

Thursday, January 2, 2003

POLITICALLY DIRECT™
JANE CHASTAIN



A fond farewell to Senator 'No Sir'

Posted: January 2, 2003
1:00 a.m. Eastern

By Jane Chastain

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The liberal press dubbed him "Senator No." However, the gentleman, who represented the people of North Carolina in the Upper Chamber of the United States Congress longer than anyone in history, was much too polite to use that simple two-letter word all by itself. Southern tradition demands the addition of a simple title of respect. Jesse Helms was much more likely to say, "No, sir."

I never will forget our first meeting. It was not in Washington. It was at the studios of WRAL-TV in Raleigh where I had presented myself as a candidate for employment. The year was 1967. I was an out-of-towner, about to become the bride of Roger Chastain, an industrial designer in the city.

I had managed to carve out a career as a television sportscaster at WAGA in Atlanta – which was a progressive city. I was quite sure my sportscasting days were numbered because I had heard they rolled up the sidewalks every night in Raleigh. Nevertheless, I decided to visit the (then) two television stations in the area before walking down the aisle to say, "I do."

The station in Durham offered me a job as a weather girl. WRAL was my last and best hope.

As I stood in the expansive office of the president of Capitol Broadcasting, which owned WRAL, Fred Fletcher took one look at me and said, "Sports? You just can't do sports for

us." That's when his executive vice-president in charge of programming spoke up and said, "Oh, yes she can!" Jesse Helms hired me on the spot.

At that time, television, particularly in the South, was a white male bastion, but I found WRAL had employed a number of women and minorities. Everyone was treated with fairness and respect. Much to my surprise, opportunities there had no gender or color barrier.

Jesse Helms also did the station's editorials. It was my first exposure to political issues and, yes, he influenced me a great deal. My sports career took me to other cities and eventually the CBS network. It would be years before I began speaking out on political issues myself. I now realize that there is a little bit of Jesse Helms in every broadcast I do and every column I write.

In 1989, while visiting Sen. Helms in Washington, I was not at all surprised to find James Meredith, the courageous African-American who integrated the University of Mississippi working on his staff.

I was surprised, however, when I first heard the liberal media assert that Sen. Jesse Helms was against women and a racist! That's before I learned that when liberals have no arguments to offer against conservative logic, in desperation, they call you names. If they call you names often enough and these epithets are repeated by their friends in the media, they often stick.

When the New York Times or Washington Post wrote unflattering editorials about him or published columns with vacuous slurs, Sen. Helms often would console his staff by saying, "I don't care what the New York Times says about me, and anyone I care about doesn't care much either." He proudly displayed a big "No!" rubber stamp on his desk.

While his accomplishments are many, I believe his biggest accomplishment was the example he set for others in the party by standing firmly by his principles.

For 30 years, he consistently voted "no" on higher taxes and bills designed to increase the size of government. He voted "no" on foreign aid money destined for dictators and thugs. He voted "no" on quotas and set-asides. He voted "no" on bills designed to limit our right to keep and bear arms.

He stood against the National Endowment for the Arts when it was funding blasphemous and homo-erotic art. He voted "no" on taxpayer funding of abortion and abortions in military hospitals. He voted "no" on AIDS programs designed to promote homosexuality and he voted "no" on programs that reward bad behavior.

More importantly, he personally blocked or led the charge against the passage of many dangerous treaties such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Kyoto Protocol (global warming), the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and the radical Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.

In Congress, there is so much pressure to go along, to get along. However, Sen. Helms never was afraid to put his foot down and, as a gentleman, simply and politely say, "No sir!" The Senate will not be the same without him.

Jesse Helms says his father was his hero. Well, Jesse Helms is mine.

Jesse Helms on the record:

"Atheism and socialism – or liberalism, which tends in the same direction – are inseparable entities. When you have men who no longer believe that God is in charge of human affairs, you have men attempting to take the place of God by means of the superstate."

"The money we spend on the U.N. is not charity. To the contrary, it is an investment – an investment from which the American people rightly expect a return. They expect a reformed U.N. that works more efficiently, and which respects the sovereignty of the United States."

"As matters now stand, many Americans sense that the U.N. has greater ambitions than simply being an efficient deliverer of humanitarian aid, a more effective peacekeeper, a better weapons inspector, and a more effective tool of great power diplomacy. They see the U.N. aspiring to establish itself as the central authority of a new international order of global laws and global governance. This is an international order the American people will not countenance, I guarantee you."

"Americans distrust concepts like the International Criminal Court, and claims by the U.N. to be the 'sole source of legitimacy' for the use of force, because Americans have a profound distrust of accumulated power. Our founding fathers created a government founded on a system of checks and balances, and dispersal of power."

"Why has CEDAW, the Convention of Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, never been ratified? Because it is a bad treaty – it is a terrible treaty negotiated by radical feminists with the intent of enshrining their radical antifamily agenda into international law. I will have no part of that. I say to these women who are picketing my office: Dream on. If its authors and implementers had their way, the United States, as a signatory to this treaty, would have to legalize prostitution, legalize abortion and implement what CEDAW regards as the preferable environment of institutional day care instead of children staying at home. This treaty [CEDAW] is not about opportunities for women. It is about denigrating motherhood and undermining the family. The treaty is designed to impose, by international fiat, a radical definition of 'discrimination against women' that goes far beyond the protections already enshrined in the laws of the United States of America."

"Let me adjust my hearing aid. It could not accommodate the decibels of the senator [Ted Kennedy] from Massachusetts. I can't match him in decibels or Jezebels."

"His [Clinton's] most irresponsible final act – the one that threatens the most lasting damage to American sovereignty and independence – was his outrageous and unconscionable decision to sign the so called Rome Treaty establishing an International Criminal Court."

"This United Nations court claims the power to indict, try and imprison American citizens – even if the U.S. refuses to join the court! This brazen assault on the sovereignty of the American people is without precedent in the annals of international treaty law."

"There are two equally important problems – the federal debt and to restore moral and religious principles as the keystone to our survival as a free nation."

"Never, has America needed prayer more than now. I submit to you that a nation that forgets God is committing suicide."

"I have lived a long time. My years exceed 80 – the majority of them I've had the blessing of spending with my best friend, Dot Helms. The point is that there is no substitute on earth for the joy brought by strong, healthy marriages."

"I will not sell my soul to stay in the United States Senate."

Jane Chastain is a WorldNetDaily columnist and radio talk-show host.