

A Remembrance of Christmas

by MCS as appeared in *House Beautiful*, December, 1970

Christmas was a very happy time to me as a child. Until I was married, I lived in the small house in Skowhegan, Maine, which had been built by my maternal grandfather, who was a carpenter, and in which I and my mother were both born. It was a small, two-story house with small bedrooms, a larger living room, a fairly large kitchen and a small parlor on the street front of the house.

We had the Christmas tree in the parlor. On Christmas Eve, we would decorate the tree with homemade trimmings made of popcorn and cranberries strung alternately on long strings, and with colored screen cloth. After we went to bed (my brother, two sisters and I), our parents would place the gifts on and around the tree. I remember I was so excited I could hardly sleep.

We would get up early on Christmas morning to gather around the tree for the distribution of gifts. Practically all of our gifts were clothes. I now wonder why I was so excited as a child in anticipation of the gifts when they were such living necessities as deliberately selected oversized clothes for us to grow into.

I remember very vividly one Christmas morning when I was up at five o'clock and stood up in my little bed and tried on a gift coat that was far too big for me. I also remember how I hated the heavy ribbed black stockings with the foot sections that my mother had knitted to the end of the stocking material.

Perhaps the reason I was excited the night before Christmas was because once in awhile we did get "fun" gifts such as sleds or skates. And just as soon as breakfast was finished, we would dash out into the heavily snow-covered yards or down to the frozen pond to use them.

I think the most recent Christmas that I remember so pleasantly—probably the happiest Christmas ever for me—was the 1949 Christmas. It was the first Christmas in my then-new home in

Fifth and sixth graders from the Margaret Chase Smith School in Skowhegan created this Christmas tree as a gift to Senator Smith on December 16, 1991.

Skowhegan and my first Christmas as a United States Senator.

More important, it was the first time in many years that my mother had been united with all of her children and grandchildren. It was centered around my mother (my father had passed away a few years before). In a family atmosphere that gave us all a warm glow inside, we gathered around the Christmas dinner

table at four o'clock in the afternoon. We didn't have the traditional Christmas turkey. Instead we had four large roasted chickens cooked by my mother for the 14 of us. There never was anything as good as my mother's roasted chicken. The Christmas dinner was truly a family affair with everyone contributing. Mother cooked the chickens, my sisters and my brother's wife each brought their specially cooked dishes of our favorite foods. After the dinner we gathered around the tree. The families of my brother and sisters had had their own family exchange of gifts earlier. *(Cont. on pg. 3)*

**"Christmas is the
Season When the Heart
Rules Supreme."**

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Kids at Heart

Sheri Shares— A Presidential Christmas

For the holiday season, I will share some highlights and history of the Presidential Christmas cards sent to Senator Smith during her 32 years in Congress. There are 23 cards in the collection sent by Presidents Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, George H. W. Bush, Ford and Reagan. The tradition of sending official Presidential greetings dates back to the Eisenhower Administration. In 1927, President Calvin Coolidge issued the first official Christmas message to the American people in newspapers across the nation. It was not until 1953, when President Eisenhower expanded his mailing list significantly to over 1300 people, including American ambassadors abroad, members of the Cabinet and Congress, and foreign heads of state and government officials, that the White House Christmas card became the official Presidential holiday greeting.

There are a number of cards from President and Mrs. Johnson. They celebrated six Christmases at the White House and sent approximately 2600 cards each year. All of their official cards feature trees, such as the Christmas tree in the Blue Room or the trees planted by past presidents on the White House lawn. Each image was rendered by American Greetings watercolor painter Robert Laessig.

President and Mrs. Nixon brought historic formality back to their presidential holiday cards by using traditional views of the White House, each painted by a well-known artist. The most unique card image is the 1971 Nixon Presidential card, which features artist N. C. Wyeth's painting, *Building the First White House*. It depicts President Washington and Architect James Hoban inspecting the uncompleted White House in 1798. President Nixon also sent Senator Smith gift prints of historical portraits of Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Monroe, Lincoln, and Roosevelt by significant artists such as Gilbert Stuart, Rembrandt Peale, and John Singer Sargent.

President and Mrs. George H. W. Bush created a series of firsts in the Presidential greetings they sent. Examples of all four firsts are in the collection; the first card designed by a White House staff member, the first card to showcase the Oval Office, the first card to depict the family's personal space at Christmastime, and the first card illustrating the lighting of the National Christmas Tree on the White House lawn. The Presidential Christmas cards in the collection are significant and can be admired for their historical greetings and artwork. They reflect each President's personal style and view of the holiday season. The exhibit will be on display until the end of January.



Bangor High School students are doing their part to protect the environment through their activities in SEED, Students Ending Environmental Destruction.



Bloomfield Elementary School students toured the Library on October 28th.



Crystal Perkins speaks to students from the Cornville Elementary School.



Ike and Mamie Eisenhower sent the first official White House Christmas card in 1953. This one from 1954 features an embossed seal of the United States. Inside it states, "The President and Mrs. Eisenhower extend their best wishes for Christmas and the New Year."



"With all best wishes from our family for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, The President and Mrs. Nixon" is the greeting sent in 1971. It features N. C. Wyeth's interpretation of President Washington and architect James Hoban inspecting the uncompleted White House in 1798.

(Christmas cont. from cover) Most of the gifts on our Christmas tree were inexpensive. Their value was worth more in laughs than in money. Earlier we had drawn name slips to see who would give whom a Christmas present. We had agreed on two rules—that they not cost above a certain amount and that they be funny.

The little laugh-provoking trinkets that we gave each other gave us a little of the greatest gift of all—happiness. We got more out of the little comic gifts than the more expensive gifts. They were symbols of the spirit of affection, the real spirit of Christmas.

Fortunately, I can now relive very vividly the memories of that wonderful Christmas for I recorded our dinner-table and Christmas tree talk and our laughs on a small recorder. I concealed it in the room so that no one would be self-conscious or unnatural.

One of the best things recorded was our laughs. The happiness of a laugh can be very contagious even when played back on thin wire. When I played the recording back to surprise the family, we laughed even more at the recorded laughs.

We vowed then to be together this way every Christmas. But somehow we didn't ever get around to doing it again. A goodly portion was my fault because so many years the Senate has stayed in session through December, and I was kept in Washington. My mother lived for only two more Christmases and then the reason was gone. We didn't realize how fortunate we were to have that Christmas together, since we would never have it again.

I shall never forget that 1949 Christmas because we were all together sharing our fun, our gifts, our favorite food—and sharing our family happiness and a little sadness because the deceased members of the family could not be with us.

Christmas is now often nostalgically sad for me. My husband and parents are gone and I have no children. But Christmas is more than just a family affair. Its essential meaning has its source in God. It is a holy, soul-stirring reminder of Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. This Christmas spirit makes this the one time in the year when self-interest and selfishness are reduced to a minimum as our thoughts in this season instinctively go out to others.

Christmas is not only a time to send greeting cards and exchange gifts. More important, it is a time when we try to give each other happiness. It is only natural that we seek first to give happiness to our families and then to our friends. But in the sharing of the happiness of this season, let us think of others. We find a deeper meaning of Christmas if we try to extend that happiness beyond the circle of our families and friends.

Christmas is the season when the heart rules supreme. May our hearts be big enough to

meet the temptation of materialism and the tasks ahead for each of us individually in a nation that is so troubled with emotional violence and divisiveness.

MCS Library Joins Forces with Skowhegan Free Public Library

The North Star Planetarium program was a huge success when children and parents entered the inflated theater to learn about dinosaurs and the Space Shuttle program.

Children and adults listen to Jon Meader prior to the Space Shuttle program. *One of the Library's littlest visitors, Unity, approached the display area in a somewhat non-traditional way!*

World Trip Exhibit Open

Read excerpts from Senator Smith's interviews with foreign leaders from 23 countries. View memorabilia and objects obtained during her stay. Draw comparisons from today's world situation to that of fifty years ago.

The World Trip exhibit will be on display until the spring of 2005. Portions of previous exhibits may be seen in the Senator Margaret Chase Smith Gallery at the Good Will-Hinckley School and on our web site.

The World Trip exhibit pictured above highlights Great Britain, the USSR, West Germany and France. The Soviet papier-mache dolls in the glass case were a gift from Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

Declaration of Conscience Exhibit on Display

Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*, was recently performed at the Penobscot Theatre in Bangor. Producing Artistic Director Mark Torres, who was featured in our September newsletter, invited the Library to set up an exhibit to coincide with the production. This informative display details the role Margaret Chase Smith played in the McCarthy Era, which was the backdrop for Miller writing this play.

“Centrism”—Topic of Public Lecture

John P. Avlon, author of *Independent Nation: How the Vital Center is Changing American Politics*, gave a public lecture on October 16. Avlon is a columnist and associate editor of the **New York Sun** and former speechwriter for Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. He and his team were responsible for writing the eulogies for all New York firefighters, police officers and Port Authority officers and other workers who were killed in the World Trade Center destruction.

Said Avlon of the Margaret Chase Smith Library, “This Library plays an incredibly important role in American politics today. Because you are keepers of a flame whose light is more important than ever. Politics kind of follows the lines of physics. Every action creates an equal and opposite reaction. So extreme actions on the one side, extremists politics, politics of personal destruction on the one side, end up creating and inspiring the exact opposite from the other side. And America is left dramatically off center.” Avlon cited this in relation to Margaret Chase Smith’s stand against Joseph McCarthy in her *Declaration of Conscience*. Because she was not only a Republican but also a woman, it had an impact and effect that would not have been felt had she been a Democrat. “Margaret Chase Smith...was constantly reaching out, by being independent in principle. She appealed across party lines and was able to do what we’re told is impossible.” Avlon stated that Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins are the direct inheritors of Margaret Chase Smith’s legacy. They are proving that the “center” can hold; that “pay-as-you-go” is old-fashioned fiscal responsibility. Avlon called attention to a central principle expressed by Senator Smith in the *Declaration of Conscience*, “Those of us who shout the loudest about Americanism in making character assassinations are all too frequently those who by our own words and acts, ignore some of the basic principles of Americanism—the right to criticize, the right to hold unpopular beliefs, the right to protest, the right of independent thought...it is time that the great center of our people who reject the violence and unreasonableness of both the extreme right and the extreme left, search their consciences, muster their moral and physical courage, shed their intimidated silence and declared their consciences.”

John Avlon makes a point to listeners during the public lecture on the state of current politics.

“Friends of the Library” Hold Annual Meeting

The 22nd annual meeting was held on October 16. Staff members presented reports on the four-fold mission of the Library, research, public policy, education, and exhibits. Sheri Leahan introduced the members to the newly opened display on the World Trip. Dr. Richards spoke about the Essay Contest and the Library’s involvement in reading programs sponsored by the Maine Humanities Council’s Harriet P. Henry Center for the Book. Dr. Gallant spoke about the MCS Fellowship program and a planned “policy intellectuals” project. Dr. David Fry reported on the state of the three Northwood University campuses as well as its outreach programs. A name change for the group was discussed as well.

Traveling a great distance were the Brydens—Penny and Betty. Penny came from Sackville, New Brunswick, while Betty traveled from Charlottesville, Virginia.

Public Safety Department Honors MCS

A framed photo and an inspirational quote hold a special place in the new home of the Maine Department of Public Safety in Augusta. In speaking about the Margaret Chase Smith Conference Room, Commissioner Michael Cantara said, “It is my hope that her spirit, insight and courage will inspire a new generation of Americans here in Maine. We could use more people like Margaret Chase Smith in today’s world.”

Pictured above is one of the labels provided by the Library for use in the Maine Department of Public Safety’s Margaret Chase Smith Conference Room.

Leeke Grant Recipient Conducts Research

Dr. Sean Savage, Chair and Associate Professor of Political Science at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, recently availed himself of an Ada Leeke Research Fellowship. While here, he not only studied the John F. Kennedy file, but also those on Smith's 1954 and 1960 Senate campaigns, the Saint Lawrence Seaway and the Passamaquoddy Tidal Power Project, and the New England Senators Conference. Dr. Savage's current book, **JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party** has just been released. Northeastern University Press will soon be publishing his fourth book, **The Senator from New England: John F. Kennedy, 1952-1960**.

Sean Savage

Spinelli Returns for Further Study

Near completion of her master's degree in American history, Joyce Spinelli of Toledo, Ohio, returned to the Library for a third time to use the MCS collection. A non-traditional student, Joyce received her undergraduate degree at the age of 64 from Lourdes College in Sylvania, Ohio, and will complete her master's from the University of Toledo in December at the age of 68. Joyce is truly an example of dedication and a desire to further one's education. Congratulations, Joyce! If the MCS Library has been helpful in any way, we are pleased. Working alongside Joyce during her visits has been her husband, Frank.

Joyce Spinelli

Experience That Helped Shape the Life of MCS

(article from Lewiston Evening Journal in 1961 entitled "Lady Senator from the State of Maine Still Remembers the Test She Failed.")

My most important childhood lesson came from a teacher. She flunked me in a history course. But that was not all of the story. She gave me a grade of 69 1/2. Passing was 70. And she refused to give me the one half of a point more in order for me to pass. So I failed in the course by only one half a point. I felt very strongly against her for that. I felt that she was unfair and had gone out of her way to be unyielding. But actually she did me a favor—a favor which I didn't fully understand for many, many years. Today I am grateful to her and I have a tremendous respect for the principle that she stood by in flunking me by only one half a point.

Interesting enough, today she refers to me as one of her prize pupils. I have never asked her by what standards she makes such a rating of me as pupil. I am sure that she does not mean scholastically. Perhaps she means that I learned a lesson from her. If so, she certainly is right because I shall never forget this lesson she taught me.

When I was in school, I was very impatient—and very short-sighted. To me school was only a necessary evil. It was like serving just so much time in prison. I resented going to school because I was so anxious to get a full-time job and start making my own living and my own way in the world. I did work part-time while I was in school. After school hours, I had such jobs as clerk in a five and dime store, a telephone operator, and a maid. That work was just enough to make me impatient to get better work—and since I couldn't because I had to go to school, I was resentful of school as being a barrier to my getting better work earlier. It was my nature to always to do things fast. And in that tendency, I was too impatient to drill myself in fundamentals. My mind was closed to the importance of fundamentals. Instead to me they were trivial and irritating details standing in the way of quick accomplishment.

But how wrong I was—and how much I regret that attitude I had back in those school days. If I had only recognized the importance of fundamentals—if I had only realized the wonderful opportunities I had of equipping myself for the future that the school and the teachers gave me. Yes, the teacher who flunked me by the razor margin of one half a point in the long run by doing so did teach me perhaps the most important lesson I ever learned in school. I think she must have done it mostly because of my attitude toward school and my studies.

She taught me that education was more important and that I should take it more seriously. More than that, she taught me to stand for principle. She taught me not only to stand for principle but to have the courage to do this even when it might not be popular or seem to be the right thing to do. Perhaps that is what she means today when she refers to me as one of her prize pupils. Perhaps she believed that I learned from her to have the courage to stand for principle when it is not easy to do so. I hope so—because while that one half point kept me from passing her history course, that very one half point taught me to have the courage to stand up for what I believe to be right regardless of how unpopular it may make me.

Teacher Dorothy Elliot is shown with MCS in 1956 during a class reunion at Senator Smith's home.

Civil Liberties Topic of Lecture

The Margaret Chase Smith Lecture at the University of Maine in Orono on September 23 drew an audience of hundreds to hear Dr. Alan Brinkley of Columbia University talk about civil liberties after 9/11 and the lessons of past assaults on personal freedoms. Said Brinkley, "It is important to remember that civil liberties are not a gift from the state that can be withdrawn; they are the product of continuous effort which is extended over two centuries by citizens, governments, and that the Bill of Rights promises. It is part of our national myth that the framers guaranteed civil liberties through the Bill of Rights." Citing examples from World Wars I and II, Brinkley referred to the Sedition and Espionage Acts as well as the internment of Japanese-Americans. Said Brinkley, "the Japanese race was the enemy and that was not severed by migration. Internment was necessary because the military said so. It was racism. The community remained silent. The internment became a case study of security measures run amok."

In this day when many Arab Americans and foreign nationals have come under question, "the effort by the government to seize new powers cannot be dismissed as frivolous," said Brinkley. Since 9/11, "it is appropriate and necessary. It is the government's role to see beyond the feelings of the public and to frame a reasoned response to the dangers we face. We need to give them considerable leeway in deciding how to balance freedom and order, but we must insist that our government and our leaders do exactly that."

Following Brinkley's remarks, a Policy Matters Forum organized by the Margaret Chase Smith Center for Public Policy was held. Dealing with civil liberties in an age of terrorism, it featured Zachary Heiden of the Maine Civil Liberties Union; Shannon Martin of the Communication and Journalism Department at UMO; and Paula Silsby, U. S. District Attorney, as panelists.

Kathy Hunt and Provost John Mahon of the University of Maine and Merton G. Henry of the Margaret Chase Smith Library are shown with Alan Brinkley (second from left) following his lecture on civil liberties.

Members of the sophomore class from Erskine Academy held a Community Service Day in which they cleaned up at the Windsor Church, the Windsor Fairgrounds, the China Town Office, Erskine Academy, the Palermo Cemetery, and the China School Forest.

Research Interest Continues

Charles Scontras came to conduct research on labor legislation for a University of Maine publication on labor history.

Eric Crouse returned once again to continue research for a proposed monograph, "Cold Warrior with a Rose: Senator Margaret Chase Smith, Anti-Communism, and American Foreign Policy, 1948-1972." Eric is a three-time recipient of the Ada E. Leeke Research Fellowship.

Accompanied by teachers Joyce Whitmore and Maureen Giunta, Ellsworth High School students studying the Crucible spend a day each year learning about Margaret Chase Smith's challenge to McCarthyism.

MCS Fellowship Students Learn About MCS and Maine

Four Northwood University students have called Skowhegan their home for the past ten weeks. From Northwood University's three campuses, the four young men have delved into the career of Senator Smith by completing two reports on aspects of her life. While here, they have also taken weekly field trips to such places as the Longfellow House and the Museum of Art in Portland; Bowdoin College and the Joshua Chamberlain House in Brunswick; Madison Paper Industries and North Star Orchards in Madison; Maine Maritime Academy and Fort Knox in Castine and Prospect; Poland Spring Museum and the Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village; Cole Land Transportation Museum and the Page Farm Museum in Bangor and Orono; Moosehead Furniture Factory and Plum Creek forestland in Monson and Greenville; and the Owls Head Transportation Museum. Each offered a view of Maine industry and economy, as well as something of Maine's history and culture. A brief questionnaire revealed much about Dan, Angel, Matt, and Jonathan.

Daniel Carroll is from West Palm Beach, where he lives with his parents and three brothers. He is a business management major at NU and hopes to incorporate his studies in his pursuit of a career in music. He plays with local bands, does studio recordings and teaches music—guitar, bass and drums—as well as music theory. He is an avid salt-water fisherman and has caught and released over fifty 100-pound sharks. His prize catch was a 100 pound sailfish.

Angel Moreno is from El Paso, Texas, where he lives with his parents and three siblings. He attends the Cedar Hill campus of Northwood University where he is majoring in business management and marketing as well as entertainment and sports promotion management. He is a member of Delta Epsilon Chi, the Marketing Association, and the Ad Club. Angel loves film and the “classics” and loves trying new foods. He had a great time at the Common Ground Fair! He aspires to be an “imagemaker” shaping the careers of celebrities and politicians. He says he has an obsession with pens?

Matthew Shoffner is from Sanford, Michigan, where he lives with his parents and five brothers and sisters. He is majoring in Economics, Banking & Finance, and Business Management. He is proficient in Kung Fu and softball and enjoys “filling out questionnaires.” His membership in Northwood University's Leaders of Tomorrow is preparing him for his future goal: “One day I will be referred to as ‘Mr. President’ and people following me around will be Secret Service agents and not IRS auditors.”

Jonathan Williams is from Saginaw, Michigan, where he lives with his parents and sister. He is a triple major in Business Management, Banking/Finance, and Economics at the Midland campus. He is Vice President of NU's Business Professionals; President of Leaders of Tomorrow, and Treasurer of Delta Mu Delta. He is a member of the USA Junior Men's National Team in fastpitch softball, and has been selected as a two-time national champion in economic research by the Business Professionals of America. He hopes to make a positive difference in government and public policy someday.

Fellowship students: Matthew Shoffner and Angel Moreno (Front) and Daniel Carroll and Jonathan Williams (Back) stand before statue of Civil War hero, Joshua Chamberlain. Angel, Jonathan, and Daniel pose before the Portland Head Light during field trip.

One would think this sign on Rt. 3 was a part of the Library's World Trip exhibit, but the students are standing at a road marker indicating the many towns in Maine named after foreign countries.

Matthew, Jonathan, Angel and Dan stand in front of the Cole Transportation Museum during a field trip to Bangor and the University of Maine at Orono. In insert, they are seen participating in “Keeping Pace with Paradis,” a local cable access program.

“Trivia” Answer from September Newsletter—The answer is on page 2 on the washboard above the clothespin. During her tenure in Washington, Margaret Chase Smith served with the administrations of **six** presidents. Congratulations once again to Phillis Russakoff and John Youney for being the first to respond with the correct **answer and location**. Phillis describes the trivia section as “much fun and a challenge, to be sure.” Former University College student, Louise Nellenbach of Michigan, also responded. Come on, folks, don’t let Phillis and John take away the winning prize! Get to the phone and give us a call! The December trivia question is: In what state was Margaret Chase Smith when Pearl Harbor was attacked? The answer is somewhere in this newsletter. Be the first to respond with the correct answer **and** where you found it in the newsletter. You might win a prize!

MCS Essay Contest

After World War II, Senator Smith helped reshape the global balance of power with her support of international programs such as the Marshall Plan and a strong national defense against the Soviet Union. Her 23-country World Trip in 1954-55 to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia helped gauge the threat posed by the spread of Communism. Fifty years later, the Library invites high school seniors to address the role the U. S. should play in world affairs. In a post-Cold War era of international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and the doctrine of pre-emption, what should American foreign policy be? Students should bear in mind the lessons of American history in responding to this question.

Prizes of \$500 for first place; \$250 for second place, \$125 for third place, and five \$25 honorable mention awards will be presented. All essays are due by **April 1, 2005**. Submit entries to:

David Richards, Assistant Director
 Margaret Chase Smith Library
 56 Norridgewock Avenue
 Skowhegan ME 04976

For questions, Dr. Richards may be reached at 207-474-7133 or davidr@mcslibrary.org. Information on past contests can be found at <http://www.mcslibrary.org/program/edu/past.htm>.

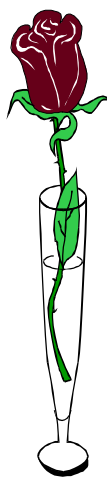
MCS Fellowship student, Daniel Carroll, enjoys the beauty of the Maine coast during a field trip to the Brunswick area.

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 Hours: Monday thru Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Telephone: 207-474-7133; FAX: 207-474-8878;
 e-mail: angies@mcslibrary.org; gpg@mcslibrary.org; or davidr@mcslibrary.org.
Web Address: www.mcslibrary.org

Friends of the Library Newsletter

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