



Millicent Fenwick: Her Way

Amy Schapiro

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Amy Schapiro has written the first biography of Millicent Fenwick, the popular and colorful New Jersey congresswoman. Affectionately remembered as the pipe-smoking grandmother who served as the model for Garry Trudeau's *Doonesbury* character Lacey Davenport, Fenwick defied such simplistic expectations to become, in the words of Walter Cronkite, "the conscience of Congress."

Born in 1910 into comfortable circumstances, Fenwick faced tragedy at an early age when her mother was lost in the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Following an upper-class childhood and a failed marriage, she began a fourteen-year career at *Vogue* magazine.

In the 1960s, Fenwick became involved in the civil rights movement and took part in local and state politics in New Jersey. Blessed with striking good looks and a sharp wit, she cut a glamorous figure, rising quickly through the ranks of the state Republican Party at a time when most of her peers were retiring. When this colorful, outspoken figure—one of only five New Jersey women ever elected to Congress—went to Washington in 1974 at age sixty-four, her victory was portrayed by the media as a "geriatric triumph."

Schapiro's extensive interviews with Fenwick's son, Hugh, who granted her exclusive rights to Fenwick's personal papers, oral histories, letters, and photographs, provide rare insight into the life and career of one of America's most memorable politicians.

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