

A black and white portrait of Clare Boothe Luce. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a dark, textured blazer over a light-colored blouse with a dark and light striped scarf tied around her neck. She is also wearing dark gloves. The background is blurred, showing other people in a crowd.

Clare Boothe Luce

A legacy of leadership
from one of the most
acclaimed and accomplished
women of the 20th Century



Clare and her brother, David

Abandoned by her father not long after her birth in 1903, Clare, her mother and brother endured difficult financial circumstances until her mother married a Connecticut surgeon, Dr. Albert Austin.

Young Clare had an insatiable curiosity about her world. A voracious reader with interests ranging from ancient philosophers to current world affairs, she was widely respected for a brilliant intellect.

Clare blazed many trails for women in her lifetime, becoming editor of *Vanity Fair* magazine, a front-line female European and Asian war journalist in WWII, an acclaimed author and playwright, a two-term U.S. Congresswoman, and the first woman to be Appointed U.S. Ambassador to a major nation.



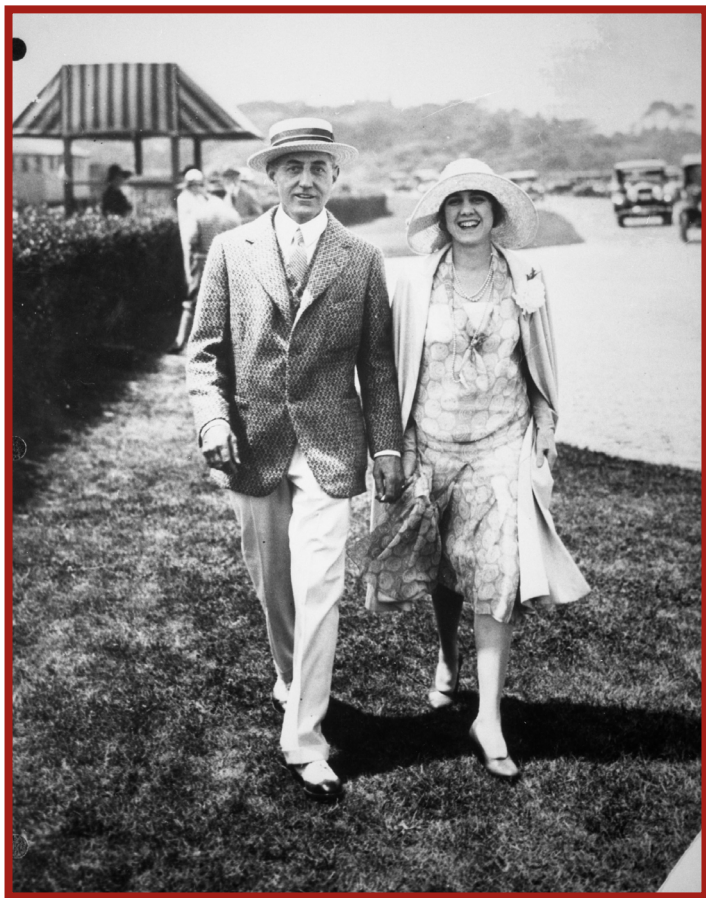
A young Clare

That Clare was a stunningly beautiful woman is uncontested by any of her biographers. Her blue eyes, blonde hair, and petite frame were the first thing people noticed, but it was her mind, wit, and enthusiasm that captivated them. Having known poverty, she was determined from a young age to succeed in life. One biographer wrote:

By the time she was 16 she knew what she wanted, her ambitions as big as her dreams: to be fluent in four languages, marry a publisher, and write something that would be remembered. She would achieve all three.

Clare attended The Castle School, a girls boarding school in Tarrytown, NY. She was teased by her classmates for reading Plato while others read romantic fiction, yet she was recognized in the class yearbook as “our prodigy and our genius.” She won honors for her senior essay on WWI — written and delivered orally in French.

After graduating in 1919, she joined her parents on an extended trip in Europe, where her stepfather was taking a series of surgical courses.



George & Clare Boothe Brokaw

On August 10, 1923 at the age of 20, Clare married wealthy New York bachelor George Tuttle Brokaw in what was described as “the most important social event of the season.” She settled into the socialite lifestyle that was expected of her. A year later, on August 24, 1924, her first and only child, Ann Clare Brokaw, was born.

By age 26 she faced an increasingly abusive alcoholic husband. Conceding her marriage was over, Clare and her daughter temporarily moved to Nevada, where she sought and was granted a divorce. She later reflected:

The New York of my youth was a fat, rich, glittering, exciting glamorous place. We wanted so much of what we had, and we had so much of what we wanted. Why weren't we happy?



Clare's Vanity Fair portrait

**“Thought has no sex.
One either thinks, or one does not!”**

—Clare's retort when complimented
for her 'masculine' mind

Returning to New York, Clare quickly wearied of the social scene. Seated next to magazine publisher Conde Nast at a dinner party, she asked for a job. Despite his doubts that she would 'stick it out', Clare began work writing captions for *Vogue* magazine.

With a career established, Clare secured the position of Assistant Editor at *Vanity Fair* magazine. Two years later, when *Vanity Fair's* editor was killed in a car crash, Clare was named Managing Editor. One biographer noted:

Boothe did more than just write some of Vanity Fair's best articles; she also came up with scores of innovative story ideas, oversaw the magazine's talented staff, and emerged as a gifted editor. Veteran editor Frank Crowninshield later said of Boothe that, “during a stretch of fifty troubled years of editing, I have never encountered a Managing Editor so able, so daring, and so resourceful.” ... One of her co-workers admiringly described Boothe as “a female who had male ideas.”

In a 1933 memo, Clare suggested to publisher Condé Nast that he purchase *Life* magazine and turn it into a photo magazine. Perhaps to his later regret, Nast chose not to pursue the idea.



*Clare with Winston Churchill,
a life-long friend who shared her interest
in politics and painting*

During a European trip in 1933, Clare's observations and her conversations with friends led her to believe that dictators Benito Mussolini in Italy and Adolf Hitler in Germany posed a growing danger for Europe and the United States.

Clare resigned from *Vanity Fair* and began writing a weekly column about the European conflict for Hearst newspapers.

In time, the interventionist tone of her columns collided irreconcilably with publisher William Randolph Hearst's isolationism, and she was fired.



The Women 1939

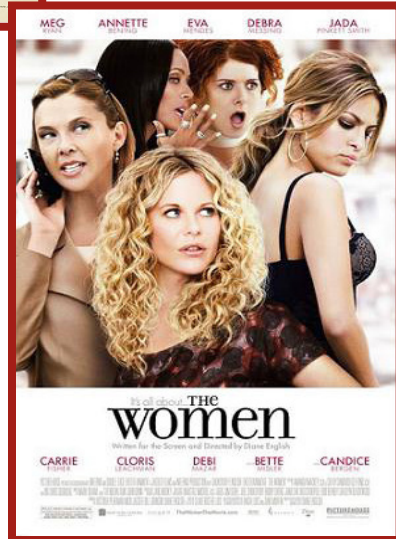
Clare turned her attention to playwrighting in 1934. Over the next six years, she would write ten plays, four of which were produced and three of those became widely-recognized successes.

Her most famous play, *The Women*, became a smashing Broadway hit with 657 performances.

It was twice made into a movie, once in 1939, when it was second in box office receipts to *Gone With the Wind*; and again in 2008. It was also produced once as a musical comedy movie (1956), and once as a made-for-television production. The play continues to be produced on stages today.

Another of her play-to-movie productions, *Come to the Stable*, received seven Academy Award nominations, including *Best Writing, Motion Picture Story*.

The Women 2008





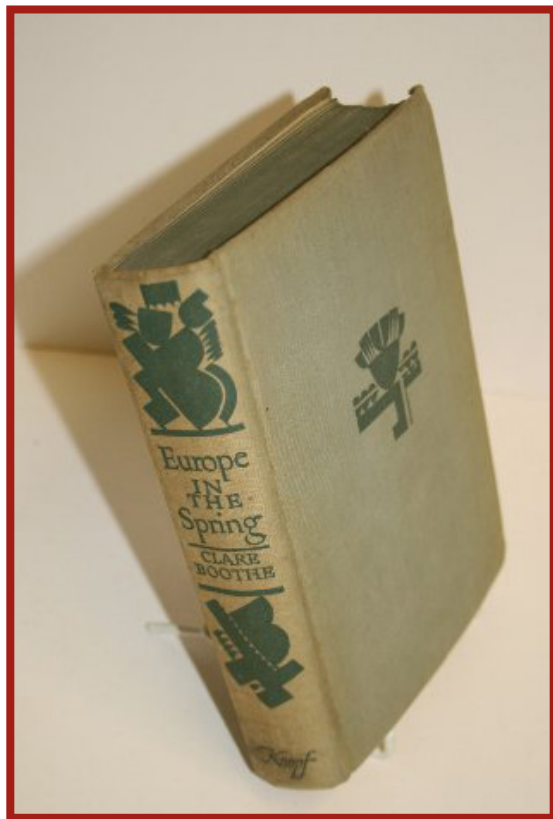
*Clare Boothe & Harry Luce in 1935,
shortly before their wedding*

Clare met Henry “Harry” Robinson Luce — founder, publisher and owner of *Time* and *Fortune* magazines — at a dinner party in 1934. As one biographer recounts:

Luce joined Boothe for a long, wide-ranging conversation. He could be overbearing, even rude, but he was also an intense and fascinating conversationalist. When the party was over they were still talking. As they walked down to the empty lobby of the hotel to say good-bye, Luce told her, quite unexpectedly, that she was the kind of woman he had been looking for and that he planned to marry her.

The couple married on November 23, 1935 — a perfect match in terms of intellect and interests. In coming years, Harry would marvel at his wife’s canny political instincts, oratorical skills, physical bravery in war zones, stamina on the campaign trail, and at her mind capable of penetrating “to the core of the most complex issues.” Clare would say of him, “If anything happens to Harry, my whole life would be over.” Influential as individuals, they became a power couple of their day.

Harry recognized the wisdom in Clare’s idea to turn *Life* into a photojournalism magazine, and he ran with it.



*Reprinted 8 times,
Clare's 1940 book helped shape
American public opinion about the
escalating crisis in Europe*

In February 1940, Clare sailed for a four month tour of Europe as a roving correspondent for *Life* magazine to observe political developments first-hand. She was dismayed by the complacency she witnessed. Italy was unconcerned by Germany's occupation of Austria and Poland. The French believed that war was coming, but that they were protected by the Maginot Line of fortified eastern French border defenses. Britain, too, felt secure.

Clare believed otherwise: that France, England and even America, were being lulled into "the dangerous illusion that they had both time and impregnable defenses."

As Germany invaded Denmark, Norway, and Sweden and advanced through Belgium into France (bypassing its Maginot Line defenses entirely), Clare returned to the U.S. to write and publish *Europe in the Spring*—a warning of Hitler's threat to democracies. Reprinted 8 times, her book "helped shape public opinion as Americans tried to make sense of the escalating crisis in Europe."



*Clare taking photos in Burma
for Life magazine*

In 1941, Clare and Harry Luce traveled extensively throughout Asia as a journalist team for *Life* magazine.

They visited the front lines in the battle between Japan and China. They met with Prime Minister Jawaharial Nehru in India and with Nationalist government leader Chiang Kai-shek in China.



*Clare prepares for flight in a
Navy torpedo bomber*

Later during the same year, Clare returned to Asia to cover the battles in Burma and to visit the Phillippines, where she interviewed General Douglas MacArthur.

In uncanny timing, her lengthy interview with General Douglas MacArthur ran as the cover story in *Life* magazine on December 8, 1941 — the day after the Japanese bombed the United States at Pearl Harbor.

In one year alone, Clare logged 75,000 miles of air travel in her quest to report the unfolding World War II story to American readers.



*Congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce,
January 1943*

By this time, Clare was an outspoken critic of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his administration's handling of world affairs.

In 1942, Clare ran for and narrowly won a seat in the U.S. Congress as a Republican representing a largely Democratic, Catholic, working-class Connecticut district.

Clare tackled her duties with the same dedication and hard work she had approached all other endeavors, often spending twelve hour days in her Capitol Hill office.

Her debut speech in Congress, which was in response to a published article by Vice President Henry Wallace, garnered immediate nation attention when media focused on this single portion of her speech:

But much of what Mr. Wallace calls his global thinking is, no matter how you slice it, still 'globaloney'.



*Congresswoman Luce boosts morale
during tour of European front in 1944*

The first woman to serve on the Military Affairs Committee, Clare spent time listening to military leaders and studying their reports and strategies. She traveled many times to European front lines during WWII to visit and cheer troops on the ground.

When other members of a December 1944 Congressional delegation visiting the Fifth Army in Italy returned home, Clare remained through Christmas. She talked with wounded soldiers in infirmaries, visited front line troops in the bitterly cold Apennine Mountains, and attended Christmas services with them in open snow-covered fields.

On December 27, 1944, Clare broadcast a fifteen-minute radio message back to the U.S., praising the American Fifth Army infantryman as “the proudest” of all fighters because he had “borne the hardest brunt in these endless mountains.”

General Lucian Truscott later said he was surprised that a Congressman, let alone a woman, could capture the great spirit of his soldiers as she had done.

In the early morning hours of January 11, 1944, Clare's 19-year-old daughter Ann, who was driving back from San Francisco to Stanford University after a visit with her mother, was killed in a car accident. The news devastated Clare.



Clare and daughter, Ann

During a conversation with Roman Catholic Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, Clare asked, "If God is good, why did he take my daughter?" He answered, "Perhaps it was in order that you might believe. Maybe your daughter is buying your faith with her life."

It sparked a spiritual journey in Clare that would lead to her receiving the Catholic rites of Conversion and Baptism in February 1946. As one biographer recorded,

As their dialogue continued, Sheen marveled at Clare's mastery of sorites, the Greek use of logic in extended argument, leading by polysyllogism to an inescapable conclusion. "Clare," he said long afterward, "used sorites better than any other person I ever met."

One long-time friend described Clare's transformation of faith this way:

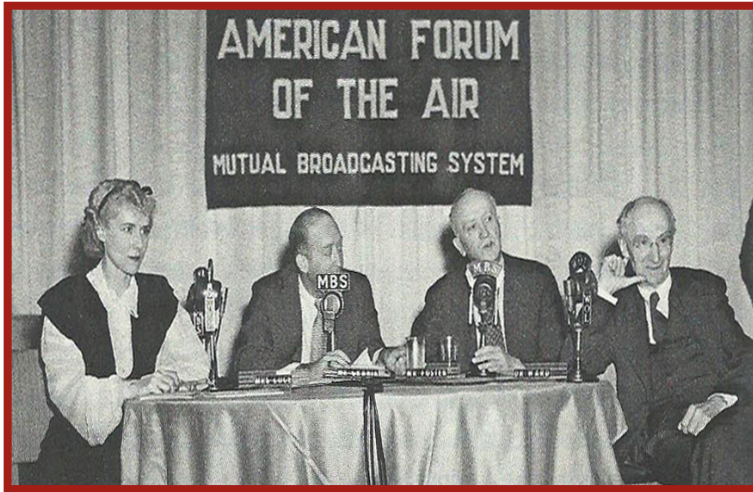
Twenty years ago she was like a diamond — beautiful, brilliant and cold. Now she is beautiful, brilliant and compassionate. She has become a kind and remarkably unselfish woman.



*Representative Luce visits
with emaciated survivors of the
liberated Nazi Buchenwald
extermination camp,
April 1945*

Clare narrowly won a second term in Congress in 1945 despite the array of national opponents, including President Franklin Roosevelt, who campaigned against her in the district.

She is credited with 18 major initiatives during her two terms in office, most of them espousing the causes of human rights. She declined to pursue a third term in Congress.



*In a national radio debate,
Representative Luce argued that
communism was
as totalitarian as Nazism
May 21, 1946*

By 1945, Clare was becoming convinced that democracy faced a new threat: communism and the Soviet Union's desire to gain territorial control over Europe. One biographer noted:

Like many political leaders — her friend Winston Churchill among them — Luce felt the Soviet Union ... posed a great danger to western democracies. In her view, the United States would have a postwar mission to prevent the spread of communist influence over the European continent.

In a national radio broadcast on May 21, 1946, debating the question, *Are Communism and Democracy Mutually Antagonistic?*, Clare argued that communism and democracy were, indeed, mutually antagonistic and that communism was as totalitarian as Nazism.

“The world of totalitarianism and the world of liberty,” she asserted, “are doomed to come into conflict.”



*Clare addressing the
Republican National Convention
July 1944*

By the late 1940s, Clare had earned worldwide acclaim. Gallup's first annual international poll in March 1946 ranked Clare Boothe Luce the fourth *Most Admired Woman* in the world.

At the 1944 and 1948 GOP National Conventions, Clare was a spirited critic of President Roosevelt's and President Truman's capitulation to the Soviet Union's Joseph Stalin.

As the 1952 presidential campaign began, Clare gave her unequivocal endorsement to GOP candidate Dwight Eisenhower.



*Clare with
President Dwight D. Eisenhower*

During the year-long campaign, Clare made over 100 personal, radio, and television appearances on behalf of Dwight Eisenhower.

When President-elect Eisenhower asked Clare what post she would like in his administration, she replied, “Naturally, what I can’t get: Rome.”

Knowing no woman had ever been appointed as ambassador to a major nation, Clare nevertheless outlined three reasons why her appointment as Ambassador to Italy would be beneficial to him, as one biographer noted:

- *he would gratify the millions of Catholics who had voted for him;*
- *it would save him from having to send another of her faith to the Vatican; and*
- *every female in the electorate would be pleased that a woman had finally got a number one diplomatic post.*

Three weeks later, Clare received a telephone call notifying her that she had received the appointment.



Italian newspapers reacted to the announcement of her appointment with sarcasm and scorn, notes a biographer:

Clare became the butt of such street vulgarisms as, “the Ambassador doesn’t tote a fountain pen” — the last noun in Italian being a double entendre for ‘penis’.

Confirmed without objection by the Senate in April 1953, Clare faced more than a hostile Italian press as she began her new role. She was responsible for supervising the work of more than 1,000 employees in 8 consulates and 9 information centers, but her senior staff was mostly previous Democratic administration loyalists.

At least she had the support of the American people. A 1953 Gallup poll found that Clare had become the nation’s second *Most Admired Woman*.

“ No good deed goes unpunished. ”

—one of Clare’s most oft-repeated quotes



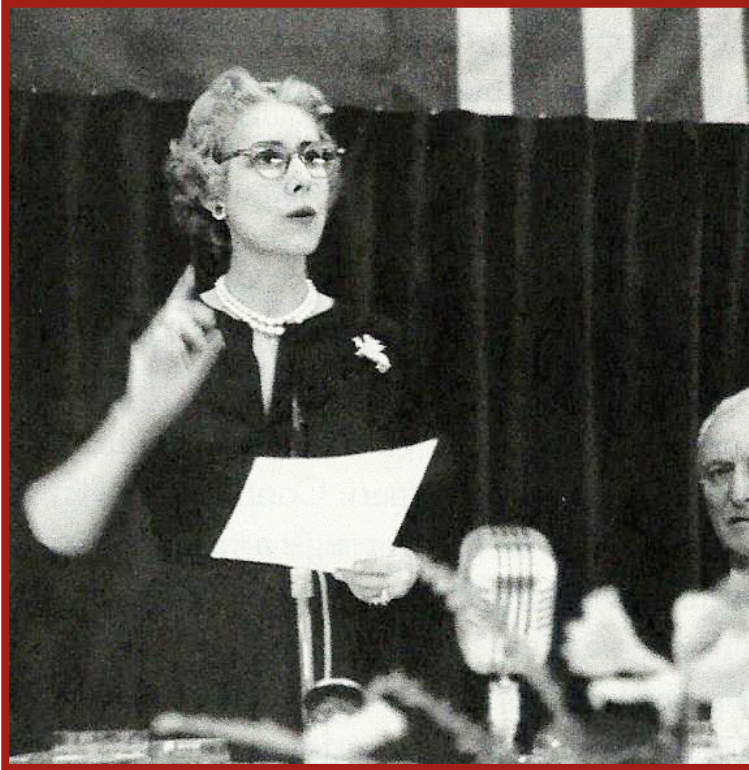
*Ambassador Clare Boothe Luce
chairing a senior staff meeting*

NATO Commander Admiral Robert B. Carney recalled how Clare handled an early meeting in which senior staff tried to overwhelm her with bureaucratic detail:

Well, she stood it for a few minutes, and then she let go with a resounding sailor man's oath, and said this was not the kind of information she wanted, and let's get down to brass tacks and confine it to facts. There was a silence around the table that you could have cut with a knife, and it suddenly dawned on everybody who was the boss man at the table, and it was Mrs. Luce; and she did a superb job at chairmanship ... bringing these people down to factual viewpoints and statements.

I was highly amused, and I must say that Mrs. Luce's stock went up with me very considerably when I saw her take charge.

Senior staff's skepticism evolved over time into admiration. Joseph Jacobs, the embassy's economic advisor later admitted, "I came to scoff, but I stayed to praise."



*Ambassador Luce delivers speech to
businessmen in Milan
May 28, 1953*

Italy was at a tipping point in 1953, The nation had two dominant political parties: the Christian Democratic Party and the Italian Communist Party, which was broadly supported by Italian unions and the major daily communist newspaper, *l'Unità*.

Ambassador Luce arrived at her post with a State Department directive to inform Italians that the good will of the United States depended on Italy remaining democratic and stemming the expansion of communism.

At a business gathering in Milan shortly after her arrival, she “called on Italian business to fight communist-dominated unions” if they wished to get American support.

Her message infuriated communists, but earned applause from many Italians.

Mysterious Illness Of Clare Boothe Luce Traced To Arsenic Poisoning From Paint

NEW YORK (UP)—CIA agents have traced the cause of the recurring illnesses of Ambassador to Italy Clare Boothe Luce to arsenic poisoning from the white-painted roses on her bedroom ceiling.

Time Magazine, in its issue appearing Thursday, will say that for 20 months Mrs. Luce had been breathing fumes, eating food and drinking coffee powdered with deadly white dust.

Tests showed that the borgian white roses in the bedroom of her 17th century Villa Taverna had been brushed and re-brushed with paint having a high content of arsenate of lead.

The magazine said the discovery was made more than a year ago and the poisoning was "one of the best kept secrets of U.S. diplomacy."

In the late summer of 1954, Mrs. Luce returned to the United States where after a long medical examination experts found she had symptoms of serious anemia and extreme nervous fatigue. Feeling better after two months, she returned to Rome to face a full work load.

Faced with political and diplomatic repercussions if the secret came out, the Central Intelligence Agency and embassy officials went quietly to work. All U.S. and Italian embassy employees were quickly investigated. No individual who had any contact with the ambassador seemed even remotely suspect.

The disconnected leads finally led to the high-ceilinged bedroom with its beams in terra cotta green and cluster upon cluster of roses and rosettes.

"Quick tests showed a high content of arsenate of lead," the magazine said. "The experts also found that the heavily leaded paint exuded fumes in Rome's humid weather."

Mrs. Luce, wife of Time-Life Editor-in-Chief Henry Luce, has been in the United States undergoing treatments to correct the arsenic induced condition since mid-May. Her general health is greatly improved, the magazine said.

She is scheduled to leave this week for a three-week Mediterranean cruise and then return to Villa Taverna where its rosetted ceiling has since been redone in non-leaded paint.

N. C. HOG MARKETS

RALEIGH (UP) — Hog markets yesterday:

Rocky Mount: 25 cents higher at 15.50-16.75 for good and choice 180-240 lb barrows and gilts.

Tarboro—steady at 16.00-16.50. Kinston, Benson, New Bern—25 cents higher at 16.00-16.50. Rich Square—25 cents higher at 16.25.

Florence, Clinton, Fayetteville, Siler City, Mount Olive, Lumberton—25 cents higher at 16.00. Smithfield, Dunn—50 cents higher at 16.00.

Ambassador Luce immersed herself in her duties. She studied Italian culture, became fluent in Italian, and traveled extensively throughout the country to meet the Italian people.

As the months passed, however, Clare became increasingly weak, fatigued, and obviously ill. Medical tests revealed she was suffering from arsenic poisoning, and it was initially speculated that her communist opponents were to blame.

A CIA investigation discovered the true cause: the heavily-leaded, white-painted rose clusters in her beautifully ornate bedroom ceiling. As she drank her coffee and read daily morning briefs and State Department cables in her bedroom, Clare was also ingesting a high daily dose of arsenate of lead flakes and fumes from her ceiling.

The paint was quietly removed and the story kept top secret for many months to avoid embarrassing Italians. Clare continued to perform her ambassadorial duties, although it would be several years before she fully recovered from the poison's ill effects.

The story of her arsenic poisoning was kept top secret for many months to avoid embarrassing Italians



*Ambassador Luce on one of her many
tours to meet the people of Italy*

**Because I am a woman, I must make unusual
efforts to succeed.**

**If I fail, no one will say, “She doesn’t have
what it takes.” They will say,
“Women don’t have what it takes.”**

—Clare Boothe Luce

Admiration for Clare grew as Italians got to know her, and they began respectfully referring to her simply as “*la Signora*” — *The Lady*.

Italy continued to be embroiled in a bitter battle with neighboring Yugoslavia over control of the Adriatic port of Trieste. As the Trieste problem escalated and threatened the stability of Italy’s fragile coalition government, Clare proposed a plan for a Trieste resolution, which received the Eisenhower administration’s endorsement.

It took 18 months of hard negotiations before Yugoslavia and Italy signed the final *Treaty of Trieste*, with a section of the Italian region returned to Italy.

In gratitude, Italy awarded Clare the *Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic* — its highest honor, and one never before given to a woman.



Portrait of Mrs. Luce

Ambassador Luce received a chorus of praise for her work in resolving the Trieste territorial dispute.

One of Italy's oldest newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, editorialized: "Perhaps never in the whole of history has a great nation owed so much to so small, fragile and gentle a woman."

Back home, the *New York Times* cheered her accomplishment:

The Trieste agreement is a victory for Ambassador Clare Boothe Luce, who floated the problem off the reef on which it had foundered some years before her arrival in Italy as United States envoy and headed it toward a solution. Her achievement is the more remarkable because the agreement is, in effect, a carbon copy, with a few embellishments, of the United States-British declaration of October 8, 1953. This declaration ... was originally suggested by Mrs. Luce and was made as a result of her insistence. (New York Times, July 12, 1954)



*Clare waves goodbye to
Italian well-wishers gathered at the
Trevi Fountain in 1956*

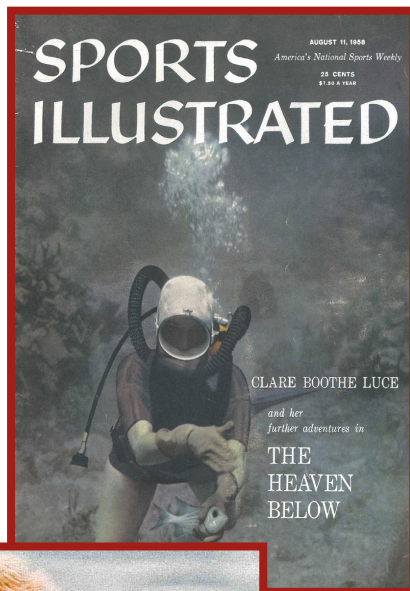
As she said goodbye to Italy, Ambassador Luce could be proud of her accomplishments. She left Italy far better off than she found it.

As one biographer noted, Italy was now “strongly democratic and economically stable. ... Its Communist constituency was diminished. She had successfully completed all her 17 diplomatic assignments, and scored a notable triumph in helping to end the long agony of Trieste.”

The *Washington Post* praised her work in an editorial:

Judged by the pragmatic test of results, her mission was extremely successful. ... She worked fantastically hard, even to the detriment of her health, and there was no doubt of her warm friendship for Italy. She brought both dignity and intelligence to her position. Her efforts command the gratitude of her countrymen.
(*Washington Post*, November 20, 1956)

*One of her
scuba diving
expeditions was
the subject of
a magazine
cover story
in 1958*

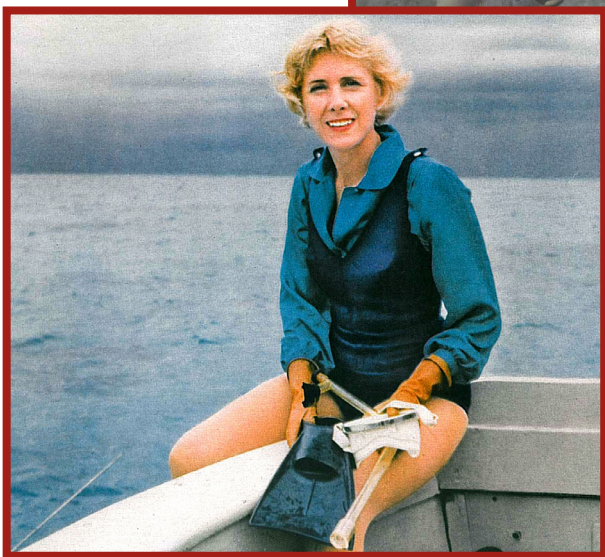


Although Clare served on a variety of presidential advisory boards until the end of her life, she and her husband, Harry Luce, settled into a quiet life in their Arizona home.

Clare continued to write short articles occasionally for a variety of magazines, but she mostly pursued painting, ceramics, mosaics and a new hobby, scuba diving.

One of her scuba diving expeditions was the cover story in Sports Illustrated magazine in 1958: *Clare Boothe Luce and her further adventures in The Heaven Below*.

In March 1967, as the couple was finalizing plans to move to a new home in Hawaii, Harry suffered a fatal heart attack.





Portrait of Mrs. Luce

President Eisenhower nominated Clare for the post of U.S. Ambassador to Brazil in 1959. It would become the “last—and most bitter—battle of her political career,” according to one biographer.

Although efforts by Senator Wayne Morse (D-Oregon) to discredit her and derail her confirmation failed (she was confirmed in a 79 to 11 Senate vote), Clare realized that Morse’s Senate committee position would only escalate the already contentious battle between them and enable him to constrain her work in Brazil. Clare resigned the post shortly after confirmation.



*President Ronald Reagan
and Clare*

Ambassador Luce received numerous public accolades and honors in her lifetime, among them the *Congressional Distinguished Service Award* and the *Presidential Medal of Freedom*, which was presented to her by President Ronald Reagan just before her 80th birthday.





*Time magazine called Clare
“the preeminent
Renaissance woman
of the century”*

Clare Boothe Luce died at the age of 84 on October 9, 1987.

She was living proof of her unique perspective on women and their roles in society:

It is time to leave the question of the role of women up to Mother Nature—a difficult lady to fool. You have only to give women the same opportunities as men, and you will soon find out what is or is not in their nature.

What is in women’s nature to do they will do, and you won’t be able to stop them. But you will also find, and so will they, that what is not in their nature, even if they are given every opportunity, they will not do—and you won’t be able to make them do it.

(Clare Boothe Luce, *Points to Ponder, Reader’s Digest*, March 26, 1996)

Time magazine eulogized the writer, editor, and politician as “the preeminent Renaissance woman of the century.”

Indeed she was.

*This small booklet has been produced
to introduce young women to our
organization's namesake.*

*We are grateful to the many
writers and biographers
for the information and insight
their work has provided
into this extraordinary
conservative woman's
life and work.*

Clare Boothe Luce
Center for Conservative Women
112 Elden Street, Suite P
Herndon VA 20170
888-891-4288
www.cblwomen.org

Resources:

Alef, Daniel. Clare Boothe Luce: Renaissance Woman. Titans of Fortune Publishing, 2009, Kindle Edition

Clare Boothe Luce. Connecticut Women Hall of Fame, <http://www.cwhf.org/inductees/politics-government-law/Clarebootheluce/#.VUZwfJN2ODs>

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*Burial site of Clare Boothe Luce,
her mother, her husband, and her daughter.
Mepkin Abbey, Moncks Corner, SC,
a plantation retreat the Luce's'
donated to Trappist Monks
in the Roman Catholic church*