



Clare Boothe Luce

March 10, 1903 - October 9, 1987

Washington, District of Columbia

Clare Boothe Luce, playwright, congresswoman and ambassador, whose life seemed to run on more engines than most, died of brain cancer at her apartment in Washington on October 9, 1987. She was eighty-four.

She was born Ann Clare Boothe in New York City on March 10, 1903, and raised largely by her ambitious mother after her father left the family. A brief early marriage to the wealthy George Tuttle Brokaw ended in divorce and left her with a daughter, Ann. She went to work in magazines, rising to managing editor of Vanity Fair, and in 1935 married Henry R. Luce, the founder of Time, Life and Fortune.

Her play *The Women*, an all-female comedy of manners with a cast of nearly forty, opened on Broadway in 1936 and ran for hundreds of performances; it was later filmed and is still revived. She followed it with *Kiss the Boys Goodbye* and *Margin for Error*. As a war correspondent for Life she reported from Europe and Asia in the early 1940s.

In 1942 Connecticut voters sent her to the House of Representatives as a Republican, and she served two terms, a sharp-tongued critic of the Roosevelt administration's foreign policy. The death of her only daughter in a 1944 car accident shook her deeply, and she converted to Catholicism, writing about the experience at length.

President Eisenhower named her ambassador to Italy in 1953, making her the first American woman to represent the country at a major post abroad. She served until 1956. Later she sat on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, and in 1983 President Reagan awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

She was buried at Mepkin Abbey in South Carolina, on land she and her husband had given to Trappist monks, near the graves of her husband and daughter.

Services

Died at her apartment in the Watergate, Washington, D.C., October 9, 1987, of brain cancer, aged 84. Interment: Mepkin Abbey, Moncks Corner, South Carolina, beside her husband Henry R. Luce and daughter Ann. Portrait: public-domain photograph, hosted by Notice Nearby.

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