

MARGARET CHASE SMITH



A REPUBLICAN PIONEER WOMAN

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Margaret Chase Smith is considered one of America's most outstanding twentieth-century political leaders and one of its greatest stateswomen.

Born in Skowhegan, Maine on Dec. 14, 1897, Margaret Chase displayed in her early life--- the independence that would later characterize her political career.

She briefly taught school, worked as a telephone operator, managed circulation for the Skowhegan newspaper, and served as an employee at a local textile mill.

During the 1920's, she became involved with women's organizations, in particular the Skowhegan Business and Professional Women's Club of which she was a founder.

In 1930, at the age of 33, she married Clyde H. Smith, who was a respected political leader in central Maine and who at age 54, was 21 years her senior. Clyde Smith was elected to the House of Representatives in 1936 and Margaret served as his secretary.

Given the demands of their careers, they did not have any children before Clyde's untimely death in 1940--- at which time Margaret succeeded her deceased husband in the House of Representatives representing Maine's Second District.

Early in her legislative career, Congresswoman Smith developed a strong interest in military issues. During World War II, she secured a seat on the House Naval Affairs Committee. She used the position to investigate congestion on the home front caused by the rapid war build up. More important--- she almost single-handedly won permanent status for women in the military.

Following a successful eight years in the House, Margaret Chase Smith beat the odds in 1948 when she soundly defeated three other men--- including the incumbent governor and former governor---in the Republican primary for the United States Senate. She then went on to win the general election.

As a result, she became the first woman in the nation's history to serve in both houses of Congress and the first to be elected to the Senate in her own right---without the benefit of having been appointed to the office.



**Declaration of Conscience Speech
June 1, 1950**

by Margaret Chase Smith

Mr. President,

"I would like to speak briefly and simply about a serious national condition. It is a national feeling of fear and frustration that could result in national suicide and the end of everything that we Americans hold dear. It is a condition that comes from the lack of effective leadership in either the Legislative Branch or the Executive Branch of our Government.

That Leadership is so lacking that serious and responsible proposals are being made that national advisory commissions be appointed to provide such critically needed leadership."

Two years into her first term, Senator Smith's Declaration of Conscience speech delivered on the floor of the Senate in June, 1950--- brought her national attention. Her opposition to the excesses of Senator Joseph McCarthy's anticommunist crusade

demonstrated to the nation her courage and independence, as well as her devotion to conscience and justice.

The Declaration of Conscience marked the beginning of the end for Senator McCarthy. It caused Senator Smith, however, to feel the full brunt of McCarthy's vengeance. He dropped her from a key investigation subcommittee, even though such action ran contrary to Senate tradition.

McCarthy also attempted to defeat Senator Smith during her 1954 re-election campaign---but refusing to be influenced by outside interests--- the voters of Maine returned Smith to office.

At a time when it was unusual for women to serve in Congress, Smith chose not to limit herself to "women's issues"--- making her mark in foreign policy and military affairs. She organized and personally financed a trip to 23 countries in order to become better informed about conditions in the rapidly changing postwar world. During her travels, she met and conferred with leaders such as Churchill, DeGaulle, Adenauer, Franco, Nassar, and Chiang Kai-shek.

Smith further helped establish herself as a respected world leader in her own right through the interviews and reports she filed for the See It Now program--- hosted by Edward R. Murrow.

Despite her early clash with McCarthy--- Smith managed to gain appointments to two of the most powerful Senate committees---Armed Services and Appropriations. Among Senator Smith's other varied interests was her commitment to medical research and her strong support of the space program---having served as a charter member of the Senate's Aeronautical and Space Committee.

In 1960, Senator Smith AGAIN made history when she defeated her Democratic opponent Lucia Cormier. It marked the first time two WOMEN had ever vied for the same Senate seat.

After her re-election, she became one of the most vociferous critics of Kennedy Administration defense policies. Her scrutiny of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara-- -exposed holes in policies and again placed her in the national spotlight---which helped set the stage for her 1964 run for the Presidency.



In January of 1964--- Margaret Chase Smith launched a campaign that she hoped would bolster respect for women as political thinkers and leaders. She announced her candidacy as a Republican candidate for the nation's highest political office—the Presidency.

Women had actually RUN for the presidency of the United States before women even had the legal right to vote in this country--- but at the Cow Palace in San Francisco in 1964--- Smith was the first woman to have her name actually PLACED IN NOMINATION for the presidency by either of the two major political parties.

One of her goals as stated by her was ---
“to destroy any political bigotry against
women---just as the late John F. Kennedy
had broken the political barrier on reli-
gion.”

In the initial balloting, she placed fifth.
Refusing to withdraw her name from the
final ballot--- she denied Barry Goldwater
unanimous consent to prove the point that
a woman had ultimately placed second.
Nevertheless, she did campaign for
Goldwater in the presidential election---but
Goldwater eventually lost 44 states to
Lyndon B. Johnson in November.

For the remainder of her political career,
Senator Smith continued to represent
Maine with distinction. She fiercely
guarded her independence and tirelessly
worked on behalf of Maine's industries and
citizens.

Throughout her congressional career, Sena-
tor Smith adhered to a two-pronged
philosophy that became her political
trademark. One of these was her perfect
attendance record in Congress. She held an
all-time voting record in the U.S. Senate
until 1981 with 2,941 consecutive roll-call
votes. The second was the fact that she
was scrupulous about spending very little
on her campaigns, never accepting cam-
paign contributions. She drove her own

car and packed her own pimiento cheese
sandwiches. This frugality earned her
widespread approval among her constitu-
ents and was an important factor in her
impressive vote-getting record.

Nevertheless, her streak of eight successive
terms finally came to an end in 1972, when
Senator Smith was narrowly defeated for
re-election by Representative William D.
Hathaway.

Retiring from political life after 32 years,
Senator Smith launched a second career in
education. For more than three years she
toured the nation's colleges and universi-
ties as a Visiting Professor with the Wood-
row Wilson National Fellowship Founda-
tion.

Accompanying her was Major General Wil-
liam C. Lewis, Jr. --- her longtime Executive
Assistant in the Senate. General Lewis had
joined her during the 1948 Senate cam-
paign and remained her loyal confidante
and aide until his death in 1982. Together
they planned for the creation of the Marga-
ret Chase Smith Library that adjoins her
Skowhegan home in Maine--- and stands
high above the banks of the Kennebec Riv-
er. The Library stands as a worthy tribute
to her personal integrity, commitment to
public service, and historical legacy.



MARGARET CHASE SMITH IN HER LIBRARY

During the remaining years of her life, Smith played an active role in the library's programs--- and especially enjoyed meeting with visiting school groups.

During the course of her long and distinguished career, Senator Smith was the recipient of 95 honorary degrees from educational institutions across the country.

In addition, she received numerous awards recognizing her contributions to the nation. The culmination was the Presidential Medal of Freedom--- the nation's highest civilian honor, ---which President George H. W. Bush presented to her in July of 1989.

Following a brief illness, Margaret Chase Smith passed away on Memorial Day--- May 29, 1995 at the age of 97. Her cremated remains are preserved in her Skowhegan residence.

Following her death---in the year 2000--- Margaret Chase Smith was selected as the most influential person in Maine from the 20th century.

Having been born at the end of the 19th century (1897) and dying at the end of the 20th century (1995) ---she had been a witness with a unique perspective as to what some call the "American Century."

Margaret Chase Smith---truly a PIONEER REPUBLICAN WOMAN---who paved the way--- for many women in politics today!