



Margaret Joy Tibbetts

Miss Tibbetts was born August 26, 1919 in Bethel to Pearl Ashby Tibbetts and Dr. Raymond R. Tibbetts. She was educated at Gould Academy, Wheaton College and earned an M.A. and a Ph. D. at Bryn Mawr College.

Beginning her life time career to the Foreign Service of the United States with her government experience in 1944 in the Office of Strategic Services, she continued service in the Department of State in Washington, the American Embassy in London, the International Cooperation Administration, and the American Embassy in Brussels. She worked in the prestigious Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs and as officer-in-charge of the consulate general at Leopoldville, Belgian Congo, now known in the present day as Kinshasa, Republic of Congo.

In a 2011 book about the OSS, she is mentioned by name while in the Research and Analysis staff of the service. At the time of President Roosevelt's death .."many staffers at OSS headquarters were in tears, grief-stricken like the rest of the country. 'We felt the end of the world had come,' recalled Margaret Tibbetts, a research analyst covering Great Britain." Note 1

From 1964 to 1969 she was appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson and served as American Ambassador in Oslo, Norway. She was the ranking woman Foreign Service Officer in charge of negotiation of military bases and atomic weapons agreements. As



Ambassador Tibbetts and President Lyndon B. Johnson in the Oval Office.

Ambassador she escorted Martin Luther King, Jr. and his family when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in 1964.

In 1969 she was appointed a Career Minister. In 1971 she was awarded the Distinguished Honor Award, the highest decoration bestowed by the United States Department of State. That same year she felt obliged to retire and return to Bethel to care for her elderly mother. Subsequently she became a college professor at Bowdoin College and very active in the Bethel community, including Gould Academy, the Bethel Library Association and the Bethel Historical Society. She was awarded a Honoris Causa Doctor of Laws from Bowdoin College in 1973.



Right: Margaret Tibbetts sworn in as US Ambassador to Norway, Secretary of State Dean Rusk looks on.

The Bethel Journals—Margaret Joy Tibbetts

She continued her active and dynamic commitment to the Bethel Community for the next forty years of her life. She was well known for her deep interest and abilities with her hobbies of natural history, wildlife, bird watching, gardening and North Western Maine history. She was a very avid reader and would wish to be remembered for that interest especially. Always a Maine girl at heart with a great sense of humor, she considered that having been sprayed by a skunk and having burned a hole in seat of her wool pants from sitting on her Mother's wood burning kitchen cook stove to have been honors equal with the others she had received in her life.

Among her Bethel interests, three stand out: the Bethel Library, of which she wrote a detailed history of the library's development; her interest and guidance of the Bethel Historical Society and her collaboration with Sumner Burgess in compiling a history of the West Parish Congregational Church.

Prior to its dedication in 1974 she was instrumental in guiding the restoration of the former Durell Tourist Home into a Bethel cultural landmark as the Moses Mason Museum. She should also be credited with first managing the process of recruiting Stanley Howe as the museum's and Bethel Historical Society's first Executive Director and as President of the society she also guided the work of the society's trustees well into the 1980's.



Margaret Tibbetts was also active in Town of Bethel affairs. In the photo above, she is serving with the Bethel Planning Board 1979-1982.

April 25, 2010: The Honorable Margaret Joy Tibbetts, 90, of Paradise Hill, Bethel passed away peacefully in her sleep at the Governor King Community of The Highlands in Topsham Sunday morning April 25.

She is survived by a nephew; F. Barrie Freeman and his wife Lois Byrne Freeman, a grand-niece Mary Tibbetts Freeman, all of West Bath, a nephew James Ashby Freeman and a grand-nephew Matthew Scott Freeman.

Source: Sun-Journal archives ; note: 1 Wild Bill Donovan by Douglas Waller 2011.