

Frances Humphrey Howard Memorial Service  
Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church  
October 26, 2002

It is difficult to believe that Frances is not with us today – challenging us, provoking us, showering us with her high spirits, her generosity and her good nature. Frances loved to be among friends, and we were the lucky beneficiaries of her friendship

We tend to think instinctively of Frances as Hubert Humphrey's sister, and there is reason for this. They were older brother and adoring younger sister; they were very close.

They grew up together in small-town South Dakota at a time when this country was a nation of small towns, and small towns were at the mercy of the grinding poverty of the Depression. In their different ways sister and brother became pre-eminent internationalists in the post-World War II era. At the same time they remained firmly anchored in their earliest experience of family, community and civic responsibility. I'm sure Anne and Bill have vivid memories of this from childhood.

Frances and Hubert shared what seemed like limitless quantities of energy, of intelligence, of imagination.

And they shared something else: a passionate faith in our country, in the future, and especially in our own ability and also our own obligation to make the world a better place. After Hubert's much-too-early death, his spirit lived on in Frances.

Yet fundamentally Frances was very much her own person. She was still in her teens when she came to Washington for the first time, and made the decision to stay on to attend college here. With her new B.A. in hand, she immediately became the Assistant Director of Social Welfare for the Washington Federation of Churches – a daunting responsibility for a young woman also going on to graduate school, at a time when the nation was still coping with the catastrophic effects of the Great Depression, when the safety net of social programs was only just being put in place. Subsequently she spent a memorable year working for Eleanor Roosevelt in the Office of Civilian Defense.

In the 1950s working Eleanor Roosevelt Frances became deeply involved with the United Nations Association educating Americans to

their international responsibilities. She helped organize the first UNA people to people tour of UN specialized agencies.

As Anne and Bill grew older she took on significant and substantial new responsibilities. She worked in the old International Cooperation Agency in the State Department, and then in its successor, the Agency for International Development. She traveled the world addressing issues of social welfare, hunger, women and children. Refugees were for her a special cause. She took time off in 1968 to work on her brother's presidential campaign but after Hubert lost, by so very little, she was persuaded to return to public service. Beginning in 1970 she went to work at the National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health, taking what has been described as her "so-called retirement" just three years ago. She loved her work there.

There was an enduring quality of Frances's commitments that mattered. She did not undertake her commitments lightly, and she stayed with them. She sat on the board of CARE for the National Capital Area: on the board of the Claude Pepper Foundation, on the boards of the National Theatre Corporation, and the Washington Opera, in every case for twenty years or more. She was instrumental in the establishment of the Friends of the National Library of Medicine.

Her abiding commitment to the Museum of African Art went back to the Museum's early days, long before it became a vital part of the Smithsonian Institution as the National Museum of African Art. But for Frances, surely, the commitment that mattered most of all was her service on the advisory committee of the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs where there will be a Memorial Service on Saturday, November 16. In her long and productive life Frances held up a mirror to 20<sup>th</sup> century America. She knew first-hand both rural communities and big cities. She had a life-long passion for social progress, for small d and also large D Democratic politics, for learning and the arts. She loved her family and her friends. She was a community-builder. She was a world traveler. She did not just care about the things she did; she loved them all.

In our memories, Frances will forever stand very tall. It was a privilege to know her, and I feel blessed to have been her friend – to have been taken under her wing. Like Hubert, Frances was a happy warrior. We shall miss her dearly.