, not only to McCarthy, but also her response to a changing political process. At its core it spoke to her approach to public service and her philosophy on the role of government in a representative democracy. Throughout her political career and her life, Margaret Chase Smith had a concern, unequaled among 20th century politicians, for the impact of events upon the individual. For her, that was a vital link that maintained a connection and relevance between government and citizen on a daily basis. From Feb. 9, 1950, when McCarthy gave his Wheeling, W. Va., speech, to the end of May of that year, she saw the U. S. Senate used by the junior senator from Wisconsin to harm innocent individuals in the name of anti-communism and opportunism. She decided to take great political risk and speak out.

In the midst of that swirling cauldron of rapid international upheaval in which Mao was victorious in China, the Soviets obtained the atomic bomb, and the Berlin Airlift was in the news every day for more than a year, Margaret Chase Smith understood the difference between what Earl Latham called the communist in government problem, where legitimate security concerns existed, and the communist in government issue, where innocent individuals were sacrificed for political gain. Above all, she recognized the dangers inherent in alienating citizens from the political process. For her, the

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(Commentary-Cont. from front)

U. S. Capitol was the people's house and she treated it as such. To have that institution, so critical to American democracy, debased in the name of a partisan battle in which truth was skewed and twisted for political means was too much for her. As such, she enunciated within the "Declaration of

Women Were “Municipal Housekeepers” Says Speaker

Nancy Cott, from the Center for Advanced Studies at Yale University, addressed the issue of “Women of Conscience in Public Life,” and spoke about the women who have provided a moral consciousness in American politics. Cott spoke about Eleanor Roosevelt, Jeannette Rankin, Dorothy Thompson, and Margaret Chase Smith, all women who “felt they had enough to say...women could and did impact a needed morality,” says Cott, “women became the municipal ‘housekeepers.’” Margaret Chase Smith was born a little too late to be a suffragist. She “dipped” into leadership in her contacts with women-only, civic organizations. The Business and Professional Women’s Club was crucial to her career. Both Jeannette Rankin and Smith shared the pattern of bonding and indebtedness with women’s organizations. Smith did not neglect women’s issues and thought of herself as doing a great deal for women by setting an example. Since Smith was “hawkish” on the military, her early days on the Naval Affairs Committee prompted her action in helping to secure permanent status for women in the military. “Since wars are man-made, perhaps peace should be woman-made,” said Smith.

Journalist Dorothy Thompson, the only woman newspaperman of her time, was purported to have the brain of a man. Said Thompson, “Before I comment, I would like to see the man whose brains I have.”

Eleanor Roosevelt was known for her moral idealism. She was the conscience of the New Deal, having learned the ways of politics by serving as her husband’s right-hand man. Says Eleanor, “women must learn to play the game as men do.” Certainly Smith learned to play the game—serving more than thirty-two years in both Houses of Congress.

Conscience” what she considered to be basic principles of Americanism: the right to criticize; the right to hold unpopular beliefs; the right to protest; the right of independent thought.

James Madison had referred to the U. S. Senate as a “necessary fence” against actions driven by emotion. Surely its deliberative nature would provide a buffer against demagoguery and preserve those principles. McCarthy threatened to upend this. Margaret Chase Smith’s speech was her attempt to rally her colleagues in defense of the democratic process through which there could be, among other things, a thorough debate about the role of government in the post-World War II world. The “Declaration of Conscience” became the hallmark for a political career in which Margaret Chase Smith cherished civic engagement. Praised by some for this speech while being attacked as a fervent Cold War warrior, she treated both the same. Her approach to public service placed the individual mill worker or

Social Security recipient or anxious parents awaiting word of their son missing in action above all else. The underlying tenet of this speech was her unwavering passion directed toward involving individuals in the political process and public service. She spent her post political years engaging young citizens and encouraging them to fulfill their obligations of citizenship. After all, it’s a representative democracy. Hmm. A speech that sought to protect government’s relevance to the governed; a speech that sought to prevent political factions from garnering a voice out of proportion to their numbers; a speech that sought to prevent the advocacy of artificially contrived positions at the expense of individuals. That sounds like a speech that not only deserves to be commemorated. It sounds like one of significance.

(If you would like a copy of the “Declaration of Conscience,” please contact the MCSL at 54 Norridgewock Avenue, Skowhegan, ME 04976; e-mail angies@somtel.com; or call 207-

474-7133.)

The World According to Theda Skocpol, Maine Town Meeting Speaker—

Theda Skocpol is the Victor S. Thomas Professor of Government and Sociology at Harvard University. She uses historical and comparative methods to address questions about states, societies, and public politics. Having written extensively about the causes and outcomes of social revolutions and modern welfare states in Europe and North America, her work now focuses on current U. S. social politics, civic engagement and voluntary associations. She recently published **Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: the Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States**, which won five major scholarly awards, **Boomerang: Clinton's Health Security Effort** and **The Turn Against Government in U. S. Politics**.

The Margaret Chase Smith Library's annual Maine Town Meeting focused on "...Consent of the Governed:" Citizen Distrust and Civic Participation, a forum on the state of representative government.

Skocpol said the decline of membership associations, such as women's clubs, veterans' and farm organizations, mirrors a decline in civic and democratic participation. Such groups as the Grange, American Legion, and Women's Suffrage Association, although locally based, had the power to shape national opinion. Such group membership levels are declining and smaller, narrowly-focused advocacy groups are increasing. Says Skocpol, political groups have shifted their focus from getting more people to the polls. Instead, their effort is in getting the "right" voters to the polls—those who will support their cause.

Professor Theda Skocpol is shown above at the MCSL annual Maine Town Meeting, "Consent of the Governed."

Katie Lozano of the Woolwich Central School says of Margaret Chase Smith, "She knew that deep inside her, her conscience was saying 'No' to communism, so Margaret made the 'Declaration of Conscience.' She had the power to stop McCarthy. And McCarthy tried to stop her, but that didn't work."

Note: MCSL Assistant Director David Richards brings Margaret Chase Smith to the Woolwich school each spring by way of a slide presentation and discussion. Student observations always prove most interesting.

"Friends" Newsletter is published by the Margaret Chase Smith Library. Editor: Dr. Gregory P. Gallant; Coordinated by Angela Stockwell with the assistance of Vanessa Caron, Lynnette King, Crystal Perkins, Byron Pooler, and David Richards. The Library is a non-profit research center and museum of 20th century political artifacts committed to bringing the ideals of Senator Smith's career in public service to the people of Maine and the nation.
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Friends of the Library Newsletter

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MCS ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

With over seventy entries for the Margaret Chase Smith Essay Contest, it was difficult to narrow the field to three winners. This year's topic of "Conscience" prompted many Maine high school juniors and seniors to submit essays; in fact, the largest number of submissions since the program's inception four years ago.

Jessamyn Bean from Lake Region High School (Naples) won the first prize of \$400 for her essay on Margaret Sanger. The second-place award of \$200 went to Maureen Parker of Biddeford High School. Jana Crocker from Mattanawcook Academy (Lincoln) won the 3rd prize of \$100. Honorable Mention awards went to Alena Callaghan, South Portland High School; Anneke Chewning, Kennebunk High School; Heather Foran, Greely High School; Rainya Ham, Washington Academy; Jennifer Jacques, Brunswick High School; Brandi Morgan, Erskine Academy; and Dana Wheeler of Lake Region High School.

Says Jessamyn Bean, "Margaret Sanger, in her fight to save poor women from being slaves to their bodies, also fought against censorship. Like Sanger, Margaret Chase Smith believed in the unspoken right of the individual to hold personal opinions, and that it is unconstitutional to persecute someone holding opinions opposite from the norm. Had Smith been a senator before her first term in 1949, perhaps she would have been the first to support Sanger in her battles against censorship and for the freedoms of mother and child."

Maureen Parker says, "I would like to think that I have lived my life thus far according to my moral beliefs. My conscience I have found, however bothersome and sometimes downright vexatious, to be my best friend and guiding light. I am not always the popular one and I am not always in the right. I do, however, go to bed each night satisfied that I am living my life the way that I have been raised to live, by following my heart and listening to what my conscience tells me."

Jana Crocker wrote an editorial to her town newspaper upholding the action taken by the local high school in punishing underage students who attended a party where they were served alcohol. Says Jana, "even now, knowing the consequences of my letter and my opinion, I wouldn't change a thing. I learned that I was a lot stronger than I thought I was. I stood up for myself in front of people who scrutinized me all my life. I am still proud of my choices and convictions, I believe that it is decisions like these that made the United States what it is today."

Jessamyn Bean of Lake Region High School accepts 1st prize in the MCS Essay Contest during a Civil War Re-enactment in Bridgton, Maine.

Jana Crocker, stands in the foyer of Senator Smith's home, after accepting 3rd prize in the MCS Essay Contest.

NEW SPRING EXHIBIT OPENS

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Senator Smith's "Declaration of Conscience" in the Senate on June 1, 1950, the library is pleased to announce the opening of a new exhibition for the 2000 season. The first part of the exhibit examines the origins of the post-World War II red scare in the United States, the people involved on both sides of the anti-communist crusade, and the ideal of conscience that Margaret Chase Smith brought to bear on the issue. The middle of the display focuses on the speech itself, with its ringing endorsements of such fundamental American liberties as "the right to criticize; the right to hold unpopular beliefs; the right to protest; the right of independent thought." The concluding section shows the immediate response of the press and public to Senator Smith's daring remarks, the impact of the speech on the political careers of both Senators Smith and McCarthy, and the lasting legacy of the "Declaration of Conscience." The exhibit, museum, and Senator Smith's home are available for viewing Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

The Politics of Conscience

Paul Mills of Farmington first remembers Margaret Chase Smith arriving at his home driving a black sedan with one wheel missing a hubcap. Apparently, Smith had had a flat tire prior to her visit. Years later, Mills, an attorney well known for his analysis of Maine politics, would write a commentary on the 50th anniversary of Senator Smith's Declaration of Conscience. Says Mills, "her most famous act as a senator would, of course, be her early and courageous denunciation of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, standing up on the floor of the Senate in her Declaration of Conscience address 50 years ago next month. She gave her speech in the early months of what would prove to be a four-year reign so indelible the Wisconsin senator's name would gain entry to the dictionary's infamous lists of 'isms.' Her position on that first day in June 1950 was an eloquent reaffirmation of some of the basic civil liberties and principles on which America had long relied, and from which it was beginning to take leave."

Continues Mills, "She was, of course, cognizant of and sensitive to public and media sentiment, but she knew that opinion was a matter that public figures needed to lead and not merely follow. And she knew that in the long run, following the dictates of one's own considered judgment—even if it meant taking a departure from the mere breeze of opinion—was more crucial in the winds of time than sailing along with it."

Paul H. Mills can be reached at 55 Main St., PO. Box 608, Farmington ME 04938-0608 or by e-mail at pmills@somtel.com if anyone is interested in his further comments.

Maine Town Meeting participants ready themselves for a day of thought-provoking ideas and challenges from two noted speakers, Theda Skocpol and Nancy Cott.

Journalist Melissa MacCrae Says Smith Speech Still Inspires

Melissa MacCrae is a staff writer for the **Bangor Daily News** and author of two books, **No Place for Little Boys**, and **It Takes a Woman: Women Shaping Public Policy**. She writes of McCarthyism, "Sen. Joseph McCarthy, a Wisconsin Republican, capitalized on the country's anxieties as he levied a barrage of charges, innuendoes and smears against President Harry Truman, and against anyone he considered to be a communist sympathizer. Those alleged sympathizers included several congressional Democrats and many celebrities in the motion picture industry.

"His ostensible goal—which became an obsession—was to reinvest power in the GOP and recapture the presidency for the party. McCarthy's anti-communist speeches spared none, and put both Democrats and Republicans on the defensive to demonstrate their tough stance against communism.

"Smith grew increasingly uneasy about the unfettered growth of what became known as McCarthyism, his trampling of citizens' civil liberties, and his use of a legitimate issue for political gain. While senators on both sides of the aisle concurred with Smith's sentiments, none dared challenge McCarthy."

Smith took the challenge, and on June 1, 2000, we celebrate the courage of the only woman in the Senate who dared take a stand against McCarthy's tyranny.

Susan Longley Comments:

"It was over Memorial Day weekend, 1950, at her home in Skowhegan, and with Gen. Lewis's help, she drafted a speech. She re-wrote. She edited, re-edited, and re-wrote again. She carefully chose every single word. Although she was willing to risk her political life in honor of her conscience, she was not willing to be careless in her choice of words."

Susan Longley (D-Waldo) is a Maine State Legislator and member of the Margaret Chase Smith Library Advisory Committee.

Was It a Rough Draft of History?

"The story itself is a fair and thorough piece of work. It uses several direct quotes from the 'gray-haired Maine legislator' to convey her message that liberty is taking a pounding from the smear tactics employed by both parties. It emphasizes her disdain for her own party's conduct and her assertion that if Republicans can't beat the ineffective Democrats fair and square, they at least ought to be decent human beings about it," says **Bangor Daily News** assistant editorial page editor Bruce Kyle. In his assessment of the "Declaration of Conscience," Kyle says, "Sen. Margaret Chase Smith, the only senator whose sex or hair color deserved mention in AP stories, stood alone. She wrote history; the first rough draft just left it out."