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## Grace Wick: Portrait of a Right-Wing Extremist

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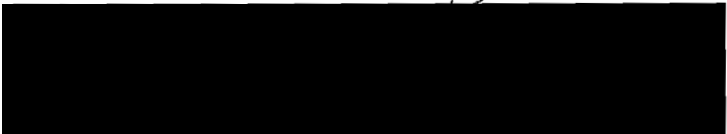
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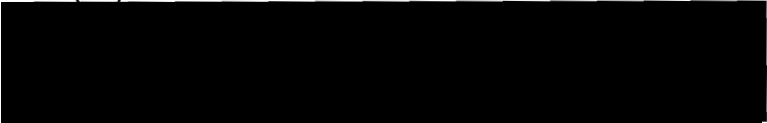
AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF June Melby Benowitz for  
the Master of Arts in History presented May 4, 1988.


Title: Grace Wick: Portrait of a Right-Wing Extremist.

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

  
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"Grace Wick: Portrait of a Right-Wing Extremist"  
is a biography of an American woman who lived between  
1888 and 1958. Wick grew up in a small midwestern town,  
but as a young woman broke away from small town tradition  
by moving to the city to pursue a career as an actress  
in the theater and in silent movies. In the course  
of her acting career she traveled across North America  
and had the opportunity to associate with people from  
all walks of life. As an actress, she was able to achieve

an autonomy enjoyed by few women during the 1910s and early 1920s. She also developed into a political activist, organizing campaign rallies for candidates, crusading to extend women's freedom, and was an active participant in mainline politics. However, as a middle-aged woman during the late 1930s, Wick developed a narrow focus on life, becoming involved with right-wing, pro-America organizations. By the 1940s she had become outspoken against immigrants and Jews and was actively distributing nativist, anti-Semitic propaganda. The thesis poses and suggests answers to the question of why a woman who had spent a number of years in the city, and in a career which afforded her the opportunity to gain a cosmopolitan view of the world, followed a course toward nativism and right-wing extremism in her later years.

Research within the Oregon State Historical Library collection of Wick's personal documents and correspondence provided a look at her life, as well as clues as to why she adopted right-wing extremist attitudes. Secondary sources provided knowledge of the culture, politics and personalities of the era in which Wick lived. Through a broad view of the period it became easier to understand why she turned to pro-America, anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic groups for support. During the Depression years of the 1930s Wick found herself overwhelmed by conditions

beyond her control--economic deprivation, United States involvement in foreign affairs (at what she felt was at the expense of its native citizens), and her role as a woman within a male dominated society. In her anxiety over her own and the nation's problems, Wick turned to her traditional, Protestant Christian, rural roots for support. Still unable to resolve her dilemma, she gradually lost touch with ordinary Americans and became a victim of hate-group psychology. During the 1940s and 1950s, all the energy she had become focused upon crusades against the immigrants and Jews. Ironically, much of her ideological belief and practical activity now brought her closer to European-style fascism, which was also a reaction to the problems of rapid change. Grace Wick's life provides a sad but informative study in the dynamics of political and social alienation.

GRACE WICK:  
PORTRAIT OF A RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST

by  
JUNE MELBY BENOWITZ

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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in  
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1988

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

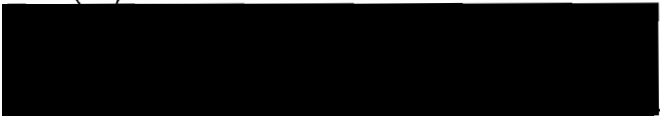
The members of the Committee approve the thesis  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Although Grace Wick never became famous for her activities, it was not through lack of trying. During her seventy years of life, she often found herself in the public eye, and much of the attention was brought about through her own efforts. During the first half of her life, Wick's youth, beauty, and brash actions helped her gain entry into local dailies, while in her later years she gained attention through her political activities. Following Wick's death, an obituary related that she was best known for her crusading efforts, but such enterprises constituted only one aspect of her life.<sup>1</sup>

Grace Wick was born and raised in a small town in Iowa, but as a young adult, she heard the call of the big city, and moved to Chicago. An acting career was what she wanted, and it was not long before she was touring the American continent with a group of performers. Subsequently, she spent several years on the East Coast--principally New York and Boston. While in New York, she married a man from southern



Oregon, and later moved with her husband to a rural area of that state. Small Oregon towns suited her no better than her hometown in Iowa, and when her marriage fell apart, she again escaped to the big city.

The latter half of Wick's life was not happy. The Depression struck at about the time she reached middle-age and had begun to question her physical attractiveness and appeal to employers. When Franklin D. Roosevelt became president, she looked upon the New Deal with the hope that her world would return to that which she had experienced during the early 1920s. When she found herself still without steady employment two years after Roosevelt took office, her disillusionment turned to radical anti-New Dealism and, later, anti-Semitic activities. By the time prosperity returned to the nation, Wick was in her fifties, her political views had become right-wing extremist, and she was loudly voicing her stand on political issues. These conditions combined to create difficulties for her when she attempted to find satisfying employment. She died an angry old woman, surrounded by poverty, a victim of circumstances beyond her control.

What is most fascinating about looking into the life of Grace Wick is the fact that she became deeply involved in so many aspects of American culture.

Wick was involved in the theater, silent films and, most heavily, in politics. A look at her life also gives a view of the place of women in American society during her age, as she often overstepped the bounds of what was considered proper womanly conduct. In an era when women predominantly were defined as wives and mothers, Wick remained married only a few years, devoting her efforts first to her career and later to politics. Although she loved and lived with a man in her later years, it appears she considered him special because he allowed her to become the center of his world, shared her views of the world, worshipped her, and encouraged her to participate in political causes. As a great-grand-niece of a pioneer campaigner for women's rights, Wick did all in her power to carry on the feminist tradition.

Grace Wick often backed the underdog, but if she considered herself in that position, fought no-holds-barred to climb to the top. The Depression years became frustrating for Wick, and her feelings of helplessness in the midst of economic conditions beyond her control eventually led her to become engulfed in hatred. A look at Wick's life shows how a person's feelings of powerlessness can lead to uncharacteristic behavior. In Wick's case it was the Jews and "foreigners" whom she blamed for all her problems, eventually reaching

the point where her hatred for these groups became one of her main focuses in life.

Finally, Wick's personality was not one to be ignored. She could be charming or vicious, but was never dull. She had an overwhelming ego, and attempted to be at the center of attention at every opportunity. She enjoyed the thought that she might have been "too big for Portland," and when a local newspaper editorialized that she was only "small fry" in the right-wing extremist movement of the 1930s and 1940s, the remark hurt her deeply. Why a woman of her considerable talents and energies turned to extreme nativist right-wing politics can only be determined through a closer examination of her life.<sup>2</sup>

## CHAPTER II

### GRACE WICK ON STAGE

On March 7, 1888, Grace Wick was born, enjoying her first experience in the limelight. The seventh of the nine children born to Alvin and Emma Wick, Grace's days at the center of the family's attention were probably not numerous. If she wanted to gain their attention, she had to work for it by using her imagination. As she grew older, Grace became adept at finding ways to gain the spotlight.<sup>1</sup>

Grace came from a background of independent thinkers. Her father, a native of Greenville, Pennsylvania, attended business college in Cleveland, Ohio, as a young man. When the Civil War erupted, he joined an artillery regiment of the Union army and participated in a number of battles. In 1870, five years after the war's conclusion, he married Emma Ufford. During the early years of their married life the Wicks lived on an Iowa farm, but moved into the town of Harlan, Iowa, in 1882. Alvin took considerable interest in politics. He was a lifelong member of the Democratic Party, but has been described as a man who was "governed largely by his own idea of things."<sup>2</sup>

Emma Ufford was born in 1848 in Oneida County, New York, but moved with her Quaker parents to Illinois and later to Iowa, where she remained for the majority of her life. She was the grand-niece of social reformer and advocate of women's rights, Lucretia Mott. Grace took great pride in her family background, referring to her parents as "pioneers," and often speaking of her great-great-aunt, Lucretia Mott. Wick grew up in Harlan, graduating from local elementary and high schools. She considered a career in education and attended Woodbine Normal School, Woodbine, Iowa, where she "re-viewed common school branches of teaching." Developing an interest in public speaking, Wick received first place awards for oratory while attending both high school and college. She did not graduate from Woodbine Normal School, but left while still a teenager. Nevertheless, she did find employment as a teacher in a small schoolhouse near Harlan.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest surviving indication of Wick's interest in politics came during the 1908 presidential campaign, when she supported William Jennings Bryan and wrote a poem in his favor. Although of questionable quality, the poem, "Our National 'Him,'" reportedly made the front page of the October 14, 1908, edition of the Harland Tribune. Written to be sung to the tune "America," the first verse is as follows:

Oh William Jennings Bryan  
With strength just like a lion--  
Yet like a lamb  
You are a noble man,  
And noble deeds you scan  
To every other man,  
From near and far.<sup>4</sup>

It is perhaps fortunate for her students that Wick shortly thereafter "got the stage 'bee' in [her] bonnet" and moved to Chicago to attend the Columbia College of Expression. She spent two years there, studying bodily expression, voice, and pantomime, and apparently enjoyed the experience. As an added bonus, while studying in Chicago, she got to meet her hero, William Jennings Bryan. Yet, her family had some doubts regarding Wick's career goals. Shortly before Christmas, 1911, her father wrote, "Hope you may know soon what you are to do. Kindly keep us posted." He also indicated his concern for her welfare by enclosing a \$20 bank draft.<sup>5</sup>

To help support herself while she pursued an acting career, Wick held a job as a proofreader for Montgomery Ward's catalogue and performed other temporary work. In the summer of 1912, she was finally provided the opportunity to put some of her dramatic talents to use when she was hired by a small theatrical company. Wick went on tour with the company, performing one-night stands in small towns in the midwestern states. From August 1912, until January 1913, her schedule was filled with travel and performances. Altogether,

the troupe played 150 towns in six states over a period of 152 days and nights.<sup>6</sup>

Once Wick arrived in Chicago in early 1913, she won a position with Chicago's Garrick Theatre and played small roles in Shakespearean repertoire. A week later, she joined the "Top O'The Mornin'" acting company and performed at Chicago's Olympic Theatre. Wick played small parts and understudied the leading role of an Irish colleen. After less than a week of performances her diary recorded that she had learned the Irish Jig. Wick remained with the company until the end of February, when the troupe left for a tour of Canada.<sup>7</sup>

Left without a job, Wick was forced to accept work as a proofreader for a Chicago printing firm; yet she did not let such mundane work hold back her quest for center stage. By mid-summer 1913, Wick had succeeded in landing her photograph in at least two Chicago newspapers. Working the graveyard shift at the printing company, Wick customarily walked home during the pre-dawn hours. But one dark, early morning she entered the East Chicago Avenue Police Station and reported that she was fearful of an attack by highwaymen. Wick explained that she had been followed on several occasions by a strange man, but had always reached home before he caught up with her. "I have carried my hat pin in my hand and was ready to use

it," she said, "But I believe that I ought to have the protection of a policeman."<sup>8</sup>

Wick's predicament caught the attention of the Chicago press, to whom she was apparently more than willing to tell her story. "'I went to the . . . Police Station and demanded . . . protection. The policemen there were very nice and agreed that I should not be subject to possible insults by men.'" Wick's request for police protection was granted, with Patrolman Ruddy Jacobson assigned to escort her home from work. When reporters asked how she liked walking home on the arm of a policeman, Wick replied, "'Oh, fine. Patrolman Jacobson is a big, strong fellow, and I feel perfectly secure when I am in his company.'"<sup>9</sup>

Wick probably staged the entire episode for publicity purposes. The Chicago Daily Journal ran an accompanying photograph which emphasized the long, curly hair falling gracefully over her shoulders. The newspaper reported that "Miss Wick's ambition at one time was to be a 'prima donna,' but the long hours of constant practice was too much for her." The Chicago Evening American carried a full-length photograph of Wick in a close-fitting strapless dress, striking a pose holding the infamous hatpin, her hips tilted to the side. Wick, who at the time of the incident was twenty-five years old, apparently told the newspapers



that she was only eighteen. The dailies also listed her address, certainly not a gesture designed to protect a woman supposedly avoiding molestation. Two days after her visit to the police station, Wick left Chicago for New York City.<sup>10</sup>

Two years earlier, Wick had attended a production presented by British actor Johnston Forbes-Robertson's theatrical group at the Garrick Theatre. This production may have sparked her interest in joining the troupe. When the company opened with the presentation of Hamlet at the New Shubert Theatre in New York City in 1913, Wick was with them as the only American member of the group outside of Forbes-Robertson's wife. Her roles with the company were small. In The Light That Failed she played a model, on stage only briefly and speaking only two lines. She also understudied some of the major female roles, but apparently never had the opportunity to fill in for the stars.<sup>11</sup>

The company played theaters in New York for nearly five months before beginning a road tour of large East Coast cities, including Boston, Philadelphia, and Montreal. During the course of her travels, Wick made short notes in her diary concerning the towns, theaters, foods, and hotels. Providence received the worst reviews in her book, as she noted the town was a "very gloomy, awful place." For the most part, however, she was

very happy with her experiences and accommodations, particularly enjoying the Driscoll Hotel in Washington, D.C., where she found herself in a "lovely room" with a bath. In comparison with the small town theaters she had played barely more than a year before, Wick certainly must have felt she had made the "big time." The Forbes-Robertson company closed on May 2, in Montreal, with a performance of Hamlet. The following day, Wick returned to New York, where she rented a room with fellow actress, Margaret "Vina" Carroll.<sup>12</sup>

After eight months of rehearsals, performances and travel, Wick was probably in need of a rest. But she did not have long to relax, for on May 10 Wick and Carroll began rehearsing An Arizona Courtship under the direction of Lonnie Buchanan. Rehearsals for the production were held every day of the week except Sundays, and the play opened on May 21 at the Palace Theatre.<sup>13</sup>

Wick must have been pleased when, in August 1914, she received a letter from Alexander Cossy of the "Farewell of Forbes-Robertson with Gertrude Elliott in Repertoire," asking her to join the company in Detroit on September 27, to rehearse for the production opening the following day. Thus began Wick's second and final season with the company.<sup>14</sup>

The Forbes-Robertson troupe began their 1914-1915 North American tour in the Midwest, and then moved

westward. During the fall of 1914 they played the large cities of the West Coast, including San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, British Columbia. While they were in San Francisco, one of the plays was suddenly dropped from the company's repertoire. Sir Johnston, an Englishman, became enraged over the politics of Irishman George Bernard Shaw, and not only dropped Shaw's play, Caesar and Cleopatra, from the troupe's repertoire, but held a large bonfire to burn the production's set.<sup>15</sup>

From Vancouver, the company moved eastward across Canada, playing in cities where Wick received some complimentary notices for her performances. One review, in the Manitoba Free Press of Winnipeg, reported that in Light That Failed she and the other minor players "contribute[d] bright sketches." From Canada, the troupe dropped south, playing the upper Midwest, including Minneapolis, Cincinnati, and Cleveland.<sup>16</sup>

For the finale of their stay in Cleveland, the troupe performed a burlesque on three of the plays in their repertoire--Hamlet, Light That Failed, and Passing of the Third Floor Back. According to reports in a local newspaper, the entire group of players, including Wick--in the role of the "self-willed Queen Elizabeth-Stasia"--were in a constant "state of uproarious laughter."<sup>17</sup>

The performers completed their tour on the East Coast, playing one or two-night stands in places such as Syracuse and Ithaca, New York, Wilkes-Barre and Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Wilmington, Delaware. A letter from Gertrude Forbes-Robertson in June 1915, in which she enclosed a photograph, advised Wick that Sir Johnston had arrived safely home to Folkestone, England, and wished the young woman "all success" appears to be Wick's final contact with the Forbes-Robertson troupe. Nevertheless, Wick cherished the memories of her two seasons with the English company for the remainder of her life.<sup>18</sup>

Following her North American tour, Wick again took up residence in New York City, where she found work performing in motion pictures. She commuted daily to the Vitagraph Company in Brooklyn, where she worked in films starring Anita Stewart, Clara Kimball Young, and a number of other stars from the silent film era. During the winter of 1915-16, she traveled to Florida with Alice Brady to make a film entitled Tangled Fates. Wick had a minor part in the picture, which starred Brady, Arthur Ashley, Helen Ware, and George Morgan. "Fred" of Variety panned the film, stating the story, by William Anthony McGuire, had great possibilities, "but the cast that was employed in the screening failed to register the requirements effectively." He concluded,

"There is nothing about Tangled Fates that anyone would want to rave about."<sup>19</sup>

Despite the pan, Wick had reason to be optimistic about her career. During the summer of 1916, she received an invitation to meet the influential Walter Pulitzer. One month later Pulitzer wrote producer David Belasco at the Belasco Theatre in New York:

I think I have found you a rather remarkable girl. I may be mistaken, of course, but from what I have seen of the work of Miss Grace Wick, the bearer of this [letter], she is one of our younger actresses who is really going to be heard from in the near future.

She has appeared with Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson for two seasons, and since then in pictures--but she needs the guiding hand of America's greatest playwright-manager to properly test out her histrionism, to place her where she belongs--to place her where she can GROW!

. . . Anything you can do for her will be appreciated.<sup>20</sup>

Despite this introduction, Wick's career did not take off following the meeting with Belasco. Perhaps at twenty-eight, she was already too old for Broadway or Hollywood. Another impediment to her success may have been the fact that Wick had become romantically involved with George Merritt, a native of Gold Hill, Oregon. On December 6, 1916, the couple eloped to Greenwich, Connecticut, where they were married by a Justice of the Peace.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout most of her eight years of marriage, Wick continued to use her maiden name, even when not

working on the stage or screen. One of her non-acting jobs began in 1917 when the United States entered the First World War. During that summer, Wick found employment with the State of New York Military Census and Inventory as an agent and enrollment officer for the City of New York. Her job was to supervise forty men and women as they conducted a census and inventory of the city's military resources and enrollment.<sup>22</sup>

The job was short-lived, however, of only about a month's duration, but Wick found other ways to occupy her time.

One night in the fall of 1917, the stars were out, and so was Grace. Thousands of New Yorkers gathered at the Grand Central Palace for the opportunity to aid the Army and Navy Field Comfort Committee and to see the stars of Broadway and the silver screen, including Helen Ware, Alice Brady, Frances Starr, and Mollie King. But, the highlight of the evening, as reported by one New York newspaper, was a performance by Grace Wick. As the reporter observed:

A near riot was caused by Grace Wick, one of the beauties of the National Honor Guard booth, when she hurled a large piece of valuable china through a life-size portrait of the Kaiser. Miss Wick was dining in the cafe opposite the Morning Telegraph booth, where the Hohenzollern portrait was in use as a money-getter for the boys of our army and navy. The Kaiser's pictured mouth was an open orifice at which people threw boxes of cigarettes. If the shot failed, the shooter paid, if the cigarettes disappeared into the Hun face a free box of cigarettes was the prize. Miss Wick

became disgusted watching the poor shooting, lost her temper and hurled a Holland china soup plate through the offensive physiognomy of William the Hun. The patriotic young lady offered to pay for the damage, but she was<sup>23</sup> roundly applauded by the delighted spectators.

That was her last New York hit, as by the end of the year Wick had moved with her husband to Boston. In Boston, she became associated with Stage Women's War Relief, participating in ticket sales to raise money for the American Defense League, helping out at bazaars, donating magazines, and knitting sweaters for soldiers from the gray wool provided by the war relief agency in amounts of one-half pound at a time.<sup>24</sup>

While continuing with her volunteer work, Wick found employment at Youth's Companion, in Boston, filling the position of a man who had gone to war. Although she was employed principally as a proofreader for the magazine, she also wrote some short stories, including one titled "Two Little Pharisee." Wick worked for the magazine for two years. Then, in 1920, as motion picture companies began to market their products for middle-class urbanites, she was hired for a job where she could put all her acting abilities to use. The Boston Evening Record announced a contest to be held in conjunction with the release of the motion picture, The Riddle: Woman in which an unidentified woman would spend approximately six hours per day walking through public places in the city of Boston. Anyone coming

up to her with the day's issue of the Record in hand, and stating, "You are the Riddle Woman of the Boston Evening Record," would win a prize of \$100.<sup>25</sup>

Grace Wick was the Record's "Riddle Woman," hired by Pathe--the film's distributor--and the newspaper. She found herself spending six days a week walking--and sometimes running--through the streets of Boston, attempting to elude capture. Daily clues were announced in the newspaper--one day's issue contained a photograph of her eyes, another a photograph of her nose and mouth, and a later issue carried a full length profile of Wick with only her eyes and nose masked. Clues of the places in town where she would be visiting were also given each day. On October 18, nine days into the contest, the Riddle Woman began to write a daily column of her own for the paper. In her column, Wick advised of her activities of the previous day, describing people she encountered as she visited local stores, restaurants, parks, and other sites, and sometimes reciting conversations she overheard. She informed the readers of what she had worn the previous day, where she had been, and what her plans were for the day ahead.<sup>26</sup>

It was obvious that Grace was thoroughly enjoying her role, as she mocked her Bostonian pursuers, saying their lack of success in identifying her indicated they were all poor detectives, including Boston's police



department. She wore a variety of disguises, and was able to blend in with the crowds of people in parks, government buildings, busy streets, restaurants, and department stores. She even furnished her vital statistics for the readers, but once again lied about her age, advising she was only twenty-six. As the days went by, Wick had some close calls in her attempts to elude capture, but none of the people recognizing her followed the proper procedures of identification. One unfortunate woman, Dorothy MacPhee, was accosted by hopeful pursuers of the Riddle Woman so many times that the Record was forced to print a photograph of the young woman, advising the readers she was not the woman participating in the contest.<sup>27</sup>

Wick received a variety of mail while she was posing as the Riddle Woman. One fan, Clarice Fleetwood, who admired the Riddle Woman's cleverness in eluding capture, wrote a poem:

Greetings to you! The Riddle Woman  
 I think you're a clever lass.  
 And to think some of the gallant men  
 Would glance and let you pass!! . . .

It takes a woman every time--  
 Off comes our hat to you!  
 And sh!!! I hope if you are caught  
 A WOMAN finds the clue!<sup>28</sup>

She also received a letter from "A. (Bashful) Hunter," a man claiming to be certain of the Riddle Woman's identity, yet was too bashful to approach a

woman on the street. The Record's "Riddle Woman" contest violated cultural norms. Following World War I a "new woman" had emerged, who had thrown off the shackles of Victorian morality in search of personal fulfillment, which included the freedom to have public contact with members of the opposite sex. Traditions were not easily set aside, however, and numbers of Boston's male citizens probably shared "Bashful's" reluctance to approach the Riddle Woman.<sup>29</sup>

Wick continued eluding Boston's citizens through the month of October and into November, participating in a variety of stunts in the process. On one occasion she posed as a speaker in behalf of Republican candidate for Governor, Channing H. Cox. She stood upon the speaker's platform in Pemberton Square for ten minutes, spoke in Cox's behalf and also encouraged the recently enfranchised women in the audience to get out and voice their political views. Wick later said that although she was a Democrat, she gladly spoke for Cox, advising she "happened to know the Democratic candidate [John J. Walsh]."<sup>30</sup>

Finally, on November 3, Wick was captured by William Lodge of Hudson, Massachusetts. Following her capture, the Record advised its readers why they had such difficulty identifying Wick as the Riddle Woman:

She is an experienced actress and reader, and has a most remarkable ability in character simulation. It is this latter feature, combined with a splendid ability to take advantage of the slightest protection the experienced fugitive finds in crowds that enabled her to evade capture.<sup>31</sup>

The Managing Editor of the Record was pleased with Wick's performance, advising her that he had managed stunts similar to hers before, but none had ever gone off as well as the "Riddle Woman." He wrote, "I will say truthfully to you that I believe you are the most capable girl in such work in the United States today."<sup>32</sup>

While Wick was eluding her pursuers, the movie, The Riddle: Woman, opened in Boston. Coincidentally, the film's star, opera singer Geraldine Farrar, was appearing in concert at Boston's Symphony Hall on November 6, only three days after the Riddle Woman of Boston was captured. Wick was given the opportunity to meet and talk with Farrar for a quarter of an hour at Symphony Hall.<sup>33</sup>

Wick's work as the elusive Riddle Woman appeared to give her the opportunity to escape the social roles projected upon middle-class women. A note in the Boston Evening Record stated that Mrs. George Merritt was unable to perform in a pageant at the local fairgrounds due to an injury caused by falling on a nail. If the readers had known that Grace Wick and Mrs. George Merritt

were one and the same, they probably would not have accepted her excuse for the missed performances. Yet Wick's fame was short-lived. When she emerged from the Symphony Hall meeting with Farrar, Wick found 1,000 autograph seekers--all anxious for the autograph of the nationally known movie star. Although Wick was to enter the world of show business off and on over the following decade, never again would she experience the publicity she received during the weeks she wandered the streets of Boston. Approximately a year after the completion of her role as the Riddle Woman, she left Boston, moving with her husband to the Jackson County area of southern Oregon. In Oregon Wick would take on new roles, including a deep involvement in local and national politics.<sup>34</sup>

## CHAPTER III

### HOPE AND DISENCHANTMENT

Grace and George Merritt arrived in southern Oregon in 1922, when Jackson County was receiving more than its usual share of publicity. The couple settled in Central Point, not far from Medford, where a battle of words was in full force between the town's newspapers over the philosophies and actions of the Ku Klux Klan. With two to five million members nationwide, the Klan of the early 1920s was a product of a traditionalist surge within both rural and urban America. The secret order promoted white supremacy, prohibition enforcement, Protestantism, American nationalism and immigration restriction. It had arrived in southern Oregon in 1921, and used anti-Catholicism as an organizing tactic. The Republican Medford Mail Tribune marked the hooded order as outlaws, while the Democratic Clarion stood up in its defense. A June 16, 1922, editorial in the Clarion described the Klan as "law abiding" and "long suffering." "There is probably no other order in existence that exercises more care in the selection of its members," the Clarion protested, and concluded with

a reference to "white robed patriots who presage a new heaven and a new earth."<sup>1</sup>

Soon after arriving in Jackson County, Wick went to work for the Clarion as a proofreader and advertising salesperson. Her experience with Boston's Youth's Companion, no doubt, helped her acquire this position.

Whether or not she was influenced by her employer or had pro-Klan sentiments before she joined the newspaper, Wick became a Klan sympathizer. Such support put at least one newly acquired friendship in jeopardy.

"Barbara," a woman living in the Medford area, and who appears to have been a Roman Catholic, wrote that she would have to break off their friendship if Wick went to work for the Klan. She expressed the fear that if the Klan had their way, Catholics would not "be able to take a long breath before many months."

Wick replied that she did not say she would work for the Klan, but was considering joining the Klan Women, as she had been given the opportunity to do so. She insisted that Barbara had been misled about the Klan's ill-feelings toward Catholics.<sup>2</sup>

Wick rallied to the Clarion's support of Walter M. Pierce, Democratic candidate in the 1922 gubernatorial race. The Clarion professed to support Pierce because the candidate was a rancher who favored agrarian interests.

Yet the newspaper gave equal play to the "Catholic" issue, ludicrously trying news of possible federal prosecution of the Klan to a report from "an envoy of the Pope." Governor Ben Olcott drew the ire of the Klan when he issued a proclamation condemning the order and appealed to federal authorities to investigate charges of vigilantism against Medford area klansmen. The governor was particularly concerned with three separate incidents of near-hanging which occurred outside of Medford and involved local klansmen. On these occasions, the vigilantes had taken each of their victims out of town, threatened them, placed ropes around their necks, and raised their bodies until only their toes grazed the ground. Olcott's response to the vigilantism resulted in a Clarion headline--"Governor Olcott Grossly Slanders Jackson County." In an attempt to involve the Catholics in the issue, the newspaper reported that a representative of the Pope had spread the news of the governor's appeal to the United States Attorney General for assistance in fighting the "outlaws" of Jackson County.<sup>3</sup>

In the summer of 1922 Wick arranged to meet Pierce in Ashland, where he was campaigning at a Woodmen's picnic. She soon organized a successful rally for the candidate in Central Point, for which he gave her full credit. Following his September announcement that he favored the Klan-backed compulsory school initiative, which proposed that children be required to attend public

schools, Pierce gained the support of the Ku Klux Klan. Whatever the impact of the secret order, Pierce beat Republican Olcott by amassing 133,969 votes to the governor's 99,164. The successful Democrat won Jackson County by a margin of 4,670 to 3,331. Pierce wrote Wick to thank her as one of his "many, many friends . . . [who] made it possible." Wick was to later give herself the majority of the credit for Pierce's success in the 1922 election, going as far as stating, "I was responsible for his being elected." She explained this by stating that Jackson County had been the "swing" county for Pierce, yet he won all but eight of the thirty-six Oregon counties, and by a margin far exceeding the approximately 8,000 votes of Jackson County.<sup>4</sup>

Wick remained an employee of the Clarion through 1923. By February 1924, she had moved to Jacksonville and listed her occupation as "housewife" on her Oregon Driver's License. All was not well in the Merritt household, however. In July, George Merritt filed for divorce, alleging immoral conduct on the part of his wife. The defendant, no doubt to aid her chances for receiving alimony, countered by claiming maltreatment by her husband and his maiden aunt, who had been living with the couple.<sup>5</sup>

Although American divorce was on the increase, rising from 100,000 divorces in 1914 to over 205,000 in 1929, court proceedings regarding failed marriages were front-page news in small towns like Jacksonville. According to



the Jacksonville Post, the Merritt divorce trial caused quite a stir in town. The fact that Wick was a former actress no doubt caught the attention of local citizens. Also, it was less socially acceptable for husbands to be the plaintiffs in divorce cases. Wick testified that she and her husband had been happily married when they lived in New York and Boston. As evidence of his affection, she produced a postcard he had sent her from Newport, Rhode Island in 1918. He wrote only, "Dear Girl--All love and best wishes--in memory of a mightily delightful good time." When questioned regarding the use of her maiden name, Wick advised that her husband had agreed at the time of their marriage that she would use her professional name.<sup>6</sup>

Testimony reported in the newspaper included that of Mary Ryan, who told the Court that "on a trip to Medford in a Studebaker auto, Mrs. Merritt was seated on the lap of then Principal Sawyer of the Jacksonville schools," exchanging puffs on a cigarette. In 1924 rural communities had still not accepted the idea of women smoking. To have been seated on a man's lap while smoking would have marked Wick as a loose woman. Behavior that was becoming the norm among youth in the cities was considered sinful in traditionalist small towns of America. The fact that Wick had recently arrived from the city gave the people of Jackson County further evidence of the decadence of city life.<sup>7</sup>

Other testimony was equally explosive. P. X. Johnson of Gold Hill denied the accusation by an earlier witness that he had "expressed a desire to step out with Mrs. Merritt." A Jacksonville woman then testified that she had been to a Halloween party where Wick was wearing a "Yama Yama" suit; but, despite attempts of the attorney for the plaintiff, the woman refused to describe the suit as "pajamas." As "pajamas" connoted a lack of underclothing (which was rapidly disappearing among city women in the 1920s), the idea of Wick wearing such an outfit in public would, again, have branded her a woman of doubtful morality.<sup>8</sup>

In her defense, a gentleman who advised he had known Wick for two or three years, testified that he had always considered her conduct to be "ladylike." The judge determined that the couple had been ill-mated from the beginning, granted the divorce, and ordered Merritt to pay \$30 per month alimony, attorney fees, and court costs. Like Carol Kennicott, who moved from the city to Gopher Prairie in Sinclair Lewis' Main Street, Wick found that an autonomous woman was not acceptable to small town society. Unconventional behavior by dislocated city women was not tolerated.<sup>9</sup>

Faced with the dilemma of where to go following her divorce, Wick accepted a short-term substitute teaching position at Jackson elementary school. During

the time she lived in Jackson County, Wick developed a close friendship with Madam Tracy-Young, a teacher and concert pianist. Shortly after the divorce, the two women left southern Oregon and traveled to Los Angeles. Wick hoped to serve as the pianist's agent and promoter, but she soon dropped Tracy and set out to promote her own career by returning to the silent screen. The Medford Mail Tribune reported in June 1925 that an editor of a Hollywood movie magazine had advised that Wick was "on the threshold of a successful screen career." A photograph of Wick wrapped in a sarong, and demurely lifting the skirt to reveal her legs, appeared in the June issue of Movie Digest. The October issue of The Screen Artist, which listed available stars and starlets, also carried a photograph of Wick, with beauty marks on one cheek and on her chin. Beneath the picture was the caption, "Leads, seconds, emotional characters."<sup>10</sup>

During the summer of 1925, Movie Digest held a "Perfect Figure Contest." The September issue reported that Grace Wick, with 32,170 votes from the magazine's readers, had proven the most popular candidate among the aspiring starlets. But Wick also returned to writing. In collaboration with another writer, she composed a scenario that concerned helping people in need, the hypocrisy of some churchgoers, and the moral that

churches should be for both rich and poor and should not discriminate against the less fortunate. Wick's attempt at screen writing may have reflected some of her bitterness toward the treatment she received in southern Oregon. Nevertheless, her ties to the region resurfaced when she received a letter early in 1926 from a former neighbor, Barney Cody, second cousin of Buffalo Bill Cody. Cody advised that his son, Archie, was in serious trouble with the law, and requested Wick's help in appealing to Governor Pierce for mercy.<sup>11</sup>

Archie Cody had been arrested by Sheriff Austin Goodman of Harney County, Oregon, in August 1924, on a "bad check" charge. He was subsequently convicted by jury trial in December of having mortally wounded the sheriff in a gunfight that erupted between the two men following the arrest. The convicted murderer was sentenced to die by hanging. Wick informed Pierce that she was returning to Oregon in February 1926, and received a warm response. That April, she accompanied Barney Cody to the State Capital to plead for the life of his forty-five year old son. Other petitioners included members of the Portland Central Labor Council, the Prisoners' Aid Society, and members of local women's groups taking a stand against capital punishment. Their arguments emphasized the lack of evidence concerning

Cody's intent to kill the sheriff. Moreover, Cody's defenders questioned whether the defendant had fired the fatal shot and whether the sheriff had accidentally shot himself.<sup>12</sup>

Despite such pleas; the governor refused to pardon the condemned man, declaring, "I can't find one scintilla of evidence to show any doubt that Archie Cody deliberately and intentionally killed Sheriff Goodman in attempting to escape." Soon after, Archie Cody was hanged. Despite the fact that Cody had served three previous prison terms for convictions, Grace Wick immediately set forth to avenge the death of Barney Cody's son. Her firm belief in the hanged man's innocence as well as her friendship with the Codys prompted her determination for revenge.<sup>13</sup>

Settling in Portland, an environment presumably more suited to her considerable energies, Wick began both a crusade against capital punishment and an attempt to destroy the political career of Governor Pierce. She felt the best way to attack Pierce was through her writing, and published a booklet in 1926 called The Mascot. (Archie Cody had once served as a mascot in a parade.) The pamphlet sold for 50¢ a copy, with the proceeds to be given to the Codys to help replace the house they had forfeited in the effort to raise funds for their son's defense. The Mascot was filled

with poems and songs denouncing Pierce. It included an allegory in which Pierce appeared as a "bald-faced calf" who turned into a donkey: Aided by elephants, the governor managed to win election, but soon revealed that he would always remain a "bald-faced calf." Wick's booklet also promoted the election of Republican Ike Patterson for governor of Oregon in the coming election. Wick once noted that The Mascot was "well distributed" and "helped defeat Pierce for re-election." This may have been the sort of exaggeration to which Wick was accustomed. But the work was controversial because it was penned by a woman only six years after American women had gained nationwide suffrage. One critic, who designated himself "A Disgruntled Male," shared his opinion with the readers of the Portland News:

. . . As for the book [Mascot], I am beyond words in expressing myself, but it seems to me that such strong language coming from a woman in criticizing our Governor is very startling and out of place. Women aren't satisfied in having the privilege of voting--they are trying to run things and it is time for us men to call a halt somewhere.

. . . If women would only realize their greatest value, they would stay at home and mind the babies and have their tired husband's dinner ready when he gets home from work, without trying to run affairs of the State by writing books, stories and words to songs and wanting people to read them.

"Fewer women authors and more cooking schools" is my slogan.<sup>14</sup>

Despite such cultural traditionalism, Wick prospered in the relatively open atmosphere of Portland

in the late-1920s. First she obtained part-time work as a proofreader for the Oregon Journal, remaining there for two years. More important, she soon signed on with Portland radio station KEX, where she directed a woman's matinee which aired three times a week. Founded in December 1926, KEX used Wick to tap the huge female consumer market to which advertisers of the 1920s were drawn. One newspaper described the Wick show as "one of the most popular afternoon features presented by any Portland station."<sup>15</sup>

Such success brought Wick the material advantages she obviously sought. The Portland Telegram noted in April 1927 that a tea party and fashion show sponsored by radio station KEX and local businesses, was to be held in "Grace Wick's fashion apartment." Another indication of Wick's affluence surfaced when a Portland woman was arrested for theft and other crimes. The defendant was found innocent of several theft charges when Grace Wick stated that she had given the woman some of the clothing she was suspected of stealing, including an "expensive coat." Wick's style of living was not hurt by the fact that George Merritt, now unemployed, was unable to continue his \$30 monthly alimony payments by 1927.<sup>16</sup>

Economic security enabled Wick to pursue other activities. In December 1926 she played a lead role

in a local production of the musical, Why Men Leave Home. When Charles Lindbergh flew into Portland as part of his grand tour in celebration of his solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean, Wick was in attendance at the banquet held in his honor at the Multnomah Hotel. She also involved herself in the capital punishment issue in the spring of 1928 when two young men were scheduled to hang as a result of murder convictions. Wick wrote Pierce's successor, Governor I. L. Patterson, requesting that he spare the lives of the men because a lack of funds had kept them from properly defending themselves. Whatever the effect of the letter, Patterson reversed the executions.<sup>17</sup>

Reversing her support of the anti-Catholic Ku Klux Klan, Wick volunteered to campaign for Democratic candidate Alfred E. Smith in the 1928 presidential race. She was recommended for a leading role in the campaign by a friend, Chester Fuller, who had informed Smith's publicity director that Wick would be of great value to the Oregon campaign because she could speak from personal knowledge of Smith's effectiveness as New York's governor. Wick quickly organized a Women's Smith-for-President Club in Oregon, which boasted twelve thousand members from across the state by the November election. The organization sponsored several Smith banquets and rallies in which Wick presided



as secretary-treasurer. True to form, she not only organized the affairs but wrote an eight verse song for Smith designed to be sung to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."<sup>18</sup>

Scheduled speakers at one banquet covered such subjects as "Foreign Relations: A Moral Issue in 1928;" "Religion in Politics;" "Governor Smith and Prohibition;" and "Mrs. Alfred E. Smith, Ideal American Homemaker." Although the Oregon State Women's Smith-for-President Club promoted the participation of women in politics, it still could not trespass upon social norms which placed women's role in the home. Yet Wick's personality found ways to defy such assumptions. As the vocalist at the meeting in question prepared to perform, a loud noise rose from the street outside the assembly hall. As a local newspaper reported, banquet chairperson Wick left her chair to determine the cause of the commotion. As she peered out a nearby window, she saw drummers in red uniforms. Crying, "Propaganda! Republican propaganda!" Wick ordered all the windows shut. The drums stopped, but when the vocalist was about to lift her voice in song, a brass band began playing from the street. The band then paraded on by, leaving the group of Women-for-Smith--and most particularly Wick--somewhat ruffled, but able to proceed with the balance of the entertainment. As it turned

out, the uniformed band was the American Legion drum corps, who were parading to raise funds for a trip to San Antonio, Texas.<sup>19</sup>

Membership in the Women's Club was free, so Wick was forced to find other ways of raising money for Smith's Oregon campaign. Contributions provided the greatest amount of support, but Wick also earned money from the sale of a poem she had written for Smith, "The Smith a Mighty Man is He." Yet a financial report provided to the Democratic Committee indicated that the group was unable to meet all financial expenses. Despite Smith's loss to Republican Herbert Hoover, Wick, who was uncompensated for her work, believed that she had done more than could be expected of her.<sup>20</sup>

By 1929 Wick began to feel the pinch of the hard times that would soon engulf the entire nation in the Depression. She complained to her attorney about the lack of alimony from her former husband. At the same time, Wick found it increasingly difficult as a divorced woman over forty to land jobs in a contracting economy. Often she deducted ten years from her age on employment applications, and even resorted to listing her marital status as "widow." Her only work between 1929 and 1933 was part-time employment as a food demonstrator for a local cheese company.<sup>21</sup>

Desperately looking for a political answer to the nation's and her own economic problems, Wick strenuously campaigned for Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1932 presidential election. She hoped that his administration would put the country back on the road to prosperity. Once Roosevelt took power, Wick looked to Washington, D.C., for employment, apparently believing that her efforts in recent Democratic campaigns would give her some influence. Consequently, she wrote to a number of high ranking Democrats, including Postmaster General James A. Farley and Oregon Congressman Charles Martin, asking for assistance. Wick also enlisted her cousin, James Wick, a congressional court reporter, to use whatever influence he had in helping her find a job. Focusing her attention on employment with local and national governmental agencies, she further applied to the Portland Office of the Internal Revenue Service and to Mayor Joseph Carson, Jr., for whom she had campaigned in 1932. All her efforts to obtain employment proved fruitless.<sup>22</sup>

During the Christmas season 1933, Wick once again turned to poetry to express her feelings. That year her friends received her "Christmas Sonnet:"

## Greetings

1933

## Christmas Sonnet

Please accept this little card so full  
of Christmas mirth,  
"Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men,"  
a token of Christ's Birth.  
Two thousand years have rolled around  
since He scattered Blessings here.  
Yet men forever come and go with each  
succeeding year.

We have a New deal with us now, a Leader  
fine and good,  
An NRA and all is well--or at least  
that's understood.  
But what I cannot understand, and my  
inner Spirits ruffle  
At those who think the Forgotten Man  
may get lost in the shuffle.

I trust you'll overlook the fact no  
gift to you I've sent,  
Except the warmth within my heart--  
my purse is badly bent.  
If Christ were here on Earth today,  
I'm sure he'd understand  
Just how I feel about it all, and give  
me His Kind Hand.  
But since He's not, I trust you'll  
take this verse for what it's worth"  
"Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men"--  
a token of Christ's Birth!"

Despite her employment difficulties, Wick remained an avid supporter of President Roosevelt, remarking in February 1934, "He is the greatest man in two thousand years."<sup>23</sup>

Early in 1934 Wick began to fashion a campaign for Congress. When Representative Martin announced that he would not seek re-election in order to run for governor, Wick wrote him that she was expecting

to submit her name as a Democratic candidate for his congressional seat. She was careful to tell Martin that as a member of Congress she would "endeavor to be as stalwart a supporter of our Great Commander-in-Chief . . . as you have always been." Stating that she was "prominent in women's Democratic circles," the Oregonian announced Wick's candidacy in February. Although Wick claimed to be Oregon's first female candidate for Congress, she was preceded by Ester Lovejoy in 1920, who ran on the Democrat-Prohibition ticket. Due to poor financial circumstances, Wick was unable to afford the required \$100 filing fee for the Oregon May primary.<sup>24</sup>

Wick's personal misfortunes resulted in a bitter disillusionment with the New Deal. In a June 1934 letter to James Farley, she presented a list of "a few things the 'New Deal' has done for me." Wick informed Farley that it had become impossible to earn a decent living. She had been evicted from her apartment three times, and was only able to remain in a dingy hotel as a result of selling dishes and furniture to pay rent. Wick wrote that she had pawned two diamonds in order to buy shoes and food during the previous winter, and was about to lose the diamonds as she could not meet the interest payment required by the pawnbroker. She advised that she was averaging only

one meal a day, and that she, who had been "considered the best-dressed woman in Southern Oregon in 1922," was, as a result of the New Deal, shabbily dressed. Wick noted that she had been offered a job at the Oregon State Insane Asylum with wages of \$60 a month plus room and board. Despite her desperate need for employment, she had rejected the position, stating that she had "witnessed enough nuts in the Legislature."<sup>25</sup>

Although she had become dissatisfied with the New Deal, Wick continued to admire President Roosevelt. On August 3, 1934, the president arrived at the Portland seawall aboard the USS Houston (Mrs. Roosevelt arrived by train hours earlier), and was met by an estimated crowd of 150,000 well-wishers. A local newspaper listed hundreds of names of persons included among the president's official reception committee. Wick's name was not on the list, yet she somehow managed to meet the Roosevelts and acquire a seat on the speaker's platform at Bonneville Dam, which the president was officially dedicating. Given that Wick had received written appreciations for political efforts from Eleanor Roosevelt and other prominent Democrats in 1928 and 1932, she may have done some name-dropping to acquire the opportunity to participate in the dedication.<sup>26</sup>

Whatever the effect of the encounter with the First Family, Wick re-entered the congressional race

in 1934. Since she had not been a candidate in the May primary, she decided to run as an Independent. To have her name placed on the November ballot, Wick needed to hold a nominating convention to gather the signatures of 100 registered voters. To be certain that she would gather the required number of legal voters in one place, she held her nominating convention at Columbia Gardens, described by the Oregonian as a "beer hall," where singing waiters dispensed beer and entertainment. Less than a year after Prohibition had been repealed, campaign workers collected the required signatures as customers drank beer and enjoyed the entertainment. Wick later advised that she chose the beer garden because she "would not find that many people at once in a church."<sup>27</sup>

Wick labeled her platform the "Ten Commandments," noting that the first letter of each spelled out the words "CLEAN HOUSE::"

- 1) Cooperate 100 percent with our beloved Roosevelt.
- 2) Labor must be treated fairly.
- 3) Eliminate red tape in the legislature.
- 4) Appropriation of funds under federal control for mining industry of Oregon.
- 5) New deal for forgotten women of Oregon.
- 6) Honest, able, humane, fearless in representing the Third District.

- 7) Old Age pension.
- 8) Unemployment insurance.
- 9) Stop graft in politics.
- 10) Eradicate public welfare under its present regime.<sup>28</sup>

Wick's platform, which combined aspects of feminism, progressivism and conservatism, revealed her heightened frustration with her own and the nation's economic conditions. She was probably influenced by ideas of Father Charles Coughlin, who supported labor groups, called for reforms in government that would decentralize wealth and power, and attacked governmental agencies and officials. Dr. Francis Townsend's Old Age Revolving Pension plan, which would have caused the government to pay \$200 a month to all unemployed persons over sixty, was also under discussion in 1934. Ideas promoting old age pensions and unemployment benefits were popular issues among organizations of the elderly, urban social workers, and midwestern Progressives, such as Governor Philip La Follette of Wisconsin. Such pressure pushed the president into signing the Social Security Act of 1935. Yet Wick's hostility to public welfare reflected a conservative distaste for supporting people from taxpayer funds. Despite her innovative campaign, and probably largely due to poor funding, Wick received the least number of votes acquired by the seven candidates in the congressional race. Republican



William Ekwall won the election with 43,900 votes, while Wick only garnered 1,875.<sup>29</sup>

Still desiring political employment, Wick traveled to Salem in late 1934 and early 1935 to seek opportunities with the state legislature. When she was unsuccessful, she blamed "Pierce's henchmen," since the former governor was now a congressional representative. Wick wrote James Farley again during the spring of 1935. This time she expressed anger at his failure to find a job for her, and threatened, "This is the last postage stamp I am going to waste on you unless I get results from this letter." She told Farley she was not writing as a life-long Democrat, but as a "self respecting American citizen" and the daughter of a Civil War veteran. Despite her frustration, Wick continued to hold onto her faith in the president:

I have the greatest regard for dear Mr. Roosevelt . . . It seems a great shame to sacrifice men like him to satisfy the greed of men like you . . .

I paid ten dollars for my college diploma, yet I cannot get FERA, DWA, PWA, or "BULL" or any other kind of alphabetical soup work . . .

Yet the letter concluded with the first major indication of her changing political views by voicing her support for Louisiana Senator Huey Long. Long had gained nationwide popularity through his Share-Our-Wealth scheme, a proposal to give every family a homestead worth \$5,000 plus a \$2,500 guaranteed annual income. The funding for the program was to have been obtained through the

confiscation of fortunes belonging to the wealthy. Wick wrote:

Huey Long may seem crazy, but he's no fool . . . I used to think that Huey was a "terrible" radical, but that was before I began missing meals so repeatedly as I have the past few months. I am interested in him now and think it is unfortunate that we do not have a Huey Long in every State.<sup>30</sup>

In the spring of 1935, the City of Portland created a committee designed to assist the unemployed in receiving fair treatment from the Welfare Bureau and other relief agencies. J. E. Bennett, Commissioner of Public Affairs, and one of Wick's former opponents in the 1934 legislative race, appointed Wick to the committee, which consisted of representatives of labor, business, professions, the clergy, and the unemployed. The fact that she was chosen for the position appeared to indicate that city officials had some respect for Wick's political views and activities. But by May 1935, it was obvious that Wick had had enough of economic deprivation and had lost all faith in the New Deal. In an effort to let the entire nation know her feelings she marched down Broadway in downtown Portland, wearing a barrel fringed with black lace and decorated with thirty political slogans. The maxims included expressions of her dissatisfaction with local politicians:

It is inexpressible what I think of Portland's "Mare!"

We thought we had elected a General for Governor [Martin]--but found we had a chocolate soldier!

She also expressed her disillusionment with government as a whole:

We need more humans and fewer vultures in political office!

Wouldn't you like persons in political office whom you could trust, respect, and depend upon?

Aspects of feminism were revealed in two of her slogans:

One of the Forgotten Women of the New Deal!

If Eve's FIG LEAVES, I hope my BARREL STAYS!

A strong militance had also emerged in Wick's thinking:

Handle with care!

Hungry people make poor pacificists!

Wake up Unemployed! Let's organize NOW!

I would rather die quickly fighting for a just cause than to be slowly starved to death by a bunch of crooked politicians!

Horse thieves are hanged--why not crooked politicians?

Wick also expressed her enthusiasm for a bill pending in Congress:

Post no Bills! Except Lundeen Bill (House Resolution 2827!)<sup>31</sup>

The Lundeen Workers Bill was a proposal to establish social insurance to compensate all unemployed workers and farmers over the age of eighteen at a rate equal to full average wages of workers in the locality where they lived and was to extend throughout the full period of their

unemployment. Similar benefits were to be paid to the elderly and disabled. Funding was to be taken from the U. S. Treasury and, if needed, by taxing individuals and corporations with annual incomes exceeding \$5,000 per year. Gauging from the estimated 14,021,000 unemployed in 1934, the increased cost to the government through the enactment of the bill would have been \$5.8 billion.<sup>32</sup>

Wick gained considerable notoriety as a result of the barrel episode. Alienated both as a woman and as an impoverished former member of the middle class, Wick used the march down Broadway to let the world know that she had only begun to fight. The barrel episode also marked her final split from the Democratic Party.

## CHAPTER IV

### FIGHTING BACK

Grace Wick expressed her deepened social anger in her "Yuletide Greetings" of 1935, which consisted of printed leaflets featuring the "barrel" photograph and all thirty slogans. Aimed specifically at congressional leaders was a note in support of the Lundeen bill, although the proposal had previously died in the House. Wick received responses from people across the nation. One man, who had known her when she was a young woman working as an usher in an East Coast theater, wrote, "You were looking on then--but now you are a part of the political and economic battle." Another correspondent wrote that it must have taken nerve for her to march in public in the barrel. Wick also received letters from people who indicated they were in agreement with her opinions of the nation's political leadership. One woman wrote:

Darling, I must tell you how I have and still am enjoying your unique Xmas folder. I have shown it to numerous people and they are all so interested. I had one old lady ask me, "Is she for the Townsend plan?" I replied, "Yes, she is for everything that will help people."

Wick's brother wrote with advice to "keep in touch with the floating vote. They[y] are hungry for knowledge and facts."<sup>1</sup>

During the fall of 1935, Wick finally obtained employment through the Work Projects Administration (WPA), a massive public jobs program created by Congress that year. Yet she lost the job by early 1936, believing the layoff to be a result of governmental responses to her "Yuletide" folders. She expressed these misgivings in a letter to the president in early 1936. Including a copy of her "Greetings," Wick advised Roosevelt of her thoughts concerning the New Deal, and reminded him that she had been included among the welcoming officials at his visit to Oregon's Bonneville Dam:

How proud I was to sit on the Platform with you and Mrs. Roosevelt the day you spoke at Bonneville Dam(n), and shook hands with both of you, and had my picture taken with both of you! And what a wonderful personality you have!

She also informed the president that her Christmas Greeting of 1933 had been in "highest compliment" to him, that she had compared him with Christ. "He was crucified between two thieves," she suggested. "You have many more than that around you." Wick told Roosevelt that as a result of his choice of cabinet members, she would not be able to vote for him in the next election.<sup>2</sup>

Wick thrived on publicity and would presumably do anything to gain the attention of the news media. On March 26, 1936, she walked into the editorial room of the daily Oregonian and announced that she was entering the race for Mayor of Portland. Wick informed reporters that she was running on a platform of "'a kiss for everyone in Portland.'" Her campaign slogan was, "'Don't mix your taffy with your boloney and applesauce and the kisses will take care of themselves.'" She told one of the Oregonian reporters, "'I'm going to give you your kiss now,'" and proceeded to hand him a candy kiss.<sup>3</sup>

But her candidacy for mayor was short-lived. Only four days after her visit to the Oregonian Wick announced that she was dropping out of the race. Mayor Joseph Carson had been added to the list of officials she held in disfavor (possibly due to his failure to help her acquire permanent employment with the City), and Wick hoped to avoid splitting the anti-Carson vote. Graciously offering to loan Carson her barrel to return home in on election night, she threw her support to Commissioner Ralph C. Clyde, who was actively endorsing a proposal to form a Public Utilities District within the City of Portland. The Public Utilities District measure was defeated, and Carson was returned to the mayorial post.<sup>4</sup>

Having worked with publicity campaigns in her early days in theater and the newspaper business, Wick knew how to attract attention. Predictably, she received mail from across the nation. One letter came from a man in Mayfield, Pennsylvania, who had read news of her candidacy in a local paper. She also heard from a friend visiting in Hong Kong, who was impressed with Wick's activities. After hearing of her "kissing" candidacy, he submitted a photograph of Wick in the "barrel" to Hong Kong's daily China Mail, which printed a brief article about Wick and her "barrel."<sup>5</sup>

Having bowed out of the mayor's race, Wick once again turned to Congress as a stepping stone in her faltering political career. For the 1936 race she had the support of neighbor, Fred Melanson, who helped manage her campaign. Wick and Melanson shared political views as well as the use of poetry in self-expression. Under the pseudonym "Mel D. Carlton," Melanson wrote a poem in which he placed Grace Wick high upon a pedestal. His "Grace, The Magnificent, America's Joan of Arc," was used in her campaign.<sup>6</sup>

Wick combined her knack for publicity with a confrontative but humorous approach to male cronyism. In an October meeting and radio broadcast of the exclusive men's Breakfast Club, an introductory affair for candidates in the upcoming election, each candidate responded



to the introduction by a moderator. As the Oregonian observed, "One by one they'd arise, clasp their own hands above their domes, shake 'em at the crowd, grin, and sit down." When the presiding officer asked if he had missed anyone, Grace Wick suddenly appeared and waved her arms above her head. These actions were completely unexpected in an exclusive men's club and, according to the reporter, "President Fred Peterson's eyes popped out in his round face like two billiard balls onto the moon." Nevertheless, the moderator asked the uninvited guest in, and inquired if she would like to make a speech. In the words of the Oregonian reporter, "Grace was off." She grabbed the microphone and began to speak. Every so often the moderator interrupted, inquiring about a particular statement. Wick responded by asking him if he was attempting to be funny, to which he claimed innocence. As it turned out, the microphone was off the air the entire time, so if she had hoped to speak to a radio audience, Wick had gambled and lost.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the incident provided an excellent example of political theater.

Calling "For Oregon and the Constitution!" Wick again chose to enter the congressional race as an Independent. In the 1936 campaign she attempted to use her lack of financial backing to her advantage, proclaiming she was "not backed by the Oregonian,

Journal, or any other moneyed interests." Wick's campaign advertising carried a photograph of her carrying a baseball bat, next to the slogan, "You stick with Wick and her BIG STICK and Wick will stick with You!" The slogan, "Fights for the People!" was also a part of her campaign. Melanson used the same idea in his "Grace The Magnificent" poem:

Out of the East where she was Born,  
     Some call it middle West  
 To Oregon a Goddess came, who  
     Fights for the oppressed . . . 8

Wick's only official endorsement for Congress came from the National Farm Council, a shadowy organization based in Kenton, Ohio. She no doubt received that group's endorsement for two reasons. The first was her support of Farm-Laborite, Congressman Ernest Lundeen of Minnesota. The second reason, and probably the most crucial, was that the Council's president, Charles E. Wharton, had a personal interest in Wick, calling her "Daddy's Little Apple Dumplin' Girl." She had come to his attention during the "barrel" episode, and he had been impressed with her activities. His interest in Wick was not purely platonic, however, as he wrote her letters expressing his desire to hold her on his knee and his hurt that she failed to express a love for him. Wick ignored his expressions of affection, accepted his support in her campaign, and wrote that

she considered him a "good friend." Despite the added support of Melanson and Wharton, Wick fared even worse in 1936 than she had two years before. When the final vote was tallied, Wick had received the support of only 716 voters, with .48 percent of the vote. Democrat Nan Wood Honeyman defeated all opponents, including incumbent Ekwall, by a large margin, earning 78,624 votes (53.17 percent).<sup>9</sup> An Oregon woman had for the first time been elected to Congress, but it was not Grace Wick.

Following her devastating defeat, Wick was able to find temporary jobs with the WPA again, working as a junior statistician and key punch operator. The project with which she was involved was a study of the consumption of goods and services by urban families. Although she enjoyed the work, and performed well on the job, "reduction of personnel" lay-offs left her unemployed again by the end of 1936.<sup>10</sup>

Finding herself once again without work, Wick began a correspondence with United States Senator Charles L. McNary, whom she had met in late 1936. Referring to McNary as the "Great Magician," Wick asked for help in obtaining a position as bailiff for the Circuit Court judges of Multnomah County. McNary assisted her by writing letters of recommendation in her behalf, as well as offering suggestions of

other persons to contact in her pursuit of employment. However, a lack of funding delayed any decision by the county judges and Wick was never chosen for the job.<sup>11</sup>

Wick might have used her status as a woman to explain her inability to land permanent employment as amidst the Great Depression most Americans considered any job held by a woman to have been stolen from a man. Instead, a frustrated Wick focused on the supposed job competition between native-born Americans and immigrants. Depression-induced frustration brought the political activist back to the nativism of the 1920s Ku Klux Klan. This time, her sympathies veered toward the extreme political right. As she wrote the Republican McNary, Wick had begun to do volunteer work for the "Pro-America Group of Women" and had been honored by the organization as a complimentary member.<sup>12</sup>

Just as Wick embraced immigration restriction, she began to speak out and write letters to government officials about Communist and Nazi infiltration within the United States. Writing as a representative of the Sons of Union Veterans in 1937, she asserted that Communist and Nazi propaganda was being spread via foreign language newspapers and radio, and urged the presentation of a bill before Congress that would

outlaw foreign languages over the radio. She also promoted a petition requiring proof of citizenship papers from foreign-born job applicants before they could be given work through the WPA or Public Works Administration (PWA).<sup>13</sup>

Ironically, when she applied for a job in 1940, Wick took exception to a government employment application which required proof of United States citizenship. She wrote the following note:

You have a heluva ignorant crust to make such a statement to the daughter of a Civil War Veteran when your own department as well as other departments are permeated with aliens, pink idiots, communist and other fungers [sic] in key positions.<sup>14</sup>

Wick also began to write letters in support of conservative members of the Senate, including Republican Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan and Democrat Rush D. Holt of West Virginia. Voicing her admiration of Holt's attacks on the New Deal, she warned him in May, 1938: "Don't let them get you as they did Huey Long!" referring to the Louisiana senator's assassination in 1935. Wick voiced her specific frustrations to WPA Administrator, Harry L. Hopkins, advising that despite her graduation from Columbia College of Expression and her tour with Johnston Forbes-Robertson, she was not able to acquire a position as dramatic coach for a local WPA theatrical project, nor even

a satisfactory interview. To top off the insult, she could not even get a job as one of the players! She further advised Hopkins that she had obtained a clerical job in 1937 with a local WPA traffic survey. But Wick complained that she was "eased out" after sending telegrams to Senators McNary, Holt, and Burton K. Wheeler which protested Roosevelt's attempts to "pack" the Supreme Court, by gaining legislation enabling the president to appoint additional justices. Wick's letter was so strong in language that Hopkins's secretary replied that she hesitated to send it through the mail to the State WPA in Portland.<sup>15</sup>

To compound her problems, Wick's rent in her downtown Portland apartment was on the rise, increasing 50 percent in one year--from \$12 to \$18 a month. Unable to meet rent payments, she was forced to borrow money from her sister in the Midwest. She wrote Senator McNary that she was "fighting like hell to keep off the cursed 'relief.'"<sup>16</sup>

By 1938, no doubt due to her continued financial woes and the controversy over the president's attempt to "pack" the Supreme Court, Wick's admiration of Franklin Roosevelt had turned to hatred. She sent the chaplains of the Senate and House of Representatives a version of the "Twenty-Third Psalm," titled "The American Psalm of '33 to '38 Inclusive," which begins:

Franco Roosevelt is my shepherd; I am  
 in want.  
 He maketh me to lie down on park benches;  
 he leadeth me beside the still factories.  
 He disturbeth my soul; he leadeth me in  
 the paths of destruction for my Party's  
 sake . . .

The "psalm," also entitled the "Twenty-Third Spasm,"  
 had been in circulation since at least 1933.<sup>17</sup>

Wick also expressed her anger on employment  
 applications, which no doubt contributed to her difficulty  
 in acquiring work. On an application form for the  
 Farm Security Administration was the question, "Do  
 you use opiates?" Her reply was:

None except what has been injected into the  
 rest of the good American people the past five  
 years. The 1932 "shot in the arm" wore off  
 long before 1936, and I have hopes for the  
 rest of the American people coming out of the  
 coma by 1940.

At the bottom of the application, she concluded:

With my education and qualifications and  
 splendid experience it is a disgrace that  
 I have been forced to ask for relief and  
 plenty of aliens in nice fat jobs.<sup>18</sup>

Unable to find anything but temporary work,  
 Wick found herself on welfare by mid-1939. During  
 that summer she wrote Eleanor Roosevelt to protest  
 the First Lady's stand in support of working wives.  
 Wick argued that thousands of single unemployed women  
 could be working if married women were prohibited  
 from holding jobs. Apparently, class issues figured  
 more predominantly in this reasoning than sisterly

solidarity. Ironically, Wick changed her party registration to Republican that year.<sup>19</sup>

While Wick faced increasing economic and political frustration in the late-1930s, her personal life became more complicated. Although the evidence is meager, indications are that sometime during the late 1930s, or perhaps not until the early 1940s, Wick fell in love with a married man. She wrote a poem, "Loved and Fell," about loving and "sinning" with a married man. The name of her lover was not mentioned, but he was quite possibly her neighbor and campaign worker, Fred Melanson. Perhaps written at about the same time was Melanson's poem to Wick:

My Invincible Lioness

No longer may I call you wildcat.  
You're a lioness I see.

Undaunted by tremendous  
odds, you bravely fought for me.

My head and heart are acheing [sic]  
With remorse, sincere and deep

Over trouble I have caused you  
Till I can scarcely sleep.

But deep within my consciousness  
a radiant light appears

Which signifies that all is well  
To put aside my fears.

And I see you triumphant,  
Your head crowned with success  
And everything your heart desires  
To bring you happiness.



Melanson's references to Wick's having "bravely fought for me" and the "remorse" he was feeling over the trouble he had caused her, may have been in regard to his marital status. Whatever their relationship had been during the late-1930s and early 1940s, by 1943 Grace Wick and Fred Melanson had begun living together.<sup>20</sup>

Melanson was also experiencing difficulties locating steady employment, having been laid off from a WPA position due to alleged laziness. Quite possibly his political views cost Melanson his job. He appeared to follow Wick's lead regarding such issues, although he occasionally voiced his own opinions. A poem he titled "U.S.S.R.--Ugly Sneaking Snakes and Rats," called for the extermination of all Communists. The poem concludes, "Let's keep it [United States] for REAL AMERICANS // To Hell with all the rest!!"<sup>21</sup>

Early in 1941, Wick's apartment building was sold to a man she described as an "immigrant Jew." Rumors were flying about the apartment, rumors that disturbed her to the extent that she took her concerns directly to President Roosevelt. She wrote the president that the problem with the world was "alien refugee Jews from Germany." She said, "Let me emphasize I am NOT prejudicial against any race, creed or color (I voted for a Jewish Governor of Oregon, the late

Julius [Meier])." According to Wick, the "refugee jew" made a downpayment on the property, and declared that he was buying it to make homes for German refugees. The man had also purchased the apartment building next door. Although the janitor from the neighboring building had stated that the new owner wanted the residents to remain in their apartments, Wick believed the former version of the buyer's intentions. She told the president that she wished to see legislation put through "forbidding alien 'refugees' and other aliens from buying property in this country."<sup>22</sup>

Wick's fears of eviction apparently were not unfounded as she was served a thirty day notice of eviction. As she later described her actions, she fought the eviction by going to the offices of the Chief of Police and Sheriff. There, she banged her fist on the table, and said:

It is time someone takes a stand! . . .  
I am not letting any blankety blank alien  
'refugee' jew (or any other nationality)  
put me, an American out of my home! There  
is either going to be a dead white woman  
or a dead jew!

Wick advised that the police were cooperative, but she did not give details concerning what actions, if any, they took to help. She also picketed the real estate company that managed the apartments. Although she claimed she won the fight against eviction, by

the spring of 1941 she had moved from her downtown apartment to an address in Northwest Portland.<sup>23</sup>

From 1941 forward, Wick felt nothing but contempt for anyone of Jewish descent. In March 1941, she attended a meeting of the nation's leading non-interventionist organization, the America First Committee. AFC State Chairman and Portland attorney Dellmore Lessard, led the discussion which centered around President Roosevelt's Lend-Lease bill. The Oregonian reported that Wick, although not a scheduled speaker, "amplified" Lessard's remarks in opposition to the Lend-Lease plan. In usual Grace Wick fashion, she found at least one occasion to jump out of her chair and announce that she had "no respect for the president." She received scattered applause, whereupon a man rushed from the room shouting, "You are all traitors here. I will not listen to this." Another woman argued that although she was against the bill, she respected the president and his office, adding, "Let us be true Americans." Lessard then announced the conclusion of the meeting.<sup>24</sup>

A month later, Wick wrote Senator McNary, expressing her anger against his lack of action in opposition to Lend-Lease. She told him she agreed with Mrs. Mary Hooker, who had written that McNary had stabbed America in the back. McNary responded to the letter, expressing amazement over her remarks. He wrote, "I have tried

many times and in so many ways to be helpful to you that I supposed you would be fair with a friend." He told her further that when the debate over the Lend-Lease bill was before the Senate, he had been recovering from an attack of pneumonia and, on the advice of his physician, had made no speeches on the subject. "I voted for every amendment that was offered to the Lend-Lease Bill," he wrote, "and was responsible for some that were written into the bill which in many ways restricted the power of the president." Wick apparently did not accept this explanation, and discontinued all correspondence with the senator.<sup>25</sup>

Disgusted with McNary, Wick turned to Oregon Senator Rufus Holman for help. In April 1941, she wrote Holman, complaining that Roosevelt was attempting to raise taxes to help Great Britain. Displaying a nationalist version of American history, she wrote, "Our ancestors fought one war (the Boston Tea party) against England because of 'taxation without representation' . . ." Wick then continued by informing Holman exactly what she believed was needed in the country, thus revealing the contours of her recently fashioned right-wing populism:

What this country needs is a militant organization titled "America for Americans." I could successfully organize such a group if I had the proper backing. It wouldn't take much financial backing as I am no chisler or grafter. I shoot squarely (literally and

figuratively). I am a member of America First Committee--it is good as far as it goes, but what we really need is a strong militant organization more than a committee. Something to show the would-be dictators that the people shall rule!<sup>26</sup>

The following month Wick wrote the president, demanding "Bundles for America and not for Britain!" Two weeks later, as a representative of America First, she told him not to send onions to Britain as the cost was too high in the United States. As with her previous letters to the President, she received no reply.<sup>27</sup>

Wick continued to have difficulties finding employment. During the summer of 1941, she was appointed one of twenty Republicans employed to investigate voter registration in Multnomah County, but the job was only temporary. Exhibiting no lack of self confidence (or perhaps once again attempting to prove to herself that the Government would again turn her down), Wick applied in early 1942 for the position of Assistant to the Director of Civilian Defense, from which Eleanor Roosevelt had recently resigned. James M. Landis, Director, wrote that there were no openings within his department.<sup>28</sup>

Although the letter could not be found among her manuscript material, Wick apparently wrote Landis a second letter, one of which she was so proud that

she sent copies across the nation. Republican Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, a fervent non-interventionist before Pearl Harbor, provided one response:

That was a most delightful letter you addressed to Mr. Landis, and I want to thank you for making a copy of it available to me. It is a pleasure to see the spirit which is still moving our people.

But an altogether different response was received from North Carolina Democratic Governor J. Melville Broughton:

Those of us who are devoting our whole time and energy to the effort of helping America win this war have little time and less desire to read this so-called but mis-labeled "America First" stuff that makes up your wisecracking, but unoriginal letter. I agree with you that Washington, D.C. has some cracked nuts operating there, but judging from your letter, Washington<sup>2</sup> does not have a monopoly on this species.

Wick's right-wing views may have elicited investigation by federal authorities nervous about potential links to the Axis powers. In January 1943, she wrote one correspondent that she almost lost her voter registration investigation job with Multnomah County as a "snooper" tried to have her removed from her job by telling the County Clerk that she was "'pro-Nazi' (the dirty jew liars)." She advised her correspondent further:

Last summer when I was having a cup of coffee with a woman in the public market, another snooper by the name of Oscar Kaufer, supposed to be a captain of the First World War, but

really a refugee from Poland or Slovakia, came up to me . . . and threatened me by saying: "Grace Vick, I vill haff to bring you vine and cigarettes to a concentration camp iff I see any more uff your writing about the juice (meaning jews)."

She said she believed it was Kaufer who had tried to keep her from being hired for much needed temporary work. More central to the question, several of Wick's friends reportedly had been questioned about her by persons representing themselves as agents of the FBI.<sup>30</sup>

In February 1943, Wick made an appearance before Army personnel at the Multnomah Hotel in Portland, Oregon. As she described the experience:

I was called before a Star Chamber . . . but refused to answer their questions or to fill out their questionnaire, but told them I would be most happy to meet my accusers face to face and answer their dirty underhanded charges. Since then they have come to my attorney's office . . . and questioned him . . . He told them I was a stickler for my constitutional rights.

Wick later expanded upon her description of the "Star Chamber" experience and, in 1945, advised a correspondent that there were "four white men and a jew" at the interrogation. She said the "whites" were embarrassed by her "naive" nature, but she had the "jew biting his nails and a glower on his swarthy face."<sup>31</sup>

Although Wick disliked all "foreigners," it was the Jews upon whom she now focused her hatred-- both immigrants and American born. In her eyes, Jews

had become equated with everything she perceived as evil. Communism and "international banking" topped her list of evils, and Wick considered the Jews to be at once both Communists and international bankers. Like other anti-Semites such as Henry Ford and Father Charles E. Coughlin, she settled the contradiction by ignoring it.<sup>32</sup>

Early in 1943 a Portland radio station announced that it would be presenting a series of shows in which various Axis dictators would be hypothetically placed on trial. When it was announced that Abraham Lincoln was to be the prosecuting attorney in the case of Adolf Hitler, Wick wrote a letter of protest. She advised William Moyes of the Oregonian that Lincoln was the wrong person to prosecute Hitler because "LINCOLN FELT EXACTLY AS HITLER DOES TOWARD THE INTERNATIONAL BANKERS." She said her father had told her that it was the international bankers who had assassinated Lincoln, represented by John Wilkes Booth, a man of "English/Jewish ancestry."<sup>33</sup>

Wick had no affection for Hitler; however, she believed his greatest crime was his having allowed the Jews to leave German occupied lands. She wrote one correspondent:

There are too many alien 'refugee' Hitler discards being shipped into this Country, taking homes, jobs and bread away from decent Americans. Can't Congress stop them or put them in the front line trenches?<sup>34</sup>



As with so many of her other campaigns, her hatred of the Jews was further expressed by writing words to a song. While she chose patriotic songs when she wrote lyrics for political figures, she chose a Protestant Christian song for her anti-Semitic lyrics. "Onward Christian Liberals" expressed her ideas of what the Jews, and those sympathetic to the Jews, were doing to the nation. Verses Two and Three follow:

Onward Christian Liberals! Gentiles  
are a fraud!  
Let the Jewish Bankers rule you from  
abroad!  
Boycott when they tell you; do just  
what they say!  
Send your sons to fight their Wars,  
for that's the Christian Way!  
Let them make your clothing, let them  
make your shoes!  
Guns and ammunition, sausages and booze!

Onward, Christian Liberals! Red and  
Parlor Pink;  
Ask the "Trojan Horses" what you ought  
to think!  
Let them run your papers, color all  
your news!  
Import Jew Professors, warble Yiddish  
songs,  
Let the Jewish "highbrows" rectify your  
wrongs!

By World War II, Wick had joined with other right-wing extremists who considered the president as one under the influence of the Jews and Communists, if not actually a Jew or a Communist himself. Within the time span of less than a decade, she had gone from viewing Roosevelt as a second Savior to remarking

that she "would help sacrifice the Roosevelt clan in order to save America!"<sup>36</sup>

Wick had begun to read all the nationalist extremist materials she could lay her hands on, and corresponded with those who shared her views. She informed Carl H. Mote, editor of America Preferred, that his pro-America magazine expressed her ideas perfectly. She also attended lectures by leaders of these extremist groups, including one given by Elizabeth Dilling, who has been described as a woman "who saw Communists under every bed, even during the Hoover Administration." Wick found Dilling to be a "very capable woman and sincere in her work."<sup>37</sup>

Late in 1943, Wick acquired work with Montgomery Ward, where she remained into 1944. Despite her employment, she continued to devote considerable time to politics and letter writing. Nineteen forty-four was an election year and, although not campaigning for office herself, Wick was determined to have some input into the presidential election. While the Republican Convention was underway in Chicago, she addressed a telegram to presidential contender, Governor John W. Bricker of Ohio, telling him not to withdraw from the race. "Vast majority thinking Americans don't want Dewey," she advised. Thomas Dewey's internationalist politics were much too liberal for Wick. When the

Republicans nominated Dewey for president, and Bricker for vice-president, the latter sent a reply to Wick, advising that he was "proud to serve as running mate of Governor Dewey."<sup>38</sup>

Not satisfied with Dewey, but still considering him the lesser of the two evils in the race between him and Roosevelt, Wick wrote the Republican nominee to give him "an older sister's advice" regarding how to proceed as president. She gave her opinions on world problems and told Dewey to consult Bricker whenever important issues arose. She advised him to stop speaking against isolationist Hamilton Fish, who "told the truth when he said that jews surround Roosevelt," to forget internationalism, and to put America first. She informed Dewey of her doubts about him, writing, "There are too many real Americans calling you 'jewey Dewey' to suit me." She also told him of her family background--that she was both a descendant of Lucretia Mott and the daughter of a Civil War veteran.<sup>39</sup>

Wick's lengthy letter also contained some rather bizarre evidence of foreign infiltration of the United States:

When the gnu [sic] deal came into power in 1933 they almost immediately introduced the European peasant style of young girls and women wearing wooden shoes and diapers over the head . . . today wherever you go you will see thousands, yes millions, of young American girls of high school age all clanking the awkward

wooden shoes and wearing peasant diapers on their heads. You may ask why? I will tell you why--THE INTERNATIONALISTS WANT TO MAKE THIS A PEASANT NATION!

Once again, Wick sent copies to large numbers of politicians, including Senators Everett Dirksen and Rufus Holman, America First presidential candidate Gerald L. K. Smith, and Hamilton Fish.<sup>40</sup>

Late in August, Wick traveled to Detroit for the first national convention of the America First Party. Right-wing extremist Gerald L. K. Smith had recently formed the party, with the idea that name familiarity would draw membership from the by now defunct America First Committee. Most of the 175 delegates at the convention were elderly women, who adopted Smith's anti-Semitic platform. Wick was the only Oregon delegate at the convention, and was determined to be heard. When her efforts to gain the podium failed, she found an ally in a Detroit newspaper. Under the heading, "America First Delegate Calls Smith 'Dead Pigeon,'" the Detroit News gave a report of Wick's reaction to the convention. The newspaper reported that the Oregon woman had spent \$300 to travel to Detroit to attend the convention, but found "'it wasn't worth the trip.'" Wick told reporters that her purpose in attending the convention was to read the letter she had written Thomas Dewey, and complained that

although America First leader Smith had praised her letter, he would not allow her to read it aloud at the convention. She further advised that she would "'continue to work for America First principles, but not with . . . Smith.'" Finally, she voiced her disappointment that the delegates chose the buffalo as the party's symbol, rather than "'the Angel with the two-edged sword, signifying truth . . . Everybody knows the buffalo is extinct.'" She later told Herbert Brownell, "I knew what Smith was when I went [to the convention] and I didn't change my mind after I got there; but I shall always be a Nationalist, regardless of Smith or anyone else." Wick also advised Brownell that she would support Dewey in the presidential campaign, rather than Smith, who had been endorsed by the America First Party convention delegates, and predicted victory for the Dewey-Bricker ticket.<sup>41</sup>

An awareness that her activities were being investigated by the government and perhaps others led Wick to be suspicious of strangers, particularly those alleging to share her anti-Semitic views. In October 1944, she received a letter from Donald Shea of Chicago, Founder-Director of the National Gentile League, and a man who allegedly considered Hitler "one of the world's greatest and most merciful leaders." Shea invited Wick to join his organization in "cleansing

our Land of the slimy international poisons." Wick delayed her reply to allow time to investigate whether or not Shea's claims were legitimate, and to be sure he was not a "stooge for 'God's chosen people.'" When she was certain Shea was what he claimed, she mailed him a one-dollar donation, and advised that she realized the necessity of organizing against the Jews and Jewish sympathizers.<sup>42</sup>

Either Shea had great respect for what he had learned about Wick or was desperate for new recruits. Upon receiving her letter he offered her the position of Oregon State Counselor for the National Gentile League. Alienated from even the America First Party of Gerald L. K. Smith, she accepted Shea's offer and immediately began looking for office space from which she planned to handle recruitment, donations, and the creation of lodges throughout the state. Wick was authorized to deduct all expenses for her work from donation receipts. Early in 1945, she wrote Shea that she was still looking for suitable office space, but had thus far been unsuccessful. In line with the organization's cause, she signed off, "Yours for good government controlled by Gentile Americans and for sending the jews back to Hitler."<sup>43</sup>

Having become confident of Shea's dedication to their common cause, the increasingly isolated Wick

wrote him of her fears concerning Richard Hamel, a man from whom she had recently begun receiving letters. Although Hamel claimed to be anti-Semitic, Wick believed he was really "snooping" and attempting to cause trouble for her. Wick informed Shea that she was being accused of spreading "jew smear stuff" (she did not say who her accusers were) and thought she was being "framed." Although she failed to respond to his letters, Hamel continued to write her until 1952. Wick later believed that Hamel was really an alias of Arthur Derounian, an investigative journalist who, using the pseudonym John Roy Carlson, authored two books--Under Cover and The Plotters--based on his infiltration of Nazi-fascist organizations.<sup>44</sup>

Despite her determined efforts, Wick had little success recruiting Oregonians to join the extremist National Gentile League. In mid-February 1945, Shea invited her to join him in Chicago, believing they could "operate together with a greater deal of success." Wick did not go to Chicago, as a few days earlier she had received a letter from Agnes Waters which caused her to reconsider her methods of operation. Waters, a resident of Washington, D.C., was a leader of the "mothers" groups, ultra-nationalistic women who banded together to spread the word and take whatever means necessary to fight the Communist Jews. Waters once told an audience:

There are 200,000 Communist Jews as the Mexican border waiting to get into this country. If they are admitted, they will rape every woman and child that is left unprotected.<sup>45</sup>

Wick admired Waters, and the two women had begun to correspond. Despite her own outspokenness, Waters sent a letter of warning to Wick in early February:

Don't be a fool and go in for any of that silly Jew smear stuff! It's a trap to arrest you, and keep away from crackpots like Donald Shea . . . work by yourself only. Use your own head . . .

I love you--and you love me--I want to help you--so don't get mad at my advice.

Waters also advised her compatriot not to write private letters to persons unknown, advising her that a Mrs. Von Hamel had written to request "Jew smear stuff," and had mentioned Wick's name. Wick took her friend's advice, at least to the extent that she discontinued corresponding with Shea. Even when in the spring of 1945, Shea wrote with some frustration that Oregon lodges of the National Gentile League were still not underway, Wick ignored his letter.<sup>46</sup>

Early in 1945 Wick compiled a forty-six page booklet entitled A Personal Message to Members of the United States Congress. The pamphlet contained a photograph of Wick on the cover, a three-page introduction, two letters to support her anti-Semitic views, and a poem concerning the senselessness of youth going off to war. The remainder of the booklet was a reprint



of American fascist William Dudley Pelley's speech and pamphlet, Dupes of Judah, originally presented to the American Legion in 1939. During the 1930s, and into the early 1940s, Pelley had gained a reputation "as the nation's premier anti-Semite." He created the Silver Legion in 1933, a fascist organization whose members dressed in paramilitary attire, and came to be known as the "Silver Shirts." The American Jewish Committee considered Pelley's Silver Shirts "the country's most vicious anti-Semitic organization." In the introduction to A Personal Message, Wick advised her readers that Pelley, who had been convicted in August 1942 of sedition over propaganda he and his organization allegedly distributed to American servicemen, had "TOLD the Truth and the un-American alien forces imprisoned him." She also discussed her interrogation at the Multnomah Hotel, and her offer to meet her accusers in open court. Finally, she asked the members of Congress, "Are YOU DUPES OF JUDAH, or are you CHRISTIAN AMERICANS?" She told them they were "too close to the picture to get a true perspective," and the purpose of her booklet was to help them understand the problem.<sup>47</sup>

In Dupes of Judah, Pelley put the blame for the world's problems during the late-nineteenth century and the first thirty-nine years of the twentieth century at the hands of the Jews. According to Pelley, the

Gentiles of the world had been duped by Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews to fight their battles. Pelley advised that, through marriage, the Sephardic Jews had managed to intermingle with the Gentiles of England, Spain, France, Portugal, and Italy. In England in particular, he wrote, they had cunningly found their way into families of "impoverished English aristocrats," and had come to dominate the Bank of England. During the twentieth century, Pelley claimed, the Sephardic Jews of England had been attempting to block the transportation routes of the German Ashkenazic (led by the Rothschilds) Jews. Pelley argued that the conflict between the two Jewish groups had led to World War I and was at the base of the international problems that predominated in 1939. Like Hitler, Wick had come to believe that the Jews were responsible for the Second World War.<sup>48</sup>

Wick was forced to visit three printing offices before she found anyone willing to print her Message. To cover printing costs, she raised money by soliciting donations. Twelve hundred copies of the booklet were printed and distributed, and she was hopeful of printing more, but ran into problems. The printer destroyed the type, and told Wick he did not want any more to do with her booklet. He added that the Jews never did him any harm. Wick, not at all pleased with the

printer's decision, responded by calling him a "dirty yellow coward."<sup>49</sup>

Wick usually sent her literature to persons she believed would be at least partially sympathetic to her anti-Semitic views. There were occasions, however, when she slipped and sent material to those who did not share her views. One of those was Congressman George E. Outland of California. Upon receipt of her Message, he wrote:

In view of the extreme nature of the material which you sent . . . I merely wanted to tell you that I consider this so dangerous that I am asking the Federal Bureau of Investigation to make a thorough check into you and all of your activities. No man or woman who is truly American could possibly send such material as this through the mail.

Wick later informed another correspondent that she "cracked [her] lip laughing" at Outland's reply.<sup>50</sup> Apparently, the polemicist never had second thoughts about her hate campaign.

Response to the booklet came from throughout the nation, with several people asking for additional copies. Wick informed one woman, who shared her anti-Semitic views, that up until four years previously (when the Jews purchased her apartment building), she had not realized why people were "cussin' the jews." She said she thought those people were "terrible." "Now that my eyes are really open," she told the woman,

"I am going to make up for 'lost time,'" and her booklet was part of her attempt to do so.<sup>51</sup>

Wick continued to correspond with a number of right-wing organizations and editors of anti-Semitic publications throughout the United States. Prominent on her list of correspondents were leaders of the "mothers" groups, including Lillian Parks, co-leader of the extremely anti-Semitic National Blue Star Mothers of America. In October 1945, Wick wrote Walter Maier of the Lutheran Hour radio program, praising his anti-Jewish message, and requesting two crosses--one for herself and one for Melanson--so they could wear them to intimidate the Jews. She also enclosed a copy of her Message to Congress. Eugene R. Bertermann, Director of the radio program, wrote thanking her for her "thoughtful letter" and "interest in the radio mission," and enclosed two miniature gold crosses. He acknowledged receipt of her booklet, and said he would look through it and keep it on file. Wick later sent a one-dollar donation to the program.<sup>52</sup>

Late in 1945 Wick obtained employment with the Oregon Liquor Commission, working forty-one hours a week as an intermediate clerk, keeping shipment records. Perhaps her new job used up a considerable amount of her energy, as Wick's campaigns and correspondence with right-wing groups slowed down considerably

during the next two years. Melanson also worked as a laborer for the Liquor Commission during the 1940s.<sup>53</sup>

The Plotters, John Roy Carlson's second book concerning his infiltration of the nation's right-wing extremist hate groups, and warning of their threat to the American way of life, was published in 1946. Four pages of the book were devoted to the activities of Portland's Grace Wick. When the book was released, the Oregonian ran an editorial, entitled "Small Fry," and discussed her part in the right-wing extremist movement. The newspaper editorialized that if persons such as Wick were considered dangerous, Carlson was overstating the menace from within the country. The editor stated further that Wick had been long known to the newspaper for the scores of documents she mailed in. As far as the newspaper was concerned, Wick was "a mere letter-writer whose theses are of stuff so tawdry as to be discredited by all but an infinitesimal few."<sup>54</sup>

Wick sent off an immediate response to the newspapers, claiming:

On several occasions I have received letters and "literature" from the alien Armenian Arthur Derounski [sic], alias John Roy Carlson, mentioned in your editorial. Most of the letters were from Boston where he used the name "Richard Hamel" . . . I'm one of the small fry that didn't bite . . .<sup>55</sup>

But she did "bite." Perhaps "Hamel" was one of Carlson's aliases, but that is not the name he used to snare Wick. Carlson corresponded with Wick under the name "Patricia O'Connell," and by claiming to be the wife of a man in the Armed Forces and the mother of an infant son. Wick, he wrote, sent him "two loads of hate propaganda," including her Message to Congress; a leaflet suggesting that islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean be set aside for occupation "by Jews, with Roosevelt their Commander in Chief and Wilkie as their Prime minister;" a copy of the Protocols, a booklet distributed by the Pelley organization, and other anti-Semitic groups, who falsely claimed it was proof of a plot by the Jewish Elders of Zion to rule the world; and a variety of other materials. Carlson described Wick as "a confirmed Pelley disciple," and suspected her contacts included some of Pelley's henchmen, as she was able to arrange for "O'Connell" to acquire twenty-five copies of the Protocols, at 20 percent below cost.<sup>56</sup>

Early in 1945, Wick heard that Hollywood producer Michael Todd was preparing to film a movie based on The Plotters. She proudly wrote Todd, advising that she was mentioned in the book, informing him of her past experiences as an actress on the stage, screen, and in the streets of Boston as the "Riddle Woman,"

and requesting that he give her a part in the film. Her efforts failed, and she remained at her job in Portland.<sup>57</sup>

Wick once again returned to her typewriter in support of William Dudley Pelley in late 1947. She wrote President Harry Truman that Pelley had been "thrown into prison because he exposed the jew deal and their Communistic plot to overthrow this Christian American Constitutional Republic," and asked that the president grant Pelley his freedom. She sent a copy of the letter to Pelley's daughter, Adelaide Pelley Pearson, who wrote to thank Wick for her support in her father's behalf.<sup>58</sup>

Wick continued working for the State of Oregon throughout 1948, although she did once again attempt to obtain a bailiff's job with Multnomah County Circuit Court. As a character reference, she gave the name of Dr. Harry Semler, a Portland optometrist whom she had known for several years. Although Wick was never a patient of Semler, his secretary remembered her visiting the office several times during the late 1940s, recalling her as "big and loud," and not one to wait patiently for the doctor. Semler gave a more positive assessment, writing that "she has qualifications to render an efficient service, as she has worldly knowledge of events, has integrity, personality, and

appearance for the position." Despite contacting each of the Circuit Court judges individually, Wick once again failed to gain the bailiff position.<sup>59</sup>

Wick lost her clerical job with the State of Oregon at the beginning of 1949. But the loss of employment did not upset her this time as she had not been happy in her work. She wrote Adelaide Pelley Pearson that being laid off from her job had made her "feel like a free soul again." With more available time, Wick again devoted herself to politics. She continued to write in Pelley's behalf, and responded to requests still coming in for her Message to Congress booklets. In December 1949, Wick prepared to launch another campaign for mayor. However, a few days before the New Year her campaign plans were halted when Fred Melanson died.<sup>60</sup>

Melanson's death affected Wick deeply. Once again, she sought relief through poetry. Although there is no date attached to the poem, she probably wrote "Buried Love" shortly after Melanson's death:

I have come to bury Love beneath a tree  
 In the forest tall and black where  
 none can see;  
 I shall put no flowers at his head nor  
 stone at his feet,  
 For the mouth I loved so well was bitter  
 sweet, bitter sweet.  
 I shall go no more to his grave, for  
 the woods are cold;  
 I shall gather as much of joy as my  
 hands can hold;



I shall stay all day in the sun where  
the winds blow;  
But, Oh, I shall cry at night where  
none shall know.<sup>61</sup>

More than two years after Melanson's death, news of the death of the wife of a long-time correspondent reminded her of her "very dear old friend." She wrote, I surely do miss him and his clever original ideas." Her affection for Melanson was revealed further in a letter she wrote the Orphan Child Welfare Institute in New York City, enclosing a five-dollar donation as a "small token of thanks for the beautiful parchment in memory of my dear Christian God-fearing friend, Fred C. Melanson." It is also likely that Melanson named Wick as beneficiary either in his will or on a life insurance policy, as several months following his death, and after years of apartment dwelling, she purchased a small house in Northeast Portland.<sup>62</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### THE CURTAIN FALLS

By midsummer 1950, Wick had returned to her letter writing campaign. In August, she contacted Oregon Senator Guy Cordon, praising him for voting to recognize Franco of Spain and for voting in favor of granting a loan to that country. Possibly hopeful that she had found a political ally in Senator Cordon, she also informed him of some of her past activities, advising:

When I frankly urged the United States joining forces with Hitler to clean up quickly on the Russian Communist Rats, I was branded a "fascist," "Nazi" and numerous other "fancy" names and was up before a "secret" Star Chamber War Court.

She told Cordon that nothing came of her interrogation, except "for five pages [she must have included the Index] the Armenian Jew Arthur Durinian [sic] gave me in his book titled The Plotters." Despite what she told Cordon, it was unlikely that Wick's interrogation by government authorities had anything to do with her receiving mention in Carlson's book. Wick also advised Cordon that she would be willing to personally drop bombs on Moscow, "even if it means just a one-way trip for me," and enclosed a copy of Melanson's poem, "U.S.S.R."<sup>1</sup>

Cordon responded to Wick's letter by remarking that her comments were indicative of a trend he had noticed in his recent mail. He wrote that he enjoyed the poem, and would "take the liberty of passing it along for some of [his] colleagues in the Senate to read."<sup>2</sup>

Blanche Clements Winters, a descendant of a suffragist who fought alongside Lucretia Mott, was added to Wick's list of correspondents in 1951. Winters was National President of the newly formed American Woman's Party, and Grace had become interested in organizing an Oregon branch of the Party. The first convention of the American Woman's Party was held in Detroit in July 1951, but Wick was unable to attend. She did, however, have at least one suggestion for the party's platform. With her long-time hatred of anything she considered "international," Wick recommended that the word be replaced with "world" in all the party's printed matter. Following the convention, Winters wrote that the Congress had adopted Wick's suggestion.<sup>3</sup>

The American Woman's Party was another right-wing extremist group. In its letter of introduction, the Central Committee gave a brief description of the party's purpose:

Dear Friends of the American Cause:

The American Woman's Party is composed of women of God, church women of all denominations

and creeds, united to save America from the evils of Communism-Socialism at home and to preserve our Constitutional form of government and the Republic for which it stands . . .

The letter declared that the party was formed because "women have waited in vain for men to take a positive stand," against the forces determined to destroy the nation.<sup>4</sup>

The American Woman's Party issued a ten plank platform, evidencing a right-wing form of feminism. The first four planks did not mention the members of the opposite sex, but demanded that "America withdraw from the un-Constitutional Godless United Nations;" opposed the "Democratic and Republican parties' bi-partisan program of continuing their monetary system of bogus money or counterfeit paper money issued by private bankers;" opposed the government's stand on the Korean issue; and called for the "re-establishing of the FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM." The latter six planks, however, became increasingly anti-male. Claiming they were "taxed to support red socialism," the party blamed the:

Christian family men in Congress . . . [who] set up a network of socialist laws, regulations, boards, bureaus, and commissions which have boiled our American way of life down to a thick pulp of socialism, bewildering our people and keeping them subdued.

The party claimed that such taxation was "in preparation for the male Armageddon, the final blow-up of Christianity," and cried, "Give the women a chance in this

crucial hour. Let us get hold of this tax burden and pull it to pieces."<sup>5</sup>

Plank No. 6 called for the outlawing of Communism in the United States, stating that the two major political parties had held a policy of "toadying to the communists within our Country." The "Necessities of Life," were discussed in Plank No. 7, which attacked the male government and its policies, and complained that men had deliberately caused the prices of the necessities of life to go "sky high." The platform suggested as follows:

Food is woman's business, as a finished product. God made it so . . . We will cut food prices down, and the prices of all the necessities of life to the minimum, for "HERE IS THE MIND THAT HATH WISDOM."

The party also advised that it would "go into the forty-eight states and clean up all communist-socialist laws that the male governments have put on the statute books." It would stabilize the American government "by getting rid of the practice of having people who are NOT elected do the work of those we elect."<sup>6</sup>

Finally, in regard to domestic and world tranquility, the platform blamed the "present male government" for unrest within the nation and around the world. It stated that problems among American youth were a result of the male government. "Youth problems and juvenile delinquency are strictly women's business," the party advised, "and we propose to make it so." Objecting

to the "male government's sneak attack on American womanhood . . . by drafting of women into the military service," it proclaimed that women despised war and were "physically unfitted for war." "Diplomacy is the God given trait of women," the platform stated. "War is total male, and always has been." The women's plan for world tranquility was to "enforce peace by the simple strategy of denying to all other nations the privilege and power of our American productivity for war."<sup>7</sup>

The American Woman's Party was not out to obtain equal rights for women, but rather to fight for security within the traditional roles. It evoked the impression that women had not formed a third party by choice, but had been forced into taking action due to the indifference and failure of men in government. The party did not outwardly promote anti-Semitism, but attracted many women who were antagonistic toward the Jews.

Ever since her speech in favor of Channing Cox while posing as the "Riddle Woman," Wick had promoted the participation of women in politics. Particularly enthused over the American Woman's Party, she was appointed Oregon State Chairman and immediately began procedures for incorporating the party within the state by circulating petitions. Learning that she had to gather the names of 24,976 registered voters to place

the party on the Oregon ballot did not deter Wick. In addition to mailing petitions to women throughout the state, she went into downtown Portland and stood on the corner of Fourth and Yamhill Streets asking for signatures.<sup>8</sup>

Wick kept up her petition drive through the fall and into 1952. Party headquarters paid for her letter-head and for the printing of the petitions, but she complained that she was "not getting paid one cent" for her work. Nevertheless, Wick received some satisfaction in her petition drive. She told her sister that she felt Melanson's presence very strongly as she performed her work.<sup>9</sup>

But by late 1951, Wick began to realize that she had been overly optimistic about gathering the necessary petition signatures. Although she spent several hours each day on the street corner in downtown Portland, she averaged only about fifteen daily signatures. Wick, who had not fully recovered from a bout with the flu several months before, wrote one correspondent that she felt her health was worth more than fifteen names a day. She finally gave up her position on the street corner because, as she advised her correspondent, "Every night I would come home exhausted and heartbroken from the feeble response."<sup>10</sup>

Ruth Marcum of Wallowa, Oregon, whom Wick had enlisted to help secure names on the petitions, had

even worse luck. After four months of attempting to obtain the signatures, she wrote Grace that she had gathered "not a one!" But Marcum was pleased that Wick had contacted her because she had finally found a woman who shared her views. Like Wick, she hated the Jews, the late President Roosevelt, and the United Nations. She told Wick that living in the rural town of Wallowa she never had the opportunity to speak with anyone who shared her interests--in the USA, politics, etc.--and said she wrote Wick to "pour out [her] woes." Marcum trusted Wick's political judgment, and asked her advice regarding whom to vote for in the November 1952 elections. The two women corresponded for almost eighteen months before they met each other in Portland, and then continued their correspondence for a number of years. Although the American Woman's Party never did get off the ground in the bland political atmosphere of the early 1950s, Grace Wick and Ruth Marcum each found a new friend with whom they could discuss commonly perceived world problems.<sup>11</sup>

Wick was not content to devote her time solely to the organization of an Oregon branch of the American Woman's Party, but continued to involve herself in a personal fight to stamp out the influence of the Jews and Communists. She encountered an article in the Oregonian which related that a local rabbi had



been critical of popular evangelist, Billy Graham. The newspaper reported that Rabbi Julius Nodel had stated in a sermon at Portland's Temple Beth Israel that "'If Billy Graham were president, this would mean that eventually the Jews would become the scapegoats for all of the nation.'" The rabbi had said that he did not mean that Graham was consciously anti-Semitic, but by saying that the sinful, corrupt and dishonest must go to Christ in order to be saved, Graham was implying that "'non-Christian groups must be held responsible for sin, dishonesty and corruption.'"<sup>12</sup>

Wick sent an immediate response to the rabbi. She told Nodel that he had a twisted mind, and that the:

Christian Gentiles have been made scapegoats in their own Country by an alien minority group of zionists . . . [and that] over 100,000 scapegoat Christian American boys . . . have been slaughtered in Korea.

She concluded by calling the Jews "devil-worshippers," and challenged Nodel to debate her at the Civic Auditorium, and to bring his "tribe."<sup>13</sup>

A few weeks later she sent a copy of the letter to fellow anti-Semite, H. L. Beach. Overemphasizing her own importance, she informed Beach that the rabbi had since begun to speak before various local Protestant churches, "to show me that he can horn in and pollute the Gentile and Christians right in their own churches."<sup>14</sup>

All of her name calling, letter writing, and political activities did nothing to help pay her bills and, once again, Wick suffered financial problems. She was forced to turn to her older brother for money to pay her 1950 property taxes, and again accepted money from him the following year. During 1952, she worked as a babysitter for six months, but received only minimal wages for that part-time job.<sup>15</sup>

On March 7, 1953, Wick would be age sixty-five and would qualify for Social Security benefits. However, all the years of lying about her age came to haunt her early in 1953, when she began applying for the benefits. She had no documentation in her possession to legally prove that she was born in 1888. Finally, after sending a number of letters to relatives and social agencies in Iowa, she was able to obtain a copy of her birth certificate. Wick began receiving Old Age Assistance from Public Welfare when she reached sixty-five. The stipend amounted to \$65 per month, but the amount was reduced when she began to receive Social Security benefits. The maximum amount of financial assistance Wick received from government agencies during the final years of her life was \$72 a month.<sup>16</sup>

During the summer of 1952, Wick received a personal invitation from Joseph Beauharnais, Chairman of the Nationalist Convention Committee, inviting her to attend

the group's convention in Chicago in July. Speakers were scheduled to "alert of grave dangers that threaten our American form of Government and our white Christian civilization." Whether it was due to her lack of sufficient funds to afford a trip to Chicago, or whether it was because Wick recalled her disappointing trip to the America First Convention eight years earlier, she did not attend the Nationalist Convention.<sup>17</sup>

Despite her personal fight against Communism, Wick had only a moderate interest in the activities of Senator Joseph McCarthy during the early years of his zealous crusade to identify Communist infiltrators within America. As in the case of her support of William Dudley Pelley, it was not until the Wisconsin Senator began receiving increasing amounts of criticism that Wick stepped in. In December 1953, she sent President Dwight Eisenhower a telegram, ordering:

Get rid of all New Deal hangovers including Dulles! Listen to McCarthy! Disregard all Internationals . . . Outlaw communist party! Refuse to deal with alien communists! Wish we had a McCarthy in each and every State!

Pioneer, Protestant, Christian American.

Grace M. Wick.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, she wrote McCarthy, "Wish you could have been twins or quintuplets. We need more men like you in Congress representing the Christian American people!" Three months later, she again wrote McCarthy:

I'm right in there fighting with you and for you.

Best of luck to you and the others back there that have guts enough to fight to maintain this Republic and for the principles that it represents.

Wick also mailed McCarthy a copy of the telegram she planned to send the president, telling Eisenhower to stop the smear campaigns against McCarthy and other "decent Christian Americans."<sup>19</sup>

At age sixty-six, Grace Wick was strong-headed and feisty. She was not a woman to be pushed around, as one Portland police officer discovered. Early in March 1954, a city newspaper reported that Wick was stopped for jaywalking by a policeman who apparently laid his hands on either her arm or shoulder. She responded by shouting, "Take your hands off me, you damn punk!" The policeman then took the angry woman into custody, and she was placed behind bars in the local jail until her attorney arrived. Realizing the trouble Wick could cause, her attorney warned, "'Don't open your mouth or you'll be in jail for life!'" The newspaper reported that Wick was finally released after paying \$5 to the bail broker, and her sentence was suspended.<sup>20</sup>

Although she continued some involvement with national issues, Wick became increasingly concerned with her own situation as an old age pensioner. In

August 1954, she attended a picnic at Peninsula Park in Portland, where she listened to a speech by Dr. Francis Townsend, a long-time crusader for benefits for the elderly. She was impressed with Townsend, describing him as a "very keen, alert old gentleman . . . who gave a fine talk."<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the mid-1950s Wick wrote the Welfare Commission to complain about the meager benefits afforded the elderly. When her letters failed to bring satisfactory responses, she resorted to other actions. Wick was often seen picketing government agencies in the effort to elicit aid for the elderly. In August 1954, she wrote her sister:

I will know when my pension check comes on the 2nd if I am going to . . . picket the State Building. If they put the price of a phone in for me I will not picket them but if they don't kick loose with the money . . . I sure as hell am going to picket the rats . . . I have my sign all painted.<sup>22</sup>

In the spring of 1957, she wrote the Oregonian, demanding more money for pensioners. "Giving billions of dollars to foreign countries when it should begin at home," she insisted, "isn't solving the [pensioners'] problem." Less than two months later, she again made the local newspapers when she picketed the State Office Building in downtown Portland. Wick told reporters that she could not exist on her \$30 a month "social insecurity" and \$42 from the State Welfare Commission.

Governor Robert Holmes had recently ordered that \$25,000 be spent in a study of old age security problems, but Wick argued that the money would be wasted and should be distributed directly to the elderly. One of her signs read, "OREGON STATE OLD AGE ASSISTANCE DEPT. STINKS--INCLUDING GOVERNOR."<sup>23</sup>

People from throughout Oregon wrote in support of Wick's position, but her sister, Pearl Meyer, living in Nebraska, did not approve. Pearl wrote her elder sister with suggestions of how she could "cut corners," and stated that their brother, Al, lived on the same income Grace was receiving. She added, "Can't see where you helped your nerves any to picket like you did. You can't buck anything like that alone, only does you harm."<sup>24</sup>

Wick took advantage of an additional opportunity to express her views when she witnessed an old woman falling and hitting her head while boarding a Portland bus. When filling out a questionnaire concerning the accident, and responding to "What in your opinion was the cause of the accident?" Wick had her answer ready:

I wish you would write Governor a letter and tell him to give the pensioners more money as most of them are undernourished and wobbly and that is why so many old people have [a] difficult time to keep from falling on busses . . . Please write Holmes a letter. I am the woman who is picketing State Building at 5th and Columbia for more money for pensioners. Have a hard time getting the \$2 each

week for bus fare. Am pioneer American stock but thoroughly disgusted with the way things are going in this Country. To hell with foreign aid to buy "friends."<sup>25</sup>

Although Wick's health was not good during the last five years of her life, she was able to earn extra money by performing occasional part-time jobs. She worked for Myrtle Goldsby, a middle-aged woman who lived nearby, and whom Wick had known since Al Smith's campaign in 1928. As Wick grew older, however, Goldsby found her friendship with the elderly woman becoming a burden. Goldsby complained that she could never question Wick concerning possible errors in her work. Even if she questioned her in a "very kind tone," Wick would blame someone else. Goldsby advised Pearl Meyer that Wick would not "discuss anything without blowing up."<sup>26</sup>

Goldsby told Meyer that Wick had been living with "so much trouble and poverty that it is very depressing." She complained that it was impossible to try to visit with her because Wick refused to discuss anything outside of her interests, and only wanted to hear herself speak. Nevertheless, Wick had become so dependent upon her neighbor that she would telephone Goldsby several times a day. By late summer 1953, Goldsby could no longer tolerate the situation, and finally wrote Wick's younger sister for help in dealing with the older woman.<sup>27</sup>

Wick's health had deteriorated during 1958, and she was diagnosed as having an enlarged heart. She had reached the point where she was unable to eat or take care of her home and pets. Goldsby and other neighbors were not able to care for her, and felt the only alternative was a nursing home. On November 9, 1958, less than two months after being placed in a nursing home, Wick died of heart disease and lung cancer. At the time of her death, the Oregonian kindly wrote that she was best known for her "crusading efforts." After Wick's death, even Myrtle Goldsby remembered her with fondness, writing that Wick had been a friend, and that she had once admired her for her beauty and mannerisms.<sup>28</sup>



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Grace Wick would probably have wished to have been remembered as a crusader for America, and one who followed in the footsteps of her "pioneer" forebears, and follow in their footsteps she did. When Wick composed the campaign song for presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan in 1908, she was making a statement that women's political opinions counted. Twelve years would pass before she was legally able to cast her first national ballot, and when the time came, she celebrated by using a stunt in the "Riddle Woman" contest to encourage crowds of women to let their political voices be heard. Wick was not satisfied to just be given the vote, but sought to gain entry into all political spheres dominated by men. She organized political rallies, women's groups, ran her own campaigns, and broke down doors traditionally closed to women. By gate-crashing the exclusively male Breakfast Club function, Wick let men know that women in politics were to be reckoned with. In her later years, she overcame the obstacle of poor health

to get out and campaign for causes she believed in. Her concern for the rights of the elderly led her to conduct a one-woman campaign to bring attention to their plight.

The beginning of the twentieth century found women slowly emerging from the cult of virtuous womanhood wherein women were required to live their lives as the purifying force within the family. At the turn of the century, increasing numbers of middle class women were attending college while others found employment in the rapidly growing cities. Despite outward appearances of new opportunities, there remained very few occupational choices for women. Most female college graduates became teachers following graduation, an occupation with a wage scale that slipped as the percentages of women teachers rose. Although she tried her hand at the teaching profession, taking the traditional route of attending a normal school before accepting a teaching position in a school near her hometown, Wick soon realized that she would not be satisfied with life as a teacher. Coming from a background of "independent thinkers," Wick broke away from morally traditional small town America to take up the challenge of the big city and an acting career.<sup>1</sup>

Wick's years as an actress gave her the opportunity for freedom of expression, both on-stage and off,

that would not have been acceptable within other occupations. Acting taught her discipline, and through her on-stage roles she was able to experience a variety of personalities. She also learned the art of self-promotion and how to gain and keep the attention of large crowds. The theater gave Wick the opportunity to meet people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (including Jews), as well as to travel to both cities and small towns across North America. Her years working among actors from both the United States and abroad, as well as her experiences as a resident of New York City, should have given Wick a cosmopolitan view of the world. Finally, the "Riddle Woman" contest encouraged her to express her freedom as the "new woman," an independence that was shocking even to some city people. Although influential people recognized Wick's talents and acting abilities, she gave up her career; first to move with her husband to southern Oregon, and later to help a friend fight for a cause in which she shared a belief.

During the 1910s and 1920s Wick also acquired experience working within the mass media of magazines, newspapers, and radio. The work, along with her experiences in the movie industry, put her in the center of the new consumerism and materialism that had become so much a part of American society in the early decades

of the century. Knowledge gained from her work in mass media provided Wick with the expertise to conduct promotion campaigns of her own. From political pamphlets and ear-catching campaign songs and slogans to marching down Broadway in a barrel, Wick knew how to stage a production.<sup>2</sup>

The free-spirited Wick must have felt stifled by the small towns of Jackson County, Oregon, when she moved to that area with her husband. In the 1920s a struggle continued between the small towns and the cities. Rural communities attempted to retain the morality of the previous decade in the face of technological advances and the expanding economy, and believed that city people led lives of sin and corruption. In their attempt to hold onto the morality of the past, a number of small town Americans were drawn to the recently reinstated Ku Klux Klan. Ironically, soon after her arrival in Oregon, Wick became a supporter of the nativist Klan. As there were few blacks in Oregon, the Protestant, white-supremacist organization focused its attention on promoting anti-Catholicism. Although she denied experiencing any animosity toward persons of the Catholic faith, and later proved her point through an active campaign in behalf of Democrat and Catholic, Alfred E. Smith, Wick stood steadfast in support of the Klan. Perhaps

Wick's support for the organization was a result of pressure put upon her by her pro-Klan employer, the Medford Clarion, and she may have naively believed her statement to Barbara that she thought her friend had been misled about the Klan's ill-feelings toward Catholics. However, it is more likely that Wick gave the secret order her support because she was a product of a small town environment. Despite the dozen years she spent enjoying the independence of an actress in the city, her country roots were strong. Her recent move from her East Coast home to a totally new area of the country where "city folk" were not easily welcomed into the community was no doubt unsettling for Wick. In her feelings of alienation, she may have been drawn to the familiarity of the Klan's moralist doctrine. The order's war cry, "Back to the Constitution" would have appealed to Wick's pride in her pioneer roots.<sup>3</sup>

When Wick's marriage to George Merritt ended in divorce, less than three years after her arrival in southern Oregon, the practices she had adopted during her years in the city became a focus of the community's attention. She then learned the extent of the lack of toleration the traditional moralist rural communities had for an independent city woman. Wick's smoking, casual dressing, and easy-going relationships with men labeled her a product of sinful

urban America. In the weeks that followed the divorce she was torn over whether to remain in southern Oregon or return to the city, and accepted a temporary teaching job in Jackson County. Very soon, however, she again escaped to the city, where she could put her considerable talents and energies to use.

The arrival of the Great Depression was devastating for Wick. Accustomed to middle class comforts and job opportunities, and having experienced the economic expansion of the 1910s and 1920s, she felt powerless in the face of the contracting economy. Although Wick utilized all her energies in attempts to locate steady employment, time after time her efforts failed. Even more than men, women were hurt by the shrinking job market as they became targets of job discrimination. Although few women worked in jobs traditionally held by men, and most women worked only out of necessity, the majority of Americans believed employment held by a woman was a job stolen from a man. Even Congresswoman Florence Kahn declared that "woman's place is not out in the business world competing with men who have families to support." Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins supported the single woman worker suffering economic circumstances similar to the predicament in which Wick found herself, but admonished the rich "pin money" worker. When Wick protested Eleanor Roosevelt's support

of the married woman worker, she was looking at her plight in narrow terms. Wick and these prominent American women were attacking each other when they could have united to fight the broad discrimination against their entire sex.<sup>4</sup>

Wick initially realized the disadvantages she faced as a divorced middle-aged female job seeker and attempted to overcome the problem by listing her marital status as "widow" and dropping up to ten years from her age. But she gradually shifted to placing the blame for her financial problems on other sources. Her initial enthusiasm over the Roosevelt administration's New Deal and promises of an improving economy turned to disillusionment and frustration as the years rolled by with no hope of acquiring permanent work. Wick was not alone in her bitterness about the New Deal. Millions of unemployed Americans voiced similar frustrations. A number of Americans turned to such demagogues as Father Charles Coughlin and Louisiana Senator Huey Long for encouragement. As Alan Brinkley has suggested, Coughlin and Long attracted millions of followers because they called

for a society in which the individual retained control of his own life and livelihood; in which power resided in visible, accessible institutions; in which wealth was equitably (if not necessarily equally) shared.<sup>5</sup>

Amidst her feelings of helplessness, Wick was drawn toward the preachings of radicals like Long and Coughlin. She adopted their enthusiasm for programs to share the nation's wealth by granting aid to the unemployed and elderly. However, like Coughlin, Wick found herself moving to the right. Increasingly, she blamed her troubles on people she believed to be beneficiaries of the nation's expanded state. Immigrants and Jews became the focus of her anger, and she joined nativist and non-interventionist groups who shared these views.

All the energy Wick had once channeled into work and political campaigns now became focused upon crusades against the immigrants and Jews. During the 1940s and '50s, Wick lost touch with ordinary Americans, and became a victim of hate-group psychology. Triggered by the sale of her apartment building to a Jewish investor, she came under the influence of anti-Semitic extremists, including William Dudley Pelley and Agnes Waters. Although at the time of the sale Wick had already begun to blame her economic problems on "foreigners," she had not up to that time demonstrated any signs of anti-Semitism. But with her numerous contacts with nativist groups, obsessed with America's entry into the war against Nazi Germany, Wick was no doubt a prime target for anti-Semitic propaganda.



Wick later combined nativism with feminism, throwing her support to Waters and anti-Semitic groups such as We, The Mothers, Mobilize For America, Inc., and the National Blue Star Mothers. In 1951, at age sixty-three, she put all her energy into an attempt to raise over 24,000 signatures and to organize an Oregon branch of the right-wing American Woman's Party.

As in the case of Wick's attraction to the Ku Klux Klan in 1922, the fact that she placed the blame for personal and national problems on "foreigners" was likely a result of her rural Anglo-Protestant upbringing. At the turn of the century, many Americans, particularly people living in small towns, felt threatened by the advances in technology, the nation's expansion into international affairs, the growing cities, and the waves of immigrants--particularly the non-teutonic groups--into the United States. Rural Americans felt overwhelmed by conditions beyond their control, and fought back by clinging to Protestant Christian fundamentalism, traditional moral codes, and political certainties. When she left home for Chicago in 1909, Wick believed she had left small town America behind. Nevertheless, when she became caught up in forces beyond her control--the Great Depression, United States involvement in foreign affairs, and finally her role as a woman within a male dominated society--her traditional roots resurfaced. Just as the nativism of the

Ku Klux Klan held appeal for millions of Americans during the 1920s, Wick turned to pro-America, anti-immigrant, and anti-Semitic groups for support in times of futility.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout her life Wick was a fighter for the causes she believed in. It was tragic, however, that a woman of her free spirit and talents reached the end of life filled with such bitterness toward her fellow human-beings and was unable to assert control over the circumstances that framed her personal existence. Grace Wick's life provides a sad but informative view of the dynamics of political and social alienation.

## NOTES

### CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>"Grace Wick Dead at 70," Oregonian 11 Nov. 1958: 13.

<sup>2</sup>Grace Wick, letter to County Clerk, Shelby County, Iowa, 10 Jan. 1953, Box 2, Folder 62, ms. 49, Grace Wick Papers (WP), Oregon Historical Society Library, Portland, Oregon; "Small Fry," editorial, Oregonian 30 Nov. 1956, Sec. 1: 6; Grace Wick, letter to Editor, Oregonian 30 Nov. 1946, B 1, F 45, Wick Papers.

### CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>"A Life Story of Mrs. Alvin H. Wick, Sr." Shelby County Republican, obituary, 19 Apr. 1928: 1.

<sup>2</sup>Republican, obituary, 20 Feb. 1919: 1.

<sup>3</sup>Boxes 1 and 2, WP; B 2, F 71, WP. Wick, letter to Julien N. Friant, 24 June 1936, B 1, F 6, WP.

<sup>4</sup>B 2, F 82, Poems, WP.

<sup>5</sup>Wick, letter to Shelby County Clerk. Wick, letter from "Papa," 23 Dec. 1911, B 2, F 73, WP.

<sup>6</sup>Dramatic Mirror Date Book, Seasons 1912-13 and 1913-14, B 2, F 80, WP.

<sup>7</sup>Date Book, WP.

<sup>8</sup>"Girl Given Policeman for Her Protection," unidentified newspaper, c. Aug. 1913, B 2, F 79, WP.

<sup>9</sup>"Girl Gets Police Escort to Guard Her in the Dark," Chicago Evening American, 11 Aug. 1913, B 2, F 79, WP.

<sup>10</sup>Chicago Daily Journal, 11 Aug. 1913, B 2, F 79, WP. "Girl Gets Police Escort," WP. Date Book, WP.

<sup>11</sup>Program, The Garrick Theatre, Chicago, 27 Feb. 1911, B 2, F 72, WP. Date Book, 2 Sept. 1913, WP; Light That Failed, partial script, B 2, F 82, WP; B 2, F 80, WP.

<sup>12</sup>Date Book, 15 Mar. 1914, WP; Date Book, WP.

<sup>13</sup>Date Book, WP.

<sup>14</sup>12 August 1914, B 2, F 72, WP.

<sup>15</sup>Wick, letter to unidentified correspondent, n.d., B 2, F 82, WP.

<sup>16</sup>Harlan Tribune, 31 Mar. 1915, B 2, F 72, WP; "Forbes-Robertson Presents The Light That Failed," B 2, F 72, WP.

<sup>17</sup>Lora Kelly, "Hermits Barred as Actors Frolic," Cleveland Plain Dealer, c. 23 Apr. 1915: 2, B 2, F 72, WP.

<sup>18</sup>B 2, F 72, WP. 19 June 1915, B 2, F 72, WP; Wick, letter to Shelby County Clerk.

<sup>19</sup>Letter to Shelby County Clerk; Fred, Variety, 19 May 1916, rpt. in Vol. 1 of Variety Film Reviews, 1907-1920, 18 Vols. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1983) n. pag.

<sup>20</sup>B 2, F 72, WP; 24 Aug. 1916, B 2, F 72, WP.

<sup>21</sup>"Certificate of Marriage," 6 Dec. 1916, B 2, F 71, WP.

<sup>22</sup>"Certificate" from State of New York Military Census and Inventory, 8 June 1917, B 2, F 71, WP.

<sup>23</sup>Unidentified newspaper article, c. 5 Nov. 1917, B 2, F 72, WP.

<sup>24</sup>Wick, letters from Mary Rehan, Stage Women's War Relief, 17 Dec. 1917, 8 Jan. 1918, and 15 Feb. 1918, B 2, F 84, WP.

<sup>25</sup>Wick, letter to Shelby County Clerk; Wick, letter from Carl Roseth, 10 Sept. 1918, B 2, F 66, WP; Boston Evening Record, 9 Oct. 1920: 1, B 2, F 82, WP.

<sup>26</sup>Record, 9 Oct. 1920 to 3 Nov. 1920, B 2, F 82, WP.

<sup>27</sup>Boston Evening Record, 19 Oct. 1920 to 3 Nov. 1920, B 2, F 82, WP.

<sup>28</sup>"Woman Sings Praises of Riddle Woman," Boston Evening Record, 28 Oct. 1920: 5 (verses 1 and 4), B 2, F 82, WP.

<sup>29</sup>23 Oct. 1920, B 2, F 82, WP.

<sup>30</sup>Boston Evening Record, 30 Oct. 1920: 1, B 2, F 82, WP; "Merritt Divorce Case Testimony Thrills J'Ville," Jacksonville Post, 7 Nov. 1924: 10.

<sup>31</sup>"Record Riddle Woman is Captured," 4 Nov. 1920: 1, B 2, F 82, WP.

<sup>32</sup>Wick, letter from John J. Wallace, 5 Nov. 1920, B 2, F 83, WP.

<sup>33</sup>"Riddle Woman of Film and Record Fame Meet," Boston Evening Record, 8 Nov. 1920: 1, B 2, F 82, WP.

<sup>34</sup>7 Nov. 1920, B 2, F 82, WP; Record, 8 Nov. 1920, 1, B 2, F 82, WP.

### CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>Clarion, editorials, especially 16 June 1922 to 30 June 1922; "A Sample of 'Truth,'" Clarion, editorial, 16 June 1922: 8.

<sup>2</sup>Wick, "Application for Position N.R.A.," n.d., B 2, F 71, WP; Wick, letter to Barbara, 28 Nov. 1922, B 2, F 85, WP; Wick, letter from Barbara, 26 Nov. 1922, B 2, F 85, WP; Wick, 28 Nov. 1922, letter to Barbara.

<sup>3</sup>Lawrence J. Saalfeld, Forces of Prejudice in Oregon 1920-1925 (Portland, Oregon: Archdiocesan Historical Commission, 1984) 5-6; David M. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan (New York: New Viewpoints, 1965) 86-87; Clarion, 14 July 1922: 1.

<sup>4</sup>Wick, letter from Walter Pierce, 15 Aug. 1922, and letter from Celia E. Bowman, 25 Aug. 1922, B 1,

F 50, WP; Wick, letter from Walter Pierce, 25 Sept. 1922, B 1, F 50, WP; "Pierce Comes Out for School Bill," Morning Oregonian, 13 Sept. 1922: 11; M. Paul Holsinger, "The Oregon School Bill Controversy, 1922-1925," Pacific Historical Review, 37 (1968): 335; Burton W. Onstine, Oregon Votes: 1858-1972 (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1973) 88 and 118; Wick, letter from Pierce, 16 Nov. 1922, B 1, F 50, WP; Wick, letter to Senator Charles L. McNary, 5 Jan. 1937, B 1, F 39, WP. It has often been considered that Pierce's support for the school bill and his subsequent support by the Klan were leading factors in his gaining the Governor's seat. However, the fact that the candidate received the majority vote of fourteen rural counties, while the school bill lost in those counties (including Jackson County), appears to refute that argument. See E. Kimbark MacColl, The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915 to 1950 (Portland: Georgian Press, 1979) 168-170; and Arthur H. Bone, ed. and expanded, Oregon Cattleman/Governor Congressman: Memoirs and Times of Walter M. Pierce (Oregon Historical Society, 1981) 178-180.

<sup>5</sup> Oregon Driver's License, 26 Feb. 1924, B 2, F 71, WP; "Judge Thomas Gives Finding in Merritt Case," Jacksonville Post, 7 Nov. 1924: 1.

<sup>6</sup> William E. Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32 (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1958) 162; William L. O'Neill, Divorce in the Progressive Era (New Haven: Yale UP, 1967), 25; Postcard, 2 Sept. 1918, B 2, F 73, WP; "Merritt Divorce Case Testimony Thrills J'ville," Jacksonville Post, 7 Nov. 1924: 10.

<sup>7</sup> "Merritt Divorce Case Testimony;" See Frederick Lewis Allen, Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteen-Twenties (New York: Harper & Row, 1931) 89-92; and Leuchtenburg, 7-8.

<sup>8</sup> "Merritt Divorce Case Testimony;" Allen, 104-5.

<sup>9</sup> "Merritt Divorce Case Testimony;" "Decree," 24 Dec. 1924, B 2, F 71, WP.

<sup>10</sup> "Local and Personal," Medford Mail Tribune, 29 Nov. 1924: 2; "Grace Wick, Crusader, Makes Headlines," Table Rock Sentinel. (June 1981) Southern Oregon Historical Society, 12-15; "Mrs. Merritt is Making Good in Moving Pictures," Medford Mail Tribune, 8 June 1925: 1; B 2, F 72, WP;

<sup>11</sup>Movie Digest, 18, B 2, F 72, WP; 16 Nov. 1925, B 2, F 82, WP; "Pierce Asked to Save Life," Portland Telegram, 8 Apr. 1926: 1; Wick, letter to James A. Farley, 6 June 1934, B 1, F 32, WP.

<sup>12</sup>"Archie Cody Dies in Rope for Murder," unidentified newspaper clipping, 16 Apr. 1926, B 1, F 50, WP; Wick, letter from Pierce, 17 Feb. 1926, B 1, F 50, WP; "Cody's Fate in Hands of Governor Pierce," unidentified newspaper clipping, c. Apr. 1926, B 1, F 50, WP.

<sup>13</sup>"Archie Cody Dies in Rope for Murder," unidentified newspaper clipping, 16 Apr. 1926, B 1, F 50, WP.

<sup>14</sup>Wick, letter to Shelby County Clerk; Wick, The Mascot: Songs and "Animal" Philosophy by Little Orphan Annie's "Cousin" (Grace Wick Merritt) (Portland, OR: Carlson Printing, 1926), B 1, F 50, WP; "Voice of the People," Portland News, editorial, 27 Oct. 1926, B 1, F 50, WP.

<sup>15</sup>Copy of employment application, 11 Mar. 1933, B 2, F 71, WP; Unidentified newspaper article, c. 1927, B 2, F 72, WP; Advertising had become big business in the 1920s. Extensive, elaborate campaigns were undertaken to convince the consumer a product was something he or she could not live without. Advertisers employed newspapers, magazines, and the popular radio as vehicles in reaching the masses; see Leuchtenburg, 200 and 242; and Allen, 169.

<sup>16</sup>"Over the Radio," Portland Telegram, 23 Apr. 1927, B 2, F 79, WP; Unidentified newspaper article, c. 1927, B 2, F 79, WP; George Merritt, letters to Frank DeSouza, 17 Jan. 1927 and 9 Apr. 1927, B 2, F 73, WP.

<sup>17</sup>Program, The Music Box Theater, B 2, F 72, WP; Menu, 14 Sept. 1927, B 2, F 80, WP; Wick, letter to Governor I. L. Patterson, 11 Apr. 1928, B 1, F 14, WP; Wick, letter to Patterson, 13 Apr. 1928, B 1, F 14, WP.

<sup>18</sup>Chester Fuller, copy of letter to Joseph L. Cohn, 3 May 1928, B 2, F 76, WP; "Women to Speak," Oregonian, 1 Nov. 1928, B 2, F 79, WP; "The Battle Hum of the Republic," 7 Oct. 28, B 2, F 79, WP; "Miss Tarbell Lauds Women's Club Lift in Smith's Behalf," unidentified newspaper, c. 1928, B 2, F 79, WP; Wick, letter from L. A. Wilson, 2 Nov. 1928, B 2, F 68, WP.

- <sup>19</sup>Helenie Stratton, "Boomlay Boom Al Girl's Club Gets Serenade," Portland News, 31 Aug. 1928: 1-2, B 1, F 53, WP.
- <sup>20</sup>B 1, F 53, WP; Wick, letter to Shelby County Clerk.
- <sup>21</sup>Wick, letter to George Roberts, 18 Apr. 1929, B 2, F 66, WP; Employment application, 11 Mar. 1933, B 2, F 71, WP.
- <sup>22</sup>Wick, letter from Eleanor Roosevelt, 4 Nov. 1932, B 1, F 52, WP; Employment application, 11 Mar. 1933; Wick, letter to James A. Farley, 6 June 1934, B 1, F 32, WP; Wick, letter from Charles Martin, 27 Mar. 1933, B 1, F 38, WP; Wick, letter to "Cousin Jimmie," 16 Mar. 1933(?), B 2, F 73, WP; Wick, letter to J. W. Maloney, 26 July 1933, B 1, F 12, WP; Wick, letter from Joseph Carson, Jr., 7 Aug. 1933, B 1, F 29, WP.
- <sup>23</sup>B 2, F 82, WP; Wick, letter to Charles H. Martin, 21 Feb. 1934, B 1, F 38, WP.
- <sup>24</sup>Wick, letter to Martin, 10 Feb. 1934, B 1, F 38, WP; "Miss Wick Out for Congress," Morning Oregonian, 15 Feb. 1934: 5; Wick, letter to Ed Griffith, 27 Oct. 1956, B 1, F 7, WP; Onstine, 253.
- <sup>25</sup>Wick, letter to James A. Farley, 6 June 1934, B 1, F 32, WP.
- <sup>26</sup>John W. Kelly, "President Backs Sea Locks Plan," Morning Oregonian, 4 Aug. 1934: 1; "Portland Greets Roosevelts Today," Morning Oregonian, 3 Aug. 1934: 1; Wick, letters from Eleanor Roosevelt, 10 Aug. 1928, 16 Aug. 1928; telegram from Eleanor Roosevelt 21 Aug. 1928, B 1, F 53, WP.
- <sup>27</sup>"Beer Hall Meeting Selects Miss Wick," Morning Oregonian, 11 Sept. 1934, Sec. 1: 6; Wick, letter to James Rowland Wick, 9 Aug. 1936, B 2, F 73, WP.
- <sup>28</sup>"Woman Gives Platform," Oregonian, 30 Sept. 1934, B 1, F 28, WP.
- <sup>29</sup>Alan Brinkley, Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982) 138-141; George Wolfskill, The Revolt of the Conservatives: A History of The American Liberty League 1934-1940 (Boston: Houghton



Mifflin, 1962) 17; Robert S. McElvaine, The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941 (New York: Times Books, 1984), 256; Onstine, 255.

<sup>30</sup>Wick, letter to Governor Charles Martin, 16 Apr. 1935, B 1, F 38, WP; Wick, letter to Farley, 4 Apr. 1935, B 1, F 32, WP; Wolfskill, 17-18.

<sup>31</sup>Wick, letter from J. E. Bennett, 27 Apr. 1935, B 1, F 2, WP; "Woman Parades Through Streets Clad in Barrel," unidentified newspaper article, c. May 1935, B 2, F 79, WP.

<sup>32</sup>"Yuletide Greetings," B 1, F 28, WP; United States. Cong. House. Cong. Rec. 18 Apr. 1935: 5965-5996.

#### CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>"Yuletide Greetings," B 1, F 28, WP; Cong. Rec., 18 Apr. 1935; Wick, letter from Art Young, 22 Jan. 1936, B 2, F 69, WP; Wick, letter from Pearl Meyer, 19 Jan. 1936, B 2, F 74, WP; Wick, letter from Helen Fuller, 22 Feb. 1935, B 2, F 76, WP; Wick, letter from Stoddard Wick, 7 Oct. 1935, B 2, F 73, WP.

<sup>2</sup>Wick, letter to Senator Lynn J. Frazier, 12 Feb. 1936, B 1, F 6, WP; Wick, letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 15 Jan. 1936, B 1, F 52, WP.

<sup>3</sup>"Kisses for All Says Miss Wick, Morning Oregonian, 26 Mar. 1936, Sec. 1: 3.

<sup>4</sup>News-Telegram, 30 Mar. 1936, B 1, F 28, WP; MacColl, 445-450.

<sup>5</sup>Wick, letter from Stanley Lewis, 10 Apr. 1936, B 1, F 28, WP; Wick, letters from C. E. Wharton, 13 May 1936, B 1, F 59, WP.

<sup>6</sup>Wick, letter to Independent Merchants of Multnomah County, c. 1936, B 1, F 28, WP; B 2, F 78, WP.

<sup>7</sup>Oregonian, 21 Oct. 1936, B 2, F 79, WP.

<sup>8</sup>Wick, campaign literature, B 2, F 80, WP; B 2, F 78, WP.

<sup>9</sup>C. E. Wharton, letters, B 1, F 59, WP; Onstine, 257.

<sup>10</sup>WPA Forms 402, 23 Sept. 1936 and 10 Dec. 1936, B 2, F 71, WP; "To Whom It May Concern," letter from Henry F. Fitzgerald, 7 Dec. 1936, B 2, F 62, WP; WPA Forms 403, 25 Nov. 1936 and 31 Dec. 1936, B 2, F 71, WP.

<sup>11</sup>Wick, letters to and from Charles McNary, 15 Dec. 1936 to 27 May 1938, B 1, F 39 and 40, WP.

<sup>12</sup>Robert L. Daniel, American Women in the 20th Century: The Festival of Life (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 92; Wick, letter to McNary, 17 Aug. 1937, B 1, F 39, WP.

<sup>13</sup>Wick, letter to John S. Hodgkin, 16 Sept. 1937, B 1, F 55, WP.

<sup>14</sup>Wick, letter to Dept. of Commerce, 6 Apr. 1940, B 2, F 85, WP.

<sup>15</sup>Wick, letter to Holt, 6 May 1938, B 1, F 36, WP; Wick, letter to Hopkins, 8 May 1938, B 1, F 8, WP; Wick, letter from Betty Reasoner, 13 May 1938, B 2 F 66, WP.

<sup>16</sup>Wick, notice from Byron Wolverton, 1 Oct. 1937, B 2, F 71, WP; Wick, letter to McNary, 6 May 1938, B 1, F 39, WP.

<sup>17</sup>1 Apr. 1938, B 1, F 3, WP; George Wolfskill and John A. Hudson, All but the People: Franklin D. Roosevelt and His Critics, 1933-39 (London: Collier-MacMillan, 1969) 25.

<sup>18</sup>Form RA-PE 3, 3 June 1938, B 2, F 71, WP.

<sup>19</sup>Wick, letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, 5 June 1939, B 1, F 52, WP; Wick, letter to Dept. of Commerce, 6 Apr. 1940, B 2, F 85, WP.

<sup>20</sup>Poems, B 2, F 82, WP; "Kickapoo," B 2, F 78, WP; Polk's Portland City Directory, Vol. 77, 1944.

<sup>21</sup>"Termination of Employment," 12 Mar. 1938, B 2, F 78, WP; Al Probst, letter to Nan Wood Honeyman, 12 July 1938, B 2, F 78, WP; B 2, F 78, WP.

<sup>22</sup>Wick, letter to Roosevelt, 27 Jan. 1941, B 1, F 52, WP.

<sup>23</sup>Wick, letter to H. L. Smith, 8 May 1943, B 1, F 54, WP; Wick, letter to McNary, 8 Apr. 1941, B 1, F 39, WP.

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25 Wick, letter to McNary, 8 Apr. 1941, B 1, F 39, WP; Wick, letter from McNary, 17 Apr. 1941, B 1, F 40, WP.

26 Wick, letter to Holman, 18 Apr. 1941, B 1, F 35, WP.

27 Wick, letter to Roosevelt, 9 May 1941, B 1, F 35, WP; and Wick, letter to Roosevelt, 26 May 1941, B 1, F 52, WP.

28 Wick, letter to Landis, 21 Feb. 1942, and Wick, letter from Landis, 3 Mar. 1941, B 1, F 11, WP.

29 Wick, letter from Nye, 26 Feb. 1942, B 1, F 13, WP; Wick, letter from Broughton, 12 Mar. 1942, B 1, F 2, WP.

30 Wick, letter to George E. Sullivan, 30 Jan. 1943, B 1, F 16, WP.

31 Wick, letter to Senator W. Lee O'Daniel, 26 Oct. 1943, B 1, F 14, WP; Wick, letter to "Patriot & Co-Worker, Donald [Shea]," 9 Feb. 1945, B 1, F 34, WP.

32 Leo P. Ribuffo, The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War, (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1983) 11-12; Geoffrey S. Smith, To Save A Nation: American Counter-subversives, the New Deal, and the Coming of World War II (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 127.

33 Wick, letter to Moyes, 27 Feb. 1943, B 1, F 41, WP.

34 Wick, letter to William P. Lambertson, 7 Mar. 1943, B 1, F 11, WP.

35 B 2, F 80, WP.

36 Wick, letter to Lambertson.

37 Wick, letter to Mote, 24 Apr. 1943, B 1, F 12, WP; Wolfskill and Hudson, 95; Wick, letter to O'Daniel, 26 Oct. 1943, B 1, F 14, WP.

<sup>38</sup>Wick, letter from James Peebles, Soc. Sec. Admin., 29 Apr. 1953, B 2, F 66, WP; Wick, telegram to Bricker, 25 June 1944, B 1, F 2, WP; Wick, letter from Bricker, n.d., B 1, F 2, WP.

<sup>39</sup>Wick, letter to Dewey, 1 Aug. 1944, B 1, F 31, WP.

<sup>40</sup>Wick, letter to Dewey; Wick, letters to Dirksen, Holman and Fish, 4 Oct. 1944; and letter from G. L. K. Smith, 10 Aug. 1944, all B 1, F 31, WP.

<sup>41</sup>Ribuffo, 174-5; Detroit News, 3 Sept. 1944, Part I: 3, B 1, F 21, WP; Wick, letter to Brownell, 24 Oct. 1944, B 1, F 2, WP.

<sup>42</sup>Wick, letter from Shea, 20 Oct. 1944, B 1, F 42, WP; Wick, letter to Shea, 12 Nov. 1944, B 1, F 42, WP.

<sup>43</sup>Wick, letter from Shea, 16 Nov. 1944; Wick, letter from Shea, 6 Jan. 1945; Wick, letter to Shea, 6 Jan. 1945, all B 1, F 42, WP.

<sup>44</sup>Wick, letter to "Patriot & Co-Worker, Donald," 9 Feb. 1945, B 1, F 34, WP; Wick, letters from Richard Hamel, B 1, F 34, WP; Wick, letter to Editor, Oregonian, 30 Nov. 1946, B 1, F 45, WP.

<sup>45</sup>Wick, letter from Shea, 14 Feb. 1945, B 1, F 42, WP; Wick, letter from Waters, 5 Feb. 1945, B 1, F 78, WP; John Roy Carlson, Under Cover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1943) 280.

<sup>46</sup>Wick, letter from Waters; Wick, letter from Shea, 17 Apr. 1945, B 1, F 42, WP.

<sup>47</sup>Box 1, F 47, WP; Ribuffo, 62-64, 78.

<sup>48</sup>Box 1, F 47, WP.

<sup>49</sup>Wick, letter to W. H. Harold, 7 May 1945, B 1, F 8, WP; Wick, letter to Marie Lohle, 7 May 1945, B 1, F 11, WP.

<sup>50</sup>Wick, letter from Outland, 16 Apr. 1945, B 1, F 14, WP; Wick, letter to Robert E. Reynolds, B 1, F 14, WP.

<sup>51</sup>Wick, letter to Mrs. B. E. Weber, 3 May 1945, B 1, F 19, WP.

<sup>52</sup>Wick, letter from Parks, 4 May 1945, B 1, F 14, WP; Wick, letter to Meyer, 14 Oct. 1945, B 1, F 12, WP; Wick, letter from Bertermann, 1 Nov. 1945, B 1, F 2, WP; Wick, letter to Bertermann, 21 Dec. 1945, B 1, F 2, WP.

<sup>53</sup>"Classification Questionnaire," 5 Dec. 1945, B 2, F 71, WP; "Notice of Position Allocation," n.d. c. post-1940, B 2, F 78, WP.

<sup>54</sup>"Small Fry," Oregonian, editorial, 30 Nov. 1946, Sec. 1: 6.

<sup>55</sup>Wick, letter to Editor, 30 Nov. 1946, B 1, F 45, WP.

<sup>56</sup>Carlson, The Plotters (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1946) 166-8 and 185.

<sup>57</sup>Wick, letter to Todd, 14 Feb. 1947, B 2, F 67, WP; Wick, "Employee Service Rating, 9 June 1947, B 2, F 71, WP.

<sup>58</sup>Wick, letter to Truman, 11 Dec. 1947, B 1, F 17, WP; Wick, letter to Pearson, 11 Dec. 1947 and Wick, letter from Pearson, 1 Jan. 1948, B 1, F 47, WP.

<sup>59</sup>Thelma Hanson, telephone interview, 21 Jan. 1988; Semler, letter to Judge Walter Tooze, 13 Aug. 1948, B 2, F 67, WP; B 2, F 61, 62, 64, 66, 67.

<sup>60</sup>Wick, letter to Pearson, 4 Mar. 1949, B 1, F 47, WP; Wick, letter from Gordon D. Hall, 12 Apr. 1949, B 1, F 8, WP; Sherrill, letter to Joseph K. Carson, Jr., 22 Dec. 1949, B 1, F 16, WP.

<sup>61</sup>B 2, F 82, WP.

<sup>62</sup>Wick, letter to H. L. Smith, 22 Feb. 1952, B 1, F 43, WP; Wick, letter to Orphan Child Welfare, 31 July 1950, B 2, F 78, WP; Wick, letter from Amy Williams, 16 July 1950, B 2, F 68, WP.

## CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup>Wick, letter to Cordon, 3 Aug. 1950, B 1, F 30, WP.

<sup>2</sup>Wick, letter from Cordon, 10 Aug. 1950, B 1, F 30, WP.

<sup>3</sup>Wick, letter from Lyr1 Clark Van Hyning, 16 May 1951, B 1, F 57, WP; Wick, letter to Winters, 4 July 1951, B 1, F 26, WP; Wick, letter from Winters, 15 July 1951, B 1, F 26, WP.

<sup>4</sup>Wick, form letter from Irene Jarvis, State Central Committee, 5 July 1951, B 1, F 24, WP.

<sup>5</sup>B 1, F 22, WP.

<sup>6</sup>B 1, F 22, WP.

<sup>7</sup>B 1, F 22, WP. American women were never drafted.

<sup>8</sup>Wick, letter from David O'Hara, Elections Division, 27 July 1951, B 1, F 22, WP; "Ballot Position Sought by New Woman's Party," Oregon Journal, 25 Sep. 1951: 4, B 1, F 25, WP.

<sup>9</sup>Wick, letter to Pearl Meyer, c. 1951, B 1, F 24, WP.

<sup>10</sup>Wick, letter to Frank B. Ohlquist, 3 Dec. 1951, B 1, F 24, WP.

<sup>11</sup>Wick, letters to and from Marcum, 1951-1957, B 1, F 23, WP.

<sup>12</sup>Hugh Scott, "Rabbi Criticizes Evangelist Billy Graham, Southern Baptist Minister Offers Defense," Oregonian, 17 Feb. 1952: 20.

<sup>13</sup>Wick, letter to Nodel, 18 Feb. 1952, B 1, F 43, WP.

<sup>14</sup>Wick, letter to Beach, 2 Mar. 1952, B 1, F 43, WP.

<sup>15</sup>Wick, letter to Social Security Administration, 14 Apr. 1953, B 2, F 71, WP.

<sup>16</sup>Wick, letter to George Wick, 31 Jan. 1953, B 2, F 73, WP; Wick, letter from Mike Finken, 9 Feb. 1953, B 2, F 62; "Delayed Certificate of Birth," 9 Feb. 1953, B 2, F 71, WP; Wick, letter from Warrington Stokes, Multnomah County Public Welfare, 10 Mar. 1953, B 2, F 71, WP; Wick, letter from Jeanne Jewett, 1 Oct. 1957, B 2, F 71, WP.

<sup>17</sup>Wick, letter from Beauharnais, c. June 1952, B 1, F 2, WP; Wick, letter to Beauharnais, 12 June 1952, B 1, F 2, WP.

<sup>18</sup>4 Dec. 1953, B 1, F 5, WP.

<sup>19</sup>4 Dec. 1953 and 28 Feb. 1954, B 1 F 12, WP.

<sup>20</sup>William Moyes, "B-Mike," Oregonian, 3 Mar. 1954, B 1, F 45, WP.

<sup>21</sup>Wick, letter to Pearl Meyer, 26 Aug. 1954, B 2, F 74, WP.

<sup>22</sup>Letter to Meyer, 26 Aug. 1954.

<sup>23</sup>"Bigger Pensions," Oregonian, letter to Editor, 25 May 1957, B 1, F 44, WP; Unidentified newspaper article, 15 July 1957, B 1, F 44, WP.

<sup>24</sup>Wick, letter from Meyer, 1 Sep. 1958, B 2, F 74, WP.

<sup>25</sup>"Accident Witness Form," c. Oct. 1957, B 2, F 66, WP.

<sup>26</sup>Fred Meyer pay stubs, 26 Apr. and 30 Apr. 1958, B 2, F 71, WP; Goldsby, letter to Meyer, 19 Sep. 1958, B 2, F 77, WP.

<sup>27</sup>Goldsby, letter to Meyer, 19 Sep. 1958.

<sup>28</sup>"Grace Wick Dead at 70," Oregonian, 10 Nov. 1958: 11; Goldsby, letter to Elva E. Wick, c. 1958, B 2, F 77, WP.

## CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup>Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, 1978) 47.

<sup>2</sup>See Allen, 166-175; Leuchtenburg, 101, 144-5.

<sup>3</sup>Leuchtenburg, 205.

<sup>4</sup>Daniel, 92; William Henry Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970 (London: Oxford UP, 1972) 107; "Woman Pin Money Worker," Literary Digest, 104 (Mar. 1930) 12.

<sup>5</sup>Alan Brinkley, Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982) xi.

<sup>6</sup>See Leuchtenburg, 6-9 and 204-208.

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