



GREAT HONOR AND GREAT TRAGEDY

Smith College is the oldest, largest, and one of the most conservative women's colleges in America. Located in Massachusetts, one of the country's most conservative states, it faces Northampton's tree-shaded Elm Street and at its back is rippling Paradise Pond, so named by Jenny Lind who thought it Paradise to walk there quietly after a demanding concert.

When Margaret Sanger, proclaiming a cause that was anathema to conservatives, received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Smith College, it was the high point of her career. Dorothy Brush, an alumna of Smith, had campaigned for this for over a year, gathering letters of praise for Margaret from people like Nehru in India and Mrs. Dwight Morrow in Mexico. In addition, with Smith in the midst of one of its fund-raising campaigns, Mrs. Brush promised a gift of one hundred thousand dollars if it would honor her friend. With Margaret's permission, she also offered the material Margaret had not given to the Library of Congress—some one-hundred-and-fifty file boxes that included the valuable letters of Havelock Ellis and H. G. Wells.

Margaret paraded across the campus to receive her degree with the other dignitaries in June 1949. She later remarked, "It was probably such a surprise to the Catholics that Smith hasn't heard a word from the Vatican about it yet."

The Drysdales wired congratulations from England, as did Lin Yu-

tang from China, John D Rockefeller, Jr , and the Reverends John Haynes Holmes and Raymond Fosdick from New York But the letter she valued most came from Angus, who, after seeing her picture in *Life* magazine with her mortarboard fetchingly tilted, said "you looked like a cock-eyed angel and seemed so young it was as if you had just gotten a B A rather than an LLD " Angus himself was ill and taking medical tests, as well as having business problems "Wish me luck," he added, "as my strength for the fight stems from you "

Of course she sent Hugh fast word about the honor

Perhaps you have heard Mr de Selincourt that your friend Margaret Sanger was given an Honorary Degree of *Doctor of Laws* by the Trustees of Smith College at Northampton, Mass ??
L L D Now remember your manners next time you see her and don't forget to be RESPECTFUL! How Havelock would rejoice and smile over that one

It seems a very very long time ago when I saw you looking pale and fragile in the lounge at the Grosvenor—then very much better as the family man at Sand Pit But it's all too long away Especially since there are so few letters which so brighten the years as your's do They come so seldom I keep wondering if I've not behaved in a *proper & correct* way when last we met, or something Then I try to think that there is no distance or time, just love which is always present

Margaret soon left for Tucson to oversee work on a new house she was having built on land owned by J Noah Before he died he had in one of his canny real-estate deals traded some land around their Elm Street property next to the Arizona Inn for a larger piece of land owned by the Inn on Buena Vista Drive He had given some of it to Stuart to build a house for himself and his family, and the rest to Margaret It was on Buena Vista Drive therefore that she was building a smart, unique place that would be a fitting background for her magnificent parties The house was fan-shaped with an oval entrance from which three fan-shaped rooms spread out, each with a serrated ceiling that sloped down from the narrow end to the wide, where there were glass sliding doors These doors led to three distinct gardens One was a Japanese garden, one a desert garden, and one was graced with an arching fountain over which multicolored lights played at the touch of a

switch The fountain was a real conversation piece in arid Tucson, especially since it was connected to an underground pool in the living room upon which lily pads floated

In addition, there was a long wing that housed a butler's pantry and kitchen, plus a small upstairs room for puttering and painting, making it all, as she said, "rather too large and expensive for a lone widow" Margaret had asked Frank Lloyd Wright to design it for her, but he declined with the remark that "anything built on less than forty acres is a pig-sty" She commissioned a local architect to build it, but soon grew angry with him and switched to Arthur Brown Meanwhile she spent the early months of 1949 taking a correspondence course in interior decorating so she could get rid of her antiques and design her new place

She sold her fine old furniture, announcing to the press that she was bored with it as well as with English manor-houses and pink adobe, and sent for new Japanese furnishings She issued press releases about the house to pique curiosity, and pushed the builders night and day to get it finished, while townspeople came to wonder and watch

All this bolstered her spirits and took her mind away from the bad publicity she had recently received when she went to England and announced on landing "Women should declare a moratorium on babies for ten years, let none get born in any country until hunger is conquered

And let the excess adults emigrate to places with more room"

The British press had hooted at her pronouncement Nineteen out of twenty papers castigated her, as postwar Britain was encouraging births by paying mothers a bonus of a pound a week for every child after the first The *London Mirror* said "Her proposal would be as practical as telling the sun to stand still or the tide to turn back" The *Standard* editorialized, "There are lots of things we want from America and can't get—and some things we get but don't want In that latter category is Margaret Sanger"

She pretended to ignore these slights but they had hurt nevertheless Back home, she went jauntily about her business of partying, adding a course in cooking to the one in interior decorating, boasting, "I could be a terrific caterer if I wanted to, or even a plumber" Between times she painted in Mexico and sent more food parcels to Hugh for which he didn't bother to thank her, making her ask humbly, "Are my parcels still welcome or wanted, and not a *nuisance*?" She was equally generous with other friends, lavishing upon them gifts of every kind

Then tragedy struck

In 1949, while summering at Stuart's cabin in Lakeside, Arizona, and carrying on as energetically as ever, she suffered a severe heart attack. There was no hospital near by, and her pain was so severe that, to quiet her, Stuart gave her an injection of Demerol—a powerful pain killer introduced a few years before and considered so non-addictive it had not even been placed on the official narcotics list. Stuart then called a hospital-plane and flew her to the Tucson Medical Center where she was put to bed for the standard six weeks of complete rest.

But after two weeks she refused to rest in bed. She had learned that the electricians were about to install an intricate lighting system in her new house, and she insisted on supervising the job herself. Her doctor did his best to dissuade her but in her typically defiant manner she told him "I am rich, I have brains. I shall do exactly as I please." He gave in, insisting only that she go to the house in an ambulance and that he follow her and park his own car conspicuously alongside hers so that passersby would know she was there under medical supervision.

A little later, still shaken and ill, she demanded that her doctor let her travel to New York to speak at an international Planned Parenthood dinner, this time he went with her. And on another matter she remained equally obstinate. She would not tell him her age. "I'm thirty-nine," she kept murmuring coyly until he exploded. "But Margaret, for God's sake, I have to know. My drug dosage depends on it." "I'm thirty-nine" she repeated as sweetly as ever, until in exasperation he looked up her age in the *Dictionary of Biography*, though even there the information was wrong.

Still, reminiscing later, her doctor considered her and Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin, the two greatest persons of the twentieth century!

There have been no basic changes in sexual patterns from 1900 B C to 1900 A D. Then Margaret Sanger caused a sexual revolution by freeing people from the fear of unwanted children, and Fleming gave the world the first real cure for syphilis. Certainly Mrs. Sanger's discovery caused some increase in promiscuity. But then freedom always brings problems. She herself can hardly be blamed. Besides, how many people start a crusade and finish it in their own lifetime?

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He told how he used to sit with her and try to comfort her with these thoughts during the long nights in the hospital when she was despondent because she was still very ill

When Angus learned of her heart attack he wanted to fly to her at once. But as she was forbidden visitors, he wrote instead. The letter is headed 4 A M August 12, 1949

Glorious Margaret Sorry that you are forbidden to see me, but I know it is for the best. For once in your life you must obey orders. I see you constantly as we sail over high mountains and deep valleys. Particularly I will see you in a few minutes when we speed the sunrise over the Rockies. Both of you are glorious.

Hugh wrote too, saying he was glad she was getting the finest medical attention, while Hobson wrote lamely, "I wish I could do something for you, but I don't know what."

On September 2 she wrote Angus from the hospital in a shaky hand

Angus, dear As my life shortens, questions arise. What am I to do? Am I to live alone? Am I to couple up with someone else? Who?

You are free. Others are free. The artist. The lawyer at (the) Plaza. The hermit in the mountains of Vermont—all old suitors asking to be favored. Well, so what? Being married helps to save one from decisions. I at present am not in love with anyone. Maybe never will be again. You are closer in my affections than anyone else, but you are *unavailable*. Some day we can talk it over.

Angus answered by return mail

Two letters today with wonderful news! First that you will be well enough to go home, and then that my rating with you is at the top! I expect to be in Montana early in Oct. & will plan to see you, if you will permit me, before returning East.

He flew to Tucson and they talked about marriage, though nothing came of it. He couldn't leave his wife, his library business, his farm,

his new invention for keeping fenceposts from rotting She noted on the bottom of his letter, "Angus—a friend of many years—is still a good friend and still finds me impossible!"

Within a few weeks she was settled—alone—in her fan-shaped house "It gives me joy It is good to be in it Comfortable, simple, but Me "

Shortly after moving in, she got a letter from Bill Sanger, who had been to see Grant and his wife, Edwina, and learned from them that she had been seriously ill He sent hopes for a speedy recovery and trusted that she was as concerned about herself as he was, signing himself "with best wishes, as ever, Bill "

She was happy to get his letter, it seemed to heal some old sores She was happy too just to be up and around again "I do just one thing a day—very boring," she wrote Angus "Anyway, it won't be long now before Spring will be around the corner & I will be going your way—East again, I think "

She added that in a few weeks she was hoping to go to Chicago for a Pioneer luncheon—going for just one night and a day though it was against doctors' orders "But so what? If Chicago has no bad results I'll perhaps end up in Japan!"

Angus answered by wiring her a plant for Valentine's day, sending with it another of his gracious notes "Glorious Valentine it gives me keen delight to think of what these blossoms will see and feel and hear as they come out one by one to be with you for a while "

She replied "What a man! Valentine for remembrance—yes? It will be here when Frank Lloyd Wright comes to dine on Saturday I will think of you and your dearness "

Still, she was growing sadder Grant, expecting his fourth child and planning to have more, caused her to record in her diary "I'm blushing " Her doctor upset her too when he said that her two big Dalmatians should no longer sleep on her bed just because they loved soft places, and that Chablis, her cocker spaniel, shouldn't be allowed to jump all over her as he used to

Soon came the sad news from Janet de Selincourt that Hugh had had a stroke He had driven into Storrington to play bowls one night, and awakened in the morning with all sensation gone in his left leg and arm, he had been put into a nursing home immediately, and sensation had returned at least partly to his arm and leg

Yet saddest of all was what had happened to her as the result of that

first taste of Demerol. Even more than the Luminal she had taken years before, she kept taking Demerol because it stopped her from caring. She also hoped it might lessen her dreams.

And Margaret dreamt a great deal. A few dreams were cheerful, but many were mystical or full of frightening portent. She thought them important enough to record in a diary that covered a period of thirty years. Some were full of snakes spreading their fangs at her or chickens getting their heads chopped off. These she took to mean that trouble was brewing in the birth-control ranks. Occasionally there was even a sex dream, she found herself being attracted sexually to Bill Sanger, but pushing him violently away. By 1951 the dream entries stop, however, possibly because by then she was taking enough Demerol to get dreamless sleep. She was using the drug not only when she needed it for a painful attack of angina, but simply whenever she pleased.