

## Chapter 11

### **While Susan Clark Dealt With the Famous, Margot Clark and Her Party Friends Such as Martha Fletcher Faced Strange Destinies**

#### **Margot's Rise and Fall**

Her mother's deepening radicalism contributed to Margot Clark choosing an unusual life-path. As the Party was moving into its Popular Front period during the mid-1930s and after her life-changing 1934 trip to the Soviet Union, the twenty-one-year-old Margot did not go to graduate school or secure a job that used the advanced writing talents she honed at Wellesley College. Instead, after a short stay at New York City's Henry Street Settlement House where her aunt worked, she joined Massachusetts' Young Communist League, her first step in becoming a devoted Party worker --and an emotionally committed Marxist who gave a fourth of her income to the Party. She took low-paying clerical jobs at a Boston box manufacturer and then at a nearby large rubber company while serving as a Party "gofor" and as the public owner of the Party's Cambridge bookstore, all while continuing her monthly donations to the Party and selling and delivering copies of *The Daily Worker*, one-hundred a day. Despite her devotion, she faced many disappointments. She had a failed love affair or two and frequently had to return home to live with her mother Susan in Weston or Cambridge because of financial problems.<sup>1</sup>

Despite her money woes, Margot continued to give her life to the Party, including working for Ella Bloor's son Carl Reeve when he was in Boston. Carl was rising star in the Party. He was a writer-editor for the *Daily Worker*, a textile union organizer at the violent Gastonia, strike, a Party official in the Mid-West and Washington state, and a "fixer" who was sent around the country to deal with Party conflicts such as revolts by the by ethnic federations. He

had been detailed from New York City to Boston to coordinate the 1930's hunger-march on Washington, D.C. and tighten control over New England's Party.<sup>2</sup>

Margot soon began to advance in the Party. Attending the Party's secret up-state New York training school in 1938 led to her becoming more than a lowly but reliable Boston-Cambridge odds-and-ender. She was assigned to shepherd new Party members and lead cell discussions, even teaching Marxist theory to Harvard's students and professors. She kept busy arranging meetings, working in the Party's Boston bookstore, selling Party publications, and staffing picket lines. She frequently hosted money-raising parties, attended demonstrations, and acted as the Sam Adams School's secretary. She became somewhat of a public figure after writing for *The Daily Worker* and performing in agitprop skits. She also aided the Spanish relief organizations in Boston and led a letter-writing campaign to boost the Party leader Earl Browder's spirits while he was imprisoned for passport violations.

Margot was mentored by Frances "Fanny" Hartman. In return, Margot helped Fanny with her difficulties.<sup>3</sup> Fanny's real name was Goldberg, but she changed that because she feared her Russian-Jewish background would harm her career as a social worker despite being a Smith College graduate. She kept her new maiden name after a Party-ordered abortion then marriage to the New York City-based Party leader Philip Frankfeld in 1935. Life went well for Fanny as she went to Russia for training then returned to join Frankfeld in guiding Massachusetts' Party. She tolerated his abusive behavior but when she discovered he was having an affair (with a child on-the-way) she had a mental breakdown. Margot and the Party supported her. In 1942, the Party financed an extended stay with electric shock treatments at the Party affiliated Pinewood Sanatorium in upstate New York where Joe Figueiredo would go, and another stay at a hospital closer to New York City. Friends like Margot helped Fanny with her divorce and with her

recurring illnesses. Margot also aided Fanny's readjustment when Fanny returned to Boston's office. Margot kept in touch with her after the Party assigned Fanny to its Indianapolis branch in 1947 after factional conflicts in Boston.

A high-point for Margot was a 1941-2 part-time job as a legislative assistant working directly with Anne Burlak, the Red Flame, who had taken-on the Massachusetts Party's administrative responsibilities and was acting as its representative to the state legislature. Margot did not keep her radicalism secret leading Florence and Helen, her favorite aunts, to beg, then insist, that Margot and her sister Joy reconsider their Party involvements. Before then, Margot's left-wing youth work at the family's Kendall Green Trapalo enclave, and in Boston, led her to become close to the Unitarian youth group leaders Stephen Fritchman and Martha Fletcher. Margot was involved with the Fritchman-aligned American Youth Congress and the renamed Fletcher-Fritchman youth organizations' traumas. Margot was so interested in youth programs she contacted the leaders of Arkansas' Commonwealth College who were devoted to training young labor leaders and asked them for advice.

By then, the Party had become the center of Margot's social life. There were many parties and public events to attend and her girl and boyfriends were always Party members or those she was trying to recruit. When she was not living at Kendall Green or with Susan in Cambridge, her roommates at her cheap Boston's flats were always Party members such as Louise Dombrowski and Harry Dexter White's niece Martha White Wiseman, a leader of the radical United Electrical Workers Union (UEW). (Dexter White was an influential Treasury Department official later accused of espionage because of his ties to the Ware and Silvermaster groups).<sup>4</sup>

Margot became such a faithful member she followed every twist of Moscow's and New York's orders, and she approved all the Soviet Union's actions including the Hitler-Stalin Pact and the invasions of Finland and Poland. Margot was so doctrinaire she refused to allow her bookstore to sell the works of Charles Bread, the influential left-wing historian, after he approved 1937's positive reports on Trotsky's actions and participated in the condemnation of Stalin's purges. Of course, Margot continued contributing to Barsky's Joint Anti-Fascist Relief Committee. As all good Party members had to do she paid for an International Workers Order (IWO) life-insurance policy despite having little to live-on and was not foreign born. She also spent much of her time recruiting for the Order and energizing its members when the Party needed those "spontaneous demonstrations."

### **Insurance for the People or the Party?**

The IWO was one of the dozens of voluntary organizations in America during the early Twentieth Century that offered life and disability insurance, medical care discounts, social events, and comradery. But unlike the Eagles, the Redmen, or the Odd Fellows, from its beginning the IWO had an immigrant and communist bent. It had formed after one of the conflicts between socialists and radicals in New York City's Yiddish community. The radicals formed their own version of the existing Workingmen's Circle, still focusing on serving the Yiddish while cooperating with the Party. In 1929, following Comintern orders to deemphasize national and ethnic differences and build what it called "mass organizations," Party leaders such as Max Bedatch took charge of the small then five-thousand-member organization, gave it a proletarian name, and began building alliances with other ethnics' fraternal orders. Soon, they were merged into a Party-controlled "workers" organization, the International Workers Organization. The first IWO convention in 1931 defined an important role for the order: It was

to support the Soviet Union and the Party. Within a decade membership grew to fifty thousand, by the end of World War II the order managed over 180,000 insurance policies (worth near a billion dollars) and served fifteen different nationalities with 1,700 local branches. The branches had summer camps, schools, and their own versions of agitprop plays written by the likes of the Party's cultural guru Mike Gold (Granich). At least one branch had a birth control center. In 1940, the IWO funded a professional theatrical group that toured twenty cities. Following the Soviet policy of the Hitler-Stalin pact years, its offering was, "The Yanks are Not Coming." At least one city's school district stopped allowing IWO sponsored classes because they were not teaching ethnic history but communist doctrine.<sup>5</sup>

New York's central office was directed by IWO-paid Party functionaries who shaped policies to fit Soviet needs and who used the organization as a fertile ground for recruiting Party members--and as a source of funds. Several witnesses testified about IWO monies going to the Party. Despite having found an American-looking figure-head, the artist Rockwell Kent, the IWO's close ties to Communism were noticed. In Massachusetts, where the IWO and the Party shared offices, the state tried to outlaw the organization in 1938. The authorities had good arguments because non-profit organization that received tax benefits were supposed to be non-political. That point won at the national level in the mid-1950s when the order had to disband.<sup>6</sup>

### **An Aging Margot and the FBI**

Margot Clark did much more than help the IWO. As a result, she began to be noticed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). By 1941 she was on a watch list and its detention list in case of war. Soon, she and Susan's mail and trash were monitored, and someone provided an inventory of all the books in their apartment. The agency even searched their basement storage area, copying many personal documents. Finally, when Margot was approaching her thirties,

she became more important to the Party becoming what the FBI called a “Key Figure” in the Boston area. She acted as the personal assistant to state Party leaders such as Fanny Hartman, headed the Party’s Boston’s West End branch, and was as a liaison with the United Electrical Worker Union’s Party section. She also had contacts with activists, such as Ann Klutch Prosten, a leader of the Party-influenced National Maritime Union and the United Office and Professional Workers. Margot was often in touch with the Party official Hugo DeGregory and with New Hampshire’s Dobrowolski family that was at the center of that state’s Party activities.

As war approached Margot became a “colonizer” and provider of information on America’s high-tech military industries. Following orders to find work in critical defense industries she took unskilled jobs at Boston area companies engaged in manufacturing some of the nation’s most important and secret equipment. She was an assembler in a guarded room at Raytheon, the radar manufacturer. She then went to Submarine Signal, the leader in sonar underwater detection equipment. At war’s end, after failing to obtain a job at the Gillette razor factory in Cambridge, she moved to the General Electric plant that was producing a range of advanced top-secret devices, including jet engines. While at the factories she recruited for the United Electrical Workers union (UEW) and the Party. She noted what was being produced, presumably reporting her findings to the Party, as it had ordered. At the same time, she aggressively recruited college students in Cambridge.

Her increasing activities led to contact with Party workers throughout New England as she was becoming an even greater admirer of the Unitarian’s Stephen Fritchman and while she was developing an emotional attachment to her working-class Communist co-workers Joe and Eulalia Figueiredo, the Party-stalwarts and paid union organizers. Margot bragged about having intelligence contacts in Switzerland with such pride the FBI’s informer Herbert Philbrick

believed she might be working for the Soviet's NKVD.<sup>7</sup> Margot attended secret Marxist-theory training sessions but went along with Earl Browder's mid-war declaration that Marxism was not revolutionary. Despite that, and so much personal sacrifice for the Cause, Margot was not promoted to any high-level Party position.

### **From Party Commitments to Asylum Commitment**

After the war, Margot followed the Party line and denounced Earl Browder and his World War II era appeasement policies. She continued to "colonize" at major electronic companies, and she worked closely with the UEW during its great strikes of 1946 that threatened production of innovative military equipment. She attended all the Boston "peace" rallies to protest such things as Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain speech as well as positive events saluting Soviet polices in Poland and praising its imposed Lublin government. Although at times without any work, surviving on unemployment insurance and Susan's charity, Margot contributed money to the local Party during its postwar financial crises. After Margot secured another job at the local General Electric plant she became devoted to the Party's new drives against White Chauvinism, the Taft Hartley act, and "labor-traitors" like John L. Lewis, Philip Murray, and David Dubinsky who were fighting Communist influence in the nation's unions. She was so involved she admitted to friends that if a war did break-out between the West and the Soviet Union she would ally with Russia because it "protects the people."

Then, in June 1947, when she was thirty-eight and still unwed, and after almost fifteen years of devotion to the Cause, Margot broke her old patterns. If her niece is correct, she did so because of love for, or a fixation on, Stephen Fritchman who was in the process of moving to Los Angeles after his battles with the Unitarians.<sup>8</sup> It is known that Margot told friends she had become frustrated with the assignments the Boston Party was giving her. She wanted active,

thrilling ones like those given to Joy—working as a true “colonizer” among unskilled ethnic workers in New Hampshire’s textile factories.

Near penniless, Margot left Cambridge by low-fare bus for the West Coast. In San Francisco she joined the Potrero Hill’s large Party cell and was aided by its members. The Potrero was a dreary working-class district where World War II’s shipyard workers had settled, but it was an exciting neighborhood. Its cheap rents and home prices attracted more than the proletariat. Many artists and radicals lived there, including Al Bernstein during the early 1940s. Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Jack Kerouac who were founding fathers of the West Coast’s Beatnik movement settled there after the war. The district later hosted the Sarvis family, John and Sylvia Powell (supporters of Chinese Communism) and Angela Davis, the Black radical Communist.<sup>9</sup>

But Margot’s target destination was Los Angeles where she moved-in with her sister Jean and her husband Sali and their two children. They were crammed into a trailer parked in a friend’s backyard. Jean and Sali had arrived in Los Angeles seven months before Margot, only to face career disappointments and near poverty. Margot lived in the trailer for three months then moved with the family to a small fixer-upper home Jean and Sali purchased with loans from Susan and gifts from friends in Cambridge. The new home was not an indication that Sali and Jean or Margot achieved financial security. Sali found only part-time work, as did Jean. Margot did less well.

Margot, although a distinguished Seven Sister, Phi Beta Kapa graduate, and with a track-record of industrial employment, was unable or unwilling to find steady work in Los Angeles or Hollywood, even with the local Party. She lasted only a few weeks at a series of jobs. She did not stop working for the Cause, however. She became part of Los Angeles’ movement, never



missing a picket line or demonstration, and never failing to join the “spontaneous” crowds arranged by Los Angeles’ Party leaders such as Dorothy Healy and Rose Chernin. Margot again sold subscriptions to the *Daily Worker*, and she helped organize the local Progressive Citizens of America. She also went door-to-door seeking support and contributions for the Hollywood Ten writers and producers who had defied a 1947 Congressional investigation into West Coast Communism and who faced imprisonment for Contempt of Congress.<sup>10</sup> Margot seems to have had time for a love affair, but another one that went terribly wrong.

Margot was constantly complaining to Jean and Sali about her life as she began surviving on hand-outs sent by her mother and by old classmates and teachers at Cambridge’s Shady Hill School. Worse, she was at odds with Jean and Sali because, she declared, they were not ideologically pure. Tensions grew in the household. Five people living in a small home and Sali’s financial woes added to the pressures. As a result, after a year living together the family was racked by conflict. Margot was claiming Jean was working against her because of her of true devotion to peace and justice. There were physical skirmishes. By April 1948, Margot had spent weeks refusing to eat anything but bread. She would not change her clothes; she would not bathe. Her weight dropped to ninety-five pounds. Jean worried about her children witnessing Margot’s increasingly strange and, at times, threatening behavior.

There was an angry confrontation. The sheriff’s department had to be called. Jean went to court and had Margot committed. In April, deputies took Margot to California’s Patton State mental hospital for a five months stay. A state psychiatrist first pointed at sexual frustration as the cause of Margot’s malaise. Next, a failed love affair was blamed. Then, he cited feelings of persecution because of her “true” Communism after she mentioned that even in Boston she had been hounded because of her beliefs. Margot soon claimed that Jean had her committed

because of them. Jean and Sali then sought advice from their Communist doctor, Franklin Bissel (his Party name was Frank Burke) who soon declared that Margot might never be cured of her schizophrenia/paranoia and that she was likely suicidal.

Jean had too many worries to take-on more responsibilities, especially because Sali decided the family was to move to San Francisco by July 1948. Jean decided she could not handle Margot as well as her family. She wired Boston and seventy-year-old mother Susan rushed to Los Angeles. She helped Jean with the children and the move to San Francisco, then returned to Los Angeles to take Margot, who was released in September, back to Susan's Cambridge apartment. Susan's lovely apartment was on Mt. Auburn Street, a few blocks from Harvard Square, and overlooked the Charles River. Susan hoped that would calm Margot who immediately applied for a job at General Electric and began volunteering at the Party's bookstore. She also joined Party rallies for Spain and the Progressive Party. By then, Jean was informing the family that while she might allow Margot to visit, she would never again welcome her in her home as a full-time family member.

### **A Declining Party and Lives**

Despite the lovely setting in Cambridge, life did not go well for Margot-- or Susan. One reason was that Margot looked to her Party leaders for help at a bad time. Although she was invited to Party social events her old friends had little time or money. Massachusetts's Party was losing members and income. At times it was unable to pay its workers. Moreover, many of Massachusetts' leaders thought they might be prosecuted under the Smith Act. Like Margot's close friend Anne Burlak Timpson <sup>11</sup>, they were preparing to leave their homes and take-on new underground identities. There was talk of buying short-wave radios and portable mimeograph machines so they could conduct Party business while on-the-run. Margot may have alienated

some of her friends when she indicated she would not go underground. For whatever reasons, she was extremely unhappy. Within three months after returning to Cambridge she was on a bus to California. There may have been another stop in San Francisco, leading the city's police to issue a warrant for her because of a bad check.

Margot settled in Los Angeles in December 1948. While making friends and renewing her Party involvements, and being hired for a time by Stephen Fritchman's church, she once again failed to obtain a steady job. There were rounds of unemployment. As well, although near forty-years old she became tangled in another fragile and frustrating relationship, this time with a telephone repairman who lived near her.

There were too many problems and Margot was again becoming unhinged. After a year and one-half, in July 1950, Margot was back in an asylum, California's Camarillo State Hospital. She was diagnosed with severe manic schizophrenia. If her behavior led the government to commit her or if Jean or Susan stepped in is unknown, but this time she was treated as ward of the state and prevented from leaving the hospital without permission.

Luckily for Margot, Camarillo was a leader in new treatments for serious disorders. After two months, and pleas by Susan, the hospital allowed Margot to be "deported" to Massachusetts' Westboro State Hospital. She stayed there a few months then was put on permanent parole to Susan. Margot was to find a job, prove she was mentally stable, and report her progress to the hospital each month. Her parole included her not being able to leave Massachusetts without permission. The hospital did not know that Margot and the other Clarks remained on FBI watch-lists.

Susan did the best she could, but Margot continued to act strangely and was slovenly. She was impossible to control. As well, Margot kept arguing that her new home had to be

California, not Cambridge although her ties to Boston's Party were increasing. Margot had gone so far as to publish a short article in the Party press declaring she had returned and was ready to aid the Cause, but hinting it would be in the West. Again, Margot failed to get steady work and she moved to and from Susan's up-scale apartment to cheap Boston ones she shared her sister Joy, and at times with her mother when Susan was ill. Although Margot did Party work she told friends she felt frustrated because she was still somewhat of a "gofor," not fully contributing to America's liberation and Negro rights.

### **Susan Was to Blame**

Meanwhile, Margot hoped the psychiatrists at Westboro could be persuaded to release her from the parole. Margot knew they had written to her relatives, but she may never have known the contents of Jean or Joy's responses. In her letters to the hospital Jean reiterated she would welcome Margot as a guest but never a full-time resident and warned the state's psychiatrist that Margot intended to return to California because of a fixation on a man. Joy's letters did much more to diminish Margot's chance for a release. Joy tried to explain the causes of Margot's illness in an emotional and rambling December 1950 letter, one that contained much about Joy's own life difficulties.

According to Joy, the major cause of Margot's sickness was the failure of all the Clarks, except Margot and herself, to be courageous radicals. There was more than an ideology problem, Joy stated. In her passionate style Joy declared her father had always been weak and cowardly and had constantly been emasculated in front of his children by a domineering Susan. Susan was also an ideological weakling, never doing more than write about social problems, Joy wrote. For Joy, Susan was a feared goddess--and the world's worst hypocrite. Even her brother Alan,

who Joy said had severed as a proxy father as she was growing up, had become an ideological weakling. So were the boyfriends she and Margot had in the past, Joy wrote.

Joy emphasized that she and Margot had been left-adrift in life without a strong father-figure, causing them to hate men, but in desperate need of a strong one. Joy then declared she might have had Margot's tortured love-life and mental problems if she had not finally met a strong male in 1947. She did not name that man, but it was the married Joe Figueiredo, her Party-mentor, who was twenty years older than she and who had been a mental patient. After posting the letter Joy was soon pregnant with his child.

### **Running Away to Failures**

Margot spent a year and a quarter in Cambridge, once again doing minor tasks for the Party. She sold subscriptions and tickets to events and attended enough meetings and demonstrations to be named as a Party member by the local press. As before, she found it impossible to hold a job.. Her longest was as an operator of the large "tacking" sewing machine at a local sportswear company. She again lived on-and-off with Susan in Cambridge sometimes renting dark rooms in Boston she sometimes shared with Joy and Susan. Margot kept in touch with her psychiatric parole office, frequently arguing she was finally independent enough to be allowed to return to California and her work for peace and racial justice. Unknown to her, Susan was writing Westboro that Margot should stay in Boston.

Margot's desire to reconnect with the telephone repairman, her worries over the prosecution of Massachusetts' Communists, and her deeply troubling guilt over not doing enough for the Cause led her to break her parole, On February 1952 she took a bus for California just as the pregnant Joy left Boston to meet Joe in Las Vegas as he was fleeing from his wife, the FBI, and the Party. In California, Margot had a short visit with Jean her sister in Mill Valley, and with old

friends in San Francisco. She then went to Los Angeles to live on money Susan was sending her because she could not hold a job. Margot took a small room in a shabby boarding house in a run-down area. According to her landlord, she wandered aimlessly around the neighborhood, even after she found some temporary jobs. Susan continued to help with a weekly check although Margot seems to have begun collecting welfare and Social Security disability payments.<sup>12</sup> Somehow, she was able to earn some type nursing degree by 1955. How much she was involved with the Party is unknown. The FBI stopped tracking her but she and Susan continued to subscribe to Party newspapers.

In the meantime, Susan was declining, physically and financially. She lost her newspaper column but continued to support left-wing front groups. She volunteered at Boston's Party offices despite being regarded as "unreliable," and somewhat of an embarrassment because of her increasingly unkempt appearance. Her finances were in such trouble she went from having a maid to just a party-time cleaning-lady. She had to give-up her lovely apartment and the Trapaló estate and live with friends. As bad, she was suffering from arthritis and an injured leg when she moved-in with Florence Luscomb at Florence's Boston home. Florence was also close to the Hinton family.<sup>13</sup>

Because of her and Margot's problems Susan decided to leave Boston in 1955. After a stop to visit the Bradens of Civil Rights protests in the South, she arrived in Los Angeles. She and Margot watched over each other, but in low-cost apartments. They seem to have withdrawn from political involvements. After a stressful decade Susan died in 1965, Margot thirty years later.<sup>14</sup> Margot never returned to the middle class, nor did she have any children. Although she had earned a nursing degree her salary left her little after the rent on her apartments, ones usually located in less than respectable Los Angeles neighborhoods. The settlement of Susan's estate

allowed her to move into better housing and she met a man during one of her later rounds of hospital stays when she was in her sixties.

Margot did not fully reunite with her family until the 1990s when Joy brought her to an assisted living home in Richmond, California, the crime-troubled, working-class, smelly oil refining shipyard center east of San Francisco. It was just a few miles across the Richmond Bridge from Jean's rustic Mill Valley home, but a universe away in terms of social conditions.<sup>15</sup>

The evidence is not conclusive, but Margot, despite all her life traumas, had remained, like her sisters Joy and Jean, loyal to the Party's ideals, and to Stephen Fritchman who held to the old versions of Communism that seemed outdated by the mid-1960s.

### **Other Strange Destinies**

Like Margot, Joy, and Jean Clark, others in their circles had less than happy lives after World War II. Martha Fletcher, Daniel Boone Schirmer, Sidney Lipshires, Otis Hood, Anne Burlak, and Hugo Degregory had to deal with the fear of imprisonment and difficult personal problems in addition to the failure of their Marxist dreams and the Party's decline.

#### **The Mysterious Martha Fletcher: From Riches to Red to Just Elitist Pink**

Martha Haven Fletcher was another young Party stalwart and Stephen Fritchman admirer who faced imprisonment as Massachusetts and the Federal government launched their late 1940's anti-Communist campaigns. Fearful of arrest, she stayed abroad, becoming a long-term expatriate in France. Although her name made the headlines of American newspapers, little was known about her background, and nothing has been known until now of her life after leaving the United States. She deserves an extensive biography.<sup>16</sup>

Martha Haven had a family background that made her unlikely to become a Communist, Stephen Fritchman's colleague, or a target of American prosecutors. American capitalism had

treated her relatives well, with only minor damage to a few during the Great Depression. So, it is difficult to understand why a California college graduate became a die-hard young leftist. The best explanation is that like others from America's intelligentsia, such as Frederick Vanderbilt Field and Edith Arnstein, Martha's early commitments came from sympathy for the poor, her humanism, and the ideological wave that drew-in so many young college students of the 1930s, rather than from first-hand experiences with the American working class life or poverty.

The Haven family moved from Maine, through the Mid-West to California in the late Nineteenth Century to become wealthy and influential attorneys and community builders in San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley. Martha's father did well as a member of his family's prosperous San Francisco law firm, but lived with his mother-in-law in her custom-built Berkeley home on the edge of the University of California's campus. Lillian, Martha's mother, became part of the Berkeley "social set," a reformer, and a Unitarian. Although the Great Depression reduced the Haven family's income Lillian made sure her children were highly educated. Martha attended Stanford University then, to reduce expenses, she switched to the University of California. Before finishing college Martha followed the family's social and political traditions. She was a sorority girl and debutante (but early-on showing feminist convictions), and she helped her mother with various liberal causes, Unitarian activities, and volunteer work at such charitable institutions as the YWCA.

In 1936, when she was just eighteen, Martha had an experience that began changing her political views. She was an exchange student in war-torn China where she had a glimpse of deep poverty and was exposed to communist ideas. On her return, despite her family's growing worries in reaction to such events as San Francisco's great General Strike of 1934 and their concerns about the Bay Area's Communist Party, Martha began to question capitalism, if not



democracy. The Spanish Civil War played a major role in shifting her further away from her family's liberal political beliefs and, importantly, what she called their social pretensions such as her mother's sewing dresses then attaching fancy store-labels on them so Berkeley's socialites would not recognize how much the depression had done to the family's income.

Spain's conflict was also shaping the beliefs of Martha's future husband. Martha met Harold Augustus Fletcher Jr., soon after she returned from China and enrolled at the University of California. Harold was from a San Francisco Unitarian family, one far richer and powerful than even the Havens, but Harold encouraged Martha to move further to the ideological left. In 1939, after Martha went to the left-oriented, some claim Communist-dominated World Youth Conference at Vassar College, she became one of the many young idealistic intellectual card-carrying San Francisco area Party members. A year later, she married into the Fletcher family, making her a part of San Francisco's power structure and its high-society. Harold's father had become part of a wealthy medical family in 1916 when he married Inez Pischel. The Pischels were closely related to the Dohrmanns who built merchandising and, later, banking, and shipping fortunes in San Francisco. The great Emporium Department store chain was one of their accomplishments. The Dohrmanns and Pischels were two of the richest and most influential San Francisco families, living side-by-side in huge, connected mansions near the famed Nob Hill. Harold's father followed tradition and joined his father-in-law's prosperous medical practice. Sepha, Inez's sister, also married into San Francisco's elite. The families were so prestigious every high-status male or female social club in San Francisco had a Dohrmann or Pischel member. The families also had estates in the most exclusive sections of Marin County across the bay from San Francisco..

But there were some family difficulties. In 1934, just as young Harold was entering the University of California, Inez divorced his father. A year later she stepped out of her class and religion by marrying Lee Ettelson, a rising-star journalist in the conservative Hearst newspaper chain. Lee had a Jewish, not Protestant or Unitarian background. Lee was not rich but in 1934 he and Inez had enough money to keep a San Francisco apartment while buying a rundown ranch in Sonoma, California, fifty miles north of the city and on the edge of Marin County. They began turning the property into an operating ranch, a winery, and a home for Lee and Inez's children. Inez did not cut herself off from her family and San Francisco's high society, however. She always put on an evening gown and attended San Francisco's opera and symphony season openings. She hosted her relatives at the ranch, some arriving in chauffeured limousines.

The young radicals Martha and Harold Fletcher were too active to spend much time in Sonoma. Both were extremely busy during their college years and their courtship. Besides her college classes Martha continued her Unitarian and YWCA work and, like Harold, was a member and supporter of the anti-military, anti-Fascist, and peace organizations that were so popular on college campuses. Martha was in other left-leaning groups, including the American Student Union. Harold was elected to the California Youth Legislature. The union and the legislature accepted the startling Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, so they were soon labelled as Communist front organizations. As well, Martha was a public supporter of the Loyalists during the Spanish Civil War. She raised money for ambulances, cooperating with the national organizations supplying the Spanish left including the Joint Anti-Fascist Relief Committee and was involved with the local branch of the Unitarian Service Committee's foreign aid organization.

Harold and Martha let their friends know of their leftist beliefs, ones that had gone beyond those of the secular humanists gaining influence within the Unitarian denomination. Harold was proclaiming that if the United States went to war it would be a capitalist war, so even if drafted he would not fight. Martha's rich relatives remember her as being a vocal advocate of Communist ideas and an annoying critic of capitalism.

Evidence indicates that Harold and Martha were more than young and innocent fellow-travelers. Martha told her friends that as early as 1938 Harold was taking her to Communist meetings in Berkeley and supplying her with communist literature. She said he even led her through the Communist Manifesto and other theoretical documents. In 1939, she displayed her party card to her friends and announced Harold also was a card-holder. How deeply the two were involved in the San Francisco area's Party activities is unknown, but it is unlikely they knew any of the Party members involved in spying on Robert Oppenheimer's atomic research at the university in Berkeley. Neither Harold nor Martha was mentioned in the voluminous reports of the California Communist investigations or those on Oppenheimer.<sup>17</sup>

After their late 1939 wedding the couple lived with Martha Haven in Berkeley but they were determined to set-up their own household. Their first problem was how to finance their new life because Harold had decided to attend graduate school, but not to follow his family's career paths. He began to study political science, not medicine or finance--then dropped-out of school without definite plans for what to do for a living. Visiting his mother Inez's Sonoma ranch, he asked his stepfather Lee Ettelson for advice. Lee used his influence and secured Harold a position as a cub reporter with the San Francisco *Examiner*. The job was to be temporary until Harold decided on a life-time career. As Harold began this newspaper job, Martha leveraged her experience with voluntary work and her people skills to secure a position with the left-oriented

National Youth Administration, a Federal agency that provided short-term work for needy youth. Then, although an anti-war crusader Martha helped San Francisco's civil defense authority build its organization.

Before then, the couple had moved to San Francisco. Being "for-but-not -of" the working class they did not chose a worker's neighborhood like the Mission or Potrero. They found a small, stylish tiny apartment on the beautiful and quaint Russian Hill's Macondray Lane. The setting fit San Francisco's intellectual-bohemian, not proletarian, lifestyle. The lane was so beautiful and unique it became an official historic site and by the Twenty First Century the tiny Fletcher apartment was worth more than a million dollars. Within a few months, although they had no children, they decided they needed a larger place. They found one a quarter mile from the lane. 1342 Jones Street was a modern apartment building located two blocks below ritzy Nob Hill and the famed Fairmont Hotel. According to family memories, Harold and Martha lived next to two young men who would play major roles in Martha's post World War II life. "Jack" Peter Cowden had gone to San Francisco's famed Lowell High School and was also at the University of California with Harold. Cowden was not from an elite family and had been a radio actor as a child but was, like Harold, unsure of his career. He was working as an advertising copywriter in 1940, soon to move to New York City and a career with CBS radio that was interrupted by military service as a reporter in the Pacific. The other young Jones Street neighbor was Paine Knickerbocker.<sup>18</sup> Paine was from an upper-class Westchester, New York family and had attended Dartmouth College before working as a reporter in the West. At twenty-seven he earned a Master's Degree in writing at Berkeley. After that, he served as a college administrator and junior reporter. Although he married in late 1940, he joined the Navy a month after Pearl Harbor, serving as a combat intelligence officer throughout the war. He returned to

the San Francisco area to work as a reporter, then became a famed theater critic and member of the city's high-society.

To his family's surprise, in 1942 Harold also cut-short his newspaper career. Despite being married and his protestations against war he enlisted in the Marine Corps just three weeks after the Pearl Harbor disaster—and as a private, not an officer. That fit with his Communist commitments but a year later, when the Marine's finally realized he was a college graduate, he began serving as an artillery and intelligence officer in the Pacific island campaigns, suffering from fever and receiving a Bronze Star.

### **The Fritchman Connection**

The war also changed Martha's life. In 1942, she accepted an offer that fit her voluntary work experience, her Unitarian background, and, importantly, her Communist beliefs: She agreed to move to Boston to become Stephen Fritchman's assistant, assigned to the task of reshaping his troubled Unitarian youth programs to make them politically acceptable to the denomination's conservatives. When she arrived Boston's Unitarians had no knowledge of Martha's Party connections and saw only an intelligent, poised, and extremely attractive young woman. She soon became a popular leader, remembered as charming young people throughout New England, and as an effective public speaker. She was respected by the Unitarian leadership, especially Charles Joy, and was asked to perform more than youth work. For example, she headed the denomination's effort to aid the West Coast's Japanese Americans who were sent to internment camps. Martha was also becoming part of Boston's Communist front scene--and the local Party. She was involved with the Society for Soviet American Friendship, American Youth for a Free World, the International Workers Order, the American Negro Youth, and the Joint Anti-Fascist Relief Committee (JAFRC). By 1945, she was organizing a huge peace rally in New

York City. “Peace” at this meeting meant acceptance of Soviet policies. Her decisions when editor of the Unitarians’ *Spotlight* magazine for young people reflected her pro-Soviet beliefs.

Because some Unitarians like A. Powell Davis’s began having concerns over her and Stephen Fritchman’s behavior, Martha was forced to change jobs. In 1945, while Fritchman kept his Unitarian post, Martha assumed a major role in the reworking of the Party’s Young Communist League into the American Youth for Democracy. She became active in Boston’s Sam Adams School, was the leader of a cell, donated to Barsky’s JAFRC, and was close to Boston’s Communist leaders such as Ann Burlak Timpson, Claudia Jones, and Dirk Struik. She even gave a well-publicized presentation alongside Herta Jo Tempi, Noel Field’s French Communist assistant, when Herta was in Boston. Martha must have encountered Party workers like Margot and Joy Clark and may well have met with Noel Field on his visits to Unitarian headquarters in Boston. Family memories suggest she kept her Party involvements from her mother and Inez, her mother-in-law.

### **A Student’s Life and The Threat of Imprisonment**

Martha’s work for the Cause did not end when Harold was discharged from the Marines. She convinced Harold to move to Boston and then found him a low-paying job heading a new Communist front organization, the Committee for a Democratic Far Eastern Policy. It was unabashedly pro-Chinese Communist. The job brought Harold into contact with leftist leaders across the county. Own Lattimore, Frederick Vanderbilt Field, Louise Branston, and Aubrey Grossman knew him and of his work. So did the FBI. It began on-and-off investigations of Harold until the mid-1950s when it closed his main file. Martha’s, however, remained open until 1961.

Harold also became a student, now with a specific career goal. In 1946, at age twenty-eight, armed with his GI Bill income and \$35,000 that came from savings and small contributions from his father, Harold enrolled in Harvard University's political science Master's Degree program, aiming at a career as a commentator on international affairs. But neither he nor Martha stepped away from their Party involvements. Martha led cell meetings arguing that if a Soviet-American war began members should prepare for civil war..

Perhaps it was the leftist involvements that led Harold to drag a usually one year of class work for a Master's Degree into three. Then, although Martha had her first child, Garth, in 1947 when she and Harold were thirty and were still living a life as rather poor students, Harold decided not to go to work. Instead, he announced he would obtain a Harvard doctorate in international studies. As well, he declared he would do his dissertation work abroad. To do so, he sought one of what became the Fulbright grants, made sure his GI Bill payments would continue if he enrolled in a foreign country, and made inquiries about studying in Italian universities.

Just then, Martha's Communist involvements became public knowledge! That almost ruined her, and Harold's lives. In 1949, when the couple was on a summer visit to Inez at the Sonoma ranch, and stopping-by their parents' homes in Ross and Berkeley, Herbert Philbrick's congressional testimony became front page news. He told of being at cell meetings led by Martha where revolutionary doctrine was the norm, especially after the Party's 1945 rejection of the Popular Front policies of Earl Browder. Philbrick reported that Harold sometimes joined-in, stating that if gradual change did not come to America he would support armed revolutionary action. Martha even held trial mobilizations of her cell to practice for the revolution's outbreak.

Philbrick's testimony frightened Martha especially because she had the new baby to care for. Her first response was to deny Philbrick's allegations to the reporters who had traced her to Sonoma.<sup>19</sup> She and Harold then considered whether it might be best to stay in the United States to fight any possible indictments, to go underground as some Communist leaders had, or as previously planned, leave for Europe.

### **Families That Were Not Friends**

They soon discovered they could expect little help from their families. Martha knew the Havens would do little. Although remembered as kindly, the Havens had become political conservatives. Martha told her children that during the 1930s her brother joined a group of vigilantes who attacked longshoremen who appeared to be supporting the great 1934 General Strike. Inez could not help. Although loving, she had little money and, despite being socially unconventional, she was less than a political radical. As well, she was dealing with serious personal problems. Lee Ettelson had left California in 1946 to head Hearst's Seattle, Washington newspaper and to work as a public relations expert advising Hawaiian planters how to curb the power of labor unions. He soon divorced Inez, leaving her with the Sonoma property, and his children, but not much else. As well, Lee declared he would do nothing for the radical Harold and Martha.

Lee was beginning a new life.<sup>20</sup> Besides becoming more politically right-wing while in working in Seattle, Lee met a lovely and sophisticated arts and music critic. Lee married Suzanne Huston Martin in 1951. That relationship led Lee to becoming a noted arts and music sponsor after he returned to San Francisco in the mid-1950s and took-on a position with the Heart papers that gave him wealth and power, a home in the city's elite Cow Hollow, a collection of valuable paintings, and a place in the city's best-brightest-and-richest. His integration into the city's elite was so deep that his death services were held in San Francisco's Unitarian Church, not a



synagogue.<sup>21</sup> But even if Lee had stayed with Inez, he would have given little help to Harold and Martha: He and the Hearst papers were one of the world's great anti-Communist voices.

Worse for Martha, the other Fletchers, and the Pischels and Dohrmanns, quickly distanced themselves. Just days after Philbrick's testimony reached the national news family representatives contacted the Federal Bureau of Investigation, letting the agency know of their hatred of Communism and Communists. Harold's father was quite severe about Martha--and even about his son who had just made a day trip to Marin County to go fishing with him. Harold Sr. stated that young Harold had lied to him about his and Martha's Party connections and went on to state that while he could understand, perhaps accept, young college students taking-up radical causes, he was repulsed by mature adults like his son still believing in Communism.

### **Becoming Temporary Expatriates and Life-long Leftist Intellectuals**

Sensing they were isolated and vulnerable, Martha and Harold decided they would be safest in Europe. There was a change in their plans, however. Italian universities stated they did not have an opening, so the Fletcher's destination became France--despite that nation's Communist Party being sanctioned by the government. In September 1949, the Fletchers left for the Universite de Paris with few possessions or money and with deep fears the American government might extradite them and bring at least Martha to trial.

What began as a plan for Harold to complete his dissertation within the typical two or three years became a seven year stay in France, with his family living like young romantic "starving artists." Because they were surviving on the \$1,000 a month GI Bill stipend, and because they wanted to keep a low profile, they moved to the Paris suburb of St Germain-en-Laye. It was an historic area, but its loveliness did not fully compensate for the living conditions in the family's inexpensive apartments or for the family's limited budget for

food and consumer goods. While at one of the apartments the family had to walk several blocks to a communal bathing facility to shower and at another apartment had to share a bathroom. One of the flats was in a partially completed building with an unfinished roof.<sup>22</sup> Fortunately for young Garth, the town's elementary schools were excellent, something that put him academically ahead of his American peers. Harold and Martha kept in contact with old friends and comrades in the United States and they had a 1952 visit by Inez and one by Martha's mother.

### **. To China and the Newest Social Experiment**

Martha tried to remain out-of-sight of the authorities, both American and French. Her fears about imprisonment intensified after she was formally indicted under Massachusetts' anarchy laws in 1951. Then, Martha allowed Harold to do something dangerous. In 1952, he accepted an offer to attend an all-expense-paid meeting, the huge Asia and Pacific Rim Peace Conference in Communist China, one obviously part of an effort to make the new regime acceptable to the world, especially the American people. Harold was invited because of his work with the Committee for a Democratic Far Eastern Policy and because he could be advertised as a typical American. Martha later told her children that while she feared arrest, the promise to keep her presence in China unknown (a promise soon broken) made the chance to see Communism in action a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. So, she decided to accompany Harold and to take four-year-old Garth. The French and American authorities learned of the trip but did nothing to stop the Fletchers from leaving or returning to France. Harold did not realize the United States' FBI began paying attention to him. But the American government took no action against him or Martha. There never was an attempt to extradite them.

The Chinese government sent an old DC-3 airplane to Paris for the three Fletchers and other French attendees. The family endured the cold and long flight to join a group of very

unusual Americans who produced a book, *What We Saw in China*, which was a glowing tribute to Chinese Communist policies.<sup>23</sup> Harold's contribution was an article saluting what he saw as China's successful free economy that encouraged private enterprise. Martha and Harold met with the Hintons and Engts, the Boston-based families that had become expatriates in China, and with other Party faithful from around the world, including America's Isobel and Edwin Cerne, Gerald Tannenbaum and Walter Illsley.

On the Fletchers return the French government was tolerant. Their expired residency permit was renewed, and Harold was accepted at another Paris university, the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. But Harold either had research problems or he was stalling to safely stay in France. It took him seven years (not the usual two or three) and an unheard-of seven drafts of his dissertation, each typed by Martha on their little portable typewriter, before his dispassionate work, "The Nationalization of Industry in France, 1942-1946: A Study of the Political and Administrative Aspects of the Problem," gained the Harvard political science faculty's approval in 1956.<sup>24</sup> Martha had done more than type for Harold. She mothered Garth and gave birth to a girl, Perry Anne, in 1954, as she trained herself in colloquial French and as she met with many leftist French intellectuals, something that helped her in later years. In the seven years in France, she and Harold had become more than secular humanist Unitarians. According to their children, they had become atheists.

With his dissertation completed but needing to go to Cambridge, Massachusetts to defend it and sensing the anti-Communist wave in the United States was subsiding and Massachusetts unable to enforce its anti-anarchist law, Harold decided to return home and to finally take a job— hopefully as a professor. His dissertation supervisor raised Harold's hopes when he passed-on notifications of job openings.

On arriving in the United States, they neither expected nor received help from the Party of their families. Although they had not been fully disowned by the Fletcher-Pischel-Dohrmann clan, Harold, Martha, and the children decided to stay with Inez at her Sonoma ranch, rather than in Berkeley, Ross, or San Francisco. Inez welcomed them as Harold searched for academic positions. Unfortunately, he was much less than an academic star and he was an oddity in the academic marketplace, an almost forty-year-old with no teaching experience and no publications. His prestigious Harvard education had not, as usual at the time, led to immediate job offers and, despite the vast expansion of American higher education in the 1950s and early 1960s, his search was disappointing. There were no offers from research-oriented universities or even the new urban state colleges serving the children of the working class.

### **To An Unexpected and Turbulent Life**

After a year at Inez's ranch, Harold received a notice of a temporary position at a small ivy-league-type teaching (not research oriented) high-reputation, high tuition college--one that had a strong religious heritage. The college still had compulsory chapel for its students and while having some progressive policies such as exchanging students with the all-Black Hampton Institute, it was a strange, conservative place for leftist atheists like Harold and Martha to consider. It was also in rural Iowa and in a town with an all-White population. But Harold had no alternative, he was desperate. Fortunately for Harold, Grinnell College was in a hurry to find a one-year replacement for Joseph Dunner, its highly regarded international studies professor, while he took a sabbatical leave.<sup>25</sup>

Although the job description indicated there was a chance of the one-year appointment being extended, Grinnell had received few responses to Dunner's recruiting letters to graduate schools. Harold became the only viable applicant. In a rush to fill the position, the college did

not worry about him passing his final doctoral examination and did not investigate his past or his political beliefs. Taking his word that he had been a newspaper reporter in Paris while writing his dissertation.<sup>26</sup> Harold was offered the job. Martha's background was not checked.

In September 1957, perhaps not realizing the college was having enrollment and financial problems, the Fletchers moved to the small and isolated Grinnell, Iowa. The college helped with housing. Luckily, Harold quickly made friends with the economist Howard Rothman Bowen, the college's new president (soon to be famous in the field of higher education's economics). The college put Martha's skills in colloquial French to use and she became an associate and close friend of John Kleinschmidt, the college's French professor who later guided her into a new career. Although their income remained low compared to the salaries at major research universities (and about twenty-percent less than the nation's average middle class household) the family was happy. They felt secure after indications Harold had a chance for a permanent position. He was soon granted one. He was able to buy a home and to take the family on summer vacations that frequently included trips to California. Because the college hosted many famous speakers, such as Arnold Toynbee, and supported a fine library, the family had much intellectual stimulation. Harold and Martha also had a full social life, partly because both had tempered, but not fully abandoned, their leftist ideologies. They remained supporters of Russia, China, and Cuba but soon backed away from evangelical-like lecturing on Marxist theory.

There were problems at Grinnell, however. When Joseph Dunner, the professor Harold had temporarily replaced, returned in 1957 he began to suspect Harold was more than an energetic liberal. The influential Dunner began a campaign to remove Harold from the college. Joseph Dunner was a devoted anti-Communist with an impressive academic record and important political connections. He held a European PhD, had a long list of publications, and

knew many influentials in America, Israel, and Europe. He began his ideological journey as a Communist but became its enemy. As a young man in Germany, he joined the Communist Party (KPD) and had pleasant associations with the Frankfurt scholars who later hosted Paul Massing. After a trip to the Soviet Union during the early 1930s and witnessing the contorted KDP policies that helped bring Hitler to power, he became a socialist. Wisely, he finished his doctoral work in Switzerland in 1934 avoiding Germany's crackdown on Jews. He arranged to move to the United States and by 1936 was on track to be a prominent academic. He held positions at the prestigious Brookings Institution, at New York University (with Rockefeller sponsorship), and at Harvard University.

During World War II Dunner served in the Office of War Information helping create propaganda to undermine the Axis powers. At war's end, he was sent to Germany to help the Allied team under Cedric Belfrage that was charged with rebuilding Germany's press.<sup>27</sup> Dunner immediately became involved with more Socialist vs Communist conflicts when he sensed that German Communists were being favored when licenses for newspapers were being issued and when their content was reviewed. Dunner reacted against the Communist influence. Among his battles was one against a friend of Sali Lieberman and Noel Field. Bruno Goldhammer, a leading Communist, had fled Germany for Switzerland in the late 1930s. Immediately after the war he resumed his Communist leadership position in Bavaria and then became an important figure in the East German government alongside more of those Noel Field had aided such as Gerhard Eisler, one of Hede Massing's husbands.

Dunner rejected Goldhammer's application for a newspaper license. That did not please Belfrage and Dunner's vigorous efforts to smuggle Jews to Israel alienated other Allied authorities. Dunner was returned to the United States, but he was not defeated or silenced.

Grinnell College immediately hired him to lead its new International Affairs program. He also became one of nation's socialist / anti-Communist intellectuals, as well as an important Zionist. He published in the Socialist's *New Leader* journal, joining with the likes of Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Reinhold Niebuhr to fight Communists and their allies such as Belfrage who had founded the leftist *National Guardian* magazine that supported Henry Wallace's Soviet-friendly 1948 presidential campaign. Belfrage was soon deported to England and later identified as a Soviet agent.<sup>28</sup> Dunner continued academic publishing and grew to be a well-regarded intellectual resource for the nation's Jewish organizations.

On his 1957 return to Grinnell College Dunner began hearing of Harold' advocating for, not against, Communist China and Soviet Russia. That was contrary to what Dunner had thought Harold's political views were. Dunner was also upset that Harold, rather than a long-time colleague of Dunner's, had been appointed chairman of the political science department and then given a permanent position only because, Dunner claimed, of Harold's personal relationship with the college's president who also was pro-Soviet.

Dunner kept his worries and protests within the college until 1961 when students began complaining about Harold voicing his pro-Castro views in his classes and at conferences while supporting the Fair Play for Cuba movement. Several students demanded Harold's removal. Dunner took an unprecedented step and went over Bowen's head. He took his grievances to the college's trustees and notified the FBI of his concerns about Harold as well as the college's administration. Contacting the trustees was a mistake. They held an investigation that backfired on Dunner. Harold kept his job and soon received tenure, although he never published any books or major articles. Dunner, however, was asked to resign—he did. But he continued his fight

against Harold. In 1964, he again contacted the FBI after he learned that Martha was the woman named in Herbert Philbrick's anti-Communist book, *I Led Three Lives*.

The government did nothing against her or Harold. In 1963, Harold was allowed to take his family to Paris on a Fulbright grant for a year's study of France's non-Communist left. They returned to Grinnell where Harold continued teaching as Martha began work on an advanced degree in French literature at the University of Iowa. Life was good for the family--until 1967. Harold was diagnosed with cancer, at age forty-eight. Seeking comfort and the best medical care, Inez's Sonoma ranch and the home of Harold's physician brother Grant in Palo Alto became the Fletcher's main residences. Despite Inez's love and the best medical care Stanford University could offer Harold passed-away in April 1968.

### **Becoming an Expatriate Again, and More of an Existentialist Than a Communist**

Martha and the children were alone and with little money. Martha knew she would have some income from government child-support payments, Harold's pension fund, and life insurance, and, if needed, sale of her home. But that would not be enough to sustain the family. Martha was in need but with no one to turn to. Inez was old and she was unable to offer much support because her ranch was failing. Martha's own family could not help and the rich San Francisco Fletcher/Pischel/Dohrmann relatives did not come to her rescue. Martha was fifty and without a job, marketable skills, or academic credentials. The only "work" she had done was a bit of teaching in Grinnell's language department and, with the guidance of the school's leading professor of French, a translation of Jean-Paul Sartre's, *Le Fantome De Stalin (The Ghost of Stalin)*. That work was more than an exercise in translation for Martha because Sarte was reacting to the emerging knowledge of Stalin's cruelties and the brutal invasion of Hungary. Sarte was demanding changes to make Communism humane. Martha's ideology softened after



translating Sartre and her children remembered her reflecting on history and condemning the barbarities of Stalin and Mao's regimes, although she approved of some of her children's forays into the United States' radical movements of the 1960s.

Martha believed she might have work opportunities in academia if she completed her graduate studies. At her age and with little money she knew she could not attend a major university such as Harvard. So, she returned to her home and supportive community in Grinnell, finished her courses at the University of Iowa, and used old and new French acquaintances to gain a fellowship at the Universite Paul Valery in Montpelier, France, then a research grant from France's version of the United States' National Science Foundation. She and young Perry began their new stay in France in 1969.<sup>29</sup>

Martha and Perry became long-time residents of the beautiful Mediterranean city, again living academic versions of happy but poor-church-mice in a small apartment with what Perry called "Goodwill" furniture. Martha renewed friendships with left-oriented artists and intellectuals such as Paul Strand (the expatriate friend of Alger Hiss) and Rene Char (a friend of the famous Albert Camus) and she even had a romance. She married Max Piquemal a French citizen but divorced him within a brief time without ending their relationship.<sup>30</sup>

Martha became a friend and helper of her mentor Jacques Proust, the famous Diderot expert, and her dissertation research was aided by another grant from France's CNRS. She may have completed her class work in 1972, but it was not until 1977 that her thesis was accepted, and she was awarded her degree. Her 1,000-page study of Theophile de Bordeu, an Eighteenth-Century physician who influenced Diderot, did not lead to accolades or to offers of academic work in America or France, however.

### **Back to High Society**

Near sixty years of age, Martha returned to America and, not surprisingly, to Sonoma and the kindly Inez who remained an avid horseback rider and traveler until her 1982 death. Martha's future was uncertain in 1977. She found herself living alone in Inez's barn's guest room, surviving on widow's payments, and vowing never to take a share of Inez's estate. Then, her life changed. After living as a poor intellectual since the 1940s, she returned to high-society. She married Paine Knickerbocker, that old friend of Harold's. Paine, the son of a rich family, had risen from being a junior reporter in Oakland to become an influential and revered San Francisco theater critic—and a centerpiece of the city's "society" and its liberal reform movements. Although he retired in 1972, he remained a toast-of-the-town. In 1978, recently widowed, he married Martha in Sonoma, then the couple returned to San Francisco to live in his lush Cow Hollow apartment. Ironic, the sixty-year-old Martha became a neighbor of Lee Ettelson, the man who had done Martha's beloved Inez "wrong."

Her children remember Martha as continuing to regard herself as an activist, but she kept a low public profile in San Francisco. While the Figueiredos and Liebermans, ex-Boston Party members, had moved to the San Francisco Bay Area, hundreds of FBI pages on San Francisco Communists have no mention of Martha contacting them or any Party members.<sup>31</sup> Investigations of her close friend Stephen Fritchman also failed to mention her. Because she had been in France during the hey-day of the United States' New Left Movement, she had no ties to those radicals. But Lee Ettelson had relations with the New Left—very negative ones. He and his newspaper became major allies of the FBI and its struggles against such left-wing groups as the Symbionese Liberation Army that kidnapped the heiress Patty Hearst. Lee helped search for Patty.

Martha kept out of sight in San Francisco for reasons other than wanting to keep her political past a secret.<sup>32</sup> Soon after the marriage Paine was struck by Alzheimer's disease.

Martha stood by him until his 1985 death in an adult facility. Paine had been so important to San Francisco there was a special public tribute to him at one of San Francisco's most renowned theaters.<sup>33</sup> After Paine's death Martha remained alone in San Francisco for three years, then another old friend appeared. "Jack" Cowden, the ex-San Francisco child radio actor who had been a young reporter with Harold.<sup>34</sup> He became a high-level executive in the CBS radio-television organization in New York City and, like Paine Knickerbocker, became wealthy. He made his home in trendy Westport, Connecticut where his wife was a well-known political liberal. Jack, in contrast, did not have a reputation as being on-the-left. He was regarded as being as on-the-right. Despite that, Martha stayed connected with Jack and after his wife's death when Jack became ill Martha decided to comfort him. She seems to have gone to Westport for a time, but in 1988 she and Jack were married in Sonoma where they spent the remainder of their lives--very happy ones, but ones away from San Francisco's high-society. For several years they lived on Inez's ranch, then after it had to be sold because of the increasing tax burdens, they moved to an apartment just five miles away. They both passed-on in 2005 while living in a nearby adult-care home.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Then main sources on Margot are FBI FOIA, margot, fritchman, susan clark; HUAC hearings; city directories; voter lists.

<sup>2</sup> Family history. Congressional and state hearings.

<sup>3</sup> FBI FOIA, hartman

<sup>4</sup> Andrew, Christopher and Vasli Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (NY: Basic Books, 2001, c1999); U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, 83rd Congress, *First Session on Interlocking Subversion in Government Departments April 10 1953* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1953).

<sup>5</sup> Zecker, Robert M., *A Road to Peace and Freedom: The International Workers Order and the Struggle for Economic Justice and Civil Rights, 1930-1954* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2018). Liebman, Arthur, "The Ties That Bind: The Jewish Support for the Left in the United States," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 66 2 (December, 1976): 85-321.

<sup>6</sup> WP 6-26-1951.

<sup>7</sup> FBI FOIA, margot; Philbrick, Herbert, *I Led Three Lives: Citizen, "Communist, Counter Spy* (Washington, D. C.: Capitol Hill Press, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> Personal and email communications with Carol Figueiredo.

<sup>9</sup> Census, city directories, family history.

<sup>10</sup> FBI FOIA, margot, FBI FOIA, figueiredo.

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<sup>11</sup> On Burlak Timpson, her papers at: [http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/sophiasmith/mnsss189\\_main.html](http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/sophiasmith/mnsss189_main.html); FBI FOIA, burlak; Belknap, Michal R., *Cold War Political Justice: The Smith Act, the Communist Party, and American Civil Liberties* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977).

<sup>12</sup> FBI FOIA, figueiredo/

<sup>13</sup> On Luscomb: Strom, Sharon Hartman , *Political Woman: Florence Luscomb and the Legacy of Radical Reform* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Social Security Death Index.

<sup>15</sup> Social Security Death Index, Margot died in 1997, age eighty-three.

<sup>16</sup> See for example, WP 4-16-1949, *Cedar Rapids Gazette* , 2-21-1956.

<sup>17</sup> FBI FOIA, fletcher; FBI, on-line Oppenheimer file.

<sup>18</sup> Useful is SFGATE 10-16-2005.

<sup>19</sup> NYT 4-16-1949.

<sup>20</sup> Census, family history.

<sup>21</sup> On Lee: Perry and Garth Fletcher email correspondence; family history, census.

<sup>22</sup> Garth Fletcher said that despite the living conditions their life was good and full of intellectual excitement.

<sup>23</sup> *What we saw in China by 15 Americans* (NY: Weekly Guardian Associates, 1952).

<sup>24</sup> Perry Fletcher statements.

<sup>25</sup> On Dunner, FBI FOIA, dunner; Dunner, Josef, *If I Forget Thee....*(Washington, D.C.: Dulaun Press 1937); *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Feb., 1947); 8; Schwarz, Leo W., *The Redeemers: A Saga of the Years 1945-1952* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953); *Who's Who in the CIA* (Berlin: Julius Mader, 1968); Stoessinger, John G., *From Holocaust to Harvard: A Story of Escape, Forgiveness and Freedom* (np: Skyhorse Press, 2014); Utey, Freda, *The High Cost of Vengeance* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1949).

<sup>26</sup> FBI FOIA,, dunner

<sup>27</sup> NYT 6-22-1990; Belfrage, Cedric and James Aronson, *Something to Guard: the Stormy Life of the National Guardian 1948-1967* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1978).); Haynes, John Earl and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000)..

<sup>28</sup> Belfrage, "The Stormy," *Op cit*.

<sup>29</sup> Barth Fletcher emails.

<sup>30</sup> Perry Fletcher emails and phone interviews.

<sup>31</sup> FBI FOIA, san francisco party.

<sup>32</sup> Family history obituaries, city directories.

<sup>33</sup> SFGATE 10-16-2005.

<sup>34</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Cowden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Cowden); Mickelson, Sig, *The Decade that Shaped Television* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998).

<sup>35</sup> City directories, family history.