



Marie J. Cady

Born: December 19, 1903

Death: March 7, 1996

Father:

Mother:

Marie J. Cady was born in Indian territory, which would later become the State of Oklahoma. She was a smart, charming, intellectual woman and is best remembered locally in her role as the executive director of the World Affairs Council in Grand Rapids, Michigan. While her devotion to the World Affairs Council was notable, her vibrant career in public relations provided the backdrop to many of her life accomplishments in journalism, politics, world travel, and the Air Force.

Marie grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and moved to Oklahoma City, where she began her studies at the University of Oklahoma. She completed her education and graduated in 1922 from Stephen's College. She landed her first job in newspaper at the Daily Oklahoman. While working, she heard of an opening at Capitol News in Lansing, Michigan, so she moved to take the job.

One fateful day at *Capitol News*, Carleton Cady, a reporter from the *Battle Creek Enquirer*, stopped by the *Capitol News*' office to visit a friend. That same day the *Capitol News*' sports writer had quit, and Marie's boss offered Carleton the position, which he took. Marie and Carleton were married soon thereafter. Marie and Carleton had one child that died in infancy.

Carleton and Marie then moved out to the lakeshore and lived in Muskegon.

Once the Great Depression hit, Marie and her husband moved back to Grand Rapids, where she began work in public relations for the Pantlind Hotel (now the Amway Grand Hotel). She described that experience as a “. . . fantastic job. My duty was to interview all the celebrities who came to Grand Rapids, including Winston Churchill...Nelson Eddy...Amelia Earhart.”

Around that time, Marie became fast friends with Joe Brewer, a leading financial expert and friend of Frank McKay. Joe Brewer got her into politics and made her his protégé. She worked on the Alf Landon campaign, handled the Wendell Willkie presidential campaign in Western

Michigan, and even sat in Joe Brewer's office the day before former president Gerald R. Ford went to Washington.

As World War II began, Marie's husband was called up from Reserve to Mitchell Field on Long Island, New Jersey. As she put it, "If he was in, I might as well be in," so she went to Des Moines, Iowa, to get commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Air Force. She returned to Grand Rapids to run the Civil Air Patrol, which was prep work for the patrols of the Gulf and Atlantic Coast. While enlisted, Marie's most interesting assignment was Selfridge Field, where she was the head of the public relations department because they were training French pilots. There Marie met Major Yadkin, who, at the time of this interview in 1995, was a Major General. For the previous 20 years, Major General Yadkin had called Marie weekly from Washington to update her on what was going on and how soon another war was anticipated.

But what made her Air Force career "unbelievable," according to Marie, was her public relations work in New York. She would be sent to New York City and assigned eight combat pilots from the South Pacific. It was her job to arrange speaking engagements to service clubs, women's clubs, and schools to promote the Air Force movie "Winged Victory." Marie admitted the toughest part of her job was convincing those war heroes to participate, but her fool-proof plan convinced them every time: throwing a welcome home party at her friend's Park Avenue apartment. Her friend was the popular lady novelist, Ursula Parrot.

Eventually, she was assigned to Mitchell Field, and after the end of the war, Marie and her husband returned to Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1959, so her husband could take a job at the paper in Kalamazoo. Two years later, her husband took a bad fall on some steps and died. Marie then bought a home in Marshall, Michigan, where she and her husband had planned on retiring, and worked at the Battle Creek paper for a while.

Around 1964, Marie decided to travel the world again, as she had with her husband years before. She traveled to Europe and down to Orleans. As she put it, "[I] enjoyed herself." Upon her return to Michigan, she decided she wanted a job in Washington, so she found a job with a Michigan congressional representative. While she enjoyed the work, she stated that the representative "turned out to be not very smart." So when he decided to run for the Senate, she told him that "he wasn't smart enough to be a Senator..." and then returned to Grand Rapids.

Upon her return to Grand Rapids, Gerry Elliot, of *The Grand Rapids Press*, hired her to run the World Affairs Council. For 15 years she served as the World Affairs Council executive director. During that entire time, she did not receive a pay check. In fact, all her expenses were paid by herself. But she enjoyed the job and would even travel to Washington a couple times a year to line up speakers. During her time of leadership, the Council had 200 members. Sadly, she walked out on the World Affairs Council when she learned of its offer to a man who was interested in running the Council for quite a large sum of money if he could set up a program with Venezuela.

Overall, Marie described her life as lucky and explained she always returned to Grand Rapids, Michigan because "there wasn't a more interesting place to live." Marie was just as interesting in her own right, and her colorful life contributed greatly to this city's rich women's history.

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