

**BFFWomenJournalists-V:** Inspired by the words of award-winning journalist and popular television host Christiane Amanpour, November 1, 2018, who spoke of how the free press is, “the BFF of the people and not the enemy of the people.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd0Blxbgpuw>, prompted me to suggest she author a book expanding her friendly rhetoric to a larger audience. Then, awaiting Ms. Amanpour’s book, I wrote my November, 2018 column recalling historic women journalists from previous columns, to support them, their profession and the free press. It has turned into a series of which this is my fifth column.

**May Craig (1889-1975)** began her journalism career in 1923 quite by accident after her husband, a Washington columnist for the *New York Herald*, was severely injured in an automobile accident and she helped him write his columns for the Guy Gannett chain in Maine. By 1931, she had her own byline and her own news bureau. By 1936, she was an established Washington journalist with a radio show on two Maine stations and her column ‘Inside Washington’ appeared in four Maine newspapers. It also was the year her husband would die.

In 1944, she became an accredited war correspondent and gave eyewitness accounts of the V-bombing in London, the Battle of Normandy and the liberation of Paris. During that time, she fought an ongoing battle with the military brass who tried to keep her (women) away from the war news, usually citing there were no facilities there for women. Affectionately known as Maine’s Tough-as-a-Lobster Newswoman, she continued writing her column after the war, which she did for fifty years total, and was the second most frequent guest on television’s Meet the Press.

By the 1960s she was an elderly woman who wore flowered hats and gloves and didn’t seem to mind being treated as a harmless crank or dotty old lady because she was still as tough as her middle-aged, male competitors and she always was persistent. *Washington Post* editor Meg Greenfield credited Craig as a hard-driving reporter known for her doggedness in asking questions. “What have you done for women?” she once pressed then-President John F. Kennedy. “Well, I’m sure we haven’t done enough,” Kennedy responded with a laugh to Craig in November 1961.



Craig fought for women’s rights from FDR’s New Deal to Lyndon B. Johnson’s New Society. Her passion for women’s inclusion was inherent. She took on leadership roles in the Women's National Press Club and Eleanor

Roosevelt's Press Conference Association, two organizations supporting women in journalism. One of her most important accomplishments was getting ladies' rooms installed outside the congressional press gallery, the other, even more important, was getting language in the 1964 Civil Rights Act that extends provisions to women. It is known as the 'May Craig Amendment.'

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2018/11/18/white-house-reporters-who-made-presidents-fume-long-before-jim-acosta/?utm\\_term=.7d6fb752a360](https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2018/11/18/white-house-reporters-who-made-presidents-fume-long-before-jim-acosta/?utm_term=.7d6fb752a360)  
<http://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/may-craig-maines-tough-lobster-newswoman/>

**Dorothy Thompson (1893-1961)** graduated Syracuse University in 1914 where she studied politics and economics. Her opportunity to be educated as a woman left her feeling obliged to support women's suffrage which she did until ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. She then went to Europe to establish herself as a newspaper journalist.

In 1921, posing as a Red Cross medical assistant, she infiltrated the inner circle of the former King Karl I, a Hapsburg (German royal family) who sought to reclaim the Hungarian throne. Being the only journalist to report on this from the inside established her as a journalist willing to take great risk and led to her job for the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* as their Vienna correspondent and in 1925 as central European bureau chief.

She resigned from the *Ledger* in 1927, when she was appointed head of the *New York Post's* Berlin bureau in Germany where she closely observed the rise of the Nazi party and wrote of its emerging agitator, Adolf Hitler. She extensively researched and wrote discerning articles about the explosive rise of National Socialism in Germany.

In 1931, the Nazi Party invited Thompson to interview Hitler for an article to appear in *Cosmopolitan* magazine before his appointment as German chancellor. She wrote: "The interview was difficult, because one cannot carry on a conversation with Adolf Hitler. He speaks always as though he were addressing a mass meeting . . . a hysterical note creeps into his voice, which rises sometimes almost to a scream. He gives the impression of a man in a trance." Her investigative reports on Hitler and the Nazis led to her expulsion from Germany in 1934.

In America she became a leading voice against fascism through her popular political column "On The Record" appearing in 150 newspapers, her speaking tours, and her popular radio broadcasts. Her writing and radio broadcasts alerted millions of people to Nazi Germany's persecution of Jews as well as the threat it posed to democracy and international peace. In 1935 she wrote:

"No people ever recognize their dictator in advance. He never stands for election on the platform of dictatorship. He always represents himself as the instrument [of] the Incorporated National Will. ... When our dictator turns up you can depend on it that he will be one of the boys, and he will stand for everything traditionally American. And nobody will ever say 'Heil' to him, nor will they call him 'Führer' or 'Duce.' But they will greet him with one great big, universal, democratic, sheeplike bleat of 'O.K., Chief! Fix it like you wanna, Chief! Oh Kaaaay!'"

Her passionate opposition to Hitler has been cited as the basis of the 1935 dystopian novel *It Can't Happen Here* by Sinclair Lewis, which imagines the rise of a fascist demagogue in America. When Nazi Germany invaded Poland in 1939, she went on the air for fifteen consecutive days and nights. She continued her public protests after America entered the war.



In December 1942, soon after first reports of Nazi Germany's plan for mass murder appeared in American newspapers, she drafted a public statement signed by fifty prominent German American academics, newspaper editors, sports figures including Babe Ruth and, of course, herself. It ran in ten major newspapers and read:

“We, Americans of German descent, utterly repudiate every thought and deed of Hitler and his Nazis. Other Americans must know where we, and you, stand. Add your name to ours!”

Thompson also aimed to open Americans' hearts to European refugees who were fleeing war and persecution. Her 1938 book *Refugees: Anarchy or Organization?* laid out the challenges facing refugees from the Spanish Civil War and the Nazi regime, and urged Americans to see that immigrants “could bring to a new country resources of skill which would increase its wealth and trade.”

In 1939, *TIME* magazine called her “undoubtedly the most influential woman in America” after First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. In the movie “Woman of the Year” (1942) Katharine Hepburn played Tess Harding, a character directly based on Thompson. In the Broadway musical, Lauren Bacall played Hepburn's role.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy\\_Thompson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Thompson)

<https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/glossary/thompson-dorothy.cfm>

<https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/personal-story/dorothy-thompson>

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